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Chair: Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal





## Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

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• (1645)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.)):** I call the meeting to order. We are in public.

As Ms. Kwan earlier asked for her question to be in public, I'll give her the floor.

Ms. Kwan, go ahead, please.

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

We're getting towards the end of the year, so we're trying to tie up some unfinished business. Committee members will recall that—

**Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC):** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I'd like to make sure I'm on the speakers list so we don't end the meeting right after Ms. Kwan's motion.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** I will do that. Thank you.

Please continue.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I was saying that we're moving towards the end of the year. There's some unfinished business that I would like to wrap up with respect to this committee.

Committee members will remember that, back before the summer recess, we were actually embarking on the process of the study around international students who were being cheated and subjected to exploitation by bad actors.

The committee agreed with respect to a motion that I had made related to that, and a subsequent press release was to be issued. The former chair—not you, Mr. Chair—did follow through on that. However, the press release that was issued did not actually reflect the will of the committee and was done without the consent of the committee. I took great offence, not just for myself but because, given the way we operate with the work we do here, it has to reflect the will of the committee.

A motion I had put on the table at that time was debated but it was not resolved. That was back on June 19, 2023.

To that end, Mr. Chair, I'd like to bring this motion back up. I would like to move:

That the committee report to the House of Commons the potential breach of privilege resulting from the issuance of a press release by the committee on June

14, 2023 which altered the language that was adopted in the motion unanimously on June 7, 2023 by editorializing the content of the motion, adding additional information that was not part of the original motion, and outright omitting information, including the specific call to waive inadmissibility on the basis of misrepresentation; the motion specifically instructed the committee to 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” and this was not accurately reflected in the content of the issued press release.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

It is exactly the same motion as was brought forward, so I'm going to ask the committee if it's the will of the committee to resume the debate on this motion.

I have three options. One is to proceed at the chair's discretion; the second is to proceed by consensus of the committee; and the third is to take a vote. That's what I'm asking the committee, because it is exactly the same motion that was brought forward earlier. To resume the debate, I need to have the will of the committee.

Is it the will of the committee to resume the debate on this?

We will take a vote on this one.

• (1650)

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Mr. Chair, I think we are voting to resume debate. Is that correct?

[English]

**The Chair:** Just so every member is clear, since Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe asked, this vote is on whether or not to resume the debate on the motion presented by Ms. Kwan.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

**The Chair:** Mr. Drouin, you had your hand up. Is there anything you want to add?

**Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I'm not a regular member of this committee, but I recognize that Ms. Kwan has raised an issue with regard to a press release.

I've been a member for eight years. Normally, members will look at a press release and they'll comment perhaps on certain language, but oftentimes we don't necessarily comment. I know you weren't in the chair at the time, as stated by the member. I'm not sure if the clerk was the clerk at the time.

I'm just seeking clarification. Perhaps the clerk could provide some information to this committee before we get down this pathway of a breach of privilege. I don't know if that sounds procedurally correct, to say that this is a breach privilege on a press release. It may be a communication error, but I'd like to seek some clarification because, obviously, I can't enter into this debate without the proper information.

I have enough experience to understand how committees work, and on a press release it seems a bit too much to say this is a breach of privilege.

I'd love to seek some clarification. Perhaps the clerk can provide some information to this committee.

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

This is not the place for the clerk to get in, because I chair the meeting, and I'll take the lead on this one. Your motion is already on the floor. I will leave it to the members to debate.

I will not ask the clerk to come forward at this point in time, even though he was the clerk at that time. That is my decision.

Mr. El-Khoury.

**Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Regarding this motion on the floor from Ms. Kwan, I would like to know some details from our colleague, Ms. Kwan.

What are the points that you're not satisfied with, and why do you think the privilege is breached? We would like to be convinced in order to have a good judgment when it comes to voting.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'm happy to respond. If the committee members actually go back and look at the press release that was issued by the chair on behalf of this committee, all the items that I had laid out in my motion are where the significant differences are. At the time I moved the motion for the press release to be released to incorporate that information, the committee was very specific.

