



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 044

Wednesday, November 16, 2022



Chair: Mr. Robert Morrissey

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

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• (1630)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.)): Committee members, the clerk has advised me that we have a quorum and that all the witnesses have been tested and cleared with their sound checks, so I will call the meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 44 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 June 23, 2022, and therefore members are attending in person and remotely by using Zoom.

To ensure an orderly meeting, I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses and members.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. For those participating virtually, please use the "raise hand" function before speaking, and please check to ensure you unmute yourself before you begin to speak. When you are done speaking, put your mike on mute again to minimize interference. For those in the room who wish to speak, the microphone is controlled by the verification officer. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order. We appreciate your patience.

You may speak in the official language of your choice. Interpretation services are available for the meeting. For those participating by video conference, you have the choice of floor, English or French. For those in the room, you can use an earpiece to select the desired channel. I would remind you again that the testing has been done with the witnesses, and the interpretation services are fine.

I would like to remind all participants that taking screenshots is not permitted.

Should any technical issues arise or we lose interpretation services, please advise me. We'll suspend while they're corrected.

Pursuant to the order of reference of Tuesday, October 18, 2022, the committee will resume its study of Bill C-22, an act to reduce poverty and to support the financial security of persons with disabilities by establishing the Canada disability benefit and making a consequential amendment to the Income Tax Act.

I would like to take a moment to remind those participating in today's meeting, as well as those observing the proceedings in person and on video, that the committee adopted a motion on Monday, October 24, and instructed the clerk to explore options to allow for the

participation of all witnesses and members of the public in the context of the consideration of Bill C-22, which included planning for inclusive and accessible meetings. The committee made arrangements for sign language interpretation in both American Sign Language and Quebec Sign Language for those witnesses appearing in person and by Zoom.

For those individuals in our audience, the sign language interpreters are being video-recorded to be incorporated into a video recording of the proceedings that will be made available at a later date on ParlVU, via the committee's website.

To assist interpreters in their work, I kindly ask all members and witnesses appearing today to introduce themselves when speaking, and to speak slowly.

Finally, if a member of the audience requires assistance, please notify me.

I would like to inform all members that the witnesses appearing, as I've stated, have completed the technical connectivity and equipment tests. I would like to remind those appearing virtually, including members of the committee, that if you do not have an approved parliamentary or House of Commons headset, I will not recognize you to speak.

I would like to welcome the following witnesses. From the Confédération des organismes de personnes handicapées du Québec, we have Paul Lupien, the chair; and André Prévost, executive director. From Spinal Cord Injury Canada, we have William Adair, executive director. From The Local Community Food Centre, we have Matthew Maynard, community connector; and Karen Wood.

We'll start with Mr. Lupien for five minutes, please.

Mr. Lupien, you have the floor.

• (1635)

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Lupien (Chair, Confédération des organismes de personnes handicapées du Québec): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My name is Paul Lupien, and I am chair of the Confédération des organismes de personnes handicapées du Québec. With me is our executive director, André Prévost. On behalf of the Confédération and all the organizations we represent, I'd like to thank you for giving us the opportunity to speak today and present our recommendations on Bill C-22 to the committee.

The Confédération des organismes de personnes handicapées du Québec is a nonprofit organization founded in 1985 by and for people with functional limitations. It is an independent community action self-advocacy group whose mission is to make Quebec inclusive in order to ensure the full social participation of people with functional limitations and their families.

The Confédération is a francophone umbrella organization that brings together and supports more than 40 national and regional organizations of people with functional limitations and their families. These individuals may have motor, organic, intellectual, visual, auditory, or neurological functional limitations, or autism spectrum, speech and language learning or mental health disorders.

The Confédération is active on the Quebec, Canadian and international scenes in all areas that have an impact on the living conditions and social participation of people with functional limitations and their families. The Confédération is also the largest “multiple disabilities” group of francophone organizations dedicated to people with disabilities in Quebec.

Six major principles guide all action the Confédération takes: full inclusion, the rule of law, the right to equality, universal accessibility, accommodation and compensation for the additional costs associated with functional limitations. That last principle is highly pertinent to the Canada disability benefit. The Confédération believes that compensation measures must be put in place to meet the various needs of people with functional limitations. These measures aim to address the consequences and additional costs associated with disability situations, and compensation can come in different forms: goods, direct services, allowances, tax measures and others.

I will now turn the floor over to our executive director André Prévost, who will present the Confédération's recommendations for Bill C-22.

Mr. André Prévost (Executive Director, Confédération des organismes de personnes handicapées du Québec): Thank you, Mr. Lupien and Mr. Chair.

The Confédération is of the opinion that passing Bill C-22 without amendment before the holiday season would be a beautiful gift for many people with disabilities. Involving these individuals as equal partners in the process of co-creating regulations, in the spirit of “for us, by us”, would certainly be a great way to go.

Therefore, payment of the benefit by fall 2023 strikes us as a realistic and necessary target for all political parties in the House of Commons to achieve. We recognize the discomfort legislators feel in voting on a framework bill that contains few details. Nonetheless, consultations with people with disabilities are still ongoing and they will provide insightful advice.

- (1640)

The Canada disability benefit must complement and enhance programs already in place in the provinces and territories. This will require significant alignment, because the benefit must not run counter to local programs. If that were to happen, the powerful negative impact would be felt by people with disabilities. Nonetheless, we're confident that good alignment is possible without any significant delays, given the many experiences and consultations currently under way and what's already available to date.

Particularly in Quebec's case, the experience of developing regulations in conjunction with the basic income program framework legislation has so far been a success. This provincial program, which the Canada disability benefit is intended to complement, represents a major step forward in the fight against poverty for people with disabilities in Quebec. If that's true, then it should also allow the program to address needs that are still unmet. Achieving that will require major efforts to intertwine the two initiatives, in our view.

We will have to find a way to index the Canada disability benefit with Quebec's one-time payment program to avoid having the income of people with disabilities indexed annually in Quebec at a certain rate, but quarterly at the federal level at other rates. Considering the costs, or additional costs, of disability, we obviously subscribe to full indexation based on the cost of health rather than the cost of living.

Finally, the individualized benefit combining the federal benefit and the Quebec program should completely and unequivocally lift people out of poverty. It should take into account the costs of disability and accessibility constraints, in terms of education, employment or transportation, among others. We believe that this combined individualized benefit should not take into account spousal income or employment income, which should provide clear income progressivity for eligible individuals.

It's important that I bring up the need to avoid the harmful effects of bureaucracy. If the federal government were to introduce the Canada disability benefit without consulting the provinces and territories, it would expose people with disabilities to the harmful effects of red tape.

In Quebec in particular, if the benefit comes into force regardless of what the provinces decide, it should not replace any existing financial assistance programs, such as the social assistance program, the social solidarity program or the basic income program. Recipients of last resort financial assistance in Quebec should not be exempted from the federal program until they have reached the low-income threshold, as measured by Statistics Canada. If they are allowed to reach or exceed the low-income threshold, it will be imperative to maintain provincial program measures such as the health care claim booklet, employability services and other compensation for people with disabilities.

If money is transferred to the province, it must go directly into the basic income program to benefit individuals, not other financial items. It will also have to be used to meet and follow the low-income threshold defined by Statistics Canada, and redistributed by Quebec under the basic income program with the same eligibility criteria as the federal government, that is, one cheque per person, regardless of spousal income.

Finally, should the Canada disability benefit be transferred to Quebec, the surplus not paid out to people with disabilities should be reinvested in other disability-related programs, be it home support, adapted transportation or home adaptation, among others. The surplus should also be earmarked for inclusion and poverty reduction.

Thank you.

• (1645)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Prévost.

[*English*]

We now have Mr. Adair for Spinal Cord Injury Canada for five minutes.

I would ask presenters to respect the five-minute timeline, please.

Mr. Adair, you have the floor.

Mr. William Adair (Executive Director, Spinal Cord Injury Canada): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am Bill Adair. I would like to acknowledge that I am presenting from Toronto. I am on the traditional territory of many nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinabe, the Chipewewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples. Toronto is now home to many diverse first nation, Inuit and Métis peoples. These are the traditional custodians of this land, and I pay my respects to their elders, past and present.

I am speaking to you today as the executive director of Spinal Cord Injury Canada. Our federation of organizations was founded in 1945 by World War II veterans. We support people from the onset of injury and throughout the rest of their lives. We help people adjust, adapt and thrive in communities across Canada.

Thank you for inviting me to address HUMA. My comments represent the opinion of Spinal Cord Injury Canada. Additionally, what I have to say has been influenced by my personal lived experience with disability, my 50-year career promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities and a shared position on Bill C-22 formed with nine other disability organizations.

I will begin by declaring the urgent need for the proposed Canada disability benefit. We first heard about the benefit in the 2020 throne speech. We're nearing the end of 2022. People with disabilities living in poverty have waited long enough. During the recent pandemic, it was evident that people with disabilities faced widespread social and economic deprivation. General costs soared. People had extra expenses for things like masks and gloves. Sometimes they even had to cover the cost of masks and gloves for their support workers who might have shown up without any. Food banks that once might have provided support were unsafe because

of the lack of transportation to get there and because other people could be carrying COVID. If your immune system is weak, your risk is more significant.

