



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

---

# Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 070**

Monday, June 5, 2023

---

Chair: Mrs. Salma Zahid





## Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

Monday, June 5, 2023

• (1600)

[English]

**The Chair (Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.)):** I call this meeting to order. Welcome to meeting number 70 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

I will remind you that we will be meeting for three hours today.

Today, pursuant to the order of reference of Wednesday, November 16, 2022, the committee will resume consideration of Bill S-245, an act to amend the Citizenship Act, granting citizenship to certain Canadians). We will continue our clause-by-clause study of the bill.

When we left off, Mr. Kmiec had just moved an amendment from the floor, which has been distributed to the committee. The floor is open for debate.

I have two people on the speaking list, Ms. Kwan and then Mr. Redekopp.

Ms. Kwan.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Before we get into Bill S-245, I would like to first put on notice the following motion:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Committee undertake a study into the targeted exploitation scheme faced by 700 Punjabi international students in which they were unknowingly defrauded by a “ghost” immigration consultant who used inauthentic admission letters for their student visa application; that this study be comprised of two meetings; and that the study consider:

- a) how the situation was allowed to happen;
- b) why fraudulent documents were not detected until years later when the students began to apply for permanent status;
- c) the significant harm experienced by students including financial loss and distress;
- d) measures necessary to help the students to have their deportation stayed, inadmissibility on the basis of misrepresentation waived, and provide a pathway to permanent status; and
- e) that the committee also examine how to prevent similar situations from occurring in the future.

I'm putting this motion on notice, Madam Chair. I fully understand the precedence of the order is for us to finish Bill S-245, for bills to be dealt with. Then we can entertain other studies, so I've put that forward.

The other thing I want to note, Madam Chair, is that, at the end of the meeting today, I would like to move the following motion. The language is as follows—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting. You're saying that you want move it at the end of the meeting.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Yes, I just want to let folks know so that they can anticipate this.

The motion would read:

That, following news reports that international students admitted into Canada with valid study permits were issued fraudulent college acceptance letters by immigration consultants, and are now facing deportation, the committee issue a news release to condemn the actions of these fraudulent 'ghost consultants' and call on the Canada Border Services Agency to immediately stay pending deportations of affected international students, waive inadmissibility on the basis of misrepresentation and provide an alternate pathway to permanent status for those impacted, such as the Humanitarian and Compassionate application process or a broad regularization program.

I just want to let people know that it is my intention to move that motion at the end of the meeting today, assuming we can finish Bill S-245.

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

Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's nice to see the NDP waking up to this issue and basically repeating the motion that I made here. I'm confused, though. Are we studying it, or are we reporting it? It's confusing. I don't understand what the NDP is trying to do here, so that's something we're going to have to talk about. You can't do both. You have to pick one, and I'm not sure that Ms. Kwan knows which one she wants to pick.

I want to let you know I was in the GTA over the weekend. I did meet with these Indian students. I saw them at the protest that they're running near the airport in Mississauga. They're actually staying at this spot 24-7. They're sleeping there. I was—

**The Chair:** I think we're getting into.... We're dealing with Bill S-245. We are doing clause-by-clause.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Let me just finish, please.

**The Chair:** Yes, it should be to the topic, please.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** All right. That's perfect.

I also want to mention that we have over 9,000 signatures.

Madam Chair, I move that the committee proceed to the consideration of my motion, which reads:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee conduct a study into news reports that international students admitted into Canada with valid study permits were issued fraudulent college acceptance letters by immigration consultants, and are now facing deportation, and that this study undertake at least three meetings; that the committee invite the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship for one meeting along with his departmental officials to testify; that the committee invite the Minister responsible for the Canada Border Services Agency for one meeting along with his departmental officials to testify; that the committee invite affected international students and representatives from Colleges & Institutes Canada; and that the committee request that the Canada Border Services Agency temporarily suspend the deportation of affected international students until those selected as witnesses can testify before the committee.

I'd really like to get started on debate on this. I know that last time the Liberals and NDP shut it down. I would like to continue and see if we can debate this issue today. I think it's an important issue that we just aren't willing to give up. I think it's important. There are deportations that are happening very quickly, so this is an urgent issue.

I met with Mr. Lovepreet Singh, who is the next person on the list to be deported, I believe on June 13. He was very concerned with the situation and what was going to happen.

I just feel that it's very timely and very important and is something that these students—and, frankly, everybody in their community—are pushing for. They really want to see something done. I would like to move that we move to that order of business today.

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

This a non-debatable motion. Mr. Redekopp has asked to have debate on his motion. We will go to a vote.

(Motion negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** We will now resume our clause-by-clause study of Bill S-245. We have amendment CPC-5 on the floor.

The floor is open for debate. I have Ms. Rempel Garner.

• (1605)

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

In the previous amendment we debated—which was, I think, shamefully defeated—many members brought up the issue of resources and allowing access for new Canadians, in all parts of the country and in all economic circumstances, to ensure they could attend in-person citizenship ceremonies.

One area where we frequently hear from settlement service providers is rural Canada. In order to attract and retain new Canadians to rural communities, particularly where there are acute labour shortages and a great desire to attract higher levels of population.... One of the impediments to doing that is ensuring there are resources for a whole gamut of resettlement services, such as language acquisition services, understanding other government service interface points and—I would add—ensuring there are in-person citizenship ceremonies.

I also think it's not just about having access to citizenship ceremonies where new Canadians live and work, particularly in rural Canada. It's also about allowing rural Canadians writ large to participate in these ceremonies. As some of my colleagues discussed earlier, regarding the previous amendment, when members of either

Parliament or the community have the opportunity to attend with new Canadians.... Taking up the oath of citizenship actually builds a sense of community and pride.

Madam Chair, I would reference the previous work of this committee, and even of different Parliaments, on settlement services. Oftentimes, when you talk to rural service providers, they will reference the fact that having those opportunities to provide not just settlement services but also community events that draw the community together and give new Canadians a sense of community is very important to building cohesion in Canada's pluralism.

One of the stated rationales for allowing online—as opposed to in-person—citizenship is that the government doesn't have enough resources to get these done. It makes it easier for people. As I've stated in previous debate, I don't think that answer holds water if our overall objective as parliamentarians is ensuring cohesiveness and ceremonies that allow Canadians to share in our pluralism in a meaningful way. Ergo, I think that, if we accept this amendment, it would send a message to the government that they need to provide resources to ensure there is availability for rural and remote communities to have in-person citizenship ceremonies.

That's my rationale for this. I think my colleague from rural Canada probably has a thing or two to say about that, but I would just say this to the people who are watching: We just tried to put forward a motion on a matter that is very germane and material to many new Canadians in very dire straits: people who want to come to this country but are facing deportation because of fraud the government needs to address.

What's happening with this bill is this. Rather than being allowed to get through this committee in the format in which it was sent to us from the other place—the Senate.... A special motion was moved, supported by the NDP and Liberals, to expand the scope of this bill far beyond its original intent. The expectation was that what's good for the goose would not be good for the gander. If the Liberals and NDP were hoping—when they opened it up far beyond its scope—that other parliamentarians wouldn't avail themselves of the rules they set and look at other aspects of the Citizenship Act.... This is now what we are all doing.

I think this is a very important amendment. However, I support my colleague Mr. Redekopp in looking at this particular issue.

Madam Chair, I would ask that we support this amendment but also recognize this is a situation the Liberals and NDP put themselves in by the government's not tabling legislation to the effect that's in here, as well as cutting a deal with the NDP to open up the scope of the bill in a situation where they could have kept it narrow.

• (1610)

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm definitely going to support this amendment. We've talked many times, and I've spoken many times at the committee here, about the whole idea of in-person citizenship ceremonies. I hear this from constituents when I speak to them. Where I hear this isn't necessarily from people who haven't gone through it yet, because they don't necessarily know what it is or what they're missing. In particular, I hear this from people who have gone through the in-person citizenship ceremony.

They tell me things like they made sure they took time off work to be there because it was so important, or they invited family to be there, or they were excited to see the different dignitaries and the other people who are often there and to hear the important speeches that people give. Mostly, what they're excited about is to actually sit through and experience the moment of taking that oath, particularly when they're called up on the stage and get to shake the hands of the officials and get to receive their actual citizenship papers. It's just the excitement of that. That's from their perspective.

From my perspective, of course, as an MP, and all of us here I'm sure, I have had the ability to go do citizenship ceremonies. It's quite a thing to sit there and to watch the eyes and the faces of those new citizens and to see the excitement they have in their eyes. Particularly, when they're coming up on the stage, too, if I happen to be there, I'm able to shake their hands, and I often give them little Canada pins, or something like that. They're just so excited and overwhelmed.

The other interesting thing that always happens at these ceremonies is the photos. There will be many photos taken not only during the ceremony but also after the ceremony ends, particularly. Of course, the big star of the ceremony is always the RCMP officer in his red uniform. Everybody wants him or her to be in the picture. That's always a great thrill. Whoever happens to be around, whatever dignitaries or other official are there, will often be in the photos as well. There can be a lineup that lasts for quite a long time after the ceremony is over. Often, I'll stay there for an extra hour or more as people come. They want to tell their stories and to talk and to have their photos taken.

It's quite a lot of fun and very meaningful. I think that is my point. It's very meaningful to the people to go through that experience, to have those photos and to walk across that stage, often with tears in their eyes. The stories they tell are often very difficult, but those tears are mostly tears of joy that they are now here and are now citizens of Canada. It's something that, as I said, is very meaningful to them.

Contrast that with somebody who's online. I've heard this from many of my constituents as well who talk about going on a computer and how it's just not the same. You're in your house. You're trying to make it as official as you can, but the phone rings or the dog needs to be dealt with, or whatever happens, and it distracts people from the ceremony. We all know. We have all experienced Zoom meetings. A couple of my colleagues are on a Zoom meeting right now and are probably experiencing that very thing where there are other distractions. It's just not the same as the intense thrill for those of us who are here in the room and who are allowed to listen in person to what I have to say.

That is what I hear from them. Having to sit in front of a computer screen and try to make it a meaningful event is not something they're going to be telling stories about in the future: "In 2023, we all gathered around Dad's laptop, and we tried to see the RCMP officer in the back corner, but we couldn't quite see him, and we got to pretend-walk across the stage." It's just not a story that tells well, and it's not something that will have the same impact or the same memory as these people get older.

Those are the stories I hear. It doesn't matter where I go. If I'm in Saskatoon, I hear those stories. I've had the privilege of spending time in other areas—

• (1615)

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.):** I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

I just want to caution that we stay on subject and that we make sure we do not waste any more time than we've already wasted, so that we can talk about what we're here to talk about and we can pass the bill.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** What Mr. Redekopp is discussing is related to the amendment we have on the floor.

Mr. Redekopp, please continue.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

As I was saying, I've had the privilege of travelling to other communities in Canada. Just this past weekend I was in the GTA and visited people in Scarborough, Mississauga, Oakville and Brampton. There, I heard similar stories of the significance of citizenship first of all, but particularly the significance of the ceremony itself. There has been much discussion about citizenship ceremonies in Canada. There has been talk about the one-click idea. There's been talk about the lack of in-person ceremonies.

In the past there wasn't much to talk about because it always was and it was just assumed that you would go to an in-person ceremony. That's just what it was. It wasn't necessarily talked about in advance of them. Now it's talked about more...and about the desire to have the in-person ceremony.

Some will say that it's difficult to do in a rural environment. It's true. They are more difficulties sometimes and it's harder to put them on as quickly as you can. At the same time, it's no less impactful to do it. Just because it's maybe a little harder to do doesn't mean it's not something we should do.

I think that, even in the cases where you are in a more remote environment, it's incumbent upon us as elected officials and it's incumbent upon the government to actually make a way for there to be an in-person ceremony, regardless of where you are in Canada. It's so meaningful to people, I don't think it's fair to take that away and to remove the ability for them to have that.

Whether you live in the GTA or in rural Saskatchewan, I think it's important that the ability is there. As I said, the evidence from those who have talked to me about the value of the in-person ceremony would bear that out and would say the same thing. That's why it's important for us to put this in here.

The other thing I would say about this—

**The Chair:** A vote has been called in the House. The bells are ringing. I need unanimous consent to continue the meeting. We can stop it at five minutes before.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Chair:** The meeting is suspended. We will come back after the votes.

• (1615) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1710)

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

We are on clause-by-clause on Bill S-245. We have amendment CPC-5 on the floor. Seeing no one....

Go ahead, Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** I was speaking, I believe, to this.

**The Chair:** Yes, Mr. Redekopp, please continue.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you.

I was speaking when the bells started ringing.

Just to quickly reiterate, I believe that it's really important that we do our citizenship ceremonies in person. As I said when I spoke before, people have asked me for that. People have commented on how important it is to them to look back in time and remember that moment when they had their citizenship ceremony with all of the photos they have and the experience they had, shaking hands, the photos with the RCMP officer, the officials and all that. It's a very important thing to them. It is something really important that we should continue and not allow to be minimized by doing it in an on-line form, where it's just a matter of being on a Zoom call and trying to follow along. That really minimizes the significance of the citizenship oath.

I think it's—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting, Mr. Redekopp. You are repeating things, so please make sure that what you have already said is not repeated.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Yes, and you'll be happy to know that I am pretty much at the end of what I wanted to say. I just wanted to quickly summarize what it was I said. I'm trying to get my thoughts together.

I also want to mention, Madam Chair, before we move to the next clause, that we have another amendment after this one, just so that you know there is another one coming.

I'll leave it at that. Thank you.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting. The bells are ringing again.

Do I have unanimous consent to continue the meeting?

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Chair:** We do not have unanimous consent, so we will come back 10 minutes after the vote happens.

The meeting is suspended.

• (1710) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1805)

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

We are doing clause-by-clause on Bill S-245.

We have Conservative amendment 5 on the floor, and I have Mr. Maguire on the list.

Mr. Maguire, go ahead.

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm very much in favour of this amendment, this motion, Conservative number five, if you will, for the new clause. There are many reasons.

I have a very good friend who happens to be the general manager now of the Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba, Mark Humphries. Mark's a great guy. He does a lot of things. He has a band that includes most of the music teachers in southwest Manitoba. He came from England, where he played in big bands over there. He has tremendous experience in regard to a lot of different areas.

I met him a long time ago, just after he came to Canada, about seven or eight years now, maybe 10. I met him when I was a member of the legislative assembly, so it would be more than 10 years ago, Madam Chair. He's quite an entrepreneur. He has worked his way into politics as well. He's a municipal councillor in his local area of western Manitoba. As I said, he has become the general manager of the Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba, which puts on—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting, Mr. Maguire, but could you keep it on topic?

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** I'm certainly going to be there. Thank you.

This is pertinent because he has mentioned to me many times how important it was for him to get Canadian citizenship in person. He's an entrepreneur, running his own operation in western Manitoba, just to the west of Virden, in between there and the Saskatchewan border. He's hoping that many of these ceremonies can continue to be conducted at future events by the Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba.

He described getting his citizenship. I was there that day to shake his hand and give him a little Canadian flag and a pin as well. I see that Mr. Dhaliwal knows exactly what I'm talking about. The pride he took that day was exhilarating. I can still remember his smile. He and his family came through the citizenship ceremony that was done live in Brandon. He never knew when he became a Canadian citizen that he would ever be the general manager of the Provincial Exhibition in the Keystone Centre in Brandon, Manitoba. That's where its headquarters are. He's done a tremendous amount of work to rejuvenate the exhibits and the entertainment that comes from that facility, bringing in musicians and that sort of thing from all over North America. It has been a great plus. His predecessors did a good job as well. I'm not putting anyone down here. The pride Mr. Humphries has shown in having Canadian citizenship is pretty tremendous, having come from England and continuing to develop our whole area. Virtually everybody in the whole region knows him, and he's been here for just over a decade.

To show you the responsibility of that, he's been a municipal councillor, as I said. He runs his own business. He's the general manager of the Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba now. His wife is also an entrepreneur, and I know the type of operation they have on their own farm in a rural area. She also serves as a substitute teacher. This is a family that feels that education is extremely important. Their daughter is taking her Manitoba bar this month, and their son is in the latter stages of achieving his Ph.D. They know how important it has been to provide the opportunity for their children to be educated and grow up in Canada, and the pride they all felt in getting their—

• (1810)

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting, Mr. Maguire, but can you please keep your points on the topic of the amendment on the floor?

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** It's very important, Madam Chair, because—

**The Chair:** Yes, so please keep your remarks in line with the amendment.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** I'm just trying to point out, Madam Chair—and I am pointing out—how important it is and how successful this family has gone on, having received their Canadian citizenship, he has felt, in person.

He has another reason for that as well. It is because of the facility that he is now the general manager of, which is where he got his Canadian citizenship. It's what's called the “Dome Building”. It's one of the few buildings left in Canada that was built from the dominion fairs of the 1880 to 1925 period. There's only one left. There's a bit of one that hasn't been rejuvenated here in Ottawa. The other one is in Brandon. It's been fully renovated. It's a great facility for these types of programs.

Being the new general manager, he would like to see that facility used for many more in-person citizenship ceremonies. I'd like to quote what he wrote to me. He said:

As a new ambassador for this much cherished Manitoba organization, I would welcome the opportunity to have physical ceremonies return to our summer event, and indeed suggest the addition of citizenship ceremonies to the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair held in the March—

It's March of every year. It's the last week of March. It's a school break, so children could attend this, as well, because they're all out of school at that time.

Of course, the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair is only one of two fairs in Canada to get that designation of “royal”. There's the the Toronto Royal and the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair in Brandon, Manitoba.

He added, “Canada encourages and welcomes with open arms immigrants from overseas. We must return to and recognize the importance of our citizenship ceremonies.

Madam Chair, that is a pretty tremendous—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting, Mr. Maguire. I think the bells are ringing again.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Just in time.... I was wearing out.

**The Chair:** The bells are ringing. A vote has been called.

Do I have unanimous consent to proceed with the meeting?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Chair:** I'm hearing some noes, so the meeting is suspended.

• (1810) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1905)

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

We have amendment CPC-5 on the floor. I have exhausted the speakers list. We will go—

Yes, Mr. Mazier, go ahead.

**Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC):** I'd like to speak on the amendment.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, please.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Thank you.

To remind the committee, this is an amendment to new clause 1.4 amending section 24 of the act:

24(2) The Department of Citizenship and Immigration shall arrange for all oath of citizenship ceremonies to be conducted in-person, including in rural and remote communities.

Is that correct?

**The Chair:** Yes, that's what we have.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** That's very good.

I thought I'd share with the committee a story. I'm from rural Canada. Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa is my riding out of Manitoba. The riding is the size of Nova Scotia. It has over 200 communities comprised of 38 municipalities, 14 first nations and 28 Hutterite colonies. The second most-spoken language is German, not Ukrainian, as a lot of people think it would be.

In there, there's a national park. It's called Riding Mountain National Park. I first got elected in 2019, and I had personally never attended a citizenship ceremony. It was never a big thing. I was a citizen, so it didn't really matter.

In our riding, Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, Neepawa is a growing community. It has a hog processing plant there, HyLife. They immigrate Filipino people, mostly, to work at that plant. The community right now of 4,000 has expanded, and now the second language of that community is 50% Filipino. It's basically changed the whole dynamic of the community that's been there for many years.

• (1910)

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

It is now 7:10 p.m., and I think that it's important that we keep everything in context. I would caution our colleagues not to share personal stories that are not relevant to what we are talking about right now. It's 7 p.m. I think people want this bill to pass. Let's get back to talking about the amendment—

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Kayabaga. We are getting into debate.

Yes, I have reminded other members also. I'll remind Mr. Mazier to please keep his remarks relevant to the amendment we have on the floor.

Please, Mr. Mazier, go ahead.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Yes, basically I was setting the stage for why these are so important, especially to a rural community like the people I represent.

In 2019, I attended my first citizenship award ceremony. My predecessor, Robert Sopuck, hosted it. He brought a judge in from Winnipeg. It was a wonderful community, which is three hours away. The judge was there, and the oath directors were there. All the pomp and ceremony was there. Meanwhile, there were 200 people standing below the stage ready to be sworn in.

This was the first time I had ever attended anything. As I got talking to the different people, I realized that someone brought in a sister from California, a Filipino person. They came in through the U.S. side, and they came to Canada to watch them be sworn in as citizens of Canada. I have to tell you, it was one of those moments when you realize just how precious a country we have here. It was all in person. You couldn't have brought these people together... For people to come up all the way from California, for people to come in and go through the process of absolutely wanting to be Canadian and cherish that moment... I think it's something magical that we don't need to lose.

That's why I'm so much in favour of this amendment. I'm thankful that my colleagues brought this forward. We all get it. It is pretty special to be Canadian. I think we should really appreciate that and encourage people to celebrate it whenever new citizens come into this country.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Next I have Mr. Hoback.

**Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC):** Thank you, Chair.

I want to build upon that. When I did my first citizenship ceremony, I didn't think much of it until I was actually there participat-

ing in it. When you have people from different cultures standing there arm to arm in the same ceremony, they start to sense what it is to be a Canadian. We are made up of a variety of different cultures, of people from all sorts of different backgrounds, from different ethnic backgrounds. We are a melting pot. We bring people together. We take advantage of each other's strengths, and we build a better country because of it.

If you didn't have that ceremony in person, you wouldn't see that. If you just click on Zoom and say, "Okay, I'm a citizen," it doesn't mean the same. I don't think we should belittle the fact that it's an honour to be a citizen of Canada. It is something that they've worked really hard to become. For the hoops they have to jump through to get to that point of being a citizen, we shouldn't shorten that. We shouldn't belittle it. We should make sure they recognize that this is something great and that they've accomplished something great in being a citizen of Canada.

This is a simple amendment that can move that forward. I think it's something that all parties can look at and say, "You know what? This makes a lot of sense." I don't want to see that taken away from those individuals. I don't want to see that taken away from them and their families. I don't want to see their first impression once they're citizens of Canada to be something they see on Zoom. I want them to experience it with other people at the same time.

That's why I think it's very important that we actually put that in here and we maintain that. Sure, it costs money—everything costs money—but these people become the fabric of our society. They become our next workforce. They integrate right into the rest of Canada. They make us the greatness that we are. Let's make sure that we set them off on the right foot. Having a simple ceremony means so much to them. Why would we reject that or prevent that from happening?

I think this amendment would be a good step in that direction.

Thank you, Chair.

• (1915)

**The Chair:** Next is Mr. Aboultaif.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC):** Thank you, Chair, for allowing me the opportunity to speak.

I'm a first-generation immigrant. I had my ceremony around April 1994. That was a good story. When I went to receive my citizenship and take the picture with the judge, there was a gentleman sitting right beside him. He was from Lebanon too. I'd never met the guy before. It so happened that he had my first name and my middle name—the same thing. The judge looked at this distinguished guy and said to him, "Do you think this gentleman is going to be as distinguished as you?" The guy said, "Well, I hope so."

After the—

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** On a point of order, Madam Chair, I just want to reiterate that we want to stick to the amendments and not tell personal stories.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** I need a couple of minutes—

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Kayabaga. This is not a point of order.



I'll just remind you, Mr. Abouttaif, that it should be relevant to the amendment that we have on the floor.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** I request that everyone speak through the chair and not across the aisle. All the questions should be directed through the chair.

I have Mr. Abouttaif, please.

**Mr. Ziad Abouttaif:** Getting to that, we had an individual who called us last week asking us not to give up the tradition of having people attending those ceremonies, to be there and to have pride to receive one of the most distinguished citizenships. I think the tradition is very important. I think we can afford, one way or the other, to continue having those ceremonies.

It is a great place for people to meet and to get to know each other. It's a place of opportunity. It just makes people appreciate more the many cultures or many people from all different walks of life getting together at one place, celebrating together and having the honour of being Canadians.

I hope the rest of the members around this table from all parties appreciate that and go along with this amendment.

Thank you for allowing me to speak today.

Thank you, Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I have Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thanks, Madam Chair.

I think we're ready to go to the vote. I just wanted to remind you that we have another amendment after this.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We will take the vote on amendment CPC-5.

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have a new amendment. It's new clause 1.4. I move that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the Act is amended by adding the following:

24(3) The oath of citizenship cannot be completed through an online web form.

That's the amendment.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Redekopp has moved an amendment. The clerk is sending it to everyone. I hope everyone has received it in both official languages.

Mr. Mazier.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Thank you.

This one is really important, especially when it comes to rural Canada. Connectivity in rural Canada, as you know, is not very good. Over a million homes right now in rural Canada are still not connected, and over 50% of the first nations are still not connected. You might say, "Oh, but we're talking about an oath ceremony. It doesn't really matter." It matters. You need to be connected to do something online, and I think we all forget that, when it comes to connectivity here in Canada, you don't have to be that far out of a big city or in a rural municipality to really understand how disconnected we are here in Canada.

You can imagine someone living in Neepawa, Manitoba, who rooted up their whole life and all and wants to be a part of this Canadian ceremony but they can't even do that. If anything should be amended on this, this should be. This is something that.... You need to have the ability to be able to connect online. This is kind of really important. You have to make sure that they are connected in the first place.

I think it's something that needs to be addressed. These people have made an honest effort to become Canadians, and I think they need to be included. I don't think anybody gets just how important it is to make sure that rural Canada is connected.

With that, I'm done.

• (1920)

**The Chair:** Mr. Hoback.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

One thing about rural Canada is that it's where we experience high rates of employment. That's where a lot of immigrants are actually relocating to because of the job opportunities that they have in the smaller communities—for example, in rural Saskatchewan. They become vital members of those communities. They're much appreciated, and the work they do is very much respected and, again, appreciated.

However, it still comes back to the fact that you're going to do something this important in their lives over Zoom. Really...? Is that what we're going to do? Is that what we've denigrated the citizenship of a Canadian to be—just click on Zoom and you're done? It needs to be more. This isn't good enough. This amendment speaks directly to that. Why would you be so heartless and not give them a chance to actually be at and experience a proper presentation of that citizenship? Why would you sit there and say, "Good enough. Zoom is good enough"?

Then you put them into rural Saskatchewan where they may not have Internet access or may have very limited Internet access, so they're halfway through the ceremony and all of a sudden it cuts out. Are they half citizens or full citizens? It's not Ottawa. It's not Toronto. It's not downtown Vancouver. There are some real reality problems with this proposal of doing it over Zoom. I just think it's impersonal. I just think it's wrong. I think it's unimaginable that we think this is a good idea. Why would we go down this path? I just don't understand what we're trying to save or do here. It just seems ridiculous to me.

Hopefully I will see some consensus around this table, just out of common decency and the understanding of the types of people we're bringing into this country—the really, really good people coming into rural parts of our country. Let's give them a proper citizenship ceremony. I'm sorry, but Zoom doesn't cut it. Teams doesn't cut it. You have to be face to face.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Just to be really clear on exactly what this amendment is talking about: The minister has proposed that in the future, rather than going to an in-person ceremony or a Zoom ceremony, there would be a button one could click online. They would navigate to a web page and click, and that would be the extent of the citizenship process for them.

We're not even talking now about whether we are in person or on Zoom. There is no ceremony at all. There isn't even a picture of the RCMP person dressed in uniform.

This is an important issue. For all the things we have talked about prior to this, it is so important that citizens have the ability to remember the time they became a citizen. It is important that they have the chance to have the photos with the dignitaries and the people there, and that they receive a memento, even if it's a little flag or a piece of paper, rather than getting a package in the mail after they have clicked. It takes more work to order a package on Amazon than to do this. It's all in the name, supposedly, of efficiency and trying to move people through the process.

I'm all for efficiency. We really do need to improve the way that IRCC works, but I don't think it's right or fair that deficiencies and problems in IRCC get paid for by sacrificing the people at the end of the chain who are getting their citizenship. Effectively, what is happening is that there are problems, inefficiencies and things that aren't working well at IRCC and the solution is to skip over all that, go to the end of the process and have people click to get their citizenship because it will save a couple of months. In reality, that isn't the problem. The problem is at other stages of the process.

I find it disconcerting that this would be a solution that would be proposed for that. Obviously, the real solution is to fix the issues at IRCC. It's to fix the backlogs and speed up the time. That's what we need to do rather than having citizenship by a click.

I also want to refer to the study that was done. The IRCC did some surveying on this. There was an article about that in the news this week. Lots of comments were received on both sides—some positive and some negative.

Looking at the story, of course the government did not release the details or the final numbers of this study because they are keeping that information to themselves. My guess, looking at the comments, is that there was an awful lot of opposition to the idea. A lot of people thought it was a terrible idea and that it shouldn't be done. Apparently there were about 700 comments, which I find surprising. I would wonder if there were more than that.

One person said, "This is a horrible idea!" in big capital letters. I think that would echo a lot of what we've heard from others. It's

sort of the same logic that we talked about on the Zoom citizenship idea. It's the same kind of thinking. The same people are going to have same opinions about that. The newcomers to our country who are becoming citizens are going to have the same opinions. They want to be there. They want to feel the moment. They want, as my colleague, Mr. Mazier said—

• (1925)

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting, Mr. Redekopp. Can you avoid repeating things? Please stay on the point of this amendment and avoid repetition.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Yes, for sure.

For the people who want to bring in their relatives to be at that ceremony, you can't bring in somebody to watch you click a button. It just doesn't work that way. That is really important.

I am curious to hear from my other rural colleagues. Mr. Mazier spoke a bit about the whole idea of connectivity. If you are relying on the Internet to do this.... We all know that Internet connectivity, as you get outside the major centres, is a problem. I live in Saskatoon. We have reasonable Internet there, but I am curious to hear the points of view from rural Manitoba and rural Saskatchewan. I think that would be an issue with this.

For the moment, I think that's everything I have to say.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Mazier.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** As my colleague, Mr. Redekopp, just brought to my attention, I believe you are officials from the IRCC. Is that correct?

Right now, our reality for dealing with the IRCC online is that we wait for two weeks. We make an appointment or our staff make an appointment, and then they wait for two weeks. They have an hour's window. It's quite a scheduling coordination two weeks out.

I can't imagine if something were to happen with the website or if something were to happen in this process. Has there been any discussion around this amendment to—

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Madam Chair, I just want to remind members that we are talking about the importance of in-person ceremonies, and what the member opposite is talking about is not in the amendment. I would ask that we get back to the amendment that we have in front of us right now.

**The Chair:** Ms. Kayabaga, that's not a point of order.

Right now, the amendment that we have is as follows: "The oath of citizenship cannot be completed through an online web form." That's the amendment we have.

Yes, Mr. Hoback.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** I have a point of order, Chair.

We can't hear her. When she speaks, I can't hear her. The volume is very low.

**The Chair:** I'll go to Mr. Mazier.

Meanwhile, I will ask the clerk to please do a sound check.

Mr. Mazier.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** I was just wondering if the IRCC staff have looked at this. Have they done any studies? Have they looked at it and said, “We can make this work for citizens all the time”? Is there going to be a 1-800 number? How is this going to work?

• (1930)

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Ms. Girard.

**Ms. Nicole Girard (Director General, Citizenship Policy, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** Madame Chair, thank you for the question.

I am having difficulty hearing the members this evening, so I am using the earpiece.

Can you hear me?

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Yes, we can hear you here.

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** Thank you.

Could I just ask if those tabling motions during the session could also share those motions with us so that we have an opportunity to review those in real time? That will save everyone time and be greatly appreciated.

In response to the member's question, what I would say is that—

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** On a point of order, if we could take a minute, we could copy this and give it to the officials so that they have this. Could we do that?

**The Chair:** Yes, I will ask the clerk to do it.

Ms. Girard, please continue.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** On a point of order, Chair, how can she continue when she hasn't seen it? Let's let her see it before she continues.

**The Chair:** She already started the conversation. Let her continue. It is being provided to her.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** You would agree that if you don't—

**The Chair:** It has been provided to her.

Ms. Girard, please continue.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** I have a point of order, Chair. You would agree that she'd give a better answer if she had the information in front of her, so why would—

**The Chair:** Yes, I gave it to her.

I have made a decision. The information is going to her. She was already saying something. She needs to complete her information.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Without the information...?

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Ms. Girard.

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I understood the question. It was just to make a general point, as motions are being tabled during the hearing.

In response to the member's question about whether the department has done a study with regard to people's participation online, I'd like to take an opportunity to correct the record about what the regulatory proposal actually is. It's been mis-characterized in the

media and through some of the concerns we've heard publicly but also during these hearings.

The proposal is to maintain citizenship ceremonies. I'd like to be clear that we agree: Citizenship ceremonies are important and they will continue.