In this committee, what we have done in the past is that when a press release is issued, literally the words of the committee's motion are adopted into that press release. This wasn't done here. There was deliberate omission of information and alteration of the content.

To me, that is entirely disrespecting the will of the committee. That should not be accepted. We're all honourable members. I understand there's a process through which we have to go. We have to get support from committee members to get the majority to move things forward. I understand that. I understand that I'm one voice around this table, and I don't always get my way.

However, in that instance the motion did pass, and the committee did pass it. However, the outcome did not reflect that. I believe that is a breach of my privilege. This is why I think it should be reported to the House. It should be investigated and looked into. It's important not only just for this moment in time, not just for me as a member of Parliament. It could happen to any of us. It could hap-

pen in any other committee as well. There are rules that we need to follow, and there are processes that we need to respect.

That's why I'm putting this forward at this point in time. It's unfinished business from this year, something that bothered me a lot at the time. However, in the interest of getting on with the work that we needed to get through, I did not bring this back up. I waited until we had a moment, and now we do actually have a moment to do that. That's why I'm bringing it forward again.

• (1655)

**The Chair:** I hear that some of the members might not have the exact wording of the motion. I would ask, Mr. Clerk, if I can suspend the meeting for a few minutes so that you can distribute that wording in both languages, please.

We're suspended.

• (1655)

(Pause)

• (1700)

**The Chair:** We'll resume.

The floor is open for debate on the motion.

Ms. Kayabaga, go ahead, please.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It took me a while to remember this motion. I think I remember it. If I'm correct, I remember the previous chair, MP Zahid—the chair at the time—explaining there was no malicious intent to remove any points in the original motion that was moved by our colleague MP Kwan. I was under the impression that we had moved on from that. We had conversations, and the explanation was accepted by the committee. I could be wrong. I would love to be corrected if I'm wrong, but it's my understanding that the chair made the press release, and a couple of points were missed in it. She was given an opportunity to explain her error and I think she, at the time, apologized.

Can we get some information on that particular conversation? I don't even know if we have any meeting notes on that meeting. There are a lot of new people on this committee who don't know what transpired. It's been a while and we've forgotten what transpired. Can we get a bit more information on what happened? Perhaps you can pull up some meeting notes on specific conversations or whatever decision was made, and on how we moved forward.

I don't remember how we dealt with the situation, and I think refreshing our memories with how we dealt with it will help us move forward.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I have a list of speakers. I have Mr. Chiang, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, Ms. Kwan, Mr. Ali and Mr. El-Khoury. I also have Mr. Drouin.

Mr. Drouin, I will put you just before Mr. El-Khoury, if that's okay. I just noticed you were on.

Before I go to the members, I'm going to ask the clerk, now, to explain the facts of the motions that were presented. Please pay attention. Once the members are ready, I will ask the clerk to update us, not on the discussions but just on the facts of what happened.

Mr. Clerk, go ahead. The floor is yours.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Keelan Buck):** These are the facts related to the public record and the Minutes of Proceedings of June 19, 2023.

During the meeting of the committee, “[Ms.] Kwan raised a potential question of privilege regarding the committee's issuing of a news release that altered the language of the motion adopted by the committee on Wednesday, June 7, 2023.” The chair ruled that the matter, in her opinion, did not relate to privilege. The decision of the chair was appealed. On a recorded division, the decision was overturned. As such, the chair invited the member to move an appropriate motion. Ms. Kwan moved that motion, which is the one on which debate resumes today. Debate arose. Then, on motion, that debate was adjourned and the meeting continued with witnesses.

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

Before I go to members, Ms. Kayabaga, do you have a question for the clerk on what he said to make clarification?

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** I posed a question about refreshing our memories of what happened, so we can all remember.