Sadly, expenses and risks have not eased up for people with disabilities. Many people live in excruciating poverty without access to support, services and other necessities of life. Some people with disabilities have now chosen to access medical assistance in dying as the only answer to end their suffering, even when their end of life is not evident.

This reality is not my Canada. In this regard, I am not proud to say that I am a Canadian. After reflecting on what I just said, are you?

The Canada disability benefit must ensure a minimum standard of good living and lift people out of poverty. It must be a catalyst to help people find opportunities to participate in society.

We appreciate that Bill C-22 is a framework bill, leaving the government to determine many details through regulations. Without a doubt, we need a rapid approval of Bill C-22.

We request that you strengthen the bill with the following two principles. Number one, there must be a robust and meaningful engagement of people with disabilities when developing the regulations. Number two, the Government of Canada must accelerate the regulation development process so that payments to people with disabilities can begin within a year of passing the bill.

Once the bill has passed, Spinal Cord Injury Canada will be ready to, and expects to, work with the government on the regulations, but for now, please be quick with your decisions. Pass Bill C-22. People's lives are at stake.

Thank you.

• (1650)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Adair.

We'll now move to the Local Community Food Centre with either Matthew Maynard or Karen Wood.

Ms. Karen Wood (The Local Community Food Centre): My name is Karen Wood.

I would first like to thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak with you and for listening to me. I am a resident of Stratford, Ontario, and a recipient of the Ontario disability support program because of a spinal-related disability along with severe fibromyalgia.

I am not here to give you my hard-luck story. I'm not a professional lobbyist. I'm here to share my own experience with you so that you can make this potentially transformative bill the best it can possibly be and deliver it to folks like me who so desperately need it now.

Here with me is Matthew Maynard, who is an adviser and advocate at the Local Community Food Centre here in Stratford. The Local is part of a national network of 15 community food centres across the country, with two more on the way. In addition, we work with over 300 Good Food organizations to advocate for policy changes that will increase people's income so they can afford adequate, quality food accessible to all as a matter of human right.

When I heard about the Local, I came to help others who need it. I learned how to weave sleeping mats out of plastic milk bags and began making them for the growing number of Stratfordites who live unsheltered and are waiting for permanent housing. It's a small comfort, but I'm committed to doing whatever I can, because I believe strongly that, as neighbours, we need to stick together and take care of each other, especially during times as hard as these.

In that spirit, we stand united with local organizations like L'Arche, Community Living, and Facile Independent Living that support community members with disabilities in urging this committee to pass Bill C-22 with all possible haste and then co-create the Canada disability benefit along with the disability community as equal partners at the regulatory stage and have the resources allocated in the spring budget for distribution in the fall of 2023.

When fewer than half of the working folks in my county make a living wage, what hope do those of us who depend on shamefully inadequate social assistance have in accessing the basic necessities of life?

I recently saw the dietitian at the hospital. She spoke to me about following the recommended Canada food guide. She told me that a quarter of a cup of greens such as asparagus and broccoli were best. I told her to stop right there. As much as I'd like to, I could not afford to eat this way. It's not because I don't know how. I live below the poverty line, so how am I expected to follow Canada's food guide? There is very little choice in the matter for those of us who rely on food banks and community meal programs to get by.

When quality, nutritious food is out of reach, you can probably imagine that getting a haircut or sharing a cup of coffee with a friend at a neighbourhood café is a luxury that I can very rarely afford. In fact, sometimes even medical necessities and things that my doctor has recommended like a walker, a shower chair or safety bars around my tub and toilet come out of my already impossibly stretched budget. In July, for example, I broke my foot, and I had to purchase an Aircast boot. This was an extra \$86 that I had to pay that caused me serious financial strain.

Even without these unexpected expenses, I struggle every month to make ends meet, and I battle with myself to determine what is more important. Do I buy what I need for my health and safety, buy a loaf of bread, or do a load of laundry? My day-to-day concern is on money, not my wellness. I live on \$600 a month. Could you?

Something so simple should not be so hard. I do not remember when I bought a clothing article brand new, as I can only afford to shop at thrift stores. Why do I have to struggle and suffer so much because of my disabilities?

When we heard about the proposed Canada disability benefit, we reached out to our MP in Perth—Wellington, John Nater, to provide him with our thoughts, share our stories with him and, most impor-

tantly, show him that our community is fully behind the spirit of this potentially life-changing legislation. Many community members at this meeting expressed some doubt about getting involved in the political process after decades of being ignored, disregarded and let down by the system, but, following our meeting, there was a feeling of hope that our voices were heard.

Three days later, at our Monday night community dinner, we sat and watched a livestream of the House of Commons debate at which MP Nater described his meeting with us and voted along with his colleagues to move this bill to committee for debate. Our hope grew again.

• (1655)

We then held a rally of support at MP Nater's office on the day the bill unanimously passed at second reading. Again, our hope grew.

Please continue to seek out spaces like The Local in your communities and talk to those of us with lived experience. We are here—community members with disabilities—to help you, to advocate on our own behalf and to bring hope to everyone living with disabilities in Canada.

Too many of us have experienced the indignity of having to prove our disabilities to administrators of benefits after being denied several times. Too many of us have experienced how demoralizing it is to have one benefit clawed back when another is introduced, or to be penalized for even getting a part-time job.

We need this benefit to avoid those pitfalls. We need the Canada disability benefit to work in harmony with existing supports to lift every Canadian with a disability above the poverty line so that we can fully participate in the communities we live in to reach our full potential and to live in dignity.

Before the pandemic, one in eight Canadians and one in four Canadians with disabilities were food-insecure. It got significantly worse during the pandemic, and now there's also the rapidly rising cost of living, especially for those living at or below the poverty line because of their disabilities.

We have a real chance to end disability poverty. Please, let's not waste it. Ensure that this bill doesn't get bogged down in the committee stage and that it passes quickly; support calls for the government to co-create the Canada disability benefit with the disability community as equal partners at the regulatory stage; push for resources to be allocated in the spring budget for distribution in the fall of 2023; and ensure there are no clawbacks when the Canada disability benefit finally rolls out.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Wood.

We will now open the floor to questions.

Before I do, I will let you know that I've been advised that the sound quality from Mr. Lupien is not adequate to do translation, so please direct your questions to André Prévost if you have any for their particular organization.

We'll begin with Mrs. Gray for six minutes, please.

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

Thank you to all the witnesses for being here today. We really appreciate it.

I'd like to start my line of questioning with Karen Wood.

Thank you very much for your testimony here today. You have touched on some very personal ways that inflation and food costs can affect people with disabilities, specifically around the Canada food guide and being able to eat healthy food and being able to afford some of these basic necessities.

I'm wondering if you can explain to us how important it is to get this right with this piece of legislation, specifically around what the amounts might be and when people might be eligible. We've also heard concerns from some people about clawbacks and how there might be unintended consequences. I'm wondering if you can speak to what your thoughts and concerns are around that.

Ms. Karen Wood: First of all, I cannot put a figure amount on it.

When I spoke with the dietician.... I cannot eat that way. She asked why I couldn't. I told her that I was on disability. She said that she felt sorry for me because I could not afford to eat properly. Then we carried on. She suggested that maybe I request greens and high-fibre foods at the food bank, which you can't always do because they only give you what they have.

I am basically in a situation where I'm not comfortable eating all these starchy foods—pastas and stuff—because that's all I can afford.

• (1700)

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Thank you.

As we moved forward, we heard testimony from officials and the minister about a timeline for this. They've acknowledged it likely taking a year to do regulations, and then implementation more than likely sometime into 2024. What are your thoughts from a timeline perspective that this is the actual timeline the government is working on?

Ms. Karen Wood: I feel it's too long. We need help and support now, not in 2024.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Another thing we've heard is about one of the pieces in this legislation that refers to working age, although there is no real definition of what that is.

I wanted to get your thoughts on this legislation being for working age. When someone is not of working age—whatever that age might be—are there concerns about people not being eligible or all of sudden being in a situation where the overall amount they're receiving is diminished by a lot?

I'm wondering if you could comment on that.

Ms. Karen Wood: Well, that means we're no longer disabled after the working age and we go on old age pension. That's not right because we're still disabled when we reach old age.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Thank you for that.

Another thing we've heard is regarding consultations. We know that this legislation was put forth in the last Parliament and then it died when the snap election happened, so here we are again without any amendments. It's about having consultations to gain input into this, so we have a piece of legislation that doesn't have a lot of details.

Are you aware of any consultations that have happened in order to make this bill as good as it can be?

Ms. Karen Wood: We've talked locally within our own community. Out there, no, I'm not aware of any.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Thank you very much.

I'd like to turn to Mr. Prévost. I have just a quick question. I only have a few moments left here.

Have you heard if any consultations are happening between the Quebec government and the federal government on this legislation?

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Prévost: I know that it's been discussed with various groups, but I don't have any more details. You would have to ask the Quebec government directly.

[*English*]

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Okay.