Secondly, the proposal is to give citizenship applicants the choice in terms of how they wish to proceed with their ceremony. The first choice that applicants would need to make under the proposed regulatory change is whether they wish to take the oath at a ceremony, as now. That's really important to emphasize. It would be the choice of the applicant. Where they're wanting to do that participation in person, as they do now, and where a connection may be an impediment, that choice will be for the applicant to make.

The second choice that will be available to applicants is whether they would instead take that oath online. There could be many good reasons why people may need to make that choice. We heard of some of them at the previous hearing. Those electing to take their oath online would have the ability to participate in their ceremony once again but at a later date, so that they're not falling behind in terms of their access to citizenship.

In terms of the “why” of this proposal, as we've heard, there are some who may not be able to afford to travel a distance to participate at a ceremony in person. There are some who may not be able to afford to take a day off work. We know that affordability is an issue for many out there.

Thirdly, in terms of accessibility, we have options now, but the Government of Canada needs to do better. This proposal is really looking to give people who may need better options of accessibility—for reasons of disability, for reasons of debilitating illness or for other kinds of reasons that may require accommodation—an avenue where they don't have to make a case to an official and ask for an exception to be made so that they can have a virtual ceremony or some other accommodation to enable them to be citizens and to be like everyone else who can make it to a ceremony, in person or virtually, with a dedicated service channel for them. That's what an electronic oath would provide, in addition to those options to continue to participate at ceremonies to take the oath, as is currently the case.

In summary, we haven't had to do the type of study that the member asked about. I'm grateful for the question. Once again, the proposal is to offer that choice to our clients in order to better meet the needs of a variety of circumstances in cities and in rural communities across this great country.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

• (1935)

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

Mr. Aboultaif—

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** I still have the floor.

**The Chair:** It's Mr. Aboultaif, and then we will come back to you.

Yes, Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** On a point of order, I believe the process you were using before was that if there were questions for the officials—

**The Chair:** But if he was finished—

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** He wasn't. He had just asked a question.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Mazier.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Now there's new information. They do have a choice right now. Is that correct?

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** Madam Chair, the proposal is at the proposal stage. It hasn't been implemented. Currently, applicants are required to attend a ceremony and take their oath at a ceremony, because that is the law. Applicants must take their oath at a ceremony in order to complete the final requirement to become Canadian citizens.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Here's the reality that I just happened to run across. I'm wondering if for people in the rural areas there will be any tools available. Who provides these tools for the local communities for the IRCC? Will they say, "Local citizens are having a ceremony, so here's what the IRCC will supply"? I don't know how that's all going to work. If something goes south, who are they going to talk to? Is there going to be a 1-800 number? Is there going to be a chat? Has there been any allocation or any thought put into that?

Right now, the problem with the websites in general, with any government website—I'm sure the witnesses have some experience with websites—is that government websites are very onerous. They don't act very well. They're not friendly. Then you're on the phone with somebody for many hours. A lot of these new citizens are just trying to keep a job and trying to do their best so that they can get approved to be good citizens.

How are we making that more friendly? How would this process work? What are the plans for that to make it more friendly?

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** Madam Chair, those kinds of considerations will have to be factored into more detailed implementation plans, which are ahead of us. It's in everyone's interest that applicants receive their citizenship in a timely way, and that this happen more quickly, which is the goal that the department is working towards.

Those kinds of practical considerations will have to be factored into the implementation plans, which are still to be developed because we are at the proposal stage at this point in time.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** I'll share with you one last story.

I happen to live here in Ottawa, in an apartment. The concierge downstairs was going to their citizenship award. It just happened I was checking in at 10 at night, and he said that he had a nine o'clock meeting and he would go online for this thing, I think it was next Monday. He said, "You wouldn't happen to have a Canadian flag, would you?" I asked what he meant. He said he'd like to have a backdrop to display that he's going to be a Canadian citizen. I grabbed him one and brought it back for him.

Then, it came to the day and he said, "I don't know, I have to stay here until midnight and it's nine in the morning." He was going to go. He was all excited. I said, "No, you go celebrate. You've done a great thing." On going online, if it weren't for my encouraging him, he would have just gone and click, bang, he would have been, "There you go. I'm a Canadian citizen."

What I ended up doing that day was that I made a nice certificate up for him. This was in downtown Ottawa. The guy was right here in our nation's capital and he didn't even think it was worth his time to go online to be a Canadian citizen. There's something wrong with that picture.

I ask you to please review that and that somehow, in these regulations, we reflect how much we do appreciate people becoming new citizens in this country.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Aboultaif.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Thanks.

I appreciate the department's being here with us today.

I have a few short questions.

First, has the department done a pilot project to make sure that the system that is proposed is going to work?

• (1940)

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** Madam Chair, it's not planned to have a pilot project, as far as I'm aware at this point in time. We do have implementation planning to do to support this proposal in the months ahead. Typically, when we develop implementation plans for any regulatory or legislative proposal, there's a lot of effort that goes into it on a lot of fronts to ensure that it can be implemented smoothly.

The department, the experts at this table and I, personally, have a lot of experience in this area in terms of what needs to go into it on the planning side to ensure a smooth implementation.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Thank you.

Based on your knowledge with the application or software, how does the software determine that the applicant is in Canada? As per the existing rules, you have to be in Canada in order to be able to attend the ceremony personally and physically to receive your citizenship. Based on the design of the software, how do we determine that the applicant is in Canada?

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** We don't have the software or the system solution in place as of yet, but the member is correct that an important part of our process is verifying the identity of the applicant at different stages, as required in the process. Those verifications that need to be done will be completed as part of those plans to support the implementation of an initiative like this one, as we would with any initiative that we could be working on to implement in this area, including the current bill under study.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** With cyber-attacks, we know nothing's safe online these days. With such an important process, to your knowledge, are the firewalls or the cybersecurity aspects of this software developed, or yet to be developed, in order to be able to ensure that the process is safe and legitimate?

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** Madam Chair, the implementation of an initiative like this one, as with any implementation plans related to a regulatory or a legislative initiative like this bill, is linked to and reliant on Government of Canada systems that we already have in place, which respect a number of safety protocols and firewalls, as required by various Government of Canada policies. We have to operate within that framework as part of our implementation preparations.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** I have one final question. If an applicant failed to connect due to either a weak or an unavailable connection, what would happen? I guess they would be pushed to another date. Is there any idea how long this could be? Could it be three months or six months? Especially if the applicant is not at fault, is there any idea within the department on how this could be handled? Will it be consistently three months, six months—whatever—or will the computer be given another date automatically? How would that work?

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** The member is correct that we currently have systems in place where, if someone, through no fault of their own, is not able to attend their ceremony, we work diligently to obtain another date that's fairly close in time for the person. It's possible that some weeks may elapse.

The goal with an initiative like this one to further leverage technology is to really collapse the wait times for the applicant so that they don't have to wait so much time for that opportunity to come around again, and so that they can become a citizen sooner and attend the ceremony, if that was indeed how they opted to take their oath and complete the final requirement.

Thank you.

• (1945)

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** I have one final question, if that's okay.

At some point, do you envision that this process can be done at the embassy level, since it's basically electronic? Has this been discussed within the department, or has it been requested? Again, if we can't guarantee or know that people who are applying are physically residing in Canada and applying for their citizenship, a convenient way to do so could be the next step that staff at the embassy level could say, "I can process it at the embassy level. I can initiate that call. I can have the program run from far away." That could be what's coming next. Has this been discussed? Is it out of the imagination to think that it could happen one day?

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** Madam Chair, it hasn't been requested; however, there is already some legal authority in the legislation. I can tell you from years of experience in the citizenship program that those circumstances where somebody may be looking to complete their citizenship process from abroad tend to be exceptional.

I have served abroad in a couple of countries in north Asia and south Asia. I have encountered situations where someone was on the verge of having their citizenship ceremony, had a devastating death in the family and had to go home for a funeral. Sometimes

they were back in their home country longer than they intended if they were having to settle estate matters and so on. Then you can have world events like the pandemic. Someone was on the verge of becoming a Canadian, but they couldn't physically get to their ceremony. Then the question is, if they're a permanent resident, whether they can benefit from evacuation procedures, or whatever the circumstances are.

There are occasionally exceptional circumstances where there is some leeway and we get requests, but it's not the norm, obviously. The vast majority, I would say, likely 99% of applicants, are here. They're fulfilling their requirements. They're anxious for their ceremony, but they would like it to happen sooner in time. The department is working on a number of initiatives to offer more options to people in a variety of circumstances, including the really exceptional ones that are through no fault of the person's own actions, as the member mentioned.

**The Chair:** I have Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Just on that note, Madam Girard, I guess the first question is this. Just to be clear, do you have to be in Canada to swear your oath?

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** Madam Chair, I'll have to go back and consult the legislation just to ensure I'm giving an accurate answer. We will provide that response to the committee in writing, if that's okay.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thanks. I would appreciate that.

Does the department have numbers on how many people have become citizens, have sworn their citizenship and have been outside the country at that time?

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** I don't have that information to hand. I would have to check if that's something that we track, because it would be outside of the norm. I will take that back, and if there are statistics available, I will endeavour to obtain them and provide them to the committee at the earliest opportunity.

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

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you. I appreciate that.

It seems like something that the department should know. As you said, it probably doesn't happen too frequently, so I would think that's something that would be known. I would appreciate having that sent.

Just before I go on, Madam Chair, the TV behind me is on. The sound is on. Is it possible to turn off the sound from the chamber?

**The Chair:** We can see if we can do that.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** I like listening to the chamber myself.

**The Chair:** Please go ahead, Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** I have good hearing.

Ms. Girard, on the subject of wait times, because you had talked about wait times, I guess the reasoning that I'm picking up on here is the departmental reasoning that having these alternate methods is to speed up the process. Because this is something that's being demanded by people asking for this option, do you have statistics and have there been studies done on the requests to do that?

• (1950)

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** I can say in general that the department frequently receives representation from applicants who are looking to have their processing time reduced, and that is something that we continue to work hard to do. As I mentioned in a previous hearing, we had a record number of over 374,000 citizenship grants last year, but we have more work to do, including continuing to work on getting those processing times down.

In further response to the member's question about wait times and ceremonies, historically it's been in the range of three to five months. It can go as low as one to two months to wait to get your ceremony, and I believe it's on the lower end of the wait currently, but that can vary depending on the year and the demand and so on.

Part of this proposal is to again give the choice and put the applicants in the driver's seat in terms of what's going to work for them. If they're able to attend that ceremony, they wish to take their oath at a ceremony and they're prepared to do that, they can proceed. If they need to become citizens now and want to take an oath online, if that becomes an option that's available to them, they can do that and can become citizens immediately once the oath is taken, but still have the benefit of taking in that ceremony or participating in that ceremony without having a wait time.

Thank you.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thanks. I appreciate that.

I guess the real question I was asking was this: Have people been asking for these options? I understand that it seems like it might be a good idea to people in the department, but have people been asking for the option to do it that way?

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** I'm not aware of all of the client feedback the department receives, so while it's possible that the request has been made, I don't have that information available to me at this time.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** It seems that if a quite significant policy shift like that was being done, there would be a lot of data to back that up.

Here's another way of asking that question then. Is there data to back up the reasoning for this decision, or is this just people sitting around a table who thought it would be a good idea and they thought they should do that?

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** This is an evidence-based proposal. It's backed by significant data. The data includes that the processing standard that the department strives to meet is to process citizenship applications within 12 months. Although the department achieved a record number of grants last year—over 374,000, as I mentioned—last April the processing times were around 27 months. Through hard work, those processing times continue to come down, but are still much higher than we want them to be. They are in the range of 21 or 22 months, as I understand it.

It's not an issue where the department needs to wait for specific service improvements to be received. We are constantly looking for opportunities for how to improve service offerings and client service, and how we can leverage technology to reduce processing times and wait times. We are confident that significant progress will continue with the various initiatives we've put in place over the last year or two during the pandemic, including bringing applications online, conducting online citizenship tests and having a combination of in-person citizenship ceremonies and virtual ones.

As the members heard, we will continue to see processing times go down, but we know we have work to do and that the service needs to improve. This is a proposal, among other initiatives that are under way, that is intended to do that.

Thank you.

• (1955)

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Did I hear you say that the wait time for citizenship piece is 22 months? Is that correct?

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** Yes, that is correct.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** I understand that COVID-19 threw a monkey wrench into things.

What were wait times like in 2019 for citizenship?

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** I believe they were closer to the 12-month processing standard, but as I don't have that processing time in front of me now, we will check and provide that to the committee.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** I understand that you don't have that information and this might have come a little out of left field, so—

**The Chair:** If I can interrupt, Mr. Redekopp, can you please keep your comments related to the amendment we have on the floor? These are not related to that.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** I believe they are. This has to do with the system of online clicking for citizenship. I believe that is exactly what we are talking about here. It's the process by which the department has sought to implement this system, so I think these are very relevant questions to that point.

We are proposing that we shouldn't be doing that. That is what our amendment is basically saying. The department is actually providing a lot of information on why that might not be the case.

**The Chair:** Keep your comments related to the amendment we have on the floor.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Okay.

On the wait time for ceremonies, I'm confused as to why the department feels it needs to make this change in order to get back to the processing standard. Let's say it was roughly on-standard in 2019 and prior. There were no online citizenship tests or there were no "click" citizenship abilities at that time.

Why does the department not believe it can get back to that point without using different technology like this?

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** Thank you for the question.

The department is constantly striving to improve processing times and to improve client service and accessibility, as I mentioned. Historically, the wait time for a ceremony, once the applicants had completed all the other requirements, was in the range of three to five months.

This is a proposal where the applicant does not elect to complete their oath at a ceremony as they do now, as I mentioned, but elects instead to complete their oath online. Once that oath is completed online, they become a citizen. They no longer have to wait the three to five months to attend the ceremony, but they still have the benefit of being able to participate in that ceremony at the later date.

In a sense, you can describe that as win-win, in that there is greater accessibility and flexibility. The applicant has an option to become a citizen at a earlier point in time, but still enjoy all of the benefits of participating in a ceremony, in terms of all of the important elements of that for inclusion, community participation and those kinds of considerations.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** That's kind of new to me, I guess. What you're saying is that, in the department's proposal, if you were to click your citizenship, you can still attend an in-person ceremony.

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** That's correct.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** What are the elements that happen at that in-person ceremony? Could you please enlighten me a little bit? Is it a shortened thing? What happens there?

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** As I mentioned, these are the kinds of issues that will be further developed as part of implementation plans to support an initiative like this one. I think it's fair to say that ceremonies could look as they look today. There are not necessarily any plans at this time to change that.

Thank you.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** I just noted in the news article that came out that it said that, for the second half of 2022, less than 10% of citizenship ceremonies were done in person. Therefore, obviously 90% were done online or would be through this if it was available.

Is there's a planned ratio by the department of how many should be one-click and how many should be in person? Is there planning that has been done by the department on where those numbers would fall?

• (2000)

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** Madam Chair, I'm not aware of any planned ratio.

As I mentioned, as part of our effort to improve service, we're really proposing to give the choice to applicants. Because this is an important day in people's lives, an important event in people's lives, as many have mentioned, we anticipate that there could be some quite significant demand by persons who would wish to continue to take their oaths at a ceremony, as is currently the case.

I'm not aware of any planned ratio. That would be down to the choices of applicants.

Thank you.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Given the numbers that have been reported, and I assume that they're correct—10% were in person—are we to, then, assume that it was the choice of individuals, that 10% of them chose to do it in person and that 90% of them chose a different method?

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** Madam Chair, that's not a correct assumption since this proposal is at the proposal stage and has not been implemented.

What the member is referring to are statistics that relate to how the current program is being administered postpandemic. It doesn't reflect what applicants may choose to do once a proposal like this is implemented.

Thank you.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** The current system that's being used by the department is skewing heavily towards Zoom citizenship ceremonies. Is that a true statement?

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** I don't have statistics for 2023 in front of me.

I'm mindful that the member has quoted statistics from last year, which is a breakdown that I don't have in front of me, so I can't confirm or correct that statement. I'd have to check the data before I could say anything on that.

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

Mr. Redekopp, she does not have those figures. We can try to get them, but it will not be possible for her to provide that right now.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** I appreciate that. If you could get them, that would be great because it just seems odd to me that this is how people would request it. It seems to me more like it's something that's being pushed onto people without their having a choice. That's my curiosity on that.

I'm done.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Mazier.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** What is the goal? You mentioned that we're out to 22 months right now and that we want to streamline it. We were at 12 months before. Then you mentioned three to five months.

Ideally, is it, if we could click and pass the test, we could become a citizen? What is the ultimate goal on this whole process?

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** Currently, the goal is to get back to the 12-month processing standard. The proposal under discussion—the regulatory proposal—would reduce the wait time for those at the ceremony stage. There's potential to get that average processing time down to below 12 months. I'm sure everyone would agree that this would be a good thing because we would like to include new citizens sooner and see that happen a lot sooner.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Aboultaif.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Thank you, Chair.

Thanks again. Thanks for the hospitality today.

I would like to move an amendment to the amendment, which would add, after the words “online web form”, the following: “or click-through option”.

To that end, I would like it if we could suspend to translate this and make sure—

**The Chair:** Will you please repeat it in English? Everyone has translation services available. It will be translated.

If you can, please repeat it. Everyone has the translation. Yes.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Yes, I can do that. After the words “online web forum”, it will say, “or click-through option”.

• (2005)

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** We can suspend to translate this.

**The Chair:** Give me one second.

Can I ask everyone to be quiet and direct their questions through the chair?

Mr. Aboultaif, you have repeated that added after “web form”, the words “or click-through option” should be added. That's your subamendment.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Yes, after the words “online web form”, it would add “or click-through option”.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** I'm not sure how to translate that into French.

**The Chair:** We have the subamendment on the floor. I think everyone has got it through translation.

Mr. Aboultaif has asked to add after “web form” the words “or click-through option”. We have the subamendment on the floor.

Go ahead, Mr. Hoback.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Are we going to suspend for translation or keep going?

**The Chair:** No, I'm not suspending the meeting right now. The meeting continues.

We have the subamendment on the floor.

Could I ask the clerk to please take the vote on the subamendment?

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** I'll speak to it, then.

**The Chair:** No one said... I've asked already for the vote. The vote has to happen on the subamendment.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** I was just getting clarification before I went to my question.

**The Chair:** You asked me about the suspension. I told everyone we had the translation.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** I still want to speak to it.

**The Chair:** Okay. Go ahead.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Thank you.

In light of the new information, I find it relaxing. You are still respecting the fact that ceremonies have some importance, and that option is there. I think that's where the subamendment will maybe clarify that it's not the only way. You can actually click on it, and then still participate in a ceremony and have your grandparents, friends, family and your employer all attend.

I want to confirm that's what they'd be able to do in this scenario. They'd click on it, and then at a later date, they would go to a ceremony. They would be a citizen, effectively, once they click on it, if that's correct.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Ms. Girard.

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** Madam Chair, could I ask for it to be clarified? Is the question referring to the impact of the subamendment, or is the question about the regulatory proposal?

**The Chair:** Mr. Hoback, can you please repeat it?

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Yes. I'm looking at the subamendment. The click-through option is what we're putting into the amendment. Basically, the idea there is that it better explains to people that they can click on it and still do the ceremony later on.

When do they actually officially become a Canadian citizen? Is it when they click on it or...? I'd like some clarification around that.

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** Madam Chair, in response to the member's last question, currently, an applicant becomes a citizen only once they take the oath of citizenship at a ceremony. That's to be clear on that. That would continue to be the case under the proposed regulatory change.

As I understand the member's question as it pertains to the subamendment, the subamendment states that the oath cannot be taken online and cannot be taken through a click-through option, if that's what's being used to describe the proposal. That would appear to mean that none of those flexibilities are available. It would appear to mean that an applicant would be required to take their oath at a ceremony, as now, before they could become a citizen.

It would appear to preclude any kinds of flexibilities for people who are disabled, who cannot afford to travel to a ceremony, who cannot afford to take a day off work or who may have a variety of circumstances that may justify some of those other options we have been discussing this evening.

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

Mr. Dhaliwal.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I was going to speak on the point of order, but thank you for giving me an opportunity to speak.

We, on this side, understand and see the motive the Conservatives have behind all this discussion that's going on.



I have a vote of thanks, Madam Chair, to all the staff and to the interpreters, who I know are putting in long hours. Particularly, when it comes to family matters, that becomes even more important. I would love to single out one person today, and it's my understanding that Ms. Girard's husband's birthday is today. We wish him a happy birthday, and we want to thank Ms. Girard for sacrificing that as well. Thank you.

• (2010)

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

Thank you, Ms. Girard. We really appreciate your being here in spite of your husband's birthday.

If we can have all the conversations done, we have a subamendment on the floor.

Go ahead, Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you.

It's too bad that Mr. Dhaliwal and the Liberals forced poor Ms. Girard to miss her husband's birthday tonight by being here so late.

I just wanted to clarify one thing. This particular subamendment and amendment do not preclude Zoom. Ms. Girard, you did say that it would not give options, and that's not true. It wouldn't allow the one-click option, yes, that would be true, but this particular subamendment, or even the amendment, does not preclude the use of an online Zoom type of situation. I just wanted to make that clear.

I think it's important, again, for new citizens to not do this through some sort of a click-through process. That is not the intention. I believe, for most people, they are not so concerned about the last few months. That's why I am quite curious to see the data that supports this, because I can understand how people would want a shorter time period. That makes sense.

**The Chair:** Mr. Redekopp, you have already requested the data. Ms. Girard mentioned that she doesn't have the data right now, and as soon as they can answer that, or get that data, it will be sent to the committee. This point has already been raised. Thank you.

We will go for a vote on the subamendment.

(Subamendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** The amendment CPC-6 is on the floor. We will go for a vote on that.

Mr. Mazier.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** I'm still kind of perplexed. There is no allocation for the people who aren't connected. We're talking about an online world that just doesn't exist in rural Canada. How do we square that circle? What is the IRCC...? Is there a plan to work with Service Canada?

When we're looking at a whole new model, and we want to get down to an area, that's another thing where I kind of question this whole process. What's going to happen that's so much different from just having a new website or an amended website?

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** As was mentioned, prior to the pandemic, ceremonies were all done in person. It was only during the pandemic that the additional option of virtual ceremonies was added. As

was mentioned during the previous session, now we have a combination. For those participating online, where a Zoom connection isn't feasible, the in-person option continues to be there, and it will continue to be there.

As I mentioned at the outset, for the proposed regulatory initiative, it will be the applicant's choice. Applicants will know whether they have the ability to attend in person or whether they want to look at an alternate option that requires an online connection.

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.):** On a point of order, Madam Chair, I'm been trying, with all due respect, to be very careful in my interventions. At this point, Madam Chair, through you, I'm just a little bit curious or trying to understand the members' questions about their own amendments or subamendment. I don't know the English word, and I don't want to start using both languages. I would say you cannot be perplexed—if I could say this—about your own amendment. Either you are proposing an amendment or a subamendment, or you are not.

I don't think you can ask the official to justify the amendment and the impact of something you are proposing. You are debating your own amendment here.

Madam Chair, through you, I just want to make sure that we're staying on point. If I bring an amendment, I bring my point. I'm not trying to have a sense of perplexity here as to why this is happening.

• (2015)

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

Mr. Mazier, your last question was a repetition of the question that you had asked earlier, before we went to the subamendment. I want to make sure to remind you to please avoid repetition, and the questions should be relevant to the amendment or the subamendment. The officials are not here to justify what you are suggesting.

**Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC):** I have a point of order, Madam Chair. It was more a point of order on what Ms. Lalonde brought forward. Certainly over the course of debate when a party brings forward an amendment, it could be any party, where government members have brought forward amendments to their own bills, to fix something that testimony had brought up over the course of a study that would have resulted in.... She mentioned being “perplexed”. There are many examples where—

**The Chair:** We are going into debate. This is not a point of order.

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** To the point of order, though, to be able to meaningful engage with the officials on a subject is very rightly—

**The Chair:** This is going into debate. It's not a point of order.

Mr. Mazier.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** I am back to Ms. Lalonde's—

**The Chair:** Please, I would request that those questions that have already been asked and that the officials have answered should not be repeated. If now they are repeated, I will have to cut members off.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** It won't be repeated. It's just a matter of relevance.

**An hon. member:** [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**The Chair:** Let's have no conversations on the sides. We are sitting late. The officials are here. They are spending their time here rather than spending it with their families. I think that should be respected. Please avoid these conversations. Please be on point, and let's get this done.

Mr. Mazier.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Just as far as the relevance is concerned, you're talking about putting an IRCC system to become citizens online. If you look at it from a rural perspective, if you're not online, if you can't.... This is a government proposal that no one has actually thought out. That's why I'm asking how the department is going to adapt to this.

That's all I'm asking. We can leave it, or we can move forward. That's not a problem.

**The Chair:** Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I think it's appropriate at this time to just remember the reason why we're here. The reason why we're here.... There was a very reasonable suggestion put forward by Mr. Kmiec.

**The Chair:** This is not relevant to the amendment we have on the floor. We are debating the amendment. Please keep your points related to the amendment.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** On a point of order, we're all tired, fair enough. To your point, the reason we're here is that there have been so many changes made to this bill. Mr. Kmiec offered an easy way to fix this to allow amendments to be provided by the middle of May, I think it was. It was not done. It was not accepted. As a result, we're having to go through this slower process.

I just need to remind everyone of that. That's the reason we're here. That's the reason this is taking longer than we maybe hoped.

**The Chair:** Please, the conversation should be on the amendment or the subamendment, whatever we have on the floor.

On amendment CPC-6, we will go for a vote.

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** I'm sorry. My name should have been on the list.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Kurek.

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Certainly what's interesting in a large rural constituency is the whole dynamic around virtual citizenship, and specifically some of the proposals that have been brought forward. You know, when we've had the details of the amendments that have been brought directly before us here, I have consistently heard question asked of whether these adjustments are.... Quite frankly, over the course of this, it was not isolated to the new proposals. It was also some of

the amendments that had been brought forward as IRCC and the government adjusted to the dynamics of COVID-19. I have had new citizens and people who are pursuing citizenship asking the simple question about how some of these things fit within the tradition of what is seen to be an incredibly valuable part of taking that step and that path to citizenship.

I guess my question to the officials specifically surrounds some of the consultations about how this impacts the perception of citizenship and the process that the oath, particularly, has. I'm wondering if they could provide some feedback or details around how some of these adjustments have impacted the perception of what the citizenship process is.

I think my father-in-law would be very comfortable with me sharing this. It was a very exciting day when as an adult—he'd moved with his family to Canada when he was a child—he decided to become a Canadian. That was a very powerful moment. There was a judge in front of an auditorium and 30 or 40 of them. This was long before I was elected. You know, me and my family.... I think I had one child at the time. It was an incredibly poignant moment for him, having lived and worked in Canada his entire life, and to also be on the stage with many others.

Has any data, research or feedback been received? Certainly, I've been receiving this. My office and constituency staff help hundreds of individuals with "casework", as we refer to it. Has there been feedback provided about this process in terms of what is perceived as the culmination of the citizenship process, that actually becoming a citizen—

• (2020)

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** I have a point of order, Madam Chair. This question was asked earlier, so I'm again calling a point of order.

**The Chair:** Mr. Kurek, please do not repeat. Just get to the point of the question.

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Absolutely. I understand. I have come to this committee, and it may have been asked in a certain context, but as the member for Battle River—Crowfoot, I have not yet had the opportunity to ask the question.

My question to the officials is on whether they could share with this committee the feedback that they have—

**The Chair:** You said this a minute ago, before this point of order. Can you please not repeat—

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Madam Chair, I'm getting to my question. That's my expectation—to be able to ask the question about whether the officials can in fact share with this committee feedback that they have received from Canadians or from a consultative process about the adjustments being made to the process of becoming a Canadian citizen.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** On a point of order, Madam Chair, this is the same question MP Redekopp asked less than 10 minutes ago.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We are getting into debate. Ms. Girard has the floor. She will answer the question.

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

As was mentioned previously, this was a regulatory proposal that was put out for public consultation. The public did provide various comments. As part of the regulatory process, the department will compile those comments and prepare the public summary that would normally be provided for final publication of the regulations some months from now, as part of the normal regulatory process. That information will be prepared for that purpose and shared down the line when we get to that stage.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Kurek.

• (2025)

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Thank you very much.

Thank you to the officials, and happy birthday to your husband.

I understand that you're sharing that there have been consultations through some of the regulatory changes, but in the context of the bill that we have before us, specifically the amendment, in the larger context of the bill, I want to nail in here specifically, Ms. Girard, the timing that you referred to with the publication of some of those comments. Can you outline exactly what the timeline would be for those publications specifically? The reason it's highly relevant to this amendment and the bill writ large is that the committee is tasked with dealing with this now but does not have the opportunity to see what some of that feedback is. I want to make sure that members of the committee and Canadians watching know exactly what the overlap of those timelines might be.

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** Madam Chair, normally for a regulatory process that takes about a year to 18 months, we would have the responsibility to prepare the regulatory package for final publication some time after the summer recess. Those would be typical timelines. I can't say for certain on this particular proposal, but those would be notional timelines.

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

Mr. Redekopp, you have the floor.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I think we're probably ready to vote on this one, but I want to mention that we have an amendment after this one, for your reference.

**The Chair:** I have Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm going to begin with a short preamble before putting my question to the officials.

What we're seeing now is the Conservative Party MPs asking really a lot of questions. They may be legitimate, but I wonder. The Conservatives are claiming to be the party of common sense and sound management of public funds. Not only that, but they're saying they will soon form the next government. But we are using House resources right now. Don't the Conservatives think we should avoid spending this money, particularly since, if they form the next government as they say they will, they could amend the current bill, which they feel is imperfect?

I'm getting to my question for the officials now.

Do you think the people whose circumstances would be stabilized as a result of this bill are keen to see it adopted, or that they would like us to debate it endlessly, as we are currently doing?

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** At the department, we are very cognizant of the fact that lost Canadians, as has been pointed out repeatedly by several members of the committee, are very eager to see this bill move forward so that they can gain or regain their citizenship.

As government officials, we always answer questions with a view to supporting the committee so that it can complete its study of a bill as quickly as possible.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** If the bill is adopted as it stands, will—

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe. Debate is happening on the amendment—

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Yes, you're absolutely right, Madam Chair. If the amendment—

[*English*]

**The Chair:** —not on the bill. We have an amendment on the floor. Could you please keep your question related to the amendment?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** If the bill is adopted without the amendment we are currently debating, then if another party were to form the government after the next election, would it be able to amend the bill by reintroducing this amendment?

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** I don't want to comment on what might or might not happen following an election. But I would simply like to remind everyone that Parliament can always legislate in one way or another.

• (2030)

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I have Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I just needed to point out that, again, we're here because of the requirement set by the government. We are not here at a normal time—

**The Chair:** Mr. Redekopp, would you like to speak to the amendment? You have already raised it, and it has been heard.

We will go to a vote on CPC-6.

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

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have an amendment that I would like to move, to make a new clause 1.4. It is that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the Act is amended by adding the following:

24(4) The Department of Citizenship and Immigration shall not create an online web form for the oath of citizenship to be completed.

I have things to say about this. I'm just wondering if everybody has this amendment.

**The Chair:** The amendment has been emailed to all the members. Please look into your P9s. All of you have it. The hard copy has been provided to the officials.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

This amendment is, I guess, taking a different approach to this, in wanting to not have an online web form for doing the oath of citizenship. This does not preclude having some sort of Zoom option, I suppose, and it certainly doesn't preclude having an in-person citizenship ceremony. It really is coming back to that same issue that we keep hearing about over and over again from constituents: that having the online web form method to do the citizenship ceremony is just not right, for a variety of reasons.

The first one is that it's good to be in person. It's good to be with the people who care about you, the people who sometimes travel to be with you so that you can actually experience the joy, excitement—sometimes tears—and thrill of becoming a Canadian citizen. We know that when that is done online, when you're sitting there, what this is specifically going after is just the simple click, because it takes away all the excitement of that moment. It takes away all the ceremony that would be there.

Another concern we have with this is on security, because when someone is behind a screen and clicking, we don't really know who that is, where they are or what part of the world they're in, or if there's some sort of fraud occurring during that time. These are all things that I think would be very hard for any kind of system to manage properly.

There are all kinds of reasons that doing it this way is a concern. We've heard about the potential for there to be a problem in rural Canada with Internet access. Just being able to actually get online to do these things that way is a concern.

I don't know if my colleagues have some thoughts on this, but those are some of the reasons we want to do this. I'll throw this out for debate.

**The Chair:** I have Mr. Mazier.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Just to echo Mr. Redekopp's comments on the whole getting away from the ceremony part of it, ceremonies are supposed to be a time of celebration with humans, not online.