Mr. Chair, if you will allow me—

**The Chair:** Sure. The floor is yours.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Thank you.

Can you go back to what you just read, the motion part? There was a part I missed, because people were speaking at the same time. At the beginning, did you say who wrote the press release? Can you read the first part of what you just read? I missed that part.

• (1705)

**The Clerk:** For sure. It begins with, “[Ms.] Kwan raised a potential question of privilege regarding the committee's issuing of a news release that altered the language of the motion adopted by the committee on Wednesday, June 7, 2023.” It was then ruled by the chair that, in her opinion, the matter did not relate to privilege. That decision was appealed, and it was overturned on a recorded division.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Going back to that, does this mean that a motion to resume that debate, which has already been voted on...? Is this standard procedure? I don't know. I just want to understand.

**The Chair:** Ms. Kayabaga, could you please elaborate? What do you mean by “standard”?

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** We're debating something we've already voted on and moved on from. My understanding, when we resumed debate, was that this was not ruled on, not voted on, and that there was no decision made, which is why I was open to resuming the debate. Now it sounds as if we've made a decision.

Does that mean we can't resume this debate, or does that mean we can go back and rehash the conversation and vote again? I'm not

sure what... I feel as if we've already made a decision, and I'm not sure what the standard procedure is right now to be able to do that.

**The Clerk:** The decision that was made was to overturn the chair's decision, which allowed, then, the motion, which is before us now, to be moved. That motion was moved. It was debated. It was then adjourned during that meeting, and now it has been resumed today.

**The Chair:** It is exactly the same wording.

I had three options. I chose the option of members deciding whether they wanted to resume. The members decided to resume, and we're going to continue.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** That's fine, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to understand that.

**The Chair:** I appreciate that. This is good clarification for all members, not only for you.

Thank you for your intervention.

I will go to Mr. Chiang, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe and then Ms. Kwan, three of the speakers. Then I'll go to the other list.

Mr. Chiang, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Paul Chiang (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As the newest member on this committee, I wasn't here when this debate happened and when this motion was moved. I wasn't here, and unfortunately, the previous chair is not here to speak on this.

I'm open to most suggestions. If the member across has a solution for what she would like to do or if she can propose a solution to rectify this issue, I would be happy to listen to what she has to offer.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Kwan, do you want to respond?

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Yes, I'd like to have a vote.

**The Chair:** I can't take a vote because there are members on the list.

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, the floor is yours.

[*Translation*]

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

I can actually help my colleagues because I was here and I remember what happened. We had in fact planned to include something in the press release, but it was amended without informing the committee members, specifically Ms. Kwan. Whether that was done deliberately or inadvertently is not the issue. The result is what counts. Our trust was broken and our privilege breached.

I sometimes get the feeling that my Liberal colleagues forget what it's like to be in opposition and to have to work with a chairperson who is not a member of their party. If the Liberals were in this position and had experienced this kind of thing, they would probably be the first to move this kind of motion. So I am simply appealing to the goodwill of my Liberal colleagues and their way of looking at politics, and inviting them to reflect on why they entered politics.

When something like this happens, it has to be remedied. I think this motion is important in the interest of democracy. When the privilege of committee members is breached, a motion like the one moved by Ms. Kwan is needed. It is very simple. Sometimes you have to get back to basics and reflect on why you entered politics. In my opinion, once my Liberal colleagues find the answer, it will be fairly easy for them to vote.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

● (1710)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

Ms. Kwan, you were on the speaking list. Do you want to speak or skip?

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I think much has already been said. If people cast their minds back to what occurred, I've already talked about that on the record. The clerk is correct to outline the history behind this in terms of where we're at.

This is unfinished business. I think we need to move on with a vote one way or the other and move forward with it.

I think it is important for all of us to understand the importance of this place and how much trust we put into the work that we do. I, for one, take my work very seriously. I know committee members know that. I put a lot of effort into it.

As MP Brunelle-Duceppe has indicated, the outcome matters. It is not to be toyed with. When we do our work, the words that we use are very specific and they're there for a specific reason.