I have one other thing. I actually just have a few more seconds here.

You mentioned a timeline that you thought would be sometime around the fall of 2023. Where did you hear that? The information that we have from the minister and officials was that it would likely be into 2024 because it would take a year for regulations.

I was just wondering where you might have heard that or if that was sort of a wish on your part.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Prévost: That's probably a realistic wish. In Quebec, the regulations for the basic income program have been developed and adopted, and the first cheques will be mailed out as early as January 2023.

As long as everything is ready in Quebec, I see no reason why we couldn't harmonize the Canada disability benefit and basic income program as early as fall 2023. The parameters should remain the same, with a few details, but the whole issue of indexation still needs to be worked out.

Of course, we're going to reach for the top, which is to go above the low-income threshold, so that people with disabilities have a decent income. The criterion is simple, it's the issue of additional costs for people with disabilities. I see no trouble in that respect. We don't understand how this could go beyond fall 2023.

• (1705)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Gray.

Now we go to Mr. Long for six minutes, please.

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rochesay, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Good afternoon to my colleagues.

Thank you very much to our witnesses for their testimony today. It's very important.

I don't think I've seen a thing that we've brought before HUMA—and I've been on HUMA for many years—that's as important and as transformational as this. When I look around the horseshoe here, among the Conservatives, the NDP, the Bloc and us, we all agree on the importance of this bill.

Very much like the Canada child benefit, the old age benefit and the GIS, it's transformational legislation. We want to make sure that we get this right. That's why it's so important that we hear your testimony and that we don't rush it. We recognize the importance of expediting it, but we want to make sure we get this right.

One thing I want to ask all three of you, first and foremost, is about the relationships and how you see this integrating with the provinces. There are a range of supports right now that persons with disabilities access through provinces and territories, whether it's a pharmacare program, a home care program or an employment support program.

I'm going to start with you, Mr. Adair. I'm looking for your thoughts as to how we ensure that we intertwine and we work with the provinces to make sure that there's a net benefit for persons with disabilities.

Thank you.

Mr. William Adair: Thank you for the question. Through the chair, I'm happy to respond to that.

I think the first consideration is the importance of realizing that there are different poverty levels in different areas of our country. A carton of eggs is priced quite a bit differently in Nunavut than it is in Ontario, at least in southern Ontario and Toronto. This is a very important consideration to get it right.

The second consideration is to ensure that there are conversations that take place between the provinces, territories and the Government of Canada to make sure that as we build the regulations and as we determine the level of funding, there are agreements with the provinces and territories that they will not claw it back. Karen talked to us about the situation where there may be a new benefit coming along, but then there's a decrease in another benefit, so there's no real gain. That's not what we're looking for here.

You were just saying it's really important that we get it right. One reason that the position of Spinal Cord Injury Canada is to pass the bill now is that we can work these details out in regulations. We, as a member of the disability community, and the entire disability community are ready to put our shoulder to this wheel, to do it quickly and effectively, and to get it right.

Look at what we did with CERB during COVID. It did not take long. If there's the will of the government to address this with the disability community in a co-creation process, as Karen explained, we're off to the races, and our country will change for the better.

Once people with disabilities are no longer struggling to survive, they can be part of our communities. They'll start working. Some of them will start working, working more, paying taxes and having a purpose in life.

This is foundational legislation.

Mr. Wayne Long: Thank you for that, Mr. Adair. I'm going to try to come back to you.

Ms. Wood or Mr. Prévost, do you have anything to add about how we make sure that we negotiate with provinces or intertwine this benefit to make sure that there's a net gain?

Go ahead, Mr. Prévost.

• (1710)

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Prévost: We're talking about a “dispenser”-type public policy. At some point, transfers will undoubtedly be made to the provinces and territories.

Of course, each province and territory has its own realities. For Quebec, because of the basic income program, we should reach the low-income threshold as early as January 2023. However, due to the inflation we're currently experiencing, the threshold will have to be raised gradually.

Our concern is that the provinces will allocate the transfers to initiatives other than those supporting people with disabilities. From that perspective, we say we can go further and achieve full and complete indexation. If we can do that, we should be able to address unmet needs, particularly when it comes to transportation, additional health and social services costs and home adaptation, long before the money is allocated to other initiatives. Even with respect to employment incentives, many unmet needs should be considered before we even think about allocating those funds to other initiatives.

This isn't the first time Canada has set up a new program. The provinces and territories have similar programs. There are precedents. However, in some cases, funds have actually been allocated to other initiatives. That's what we hope to avoid with the Canada disability benefit.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Long.

[Translation]

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

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Good afternoon, everyone.

Thanks so much to the witnesses for joining us. Bill C-22, which is before us, is a major piece of legislation. As parliamentarians, we had to pass it in principle before we could consider it here in committee. Today's testimony and all the testimony that's come before will be very helpful to us as we move forward.

I want to begin by acknowledging all the work that's been done in Quebec. I know that it took a huge amount of consultation work to get to this point. We can therefore say that the basic income program, which will be introduced on January 1, 2023, is a first for Quebec.

Mr. Prévost, you know it, you told us so: things will get awkward if we proceed by regulation. For us, as parliamentarians, there is a legal vacuum as to how and to whom this new benefit will apply and how much it will be. The government believes that the guaranteed income supplement model, which we all know through our pension plans, will apply here. It provides an income supplement below a certain threshold.

Mr. Prévost, why do you feel it's crucial that regulations be developed in tandem with government, by and for organizations and groups of people with disabilities? I understand that this is how Quebec has seen it, but we need to look at the situation on a Canada-wide scale.

How can we be sure that the regulations will apply to all groups? Will all groups making up this disability community have the opportunity to be consulted?

What are your thoughts on the timeline for consultation, if people with disabilities want to be able to receive their benefit as soon as possible?

• (1715)

Mr. André Prévost: That's a very big question you're asking me. I don't pretend to have a complete answer, but the concept of inter-governmental coordination comes to mind.

On this issue, perhaps more than many others, we're going to need intergovernmental coordination, and we'll also have to define the parameters of that coordination. It will probably take a tailored approach, not a one-size-fits-all approach. A colleague mentioned earlier that the cost of living is not the same across Canada, which is true. Nor should we give out the benefit with one hand and take it away with the other at tax time, partially or in full.

So, as you can see, we need to define broad, Canada-wide parameters based on principles, some of which came up earlier. One of them was additional costs. People who have earned minimum wage all their lives receive quite a low level of benefits in their senior years. All clienteles and demographic groups must be respected. The concept of additional costs should be endorsed and enshrined in the terms of the benefit that would be coordinated with the federal, provincial and territorial governments.

I've proposed one parameter, but there could be a series of others. We can't come up with a specific amount, because it's more complicated than that. To be fair and equitable, we're going to have to go with parameters to explain the rules of intergovernmental coordination. The overarching goal is to lift people with disabilities out of poverty, and that includes recognizing the concept of additional costs.

Ms. Louise Chabot: Thank you. You've made some valuable points and given us some clues. As you know, we're currently looking at a blank page, and the need to have guidelines has been raised in the House.

I have another question that deals with those guidelines. The bill we're considering is for working age people with disabilities, ages 18 to 65. When we asked the minister and her officials, they said that a benefit is already given out before age 18, and after age 65, it's retirement.

However, certain witnesses have said we should expand the scope of the bill to cover people who start working at age 15 or keep working after age 65. Do you have an opinion on that?

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Chabot.

[English]

Your time has concluded.

We go to Ms. Zarrillo for six minutes.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I really want to thank the witnesses today. Those presentations have really highlighted and brought home the importance of getting this right. I'm hearing from witnesses what we've heard quite a few times before: Let's get it right and let's do it quickly. I actually don't think we should have to give up one for the other. I think there is an opportunity for us to get it right and to also get it within a very reasonable timeline.

I was going to start with Ms. Wood and then ask Mr. Prévost a question. I really want to go with that theme that Ms. Wood brought in, which is around hope and expectation. We know that this bill doesn't have a lot of information about what it's really going to bring, so I'm interested to hear from Ms. Wood what the expectation is, both for you and your community, many of whom you speak to.

The minister spoke of this benefit being a top-up. I'm wondering if you could share your interpretation of what that top-up means to you and your community. What do you think that top-up looks like? What are you visualizing that to be?

Ms. Karen Wood: The top-up would be taking us out of the poverty level, the below-poverty level. We need to be at poverty or above it a little bit. I'm not expecting millions or anything; I'm just expecting to be able to live without bobbing for apples every month, wondering what bill I have to pay or what I have to buy over and above what is expected.

• (1720)

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Thank you very much.

I'm just going to follow up on that with a question. We got some information from Employment and Social Development Canada recently that talked about individuals with disabilities living alone. There is nowhere in Canada where they are living at the poverty line or above, and I just wanted to ask you for your thoughts about household income versus disability being individualized. Do you believe that it should be individualized or do you think that a household income test is appropriate?

What are your thoughts on whether this should be an individualized benefit or whether it's okay to have a household income test?

Ms. Karen Wood: I think it should be based on individuality.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: We heard that a number of times. Thank you for that.