I don't know how much thought was put into this kind of development. I understand the streamlining thing. I think it makes a lot of sense, but to what end?

I'm not seeing a lot of thought being put into this. It's like, here, we checked off the box and we can be a citizen and all of that, but how fast will this happen? What are we taking away from this, besides the whole ceremony part?

To understand this a bit better too, I'll go back to this: What's a person to do if they don't have any connectivity or anything like that? Are they expected to travel in right now?

I guess that's a question for—

• (2035)

**The Chair:** Ms. Girard.

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** Madam Chair, prior to the pandemic, when ceremonies were in person and when there were not virtual options, people did have to travel in, depending on their location and circumstances, and on where the ceremony was being offered.

That may still be the circumstance today, although as discussed, there are many virtual ceremonies available today across the country to accommodate different circumstances. That would be less of an issue under current circumstances, because that option became available during the pandemic.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clerk, could you please take the vote on CPC-77?

(Amendment negated: nays 7; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have an amendment I would like to make. This would be new clause 1.4, that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the Act is amended by adding the following:

24 (5) Should a person be unable to attend an in-person citizenship ceremony, the Minister may waive this requirement only on compassionate grounds and a virtual option should be offered in those circumstances as requested.

That's the motion, and I have things to say about it, but we will take a minute just to make sure everybody has it, including the officials.

**The Chair:** The clerk has emailed it to all of the members, and everyone has received it. The hard copy is going to the officials. I will keep a speaker's list.

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

We've just received this amendment. I'll have to check with my team to determine whether or not we can accept it. Can we suspend the meeting for a couple of minutes so that I can look at the amendment?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Go into your email. Mr. Redekopp is speaking; you can have a look meanwhile.

Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** I will endeavour to do my best.

I think that the intent of this amendment is to ensure, for those who need it—it was mentioned, I think, a few minutes ago, Ms. Girard—who may have issues with accessibility or whatever the circumstance might be, that they have the opportunity to have some alternate way of doing the citizenship ceremony.

The purpose of this clause is to make that option available. We need to be compassionate. There certainly needs to be the ability to have your citizenship ceremony if there are issues. That's where the compassionate grounds of this come from.

At the same time, we do not want this to be abused. We want it to be there for that purpose, and not there for somebody who doesn't need it.

● (2040)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

I just want to be sure that this amendment is in order. There is no definition here of compassionate grounds. Perhaps the legislative clerks could give us some information on this. I'm sorry, I know we are in a break, but can someone help me understand more clearly? I just want to make sure that the amendment is in order. We could then debate it afterwards.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, it is in order. This amendment, CPC-8, is in order.

Mr. Redekopp, you are next.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you.

That is a very good point that my colleague Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe brings up. It's important that we be clear what we mean by compassionate grounds. I think this is very important. I can think of some examples of this.

If a person was sick for a long period of time, to me that would be a good example, a good case, because they were unable to travel. We just came through COVID, when you weren't able to be with other people because you were concerned about catching something, particularly if you were an older person. We all experienced that through the last number of years. I think that would be one example of what would be compassionate grounds.

We want to make sure, for those people who can't travel for legitimate reasons, that they can have an in-person citizenship ceremony. We need to give them that ability.

Another example I can think of is if you were simply unable to get off work. If you had the kind of job that didn't allow that, and if you were a great distance away from the citizenship ceremony, this could potentially be a reason for being granted the ability to do this.

We're not asking for a big, onerous process here. At the same time, we don't necessarily want people to be able to just choose to do this because of all the things that have been said tonight. I won't repeat them all, but the most important elements of this are being able to go to that citizenship ceremony, being able to bring your family and your friends, being able to walk across that stage and shake

the hands of the officials, being able to receive your certificate and being able to pose for photos with the RCMP officer and other officials.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting, Mr. Redekopp. This point of shaking hands and taking the certificate has been raised a number of times. Please avoid repetition; repetition should not happen. What has already been said should not be repeated.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** As a point of clarification, Madam Chair, those were said on previous amendments. This is a different amendment. I'm just curious to know if we cannot speak about things on this amendment.

**The Chair:** The same things that you are repeating have already been repeated.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Were they repeated on this amendment? That's my question.

**The Chair:** They weren't on this amendment, but the same point has been raised more than four or five times already.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Sometimes I think when we're starting a new point—

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** On a point of order, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Give me one second.

Go ahead, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

● (2045)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I understand that you need to interrupt from time to time, but for the interpreters, you have to turn your microphone on for them to hear your magnificent voice, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Yes, I will make sure. I'm sorry about that, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** As I was saying, the reason people want to go to ceremonies is the excitement and thrill of being there. That's what we're trying to avoid here. We're trying to avoid the person's not being given the privilege of doing that.

Part of the logic on this, too, goes back to the backlogs in the system. I believe the department is trying to shorten the time it takes to get your citizenship at the citizenship ceremony. However, the problems that are coming in the department and the problems there that are causing these very long times—these many months of delays and waiting to get your citizenship—are not primarily because of going to that ceremony. They're because of other things. They're because of things earlier in the process. They're problems within the department and issues that need to be corrected.

However, the solution seems to be essentially to penalize those people at the end of the process. It's probably the most meaningful part of the whole process to that person. The person doesn't necessarily.... There's no particular meaning inherent in the work that goes on—from the person's perspective—in IRCC. It's important work, absolutely, but it doesn't mean much to the person, because they can't see it. They don't see what's going on. To them, it's a big, black box. Things are just happening.

The meaningful part of getting your citizenship is that very last part, when you go to the citizenship ceremony, take that oath and walk across the stage, as I said before.

**The Chair:** That has been said.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Yes.

We don't believe it's fair to penalize that person at the end of the process by not allowing them to do that, by instituting an online way to do this. However, as we're saying, we need the ability to allow those who may have extenuating circumstances to be able to have an option to do that through an online way or through some other method.

We have to be very sure in doing so that we've protected the security of this situation, so that we know who the person is who's doing this. That's where this needs to be done carefully and not too broadly. At the same time, we don't want to make it an onerous process either, because we're not trying to penalize anybody because they happen to be ill, or whatever the case might be.

That's the background and the basis for making this motion. I don't know if my colleagues have any comments they want to make on this. This is something that is important to us and something that needs to be well thought out, but I think it really adds an avenue and a pathway to resolve any issues that may come up for people who are unable to physically attend.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm sorry, I was having a bite of pizza. I'm truly disappointed that Ms. Girard won't be able to have pizza with her husband this evening.

I've received some comments on Twitter from people watching us live who are affected by the amendment we are currently discussing, about the citizenship process. These are parents who really want this situation to be dealt with for their children, because it's still in limbo. I'm going to read you one of these comments in English, because I received it in English. I am unfortunately not talented enough to translate it into French. I hope my party will forgive me. It's the first time I have ever said anything here in English.

I answered them by saying that the process was being drawn out and that there were a lot of questions about the ceremony and other matters. That, in fact, is what most of the amendments we are debating are about. They said it was ridiculous. Here's what they told me.

[*English*]

They said there must be something that can be done by the rest of the committee members. They said this is a cruel injustice. They said children born in Canada do not have a citizenship ceremony, and neither should adoptive children. They said the bill is about amending the rights of citizens, not the process for a ceremony.

[*Translation*]

Do you agree with this comment I just received?

● (2050)

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** I fully agree with it, because the people affected by this bill will not have to go through a ceremony. The debate we are having does not affect lost Canadians or their children, who would benefit much more from the other amendments that were adopted by the committee.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I have Mr. Kurek and then Ms. Lalonde.

Mr. Kurek.

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

It's certainly interesting that when you look at the intent of this legislation and ensuring that those so-called lost Canadians are able to be recognized.... I know, for example, in hearing the very touching story, and I'm sure it's hard to hear, because I listened intently when it was debated in the House...ensuring that the process to seize that citizenship is realized.

I know a member, a Conservative colleague, is not specifically impacted by this, but it's a similar type of scenario. Consistently, when it comes specifically to this amendment and how it would strike a very appropriate balance, Madam Chair.... Balance is where as a committee we're able to accomplish so very much, because we are able to ensure that in the midst of what can often be ruckus in the House of Commons, we come to committee. We can take a breath, get to the root of what is important to our constituents and work with other political parties in an environment that is conducive to ensuring that can take place.

I think that's where this amendment specifically really strikes that right balance when it comes to an in-person ceremony, and I don't think it is any surprise to members around this table that Conservatives are very supportive of this. With all due respect to my Bloc colleague, there certainly is a significantly greater value placed on the idea of citizenship and its value by those of us who believe in a united country. Ensuring that we find the right balance that can be sought when there is not that ability to have an in-person, because there are dynamics....

I live in a rural constituency, Madam Chair, and it's 53,000 square kilometres. I heard a number of times of a constituent speaking on the phone with somebody from Service Canada, and they'll say, drop by number one Canada Place and we'll get that sorted out for you. Number one Canada Place in the province of Alberta happens to be in the city of Calgary, and that's a three and a half to a four-hour drive. It's finding that right balance because when it comes to the value of what citizenship is, there is something that is very practical, and then there's something that is less tangible. There's that value and assurance that you're becoming a part of this Canadian family, of those who have come before.

I could go on at length, but I won't. I'll spare the committee my very proud Canadian history and the more than five generations specifically in the Consort area and the farm. I will spare the committee that.

**The Chair:** Mr. Kurek, please keep your comments on the amendment, otherwise I will have to cut you off.

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Absolutely, Madam Chair.

The reason I bring that up, and I won't get into the details, is to ensure that there is that ability for where exceptions need to be made. I think for all of us around this table—and quite often I think in Parliament—it's exceptions that become the debate point that defines the direction of public policy, whereas I think that the general trends are far better as the determining factor for what public policy should be, and exceptions need to be noted so that they can be accommodated.

Specifically when it comes to this amendment, we see a very pragmatic option: that the minister—and I have no doubt the processes that the minister would be able to create surrounding where the requirement for an in-person citizenship ceremony could be waived—would be entirely reasonable.

We have a democratic infrastructure in this country that ensures that there is the ability for the government, given the mandate to govern by the people, to ensure that something that can and should be taken as seriously as it is—that idea of citizenship.... When an exception is required, there would be that very straightforward ability to ensure that, without undue strain on an individual or a family, or whatever the case is, whether it be because of an illness or an economic circumstance, or a global pandemic.... We would see that those options can be offered in those circumstances as requested, because it gives the minister that ability. That's key, Madam Chair, because the minister is—

● (2055)

**The Chair:** You have already made that point, so please avoid repetition.

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Absolutely not. The reason, however, that the minister's involvement is so significant comes to the actual last two words of this amendment, and the last two words are “as requested”. This is because it's the minister's involvement as the keystone of the democratic involvement of a government related to specifically, in this case, a department.... I won't go into any more details of the governance structure of executive government.

However, it's the “as requested” that really sits at the...why this amendment is so reasonable, because we are talking about welcom-

ing individuals into the Canadian family, taking the oath. They are being entrusted with a great level of responsibility. That's the nature of what citizenship is—it comes with responsibility.

In the midst of everything I've shared, I'll just conclude my comments with this, Madam Chair. It's ensuring that there are reasonable grounds for exceptions where required, and that the minister's involved, but then it ultimately comes down to those who are asking and engaging in the process to join the Canadian family. That truly gives the grounds for why this so reasonable. It's that beginning stage of responsibility, and then, of course, the full responsibility of citizenship, whether that's voting, political involvement, or paying taxes—the whole deal that comes along with that. It's signalling the responsibility associated with what that looks like in the very nature of what this amendment is meant to, I think, reasonably accomplish.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Dhaliwal.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair, let me help my friend, Mr. Redekopp. Perhaps he will be able to vote against his own amendment.

The IRCC very well knows that our office is the busiest office in Canada. There are far more cases than any other MP has across Canada. I see the compassionate cases that come forward as well. Now it's taking them about 34 months.

Being a professional engineer, I'm also very practical as well. This bill is giving every individual an opportunity, as Madam Girard explained earlier. If an individual wants to have a ceremony in person, they can go and take the oath in person; if they cannot do that, they can do it online. We are already giving that option that my dear Conservative friends are looking forward to, but when we get into these compassionate grounds, there are 350,000 cases every year—350,000. People are going to come out and say they can't go in person for certain reasons. Everybody is going to think that their case is the compassionate case, and then they will take it to the minister.

In fact, this will cause more delays and more backlogs in the system. Instead of reducing the backlogs, in fact, we will be creating more backlogs, and I would like to ask officials if they would agree with me on that particular issue, when the compassionate cases are already taking 34 months. It will put more pressure on the department.

● (2100)

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

Next on the list is Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** On a point of order, Madam Chair.

My colleague Mr. Dhaliwal concluded his comments with a question, and Ms. Girard was about to answer it.

[English]

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. I was just pouring water, so I couldn't put on the mike.

Yes, go ahead, Ms. Girard, before we go to Mr. Redekopp.

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

The member is correct. The proposed amendment would require an assessment by the department and resources to put behind that, and that would potentially have an impact. It would certainly have an operational impact, and it could have an impact on processing times.

I'd like to also take this opportunity to note that the term “compassionate grounds” is not defined. I'm quite open with people who know me that I'm a cancer survivor. In 2016, I was extremely ill for a period of a year. I went through cancer treatment and was functionally disabled. During that time, I would not have been able to make it to an in-person ceremony, or even a virtual one, because I wouldn't have felt very dignified sitting up in a hospital bed to participate in a virtual ceremony.

The proposal we spoke about earlier—which is a regulatory proposal at this time—that would offer people the opportunity to attend a ceremony, as now, to take their oath, or to take their oath online and celebrate their ceremony at a later date, could account for many compassionate scenarios, including ones where people may be extremely ill and have to go through very taxing treatment. They would still be able to become citizens at the same time as other members of their family without having to go through a laborious decision-making process about whether their individual circumstances and their illness qualify as compassionate circumstances. If, down the line, they feel that they're able to participate in a ceremony at that later date, then that would be possible under that kind of proposal. It's not clear that the proposal that is on the floor for debate would allow that.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Girard, for sharing your personal challenges. I, myself, have gone through stage 4 cancer, and I know exactly what you mean. I really appreciate your sharing it. Thank you.

Next on the list is Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

To both of you women, I appreciate your sharing that. I highly respect you, and I'm really glad you're here participating in this tonight.

There have been some great questions from Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe and from Mr. Dhaliwal, as well. I just want to speak to the issue that was raised by Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, which I think is this: Why is this amendment even here, and what's the reason for this amendment? I think it's really important to remember why this particular amendment is here.

When this bill was started, the intent was fairly narrowly defined. Then, through a long story that I won't repeat, there were ideas to expand this. Ultimately, it ended up in the House, where—

**The Chair:** Mr. Redekopp, I'm sorry for interrupting. This has already been mentioned.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** On this one?

**The Chair:** You have raised this issue of why or how the scope was expanded and all that. You have already spoken on that.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Madam Chair, this was—

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I have a point of order.

Madam Chair, you know how fond I am of you. Truly. But the interpreters have mentioned several times that you need to turn on your microphone so that they can translate what you're saying. I know the pace is often fast, but what's involved here is the welfare, health and safety of our employees, for whom we have the highest regard and who are working overtime this evening.

It's just a short “reminder”, as they say in Ontario.

[English]

**The Chair:** It will not happen again, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe. I'm sorry for that.

Mr. Redekopp, the discussion on the scope and the expansion has already happened. I would request that you please keep your comments on this amendment, CPC-8.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe raised this issue of scope, and I haven't had a chance to speak to it on this amendment, so I need to respond to his question and his thoughts on the issue of scope as it relates to this amendment. It's about why this amendment is here.

• (2105)

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting, Mr. Redekopp.

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe had a question about whether this was in order or not. I checked with the legislative clerk. It is in order. That's why we are debating it. That was his question, and that was already answered. Please....

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

He further asked Ms. Girard, I believe, about the.... Maybe we need to go back and look at it, but his question had to do with why this is here, because it has nothing to do with the original lost Canadians. I believe that was the question that was loosely asked. That's my loosened paraphrase of his question.

I'm speaking about this because it's a very good question, and it does specifically get to why it's here. In order to answer that question, it needs to be through the lens of scope. That's why I'm speaking to that. I haven't had a chance to speak to that on this amendment, not since Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe asked the question. That's why I'm mentioning that.



The point that's important to understand here is that the original scope was very narrow. This scope has been widened. The government purposely widened the scope. This gets to how an amendment like this in a bill that has to do with lost Canadians.... The government specifically amended this bill to allow it to be wide open so that they could do more than just what the original intent of the bill was. The original intent of the bill was fairly defined, fairly simple. It would probably have passed through here quite quickly, but as we now know, as you add things to this bill, it becomes more complicated and takes longer. Why do you do that? It's because you don't have a lot of opportunities to actually make changes to the Citizenship Act. This is an opportunity to make changes to the Citizenship Act.

Just as the originator of this bill had an idea to change the Citizenship Act, the NDP and the Liberals got together and decided there were some other changes they wanted to make. It's totally within their right to suggest that, and they have the power through their grouped majority to actually make it happen, so they did.

Then we ended up in a different place. We're no longer just looking at the lost Canadians bill. We are looking essentially at a statutory review of the Citizenship Act, because this is the one opportunity we have to suggest and make those changes that we believe are important and will improve the Citizenship Act for all future Canadians. That is the reason we are looking at some of these different ideas here.

This is our chance to go into the bill and to make those changes that we've discussed and haven't had an opportunity to make. We hadn't had a vehicle, so to speak, to make those changes. It's the same logic the government used when they decided to add some of the amendments they added.

I don't think it's fair to accuse one person, one member on this committee, of adding an amendment when someone else on this committee has added an amendment to do something that expands the scope of the original bill. That's the better understanding of why this is here. I hope that helps Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe understand that a bit better.

We certainly want the best outcome for Canadians, and we want the Citizenship Act to be the best possible regulation and law that it can. That's why we've done this, and that's the reason this particular amendment is in here.

I just wanted to make that clear, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Mr. Aboultaif.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Thank you. I'm going to change the questioning to Ms. Girard.

In the existing bill that is proposed, S-245, how does this amendment speak to what we already have? Do we have a mechanism to deal with the situation where compassionate grounds are a fact?

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** Madam Chair, as in my response to another member of this committee moments ago, I would reiterate that those who are benefiting from this bill are generally receiving citizenship automatically by operation of law, so they are not required to go through a citizenship ceremony. That would be the first point.

The second point is that the flexibility already exists where citizenship applicants may need accommodation. As I mentioned, we already have the possibility of virtual citizenship ceremonies. If someone misses their ceremony through no fault of their own, they can be rescheduled. If they have circumstances that may require them to have their ceremony at a later date for reasons of illness and so forth, the citizenship program is facilitative and looks to accommodate those different kinds of circumstances.

Thank you.

• (2110)

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Based on historical records, do we know how often the minister interferes or intervenes in these circumstances? What's the percentage of cases versus regular cases that exist on an annual basis?

If you have those figures, I think they would be helpful to the conversation. Thank you.

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** Madam Chair, I don't currently have statistics before me on the number of requests for accommodation on compassionate grounds. I would have to check what data the department has and provide what is available to this committee at the earliest opportunity.

Thank you.

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

Go ahead, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Girard, I have a brief question for you.

The wording of the amendment we are now discussing mentions compassionate grounds. According to the proposed description, would officials be able to clearly understand what constitutes compassionate grounds and make appropriate decisions? From the legislative standpoint, can the concept of compassionate grounds be applicable to different situations? If not, it would be totally arbitrary or abstract.

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** Guidelines would indeed be necessary for the people who would be reviewing applications, in order to give them parameters and prevent any arbitrary application of this provision.

We need to ask whether compassionate grounds might include instances in which certain people need flexibility because of financial limitations or other factors. Health problems could also be considered on compassionate grounds. For example, could people who have cancer have an exemption, while others with different health problems would not? Determining who is entitled to flexibility and an exemption is a difficult process, and we would like to avoid requiring officials to rule on these. The application of this provision needs to be more consistent if people are to have ready access to the flexibility they need, for all kinds of reasons. It should include financial or other considerations in addition to health constraints.

That's precisely why the regulatory proposal was put forward: to give applicants the opportunity to take part in their citizenship ceremony in accordance with current procedures, or to do so online at a later date.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** For example, compassionate grounds might include parental reasons, such as someone who is the head of a single-parent family, who does not necessarily—

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** Definitely. That's right.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** So the scope of compassionate grounds would be broadened.

In fact, if we were to adopt the amendment as it is currently worded, there is a risk of creating all kinds of problems, and in particular leaving us quite some distance from achieving the main objective of Bill S-245, which is to grant citizenship to people who should never have lost it in the first place.

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** Yes, we have a long way to go.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** We have a really long way to go.

I always get a kick out of my Conservative friends, and especially this evening. I understand what they're up to, and it's altogether legitimate. We're allowed to do this in committee as part of the parliamentary process. However, I'm just wondering about something, and I'd like to ask Ms. Girard about it.

I'd like to report that the messages keep coming into my Twitter account. There are all kinds of people watching us this evening, at 9:15 p.m. I would imagine, Ms. Girard, that your husband is there too. All kinds of people watching us this evening are wondering what the heck we're up to at the moment. At this point, there should be just one amendment left to look at, amendment G-10, and then we'd be done with the amendments, I think—

• (2115)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

Please keep your comments to the amendment we have on the floor. It's amendment CPC-8.

If you can, please keep your comments to the amendment.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Of course, Madam Chair. My comments will continue to be about amendment CPC-8, which concerns compassionate grounds. In fact I believe we will all be needing them this evening.

So, many of the people watching this evening are wondering why we are now discussing amendment CPC-8, which I can read to you once more:

24 (5) Should a person be unable—

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Just one second, I have Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Madam Chair, you've been trying to make sure that we don't repeat ourselves, and I think we've been trying not to do that. I think Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe did just raise this very same issue in his prior intervention.

**The Chair:** We are getting into a debate.

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, if you can avoid repetition, please go ahead.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Yes, but I hadn't yet read the amendment. I have the right to do that, because it's the first time I am doing so. I will therefore read the amendment:

24 (5) Should a person be unable to attend an in-person citizenship ceremony, the Minister may waive this requirement only on compassionate grounds and a virtual option should be offered in those circumstances as requested.

The wording uses the conditional, and says “should be offered in those circumstances”.

Is it possible to have an amendment that would completely change the bill and conditionally have force of law when it uses the wording “should be”? Have you seen that often? I'm asking you the question.

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** I'm not aware of all the precedents, but it's up to Parliament to legislate. We, the officials, are there to implement the law faithfully, as the expression goes.

My understanding of the proposed amendment is that the conditional wording pertains to the applicant's request. That's my assumption.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I asked because I don't really know how I'm going to vote on this amendment.

On the one hand, I'm wondering how compassionate grounds would be applied, as we discussed earlier, and whose scope is extremely broad. On the other, how will an amendment like this be applied if a conditional verb is attached to it?

I will now ask the legislative clerks. Is the wording different in French and English? In French, the conditional is used. I may be mistaken.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe. I will clarify with the legislative clerk and get back to you.

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, I've checked with the legislative clerk. The language that has been used can be used.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Okay, good.

I have a final question about the amendment, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Currently, the act allows someone who makes the request to participate in the citizenship ceremony virtually. If this change is made to the bill and it is incorporated into the act, what difference would it make?

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** Here's what would change. The committee provided statistics that were obtained for the 2022 year—

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Excuse me, Madam Chair, but I'm having trouble hearing, because people in the room are talking a lot.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Can I please request that we not have side conversations so that everyone can understand? With interpretation, it is very difficult to hear if people are speaking on the side. Please avoid side conversations.

Go ahead.

• (2120)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** Briefly, practically speaking, it would take away some of the flexibility the department currently has to combine, as it usually does, the personal and virtual ceremonies. The virtual ceremonies would really be limited to those specified in the requested exception on humanitarian grounds. It's impossible to know ahead of time what that would amount to.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I haven't finished, Madam Chair. I have a lot to say about this amendment.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you.

In the federal government, there is usually a single window through which the public can file complaints about any of the departments. I would imagine that your department sometimes receives complaints from the public.

Since the introduction of virtual citizenship ceremonies, have you received any complaints from people who found the experience unpleasant and regretted not having taken part in the in-person ceremony?

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** I'm not aware of any such complaints. There may have been some, but I haven't heard about them. In view of my responsibilities, I'd like to believe that if such a complaint were made, I would have known about it and received information about it.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Have you received any complaints from people who wanted to attend the citizenship ceremony in person but who were unable to do so, and who refused to attend virtually because they did not like that option?

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** If a virtual ceremony has been scheduled for applicants, and they are emphatic about wanting an in-person ceremony, I believe we do everything possible to accommodate them.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I believe that's all for now.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Hoback.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to go back to Mr. Dhaliwal's conversation that he had. I was going to ask him a question, because he has a lot of constituents in his riding for whom he does a lot of immigration cases, but I don't see him here. He must have just stepped out.

Do you want to come back to me when he comes back?

**The Chair:** Yes, we will come back.

Go ahead, Mr. Kurek.

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**The Chair:** We'll have no side conversations, please.

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** I'm happy to cede the floor back to Mr. Hoback.

**The Chair:** Mr. Kurek has the floor, and then we will go back to Mr. Hoback.

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have two points.

One is very specifically related to the amendment, the carving out of an exemption here and ensuring that the responsibility is placed upon those who will be new citizens.

Obviously, there's a much larger conversation to be had—which we will not have tonight—surrounding the immigration backlogs and certainly some of the challenges. Although my office may not have as much volume, certainly there's a host that could be talked about. I won't go there.

However, I do want to specifically comment on what was said in the previous comments. I have received a fair amount of feedback from constituents and their families who have been frustrated with the move to Zoom ceremonies. It's certainly my hope that this would filter its way up. When I've heard from constituents, in many cases they've come from countries where governments do not welcome criticism, so sometimes they're unwilling to or feel that they may not be able to rock the boat, if I could use that expression.

As a member of Parliament developing a relationship with constituents and specifically navigating the intricacies of casework, especially those circumstances that end up in our offices, these are generally the ones that fall through the cracks.

Certainly, I've heard from a host of constituents and their families that they would have preferred to have an in-person option. Further, there have been a number of instances where I've heard from constituents that, when there have been requests to accommodate and specifically the desire for there to be that in-person option....

In fact, here is a very touching story. It was at the height of COVID. There was an outdoor celebration that took place, where they did the ceremony virtually and then had an outdoor celebration. They were really disappointed that they couldn't do it together, in person. They had an outdoor, distanced celebration that somewhat resembled a wedding or graduation. It was a very touching story. I was sent pictures. It was very moving.

It's certainly feedback that I've heard. If I'm one of 338 members of Parliament hearing that feedback, I have no doubt that there are additional members.

I just want to note that certainly those going through the process don't want to question the process of the country they're asking to become a citizen of. There's a hesitancy. Especially when you hear some of the stories of those who have come to Canada because they're fleeing persecution or whatever the case is, it's completely valid. Their past experience informs their perspective, although, in some cases, they learn how our free and democratic openness, the ability to criticize and the freedoms associated with fair elections—

• (2125)

**The Chair:** Perhaps you could come to the point on the amendment, please, Mr. Kurek.

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Absolutely.

That's where it's the ability to ensure that those voices are heard.

In relation to a question I had asked previously, I won't ask the officials to reanswer, but it would be very helpful to understand that feedback from, I assume, round tables and whatnot. It would be very helpful to understand what types of responses were given as we're confronted with having to deal with some of these circumstances. There could be that fulsome understanding to ensure that policy is actually reflective of what is in the best interests of the people of this country and not necessarily a particular agenda.

With that, I will close my comments for now.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We will go back to Mr. Hoback.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Through you, I'd like to ask a few questions of Mr. Dhaliwal because he does handle a lot of immigration cases. I worked with the gentleman on other committees. I know that he's a fairly honourable person. He wants what's best.

I'm curious. Do you have an example of compassionate grounds and how they function right now, and how this amendment would change that? If it's not accurate, then what would you do to amend it to make it accurate so that it makes it better?

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** First of all, I would like to explain why I left. I left because.... You do have good relationships with the other

side when you travel together. When it comes to Mr. Hoback, he's one of those friends on the other side, and we have a very great relationship, as well as Larry Maguire. He was in the room, and I was telling him—

**The Chair:** Could you come to the point on the amendment, please?

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** I'm going to come back to the point, Madam Chair, because I went there to tell Larry, and said—

**The Chair:** Please, come to the point.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Okay, Madam Chair.

The question he asked me is a very serious question.

In fact, I see many cases come to our office that are of a compassionate nature, and that's not necessarily because we are elected people but because we have hearts. When it comes to officials, they have to go through a lot of things when they make their decisions. It's not necessarily just the thing that is compassionate to us that will fit their criteria. They have to make sure that they do their duty to determine that case.

Today, if we look at any case for which we apply or we inquire about for the waiting times, as was mentioned earlier, Madam Chair, it is 34 to 36 months, because they have to make sure that they do their duty—

• (2130)

**The Chair:** I think this point was raised earlier and was explained.

Mr. Hoback, you asked the question, so the next one I have on the floor to have a question is—

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** He didn't really get a chance to answer it.

**The Chair:** I think he has explained it.

Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** He didn't get a chance to answer the question. He was just heading there.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Are you going to have a point of order on it?

**The Chair:** What he was trying to explain has already been explained, so I'll go to Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** No. I have a point of order, Chair. I was asking if he had any suggestions—

**The Chair:** This is going into debate. It's not a point of order.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** You haven't even heard me. How can you say it's debate?

**The Chair:** You have already raised this. He has answered it.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** No, I have not. You don't know what I'm going to say.

Ma'am, I asked if he had any suggestions to amend it and to make it better so that it functioned better.

He has not gotten to that point in his answer. Would you give him the floor so he could complete his answer?

**The Chair:** I'll ask you to, please, give a quick answer without going into other conversations.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Madam Chair, the short answer is that I already explained that we should give an opportunity to people who want to have this oath ceremony in person. They should be able to go in person. If people do not want to go in person, then they are satisfied, because we are fighting for them in fact. The Conservatives are fighting for those people who want to do it in person.

Parliament is already giving them the opportunity if they want to go and have a personal oath, and we already have that for compassionate reasons. If people are not able to go, for any reason, they should be able to do it anywhere instead of the department determining it and delaying it for another three to four years.

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

Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Just for your information, we will have another amendment after this one. That's just so that you're aware.

I wanted to go back. Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe had asked the officials this question of compassionate grounds. I think it was a good question. I just need some clarity from the officials on this.

It sounded like you were not very supportive of the wording because it's not specific enough. I think that is generally what you were saying, but here's where I'm confused. Is that not what regulations are for? Is that not something that's done on a very regular basis?

I'm sure there are many examples of legislation that is not clear down to the specific details, but it's the implementation by the department through the regulations, through the gazetting process, that actually enumerates all of those important details that we as legislators don't have the ability and the insights, frankly, to do. You probably don't want legislation coming from us that is very prescriptive and that is very specific, because it's likely to cause unintended consequences, as we've talked about many times at these hearings.

I would ask that question to the officials, Madam Chair.

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** Madam Chair, as has been mentioned, flexibility is needed in the system to accommodate a variety of circumstances, but the larger point I've been seeking to make through my comments about design and how the program is delivered is that "one size fits all" equality is not equity. Right now, as Mr. Dhaliwal and others have mentioned, people who have compassionate circumstances have to come forward to the department and make a request. The request needs to be assessed. That takes additional time. It can take additional documentation. Citizenship is delayed.

The Government of Canada needs to do better in terms of accessibility and in terms of how we serve Canadians. Rather than having the critically ill come on bended knee and say, "I need compassionate circumstances. I need some flexibility and I'd still like to become a citizen," the idea is to accommodate these kinds of circumstances by design: If you have no issues and you wish to attend your ceremony, select that option and take your oath at your ceremony. If you have some circumstances, don't take additional

months to make a special exceptional request of the department for accommodation. Select an e-oath. Become a citizen right away. Celebrate that ceremony with your loved ones at a later date, when it's possible for you, if that's an opportunity that you would like to take up.

I have no further comment, Madam Chair. Thank you.

• (2135)

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

According to what I've heard, if this amendment were applied, there would be a lot more paperwork and red tape.

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** That's right.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** And yet the Conservatives are bragging about their common sense and the need to reduce red tape, paperwork and the amount of time required. That may not be their intent, but this amendment would mean that it would take longer to process applications.

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** I'm convinced that this would be an unintended outcome of the proposed amendment, even though I think it was well-intentioned. Practically speaking, however, implementing this amendment would have the effect that was just described.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Okay. Thank you.