Accordingly, I think this motion needs to be voted on so we can have finality and a conclusion with respect to this. I think it's important for all members of Parliament.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I have the speaking list. I have Mr. Ali, Mr. Drouin, Mr. El-Khoury, Ms. Kayabaga and Mr. McLean.

I'll go to Mr. Ali.

Go ahead, please.

**Mr. Shafqat Ali (Brampton Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair.

It's surprising to see that the matter came before the committee in June. After almost six months, it's been brought back to the committee by my honourable colleague, who is saying that this is unfinished business.

I'd like to see the intent here. Last week, she didn't like how we worded it. She was disturbed. I'd like to see her rationale in bringing back that unfinished business. Is it really on the content of this motion or does she have something else? I just want to have—

**The Chair:** Every member has the right to bring in a motion.

**Mr. Shafqat Ali:** I just wanted to understand. I think today is the last meeting we have for 2023 and it's the last hour. It's a six-month-old issue. If we're voting on something, we need to jog our memories, understand the issue, debate, look at the rationale and then vote on it. That's what I'm trying to understand a bit. I need to see a bit more clarity on this motion before I vote.

The clerk has given the background and we have the motion before us, but I'm not sure if that press release was presented in the House. Where did the breach happen? Was it on the chair's side or was it an analyst who wrote that press release? There are so many dots to connect and so much missing information. I'd like to see those facts before I can come to a conclusion on how to vote on this motion. That's why I wanted to bring that up.

Thank you for your patience.

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

I explained earlier that every member has a right to bring in a motion. For myself, as the chair, and Mr. Buck, as the clerk, our job is to make sure that the committee is well informed. We follow certain procedures. That procedure is why I brought it to the committee to resume the debate, instead of making that decision at my discretion. The committee was in unanimous support of resuming that debate, and here we are.

We'll continue to provide you support if needed.

Now we will go to Mr. Drouin.

Mr. Drouin, I sense you know everything about immigration when it comes to the farm workers in agriculture and whatnot, so here we go.

● (1715)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I have heard the pleas of my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois and the NDP. I want to reiterate that we are talking about a press release. Unless the motion stated that the committee had to draft the press release or edit or approve it after drafting, I think we are wasting time right now.

One possible solution would be to instruct the analysts to draft another press release. Calling it a breach of privilege is overstating the case. I have never seen this in a committee. It makes no sense. We are meeting in camera and now we are meeting in public to discuss this. Is it because some people want to grandstand? I have no idea, but I have to wonder what is motivating my opposition colleagues, for whom I have a lot of respect.

Let me say again that we are talking about a press release. Has the content of the report tabled in the House changed? No, absolutely not. Was the press release tabled in the House? No, absolutely not. So it is an exaggeration to call it a breach of privilege.

Let's be reasonable and propose a sensible solution. My colleagues are saying that the press release does not reflect the will of the committee. Yet the committee never approved the final version of the press release. I know that because we never do. That being the case, I do not even know why this motion is in order as part of the committee's work. It is a waste of time, in my opinion.

Let's instruct the analysts to draft a new press release and then we can move forward. There is no point in taking this back to the House of Commons since the press release was never tabled there. Only the report was tabled there. The committee suddenly says that a press release will be issued, but it is not tabled in the House.

I know I am getting worked up, Mr. Chair. Let's stop turning around in circles and find a reasonable solution for all committee members. You were not even in your current role when the press release was issued, Mr. Chair, and yet this is being put to you and you have to react. It is ridiculous.

I suggest we give the analysts new instructions to draft a press release that clearly reflects the will of the committee, which is what Ms. Kwan wants. That's it.

[English]

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

Is it just a suggestion, or do you want to bring in an amendment? We already have a motion on the floor.

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** Mr. Chair, I don't think I can bring an amendment to a call of a breach of privilege. What I would ask is that Ms. Kwan remove her motion and that we give drafting instructions for the new press release—to be approved by all committee members—final version.