I want to go to Monsieur Prévost on the same question around the top-up. I'm really trying to get an understanding of what the expectation is out there in the community. With very little detail, people must have an idea in their mind of what it should be or could be.

It's just that same question about the minister speaking of this as a top-up. Could you share your interpretation of what that means, what that top-up looks like?

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Prévost: I will found my response on Quebec's basic income program.

In today's dollars, and not counting the indexation will be applied in January 2023, a single person will be eligible for an annual income of \$13,656. This will go up \$337 per month for a single person. Obviously, that's a bonus for a single person, not a penalty for a couple.

We need to consider even more important parameters. For example, can an individual retain certain assets, like real estate, and if so, to what extent? Quebec allows a total of \$500,000 in assets to be retained while receiving the basic income.

These criteria will obviously be important when coordinating and intertwining Quebec's basic income program and the federal disability benefit. It wouldn't make sense to have one amount for the federal and another for the provincial.

We also need to think about the issue of registered retirement savings plans or retirement savings: Do they have to be exhausted, as is currently the case, before an individual becomes eligible for the basic income program?

Of course, all these issues must be considered and, most importantly, tied in with the Quebec basic income program or its equivalent in other provinces or territories. Things need to be fair and equitable between the provinces across the country.

[*English*]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Thank you so much for that. Actually, the basic income project out in Quebec is very interesting and quite exciting, and I'm looking forward to seeing data come back on that.

One thing that we did hear in this committee was that the basic income plan in Quebec took four years to go from the outline to fruition. I am just wondering, Monsieur Prévost, if you would be able to share with us how we could ensure—legislators who are sitting around this table and in Parliament—that we meet the expectation of no more than 12 months to get this benefit into people's bank accounts.

I see what you're saying about all the different aspects that need to be considered. How can we ensure that it takes no more than 12 months to get there and to get money and supports to people?

The Chair: Are you directing that question to Mr. Prévost?

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Yes, I just want to follow up on some of the commentary on basic income in Quebec.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Prévost: Can you repeat your question?

[*English*]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Yes, I'm sorry. I was just talking about the basic income in Quebec, that it took four years and there are many factors that have already been cleared out in Quebec. Here, we have to deal with all those factors from the beginning, and we really have a very short timeline. We're hoping it's less time, no more than 12 months.

Do you have ideas or thoughts for us on how we can ensure, as legislators, that this takes no more than 12 months?

• (1725)

The Chair: Mr. Prévost, give a short answer, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Prévost: I'm going to don my political scientist's cap to talk about public policy.

In terms of methodology, like Quebec, a few provinces have programs. I would tend to have a quick meeting to compare the existing program statements and the different parameters that apply. Once this first meeting is done, it would be very realistic to take stock of the situation, unless that's already been done. I am not sure what's been done in Canada in that respect.

Based on that meeting, which could be held quickly, it would be easy to determine key parameters to be included in the final version of the bill to accompany the transfers to the provinces. The check could certainly be sent directly, and the terms would need to be explored. After all, we're in the digital age and bank transfers are becoming more common. However, to understand what's going into our bank account, we need to know the parameters, and these parameters require intergovernmental coordination. Why not start with what's already been done and taken several years to negotiate?

As I said earlier, Quebecers are allowed to keep up to \$500,000 in assets. Perhaps that's not enough, maybe it's too much, but we must at least agree on a value that will be the same for everyone, even if it means updating it based on other parameters, such as the cost of living. As we discussed earlier, the cost of living isn't the same in Nunavut as it is in southern Ontario or Quebec. We would need to have something that makes sense.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Prévost.

[English]

Thank you, Ms. Zarrillo.

We go to Ms. Ferreri for five minutes, please.

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

Thank you to all of our witnesses for being here today. I appreciate your time and insight.

If I may, I'll start with Ms. Wood. Thank you for your testimony.

As a member of the opposition, I really want to make sure that we don't repeat some of the same mistakes that we have seen happen in other programs that have been rolled out. We want to make sure everything is done correctly.

The Auditor General's report has just come out. One thing in particular is around housing. The report says that CMHC has "spent about \$4.5 billion and committed about \$9 billion but did not know who was benefiting from its [work]."

As well, when we look at food security, which you've been sharing so much about, the Auditor General's report has said that "the government had not developed a national emergency preparedness and response plan that considered a crisis affecting the entire food system and Canadians' food security." It also stated, "According to a May 2020 study by Statistics Canada, food insecurity among Canadians rose" to almost 15%. We know food bank usage is up to the highest it's ever been in history.

My question for you with this bill is, what do you see that will make sure that this program—this bill—doesn't see the same lack of accountability or proper implementation for getting the funding to the people who need it most?

Ms. Karen Wood: Can I refer this to my partner, Matthew Maynard?

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: You certainly may.

Ms. Karen Wood: Thank you.

Mr. Matthew Maynard (Community Connector, The Local Community Food Centre): Hi. I'm Matthew Maynard. I'm with The Local Community Food Centre in Stratford.

One thing I would suggest is that if it is done and co-designed with lived experience, that brings a different focus to the legislation and to the regulation. It will also bring a different energy, because those who are speaking from those lived experiences are going to be looking at, "How do I achieve the dignity and the support that is needed? It's not that I need to benefit more than anyone else across the country, but I do need to be able to thrive."

I think in that way it doesn't matter which side of the House you're on. It means that you're bringing into the conversation around regulation those who are going to be impacted. As we've heard from other witnesses, those organizations will also be there to support, regardless of which side of the House it's on, and to make the accountability so that individuals can experience dignity.

I guess I would make one other comment, as you brought up the food security issue. We know that at an individual level, those with disabilities have to find solutions day to day. That can mean going to a food bank that is empty. It can mean taking advantage of a food program that is available through a community centre or a church.

If the solutions can be at both the neighbourhood and the community levels, as well as at the provincial level and the federal level, that's how it can be done quickly and with the accountability that you're looking for.

• (1730)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you so much. I appreciate that feedback greatly.

I guess the question, then, is this. We often hear "Nothing about us without us". Do you feel that this has been done effectively in this bill, that there's been enough consultation with those with lived experience and those with living experience?

That's for Matthew.

Mr. Matthew Maynard: Thank you.

We were able to experience that with our own MP. As Karen mentioned in her presentation, we were able, from the beginning, to bring our concern to our MP, to have our MP hear us, to have our MP bring that to the floor of the Commons. I think there is that possibility, then.

But it takes commitment. It will take commitment from our MPs and from our municipal councils to make it a reality so that it truly does become the benefit. In some ways, I would say at the local level we very much experienced it. To me, that makes it a possibility throughout the country.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you.

I just want to say that's a shout-out to John Nater. He's their MP. I just want to have that on the record, because he's a great guy.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Ferreri.

Now to close out this round we have Mr. Kusmierczyk for five minutes.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Windsor—Tecumseh, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a question for Mr. Lupien. I've heard your colleague beautifully describe the need to pass Bill C-22 through this committee and through the House, without amendment, as quickly as possible. He described it as a beautiful gift to persons with disabilities in Canada. I thought that was a beautiful statement to make.

We've just seen a release signed by a number of Quebec organizations, including your own, that supports persons with disabilities and again calls on the House of Commons to pass Bill C-22 without delay. Perhaps you can talk a little bit about the urgency to pass Bill C-22 in this committee and in the House. Why is that so important?

Can you also talk a little bit about the willingness of your organization to participate in the process, that regulatory process, that co-creation of Bill C-22, and, again, talk about what that would look like?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Lupien: The cost of living is much higher for a person with disabilities, and they don't earn as much income. Even if they receive a disability pension of \$800 a month, they need to come up with the rest. The guaranteed income supplement doesn't increase their income that much. Those who are on welfare, on the other hand, see a difference, because they get \$1,300 more.

It's no better if you are in a couple. I didn't qualify for welfare, which forced me to apply for disability and live on only \$800 a month. Now I've used up all my registered retirement savings plan money and I'm at the end of my rope. We don't even know how we're going to live together as a couple, because unless we live alone, we can't make ends meet. We've been going to food banks for two years because we have no choice: we don't make enough money.

Something should have been done long ago for people with disabilities to give them a much higher guaranteed income. Anyway, we're facing an emergency across the country, no matter where people live. The cost of living may vary from one place to another, but we have people in trouble everywhere. The sooner we lift people with disabilities out of poverty, the better off we will be.

As another witness said at the beginning of the meeting, sometimes I'm a little ashamed to be Canadian. People with disabilities, some of whom have become disabled over time, are belittled. We're not really part of society anymore, because we can't afford to go

out, we can't afford luxuries or anything. That means we can't go to restaurants with our friends, because we can't afford it. It means some things are out of reach.

When people with disabilities retire in Quebec, 32% of their disability pension is clawed back. We experienced that, so my pension will be cut down. Couldn't we be allowed to keep that pension when we retire? Again, the cost of living won't be going down for me. As a person with a disability, I'm in a manual wheelchair and I have to buy gloves to be able to handle it better. Those gloves cost \$50 or \$60 a pair, and they don't last for 100 years. That's an example of things that we have to buy and that involve additional costs. Whatever disability we have, we always face other costs and, for us, those costs are always much higher than normal.