Ms. Girard, if we were to vote in favour of amendment CPC-8, and this provision were added to the act, what difference would it make?

We are speaking hypothetically once again. All kinds of hypothetical scenarios were raised during the debates and the work on this bill. As there are a lot of singular circumstances with respect to lost Canadians, we have to look at specific cases.

If this amendment were implemented, what difference would it make?

Let's take a hypothetical case, about which I've spoken before. Let's look at what would happen if Quebec were to become an independent country in a few years. What would happen to children who are born in Quebec afterwards? Logically, given that Canada recognizes dual citizenship, Quebecers born in Canada would have Quebec and Canadian citizenship, but the first and second generations of children of Quebecers born in an independent Quebec, and hence outside Canada, would have Canadian citizenship.

If we were to adopt this amendment, what would change if Quebec were to become a country? The next two generations born outside Canada would have Canadian citizenship and could vote in Canadian federal elections, even though they are living in an independent Quebec.

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** I can't comment on a theoretical scenario with respect to Quebec, but I can confirm two things.

First of all, based on the amendments to the bill that have already been adopted by the committee with respect to Canadian children born abroad, meaning outside of Canada, the second and subsequent generations would have access to citizenship provided that the Canadian parent meets the connection criterion established by the committee. The member could apply this consideration to a scenario.

Secondly, the amendment currently being discussed would not affect this cohort, which would benefit from new provisions, because there wouldn't be a ceremony for them. They would automatically become Canadian citizens. Those born abroad, meaning outside of Canada, would not need to take part in a citizenship ceremony.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** That's the answer I was really looking for. I asked the question in a roundabout way.

When all is said and done, this amendment would change absolutely nothing in terms of first- or second-generation citizenship for children born outside the country.

• (2140)

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** That's right.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Mazier, you have the floor.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Madam Chair, I would like to propose a subamendment, using some common sense here.

Where it says, "Should a person be unable to attend an in-person citizenship ceremony, the Minister may waive this requirement", strike "only on compassionate grounds", and start over again with "and a virtual option". Then strike "should" and replace it with "be offered in those circumstances as requested."

**The Chair:** I will repeat that.

The change that he is requesting is that it will read as, "Should a person be unable to attend an in-person citizenship ceremony, the Minister may waive this requirement and a virtual option be offered in those circumstances as requested."

That is the subamendment.

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Could we have it in writing in French, please? I wouldn't want our interpreters, who are working very hard, to be put under even more pressure. It's not up to them to come up with the wording for a subamendment or an amendment in the other language. I would therefore like to have the official version in French.

Thank you.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I will ask Mr. Mazier to please read it again and, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, I hope you can get the translation.

Yes, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe...?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Madam Chair, I am truly sorry to have to say this, but the interpretation of a subamendment or an amendment is not considered the official wording. That's not something interpreters have in their job description.

I'm sorry, Mr. Mazier, but that's how it works. There are two official languages in Canada, my dear friend. If you want to introduce a subamendment or an amendment, it has to be provided in writing in the official French version. That's how things work if you want to comply with your Canadian statutes.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I will suspend the meeting for two minutes.

• (2140)

(Pause)

• (2145)

**The Chair:** I will read the text as it will stand after the subamendment so everyone can hear the translation. Copies are not being provided.

It reads, "Should a person be unable to attend an in-person citizenship ceremony, the Minister may waive this requirement and a virtual option be offered in those circumstances as requested."

It strikes off "only on compassionate grounds" after the word "requirement", and also the word "should" after the words "virtual option".

We have a subamendment on the floor.

Go ahead, Mr. Mazier.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think this really does strike a nice balance, given everything that's been said.

For the department, they have very clear directions that we have a compromise there. Even if someone doesn't have access to anything, there is an escape hatch, and I think this is one of the more concerning things I have seen in any type of legislation we write. Many times people in rural Canada are forgotten and it's not on purpose. I know it's not, but that flavour, that ability for a citizen, a person, to be able to appeal the process and be able to work with the government and work with the department, this clause, this phrase, would allow them to do that. I think it's an important thing to do, especially when it comes to citizenship. You're still dealing with a new person in this country, and they're very unfamiliar. For heaven's sake, they'd be very intimidated in dealing with the government.

They've been questioning everything they were doing anyway, and I think this would show a nice balance to the intent of this legislation, and I would hope that the committee can support this one amendment. It would really address and put some calm over the whole process and over the whole bill.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** We'll have Mr. Kurek and then Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you to Mr. Mazier for what I think is really getting at the heart of both what the Conservatives are trying to accomplish with this amendment but also, in light of the feedback received from other parties and other officials, to make sure that it gives the discretion required while maintaining the heart of what we're endeavouring to accomplish, and that is to ensure that the value of that process of joining the Canadian family is in fact preserved.

I think, actually, if one looks at this amendment in the context of the larger conversation and specifically the subamendment that takes in some of that feedback—and we're endeavouring to be constructive here—it accomplishes and checks all the boxes required to ensure that what would be passed as part of Bill S-245 actually accomplishes the stated objective.

I won't get into some of the details about the scope being opened up and some of the debates surrounding Senator Martin and some of the past elements of what got us to this point. I won't go there, but I would hope that members of this committee would see that we're certainly willing to be constructive and collaborative and get to a point where some of the concerns that have been raised are addressed. I think this will be a step forward, both for this amendment but also for the bill itself.

● (2150)

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** So my understanding is that if the subamendment were adopted, the proposed wording in the amendment would become: “Should a person be unable to attend an in-person citizenship ceremony, the Minister may waive this requirement and a virtual option be offered in those circumstances as requested.”

Ms. Girard, if we were to adopt this modified version of the amendment, what change would it make in comparison to what we have now?

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** Speaking for the officials here today, we are not sure that there would be much of a difference between this wording and the existing provisions in terms of future citizenship ceremonies.

On the other hand, as I said earlier, it does not reflect the regulatory proposal with respect to a third option for people who are unable, for a variety of reasons or circumstances, to take part in a ceremony in person or virtually. These would likely have to be good reasons, whether temporary or permanent. In fact, it's for a future proposal.

I have nothing more to add.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I understand, but if we were to adopt this amendment, it wouldn't change anything with respect to the third option.

At the moment, when someone wants to take part in a citizenship ceremony virtually...

I'm waiting for people in the room to stop talking, Madam Chair.

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** Madam Chair, could the member repeat his question?

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I may in fact have been the one to have misunderstood. Did you say that if we were to adopt this amendment it would change the third option you mentioned?

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** I'm going to clarify the regulatory proposal. In addition to allowing people to decide whether to take part in a ceremony in person or virtually, as is currently the case, the proposal is to allow those applying for citizenship to select an option that would allow them to take the oath online and attend a ceremony at a later date.

This wording does not clearly indicate that this possibility is available. Indeed, the wording before us seems to mainly reflect the current state of affairs, which is that you can choose between an in-person ceremony and a virtual one, but it does not reflect the intent of the regulatory proposal, which is that people can choose to take the oath online and participate in a ceremony afterwards.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I understand precisely what you're saying. Nevertheless, I'm not the one who came up with that wording; it was the Conservatives who proposed a subamendment to their own amendment.

The English version says “virtual option”. In French, “option virtuelle” could be a reference to responding online to the connection criterion—

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, I'm sorry for interrupting.

Go ahead, Mr. Dhaliwal.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Madam Chair, I know there's an important discussion going on, but if there's a hard stop at 10 o'clock, we should give Madam Kwan an opportunity to bring up the motion that she raised earlier on students, if she wants to.

**The Chair:** Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe has the floor. Let him finish.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** What I am trying to point out is that our Conservative friends proposed a subamendment to their own amendment, but that it doesn't seem to change anything at all compared to what is currently being done. That's more or less what I was saying.

You've given a partial answer to my question: you too appear to be wondering about the option for responding online with respect to the connection clause and participating in the ceremony afterwards. The French words “option virtuelle” could cover what is currently the case. Logically speaking, it could be interpreted in that way.

● (2155)

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** It's possible, but that remains to be seen.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** It's true that it's vague.

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** That's right.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Redekopp—

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Madam Chair, on a point of order—

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** I wanted to speak to the subamendment.

**The Chair:** We have a hard stop at 10 o'clock. We will have no services beyond 10 o'clock.

Ms. Kwan, would you like to have the floor to add to what had you mentioned at the beginning?

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** I have point of order, Chair.

**The Chair:** Yes, Mr. Hoback.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** I understand that you have run out of the budget for this committee. You don't have a budget for meals and things like that. Are you going to propose increasing the budget for these meetings so that members and interpreters and staff can actually be properly fed at night, instead of just ordering in pizza at the last minute?

**The Chair:** I will work on that with the clerk to see what can be done.

Ms. Kwan.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Excuse me, Madam Chair.

Will you be bringing that to committee, then, to review and vote on? You will actually have to amend the original budget—

**The Chair:** I will discuss it with the clerk and the authorities, and then get back to the committee. I will have to check on that and then get back.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** When can I expect you to get back to us?

**The Chair:** In the next meeting.

Go ahead, Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** On a point of order, Madam Chair, I'm trying to understand what's going on here. Forgive me, because I don't necessarily know all the rules.

We are debating an amendment and then a subamendment, and I believe you have a speaking list on your paper there. I'm confused—maybe the clerk can help us out here—as to how we are moving to Ms. Kwan when you have a speaking order and we're on a clause-by-clause subamendment.

**The Chair:** Let me clarify that.

She mentioned, and I said to her, that she could do that at the end. I have the speaking list. That will be maintained. We will be coming back to that.

With that, I will pass the—

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Madam Chair, I'm not done on the point of order.

I'd like to know, because that doesn't jibe with what I know about how committees work. Could the clerk confirm that this is something you actually can do?

**The Chair:** Our resources are running out. I'm suspending the meeting.

I have the speaking list. We will come back to it.

[The meeting was suspended at 9:58 p.m., Monday, June 5]

[The meeting resumed at 3:36 p.m., Tuesday, June 6]

● (3935)

**The Chair:** I call this meeting to order.

We are resuming meeting number 70 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. We are continuing our clause-by-clause study of Bill S-245.

When we left off, we were debating a subamendment to amendment CPC-8. We had Mr. Redekopp and Mr. Mazier on the floor, so I will go to Mr. Redekopp, as he was on the speaking list.

Mr. Redekopp, go ahead.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Just before we get going, I wish to reopen debate on my previously adjourned motion on the Indian students. The motion reads:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee conduct a study into news reports that international students admitted into Canada with valid study permits were issued fraudulent college acceptance letters by immigration consultants, and are now facing deportation, and that this study undertake at least three meetings; that the committee invite the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship for one meeting along with his departmental officials to testify; that the committee invite the Minister responsible for the Canada Border Services Agency for one meeting along with his departmental officials to testify; that the committee invite affected international students and representatives from Colleges & Institutes Canada; and that the committee request that the Canada Border Services Agency temporarily suspend the deportation of affected international students until those selected as witnesses can testify before the committee.

As I've said before, I have spoken with these students—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting. It's a dilatory motion, so you just have to bring it and we have to go into a vote.

(Motion negated: nays 6; yeas 5)

**The Chair:** The motion is defeated.

We are back on the subamendment to CPC-8. We will now vote on the subamendment.

(Subamendment negated: nays 7; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** Now we are on the amendment, CPC-8.

Mr. Redekopp, go ahead.

● (3940)

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thanks, Madam Chair.



I think we spoke at length about this yesterday and had a great time last night with all of us here, so I don't think you want to hear all that again. Some of us may want to hear it, but some of us don't. I just want to let you know that we have another amendment to do after this one is completed.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clerk, would you please take the vote? We will be voting on CPC-8.

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

**The Chair:** Yes, Mr. Kmiec.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Madam Chair, I move that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the Act is amended by adding the following:

24(6) where citizenship ceremonies are conducted virtually, they must

- a) be recorded for the purposes of confirming the oath of citizenship has been appropriately carried out
- b) be geolocated within the territory of Canada

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Yes, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I have the amendment before me, but the interpreter unfortunately did not have it, and could therefore not interpret it. It's not only for me, but for everyone watching online. The interpreter should be provided with the amendment so that she can interpret it.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** She has it.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** She says that she has just received it.

Could we please have the amendment read in French, for the people who are watching?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Can I ask Mr. Kmiec to please read the amendment again?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** I'm going to read it in French, Madam Chair. Je propose que le projet de loi S-245 soit modifié par adjonction, après la ligne 19, page 1, du nouvel article suivant:

1.4 L'article 24 de la Loi est modifié par adjonction de ce qui suit :

24 (6) Lorsque les cérémonies de citoyenneté sont virtuelles, elles doivent

- a) être enregistrées afin de confirmer que le serment de citoyenneté a été prêté de façon appropriée
- b) être géolocalisées sur le territoire du Canada

[*English*]

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

We have amendment CPC-9 on the floor.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Can I explain the logic of this?

**The Chair:** Yes, Mr. Kmiec, go ahead.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Very briefly, the logic is as follows. We know that certain citizens.... As I mentioned in a previous meeting, the Order Paper question that was signed off on by the parliamentary secretary showed that there are indeed thousands of virtual ceremonies being held. This would be an amendment to the act to ensure that, when you do take it virtually in those instances where it does happen, you are geolocated to the country of Canada and you are not overseas in another country when you take your oath of citizenship, and that we record those.

It would be a good practice for IRCC to do more recordings and to keep them on file. That way they can confirm whether the oath of citizenship was taken.

Thank you, Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Seeing no further debate, we will vote on amendment CPC-9.

(Amendment negated: nays 6; yeas 5)

**The Chair:** Mr. Kmiec, you have the floor.

● (3945)

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I do have another amendment I'd like to move. After I have read it in English, I will read it in French as well.

I move that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the Act is amended by adding the following

24(7): where a citizenship ceremony has been scheduled, the Department must provide the person with at least seven days' notice prior to the date of the ceremony.

[*Translation*]

I will now read it in French.

Je propose que le projet de loi S-245 soit modifié par adjonction, après la ligne 19, page 1, du nouvel article suivant:

1.4 L'article 24 de la Loi est modifié par adjonction de ce qui suit

24 (7) Lorsqu'une cérémonie de citoyenneté est prévue, le ministère donne à la personne un préavis d'au moins sept jours avant la date de la cérémonie.

[*English*]

I'll explain the logic of this one. It's pretty simple. After hearing some of the debate at the table about persons having difficulty planning ahead of time, I did take the liberty of looking up what other countries do. Right now, we can make mandatory at least a seven days' notice for a person when they have a citizenship ceremony scheduled. In the United Kingdom, citizenship ceremonies have to happen within three months of receiving an invitation, so there is actually quite a bit more notice being provided. In New Zealand, there is a four weeks' notice before the ceremony, so it is not unusual for countries to provide a notice period for the department to inform the person that they are now eligible to take the oath of citizenship, and by which day. There is a notice period that gives people time to plan out when they can reasonably be there, and if there is a need to reschedule, they can take it up with the department.

So that's the logic. It's just an easier method for new citizens to take the oath of citizenship, making sure of their timeline so that their families can all be there.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** I just want to let you know that we will have another amendment after this one.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We will go to a vote on CPC-10.

(Amendment negated: nays 6; yeas 5)

**The Chair:** Next up is Mr. Kmiec.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have another amendment I'd like to propose. This one is that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause—

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I have a point of order, Madam Chair. The interpreter doesn't have the amendment.

I'm sorry. I'm not doing this for myself, but for those who are watching us.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe. Give me just one minute.

The clerk is sending it to the interpreters.

Mr. Kmiec, could you please start? The interpreters have it and the officials have it. It has been sent to all members by email.

● (3950)

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** I will begin with the English, and then I'll read the French.

I move that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the Act is amended by adding the following

24(8) where a citizenship ceremony has been scheduled for a person, employers in federally regulated industries must grant that person leave for one day to accommodate the ceremony.

[*Translation*]

I am now going to read it in French.

Je propose que le projet de loi S-245 soit modifié par adjonction, après la ligne 19, page 1, du nouvel article suivant...

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Hold on for one second.

Someone from the interpreters said they have not received it. The English version has not been received by the interpreter.

Can you send it?

Interpreters, have you received the English copy? It has been sent by email.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** The staff interpreters have in fact received the email, but the interpreter today is a freelancer. He doesn't have access to the confidential documents and can't receive emails from the clerk. He definitely requires a sheet of paper on which the amendment is written in black and white.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** On a point of order, Madam Chair, I believe the bells are going.

**The Chair:** The bells have started ringing. The vote has been called.

Do I have unanimous consent to continue?

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Chair:** We don't have unanimous consent.

● (3955)

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Chair, on a point of order, would there be unanimous consent to revert to the discussion of the motion on international students and discuss that during the bells?

**The Chair:** I did not get unanimous consent to continue the meeting, so the meeting is suspended.

We will come back after the vote.

● (3955)

(Pause)

● (4045)

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

We have CPC amendment 11 on the floor.

Mr. Kmiec, go ahead.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

To continue on this particular amendment, this is based on what has been said at committee regarding citizenship ceremonies. I believe that citizenship ceremonies are important, as I've said before, and that we should offer an opportunity for employers, since we regulate federally regulated employers in the federal jurisdiction, to accommodate persons who are going to the ceremony. They should provide one day of leave so people can do this. This would be a once-in-a-lifetime usage. I don't think it's a lot to ask employers to do this.

I will note that the Province of Manitoba—I'm surprised that my province hasn't done this, but Manitoba has—offers four hours of unpaid leave for citizenship ceremonies, which is pretty impressive. I think it should be a standard, for at least those we can regulate, that we do, in our jurisdiction, offer a day of leave for citizenship ceremonies.

Thank you, Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Redekopp, go ahead.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** I want to let you know that we have another amendment after this one.

**The Chair:** Seeing no further debate, we will vote on CPC-11.

(Amendment negatived: nays 6; yeas 5)

**The Chair:** The amendment is defeated.

Mr. Kmiec, go ahead.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** I will read CPC amendment 12 into the record.

[*Translation*]

I move that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the Act is amended by adding the following:

24(9) The Minister must disclose in advance to Members of Parliament the location, time, and date of all citizenship ceremonies that will be attended by their constituents, either in-person or virtual.

[*English*]

The logic of this is simple. As parliamentarians, we should know when our constituents are becoming citizens of Canada. This is not done on a consistent basis.

I know that in my riding, I often get an invitation when there's a special occasion when it's being done, but this is not being done on a consistent basis. I remember one year when my pharmacist became a Canadian citizen, I wasn't made aware of when this was going to happen.

It would be good because sometimes, because of how large some of our cities are, there are people from different ridings being lumped together in some of these ceremonies. If all parliamentarians knew, we could make plans to attend. I think, as parliamentarians, we have a responsibility to be there and to participate in what is really a huge life milestone for many persons who are obtaining their citizenship.

I have never had a citizenship ceremony in person that I regretted attending. They are all terrific to attend. I'm hoping we can find

consensus at the table here that it should be a requirement to tell members of Parliament when citizenship ceremonies are happening.

We already get a list of new citizens. It's not too much to ask the department to send us a list of all citizenship ceremonies where our residents are going to take the oath of citizenship. It would just be one little extra step. That way, we can make ourselves available to participate in this. We could help the department make sure there are good, strong showings at the citizenship ceremonies, as well.

Thank you.

● (4050)

**The Chair:** Mr. Redekopp, go ahead.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** I will just mention that we have yet another amendment after this one.

**The Chair:** Okay. We will have a recorded vote on CPC amendment 12.

(Amendment negatived: nays 6; yeas 5)

**The Chair:** Mr. Kmiec, go ahead.

● (4055)

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Madam Chair, do you want me to start reading amendment 13 from CPC, or do you want me to just pause for a moment to allow it to be distributed?

**The Chair:** Let me just check.

Give them a second. It's being distributed to the officials, so we can begin after that.

Okay, Mr. Kmiec. Please begin reading amendment 13.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** All right, Madam Chair.

I move that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the Act is amended by adding the following:

24(10) A document of citizenship must be provided immediately upon completion of the oath of citizenship.

[*English*]

The logic of this amendment, since we're doing what I would call a statutory review of the Citizenship Act, is that at the citizenship ceremony, when you attend in person, and actually when you attend it virtually as well, the department has you cut your permanent residency card. The PR card is cut. Oftentimes they ask you to cut it visibly in front of these civil servants, because you can't have a PR card and citizenship at the same time, obviously.

What happens then is that they mail a document of citizenship. But they already know who has attended there. They can kind of check them off the list. There's no reason that you couldn't have them just print off the document of citizenship. I personally would much rather that we go back to the old way. I won't fish out my citizenship card from my pocket, but the old cards are much better. This is a big document of citizenship.

The reason that one is so important is that you need that to get your passport. You need that for your passport application. It's 30 days or however long it takes, depending on how remote you are. You may live in a remote community or in an apartment block where there may not be mail delivery every single day, depending on how the contractors work with Canada Post.

The logic of this is to just do it at the ceremony. It's just a process issue. Just give it to the persons as they're there. Because citizenship ceremonies may take an hour or two or three to complete, I think the department has enough time to check off who is there and check them off digitally in the database. Then they can just print off the document at the location, or have them ready to go. Whoever doesn't show up, the department can just bring it back to their offices.

I think it's a huge process improvement for new Canadians.

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

We have CPC amendment 13 on the floor.

Mr. Redekopp, go ahead.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** We will have another amendment after this one.

**The Chair:** We will now vote on CPC amendment 13.

(Amendment negatived: nays 6; yeas 5)

**The Chair:** Yes, Mr. Kmiec.

• (4100)

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Madam Chair, I have amendment 14. There will be amendment 15 after this as well, but I'll stop myself.

Do you need time to distribute the French and English copies?

**The Chair:** Yes, Mr. Kmiec. Just give us a second while the amendment is distributed.

Okay. Everybody has it.

Mr. Kmiec, you can start reading CPC amendment 14.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I move that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the Act is amended by adding the following:

Part VI, section 24.1

Respecting holidays and days of significance to promote Canada's multicultural identity

24.1 Citizenship ceremonies may not be scheduled on enumerated days of significance. The Minister or the Department must take steps to offer alternative days in accordance with the respect and promotion of Canada's multicultural identity.

[*English*]

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

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** I can explain the logic of this amendment.

It's really in the title: "Respecting holidays and days of significance to promote Canada's multicultural identity". I think we'd all agree that there are very few people who would show up to a citi-

zenship ceremony on Christmas Day or Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day or any other major holiday of the year. There are many people who celebrate holidays that are not recognized right now in statute, that are not either directly referred to...or these holidays are on a different calendar. They may be on a lunar calendar. There are the Julian and Gregorian calendars in different Christian denominations, so it does sometimes move around in the year. Just as we shouldn't expect someone to come when it is their New Year's celebration, whether it is Rosh Hashanah or one of the others—Vaisakhi is an excellent one—we shouldn't expect them to come on their New Year's. They're going to be with family and they should spend it with family.

The department should be mindful of it, as should the minister, and therefore they can work around those days. There are 365 days in the year. I don't think it's too much to ask that the department find days that work for new Canadians who are about to take the oath of citizenship and not force them to do so on a date that is of significance to them.

Thank you, Chair.

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

We will vote on amendment CPC-14.

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

• (4105)

**The Chair:** Mr. Kmiec, go ahead.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

We're on CPC-15, and there's CPC-16 afterwards, as well.

On CPC-15, unfortunately, if we had passed the previous one, Chair, then we wouldn't need this one now, but this is the amendment.

[*Translation*]

I move that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the Act is amended by adding the following:

Respecting holidays and days of significance to promote Canada's multicultural identity

24.1 (1) Citizenship ceremonies may not be scheduled on Simbang Gabi.

[English]

Simbang Gabi is a devotional nine-day series of masses attended by Filipino Catholics, usually celebrated during Advent from December 16 to December 24 in preparation for Christmas Day. It's regarded as an important tradition to praise and worship God. This religious tradition encourages community development and camaraderie among parishioners through a common effort of prayer, celebration, fellowship and charity. It's especially important to Filipino Catholics.

Thank you, Chair.

**The Chair:** We will be voting on amendment CPC-15.

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** Mr. Redekopp, go ahead.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have another amendment I'd like to move, and I believe we have another one after this one as well.

I will move that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the Act is amended by adding the following:

Respecting holidays and days of significance to promote Canada's multicultural identity

24.1(2) Citizenship ceremonies may not be scheduled on Undas.

I'll just wait until everybody has it, and then I'll continue.

**The Chair:** Yes, it has been distributed.

Mr. Redekopp, you can please continue.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

This is a Filipino holiday. They take this day to remember their deceased friends and family, and it allows them to celebrate those who have gone on before them. My friend Mike from Saskatoon told me of the importance of these Filipino holidays to maintain the unique Filipino culture.

As an interesting note, where did the name Undas come from? Filipinos have a habit of shortening words to make them simpler, and this name is a short form of *Día de Todos los Santos* or "day of all saints". All Saints' Day is what this is celebrating.

Again, I think it's important that we recognize and are sensitive to the other cultures that are in our country. That's why I'm moving this amendment, and I would welcome everybody's support.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

● (4110)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Redekopp has moved amendment CPC-16, so we will take the vote on this amendment.

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** Mr. Redekopp, you have the floor.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have another one to do, and there will be another one after this.

**The Chair:** Can you give us a second while it is being distributed?

Okay, go ahead.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** This is our amendment 17, and there will be another one, Madam Chair.

I move that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the Act is amended by adding the following:

Respecting holidays and days of significance to promote Canada's multicultural identity

24.1(3) Citizenship ceremonies may not be scheduled during the Lunar New Year.

Again, this is very important. There are 365 days in the calendar when we can schedule citizenship ceremonies. We want to make sure we respect the different cultures and people in our country. We're a multicultural country. Lunar New Year is one of these days.

I have a note here from a friend of mine named Tang, and he said that they celebrate Lunar New Year because it is the first day of the new year, and everyone would come back home no matter where they were. They might work in another province or even in another country, but their families expect them to be reunited with them. My friend William said that the new year is an important family reunion occasion, so those who are living or working far away would return home prior to the holiday.

You can see that, if there were a citizenship ceremony scheduled on that day, people who celebrate Lunar New Year simply wouldn't be there. This is why I believe it's important that we respect that. We, of course, want to encourage people to attend citizenship ceremonies, so let's reflect that in the way that we schedule them. That's why this is here.

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

We have CPC amendment 17 on the floor. Seeing no debate, we will vote.

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** Mr. Kmiec, go ahead.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have CPC-18, followed by CPC-19 right afterwards.

● (4115)

**The Chair:** If you can just give us a second, this is being distributed so that everyone can have it.

Okay, Mr. Kmiec, you can continue, please. The amendment has been distributed to all the members.

[Translation]

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I move that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the Act is amended by adding the following:

Respecting holidays and days of significance to promote Canada's multicultural identity

24.1 (4) Citizenship ceremonies may not be scheduled during the Mid-Autumn Festival.

[English]

This is a fairly important holiday. The mid-autumn festival is also called the moon festival or the mooncake festival. If you haven't had mooncake, Madam Chair, I highly recommend it. I've had it many times before with my family. The festival "is a celebration of the rice harvest and many fruits [that go along with it]. Ceremonies are held both to give thanks for the harvest and to encourage the harvest-giving light to return again in the coming year. It is also a reunion time for families".

Families would be unable to attend should they have a family member who is about to take the oath of citizenship. Therefore, it should not be scheduled on that day so that they can spend time with family. The citizenship ceremony should happen on a different day.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** We have CPC amendment 18 on the floor. Seeing no further debate, we will vote.

(Amendment negated: nays 7; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** Mr. Kmiec, go ahead.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm just giving you notice now that there is a CPC-20 after this.

Should I wait until CPC-19 is distributed?

**The Chair:** Yes, just give us a second.

Okay, Mr. Kmiec, you can continue. CPC-19 has been distributed.

[Translation]

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I move that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the Act is amended by adding the following:

Respecting holidays and days of significance to promote Canada's multicultural identity

24.1 (5) Citizenship ceremonies may not be scheduled on Diwali.

[English]

Diwali is the festival of lights. It's the most important holiday in the Hindu calendar. It symbolizes the spiritual victory of light over darkness, good over evil, and knowledge over ignorance. It's also celebrated with several other religions in India—I thought I should note that.

I think it's important that we not hold citizenship ceremonies on those days because we have many residents of Canada becoming citizens who are faithful Hindus. Therefore, we should make sure that we respect Diwali.

• (4120)

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

(Amendment negated: nays 7; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** Mr. Kmiec, go ahead.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

This is CPC-20. There is a CPC-21 coming as well, so I give you notice.

This could all have been avoided if we had just voted for the first one.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** [*Inaudible—Editor*] 365.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Absolutely not. We are tempered and merciful on this side.

**The Chair:** Mr. Dhaliwal, it already cannot be 365 days. We don't have it on Christmas, Easter, Victoria Day or Labour Day.

Mr. Kmiec, please proceed.

[Translation]

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** In amendment CPC-20, I move that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the Act is amended by adding the following:

Respecting holidays and days of significance to promote Canada's multicultural identity

24.1 (6) Citizenship ceremonies may not be scheduled during Navratri.

[English]

Madam Chair, the logic of this one is that Navratri is an annual Hindu festival in honour of the goddess Durga that spans nine nights. It is celebrated differently in India's various regions. For many people, it's a time of religious reflection and fasting, while for others it's a time for dancing and feasting.

Again, persons who have a citizenship ceremony on one of those days may not be able to attend for religious reasons. Therefore, we should not be scheduling citizenship ceremonies during those days, when a person would be unable to attend.

Thank you, Chair.

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

(Amendment negated: nays 7; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** Mr. Kmiec, go ahead.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

CPC-21 is being distributed.

I am giving notice that there is a CPC-22 as well coming afterwards.

• (4125)

**The Chair:** Just give us a second before you read. It's being distributed to all the members.

[Translation]

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I move that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the Act is amended by adding the following:

Respecting holidays and days of significance to promote Canada's multicultural identity

24.1 (7) Citizenship ceremonies may not be scheduled on Holi.

[English]

The logic of this is similar to the other ones. Holi is a popular and significant Hindu festival, celebrated as the festival of colours and spring. We should not be putting citizenship ceremonies on those special days for Hindus.

Thank you, Chair.

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

We have CPC amendment 21 on the floor.

Seeing no debate, we will vote on CPC amendment 21.

(Amendment negated: nays 7; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** Mr. Kmiec, go ahead.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

CPC-22 is next.

I also give notice that CPC-23 will be after that.

**The Chair:** Please just give us a second. Amendment CPC-22 is being distributed.

[Translation]

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

In amendment CPC-20, I move that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the Act is amended by adding the following:

Respecting holidays and days of significance to promote Canada's multicultural identity

24.1 (8) Citizenship ceremonies may not be scheduled on Vaisakhi.

[English]

On Vaisakhi, Sikhs celebrate the inauguration of the Khalsa, gathering with their community in gurdwaras all around the country. Together, they listen to kirtans, read sacred scriptures and reflect on the timeless values of peace and charity. Vaisakhi also coincides with the time of harvest in India, inspiring generosity and thankfulness for the many blessings we receive.

• (4130)

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

We have CPC amendment 22 on the floor.

Seeing no debate, we will vote on CPC amendment 22.

(Amendment negated: nays 7; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** Mr. Redekopp, go ahead.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have amendment 23, and there will be a 24, possibly even a 25. I don't want to keep you on the edge of your seats.

I'll wait until this one is distributed properly.

**The Chair:** I'll just suspend the meeting for two or three minutes so that everyone can take a little break.

While the meeting is suspended, this is being distributed.

• (4130)

(Pause)

• (4135)

**The Chair:** We will resume.

We have CPC amendment 23.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I will just read amendment 23. I move that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the Act is amended by adding the following:

Respecting holidays and days of significance to promote Canada's multicultural identity

24.1(9) Citizenship ceremonies may not be scheduled on Guru Nanak Dev Ji's Gurburab.

In my Sikh community and with Sikh friends, Guru Nanak Dev Ji's *Gurburab* is very important. It celebrates the birth of the first Sikh guru and the founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak.

As part of these celebrations, Sikhs gather to meditate, sing kirtans and reflect on the core value of Sikhism and the teachings of Guru Nanak, such as to remember God constantly, to earn an honest livelihood, and to share their earnings with everyone through charity. I think we've all experienced that as we've been to the various parades and celebrations. We all know that the Sikh people are very generous. They're always feeding everybody who comes around. It's about their values and the way their community acts out their faith.