We know the analysts do a very good job. They do this every day in all the committees they serve on. I know if there was some intent that somehow didn't reflect the exact word, comma or period.... Obviously, if Ms. Kwan is amicable to this solution, I would ask her to remove this.

As I said, I'm not a regular member, but perhaps she could provide drafting instructions for a new press release. That would be a reasonable solution to what we're facing right now, as opposed to having this matter brought to the House.

• (1720)

**The Chair:** Even though you're not a regular member, you have the right to have an intervention.

Mr. El-Khoury, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I totally agree with my colleague, Mr. Drouin.

Here, Mr. Chair, the situation is as follows: With what Ms. Kwan has proposed, it's pointing fingers at both the former chair, Ms. Salma Zahid, and the analysts. I do believe that, in all ways, the analysts were doing a perfect job, and here we have a doubt of proba-

bly bad intentions, which is very serious. When we talk about a breach of privilege, that's something very serious. We're pointing fingers at the former chair and the analysts.

Due to the fact that this letter was not tabled, what is wrong if Ms. Kwan comes with a friendly proposal to rectify and adjust it according to her satisfaction? I'm not seeing anything wrong with that if we're going to be very honest in our intentions in order to bring what Ms. Kwan wants to be on the report. This is what I will say, and this leads me to believe that this should be out of order at this time, unless we solve it and rectify it on a friendly basis.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. El-Khoury.

The motion is in order. I will carry on with the speaking list.

Mr. Kayabaga.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** I'm not a "Mr."

**The Chair:** Are you not speaking?

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** I'm speaking, but I'm not a "Mr." It's she/her.

**The Chair:** I'm so sorry.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** It's okay. I wanted to clarify that in case there was confusion. I just want to clarify on the record that I do identify as a woman and was born a woman. Thank you.

Mr. Chair, can I just ask if the clerk could read us the original press release? I can't find it. If somebody has it, I'd love to read it and compare it to the one that was released, and see where we can work to rectify some of the mentioned mistakes.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC):** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I know that the Liberals don't want to see this move forward, but it's not your job or the clerk's job to do her homework for her.

This is a public document. It's all there—

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** I'm sorry. I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** —so I would just ask that things continue.

**The Chair:** Ms. Kayabaga has a point of order.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** I think it is my right, as a member of Parliament, to request that, in order to make such an important decision, we bring back something that we've discussed in this committee and revise it.

If the clerk could provide us with the press release that was released by the committee, in both languages, I'd like to see it.

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

Mr. Redekopp.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** I'm sorry. I haven't finished speaking. I'm still—

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** I have a point of order.

She wants—

**The Chair:** She's also speaking on a point of order, so I'll give her the floor.

Ms. Kayabaga, go ahead, please.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** I'm still a speaker. I know that I requested for a point of order—

**The Chair:** You were on your point of order. Are you done on the point of order?

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** I'm done on the point of order, yes.

**The Chair:** That's good.

Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** My point of order is just that if she wants to read this press release, she can go ahead and read it, but I don't think it's the clerk's job to read it to the committee.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

There are quite a few points of order.

I will go to Mr. Ali on his point of order.

**Mr. Shafqat Ali:** Mr. Chair, thank you for that.

I think that if we're going to vote and she does not have the information.... We need to have that information, so I support her point of view that she should have that information before we can move forward on that.

Thanks.

**The Chair:** As there are no set rules on this one, I would ask the clerk to intervene so that he can give his thought process on this one.

• (1725)

**The Clerk:** I'm happy to take the committee's instruction as it gives it to me.

I can read it. It is available on the committee's website. It was distributed but, granted, several months ago. It's up to the committee or the chair to instruct me accordingly.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Kayabaga, do you still want the clerk to distribute it?

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Did I hear him say that he can read it?