The main reason this is important is that it will help people with disabilities in Quebec and across Canada to get their heads above water. We're living in poverty across Canada.

• (1735)

[*English*]

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: How much time do I have, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You have 15 seconds.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Okay, I have a quick question.

The Chair: And make it a quick answer.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: This is a question for Mr. Adair.

I know my colleague raised a question about accountability. It is written in this legislation that it will be reviewed by Parliament three years post-implementation and five years after that. Can you speak about the adequacy of those accountability measures that are built into the legislation, the review and accountability measures that are built into Bill C-22?

Mr. William Adair: I find it satisfactory.

I would add another component, too: How do we know this is making a difference? What difference is it making? What's the impact of providing the Canada disability benefit? It's not just the impact for people who are lifted out of poverty. What difference has it made for people living in Canada, for our country, for our nation, in terms of the untapped potential, work contributions, and talents that will come forward? People will be able to participate in community activities and make our country even stronger.

We need an evaluation component to look at the impact of this benefit not just for the people but also for our whole country.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Adair and Mr. Kusmierczyk.

This concludes the first round. We'll suspend for a couple of moments while the witnesses for the second round are cleared.

Thank you to all the witnesses who appeared in the first hour. Thank you for your time.

My apologies, Mr. Lupien, but you did get an answer in during the last questions.

• (1735) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1745)

The Chair: Welcome back, committee members. We'll resume the study on Bill C-22.

To assist the interpreters in their work, I would kindly remind all members and witnesses appearing today to introduce themselves when speaking, and to speak slowly.

I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses, especially those appearing virtually. You may speak in the official language of your choice. Interpretation services are available for the meeting. You can choose either French or English by choosing the icon at the bottom of your screen. Please wait until I recognize you before speaking.

For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon. Remember to activate your mike when you're speaking and to silence it whenever you've concluded.

All comments must be addressed through the chair. I would remind all members and those appearing virtually that if there is a disruption in interpretation services, please get my attention. We'll suspend while it's corrected. For the benefit of our translators, please speak slowly so that they can follow the process. If there is a sound quality breakdown from those appearing virtually, then I will not be able to recognize you.

For the second hour, in the committee room we have Rosemarie Hemmelgarn, the parent of a disabled individual; and Michael J. Prince, Lansdowne professor of social policy in the faculty of human and social development at the University of Victoria, appearing virtually. Both are appearing as individuals. We also have Krista Carr, who is appearing as executive vice-president of Inclusion Canada.

I would ask those presenting to respect the five minutes for opening comments so that our committee members will have the chance to question you.

We'll start with Ms. Hemmelgarn for five minutes, please.

Ms. Rosemarie Hemmelgarn (As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

My name is Rosemarie Hemmelgarn. I live in St. Walburg, Saskatchewan. I am a retired office administrator, but more importantly, I am a wife and mother of three beautiful daughters, two having an intellectual disability.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak on behalf of our family and other parents of disabled persons.

Our family's vision for our disabled daughters is a lifetime of inclusion in all aspects of life. Examples include education, owning their own home, being employed and involved in community, having valuable relationships and friendships, financial security, trans-

portation, access to health care and being valued and participating members of society. Essentially, it's the same life as their older sister, a life they can look back on and know that it was worth living.

What follows is the reality I have experienced being a parent of disabled persons in Saskatchewan.

First is advocating. I am a full-time advocate for my daughters. I have had to advocate ridiculously hard for their supports as preschoolers, in the education system, and now in the social services system through SAID and CLSD.

The system is making it so hard to get supports that it seems to me they're hoping you'll just give up. Documents are lengthy, cumbersome and repetitious. Policies aren't flexible. Programs are complicated to access. If you don't have an advocate, you will be at a disadvantage and more than likely won't get any support until you are in crisis.

We as parents are tired physically and mentally. We are forever caregivers. Many are scared to speak up because they might lose supports.

Second is meeting criteria: assessments, testing and medical. I have had to watch my daughters go through numerous humiliating psych-ed assessments so that they could qualify for funding to get supports. We've had to share what I refer to as our "dirty laundry" over and over again to remind us of how much we cannot do instead of focusing on what we can do.

Third are the effects on the entire family. Our entire family is affected daily by having disabled persons in it. They are my responsibility for the rest of my life. Relationships between husband and wife and all siblings are tested. I worry about who will take over once I'm gone.

Fourth is financial security. Families are expected to risk their current and future financial security to care for their disabled loved ones. Adult siblings are expected to take on added responsibilities. The income support disabled persons are currently receiving is already inadequate, and financial support is being stretched. Disability support amounts haven't risen with inflation and are lagging behind. Disabled persons should be able to save money and receive an inheritance or gifted money without having their benefit reduced.

Fifth is being an employed disabled person and having their provincial disability benefit clawed back—for example, SAID in Saskatchewan. My daughter is employed, and she can only keep \$6,000 per year of her employment income. After the \$6,000 exemption, she loses a dollar from her provincial disability benefit for every dollar earned through employment income. This is clearly a disincentive to work if you are disabled. To top it off, the method the Saskatchewan government uses to calculate the monthly SAID benefit and employment income benefit puts her at risk of getting cut off SAID and having to reapply, and results in her income being unevenly distributed monthly. Saskatchewan Social Services expects employed SAID clients to budget their income.

I'll just leave it at that.

This is my recommendation: Pass the Bill C-22 legislation immediately. Work on the regulations and framework after legislation. Disability organizations, disabled individuals and family members expect to be at the table in the regulation planning.

- (1750)

The CDB must be a generous supplement in addition to provincial benefits. The CDB cannot be clawed back and must be a supplement to enhance provincial benefits, not replace provincial disability benefits.

I want to see the federal government administer the benefit federally and not pass the CDB funding on to the provincial governments to administer. The CDB must be fair, equitable and easy to access with no red tape, and have no barriers for being employed.

In closing, I'm going to pray that Bill C-22 gets passed in legislation immediately, and that the regulations are developed later, in conjunction with the disability community. For a disabled person, it would be the most historic time in history to see Bill C-22 passed and have disabled persons removed from poverty. Even more historic would be the intention of Bill C-22 not getting lost in the future—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Mr. Chair, we're not getting the interpretation.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Chabot.

Ms. Hemmelgarn, could you repeat the last phrase?

Ms. Rosemarie Hemmelgarn: For a disabled person, it would be the most historic time in history to see Bill C-22 passed and have disabled persons removed from poverty. Even more historic would be the intention of Bill C-22 not getting lost in the future.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Hemmelgarn, for your presentation.

We go to Mr. Prince for five minutes.

Mr. Michael J. Prince (Lansdowne Professor of Social Policy, Faculty of Human and Social Development, University of Victoria, As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to the committee today. You have my submission. It's entitled "Improving Bill C-22 in a Prompt and Principled Manner".

My remarks will focus on two topics: the preamble to the bill and the continuing role of this parliamentary committee as you move forward.

As it is, the preamble in the draft bill does several important things. It identifies the intended target population group, the working-age persons with disabilities. It remarks briefly on some of the barriers faced by people living with disabilities in this country. It outlines the relevant policy context of international, constitutional and federal legislative measures in place. It commits to the principle of "nothing without us", the involvement of the disability community and individuals and families in the policy and program design process. It recognizes the essential role of provinces and territories in delivering and in managing the multitude of interactions between programs and families, and between federal programs and provincial and territorial programs.

As you know, Bill C-22 does not contain a section on guiding principles. However, there are some included in the preamble and in other parts of the bill. Nonetheless, certain important principles and values are either absent or unclear as contained in the current preamble. These uncertainties and lack of clarity include the intersectional nature of people's lives, the concept of a disability, the principle of the inherent dignity of all people, the concept of an adequate standard of living, and the question of whether "nothing without us" means that persons with disabilities must be involved in the making of regulations and in the evaluation of program delivery and results.

I would suggest, as is listed in my submission to you today, that the bill requires a limited number of modest changes to strengthen the bill to better reflect public values and the parliamentary intentions. These are listed in my submission. I'm happy to talk about them in the question and answer period. What I'd just like to say at this point is that most of these recommended additions and the textual changes are familiar. They already exist in the Accessible Canada Act, in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, or in federal regulatory management policies at Treasury Board.

Recommendations like the ones I am suggesting enable you as parliamentarians to clarify and bolster the underlying values and principles of this much-needed legislative initiative. These recommendations also could be thought of as helping to set the table for this committee's ongoing role.

For decades, parliamentary committees in Canada provided an essential place for the dialogue and the advancement of the status of persons with disabilities and their families. I have been appearing before this committee since 1994. I'm glad to be here yet again, after a span of 10 governments, to continue to advance the rights and dignity of Canadians with disabilities.

I see three important roles for you going forward, Mr. Chair. One is to examine closely the implementation of “nothing without us” as a principle, as carried out by Employment and Social Development Canada and the department's actions, to make sure it both recognizes and proactively supports the ongoing engagement of the disability community during the regulatory process.