This is a very important day for them, and it's important, I think, for us to recognize that and make sure that we are not scheduling citizenship ceremonies on that day, as they have other important things they need to attend to.

This is the amendment, and I would like to ask my colleagues to support this amendment.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Lalonde, go ahead.

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** I want to thank the member opposite for raising and bringing these amendments. What I see is definitely filibustering on the clause-by-clause. Lost Canadians have expressed through social media... I know that my colleague, Ms. Kwan, made a public statement on this.

I think at this point it is very important that we realize that the department always has a consideration when it comes to citizenship ceremonies. I am very happy to see that the member opposite has finally recognized that we are having in-person ceremonies, as we have discussed many times.

[*Translation*]

It's very important for us to have the department's engagement, for us to speak with the communities, and for us to discuss important matters and what they mean. I can tell you that when I attend citizenship ceremonies, I can sense that the community takes pride in it. I did so during Citizenship Week, and there were people from many nations participating in this special event with us.

That's why I can't support this amendment at this time.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mrs. Lalonde.

Mr. Redekopp, go ahead.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Since Mrs. Lalonde raised this issue, I want to be very clear. She raised the issue of the Indian students we have talked about, and I want to make it very clear to everybody that I have raised this issue four times. I tried to bring it to this committee and tried to get this committee to look at this issue. Every single time, the Liberals and the NDP have voted against speaking to that issue. So I want everyone—

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

• (4140)

**The Chair:** Mrs. Lalonde, go ahead.

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** We are talking about an amendment about oath ceremonies.

**The Chair:** Yes, thank you.

Mrs. Lalonde is right. We are on CPC-23 now, so please direct all your questions on CPC-23.

That's a valid point of order.

Mr. Redekopp, can you keep your comments on CPC-23?

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd just note that Mrs. Lalonde was speaking of that very issue. I wanted to set the record straight on that, that it's not us who are slowing this down.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Kmiec, go ahead.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** On the matter of this amendment, amendment 23, we've passed more amendments at this meeting today than I think at any prior meeting. I stand to be corrected, but I think we have. We take every amendment seriously; we've been going through them during this process. I think this amendment is worthy of consideration just on the merits of the individual amendment.

We weren't able to submit new amendments at the time. As you will remember, Madam Chair, the opposite side voted down my proposal to have amendments brought in by May 15. We're simply trying to get through each of our ideas and to see that they are given the exact same time all other amendments are given.

I think this is a worthy one to do. Citizenship ceremonies are planned all the time throughout the year by the department. We can

legislate—we're legislators and that's exactly what we're supposed to be doing at this table—and give direction to the department that they shall not do certain things in a certain way or that they shall do certain things in a different way. That is the whole point of legislation. This is very simple. It's just directing them not to schedule citizenship ceremonies on a very specific day of significance to Sikhism. That's really all we're asking them to do. We have not been prolonging debate on any of the prior amendments today, bringing them to a vote expeditiously and making the points we need to make on behalf of our constituents and supporters throughout the country who do believe this is important.

I think amendment 23, along with other amendments we may have to bring forward.... I'll note that there has been plenty of extra time allocated for the consideration of clause-by-clause by you, Madam Chair, and there hasn't been time given for international students. There are issues that are very urgent—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting, Mr. Kmiec, but I would request that you please keep your comments to CPC-23.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Back to CPC-23.... We have other amendments that we will continue to propose at this table. This one is worthy of consideration, and I hope all members will support it.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Perkins, go ahead.

**Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

This is my first attendance at this committee, although I have been an associate member of the committee since I was elected.

Since it was raised by the government member, Mrs. Lalonde, I would just say that we have not been having a great deal of discussion on this amendment or other amendments, in order to have speedy consideration of these things. As some of the government members will know, I had the honour of sitting on the finance committee for 27 hours recently and talking for 18 of them. We could start doing that here, if we wanted to, but I think the nature of collegiality.... I think the opposition members have been very generous in just introducing the amendment, as we have been, and not speaking in great detail, each one of us, to that amendment, which we could do.

If the government would like us to start doing that, they could keep questioning the validity of these things, and I'm sure we can find the time to speak more frequently to these amendments, all of us who have a right to speak here.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Seeing no further debate, we will vote on CPC-23.

(Amendment negated: nays 7; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** Mr. Kmiec.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you, Madam Chair.



This is CPC-24. I'm giving you warning now that there is a CPC-25. I'll wait for it to be distributed.

• (4145)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Kmiec. While it is being distributed, you can go ahead, please.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

As I did earlier, I will now read out amendment CPC-24, beginning with the French version.

Je propose que le projet de loi S-245 soit modifié par adjonction, après la ligne 19, page 1, du nouvel article suivant:

1.4 L'article 24 de la Loi est modifié par adjonction de ce qui suit:

Respect des jours fériés et des jours d'importance pour la promotion de l'identité multiculturelle du Canada

24.1(10) Les cérémonies de citoyenneté ne peuvent avoir lieu le jour de Bandi Chhor Divas.

[*English*]

On Bandi Chhor Divas, Sikhs commemorate Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji for standing up for the freedom and human rights of others at the cost of his own, celebrating his release and that of the 52 others he ushered to freedom. Together we admire his inspiring endurance and compassion, and honour the message of hope that he brought to all those suffering oppression.

I think it's important that we ensure that citizenship ceremonies are not held on that day so that Sikhs across the country who are eligible to take an oath of citizenship do not have to choose between taking the oath of citizenship and commemorating this great guru.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Kmiec has moved an amendment, CPC-24. Seeing no debate, we will vote.

(Amendment negated: nays 7; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have CPC-25 that's being distributed. I'll just wait for that.

**The Chair:** Can you please hold for two minutes?

Okay, it has been distributed, Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

This is for new clause 1.4. It is that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the Act is amended by adding the following:

Respecting holidays and days of significance to promote Canada's multicultural identity

24.1(11) Citizenship ceremonies may not be scheduled on the first day of Ramadan.

As we all know, Ramadan is a 30-day festival or celebration. It's a very important time of the year for those of the Muslim faith. That first day is always a very significant day as they begin Ramadan.

I have just a couple of things I wanted to read. Fatima from my riding told me this:

Ramadan, the 9th month of the Islamic calendar, is a time of spiritual rejuvenation when Muslims spend time reflecting on how to become the best they can be. The primary focus is fasting which fosters self control, mindfulness, gratitude, and feeding the soul. During this month, there is renewal of intention to be more [focused on] acts of worship with more prayers, charitable deeds, and better overall conduct.

She goes on to say that it's also a time when families gather to share the Iftar, or breaking of the fast together, traditionally with dates, as was the practice of the prophet Muhammad.

I'm sure all of us have been to Iftars. It's a wonderful time when.... For those of us who don't fast, it's not actually a good thing, because we end up gaining weight during the whole period. The whole point is you have to fast to balance off the Iftar, but I'm learning. I have done a little bit of fasting and my goal is to get better at that.

Mubarak sent me this, which I thought was very touching. He said:

My faith is one of the most important parts of my life. The religion of Islam is my identity, my hope and my lifeline. I like to celebrate everything that has to do with my religion. For example the month of Ramadan, it is one of the most important months on the Islamic calendar. It is a month of fasting with a lot of prayers but with very less sleep and food.... To me, it is like a physical and spiritual boot camp in which I try to enhance my spirituality, morality and seek nearness to The God Almighty not only for a month but for the entire year until the next Ramadan arrives. It also helps me physically to cleanse myself in many ways.

I think this is a very important time for Muslims in Canada. That's why I believe that the first day of Ramadan should be respected and we should not schedule citizenship ceremonies on that day.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

• (4150)

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

We have CPC-25. Seeing no debate, we will go for a vote.

(Amendment negated: nays 7; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have another amendment, amendment CPC-26, that I'd like to distribute. I'll give you a minute.

Amendment 26 would amend Bill S-245 by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the Act is amended by adding the following:

Respecting holidays and days of significance to promote Canada's multicultural identity

24.1 (12) Citizenship ceremonies may not be scheduled on Eid al-Fitr.

Again, following on the last one, the end of the month of Ramadan is Eid al-Fitr. That's one of the great days of celebration as well in that festival, particularly since that's the day when everybody puts out their very best food and their very best of everything. Again, for me it's an exciting day to visit with families and eat way too much. It's a good thing.

Mubarak said this about Eid al-Fitr: “Eid al-Fitr is an annual celebration that is celebrated at the end of Ramadan. To me it is a day of gratitude to God Almighty for enabling me to successfully go through the month of Ramadan. It is a day of joy and happiness in which I like to go visit my family and friends, exchange gifts with them, have food during the day and on and on. Eid is particularly very exciting for children. They get gifts and mostly cash from elders.”

This is what Abbas told me: “Eid-al-Fitr is my favourite. After the blessing of the month of Ramadan when people are so pious, practise good deeds and donate generously, we celebrate Eid at the end of the month as a reward. This festival brings people together to exchange gifts and presents, meet and greet friends and families, and enjoy feasts and food.”

Again, this is a very, very significant day. In fact, I believe we had about 15,000 people come together in Saskatoon for the Eid al-Fitr celebration. That's a large number for a city like Saskatoon. Much food was consumed on that day; I can say that.

I would encourage you to accept this amendment to the bill.

• (4155)

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

We have CPC amendment 26 on the floor.

Seeing no debate, we will vote.

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have amendment 27. That will be followed by amendment 28, but I'll let you distribute this one first. I'll speak to it when we're ready.

**The Chair:** We will have to suspend the meeting for a few minutes while this amendment, amendment 27, is being distributed.

I will suspend the meeting for a few minutes while we get food for all the members. We'll come back after that.

• (1757)

(Pause)

• (4230)

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

I request that everyone please take their seats. For those who are virtual, please turn on your cameras.

We have CPC amendment 27. It has been distributed.

Mr. Redekopp, you can please go ahead.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

It proposes new clause 1.4. It is that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the Act is amended by adding the following:

Respecting holidays and days of significance to promote Canada's multicultural identity

24.1 (13) Citizenship ceremonies may not be scheduled on Eid al-Adha.

This is another very significant Muslim holiday. In fact, it's coming up very shortly here.

• (4235)

**The Chair:** I didn't hear about that.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** You're a comedian too. I appreciate that.

I had a couple of constituents reach out to me.

Mumtaz said, “Eid al-Adha, also known as the 'Festival of Sacrifice', is celebrated to commemorate the story of Prophet Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son as an act of obedience to God. Muslims who can afford it perform the ritual of sacrificing an animal, and the meat is then distributed to the needy and shared with family and friends. This festival is also a time for family gatherings, feasting and charitable acts.”

Shorif said, “Eid al-Adha teaches us sacrifice. We share food with the elderly, poor and people in need. It reminds us of our submission to Allah.”

This is a very significant day. As with the others, I think it's very important for the department to recognize these days and avoid scheduling citizenship ceremonies on these days. I would ask for my colleagues' support on this amendment.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Seeing no further debate, we will vote on CPC amendment 27.

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have amendment 28.

If you can have it sent around, I will be willing to speak to it.

**The Chair:** Just hold on for a minute so that it can be distributed to everyone.

Brad, I will see which religious holiday you will miss.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Will I be marked afterwards?

**The Chair:** No.

Go ahead. Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

New clause 1.4 is that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the Act is amended by adding the following:

Respecting holidays and days of significance to promote Canada's multicultural identity

24.1 (14) Citizenship ceremonies may not be scheduled on Muharram (Islamic New Year).

Again, this is another significant date for Muslim people. It's the whole idea of respecting these dates when people are not really available to do citizenship ceremonies.

Zunaib told me that the Islamic New Year marks the migration of Prophet Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina, which was a turning point in the history of Islam. Muslims use this occasion to reflect on their journey of faith, renew their commitment to God and seek forgiveness for their sins. The Islamic New Year is a time of introspection, prayer and gratitude for the blessings of life.

He said that overall, Islamic holidays are significant not only because they celebrate historical events or religious beliefs, but also because they offer an opportunity for Muslims to connect with their faith, their community, and their humanity.

Mumtaz told me that recognizing these holidays would demonstrate Canada's commitment to religious freedom and respect for the diversity of its citizens. It would also be a way to acknowledge the significant contributions made by the Muslim community to Canadian society.

He added that recognizing these holidays would enable more people to participate in the celebrations without having to miss important things. Recognizing these holidays would also promote social cohesion and unity by bringing people of different faiths and cultures together. It would provide an opportunity for Canadians to learn and promote greater understanding and respect for diversity.

I couldn't have said that better myself.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

• (4240)

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

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** CPC-28 is defeated.

Go ahead, Mr. Kmiec.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** I have CPC-29. There will be a CPC-30 and CPC-31 as well.

**The Chair:** It is being distributed.

Go ahead, Mr. Kmiec.

[Translation]

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Once again, I will read amendment CPC-29, beginning with the French version.

Je propose que le projet de loi S-245 soit modifié par adjonction, après la ligne 19, page 1, du nouvel article suivant:

1.4 L'article 24 de la Loi est modifié par adjonction de ce qui suit:

Respect des jours fériés et des jours d'importance pour la promotion de l'identité multiculturelle du Canada

24.1(15) Les cérémonies de citoyenneté ne peuvent avoir lieu le jour de Newroz.

[English]

Newroz is the first day of spring. I do say "Newroz" because it is also considered a national Kurdish celebration, and I also chair the Parliamentary Friends of the Kurds group on Parliament Hill, which I started. I've been a big advocate of recognition of the Kurdish people in Canada for who they are. They are a distinct indigenous group in the Middle East.

In Kurdish mythology, Newroz combines nature's awakening from a long, cold winter with a nation's awakening from a long life of captivity and repression. The lighting of fire, gatherings and dancing hand in hand at Newroz symbolizes unity, tolerance and the victory of light over darkness.

Canadians of Kurdish heritage celebrate Newroz. They see it as an opportunity to share their rich culture with other Canadians and to keep the spirit of Newroz alive mainly in three ideas [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] and resilience.

For those who may not know, especially in the city of Akre in south Kurdistan.... There are four parts of Kurdistan that are important here. In south Kurdistan, which is also called Bashur, Bashuri Kurds celebrate in Akre, where the entire mountainsides are lit on fire. Fire is so important because it's a representation of the spring, the starting of something new. They light large bonfires. This happens in all four regions of Kurdistan. It also happens in Bakur, which is the territories in Turkey; Rojhilat, which is the western provinces in Iran; and Rojava, which is the northeast region in Syria.

I think it's an important time of the year. There are also picnics that are planned for afterwards, but this first night is incredibly important and it should be set aside so that Canadians of Kurdish heritage don't need to choose between attending their citizenship ceremony to swear an oath to become citizens and celebrating Newroz with families.

• (4245)

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

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have another amendment. It is amendment 30. I'll wait until it's distributed.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This amendment relates to proposed new clause 1.4.

I move that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the Act is amended by adding the following:

Respecting holidays and days of significance to promote Canada's multicultural identity

24.1 (16) Citizenship ceremonies may not be scheduled on Yalda Night.

This is a really important Iranian holiday, and I have two very good leaders in Saskatoon, Bijan and Pooyan. They're very strong Iranian leaders in the community and they're doing lots to hold up Iranian causes in Saskatoon and literally across the country.

Bijan told me, "Most Iranian holidays are based on natural phenomena, given that the Iranian calendar is synchronized with the earth's revolution around the sun. Yalda happens during the winter solstice, which is the longest night of the year, and is a celebration of enduring and passing the longest of nights and moving toward a future with more sun and sunlight, both literally and also as a sign of moving from evil to good.

His brother Pooyan said, "Personally, these traditions play an important role in maintaining identity and a sense of self, besides their benefits. I also believe living through governments like Iran's creates a sense of distance and distrust among people. These holidays are an opportunity to heal the wounds of our relationships, practice kindness and trust, and love each other again.

"When I look at people's faces during these celebrations, I see decades of tiredness and of being alert and anxious. I love seeing them laugh and smile and embrace each other. It also helps that these occasions remind me of my childhood when I didn't know much and life was simpler and more fun!"

Again, I would hope that I could find support to pass this amendment.

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

We have CPC amendment 30 on the floor.

Seeing no debate, we will go for a vote.

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you. I see we're becoming very efficient at distributing these amendments. I'll pause for a moment.

• (4250)

This amendment also relates to proposed new clause 1.4.

I move that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the Act is amended by adding the following:

Respecting holidays and days of significance to promote Canada's multicultural identity

24.1 (17) Citizenship ceremonies may not be scheduled on Thai Pongal.

This is also a very important holiday. I found that the best description of this holiday actually came from Minister Hussen. He said, "Tamils celebrate the end of the harvest season by coming together and enjoying pongal, a sweet and savoury dish made with rice and fresh milk."

His statement continued, saying, "At the heart of Thai Pongal are the values of respect, compassion, and mutual support within families and communities—values that unite all Canadians and speak to who we are. Coinciding with Tamil Heritage Month, Thai Pongal also highlights the enduring strength and resilience of the Tamil

community, while also serving as a continued reminder of the great impact they have made and continue to make."

This is an important holiday for Tamils. I think it's important that we recognize that and respect that as we're setting citizenship ceremonies.

Before I finish, Madam Chair, I want to mention one thing: You'll notice that we have not mentioned Christian holidays. As a Christian, I can say why that is. It's simply because those holidays are already recognized, because those are on the calendar that we follow in this country. Those holidays are here, and all we're trying to do is add to those and bring some balance with all the other cultures and religions that we have in our country.

For those of you who are wondering why we haven't raised Christian holidays, that's the reason: We don't need to. They're already in the calendar and they are respected by the department for that reason.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

We have CPC-31 on the floor.

Seeing no debate, we will go to a vote.

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 3)

**The Chair:** Amendment 31 is defeated.

Go ahead, Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Yes. The next amendment, amendment 32, is being distributed. I'll just pause.

Let me read this amendment on proposed new clause 1.4.

I move that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the Act is amended by adding the following:

Respecting holidays and days of significance to promote Canada's multicultural identity

24.1 (18) Citizenship ceremonies may not be scheduled on Puthandu (Tamil New Year).

Again, this is another significant day in the Tamil calendar, something that we need to respect and be careful of as we schedule citizenship ceremonies.

Puthandu is a significant celebration for the Tamil community, as it marks the beginning of a new year. It is an opportunity to reflect on the challenges and successes of the past year as well as to look toward the future with hope and optimism.

To mark this occasion, friends and family will come together and begin the celebration by decorating the entrance of their homes with *kolams*, which are designs made of coloured rice flour.

They will also exchange gifts and greetings, dressed in new clothes, and enjoy delicious food together.

Just as in the previous amendment, this is an important time that we must be careful to respect, and make sure that we don't schedule citizenship ceremonies on these days so that we respect the Tamil culture in Canada.

I would just implore my colleagues to support and vote for this motion.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

● (4255)

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

We have CPC-32 on the floor.

Seeing no debate, we will go to a vote.

(Amendment negated: nays 7; yeas 3)

**The Chair:** Mr. Kmiec is next.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

CPC-33 will be followed by CPC-34. CPC-33 is being distributed, so perhaps I'll just wait a moment.

CPC-33 also relates to proposed new clause 1.4.

I move that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the Act is amended by adding the following:

Respecting holidays and days of significance to promote Canada's multicultural identity

24.1 (19) Citizenship ceremonies may not be scheduled on Vesak.

Vesak is the most important day in Buddhism, when Buddhists in Canada and around the world commemorate the birth, enlightenment and passing of the Buddha. The community celebrates by going to prayer at the temple and meditating upon Buddhist teachings of kindness, generosity, peace and compassion.

It's an important day, and we should ensure that citizenship ceremonies are not scheduled on the same day that many Buddhists will be celebrating Vesak.

Thank you, Chair.

**The Chair:** We have CPC-33 on the floor.

Seeing no debate, we will vote.

(Amendment negated: nays 7; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Kmiec.

● (4300)

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

This is amendment CPC-34. There is a CPC-35 and a CPC-36 as well. I move that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the Act is amended by adding the following:

Respecting holidays and days of significance to promote Canada's multicultural identity

24.1 (20) Citizenship ceremonies may not be scheduled on Hanukkah.

In brief, the eight-day Jewish celebration known as Hanukkah commemorates the rededication during the second century before Christ of the second temple in Jerusalem. Often called the "festival of lights", the holiday is celebrated with the lighting of the menorah, games, traditional foods like latkes and doughnuts, and playing games with the dreidel, which is a little instrument that you spin. It's kind of like a die, but you get to spin it too.

I think it's important to ensure that we don't have citizenship ceremonies on days when persons practising the Jewish faith will be unable to attend a citizenship ceremony to take the oath and would much rather spend time with their families. Hanukkah is a very important holiday. It's one of those high holy days in the Jewish calendar.

Thank you, Chair.

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

(Amendment negated: nays 7; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Kmiec.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

CPC-35 will be distributed. There is also a CPC-36 and a CPC-37.

I move that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the Act is amended by adding the following:

Respecting holidays and days of significance to promote Canada's multicultural identity

24.1 (21) Citizenship ceremonies may not be scheduled on Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year).

Rosh Hashanah, as I said, is the Jewish new year according to the Jewish calendar. It does move around during the year. It's considered one of the high holy days. There's a focus on renewal and wishing for a prosperous new year. Traditions include hearing the blowing of the shofar. For those who don't know, the shofar is a ram's horn that is pierced through, so it has a deep, long bellowing sound.

They feast together. The eating of sweet foods and the dipping of apples in honey are part of the tradition. Orthodox Jews refrain from using electricity, driving, riding and other forms of prohibited work. Many of these are Talmudic laws as well. I think it's important that we not hold citizenship ceremonies on those days.

There was an election at one point scheduled around Rosh Hashanah, and it resulted in some areas of the country having a difficult time finding election workers. Equally, in this situation, I think it would be best to have citizenship ceremonies avoid this day so that persons of the Jewish faith can celebrate Rosh Hashanah with their families.

● (4305)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

(Amendment negated: nays 7; yeas 3)

**The Chair:** CPC amendment 35 is defeated.

Go ahead, Mr. Kmiec.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I am just noting that CPC-36 should be distributed, but there are also CPC-37, CPC-38 and CPC-39.

On amendment CPC-36, I move that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the Act is amended by adding the following:

Respecting holidays and days of significance to promote Canada's multicultural identity

24.1 (22) Citizenship ceremonies may not be scheduled on Yom Kippur.

Yom Kippur is the Jewish Day of Atonement. It falls 10 days after Rosh Hashanah. It's a solemn day spent reflecting on one's actions in the previous year and spent asking for forgiveness and pleading for divine mercy.

Jewish law mandates a 25-hour fast from sundown to sundown and the observance of a special religious service, as well as a prohibition on washing and bathing oneself and on wearing leather shoes. Orthodox Jews as well, refrain from using electricity and from driving or riding, and from other forms of prohibited work.

From that description, it would be quite difficult for one of them to make it to an oath of citizenship. It might be considered as work, and therefore they would be unable to go. As I said, Yom Kippur is a Day of Atonement, but it is also a day of reflection, and it's one that's typically spent at home with family.

Madam Chair, I don't think we should have citizenship ceremonies scheduled for that day.

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

We have CPC amendment 36 on the floor.

Seeing no debate, we will go for a vote on CPC amendment 36.

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** CPC amendment 36 is defeated.

Go ahead, Mr. Kmiec.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I will have to wait for CPC-37 to be distributed before I can read it into the record and explain its purpose.

Just so you know, Chair, there are also CPC-38, 39, 40, 41 and 42, and there is a 43rd one. That is it until we get into clause 2. I am just giving you notice now that we will stop and then move to clause 2.

On amendment CPC-37, I move that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the Act is amended by adding the following:

Respecting holidays and days of significance to promote Canada's multicultural identity

24.1(23) Citizenship ceremonies may not be scheduled on Orthodox New Year.

Orthodox New Year is celebrated as the start of the new year in the Julian calendar for Christian Orthodox, Eastern-rite Catholic and Coptic Christian communities. The time is normally spent eating traditional dishes at home with loved ones, and they also attend

a special New Year's Day liturgy at their churches. This typically happens about two weeks after Christmas....

I think it's on the Gregorian calendar. Forgive me if I have the calendars wrong, but it's a very important celebration, especially for Coptic Christian communities.

I just spent my weekend, especially Sunday, with the Coptic community in Montreal, and it is a very important holiday. It has been celebrated almost exactly in the same manner for over 2,000 years, including the music in their services and the practices and the liturgy, which are almost intact. They have not updated it in that amount of time.

If anybody is curious about what the practice would have been over 2,000 years ago, the music, the liturgy, the style of the churches, the contents and the traditions have basically not changed in that time.

It's an important day, and we should not be scheduling citizenship ceremonies that would conflict with a person's religious faith and obligations to attend these liturgies at their churches.

Thank you, Chair.

• (4310)

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

We have CPC amendment 37 on the floor.

Seeing no debate, we will go to the vote.

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** Amendment number 37 is defeated.

Go ahead, Mr. Kmiec.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

If CPC amendment 38 could be distributed, then I can get into the details of what it is.

To read it into the record, amendment CPC 38 states that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the act is amended by adding the following:

Respecting holidays and days of significance to promote Canada's multicultural identity

Section 24.1(24) Citizenship ceremonies may not be scheduled on Nayrouz (Coptic New Year).

Unlike Newroz, Nayrouz is a feast when martyrs and confessors are commemorated within the Coptic Orthodox Church. It's celebrated on September 11. The day is both the start of the Coptic new year and its first month, which is Thout.

Again, citizenship ceremonies should not be placed on the new years of cultural significance or religious significance to the different multicultural groups and cultural groups in Canada. It would be good practice to avoid those days, and this is an amendment to the Citizenship Act that would see that enshrined in law.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We have CPC amendment 38 on the floor.

Seeing no debate, we will go to the vote

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** Amendment 38 is defeated.

Go ahead, Mr. Kmiec.

• (4315)

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Amendment CPC 39 should be distributed shortly. This one is a Korean holiday.

To read it into the record, amendment CPC 39 states that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the act is amended by adding the following:

Respecting holidays and days of significance to promote Canada's multicultural identity

Section 24.1(25) Citizenship ceremonies may not be scheduled on Chuseok.

Hopefully, I pronounced that correctly.

Chuseok, also known as Hangawi, is a major mid-autumn harvest festival in Korea. Chuseok celebrates the bountiful harvest and strives for the new year to be better than the last. Koreans visit their ancestral hometowns and share a feast of traditional food.

Again, we should be avoiding days of significance like this to ensure that Canadians of Korean heritage can spend them with family, but also so that any new Canadians who are about to take the oath of citizenship don't have to choose between spending time with their families or going to take their oath of citizenship.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We have CPC amendment 39 on the floor.

Seeing no debate, we will go to the vote.

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Kmiec.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Amendment CPC 40 should be distributed, and I'll just hold off until it is.

Amendment CPC-40 is that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the Act is amended by adding the following:

Respecting holidays and days of significance to promote Canada's multicultural identity

24.1 (26) Citizenship ceremonies may not be scheduled on Onam.

Onam is an annual harvest festival celebrated predominantly by the people of Kerala. The purpose of the festival is to commemorate the mythical King Mahabali, celebrate the end of the monsoon season and welcome the harvest.

Again, Madam Chair, I believe it's important that we avoid such important cultural holidays when setting days for citizenship ceremonies so that persons don't need to choose between spending the

day with their families and taking their oath of citizenship to become new Canadians.

• (4320)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We have CPC amendment 40 on the floor.

Seeing no debate, we will go for a vote on CPC amendment 40, Mr. Clerk.

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** Continue, Mr. Kmiec.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Amendment CPC-41 should be distributed. I'll speak to it once it's in everybody's hands.

Amendment CPC-41 is that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 1 the following new clause:

1.4 Section 24 of the Act is amended by adding the following:

Respecting holidays and days of significance to promote Canada's multicultural identity

24.1 (27) Citizenship ceremonies may not be scheduled on Tet.

Tet is an important day of celebration and a time of reflection and hope for many in Asia. It's especially celebrated by many people in the Vietnamese community. I remember growing up with many friends, and a lot of my mom's clients especially were either from Vietnam or from Hong Kong. Tet is a chance for families and extended family members to celebrate together and give blessings for good luck and for cleansing of bad fortune in the past.

Again, it's really important for us to make sure that we enshrine this in legislation and ensure that persons don't have to pick between going to their citizenship ceremony and taking the oath to become new Canadians versus spending that time with family and being able to celebrate some of their cultural inheritance and holidays from their countries of origin after they come here to Canada. I think it's important to enshrine that in law and to make sure that Tet is one of those holidays.

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

We have CPC amendment 41 on the floor.

Seeing no debate, we will go for a vote on CPC amendment 41, Mr. Clerk.

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Kmiec.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Madam Chair, I have good news.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Oh, already?

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** No, not already. We're moving on to clause 2. I'm not sure if at this point we need to vote on clause 1 to complete it.

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

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** There are other amendments we will put forward, but they come in the next clause.

**The Chair:** Yes, okay. We will come to them.

On new clause 1.4 and G-9, Mr. El-Khoury, would you like to move G-9?

**Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.):** No. We decided not to move G-9, Chair. Thank you.

**The Chair:** We will go to clause 2. As I indicated in the beginning, NDP-2 was defeated. That's why we cannot move NDP-13. It makes a reference to paragraph 3(1)(s), which would have been created by NDP-2, had it been adopted.

• (4325)

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I have an amendment I'd like to have considered that would be after line 22. That's just a heads-up.

**The Chair:** Shall clause 2 carry?

Go ahead, Ms. Rempel Garner.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I move that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 22 on page 1 the following:

Section 27.2 of the Act is amended by adding the following after (d):

(e) specifying required timelines for citizenship applications to be processed by the Department of Citizenship and Immigration to ensure reasonable timelines for applicants are met.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

[English]

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** The interpreters indicated to me that they don't have the text of the amendment and that they can therefore not do the interpretation. It would be much easier if they had it in hand. That would make it possible for everyone watching us at home to hear the interpretation into French.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Rempel Garner, hold on for just one minute.

• (4325)

(Pause)

• (4330)

**The Chair:** Ms. Rempel Garner, we will have to vote on clause 2 and then we will come to you.

(Clause 2 agreed to on division)

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Ms. Rempel Garner.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you for the clarification on the position of moving the motion.

For the interpreters, this is amendment CPC-44. This would result in a new clause 3. I move that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 22 on page 1 the following:

Section 27.2 of the Act is amended by adding the following after (d):

(e) specifying required timelines for citizenship applications to be processed by the Department of Citizenship and Immigration to ensure reasonable timelines for applicants are met.

Chair, the rationale behind this amendment is that throughout testimony here, including throughout testimony from the department officials, particularly as related to the rationale for moving the oath of citizenship online, we have heard that there have been difficulties in meeting service standards for processing citizenship applications.

This is still problematic, and I think part of our deliberations on this bill were on some of the processing timelines that might occur, given the volume of citizenship applications as well.

The purpose of this amendment is to underscore the need to ensure reasonable timelines for processing of applications.

While I have the floor, Chair, I would just re-emphasize that the scope of this bill was opened up for amendments, and that is what we're doing. We're making rational amendments to try to strengthen this bill as well as strengthen the Citizenship Act. The intent of this amendment is to ensure that citizenship applications are processed in a timely fashion and that we are enshrining timeliness in the Citizenship Act itself.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Rempel Garner.

Mr. Redekopp, go ahead.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I think this is a really important amendment and I really support Ms. Rempel Garner's bringing this one forward.

We all know that we deal with the lack of timeliness in processing of applications every day in our offices. I think it's really critical that there be really specific targets set and that these timelines be known and then met by the department. It would probably eliminate half the work in our offices and in IRCC as well if we didn't have the long wait times we have right now. All of us receive daily complaints about how it takes months and months.

One of the hardest cases I ever had to deal with was that of a man in Saskatoon whose wife and young child were in another country. He had never seen his child, who had been born during the time he was in Canada. He was waiting for the paperwork for his wife. It had been two years at that point, and ultimately it took longer.

That's why I think it's so critical that we have these guidelines specified and the timelines defined. It's something that's really important, so I applaud my colleague for bringing this amendment forward. I implore colleagues to vote for it and support it as one of our amendments tonight.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

Seeing no further debate, we will go for a vote on amendment CPC-44.

(Amendment negatived: nays 6; yeas 5)

**The Chair:** We will proceed to amendment CPC-45 on the new clause 3.



Mr. Kmiec, go ahead.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** I have amendment CPC-45 to move, Madam Chair. It comes after line 22.

• (4335)

**The Chair:** Okay, let's get CPC amendment 45 distributed.

• (4335)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (4335)

**The Chair:** Okay, everyone, we'll look at CPC amendment 45.

Go ahead, Mr. Kmiec.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I am going to read it into the record so the public is clear on what we're trying to do here.