**The Chair:** He can read it, but I would either distribute it again or—

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Can we distribute it again, and distribute the original—

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

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** I'm sorry, but I'm speaking. I have the floor right now.

**The Chair:** Ms. Kayabaga, go ahead. The floor is yours.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Thank you.

I would like to get a copy of the original press release requested by MP Kwan and the one that was released and distributed to the

committee. If you don't have that right now, maybe we could suspend while we look for that.

**The Chair:** Go ahead on a point of order, Mr. McLean.

**Mr. Greg McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think that suspending would be the wrong thing to do at this time, because we're trying to actually accomplish something in this committee. There is a point of privilege that's been raised, which I think is a very valid point of privilege.

I also want to indicate to this committee that there have been a few meetings now where we've had on the agenda to address the study into what's happening with the mandatory provident fund in Hong Kong and how Canadians are being affected by that with their insurance companies in Canada. I'm wondering if we'll get the chance to get to that today, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** We have a hard stop at 5:30 p.m. I still have a list of speakers to speak. The only other people who are allowed are those with a point of order; otherwise, I have a speaking list.

Ms. Kwan, on a point of order, go ahead, please.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

It seems to me that the Liberal members are asking for some sort of press release that I had drafted up. I didn't draft up a press release, Mr. Chair. Rather, the only press release that exists is the one that the former chair had—

**The Chair:** This is debate, but you could—

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** I am just trying to clarify exactly a point that Ms. Kayabaga had actually raised. I just want to make it clear with respect to that.

The only press release that exists is the one the former chair had issued on behalf of the committee, without consulting the committee, which is contrary to the motion that the committee had passed. To that end, there isn't a press release that I have drafted up, Mr. Chair.

I also just want to raise, with respect to this point of order, the allegation that somehow there is an ulterior motive with respect to this. As I stated early on when I brought this motion back, this is indeed unfinished business. I did not interrupt the previous work in the last six months or so because I did not want to interrupt the important work we were embarking on. As you can see, there is a filibuster going on with this motion right now. If this motion had been brought up at a different time, much of the work we needed to do could actually have been derailed, which I did not want to do, Mr. Chair.

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

There is a point of order.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** I was first on a point of order.

**The Chair:** There is another point of order.

**Mr. Shafqat Ali:** Yes.

**The Chair:** There are two points of order right now.

I have Mr. Ali, and then I will come to you, Mr. Redekopp.

Mr. Ali, go ahead.



**Mr. Shafqat Ali:** Can we suspend the meeting, because we need to discuss—

**The Chair:** I am not suspending the meeting—

**Mr. Shafqat Ali:** One second. I haven't finished, Mr. Chair.

We need to take a look at the text of the press release. That is the reason I requested that, please.

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

I will go to Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Just on your mention of a hard stop, I would just question what time we started. I don't believe we have a hard stop at 5:30 p.m. because normally it would be two hours from when we started, and then potentially extra time would be added to that.

Could you just confirm the logic on a hard stop at 5:30 p.m.?

**The Chair:** We all know that there is a Christmas party for the Liberals. We can go all night. You understand that we accommodate in all circumstances. As chair, I always listen to all the members. Even when Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe came up.... I don't take sides on this one. I would appreciate it if we can accommodate that.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** I have a point of order, then, on that.

I'd need to see in the book where a Christmas party is a reason to stop a meeting.

**The Chair:** No, it's not a reason. Any time members want to—

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Then I would still ask you to tell me when the meeting started and when the two hours of a normal meeting are up.

**The Chair:** Okay, we'll do that.

We started the meeting at 3:50, and the hard stop would be at 5:50, but I will give another 10 minutes because we suspended in between. The hard stop will be at six o'clock. If everyone agrees, then I will adjourn the meeting at six o'clock.

We will go back to the debate now.

Mr. Drouin.