The second role is to consider the administration and the delivery mechanisms of the benefit to ensure that they are carried out in accordance with the principles that all persons have barrier-free access to the application processes of income programs, and that all persons must be treated with dignity regardless of their disabilities.

The third role I see for your committee going forward is to monitor the progress of this benefit's effects in relation to poverty reduction targets and the Poverty Reduction Act, to look at and to consider that we see a 50% reduction in the poverty rate among working-age persons with disabilities, as it was measured in 2015, so to have that cut in half by 2030. These are noble goals.

• (1755)

I would just like to add that in light of that, you may wish to look at clause 12 of Bill C-22, regarding the parliamentary review cycle. As it stands, the bill suggests a review after three years of the bill's being enacted and put into place, and then subsequent reviews every five years thereafter.

I would suggest, perhaps, cycling it more frequently so that you review the bill one or two years after it's been enacted and you continue to review it every three years rather than every five years. That will enable the Canadian disability community to be assured that this will not be put off for several years for review and consideration, that we will learn a lot in the implementation in the first two or three years, and that flexibility and learning will be there and possible. It will allow this committee to do its job of thoughtful scrutiny and upholding accountability for the delivery of this bill, so that it makes a difference in the lives of people across the country.

Thank you very much.

• (1800)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Prince.

Now we go to Ms. Carr for five minutes.

Ms. Krista Carr (Executive Vice-President, Inclusion Canada): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and the rest of the committee, for the opportunity to appear before you today to speak about Bill C-22.

I'm joining you today from Victoria, B.C., the traditional territory of the Lekwungen, Songhees and Esquimalt peoples.

I'm very happy to be part of this critical discussion and the advancement of this foundational legislation to create Canada's first ever national disability benefit.

The organization I represent, Inclusion Canada, was founded over 60 years ago. We are a national federation of 13 provincial/territorial member associations, over 300 local associations and more than 40,000 members across the country supporting people with an intellectual disability and their families.

Financial security for individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families has been a priority issue for our organization for many years. The creation of a Canada disability benefit has been a long time coming, but we're happy we are here now.

We need to move quickly to pass this framework legislation, get the regulations developed and get this benefit into the hands of people with disabilities. The people we support every day and many others with disabilities simply cannot wait.

Bill C-22 is a historic opportunity to address the income security of people with disabilities in Canada. It is important to get it right. Past governments have prioritized the reduction of poverty for seniors and children, with old age security and the Canada child benefit. It is well overdue that our government prioritizes the reduction of poverty for working-age people with disabilities with the Canada disability benefit.

Canadians with disabilities and their families face staggering rates of poverty that are inexcusable in a country like Canada. In Canada 22% of people have a disability, with more than 40% of those living in poverty. When we pull back the layers on this data and specifically look at people with intellectual disabilities, the rates are far worse, in that 73% of working-age adults with an intellectual disability who live outside their family home live in poverty, as compared with 23% of those in the same age cohorts among the general population. This is truly unacceptable.

With inflation at its highest level in decades, people with disabilities are falling deeper and deeper into poverty. Unfortunately, in Canada poverty is the most likely outcome for someone with a disability. People are choosing between paying their rent and buying their food. They're taking risks with their health and safety. They're unable to access adequate health care and personal support. Pervasive ableism, discrimination and legislated poverty are very real issues that people with disabilities battle every day. They can't get ahead and they remain far below the poverty line.

There are gaping holes in Canada's social safety net. The Canada disability benefit will begin to close some of those gaps. Bill C-22 sends a clear message to people with disabilities that this country will no longer allow them to struggle to live a life with dignity. How we treat people with disabilities in our society reflects our values as a nation, and we have an opportunity to do better.

We know that Bill C-22 is framework legislation that will enshrine the benefit in law. I know that some have suggested that Bill C-22 should contain more details regarding the design of the benefit and that it should be amended. Furthermore, legislators might be tempted to make amendments to clarify more technical elements of the benefit.

Although I clearly understand the motivations behind this, we do not think it is the best course of action. Indeed, some of these elements are extremely technical, and it is likely that the discussion on these elements in committee would greatly slow down the adoption of Bill C-22.

With all due respect to the parliamentarians on this committee and beyond, in the spirit of “nothing without us”, we feel really strongly that it is persons with disabilities, their families and representative organizations who should be working arm in arm with government to design this benefit through the regulatory process.

Our view is that we have an opportunity before us now to get this foundational legislation enacted into law. Getting this bill passed as quickly as possible will allow government to start the formal process of negotiating with provinces and territories on how the benefit will interact with other provincial/territorial supports, which we know is a very complex system in this country.

My final plea to you as members of this committee is that if you truly want to make a historic impact on the lives of people with disabilities in this country, and I know you all do, you will do everything in your power to ensure that this bill passes as quickly as possible so that we can get on to the design work, the negotiations with the PTs, and get this benefit into the hands of people who desperately need it.

No one in Canada should have to live a life in poverty, especially as a result of having a disability. Let's please get this done.

• (1805)

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Carr.

We'll now open the floor for questions, beginning with Mrs. Falk for six minutes.

Mrs. Falk, you have the floor.

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

I'd like to thank our witnesses for coming today.

Rosemarie, I particularly want to thank you for travelling as far as you have, which is from my neck of the woods. Thank you so much for that. I also want to thank you for the full-time lifetime advocacy that you have chosen to do on behalf of your daughters. I know it's not a small feat to cut through the red tape and the barriers that are placed at every level of government; it doesn't matter where. It's quite the trek to go through.

We know this legislation gives the government the authority to create a benefit for persons with disabilities, but in our opinion, it doesn't give particular assurances. There is no indication of who would be eligible, what the benefit amount would be, or how it would be determined. There is no implementation date or any other detail at all.

I'm just wondering what you, as an advocate and as a mother, think the eligibility parameters should be.

Ms. Rosemarie Hemmelgarn: I've been thinking about that. One of the thoughts that I came up with would be that if you were

able to qualify for the Canada disability benefit, that would be one way of qualifying. There may be others, but I'm sure that members who would be in the regulation phase would have other ideas around other areas that might qualify. However, I think the Canada disability benefit would be a good start.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Okay. Thank you.

Ms. Carr, I am just wondering if your organization, Inclusion Canada, has been guaranteed to be at the table during the development of the regulations.

Ms. Krista Carr: I don't think any particular organization has been given any specific guarantees. However, what I would say is that we definitely have gotten a very firm commitment—many of us as organizations and individuals with disabilities—that we will be very much at the table with the government in the creation of the regulations.

If I can use the creation of the disability inclusion action plan or the COVID response to people with disabilities as examples, the current minister, Minister Qualtrough, very much made sure that nothing went forward without consulting with our organizations. That included asking us whether we thought framework legislation should be the way forward and then working out the regulations together, or doing all the work up front and trying to come back with a bill that's “fully cooked”.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Okay. Thank you, Ms. Carr.

I guess I just have some hesitations. In my experience, when I look at consultations with provinces with regard to other pieces of legislation, I haven't seen that happen, and the provinces haven't had that either. I just really hope that the government isn't misleading disability organizations and persons with disabilities, because it is so critical that we get this right. I just really want to make sure, especially when we have advocates like yourself and Rosemarie, who have been at the table now. I'm just hoping that continues afterwards.

Bill C-22 has the stated intent “to support the financial security of persons with disabilities”, but the overall driving force of conversations around this bill is inclusion and the need to break down economic and social barriers that are limiting full and equal participation within society.

The Quebec college of physicians recently recommended to the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying that it would be appropriate to expand access to MAID to infants up to the age of one who are born with severe or grave syndromes. This recommendation is not only unethical but also flies in the face of the work that we are trying to do here today.

I'd like to take this opportunity to move the following motion:

That the Committee report to the House that it is of the opinion that it rejects the Quebec College of Physicians assertion on October 7, 2022, that the expansion of medical assistance in dying (MAID) is appropriate for infants up to age one who are born with severe and grave syndromes.

I know that we're all very eager to get back to our panellists. I hope that my colleagues around this table would be prepared to support this motion fully, reinforcing this important message that all Canadians, no matter their ability, should be able to fully participate in society and that our collective goal is to remove existing barriers.

• (1810)

The Chair: Thank you to the witnesses participating in this committee.

A committee member has made a motion. The motion is in order, so I'm opening the floor to discussion on the motion that's been moved.

Is there discussion?

Go ahead, Mrs. Falk.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: As I said, I hope that we can pass this really quickly and move on with our witnesses.

I think this reaffirms their value and that they are important to society. It helps with the work that we are doing here today.

The Chair: Go ahead, Madame Chabot.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Mr. Chair, I understand that you consider this motion to be in order. I find it to be out of order. I feel sorry for our witnesses, by the way.

This motion is about one group, but it could have been any group, in connection with the issue of medical assistance in dying, which is not at all the subject of our study. Fortunately, we have a joint committee currently working on what to do next on the issue of medical assistance in dying.

Questions on that subject should be directed to the House or to that joint committee.

Having said that, I will vote against this motion.

[*English*]

The Chair: Go ahead, Mrs. Falk.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Thank you, Chair.