It's that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 22 on page 1 the following:

Section 27.2 of the Act is amended by adding the following after (d):

(f) requiring that service standards of the department in managing application backlogs are tied to bonus compensation at the EX-1 and DM-1 levels and above on an annual basis, where bonus compensation is withheld or wholly rescinded should the departmental backlogs exceed more than five per cent of total applications.

I am trying to find it on my computer here quickly, Madam Chair. I have the department's spending for last year on how much was paid out in bonuses.

As we know, the department's immigration backlog is about 2.1 million. It grew by about 100,000 applications during the public service strike. Right after the pandemic, it was at a high-water mark, since 2015, of about 2.9 million applications that were backlogged.

In the Treasury Board Secretariat submission—the departmental plans that are submitted by the department when it tables its estimates—usually there are sections in there that refer to the service standard expectations and how many applications they expect to complete by a certain threshold. The department has a target for every stream, and usually they try to meet it within a fixed amount of time 80% of the time.

However, that's not the experience that many of us have with our constituents. Probably 90% of the work in my constituency office in Calgary is on immigration case files, and many of those are related to backlogs. Backlogs cause problems for constituents. They mix up their lives. It delays planning for family reunification. It makes it very difficult to plan trips for families. It's very difficult to know whether you can grow your business or not when you're waiting for someone's work permit.

Although this is my favourite example to give, it is not a happy example. I have a constituent who came to me about a month ago. Her temporary resident visa application was from Tanzania. This application has been 1,113 days in the system.

I have another constituent from Nigeria. Her husband wasn't able to join her to celebrate Christmas in 2022. Every time she logged into the system, the delay kept increasing—every single time.

When my constituency office and I would follow up with the agents, they told us we would have to wait.

I don't think that's acceptable. In the private sector, compensation bonuses are based on performance. The department, at this level that I'm referring to, the EX-1 and DM-1, is not performing up to the standard of my expectations.

A few months ago, I filed an order paper question in the House asking for the total amount being spent on bonuses. Over \$30 million was paid out in 2022. Sadly, I don't have the exact number before me here, but quite a bit of money was spent by the department on bonuses.

For the benefit of my constituents and yours, Madam Chair, and I'm sure just like every one of us around this table, I would like to tie that to performance. I don't think that's unreasonable. It's strictly on the service standards set by IRCC and nothing more. I think tying the two together would give a very strong incentive to the most senior members of the department to drive the department towards excellence.

When you have an application backlog of two million, including all applications that are within the service standard and those that are way beyond the service standard, I don't think it's unreasonable to expect that bonus compensation be withheld or wholly rescinded if the backlogs exceed more than 5% of total applications.

You could do it by streams. You could do it by overall numbers. I think it's reasonable to do. I think it's time that our constituents back home see some type of accountability from this department that has, as we know, doubled its staff since 2015 and doubled its budget since 2015.

• (4340)

**The Chair:** I see that Mr. Perkins is on the list, but I would like to give my ruling on this amendment.

Bill S-245 amends the Citizenship Act to provide for the acquisition of Canadian citizenship. This amendment, which has been moved by Mr. Kmiec, proposes to establish a review mechanism for bonuses for senior public servants at the levels of EX-1 and DM-1 or above.

*As House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, states on page 770:

An amendment to a bill that was referred to a committee after second reading is out of order if it is beyond the scope and principle of the bill.

In the opinion of the chair, the amendment is contrary to the principle of the bill. Therefore, this amendment is inadmissible.

Go ahead, Mr. Kmiec.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** I challenge your ruling, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** That is non-debatable. We will vote.

Shall the ruling of the chair be sustained?

(Ruling of the chair sustained: yeas 7; nays 4)

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** I have Mr. Kmiec.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

On a point of order, because I think this may have happened before, you gave your ruling without perhaps the benefit of other information, including Speaker Milliken's ruling back in 2008 on the principle versus the scope of a bill. I wanted to refer to that ruling, because I believe that maybe one of our next amendments might cause that. This is more information—

**The Chair:** This is not a point of order. We are going into debate.

I made a ruling and that ruling was sustained, so we will move on—

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** When I move on to my next amendment, Madam Chair, I just want to make sure that you give me a chance to explain Speaker Milliken's ruling on the principle of a bill, because I don't think your ruling is correct.

**The Chair:** When we come to that, we can deal with it. Based on my ruling—and the ruling was sustained—we will move to new clause 3 and G-10.

Go ahead, Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** We have two more amendments we have to do here.

**The Chair:** Do you mean before we do G-10?

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** It's after line 22.

• (4345)

**The Chair:** Okay, Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** This amendment, CPC-46, reads as follows: Regarding new clause 3, I move that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 22 on page 1 the following—

**The Chair:** Can I ask you to hold while the amendment is distributed?

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Yes, sure.

**The Chair:** It has been distributed.

Okay, Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

This amendment reads as follows: Regarding new clause 3, I move that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 22 on page 1 the following:

Section 27.2 of the Act is amended by adding the following after (d):

(g) prescribing the manner in which foreign credentials may be regarded as equivalent to Canadian credentials as per previously approved Acts of Parliament, in a manner that may act as a step towards gaining citizenship.

This is a critical part of the problems we're having in our country right now with newcomers to our country who are trained in a profession and are unable to actually work in that profession—for example, doctors, nurses, engineers and so on.

This is a perennial problem. We've all heard of the classic situation of a doctor driving a taxi when we have shortages of doctors in our country. We also have shortages of nurses, for example, yet we have many thousands of doctors and nurses who are not practising in their field because our system doesn't allow that.

One of the parts of that, one of the pieces of that puzzle, is the foreign credentials component, so what this amendment is doing is looking at the section of the act that gives the minister the ability to do certain things in terms of regulations. What I'm proposing through this amendment is to allow the minister to say what is an equivalent credential, so that if you have a certain credential from another country—for example, India—the minister can, through proper due diligence, designate that it is equivalent to a certain Canadian credential.

We think that's important, especially for the future. Whether this government is able to figure that out or not, I'm not sure, but potentially there might be a future government that might be different, and that government may want to do some of these things to improve the situation.

That's where this would be an opportunity for the minister to be able to designate equivalencies and therefore speed up the process and make it less expensive and less time-consuming for a newcomer to work in our country with the credentials they have.

That's what this is about. I would encourage my colleagues to support this amendment.

Thank you.

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

We have amendment CPC-46 on the floor.

Seeing no debate, we will go to a vote.

(Amendment negatived: nays 6; yeas 5)

**The Chair:** Mr. Redekopp, go ahead.

• (4350)

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have amendment CPC-47, which is being distributed. I'll just pause.

**The Chair:** Mr. Redekopp, please go ahead.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I will read amendment 47 on new clause 3.

That Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 22 on page 1 the following:

Section 27.2 of the Act is amended by adding the following after (d):

(h) overriding licensing boards under federal jurisdiction and provincial licensing boards with regards to foreign credentials, which include, but are not limited to, numerous fields such as medicine, nursing, pharmacology, engineering, among others, to enable immigrants to practice their professions in Canada, which may serve as a step towards gaining citizenship.

Madam Chair, this is also a very significant issue in Canada right now. Newcomers to our country have skills. They have training. They have had, in many cases, years of experience in a certain field. When they come to our country, they're told that they can't practise their profession, whether it's as a doctor, nurse, engineer, lawyer or veterinarian—there are many examples.

I've spoken to many people who have literally decades of experience in certain professions, yet the process to get licensed in Canada is so onerous that, essentially, they have to start again—spend many thousands of dollars, take years of education, essentially repeating what they've already learned, not only through school but often through experience.

Certainly in Canada, we need to have standards. We need to make sure that people who come here to work in those jobs have the skills and education required. That goes without saying, but at the same time, we know there are a lot of cases in which people meet that standard, and they would meet that standard but there are gatekeepers in the way. There are licensing boards. There are other boards that restrict the adoption of people into their groups so that those people cannot practise.

What is so important, I think, is that we eliminate these gatekeepers and allow for co-operation among these groups in our country so that we take advantage of the tremendous pool of labour that is just there before us.

It seems somewhat obvious to me, given that most parts of the country would agree that we have a shortage of doctors, for example. We have many newcomers who have been trained as doctors, who may have years and even decades of experience as a doctor in another country, but because of the way the licensing boards in Canada have set things up, they are just not able to go through the process. Either they can't get in or the process is so onerous and time-consuming and expensive that it's just not something they're able to do.

Particularly if you're a little bit older in years and you've already gone through school and have practised as a doctor, for example, for 20 or 25 years, to be told that you need to start again, the same as a 19-year-old or 20-year-old student and go through five or six years of education again, it's not a very attractive thing for many of these people. I've talked to them, and they've shared that exact thing with me.

This amendment goes to the part where the minister is able to make regulations. It would allow the minister to, essentially, force licensing boards to adopt certain standards when it comes to credentials, because sometimes the credentials are where people get tripped up. It lists some of the areas that this would work in, like medicine, nursing, pharmacology, engineering, etc. It basically gives the minister the ability to go in and write regulations that will ease the transition of newcomers to our country into the field that they're trying to work in.

This is, I believe, something very important and something that needs to be done. It wouldn't necessarily be simple. There would have to be co-operation, but I have confidence in our ability to co-operate on things like this, particularly today, right now in our country, when we have a shortage of doctors, for example.

I'm quite confident that there would be a way to co-operate to make this work, for all levels of government and licensing boards to work together, but if the minister had a little more power in this, I think it would be helpful.

That's why this amendment is here. That's what I'm hoping for. I really hope my colleagues will support this amendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

• (4355)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We have amendment CPC-47 on the floor.

I'm seeing no debate. We will go to the vote on amendment CPC-47.

(Amendment negated: nays 7; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** We will now proceed to new clause 3 in G-10.

Mr. El-Khoury, would you like to move G-10?

**Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury:** Yes.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to move amendment G-10. However, I want to move the updated version that I believe was sent to members recently.

I would like to read it in both languages.

[*Translation*]

For my friend Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, I will read the French version first.

Je propose que le projet de loi S-245 soit modifié par adjonction, après la ligne 23, page 1, de ce qui suit:

Entrée en vigueur

Décret

3 La présente loi entre en vigueur à la date fixée par décret, mais au plus tard le cinq cent quarante-huitième jour suivant la date de sa sanction.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mr. El-Khoury, wait one second.

Yes, go ahead, Ms. Kwan.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** I'm just carrying on. I want to get on the speakers list. That's all.

**The Chair:** Okay.

I want to make sure everyone has their copy of the amendment.

**Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury:** It was already sent, yes.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Go ahead, Mr. El-Khoury.

**Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury:** Amendment G-10 reads that Bill S-245 be amended by adding after line 22 on page 1 the following:

Coming into Force

Order in council

3 This Act comes into force on a day to be fixed by order of the Governor in Council, but no later than the 548th day after the day on which this Act receives royal assent.

I would like to give some thoughts on it.

Madam Chair, this motion introduces a “coming into force” provision to set a future date when the bill will take effect, but no later than 18 months after royal assent. I think we can all understand that, with all the complexity around this bill, IRCC will need time to prepare for the changes. This will help assure an orderly implementation of operational readiness, systems changes and the development of supporting regulatory changes.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I have Ms. Kwan, and then Mr. Perkins.

Go ahead, Ms. Kwan.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'll be supporting G-10 as a companion piece to the package here. I think these elements are important to indicate how we will see the package proceed, once—hopefully—it becomes law.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Perkins.

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Could I ask the officials...? To me, this is an unusual clause—that the Governor in Council would make the choice about when it's proclaimed in law.

Could you tell me, first, what the effect of this being approved would be? What would the purpose of this be?

• (4400)

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Ms. Girard.

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** Yes, Madam Chair.

Thank you for the question.

We had a similar provision for the legislative amendments implemented in 2009 to remedy lost Canadians, as well as the overhaul of citizenship legislation done in 2014-15. Without a provision like this, when Parliament finally passes legislation, it would mean it comes into force right away, and the department is expected to loyally implement it right away.

As I've previously testified, to implement a legislative initiative such as this one smoothly and to ensure we can process the citizenship applications of those benefiting from the bill, at a minimum, we need some IT changes put in place. Those generally take a year to get in place. We typically have to develop regulations, as well, to support smooth implementation. The regulatory process takes a year to 18 months. To do it within a year is considered very tight.

Alongside those critical changes to IT and the regulations, there is usually a whole host of other changes we need to do in parallel. We need to update our application forms and communications, and do our outreach to those who are benefiting. We need to update our policy guidelines, our training and all manner of things to get the program ready to deliver.

That is the purpose of having a “coming into force” provision.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Perkins.

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** For the provision, you said one year would be tight. Eighteen months is enough. What happens if you're not ready after 18 months?

**Ms. Nicole Girard:** The department has fairly significant experience in undertaking the implementation preparations that are required for a legislative initiative such as this one. I can say, in my last 15 years of loyally implementing a number of legislative changes, we've always managed to do it within the timelines and under 18 months.

Thank you.

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

Seeing no further debate, we will vote on G-10.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

**The Chair:** Ms. Kwan.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have another item that I would like to move forward on, but I guess I should wait until this package is done first. Are there any other amendments after this?

**The Chair:** If it is not related to any amendment....

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** No. When we're done with all the amendments, if I could get the floor....

**The Chair:** Yes, I will come back to you.

Shall the title carry?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

Just for process, don't we need a vote on clause 3?

**The Chair:** No, we don't. I've checked with the legislative clerk.

Shall the bill as amended carry?

(Bill S-245 as amended agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4)

**The Chair:** Mr. Kmiec.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** I know the next question will be, “Shall the chair report the bill as amended to the House?” That is a debatable motion, is it not?

I'm just putting myself on the list.

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

• (4405)

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** No, and I want to speak to that.

The reason it's still a no—despite the fact that we've had I don't know how many hours of debate to get to this point—is that I want to make very clear that both my position and the position of my caucus is that this was a bill where the sponsor came here and distinctly said where the tracks were to go, in her view. I reiterated and spoke to her again during the clause-by-clause consideration.... I just want to make sure it is understood that we were opposed to the expansion of the scope of the bill and the votes that were held then. We did not want to go beyond the original scope. It was a very narrow support and help for a certain group of lost Canadians that we were trying to address.

Expanding the scope then led to our side thinking of things we have heard from constituents and stakeholder groups and from witnesses before the committee on important amendments that could be made.

I then said in the House during the debate on the tabled reports from this committee, when concurrence was moved, that we would consider this a statutory review. We tried to demonstrate that this would be what we consider a statutory review of the Citizenship Act. Therefore, we would make amendments that we thought were necessary or important or that addressed concerns we heard in different communities.

Again, we showed some goodwill. We voted for some of the amendments, such as the improvements in language that the department brought forward and said needed to be done—the difference between Bill S-230 and Bill S-245 and the difference in language that needed to be brought forward. We decided that, yes, we would vote in favour of that.

There were measures in there to make sure that adopted children would be treated equally to children born in Canada and children naturalized in Canada. We supported those as well.

We did not support the substantial connection test being only 1,095 days, and we suggested it should be successive or continuous days. We thought that it could have been toughened up with some prohibitions on persons who have been convicted for crimes with two years plus a day. It would have strengthened the bill. We could then have voted for a substantial connection clause, especially if it had added more days.

I have to say, there was much unpleasantness in May, unfortunately, during those breach of privilege debates that we had to have at this committee. I will also remind you, Chair, and others at the committee, that I proposed a motion that would have seen us deal with amendments at the table by May 15—for other parties to submit them—now that the scope had been expanded.

I know that this was a long and arduous process. However, I think we've learned more about the Citizenship Act than any of us on this side and on that side probably knew. I have copious notes now, and I probably understand the Citizenship Act better than I ever wanted to. Now when somebody from my caucus comes has a question or a bright idea, I will use the content from this meeting to dissuade them from touching this act and making further amendments, because I realize how simple it is to lose entire groups of Canadians and make more lost Canadians in so doing.

I hope we also demonstrated the fact that we can be reasonable and can proceed to quick votes when necessary, when time is of the essence. We were making a point that the way May went down was, in my view, still not acceptable and that we all take this back to other committees that we may serve on so that this doesn't happen again.

When the sponsor of a bill asks that we not affect the contents of the bill, the substance, the scope and the principle, and that we leave it intact and have a simple up or down vote on whether we support the bill as is, it is a courtesy to our colleagues not to—what I will again call—vandalize their bill. I have used that language, and I will continue to use that language, I'm sure, at report stage, at third reading of the bill and then as it goes to the Senate.

The witness testimony that was heard at the Senate committee was that, if amendments were to be made, that would delay the passage of this bill and it should just be passed as the original. There was a certain gentleman who said that repeatedly. I have the witness testimony from that committee on Bill S-230 when it was being debated originally.

Now that there are amendments that are very likely to pass, this bill will likely go back to the Senate. That could be as late as perhaps the fall—late fall—or into the spring session, and who knows whether there will be an election then.

I am just laying out the concerns I have with the way this was done. This bill could have been passed way back in May. I am convinced of it. It could have been royally assented to and then we could have worked on a different piece of legislation, or a member could have tabled a different bill that could have been considered. That's not me, because I drew third from last in the private members' bill draw.

I will note, for the benefit of all of us, that senators seem to be able to legislate faster than members of Parliament. We get only one chance from one draw in each Parliament, while senators can keep drafting new bills and expediting them through the Senate, if they can convince their colleagues....

● (4410)

I just think there's a certain measure of unfairness that now has been built up in our system, whereby members of Parliament get to legislate less quickly and less easily than senators can, and senators don't have an elected mandate from the public to push the bill, so they push.... Nevertheless, they are nominated and they are appointed by the Governor General upon the advice of the Prime Minister, so they can do work like this, like Bill S-245.

I just want to lay that out, because I've seen a few articles using the F-word and people know how much I love that word, because I've used it at other committees. It's not the one you think. It's the "filibuster" word. We have not done that. We have asked questions to wonder about the contents of the Citizenship Act and the impact on different groups of lost Canadians. We also had structural amendments that we wanted to do on the Citizenship Act, which we have proposed and laid before the committee. Unfortunately, none of our amendments passed even though I heard that some of them were.... The content was quite good and could form part of future private members' bills that any member can pick up and reuse. I just want to make sure that members remember that and also that the vice-chair of this committee and I can be merciful when we want to be merciful and allow things to continue and proceed to business.

Madam Chair, there is a group of hopeful Canadians out there—international students who really need our time and our efforts—and I really hope that this committee is going to do that, but with the state of this bill right now, I know that I'm going to have a very tough time presenting this to my caucus to convince them that we got something in it. There's nothing in here that I can really point to, nothing to convince them that this bill is the same substance as it was before it came to this committee intact. That is a concern to me. This might happen to any one of us with our bills in the future—where the content might be deleted and replaced with things that we don't agree with—but it looks silly when you're the sponsor of a bill and you're whining to have to either vote against it or against your colleague's bill just because the content has been drastically changed from the original.

I want to put that on the record, because I'm sure there will be journalists who will want to refer to this, and I would want to refer to it, too, and send them the clip. That way, it can answer all of their questions on our feelings and thoughts on the process up until this point.

Thank you, Chair.

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

I have Ms. Rempel Garner.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I echo my colleague's comments. I won't repeat them ad nauseam, particularly on how there were good amendments in this process, as my colleague Mr. Kmiec said, on strengthening the language and also with regard to adoption.

Colleagues, I want to emphasize that this is an exercise on how not to approach private members' legislation for a reason, and if the government members find themselves on this side of the table, on what happened here, you do not want to be part of that. I'll tell you why.

The government has had eight years to propose the types of amendments in here and they chose not to—number one—and the scope that was proposed in here was so beyond the original private member's bill that it really should have been government legislation or another private member's bill, but what happened was that the committee—the NDP and the Liberals—decided to override the Standing Orders and the procedures on how we dispose of and dis-

pense with private members' legislation to expand the scope, because that didn't happen.

What happens to my colleagues, particularly in the government party, then, is that as legislators you're sitting here and dealing with amendments that are really significant, that we haven't had witness testimony to and, as well, that we haven't had departments testify to.

The other concern I want to re-emphasize in the deliberations on this bill and why it was so important to scrutinize these amendments is the leaks that happened and the breach of privilege. I understand that there are passionate stakeholders on this, but they're not elected officials. They may have opinions on this issue, but they're not representing the hundreds of thousands of people who we represent. Therefore, there should have been decorum and due process put in place, and due process wasn't followed in this instance.

We came into this all in agreement on passing this bill expeditiously, as it was in the Senate. My sense is that this is not going to be the case when it inevitably returns to the other place. I think that's unfortunate. I think what's happened here is that this is now a piece of legislation that is going to likely...not at my request or anything, but it's going to face more scrutiny and more holdups, probably because a couple of well-intentioned people thought they could break the rules and play fast and loose with the rules. That's really unfortunate because the substance either should have been in a government bill or not taken this way.

For those people who are listening, if that happens, it's because the rules weren't followed and the original deal and the original spirit of this bill were broken by an overreach. I find that really disappointing, and I think it has potentially negative outcomes for a lot of people, so I also echo my comments of my colleagues that this should not be reported.

Thank you.

• (4415)

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I just want to remind everybody that the original intent of Senator Yonah Martin, when she put this bill forward, was to try to avoid the problems that had happened in the past. In the past, this bill—a very much similar bill—had come forward.

As we know there are different categories of lost Canadians. Each category of lost Canadians requires a certain correction or a fix or repair to the Citizenship Act in order to bring those lost Canadians back in as Canadians. Each of them stands on their own. It's very complicated. It's very complex. The act is actually very complicated, as my colleague Tom has said. It's very difficult to understand. I think, very much, our officials for providing that knowledge because it's very hard to understand how this affects that and everything.

When there is a bill that changes that, it's very complex. When you try to solve one, two, three or four different problems, you end up with that many chunks of words, of amendments, to the act that all impact different parts of the act. It gets very complicated. Lots of questions have to be asked. It's not something that's simple to do. It takes a lot of time, first of all, just to draft it and to get it written properly. Then it takes a lot of time here to deal with it.

This was the whole point of why these bills have failed in the past. The process required, when you do that sort of thing, takes a long time. You can't just simply have a meeting, explain it and it all makes sense, and then everybody votes and it's done. It's not like that because there are so many pieces to this puzzle. They're all very complicated. They all need to be double-checked.

The whole reason we're here is that previous changes to the legislation had been made, and unknowingly, there were unintended consequences. Because proper due diligence wasn't done.... I'm sure the people who did it did their best, but they could have asked more questions because they obviously missed things. Those things then resulted in what we refer to as "lost Canadians". Another way to refer to that is "unintended consequences" of a bill.

What has happened since then is that much more scrutiny is being put on citizenship changes for that very reason. We don't want to create new unintended consequences. Bills have failed in the past because they extend too long, they require too much study and, being in a minority situation, inevitably, we aren't able to go the full four years. Then an election happens, and that's the end of the bill. That has happened before.

That's why, when Senator Martin decided to bring this bill forward, she wanted to take a different approach. She was unhappy with the fact that this had failed. In fact, constituents who spoke with her relayed that concern: The approach hadn't worked, so a new approach was required. That's where her idea came for this. Let's just take one of these groups—one of the larger segments of this group of lost Canadians—and let's just try to fix one thing.

One thing that would be quite simple.... It's not that it would be simple. That's not putting it right. It's that it would be limited. The explanations, while complex, would be somewhat limited, so it wouldn't take eight meetings to figure it out. It could be done in one or two.

To that end, that's what she decided to do. It had the bonus effect of the same exact issue that had been talked about in the Senate before. To her advantage, the Senate didn't actually need to restudy it, because it had already studied exactly that thing. She was able to move it through the Senate very quickly, because the Senate agreed that, since there had been no changes to the original bill—the previously studied bill—it didn't need to restudy it. It agreed with Senator Martin to just pass it through the Senate to the House.

When it arrived at the House, what could have happened—what I have before described as track A—was that we could have brought it here. We could have asked the hard questions that needed to be asked on this particular group of lost Canadians. We would have been done by now, I guarantee it. As I said, even though the questions are complicated, and the answers are difficult to explain, it's a very limited segment of information that was required.

We would have had that information. We would have asked the questions we needed to. We would have made sure—and actually, the department had some good suggestions for wording and language changes to Senator Martin's bill that we agreed with—that the exact correct words were there, and there would be no further unintended consequences. That was all done.

That would have been completed. It would have been through this committee many weeks ago, and it would have been back to the House. All that would have been required for it to become law was a vote. It probably would have been the law of the land by now.

• (4420)

That was track A. That was the track we were on. That was the whole logic of what Ms. Martin had planned as a different approach to this problem and a different approach to this legislation actually getting through the system.

That was the plan. That's how it would have gone on track A. What really happened, as we know now, is that the government and the NDP got together and decided they wanted to try track B, which just so happens to be the same track that was tried before. We know what the result was before. The result before was that it didn't get through because it was too complicated. We had people tell us—and we know from the previous Senate testimony—that constituents said that, if this was going to get overly complicated, it would not pass in time, and they would rather have at least one piece of it dealt with, and then we could come back and deal with the others later. That was the testimony of people. That was the testimony of the sponsor of the bill. She specifically requested that we not expand this so as to slow it down. That was her main request—that we just leave the bill as it was so that we would not slow it down and not conflate different issues that would add time and cause this bill to fail again.

Unfortunately, that's the track we're on. Not only did it take longer for us to process and analyze all these issues here in this legislation and to make sure there were no unintended consequences, but the really sad part is that now it will eventually make its way back to the Senate because it's not in the same form it was when it was sent from that place.

What's very likely going to have to happen there is that the Senate will look at this and say that this is not what they agreed to. It's not the same thing, so they will ask what all the changes are. They are going to have to study this bill. The way the timing goes on these kinds of things, it's not something that will happen next week or tomorrow. This could take a long time before it actually gets the chance to be talked about in the Senate and referred to committees there. This will potentially add many months to this process.

This is the danger we spoke of at the very beginning of this process when, as my colleague Mr. Kmiec said, the bill was vandalized. We had warned about this, that besides taking longer to get through the House of Commons, it was going to be studied in great depth again at the Senate, and there would be many questions with potentially further amendments at the Senate that then would have to come back. It could have been done. Track A could have been done. With track B, there's a bunch of uncertainty. It's going to extend it for months, guaranteed. In this environment of a minority government, you never know when an election could be called. Should an election be called, all of this work will have been for naught and it will all get thrown out, and some future parliamentarian will have to address this and start this again.

That raises another good question. If the government was so intent on making further amendments, why did it not just introduce a bill? It could have let this bill deal with this piece of the puzzle, let it go through and be done with it. The other changes the government wanted to make could have been introduced in another bill. It would have very much been within the scope of the immigration minister to do so. The government has the ability to control the agenda and to put bills through the House of Commons. This would be quite a logical and sensible way to do this so that we would both preserve what Ms. Martin had intended in hers and put the government changes through on their own bill. What the government has done is vandalize this bill.

We always have to remember that we as parliamentarians have few tools with which to legislate, but one of them is private members' bills. When we put forward a private member's bill, the intention is that we are communicating our idea, the thing we want to do, and we are putting that forward to Parliament to be voted on. When the government comes along and says essentially to delete everything and replace it with what they want, it's no longer our bill. I don't think any of us around this table or any of us in the House or the Senate wants that approach. We all want to retain the right to push through our legislation the way we envision it.

The government should not be able to take over our private member's bill, throw out what they want and put in what they want, but that's what has happened here. I think that's another significant abuse of a private member's bill. It's not something that we should think lightly about.

• (4425)

This has huge implications for precedents, as well, because if the government did it here, you can guarantee this case will be referred to in the future. They will talk about what happened at this committee and they will use it as a precedent to destroy some other future parliamentarian's bill. I can assure you that it is going to happen. It's very disappointing, and it's disappointing that I have to be a part of that, because it's not something I see as a good precedent in our country.

I am really disappointed—I guess that's the best way to put it—in the process that has happened here and in the way the government has taken this bill, put in these changes and, frankly, taken advantage of the private member's bill of a fellow parliamentarian, rather than doing the work it should have done on its own, which is pro-

duce its own bill to make the changes that the government wants to change.

That summarizes my thoughts on this. I'll allow someone else to speak on it.

Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

Go ahead, Ms. Kwan.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'll be very brief and say that when Bill S-245 was tabled, I had a chance to meet with Senator Martin. I indicated to her my intentions of expanding the bill beyond the scope it touched on.

The senator made it clear to me that as long as I had the minister's support, I would have her support as well. That, of course, changed at the last minute, because later on, I was advised that she would no longer be able to proceed with that out of respect for her Conservative parliamentarians.

Anyway, I just wanted to set the record straight on the process that I embarked on. We are where we are. We've gone through several rounds of this. I don't want to prolong this, but I want to get that on the record.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Perkins.

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm a relatively new member of Parliament—the class of 2021—so I've been learning the ropes over the last two years on the private member's bill process. While I'm 132nd on the list—

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** That's better than me.

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** That's better than Tom, too, I guess.

I've worked on a number of ideas I've had, though not in the space of the Citizenship Act. I've found it to be a challenge to work within the confines of the process and I'm learning, of course, that the narrower you make your idea, first of all, the more likely it is that you can actually get something drafted. Even getting something drafted seems to be a bit of a challenge if you are overly ambitious and try to fix a number of things at once. Then, of course, there's always a question of whether it is or is not a money issue.

In my case, I've been dealing with something about RRIFFs, and whether or not that's deferred income or tax if they... I won't bore you with all of that right now.

While I'm relatively new to this process as a member of Parliament, some people—at least one at the officials' table—know that I served some time in government as a staffer when I was much younger and had a lot more hair. In my twenties, during the Mulroney government, I worked with the minister. Back then, you went around with your minister through the departments for—

• (4430)

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting, Mr. Perkins.



I would request that you please keep your comments to Bill S-245, such as whether the bill can be reported to the House as amended.

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** Okay—

**The Chair:** Please keep your remarks just on that.

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** Sure. I am doing that—in the context of the bill and whether or not the issues put forward by the author of the bill were respected by the process in expanding its scope. The role of the government in choosing when it should bring in its legislation and insert itself into, perhaps, minor technical corrections and wording—legalese—in a private member's bill versus what's been done to this bill.... It has, in my mind, changed the nature of the bill quite a lot.

When you're in government, as government members know on the other side, you see an area that needs addressing. This area of lost citizens has been something that has been around for a while, and it's clearly something the government could have taken—and should have taken—its own initiative on, to craft it in a way that was not trying to put a square peg in a round hole. Rather, draft it in a way the government could see would work and that would give them the time to set it up properly, change the act and set the systems and everything else up to understand and do the proper consultation in drafting the bill.

That process—I know from my time as a legislative assistant—can be arduous, but the government has been in power for eight years and has had lots of opportunity to do that.

**The Chair:** You are going out of scope. Please keep your remarks to Bill S-245. Otherwise, I will have to cut you off.

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** With respect, Madam Chair, this is not out of scope because I'm speaking to the issue of the scope of the bill, what's been done to the bill and why it should not be reported back to the House. It should not be reported back to the House because it goes far beyond the original intent of the author and the sponsor of the bill. She has made that clear to this committee.

I think that, as part of understanding and discussing whether this bill should be reported back, it's totally appropriate to look at the areas where the government expanded the scope of this bill and chose this route to change, in my view, the very nature of the bill versus the government's option to bring in its own bill, which it chose not to do. In this process, it rejected a number of important improvements.

Since it broadened the scope of the bill, it had an opportunity, with some amendments, to talk about and expand the issue of the process one goes through, a citizenship process and oath, which is incredibly important. It's not just some sort of bureaucratic paperwork type of thing where you can say, "We have a backlog that's doubled under our government, so we'll just try to figure out ways to speed it up, make it all virtual, take the magic out of that most important day in a person's life and have them just sit at home on a computer and swear in, if the technology works." These things could have been addressed, as well, since the government chose to go at it, but it chose to not continue to look at ways to make sure that it is required that these most significant ceremonies be done in person, that it be known publicly when the ceremonies are done, or that members of Parliament be invited to all of those, members of

Parliament who have managed to go to those very moving ceremonies.

That's not possible when it's done in a virtual situation. The people may not even be in the same city—the citizen court judge and the individual being sworn in. It diminishes and cheapens the process. If the government felt that this was the way to go, then it surely proved it through this process.

The main issue is this: Why did it not take the opportunity that the government has to create its own legislation and draft it specifically into what the government needed? That is a process. I was taught how to do it.