• (1730)

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** On a point of clarification, Mr. Chair, the notice of meeting says 5:30 p.m. I respect my Conservative colleagues, but I am sure they would love to continue this meeting tomorrow at six o'clock, and I'll be there—

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** A point of order, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** There is a point of order.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** There is no reason for the point of order that was just raised. It has been decided that we will continue the meeting until 6 p.m. Can we continue and not waste our time on points of order that serve no purpose?

I know Mr. Drouin wants to go to his Christmas party, but it is time to work and he is paid for that.

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** That is not the case at all, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe. I am going to meet with the dairy farmers of Canada.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** You do not have the floor, Mr. Drouin.

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** Neither do you, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Let me say that I have the floor right now. As the chair, I have made the decision. The hard stop is at six o'clock, so there is no more discussion on that, please.

Let's go to the speakers list, unless there is a point of order.

Go ahead, please, Ms. Kayabaga.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Thank you. This is on the point of order.

**The Chair:** You are on the speakers list. Either way, you are the first one to go.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** All right. Thank you.

I had asked to see a copy of MP Kwan's original motion.

Mr. Chair, first of all, I want to thank the analysts for the work they have done on this. They are the ones who drafted this press release, so if it didn't capture what MP Kwan was trying to put into the motion, I think we need to review these two. I'm still waiting for that to be distributed. I don't know when we're going to get that. I've asked the analysts and the clerk.

I want to make comments, Mr. Chair, but I'm still waiting for her original motion to be distributed to us. It's hard to make that decision if we're not able to compare both.

I don't know if you want me to read the press release that we have here, while we wait for the analysts to send us the other one. However, I do want to get a copy of her original motion so that we are able to compare. The argument here is that the points that MP Kwan had made in her request were not captured in this press release. There is a grave accusation that's being made on the previous chair that she omitted that, and that there would be an investigation on this motion that's on the table. I want to remember exactly how the conversations went, and for us to do that, we have to see both motions—

**The Chair:** Ms. Kayabaga, instead of you taking another two minutes, I will ask the clerk to distribute that, before I get back to you. That will be faster.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** I would like to get that, but I'm not done speaking, Mr. Chair. I'd like to continue to—

**The Chair:** I know. That's what I said.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Are you going to come back to me?

**The Chair:** You have the floor. It's your call. If you want, I can give the instructions—

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Please do give the instructions, but I'm not done commenting on it yet.

**The Chair:** Okay. The clerk will distribute that in a couple of minutes, then. The discussion is over on that part, but you still have the floor.

The meeting is suspended.

• (1730) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1740)

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

Ms. Kayabaga, the floor is yours, but first I want to confirm that you got the press release, as well as the original wording of the motion.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Mr. Chair, you're going to get confirmation that I did get the motion.

I want to read Ms. Kwan's motion that was moved on June 19, 2023, which I think was meeting 72.

**The Chair:** Please go ahead.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** It reads:

That the committee report to the House of Commons the potential breach of privilege—

I'm sorry. Is this the motion for today, or is this the motion that was moved in June?

**The Chair:** Ms. Kayabaga, the floor is with you. As the chair, I have given you the floor to talk about and have a debate on the motion.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** I was just asking a question, but I'll continue.

The motion reads as follows:

That the committee report to the House of Commons the potential breach of privilege resulting from the issuance of a press release by the committee on June 14, 2023 which altered the language that was adopted in the motion unanimously on June 7, 2023 by editorializing the content of the motion, adding additional information that was not part of the original motion, and outright omitting information, including the specific call to waive inadmissibility on the basis of misrepresentation; the motion specifically instructed the committee to 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” and this was not accurately reflected in the content of the issued press release.

[Translation]

Mr. Chair, the motion I just read out was tabled on June 14, but was read out on June 19. Its purpose was to respond directly to the committee's press release which condemned the actions of ghost consultants in India who have exploited the immigration system and preyed on international students.