I have to disagree with Madame Chabot. The Minister for Children and Families answers to this committee. Minister Qualtrough answers to this committee. We have heard time and time again in the short study that we have done so far on Bill C-22 that we have people with disabilities choosing to end their lives not because they want to, but because they can't afford to eat or shelter themselves.

I think it is imperative that we stand with the community and reaffirm their value to Canada.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Falk.

Madame Chabot, do you still have your hand up?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Mr. Chair, the whole debate around the concept of medical assistance in dying and the right, or non-right, according to some, to request it is extremely important. It's an issue on our minds in the House of Commons and it's currently being

studied by a thorough joint committee, which is hearing witnesses and should be allowed to complete its study. You're either for it or against it, but I feel that's a debate for all parliamentarians.

I'm not judging my colleague's reasons for moving this motion, but I do feel that this committee is not the place to debate this important societal issue. This is not the place to pass a motion before the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying completes its work and before parliamentarians have made their decision.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to request a recorded division.

• (1815)

[*English*]

The Chair: We'll hear Mrs. Falk and then Ms. Zarrillo on the motion.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Thank you, Chair.

I want to add that this would reaffirm Minister Qualtrough's statement that was recorded in the media. She thought it was appalling that this was suggested. I think this is a great opportunity for our committee to reaffirm that.

The Chair: We'll hear Ms. Zarrillo on the motion.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I apologize to the witnesses for this.

I want to follow up on something that Madame Chabot said, which is that there is an opportunity to bring this to the House and have a wider discussion. I think many were horrified to see some of that testimony and were upset.

To the mover's point and to Madame Chabot's point, let's bring this to the House of Commons. If that's what we need to do, then let's do it that way. This is a very important topic that has wider impacts than what's happening here at this committee.

We could then get back to our testimony today. We have a very short window.

The Chair: Mrs. Falk, did you have anything to add?

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Chair, can you call a vote?

The Chair: Well, the floor is open, Mrs. Falk. You moved a motion, and it is debatable until nobody wants to speak.

Go ahead, Mr. Long.

Mr. Wayne Long: Thank you, Chair.

Although I understand the intent of the motion, I just feel.... We have a committee that's studying MAID now, and I just feel it's outside of the scope, so we can't support that.

The Chair: Seeing no further discussion, I will call for a vote on the motion that was moved by Mrs. Falk.

(Motion negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

The Chair: The motion has been defeated.

We will return to the witnesses. We will begin with Mr. Van Bynen for six minutes.

Mr. Van Bynen, you have the floor.

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to express my appreciation to the many witnesses we've seen over the course of this review, particularly for the insights that are being brought to us for our consideration and discussion. We've had a number of people appear as witnesses from many organizations representing persons with disabilities. One individual, for example, indicated that he had consulted with 37 groups.

It is intended that we co-create broadly with people with disabilities to establish the framework. I'm wondering if Ms. Carr could tell me the number of members that Inclusion Canada represents and in what capacity they would like to contribute to that process.

Ms. Krista Carr: Thank you very much for the question.

We're a national federation. We have 13 provincial and territorial associations with over 300 locals and more than 40,000 individual members across the country, so it's certainly a nationally broad spectrum of people.

We have conducted an extensive consultation within our own federation on this benefit, and we were part of a project funded through ESDC whereby a whole bunch of national disability organizations were tasked with carrying out consultations across the country on the four pillars of the disability inclusion action plan, of which this was one. We led those consultations, so we certainly have heard from Canadians across the country.

There are a number of people who would want to be at the table, for all kinds of obvious reasons. I couldn't give you an exact, specific number, but people are saying that they want to have a say in the design of this benefit and what that looks like, for everything from eligibility criteria to amounts, etc. People very much want to have a say in the design of the benefit.

• (1820)

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: Thank you.

In the preamble of the bill, on "social exclusion", is social exclusion more likely for those with disabilities who live in poverty than those without disabilities? In your opinion, how should the Canadian disability benefit be designed to promote social inclusion for persons with disabilities? For example, does the bill as it's currently designed exclude anyone who should be included? Conversely, do you think the bill could potentially include too broad a range of individuals?

Ms. Krista Carr: The fact that the bill includes people with disabilities.... It talks about people of working age with disabilities, so I do believe this is the right focus for the bill. At the end of the day, I really do.

We have the Canada child disability benefit. Is it adequate? Should it be increased? Absolutely. We have the GIS: Is it adequate or should it be increased? Of course it should be. But the group that is the most impoverished among persons with disabilities is working-age Canadians. That's the only group for which we do not have a supplemental program, so I would certainly support that.

As far as the legislation itself goes, the framework legislation, at the end of the day it's about persons with disabilities. I hope that will grow up to include the broadest possible definition of "disability". That's why it's so critically important for us to be at the table and fighting for those pieces when we get to the regulatory process.

I hope that answers your question.

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: It does. Thank you very much.

My next question is for Mr. Prince.

When testifying before the committee on October 26, an official from Employment and Social Development Canada told the committee that most of the parameters of the benefit will need to be fixed in regulations because the approach "recognizes disability as an evolving social construct" and a regulatory approach "will allow for more flexibility as our understanding of disability evolves."

As a professor and as a researcher on these issues, what do you think disability as an "evolving social construct" means in the specific context of Bill C-22? Do you agree that an evolving understanding of disability should be reflected in the legislation, and if so, how should that be done?

Mr. Michael J. Prince: Thank you for the question.

You will see that in my submission I recommend some additional language in the preamble that says we recognize "that disability is an evolving concept that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person's full and equal participation in society." That language is a shortened version of both what you will find in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and a much longer definition in the Accessible Canada Act.

For the purposes of this framework bill, I thought there should be at least some brief reference to the notion of disability, but without burdening the legislation by trying to provide a long laundry list of what all of the conditions or impairments or dimensions are. Society's understanding of mental health and of socio-psychological disabilities has evolved greatly over the last generation, as has the concept of episodic disabilities, a term that hardly any of us used 10 or 15 years ago, the idea that people live with fluctuating and cyclical conditions. Our programs have done a very bad job historically of acknowledging something that's not a physical, permanent and obvious impairment. The public policies of our society have to evolve to catch up with the true lived experience of young girls and boys and adults, men and women, whoever.

I'm suggesting to you that a friendly amendment could provide some additional language about disability that could be included in the preamble, but that should be left to the regulations and the co-discussions with disability groups.

Perhaps I could just speak briefly to the notion of disability on the intergovernmental side, because this is going to be an income supplement. It's going to be a supplement to provincial programs and federal programs that currently exist. As you all know, a great variety of definitions of disabilities currently exist. If this supplement is going to work quickly and effectively as an addition to those existing programs, it's going to have to take a fairly generous and flexible and responsive approach to what disability is, basically mirroring—

• (1825)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Prince.

Thank you, Mr. Van Bynen. We've gone over the time.

[*Translation*]

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

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

I also like to thank the witnesses.

I'm going to go back to the concept of disability.

Mr. Prince, you're absolutely right: The definitions in French and English are not the same.

I will use what we experienced in Quebec as an example: 16% of the people who could have been eligible for the one-time disability payment, which was up to \$600, didn't apply because of the definition.

You said that the definition needed to be made clearer through the shared regulations. Did I understand you correctly, or do you instead feel that parliamentarians should clarify the definition in the wording of the bill?

[*English*]

Mr. Michael J. Prince: Thank you for your question.

I wouldn't suggest that parliamentarians try to solve this question in the draft bill. As Ms. Carr warned us, if one tried to get into the technical details at this stage of a bill in a committee, it would unduly delay it and completely go against this great desire to perhaps tweak the bill but pass the bill fairly quickly.

Where the discussion on eligibility and harmonizing definitions of disability will happen is both with respect to the regulations and, quite honestly, with respect to the intergovernmental agreements that will have to be negotiated and reached with the minister. Once the bill becomes law, she will have the legal authority to enter into formal agreements with provincial governments and territorial governments and departments. It's there where the creativity will have to be.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Thank you.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael J. Prince: Just quickly, I have one last point.

I would hope that not only the federal departments enable nothing without us, but that in the provincial realm, provincial governments provide equal opportunities for disability groups in their own jurisdictions to be involved somehow, creatively, in what traditionally are closed intergovernmental discussions.

There needs to be greater transparency and opportunity for disability groups to have a voice, not just with their local MLAs or MPs, but with both orders of government, to ensure that we start to try to dovetail these definitions.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Mr. Prince, I'd like to clarify your comments.

You said that in Bill C-22, some guidelines were unclear, including the principle that nothing should be done without the involvement of people with disabilities. In your view, there is merit in clarifying these aspects, particularly with respect to the income threshold for the Canada disability benefit. That's our dilemma, and the testimony is important.

Should we clarify this upfront or should we wait to clarify all these things in the regulations?

[*English*]

Mr. Michael J. Prince: Again thank you for the question.

I think this speaks to the issue of adequacy or the notion of what a floor or a guaranteed supplement would look like if it's modelled after the seniors benefit of the GIS. I'll embellish my answer to your question. I would think that this income supplement has to be GIS-plus.