My colleague Mr. Redekopp talked about the law of unintended consequences. In fact, the deputy minister I was referring to earlier, Arthur Kroeger, with whom I worked in employment and immigration—he was our deputy minister—taught me about the legislative planning process and how the primary job of drafting legislation of the department is to figure out the law of unintended consequences. Every piece of legislation has those things you're trying to do, but it also has impacts on things that you necessarily cannot anticipate.

We spent, on that case, on a bill that changed the Employment Insurance Act—or Unemployment Insurance Act, as it was known then—a year working on scenarios of unintended consequences to the bill. That's why you don't come at the last minute into a private member's bill and try to insert things that are beyond the scope of the bill, in my view again, without doing all the proper work in advance. It could take a year or two years—this government has had eight years to do it—to think of all the unintended consequences and how they will impact people, how people will do things and react to the law in ways that you did not expect. That takes a lot of work and due diligence.

I don't think amending a private member's bill shows that the government had much forethought in how to go forward with a comprehensive review of the Citizenship Act and ensure that it achieved everything that it wanted to achieve. In this case, since it was opened, as we've said, we proposed a number of things that the government chose to ignore. The original author may now see the bill delayed extensively because we have one or two weeks left in the House before the summer break.

● (4435)

Of course, there are a lot of rumours about things that might happen during the summer, as there always are, including possible prorogation.

**An hon. member:** It could be a cabinet shuffle.

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** It could be a cabinet shuffle, as well. It seems pretty evident there's going to be a cabinet shuffle.

On the issue of going forward and the time left for the Senate to deal with the amendments of this bill, it's highly unlikely this is going to make it through in time. Who knows what the fall will bring? It could be a Speech from the Throne and whatever electoral fortunes we may face.

As a result of all of this, the bill could have been through the system with a quick resolution and passage through the House, as we've done.... I sit on the industry committee as well. We passed three private member's bills through our committee in the space of one month, because we all worked together and the government didn't make major changes. They made minor legal changes to make sure those bills complied with CUSMA.

In this case, the substantive changes—changing the nature of the bill—are causing this to end up in a legislative loop, which means the lost citizens may, yet again, get let down by this Parliament not addressing their needs. This process takes years.

I would ask the government whether they could clearly rethink their approach, go back to the drawing table, agree with us that the bill should not be reported back and come back with a proper piece of legislation that does the things they want. They can leave this bill alone or make the choice, at further stages in the House, to correct the mistakes they've made by expanding this bill.

Again, we haven't thought through.... I don't think the government has thought through all the changes these amendments will make. I would ask the chair not to report this back to the House, so the government can do its homework in the proper way by introducing a proper bill and fixing the things the government wants to fix in the Citizenship Act.

Thank you.

• (4440)

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

I have two people on the speaking list.

I will suspend the meeting for a minute and come back.

The meeting is suspended.

• (4440)

(Pause)

• (4440)

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

Next, I have Ms. Rempel Garner on the list.

Go ahead, Ms. Rempel Garner.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Thanks.

Briefly, Madam Chair, I want to point out, in response to Ms. Kwan's comments, that we didn't have the opportunity to hear from Senator Martin on the assertions Ms. Kwan made because of the way the bill was dispensed with in the motion that was passed, which opened up the scope. We didn't have an opportunity for witnesses. That's exactly why we have these rules.

We have a colleague here making assertions about a colleague from the other place, when she did not have the opportunity to come here. I would ask that her motives, or whatever she said or didn't say, not be put on the record or considered to be on the record, given that we didn't have the opportunity to question her.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Kmiec.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

There were just a couple of points made by Ms. Kwan. There was a short point about the intentions or the views of Senator Yonah Martin. It's commendable that the member reached out to our colleague from the Senate when the bill was tabled and that she met with Senator Yonah Martin and that she said her views had changed between then and now, at some point.

That's not comparable to us. We sit with our Senate colleagues in all of our meetings. I know that's different from the case for most caucuses, but our senators are involved in everything we do, with regular reports in caucus. They listen to the whole debate and they get to participate in it. They are equal members in our national caucus.

I should know. I chaired the national caucuses of the Conservative Party during the pandemic as well as a little before that and a little after that. Her views did not change. I thought she was very clear, when she came before the committee on Bill S-245, which was taken through the Senate so quickly, that there was a common understanding among senators that the substance of the bill was the same as that of Bill S-230.

That's why Senator Martin was able to convince her Senate colleagues to expedite the bill and to convince our caucus that the substance had not changed and that, therefore, this bill should be pushed through because it was essentially the same as before.

You can't interpret every conversation you have as a permission slip for any action to be taken. I did follow up and I have followed up repeatedly with the senator in question and also with the House of Commons sponsor of the bill, who was my predecessor on this committee, about their intentions concerning the contents of the bill.

At this final stage of the bill, I just want to ensure that we have a common understanding of how we got to this point with some of the work we have done and where we agreed on certain amendments to be passed. Again, having one-off discussions doesn't compare to being in the same caucus room. I know it's different for certain caucuses that don't have senators who sit with them regularly, but in this case we do, and I believe we've reflected what was Senator Martin's understanding when she testified at this committee as a witness. Also, we have been able to speak to her continually about stakeholder relations, the contents of the bill and certain amendments to be considered.

As my colleague Mr. Perkins said, when all of us are drafting bills, the tighter a bill and the simpler it is, the more likely you are to get consensus from more people. When bills are changed at committee stage—and it happens, and I agree. I'm sure if there is another IRPA bill or maybe the government will have a bill to amend the Citizenship Act at some point or a modernization bill, as they like to call it, there will be amendments made by the committee that may result in our having to return to our caucuses to get a review or to get agreement on them. That is how my caucus works. When a bill is substantively modified, seriously amended as this Bill S-245 will be, it should be reported back to the House and it will require us to go back to caucus.

We have a caucus meeting tomorrow. I think all of us have caucus meetings tomorrow, so I was wondering, Madam Chair, whether you would be willing to perhaps suspend the meeting, and I could take it back to my caucus, and we would meet tomorrow at 3:30. I could therefore get direction tomorrow morning from my caucus team and the Senate caucus members on the Conservative side as well, and I could come back to the committee. We could either expedite it or we could maybe reconsider it, but I would hope we could expedite it. I hope my caucus would give me very clear direction.

That is how we work. We have a consent system. We have caucus advisory committees, and I don't think that's a big revelation to anybody out there, but there is a substantial amount of consultation that every shadow minister has to do on their file and every sponsor of a private member's bill or a Senate bill has to do.

The substance has changed. The scope is much beyond that of the original version that came to this committee. On at least one of those matters—the adoption clauses—we did agree with them, and I'll stand by those votes. I thought we voted wisely to expand it there.

I think that would perhaps be better for us, because it is late and I know this committee met extensively on Monday. I was not here on Monday. Forgive me for that. It was my oldest son's junior high graduation, and that's one of those things you can't miss, especially when it's your first one who is graduating. I could not miss that, so I was present for that.

That would be my suggestion and perhaps you could take it under advisement.

I'll stop there.

• (4445)

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

Congratulations to you on your son's graduation. I will be heading to my younger son's graduation next Tuesday at McMaster, and it will be the first one for us as a family because the elder one graduated during the pandemic when there were no graduations. He graduated from Ryerson. On Tuesday my husband and I are heading to McMaster for my son's graduation. He became a mechanical engineer.

I have two more people on the speaking list—Mr. Redekopp and then Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

Mr. Redekopp, go ahead.

• (4450)

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm just curious. My colleague Mr. Kmiec asked you about suspending and resuming tomorrow. Is that something you would consider doing? That's just a quick question for you.

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Okay. All right.

I wanted to address as well the changes made to this bill when we were starting to run into a time crunch in May. The committee requested of the House an extension of time, which I think was a reasonable request. Along with that request for an extension of time was also an extension to expand the scope.

I think this is one of the places we ran into trouble, as I've spoken to before. I just wanted to reiterate some of the implications, I guess, of that change to expand the scope. I've spoken about before, so I won't repeat, how it changed the direction of the bill from track A to track B. The other thing it did is that it opened the door to doing many different things to the bill. The government had their ideas on how they wanted to change the bill. The NDP had their ideas on how they wanted to change the bill. I think the Bloc just wanted to get past the bill. We had our own ideas of how we wanted to change the bill. By opening up the scope of the bill, we took it as a statutory review. I think essentially that's what was happening with the members of the government and the NDP as well.

By doing so, it really caused us to step back and say, "If we have the option and the ability to actually make changes in this legislation, this very complicated Citizenship Act, what are the things we've been hearing?" That's where we were able to go back to our offices, to constituents who had spoken with us and to stakeholders who had contacted us to really go through and look at those things that had been sort of on the priority list. Essentially, the question was, "If you could fix the Citizenship Act in one way, what would it be?" Out of that discussion came the suggestions we've made.

I think people need to understand that when this bill's scope was opened up, it presented an opportunity to fix multiple things that were wrong in the system. That's what the members of the government chose to do. That's what the NDP chose to do. That's what we chose to do. When we got to our amendments, that's what they were. They were sensible amendments that were drawn from the suggestions and thoughts that we and our constituents had so that we could improve and fix things. In the same vein, we didn't want to have any unintended consequences in those amendments, so we were careful to draft them in such a way that they wouldn't do that. The result of that was to have what we call the statutory review, which is essentially what was happening.

The other thing I wanted to touch on relates to that. It still could have gone easier than it did. My colleague Mr. Kmiec made a very reasonable proposal or motion: Given that we are expanding the scope, and given that we are expanding the time, let's have an extra two weeks—I think at that time it was two weeks—to submit the amendments we want to submit. Of course, that motion was not approved. Therefore, we were not able to do that. As a result, we had to take more time here. We had to provide our amendments one by one as we went, which made more work for the clerks and everybody around the table. If we had accepted that very reasonable motion by Mr. Kmiec back in May, we wouldn't have had this issue.

The other issue I want to touch on in that same line of thinking is the fact that there was a breach of privilege when an amendment that had been shared in confidence with members was actually shared outside this room and shared very explicitly and in a very detailed way with members of the public. That is another reason there was great hesitation to submit the amendments we had. It was the risk of those being put out there in the public. We weren't sure what was going on with the committee and who was supplying that information to others.

That was another reason this took longer than it needed to. There was a lack of trust, I think, in how that happened. I'm not sure we ever quite got to the bottom of that, but we need to ensure, number one, that it doesn't happen again. It's a disappointing thing that happened. Of course, it's a well-established principle of parliamentary privilege that certain things are allowable and certain things aren't, and that was one that wasn't.

• (4455)

I just wanted to add those things to the record, and some of the reasons we ended up where we did on this.

I'll leave it at that for the moment, Madam Chair.

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

Go ahead, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I was just wondering whether we had the room until 9 p.m.

Is that the case, Madam Chair?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Yes, we have the services available until nine.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** So there are five minutes left for the meeting, but when I raised my hand, there were 20 remaining.

Are we going to vote on the report to be tabled in the House or should we suspend the meeting and pick up where we left off tomorrow?

I don't think it's worth continuing the meeting. There's no point with only four minutes left.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I have one more person on the speaking list.

Go ahead, Mr. Perkins.

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

This is a bit of a follow-up, if I could, to the beginning of Mr. Redekopp's question, which was a follow-up to Mr. Kmiec's question about suspending until tomorrow.

Because we made more than 40 amendments, Mr. Kmiec referred to our caucus process. That was one of the revelations here when I got elected. I thought the caucus part of the whole process would be two hours a week that I could never get back. It turned out that our process, anyway—I don't know how it is for the other caucuses—is a lot different from what I expected, in the sense that for any motion, issue, bill or private member's bill that goes before Parliament from this place or the other place, the shadow minister has to set up what we call a “caucus advisory committee”, which was referenced. I'm the shadow minister for industry.

It's basically inviting all your caucus members to a discussion on that issue to discuss the bill, the proposal and what the shadow minister may or may not think, and to also have a discussion about what we think our position should be. That discussion then goes through a type of cabinet process. We have shadow cabinet committees, which shadow ministers sit on for various areas—economic policy, social policy. The relevant shadow minister has to take that caucus input on that bill or legislation, as was the case for this one, to that shadow cabinet committee and have yet another discussion about the bill and what caucus recommended.

Sometimes that process reconfirms what the caucus advisory committee wants. Sometimes it modifies it or alters it. It then goes on to a meeting of our leadership team, which is the equivalent of the cabinet's P and P process, so it's like the cabinet committee process. I think it was Rona Ambrose, when she was leader, who set up this process for us, which we still follow.

As discussed at that committee meeting, that P and P process, not unlike the cabinet process, may choose to do something different or to ratify or alter something at that discussion. Then it goes to the full caucus, believe it or not. The shadow minister who presented it originally has to present it to all of the caucus. We then have a caucus discussion and debate about that recommendation and an actual vote. Everything we do goes through that process, including the vote.

When there is a substantial change to what we approved originally, whether it's a private member's bill, a motion or a government bill that happens through the committee process, as shadow ministers we're obligated to bring that back to the full caucus to have a discussion and debate about what we think the caucus and the team—this is a team sport, after all—should be doing.

Because the alterations to this bill are so significant, it would require us.... We're lucky, in that it's Tuesday. We've missed some of the other elements, but we all do have caucus tomorrow. Our shadow minister could make a presentation to caucus tomorrow morning on what has changed and get feedback from the caucus on the position for reporting back and the vote on what our position would be on reporting back to the House and going forward to third reading.

If I recall, Madam Chair, I think that while you may not have said it, you seemed to nod your head when Mr. Redekopp asked if you would consider suspending and following up on Mr. Kmiec's idea that we suspend and come back tomorrow, if possible, after the caucus process. That would mean after question period tomorrow we'd reconvene so that we could have, with our proper caucus of our 118 or so colleagues—I guess I'm not so good at math tonight—less those present, the input of those caucus colleagues and instructions that we could bring back to the table tomorrow, if that were possible.

• (4500)

Madam Chair, I would like to follow up on the two previous comments on whether that nodding was agreement so that we could adjourn until tomorrow—

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

I still have people on the speakers list. We do not have the services available after 9 p.m. It is 9:02, so I will suspend the meeting.

Thank you to everyone for your patience.

The meeting is suspended.

[*The meeting was suspended at 9:02 p.m., Tuesday, June 6, 2023*]

[*The meeting resumed at 7:24 p.m., Wednesday, June 7, 2023*]

• (6720)

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

We are resuming meeting number 70 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. We are continuing our study of Bill S-245.

When we left off, we were debating the question on whether the chair shall report the bill as amended to the House.

I have two people on the speaking list, Mr. Redekopp and Mr. Kmiec.

Mr. Redekopp.

• (6725)

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm going to take a slightly different tactic tonight.

In the last few meetings, I started by trying to move my motion to talk about the Indian students. I think we all want to see some action on the Indian student issue, but I don't want to see it voted down another time. I think that would be bad.

What I would like to suggest, and maybe this is more of a point of order than anything, is that after we're done with Bill S-245—hopefully, tonight—we move to committee business, where we can consider that motion and other committee business, if it comes up.

I'm wondering whether we could have an agreement that we could do that, Madam Chair.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** That is automatic.

**The Chair:** Mr. Dhaliwal, let me recognize you first.

We have to complete Bill S-245.

The meeting was suspended. We are resuming. Once we get through that, then we will proceed.

We need to get through Bill S-245. We have that legislation that is of importance. First we need to clear that.

After that, we can see where we can go.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** As long as the committee has the will to at least consider going to committee business...and just to show that we are willing, I would suggest that we proceed to a vote on this statement.

**The Chair:** Do all members agree to that?

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Madam Chair, I had my hand up.

**The Chair:** Yes, Mr. Dhaliwal, and then Ms. Lalonde.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

There is no issue with the NDP, Bloc, Conservatives or us on the Liberal side, bringing any of those motions or anything to do with those students. We all want to help.

However, the main thing is Bill S-245. If we can get that out now, then I'm sure every member in this House—on the Liberal side, I am certain—is fully in support.... They are not only supportive; in fact, they are already talking to the minister and to IRCC and CBSA to make sure justice prevails.

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

Ms. Lalonde.

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** I want to ask my colleague what he meant.

For us, it is very important that we move forward on Bill S-245. We have spent over 28 hours throughout this wonderful initiative. I'm sure that a lot of people outside of this House, and this committee, will be happy to see this coming to a vote.

I would be happy to find out more about how the member wants to proceed, but my first thought is to get Bill S-245 to a vote.

**The Chair:** Mr. Kmiec is next, and then Ms. Kwan.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** I thought I was on the list before, Chair.

As I said, I went to my caucus. I am ready to vote.

**The Chair:** Ms. Kwan.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I am very ready for the vote.

We have been ready for some time, and so are the lost Canadian families. Let's get on with it.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Seeing no debate, we can go for a vote.

Shall the chair report the bill as amended to the House?

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** We would like a recorded division.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clerk, can you please take the vote?

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

**The Chair:** I will report the bill as amended. It is adopted.

Thank you, everyone, for your patience.

Thank you to all the officials, and to the team being led by Ms. Girard. Let's give her a big hand.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**The Chair:** I know you have been very patient, and you had to spend your husband's birthday with us to get through Bill S-245. On behalf of all the members of the committee, I really want to thank you and your team for being here for many long evenings.

Thank you to all the support staff and to the interpreters.

I really want to thank all the members for their co-operation and for their patience.

I thank all our staff also, because we can't do it without staff.

Thank you to everyone for getting this legislation through. Hopefully, I will report it back, and we will be moving on.

Yes, Ms. Kwan?

• (6730)

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I, too, would like to thank the staff, particularly for their patience and endurance with this bill.

Now I'd like to move two motions, Madam Chair. I will move them one by one. I'll let the first one be dealt with first, and then when we've finished with that, if you can come to back to me, Madam Chair, I'll move my second motion.

My first motion is:

That, following news reports that international students admitted into Canada with valid study permits were issued fraudulent college acceptance letters by immigration consultants, and are now facing deportation, the committee issue a news release to condemn the actions of these fraudulent "ghost consultants" and call on the Canada Border Services Agency to immediately stay pending deportations of affected international students, waive inadmissibility on the basis of misrepresentation and provide an alternate pathway to permanent status for those impacted, such as the humanitarian and compassionate application process or a broad regularization program.

Madam Chair, I'd like to move this motion first. I think it is important that this motion be adopted by the committee.

As mentioned previously, this is an issue that I wrote to the minister about, long before this matter became a topic for this committee. I called for him to take action in raising the concerns of how

these students have been victims of this fraudulent scheme. The measures we need the government to take are staying the deportations; waiving inadmissibility based on misrepresentation by the fraudulent, ghost consultants in submitting doctored admissions letters, unbeknownst to the students; and then, finally, giving the students a permit pathway.

As we know, when students are faced with the issue of inadmissibility, it stays on their record for five years. That applies to all immigration pathways, so this is very significant to their future.

These students—I've met with many of them now—are in such a terrible state. They've lost money, and they are stuck in a terrible situation. Some of them have deportation orders. Others have pending meetings with the CBSA.

As a first step, this, I think, is absolutely essential and necessary, Madam Chair, so I'll move this as my first motion. After this is dealt with, I have another one to move.

**The Chair:** Okay.

I have a speaking list. We'll have Mr. Dhaliwal and then Ms. Rempel Garner.

Go ahead, Mr. Dhaliwal.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank Madam Kwan for bringing this motion forward.

Right now, Madam Chair, as Madam Kwan mentioned, she is concerned about that. Certainly, on this side, I—along with all of the Liberal members on this committee, as well as the many members outside of this committee—am very concerned about this issue as well.

In fact, as Madam Kwan mentioned the ministry, I would move the following amendment to add at the end of the motion, "and that the committee invite the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship for one hour, the Minister of Public Safety for one hour, and department officials for one hour each to provide a briefing on the situation for a total of four hours".

• (6735)

**The Chair:** Mr. Dhaliwal, do you have this amendment in both official languages?

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** No, I don't. I just came up with it, and that's all I have. It's totally acceptable.

**The Chair:** Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, is it okay? Were you able to get the interpretation?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** The interpretation was unbelievable this evening.

I liked it.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We have an amendment by Mr. Dhaliwal on the floor.

Go ahead, Ms. Rempel Garner.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Madam Chair, in response to Ms. Kwan's comments.... I'd like to build on them.

The issue of individuals who disguise themselves as licensed practitioners and pretend to help people come to Canada and prey on them financially is something that has plagued our country for years, and it's not getting better. It's getting worse. I have sat on this committee for many years, and there have been many reports. This situation is not getting better. It's my hope that, if we move forward with this motion, the government gets serious about this. It puts people's lives at stake. It puts people at risk of human trafficking. It puts people at risk of being exploited in so many different ways. This is something we need to have compassion for, and it's incumbent upon the government to act.

I hope, with regard to the subamendment, that it is not designed to delay and obfuscate government action on this issue. There needs to be action now. There needed to be action weeks ago—not just in this circumstance but also to the broader scope. Some of the reforms made to deal with ghost consultants are clearly not working.

On the accreditation body to deal with immigration consultants, I also have concerns about whether or not these reforms have actually worked. Perhaps we can get to that. Certainly, it shouldn't delay action for people who have been affected in this situation.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Kmicic.

**Mr. Tom Kmicic:** I like the fact that the ministers are being added to this.

We have one subamendment that we'll propose after we deal with this one.

I hope the committee keeps itself open to allowing more than just four hours to have affected international students come in, and also Colleges and Institutes Canada, which is the stakeholder group that represents all the colleges. Some of these international students have given me the emails they've received back and forth, which are used in inadmissibility hearings by CBSA. It is evident in those that IRCC and CBSA were doing the work of confirming that these fake acceptance letters were in fact fraudulent, three years.... I have one case that is three years after the fact. There's an email exchange with the registrar and admissions officers of one of these colleges, so I have a hard time believing the college network, so to speak, wasn't aware that there was fraudulent activity going on.

We should keep it open for the future, but on this subamendment, I'm onside with what Mr. Dhaliwal said.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Seeing no further debate, we will have a vote on the amendment proposed by Mr. Dhaliwal.

(Amendment agreed to)

**The Chair:** We have the motion by Ms. Kwan, as amended, on the floor.

Go ahead, Mr. Redekopp.

• (6740)

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to mention that I spoke, today, with the students affected by this, and they are growing extremely impatient for some action. They'll be very happy to see, finally, that this committee is taking some action.

One thing I think we have to be very careful about, at least from the Conservative perspective.... We are all for not immediately deporting these students, because there are a lot of questions that need to be answered. We are also certainly open to their obtaining PR status. However, we are concerned about creating a special pathway for these particular students. We have the pathways that are there. I think what all these students want is to be considered, like anyone else, for permanent status. They're not asking for something special that way.

I have a subamendment that I would like to propose in this regard.

Towards the end, the current one reads, “waive inadmissibility on the basis of misrepresentation and provide an alternate pathway to permanent status for those impacted”. I would like to delete “an alternate pathway to permanent status” and replace it with “a path to reapply for permanent residency”.

It would read.... I'll start at “call on the Canada Border Services Agency to immediately stay pending deportations of affected international students, waive inadmissibility on the basis of misrepresentation and provide a path to reapply for permanent residency for those impacted,” and it carries on.

**The Chair:** Please just let me write it down. Is it “a path to reapply”?

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** It's “a path to reapply for permanent residency”.

**The Chair:** It will read “on the basis of misrepresentation and provide a path to reapply for permanent residency for those impacted”.

We have a subamendment by Mr. Redekopp on the floor. Mrs. Lalonde wants to speak to it.

To bring on record what Mr. Redekopp said, this committee adopted a motion earlier. Everyone was in favour of it, that the legislation would have priority. Based on that, we had to get through the legislation to get on to any other business of the House.

That's why the committee has been going through meetings on Bill S-245. It's because of this motion the committee has passed, that the legislation holds a priority. I just want to put it on record that we had to get through that legislation before we could do anything else.

Next we have Mrs. Lalonde and then Mr. Dhaliwal.

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** I'll let Mr. Dhaliwal go first, and maybe I'll share some thoughts after. I really want Mr. Dhaliwal to speak on this issue that is very important to all of us.

I know my colleague would really appreciate the opportunity to speak.

**The Chair:** Mr. Dhaliwal.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank Mr. Redekopp, Brad, on the other side for bringing this forward and for the way he's thinking. In fact, the way he's thinking is that the students were here. They already went through school. They got their diplomas or degrees. They got the experience. Basically, the way he's saying it is that students are not just beggars who take immigration for granted. There are many other people who have gone through the same path as well. There are probably hundreds of thousands of those other students who will feel that it's fair.

I think that is the approach he's taking. They are competing with other students who came through other means. That's what it meant.

I would like Brad to reflect on this one, please, on if I'm right about the way he's thinking.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Lalonde, do you want to speak?

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** I just want to understand the member's decisions for this subamendment. I hear my colleague, who is an expert in this and is certainly closer to the file from an emotional.... I would like to hear a little more, because my understanding is that we're asking to delete "alternative pathway" and add "provide a path to reapply for permanent residency".

I know the member mentioned that he spoke to several of those students. Does he have assurance that they already have...? Are they reapplying? Have they applied already?

Maybe he can share some thoughts.

• (6745)

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** As you were speaking, one thing that did rise in my mind that we should maybe think about is that probably not every one of them has applied. That is a fair statement. I think most of them have, and that's when this issue came up, actually. It was when they applied. That's when the CBSA finally went and actually looked at the papers from five years ago and realized they'd made a mistake five years ago.

Maybe it should say "a path to apply or reapply", but I think the key point is that I don't think anybody's asking for any special treatment. They just want to have the ability to apply for permanent residency, or reapply, as is necessary.

I would be fine if we wanted to say "a path to apply or reapply for permanent residency". That would work, too, because that's the intent of it.

I would agree with what Mr. Dhaliwal said; he's correct.

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** What's the difference? That's my point.

**The Chair:** I have a speaking list: Ms. Rempel Garner, Mr. Ali and then Ms. Kwan.

Ms. Rempel Garner is next.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Just to build on Ms. Lalonde's question, I think what's happened in this situation is that there are some parallels to what we were seeing with the facilitation letters in the Aghan study that we were looking at, where people thought they had applied for programs, but they didn't actually apply because.... I'm looking at Mr. Redekopp for confirmation. They thought they had applied, but essentially they were scammed in this circumstance. Is that right?

On the words "reapply" or "apply", I think it's all being used in the same context, in that there was intent by these people to apply formally. They thought they were applying through a correct path, but they were scammed. I think the spirit of Mr. Redekopp's text and Ms. Kwan's original text is the same thing, from what I'm taking. It's just that for my colleague Mr. Redekopp, what I think he's trying to say, Ms. Lalonde, is that there doesn't need to be a separate special program. The pathways already exist, so let's use the existing pathways that already exist to allow them to come in, rather than creating a special program.

That's my understanding, and I would hope there would be unanimity on that. I think the key thing here that we all agree on is that at the heart of the issue these people were scammed. We have a duty of care to ensure that doesn't happen again, that they're not in a position of vulnerability and that due process is still applied. I don't think anybody is saying that due process shouldn't be applied. In that context, that's why I would support Mr. Redekopp's amendment.

Maybe I'm misunderstanding, but that would be my understanding of what happened here.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Rempel Garner.

Next is Mr. Ali.

**Mr. Shafqat Ali (Brampton Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

This issue is really important, especially in Brampton. I see many students who are struggling to deal with their situation. I have sympathy, and my office is assisting some of the students who fell into that situation of being banned for five years. Our constituency office is assisting those students.

I think it's a record as a government: In 2016, we had 264,000 students, but in 2019 there were over 400,000 students. We had a situation last year. There was an article on IELTS. For some students, the IELTS was not genuine. There was an article about a college in Niagara.

Now this is happening. Some students may be innocent or some.... We don't know until we go through a study on it. I think we should allocate the time to a study on this, to find out where something went wrong and how we deal with this issue without compromising the integrity of our system, of IRCC.



There's one more question that I wanted to ask Mr. Redekopp. He said that we should give PRs to people who were here for five years, but then, who applied or.... Yes, they can apply, but my point is, do we deal with the refugees who have been here for the last five years in a similar way...? Would that open another door?

I wanted to hear your thoughts on that, but yes, this issue is really important, and I think we need more time to discuss it as a committee and to bring forward suggestions or solutions.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

• (6750)

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

Ms. Kwan.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The situation with the students is devastating. I think we all agree with that.

I've talked to a number of the students now, quite a number of them, actually, in the last number of days. Some of them have made an application to have their TRV extended, and now their system is hung up. Others are going through a process of trying to access and build towards a permanent pathway, which is ultimately what they want.

In this motion I've tabled, I'm saying to the government that we should acknowledge the suffering these students have undergone. One student I spoke with racked up \$20,000 in legal fees as a result of this situation. They paid the fee to the unscrupulous consultant already. They paid student tuition to the school they were supposed to go to. However, they didn't end up going to it because they didn't know there was a fraudulent claim with that, so they went to that school to try to get access to the school and couldn't. Then, they went to another school after all of this, so they paid double the educational fee in this situation.

They have sold their land at home. They've sold everything they own at home. They have nothing at home. This is the reality they're faced with.

I think my motion calling for the government to provide an alternate pathway for these students is the right thing to do. Alternate pathways could mean a humanitarian, compassionate stream. They'd still have to go through the process in their application. I think it is the right thing to do, so I don't support the amendment. I'm sorry.

The Conservatives have taken a different point of view for a long time. In their other motion, they said to suspend deportation only until they get a chance to testify. I don't agree with that. I actually think we should suspend the deportation, not just until they testify but until there is a full remedy for the problem, including the waiving of inadmissibility based on misrepresentation and for that pathway to materialize.

I'm sorry. I don't support the amendment, and I would like my motion to stay as is.

**The Chair:** Mr. Dhaliwal.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I certainly feel very bad about these students as well, and particularly the ones who are facing deportation and have to go through this, but the way I see it is this. Some members of the committee might not know the system and how it works. What happens is that the student gets a letter from the school and then the admission is done. The student pays fees directly to the institution. What happens—single cases have come to me—is that they will do this, but this will also somehow be done by the agent. When they land here, they find out, or the agent tells them, that they didn't even have admission to that school, or it didn't even exist. What happens is that the student takes admission into another school. Basically, they start their life at some other school, like the 400,000 students Mr. Ali mentioned earlier. They are in the same lineup.

The main focus that I see right now is the fraudulent letter. What damage did that fraudulent letter do to those students? They took their letter, and now they're facing a five-year deportation ban. I would support Madam Kwan on this one. This should be abolished right away. This should not be on their record. They were not aware that this letter that was given to them was fraudulent.

On the other hand, our dear friend Mr. Redekopp on the other side has brought a motion forward. Basically, I think he's saying that they got in here, for example, on this letter they were issued, and we are already dealing with that. That fraudulent letter should not put a five-year ban on those students. If those students have already taken admission in the other college, and they have gone through that process, they already have the number of hours they need, the qualifications they need, the exams they need and all the other requirements—medical, criminality check—so they are the ones who should be given immigration instead of a blanket being put over the whole thing.

If we go with a blanket thing, we're not certain; they're now saying there are 700 students, but I don't think there are 700 students. The number I see is about 200, or whatever the number is. Out of those 200, some of them might have already gotten their immigration and gone through the system already. Some of them have already completed all the requirements they needed to make sure they have the required number of points for express entry, or they have applied under some provincial program, such as BC PNP. There are a lot of pathways that students have already followed, but the major issue they are facing is deportation and this fraudulent letter. If they got the admission here, they are in the same lineup as any of the other students, the 400,000 or so students who came in, because that letter was the only thing. Now that letter is not going to have any impact on their application.

Is that the line Mr. Redekopp is thinking along, that it's fair to these students who have come under this fraudulent letter and it's also fair to those 400,000 or so students who are already here studying?

• (6755)

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

Next I have Ms. Rempel Garner.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Thank you, Chair. I'll be brief.

I just want to address Mr. Ali's concern on fairness, which I think is fair for us to talk about.

The motion as it was originally worded reads, “provide an alternate pathway to permanent status for those impacted”.

The amendment that Mr. Redekopp is suggesting is, “provide a path to reapply for permanent residency for those impacted”.

I think it was Mr. Dhaliwal who suggested perhaps a subamendment to this amendment, which would say, “a path to apply or reapply”, but the implication that Mr. Redekopp's amendment catches is the fairness one, Mr. Ali. It suggests that we're not going to create a special stream for people, but we're going to allow them, if they were deemed inadmissible because of the fraudulent letters, to reapply or apply, as the case may be, through normal processes and due process.