The current monthly payment this fall for a single person on GIS is \$1,023. I think the Canada disability supplement has to be at least that. It needs to be, like the GIS, indexed quarterly to the cost of living. It needs to be non-taxable as a benefit and it needs to have an earnings exemption associated with it that is far more generous than with the GIS.

When the GIS was first introduced, there was a tremendously high clawback. The assumption in the 1960s and 1970s was that seniors weren't going to work. You retired, you got your pension and that was it. We now know. Over the years, the earnings exemptions attached to OAS and GIS have gone up to acknowledge that people continue to work even if they're eligible for this benefit. It's a very modest earnings exemption.

With this Canada disability benefit, there's an opportunity to set a very generous earnings exemption. Again, not everybody with a disability is going to earn a lot or work, but we need to send a signal that we are not labelling the recipients of this benefit as unemployable or having, by definition, work incapacity. We have to acknowledge that there's a desire and an aspiration by many—particularly younger people with disabilities. There's a generational shift here in aspirations for work. We need to support that.

Again, I think these regulations could be done within six to eight months with the full involvement of the disability community. If you look at the list of what has to be done in regulations under this bill, from (a) down to (q), or however far into the alphabet it goes, a lot of those could be done pretty readily. I'm confident that payments to Canadians could be possible at the end of 2023 or very early in 2024—in the next fiscal year.

• (1830)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Would you like us to propose an amendment—

[*English*]

The Chair: Madame Chabot, time is up.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Chabot.

We'll go to Ms. Zarrillo for six minutes to conclude.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to ask my questions of Ms. Hemmelgarn.

I just want to say how powerful your testimony was today. You speak for yourself and your family, but you also speak for many families who have come to speak to me over the years. I want you to know that you're not alone, but I see the fight and I see the exhaustion, and it shouldn't have to be this way for you. I just appreciate so much your coming today.

My question is around the fact that, as legislators, this is the opportunity for us to ensure, as you said, rights for your daughters, yet you worry about who will take over, such as adult siblings. I've had residents come to speak to me who were in their sixties and who have sisters and brothers who are still supporting each other. You also spoke about assets. One had a trust that was set up from their parent before their parent passed. The person now has to go into assisted living, and they have to pay capital gains on their condominium that was bought by a trust. There are so many things. It was so powerful, what you said today.

I feel the pressure of making sure that your daughters and other people's kids have the income support that they need throughout their life. I'm worried. To me, having it all in regulation is almost like an untenable risk right now, when the stakes are so high, to say that we don't know what the income is going to be, that we don't know who is going to get it, and that we don't know when they're going to get it.

My question for you is around that untenable risk of it ending up not being enough to lift them out of poverty. Do you have any words for me as a parent, as a mom to a mom, about how I can get over that fact that I feel like I need to do something to protect the adequate income in this legislation rather than just in regulations? How can I get over that to just let the chips fall?

Ms. Rosemarie Hemmelgarn: There are a lot of parameters that could be taken into consideration. There are things that I listed, like inheritance or if you're gifted money. Right now, if my daughters are gifted money, they have to report that money to SAID, and their benefit gets reduced. This is gifted money.

I just feel that, if I were to get gifted money, or if I were to give you gifted money, there wouldn't be a problem, so why should there be a problem for a disabled person? It's discriminatory. In so many different ways, they are discriminated against just for being dis-

abled. For instance, you are limited in how much you can have in your savings account and chequing account. Why should a disabled person have a limitation for the amount of money they can have in their savings account or chequing account? Nobody else has to worry about that.

My oldest daughter came with me to advocate for them at one point at social services, and when we were done, we came out of the room, and she didn't say this in front of her two sisters, but she said, "Can you believe it? I could not believe it." We had to walk into the room, and we had a glass window that we had to talk through to a person to ask if we could make an appointment to see our social worker. She said, very coldly, "You can use that phone right over there." We dialed the phone to get connected with the social services person we wanted to see, and luckily we were able to see her. We went into this little room that was no bigger than 10 feet by 10 feet, no windows, and there were four of us in there at a desk. We said what we needed to say, and we left. My oldest daughter said, "I can't believe that, the way they were treated." I said, "Welcome to your sisters' world". That's just one small example.

• (1835)

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: It's discrimination over and over again.

Ms. Rosemarie Hemmelgarn: It's over and over again. Why? Why should disabled people get treated any differently than you or me? They have so many challenges with just the way they are treated, and with the system that's supposed to be helping them. It's most discouraging.

I had to advocate with SAID and social services. They're so set on policies—policies that are not invested in the people. They are harming the people. They are not flexible, and they will not change. If you try to connect with a person, they don't answer you. They pretend you don't exist. They won't phone you back. You have to phone another person. You try to find out who made these policies. You finally find out, and it takes maybe four months to get a meeting with them. When you do get a meeting, they're just stern on their policy, which is set up to fail some clients—not all clients, but some clients. They're strict and stern, and they won't change.

It's a very hard life being a disabled person. If you don't have an advocate, you're in big trouble. Many of the social problems right now in the communities and in the cities, with the homeless or the justice system, stem from a lot of these. I worked in the education system for a while, and some of the students had problems, because they couldn't learn. It wasn't their fault; they had intellectual disabilities. I moved on several years later and I worked in the RCMP. I'd see these people trickle down into that system, and it was a culture that wasn't changing. There was nobody there to help them. It started right in the school years where they never had the supports they needed. Then they're adults, and they don't have an education. They may not have an advocate. Some of them go into the justice system, and that fails them too. With many of the people we see—the drugs, the alcohol, the mental health problems, the homeless—a lot of it stems from the beginning, having intellectual disabilities.

If you're a disabled person, it's a long, hard road, and you are at a disadvantage compared to people like you or me.

• (1840)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Hemmelgarn.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: I think that's a wonderful way to end it, the very compassionate...the understanding that we're talking about people here and discrimination over and over again.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, for letting it go a little bit longer. That's a wonderful way to end our testimonies today.

The Chair: Thank you so much to the witnesses.

Before we conclude the meeting, on Monday we will have committee business. We have some work to do. Because this is our last witness panel, I want the clerk to speak briefly and to bring to your attention the timelines we need to move to consideration of the bill.

Madam Clerk, would you briefly discuss that?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Danielle Widmer): Yes, the chair is correct. It's the fourth meeting to receive testimony from witnesses. Moving forward, we're looking for direction from the committee in terms of the timeline for clause-by-clause for Bill C-22.

I'm just going to put this into consideration in terms of the bill, and just roll it back a bit. The deadline for briefs is tonight at midnight. We have received over 100 briefs so far. Approximately 10 of them are on the website, and 90 of them are in translation right now. You will be receiving correspondence on a weekly basis. You will receive your first package of correspondence from the first week. There are a lot in translation right now, and we expect to receive them all at end of the month, by early December.

In terms of the timeline, it will be good to understand where the committee would like to go in terms of clause-by-clause dates—either today or Monday to decide the date for the clause-by-clause and the deadline for amendments. To respect the routine motions, we ask that the deadline for amendments be 48 hours before the date of clause-by-clause. It's one of those things of understanding when the committee would like to consider clause-by-clause, so we can set up some timelines for that.

The Chair: Okay. We'll need to make clear decisions today.

For clause-by-clause, could we begin it on Wednesday if we made that decision today?

The Clerk: If the committee wanted Wednesday, to have 48 hours for the amendments and deadlines, ideally, it would have to be Monday at noon at the latest for those amendments to be submitted. I'm not too sure where everyone is with drafting.

The Chair: I have Mrs. Falk, then Mrs. Gray and Madame Chabot. We are over our two hours, as well.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: When will we have all the briefs translated?

The Chair: She said the first week of December at the latest.

I have Mrs. Gray and then Madame Chabot.

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

Thank you for bringing this up.

I think now that we have some clear idea from the clerk, we need to discuss this on Monday when we're looking at the work, rather than try to come up with something on the fly here today. Let's have a more detailed discussion about this and the other work of the committee on Monday. That way, we can have time to properly go through it.

The Chair: That's why I'm raising it now. It's to get direction.

Go ahead, Madame Chabot.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: I could agree on this idea of taking time to discuss it on Monday.

One thing concerns me, though. We conducted our study on people with disabilities, for which we had scheduled four meetings. We didn't know if we were going to get the bill, but we still wanted to hear from witnesses, which we did during those four meetings. Today, the clerk tells us that the committee has received about 100 submissions, which is no small number.

Here's my wish. As all committees do with all motions under consideration, I would welcome a formal report of our study and highlight the recommendations that have been submitted. I think we need to leave a paper trail of all of this and give it to the minister, in addition to passing Bill C-22. Otherwise, all of this will go to waste.

We don't need to debate this today, but I submit it for your consideration. Is this at least the way it was intended to be done?

• (1845)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Chabot.

It was a good point that was raised. We can have this wholesome discussion at Monday's meeting on how the committee wants to proceed going forward. I just wanted to signal the timelines on the routine motions that we have to follow.

With that, seeing no further questions—and we're over time—is it the wish of the committee to adjourn?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: The committee now adjourns.

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