I think it's really important for us to accept this amendment—and not just in this case. I don't know what's happening—'tis the season—but our committee this session has been seized with fraudulent letters of all sorts. I think we, as parliamentarians, have to be careful to not inadvertently create a pull or an incentive for ghost consultants to say, “Well, it doesn't matter. I'm going to issue these fraudulent letters and then I'm going to tell people that, guess what, the committee is now going to say that they have an alternative pathway.”

I don't want to put words in her mouth. I know that's not the spirit of Ms. Kwan's amendment, but I think it behooves us to be precise and say that we understand the humanitarian nature of the situation, but we also want to make sure we are using existing processes and due process, so that we're not being unfair—to Mr. Ali's component; that we're being equitable—but we're also not creating a pull factor by saying that when this type of fraud happens, we're going to create special circumstances. Frankly, that is what we risk happening in the Afghan letter cases as well, because there are civil cases right now.

I think we just need to be precise as a committee. We shouldn't be binding the government in a pull factor. I think that's the spirit of Mr. Redekopp's amendment here.

• (6800)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Rempel Garner.

Next I have Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Just to be very clear, I think we're all saying the same thing. We want the process to be fair. Mr. Dhaliwal said it should be fair to everyone, and I agree. We don't want anybody to have special treatment. By the same token, we want these students not to be penalized by a five-year wait because of something they had no control over.

That's why I think it is important they have a chance to apply or reapply, notwithstanding the fact that they potentially have this five-year issue.

I think we're all saying the same thing. If you like my words, great. If you don't, that's great too, but I suggest we vote.

**The Chair:** I have a speaking list, so we will have to exhaust the list.

Mrs. Lalonde.

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I want to bring a perspective, maybe. I certainly hear my colleague from the Conservatives on this issue.

I believe, though, that we will all agree that the victims of the fraud need to have a pathway to permanent residency. They surely shouldn't have additional barriers just because they were tricked.

I was asking the honourable member so I could better understand, because I actually don't see a real difference from the motion of Ms. Kwan. Within the news release it would say, “a pathway to apply or reapply”, or “an alternative pathway”. I see this as being the same.

I don't want to go on and on, but I would feel strongly that we keep the wording the way it is, because I don't think it makes any difference. I think that collectively we just agree that we want only the best thing for those students. We want to give them an alternative pathway.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mrs. Lalonde.

Mr. El-Khoury.

**Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have a very diverse riding. I think we have to be fair. I totally feel for these students, and we should find a way...but when I receive people and I receive deportations for people who have similar issues.... They came here and they were advised, coming here as tourists, to apply to become permanent residents. They believed that. They stayed for three, four or five years, and then they were refused, deported.

What can I tell those people when they come to me and ask, “Why don't you prefer to talk about this? You work hard to settle the issues of those people, those students, but not our issues”? This is what I'm feeling, and I wonder how I can face those people.

However, after saying that, I can tell you, looking very logically at what Ms. Kwan commented on, I am ready to support her proposal as it's presented. Thank you.

• (6805)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. El-Khoury.

Go ahead, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I have no comments to add.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Okay.

We will go to a vote on the amendment proposed by Mr. Redekopp.

(Amendment negated: nays 6; yeas 5)

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Kmiec.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Madam Chair, because you mentioned that this committee has passed a motion ordering the business that we do, I have an amendment to make sure that this is the next business we undertake. It would add a comma after the words “and that”, and then “notwithstanding any usual practice or previous motion adopted by this committee,”

That would be the amendment, and it goes back to—

**The Chair:** Can you repeat that? Would it be after the last regularization program?

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** It would be after, “and that”, at the bottom. That's the part that Mr. Dhaliwal added. He added, “and that the committee invite the Minister of [IRCC]”.

It would be “and that, notwithstanding any usual practice or previous motion adopted by this committee, the committee invite the Minister of [IRCC]...the Minister of...”.

This is to make sure that this is the next business that this committee undertakes.

**The Chair:** Can you please fully repeat your amendment?

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** My amendment would be, after the words “and that” but before the words “the committee invite”—hopefully, it's clear now—“and that, notwithstanding any usual practice or previous motion adopted by this committee, the committee invite the Minister of [IRCC]...”, and then it goes on.

**The Chair:** I need a minute to get the amendment proposed by Mr. Kmiec into the motion.

[Translation]

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** We can do something else before the invitations. Even if we were to adopt the motion, we will continue to review the report drafts, because we still have several to complete.

Is that the plan?

[English]

**The Chair:** I will have the clerk read the motion so that it is clear for everyone.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Keelan Buck):** The amendment proposed is to add, after the words “and that” in the last section of the motion, “notwithstanding any usual practice or previous motion adopted by this committee”.

[Translation]

In French, we need to add, after the words “et que” in the final part of the main motion, “et nonobstant toute pratique habituelle ou motion antérieure adoptée par ce comité”.

• (6810)

[English]

**The Chair:** Okay, we have an amendment that is proposed by Mr. Kmiec on the floor.

Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** To be very clear, our intention in doing this is that we get to this immediately so that there's no other business that will supersede this. That's the intention, and I would hope that's the intention of all the committee members.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Ali.

**Mr. Shafqat Ali:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I think it was Ms. Kwan who put forward that motion. It's crystal clear. It deals with the issue. I think we should move on, instead of wasting time bringing forward amendments to that motion.

It is clear and it deals with the issue. I agree with it. I wanted to put that on the record.

**The Chair:** Ms. Rempel Garner.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Briefly, Chair, this is to your comment earlier about how we were dispensing with Bill S-245 and that's why we weren't dealing with Mr. Redekopp's earlier motion, which I believe precipitated this debate on this issue. Not to challenge your ruling, but to be fair, the Standing Orders do allow committees to essentially control their own destinies. Motions can supersede business, as we saw with the motion on Bill S-245 that changed the scope of the amendments that were delivered.

I think what Mr. Redekopp's motion does is it clarifies that there will be no delay. There will be no other business that will precede this particular issue. We're enshrining that so things don't accidentally get scheduled instead of this particular study, particularly since we've agreed to add more time for study on this issue.

I support this amendment because it clearly says that this is the next order of business. This is the direction that the committee is giving to you, Chair. I would urge my colleagues to support it for that reason.

**The Chair:** I have Ms. Kwan and then Mr. Dhaliwal.

Ms. Kwan.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I don't think the amendment is necessary.

The order of precedence we have is actually on bills. Bill S-245 was before us, so we had to deal with that. Now that it has been dealt with, it is my full intention that this be our next study. I think there is commitment from committee members here to do that. I don't think this is necessary, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Mr. Dhaliwal.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair, as far as I see, to me, this should be the next priority as well. I personally see that everyone is on board.

Why don't you suspend the meeting for a few minutes, Madam Chair? Let them talk among themselves to come up with.... Whether we vote no to Mr. Redekopp's motion or we agree with Madam Kwan, it's the same thing.

I just want, for the sake of this committee, to suspend for a few minutes to let them talk. If it's the same thing, let's move forward and this should be the next priority for this committee.

**The Chair:** Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Madam Chair, let's be efficient this evening. We all know how we are going to vote. Everyone is familiar with the wording of the motions, the amendments and the subamendments. We've done our work and we are intelligent enough to be able to vote quickly without further debate. We don't even need to suspend the meeting for two minutes to discuss anything. All we have to do is vote. I think that we are intelligent and efficient enough to do that.

Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like us to start working on it right now.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Should we go for a vote?

Is it the will of the committee to suspend?

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Chair:** Seeing no further debate, we will go for a vote. We are voting on the amendment proposed by Mr. Kmiec.

• (6815)

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Madam Chair, you're going to a recorded vote. Could you just do it by a show of hands? It will go a lot faster.

**The Chair:** I have asked already for the clerk to take the vote, so he'll take the vote.

(Amendment negatived: nays 6; yeas 5)

**The Chair:** We have the motion as amended on the floor.

Ms. Kwan.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** I'm hoping we're ready to vote on my motion.

**The Chair:** Seeing no further debate, we will vote on the motion proposed by Ms. Kwan as amended.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Ms. Kwan.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'd now like to move this motion.

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Committee undertake a study into the targeted exploitation scheme faced by 700 Punjabi international students in which they were unknowingly defrauded by a "ghost" immigration consultant who used inauthentic admission letters for their student visa application; that this study be comprised of two meetings; and that the study consider:

- a) how this situation was allowed to happen;
- b) why fraudulent documents were not detected until years later when the students began to apply for permanent status;
- c) the significant harm experienced by students including financial loss and distress;
- d) measures necessary to help the students to have their deportation stayed, inadmissibility on the basis of misrepresentation waived, and provide a pathway to permanent status; and
- e) that the committee also examine how to prevent similar situations from occurring in the future.

Madam Chair, I'll be very quick about the intention of this motion. I think it's self-explanatory. I think we need to do all of these elements.

The big difference I want to highlight, though, between this motion and the one the Conservatives moved earlier, which they say is similar, is that it's substantively different. In their motion, they only call for the deportation to be stayed until witnesses present to this committee. That is not good enough. We need the deportation stayed in a substantive way so that the inadmissibility on the basis of misrepresentation can be waived and a permanent pathway option is available to them.

The other piece that is also significantly different is that the Conservative motion does not talk about waiving inadmissibility. If you don't waive inadmissibility, these students have, on their records, a five-year ban, and that is very significant for their futures. They would not be able to access any immigration pathway, even if it were a study permit, a work permit or anything like that. That is an essential component, in my view, to this.

Finally, to the last point—a permanent pathway—this is what the students want, and we need to make sure we address that as well.

There's a substantive difference, and that's why I supported the adjournment of those motions. I would not support the motion in any event, and I would support this one, which is much more holistic in addressing the issues for the students.

**The Chair:** We have a motion on the floor moved by Ms. Kwan.

I have a speaking list with Mr. Kmiec and then Mr. Dhaliwal.

Mr. Kmiec.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm in agreement with this motion. I have another motion after this, though, so I just want to give you notice. It is on notice already.

I thought that, first, we could do a study, and then we could come up with solutions to problems and not the other way around, typically. There was always the option of accepting....

We had four votes before we finally came to international students, which my colleague Mr. Redekopp tried to do at this committee. At any one of those times, Ms. Kwan could have come to us with the wording she wanted to add to our motion. I thought ours was better, but we're always open to making it even better and to having a different wording.

I support this motion, and I will be voting for it.

• (6820)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Dhaliwal.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Madam Chair, I'm not here to debate whose motion is better.

I want to thank each and every member of this committee for finally supporting the students who are facing this difficulty. I don't think anyone is not in favour of the five-year ban, based on that letter, being taken away and the deportations being stayed, whether they are stayed until whenever.... Even if they were to do their studies and stay afterwards, I think everybody probably meant the same thing. There was no problem on this side of Bill S-245. We were always saying to our Conservative and NDP friends that, of course, once we finish this, we will deal with that issue. I'm glad each and every party is supporting dealing with this, and that the motion proposed by Madam Kwan and amended by me is going through.

Let's get on and see. Even if students come to you, as an individual.... Let's pursue those cases with the ministers of IRCC and public safety to make sure they feel that the support is there and that we're standing with them shoulder to shoulder. We should not play politics with this issue or make this issue a political football, when those students, at the end, keep suffering.

That's where I want to leave it, Madam Chair. It's not only the Liberal members on this committee. I can tell you, Madam Chair, that many other members have approached me. They are talking outside this group. We have already met with the IRCC minister's department, as well as CBSA, to make sure we are prudent on this issue and support it as much as we can.

On behalf of the Liberal caucus, I want to show my support for these wonderful students.

**The Chair:** Next, I have Mr. Redekopp and then Mr. Ali.

Go ahead, Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

You know, as I said last weekend and this week too, I've spoken with the students, and they were very frustrated that no actions were happening at this committee. I think they'll be very pleased to see things happening now. We have to remember, though, that Lovepreet Singh is a person who is still scheduled to be deported very soon. This does not solve that problem. There are still issues that are very urgent, which the government needs to address here.

At the beginning of the meeting, I said I was going to take a different approach. Instead of moving my motion and having it get voted down again, I was going to try something different. I think that's what has happened here tonight. It doesn't matter to me whether it's my motion that gets approved or what we do. I just want to see some action happen, and I see action happening here tonight. I think the students—who are probably watching this right now—will be very excited to see that. I'm excited to do that.

I will support this motion if it means we can move forward with this.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Ali.

**Mr. Shafqat Ali:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank all my colleagues for voting on this motion.

The international students are in a devastating situation. I've seen it in Brampton. Many of my constituents approached me. Our team of Brampton MPs have also had, numerous times, discussions on this issue. I think we need to have empathy for those students. We should not exploit the situation and play politics with those innocent students and their issue. This motion could have been passed way earlier in this committee if we hadn't wasted so much time on certain amendments on Bill S-245.

I want to thank all the members. At the same time, I'd like to request of my colleagues.... Those international students have gone through a lot and they're going through a lot. Let's not play politics with that. They know this side of the aisle's record on immigration and international students. It's amazing, so they know the genuineness.

My request to all of my colleagues is this: Let's not exploit the situation. Let's not politicize the situation. Let's move on to the motion moved by my colleague Ms. Kwan and deal with this issue as soon as possible.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

● (6825)

**The Chair:** Next I have Ms. Kwan.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** I have just a very quick comment.

In terms of the students who are faced with this situation, many of them have actually reached out to me. I've spoken to many of them, and I'm working with them to collect their information to get their consent. I had already been in conversation with the minister about the situation to get their files right in front of the minister and to have, hopefully, a positive outcome for them.

In the case of Mr. Lovepreet Singh, he is, indeed, faced with deportation imminently, so that's an urgent file. In fact, I was on an email with him just now with respect to that.

Absolutely, we need to do that.

The work in this committee.... As I explained to the students, as well, as anxious as they were, this committee has no authority to waive or stay deportations. Only the Minister of Public Safety can do that—or the Federal Court. However, what we can do, of course, is to look into the situation and explore different options as recommendations to the government to see how we can prevent this from happening again.

Most urgently for the students who are faced with this situation right now, we need to actually take a different path. In my view, the best path for moving forward is to bring their cases forward individually to the minister's attention and have them addressed. That's exactly what I'm doing with my staff team.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, you have the floor.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Conservatives and the Liberals said that they would be voting in favour of the motion. Given that the NDP moved it, I would imagine that the New Democrats will also vote for it. The Bloc Québécois will also vote in favour of the motion.

Can we move on to the vote, Madam Chair?

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Dhaliwal, do you want to speak? Your hand is raised.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I think Madam Kwan has already clearly said it. For a number of years—the 13 or 14 years I've been an MP—it's like A, B, C. I'm not going to name anyone because every client has a right to confidentiality, so we can't legally give names on this. In fact, we should not even be discussing this: this year, their names, the emails we are getting from them. In fact, all that information is very confidential.

Previously, Madam Chair, there were a lot of cases that came to our office and we took an approach to stay their deportation. That's what Madam Kwan meant. Basically, exactly, I was going to say to other members on this committee and the students as well. They should go to their respective members right away so that they can take their authorization to talk to the CBSA. Once they get in touch with the CBSA and get all the information, then they can get in touch with the Minister of Public Safety and explain why they're not in danger of running away. I'm sure that, under these circumstances, the minister will look at this very favourably and this will get done.

Basically, individual cases should not sit at home and wait for anything. The people who are already facing deportation should go to the respective members for the ridings they live in and tell those members to pursue the stopping of their deportation.

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

Ms. Kayabaga.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I don't want to delay this any longer, but I just want to put some things on the record because I did hear my colleague, Mr. Redekopp, state that we were trying to vote against this motion. That is not what we're trying to do. We're trying to make sure that we do not delay Bill S-245, which had many people's lives in jeopardy. I'm glad that we were able to get to that point.

I also think that it's important to strike a balance on what we're doing right now. We're deeply concerned about the students, and that's really important to note. This is really important legislation, and we've received hundreds of letters from people who are looking for it to be passed. I think we can go clause by clause, considering that it's typically a two-hour process. This is something that the Conservatives have dragged out for over 30 hours, and they've showing no signs of stopping this.

We're here right now, in this moment, because of the 30-hour process that we just finished: going through the clause-by-clause on Bill S-245.

• (6830)

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting, Ms. Kayabaga.

I'll just request that all members avoid side conversations and talking across the aisle. Our member has the floor and is speaking. Let her finish.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** I want to point out some major flaws in the motion. There's a part where he wants to drag these vulnerable students in to testify and essentially prove to the committee that they are innocent. It's, honestly, despicable, Madam Chair, because they've already gone through a lot, and I don't think they need to go through that any further. I think one of my colleagues just mentioned that it's unethical for us to even mention their names.

We are seized with this issue. We want to study the cause, and we want to find a solution and not waste any more time questioning whether the students were complicit or not, which is what the Conservatives are essentially trying to do. I hope we do not do that.

I want to clarify. This motion that my colleague, Mr. Redekopp, has brought insinuates that we can bring the students in, and I think we shouldn't do that.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

Are we debating my motion now? I'm happy to, if that's what we're doing. Are we debating my motion? It's just to clarify.

**The Chair:** No, it's Ms. Kwan's motion that we are debating.

Ms. Kayabaga.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** I'd like to finish, Madam Chair, by saying that we support Ms. Kwan's motion. I hope that we can remain within the lines of ethics and we do not drag this out for another 30 hours. As we all know, people's lives are on the line right now.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I understand that the Liberals are angry because the Conservatives took a lot of time over Bill S-245, and decided this evening to speak for an extremely long time without saying anything at all. Everyone knows that we all agree on the motion.

I'd like to tell my Liberal friends that if the Bloc Québécois wanted to, it could carry on at length and read from books. If we wanted to play that game, it would not be amusing. I'm prepared to do my share of work and to get going immediately. People should stop wasting the committee's time. Just because someone has spoken for far too long doesn't mean you have to do likewise. If you criticize someone for something, then you shouldn't do what they did.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The floor is yours, Ms. Kayabaga.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Madam Chair, my colleague shouldn't use expressions like "wasting time", because that's not what's happening right now.

We were all elected and we have work to do. And that's what we're doing.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

[English]

**The Chair:** Seeing no further debate, we will go for a vote on Ms. Kwan's motion.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

**The Chair:** Mr. Kmiec.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** As I told you, Madam Chair, this motion has been on notice since March 27. I move:

That, the committee report the following to the House: that Russian opposition leader Vladimir Kara-Murza is facing political persecution in the Russian Federation including a show trial with high treason charges following his public condemnation of the unjustified and illegal war by Russia against Ukraine. That Vladimir Kara-Murza has survived two assassination attempts by poisoning including in 2015 and 2017, and that he is currently imprisoned in Russia and his health is failing. That Vladimir Kara-Murza is the recipient of the Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize awarded by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and is a Senior Fellow to the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights. Therefore, the committee calls on the Government of Canada to grant honorary Canadian citizenship to Vladimir Kara-Murza and demand that the Russian Federation set him free.

Madam Chair, that is the motion that has been on notice.

I'll briefly explain why this is still important today. He is still in jail. He's 41 years old. He is the same age I am. He has three kids. His wife, Evgenia Kara-Murza, has been here before, and she has spoken to members of Parliament.

We are trying to reach an agreement with all parties on a UC motion, and I understand we're still having trouble getting there. He has been under arrest since April 2022. Again, he has suffered unjust treatment by his captors. As one of the official opposition leaders in Russia, he, with Alexei Navalny, has basically led the way in defending the democratic rights of people who oppose Vladimir Putin's regime and the Kremlin.

His health has declined. He's lost about 40 pounds since his trial began. He did not have 40 pounds to lose, by the way; that would be like me losing 40 pounds. He's had two poisoning attempts, both suspected to have been directed personally by President Vladimir Putin, from his past two visits to Russia in 2015 and 2017. He has already been diagnosed with polyneuropathy. He's lost feeling in both feet and one arm. Even under Russian law, such a diagnosis should lead to his release, and it's very likely that he will die soon unless he is released.

Unfortunately, yet predictably, Russian courts found him guilty and sentenced him to 25 years in jail. I will also note for the record that there is a statement by the chairs of the foreign affairs committees of various European states in continental Europe that condemns the sentencing of Vladimir Kara-Murza. As all political prisoners know—I have met a few in my time here on Parliament Hill—if we do not promote their names, if we don't have them front and centre in the public, they will be forgotten, and regimes like the

one Vladimir Putin leads will murder their opponents in jail. They have shown before that they have done so. Boris Nemtsov was murdered on a bridge right outside the Kremlin, in the evening, when he was shot to death in a very brazen murder.

For Russian opposition leaders, Russians who support democracy and the Russian Federation, it is a tough life being a member of the opposition there. I count my blessings that I am here in Canada. It is very difficult for them. Granting him honorary citizenship would be the least we could do to support someone who has basically given his life for the democratic movement, human rights, free speech and liberty. The only thing he said that wound up putting him before the Russian courts was that the invasion of Ukraine was illegal and unjust and that he continues to oppose Vladimir Putin's regime, the kleptocrats in the Kremlin.

I hope that we can pass this and bring it to the House, so that the House can pass it as well, and that eventually the Senate may do something similar. There are six honorary citizenships that have been granted, I believe, in the past 30 or 40 years. This would be our seventh. I can't think of anyone more worthy than Vladimir Kara-Murza.

• (6835)

**The Chair:** Next is Mrs. Lalonde.

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** I want to say thank you to my colleague for bringing this forward. There are so many areas where we would agree on the principles of his motion.

I don't want to upset anyone on this committee, but I think it's important that we also set the stage for this motion. When you think about ordinary Canadian citizenship, it is not at the discretion of the minister of IRCC. I think it's important that this be on the record. It is purely symbolic. It is an act on the part of the House. As my honourable colleague mentioned, since 2001, there have been six citizenships. One of them, unfortunately, was revoked. It was done through a unanimous consent motion that was proposed in the House for a joint resolution to be passed to grant that honour.

I think it's important that everybody understand that the recipients of that honour do not receive any of the rights held by Canadian citizens, such as the ability to receive or hold a Canadian passport, nor are they permitted to exercise any duties associated with Canadian citizenship. I think it's important that we realize, and that we put on record, what we are proposing to do in essence.

My honourable colleague did mention how horrible it is for this wonderful person who, through his perspective, is actually challenging, contesting and opposing what the current regime of Vladimir Putin is doing. I think we can agree on all those aspects of what we want to do here. I hope that I'll have the support of my colleagues, because I think the principle is right, but we need to ensure that the language is actually reflective of past practices, what exactly it means and what we would be saying.

For that reason, Madam Chair, I would like to propose an amendment to my colleague's motion. If I can read it in both official languages here, I will do so.

Madam Chair, maybe it would be easier if I read the motion the way I would like to see it with the amendment going forward.

• (6840)

**The Chair:** Just one second, Mrs. Lalonde.

Are you proposing an amendment to the motion moved by Mr. Kmiec?

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** Yes. I move the following amendment.

I would like to delete the words “That, the committee report the following to the House” and replace them with “That the committee issue a press release stating”, and also delete the words “the Government of Canada” and replace them with “Parliament”.

Madam Chair, could I read it as it would be amended, to help our translators?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** The amended motion in English would read:

That the committee issue a press release stating that Russian opposition leader Vladimir Kara-Murza is facing political persecution in the Russian Federation including a show trial with high treason charges following his public condemnation of the unjustified and illegal war by Russia against Ukraine; that Vladimir Kara-Murza has survived two assassination attempts by poisoning including in 2015 and 2017, and that he is currently imprisoned in Russia and his health is failing; that Vladimir Kara-Murza is the recipient of the Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize awarded by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and is a Senior Fellow to the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights; therefore the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration calls on the Parliament of Canada to grant honorary Canadian citizenship to Vladimir Kara-Murza and demand that the Russian Federation set him free.

[*Translation*]

I could repeat that in French if you would like.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mrs. Lalonde has proposed an amendment, so we have an amendment on the floor.

Mr. Kmiec, go ahead.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** I am fine with the second part, where “the Government of Canada” is stricken out and replaced with “Parliament”, but I'm not fine with a news release. I can put out a news release. I can tell you that Vladimir Putin doesn't care about my news release.

All of us here at this table are sanctioned by the Russian Federation. All of us are banned from entering that country, which I wear as a happy badge of honour. When an initial list came out, I was not on it for some reason—a bunch of us were not on it—and it was very difficult for me to deal with my family because they thought that was impugning my character somehow not to be sanctioned by the regime.

The first part is not acceptable. We've done this before. The committee has put out a news release, and it goes nowhere. There was

one on minority Christians being persecuted overseas, and there were two other ones earlier in the year. Those were quickly forgotten. The thing that is not forgotten and that other regimes pay attention to is when Parliament and committees of this Parliament act and do things. Through acts of Parliament, we've recognized genocides. We act. We pass unanimous consent motions. Those are things people pay attention to.

To me, although they are non-binding, that's still the way we've done it before when we've named others to become honorary citizens. This is a way, through Parliament, to do so.

I don't support the amendment, even though half of it is okay with me. A news release is not enough. I would like to see this reported back to the House. It needs to be as is. A news release is simply not enough. It won't help. The Russian Federation won't care. They won't pay attention to what we do here. A news release just won't do it.

Other Parliaments are acting as well. Time is of the essence.

• (6845)

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

We have an amendment on the floor.

Yes, Mrs. Lalonde.

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** I'm not sure when, but I just want to clarify. Because of the French and what I said, I want to make sure it was very clear...not on the amendment but on the suggestions of the revocation of the citizenship of one of the individuals. We can talk about Mr. Kmiec's motion or the amendment, but at one point, Madam Chair, I just want to make sure it's on record that I want to share some thoughts.

**The Chair:** We have an amendment on the floor, proposed by Mrs. Lalonde.

Do you accept that as a friendly amendment from Mr. Kmiec?

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** No.

**The Chair:** Okay.

We have an amendment on the floor. We will take a vote.

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

**The Chair:** The amendment is adopted, so we have the motion as amended on the floor.

Mr. Maguire, did you want to speak?

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** I never thought I'd be in a position to talk about this as much in such an important position.



Boris Nemtsov, as my colleague has just indicated, was shot on the bridge by the Kremlin as a leader of the Russian opposition. I was there with one of my Liberal colleagues, Scott Simms, who was filling in for Larry Bagnell when we were on the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region, or SCPAR. This was about 2018 or somewhere in there. Maybe it was earlier. Tom will probably know more about the exact date of that shooting.

I had the opportunity, with Scott, to walk up on the bridge that night, which was six months after this gentleman had been shot. The flowers were still being laid every night on that bridge in honour of this young man who gave up his life as a Russian leader. The guards were there to make sure that no other extraordinary events were taking place on that bridge, but they could not stop the Russian people from placing those flowers, those memorial cards and those gifts on that bridge. There were so many that they would take them away each week so there would be room for the people who were still bringing them six months after this shooting.

I beseech my colleagues to do more than what is in this resolution—this motion—tonight. I wanted to let them know that I and my Liberal colleague were there and very much in favour of supporting...what happened to that young man in Russia that night. I think it's actually imperative that Canada do far more than just turn a blind eye to this.

Thank you.

• (6850)

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

Mrs. Lalonde, go ahead.

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** Just to put on the record, Madam Chair, I want to be very strong on this. When I mentioned the unfortunate revocation of this person's citizenship, I didn't mean that it was unfortunate that it was revoked. It was fully deserving that it was revoked for Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi in 2018.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Is there any further debate?

We will go to a vote on the motion as amended.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

**The Chair:** The motion as amended is adopted.

Before we adjourn the meeting, I need some guidance on the scheduling.

Ms. Kwan, go ahead.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you very much.

I would like to ask that the two motions we passed today, the first with respect to inviting the minister and officials to come and the second in terms of doing the study, be the next items that we deal with for this committee.

**The Chair:** Yes, I want the committee's guidance on how we want to schedule that.

Before we rise for the summer break, we are left with four meetings—June 12, June 14, June 19 and June 21. Right now, we have

scheduled a meeting for June 19 with Marc Garneau for one hour, and the DND officials for one hour. That was scheduled.

Today we have passed two motions. The first one was passed in regard to inviting the Minister of Immigration and the Minister of Public Safety. We need to have two meetings. The second motion that was passed also states to have two meetings. That means that if we need to study these two motions, we need four meetings. Should we cancel that meeting on June 19 with Marc Garneau and the DND officials and schedule these four meetings?

In regard to the ministers' availability, in the first motion that we passed we are asking the ministers of immigration and public safety to appear before the committee. To schedule that, I'm not sure whether anyone would be able come in on Monday or not.

I would like to get some guidance from the committee on how you would like me to proceed.

Mr. Redekopp, go ahead.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** I think the priority from my perspective would be the initial motion that we passed, where we invite the two ministers. That would be the priority. I would hope that could be done next week. I think we can cover off lots of the issues in those two meetings.

I'm debating about the other two. It would be great to have Marc Garneau come in. He's already scheduled. There's a chance we won't have the meeting on the Wednesday, potentially, Friday being the last day of Parliament. Anyway, potentially it won't happen. There are odds there. If we base it on last year, that meeting wouldn't happen. We wouldn't be able to complete that anyway.

The other problem—I throw it out there—is that even if we complete those two meetings, we still have to write a report. That wouldn't happen until the fall, at which time we may have forgotten a lot of what we heard. That would be an argument for doing it then.

Those are just some of my thoughts. I'm not necessarily saying one thing or the other. I'm just thinking out loud, if you will—maybe that's a dangerous thing to do.

I think, for sure, the priority should be the two ministers in the first motion that we approved tonight.

Thank you.

• (6855)

**The Chair:** Mrs. Lalonde, go ahead.

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** Considering there's maybe a perspective from my honourable colleagues about our timeline in the House before we rise, I would say right now that we should focus on sending the invites, Madam Chair. I don't think any of us can control what days the ministers are able to come. We know how sometimes restricting any decisions that we make is restricting our ability to be more broad.

I would say to the committee, let's send the invites and see the response.

**The Chair:** Based on the input from the members, I think the desire is to go through the first motion first. We will have to send an invitation to two ministers. We are requesting one hour from each minister and one hour from each minister's officials.

Just in case, if we cannot get any ministers, should we just schedule the officials on Monday, if they are available? We will have to check what the availability is for the officials for one hour with IR-CC and one hour with Public Safety. Or would the members like to have the minister and the officials together for each meeting?

Go ahead, Mr. Dhaliwal.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

It does not matter which sequence they come in, as we'll talk to all of them. The departments will probably even be the best to start with, because they will be able to lay out all the information that we need, and then members of Parliament will be able to put questions to the ministers.

To me, this takes priority. It doesn't matter what sequence it takes.

**The Chair:** We'll have Ms. Kwan, and then Mr. Redekopp.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I am fine with having officials come first. If we can arrange for the ministers to be here and the ministers can come after, I'm fine with that.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

At the end of the day, what's important here is.... Whatever is best to get the students studied is the way to go. If we can move this forward and get at this issue of the fake acceptance letters we have been discussing, whatever makes it happen more quickly is the way we should go on that.

**The Chair:** Would members like to keep this meeting on June 19 as scheduled with Mr. Garneau and the DND officials?

Go ahead, Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** One other thing I was going to mention is that if it turns out that there's nobody available on Monday, I'm quite certain that we could get the students to come in. I'm sure they would be very interested in coming to testify and speak to us too, so that's another thought.

**The Chair:** We have decided we will go with the first motion first. We will have to deal with that.

Let me get the invitations out to the ministers. I can't really say what their availability is unless we send the invitations and get some answers from them. I can update the committee as we hear from them.

Yes, Mrs. Lalonde.

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** I personally think we should send the invitations. Ministers should come first. That has always been the procedure of the House. Let's continue. Let's see what the response will be.

I cannot control anybody's schedule. My understanding is.... I'm not sure until when we will sit in the House, according to my honourable colleagues.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you to all of you.

I will work with the clerk, and we will see what the availability is. Based on that availability, we will schedule the next four meetings—four or three, whatever the number is—and I will update the members.

Yes, Ms. Kwan.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Could the clerk also send to all of us the number of witnesses we'll be able to invite and the deadline for when we have to submit the witnesses for that study of two meetings?

**The Chair:** That's for the second motion. We'll work on that.

Let us get the invitations out to the ministers. If I get any updates by tomorrow, I will update the respective vice-chairs and let everyone know.

With that, I really want to thank all members. This week has been tough and long. Thank you for your co-operation, your patience and your hard work. We have been able to get through the legislation. I really appreciate your making changes to your schedules and being here for many hours together. It has been good spending time together. Thank you.

With that, the meeting is adjourned.







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

---

### SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

---

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

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

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

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

---

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

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

---

### PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

---

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

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

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

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

---

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