• (1745)

I will also read out the press release, issued in Ottawa on June 14, 2023, so everyone knows what was in it:

[...] the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration will begin a study looking into the circumstances that have led 700 international students from India to be found inadmissible to Canada and to understand how this could have been prevented. Consultants hired by the students to help with their applications submitted fraudulent documents claiming to be admission letters from Canadian designated learning institutions. The “ghost consultants” created an exploitative scheme that has left many students, graduates and post-graduates—

[English]

**The Chair:** Can I ask the members to please keep it quiet and listen to the honourable member? Ms. Kayabaga has the floor.

Ms. Kayabaga, go ahead.

[Translation]

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** I will start the sentence over again because a lot of people were not listening any more:

The “ghost consultants” created an exploitative scheme that has left many students, graduates and postgraduates facing removal orders on grounds of misrepresentation and a ban from entering—

[English]

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Ms. Kayabaga, there's a point of order.

Go ahead, Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** I do enjoy the French language, but I want to point out that this is a repetition of what we've already heard in the English version. It's the exact same thing.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** I haven't read the English version yet.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** You're repeating something that's been said, and I don't think that's necessary in this meeting tonight.

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

Ms. Kayabaga, you have the floor. Go ahead, please.

[Translation]

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will repeat the sentence again because I was not able to finish:

The “ghost consultants” created an exploitative scheme—

[English]

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** There's a point of order.

Go ahead, Mr. Drouin.

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** I have a serious concern when members of Parliament are questioning the language of choice of other members.

It has happened with Mrs. Thomas, Mr. Redekopp—

**Mr. Greg McLean:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** —[Inaudible—Editor] speak the language of their choice—

**The Chair:** There's already a point of order. That's why I gave the floor to Mr. Drouin.

[Translation]

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** I will speak French if I wish to do so.

• (1750)

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. McLean, go ahead on a point of order.

**Mr. Greg McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am going to interject here. There was nothing raised about anybody's use of either language in this committee, because both official Canadian languages are permitted.

As a matter of fact, we had a witness here speaking in another language as well, so we entertain all languages, contrary to Mr. Drouin's completely inappropriate interjection. My colleague was only saying that there was repetition being foisted on this committee at that point in time, so I would like that to be clear, and Mr. Drouin should withdraw.

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

With due respect to everyone, we have both official languages in committee. We follow those steps here, and all the members are doing that and respecting that right.

Go ahead, Ms. Kayabaga.

[Translation]

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will start the sentence over again because I am not being allowed to finish. I really want to finish it.

The “ghost consultants” created an exploitative scheme that has left many students, graduates and postgraduates facing removal orders on grounds of misrepresentation and a five-year ban from entering Canada. The committee strongly condemns the actions of “ghost consultants” in India who have preyed on international students.

The committee urges the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and the Minister of Public Safety to immediately use their discretion to stay pending deportation orders and to provide remedies to those affected, such as by offering permanent residence through the use of humanitarian and compassionate considerations or by implementing a temporary public policy.

Mr. Chair, that was the French version because I was speaking French earlier, but I will now read out the press release in English.

[English]

It was to condemn the actions of the ghost consultants in India who preyed on international students. As I stated earlier, this was drafted on June 14, 2023—

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** A point of order, Mr. Chair.

[English]

**The Chair:** There is a point of order.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I just want to ask a question. Is interpretation service being provided? I just want to know because the quote is being read in French and English, but we have interpretation service. They are saying the same thing. I don't mind if people say various different things in their preferred language, but I just want to make sure that we have interpretation service. If so, I

do not see why the same thing has to be repeated in both languages. I will let the member do so, of course, but I just want to make sure that we have interpretation service.

Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** Ms. Kayabaga, you have the floor. Go ahead, please.

Hopefully you will not repeat what has already been said. I would welcome new information.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Mr. Chair, I think that's an unfair thing to ask me. I have the right to speak in this committee. I have the right to raise issues as a member of this committee. I'm a permanent member of this committee. I'm a bilingual member of this committee, so I speak in whatever language I want to speak in—

**The Chair:** You are welcome to.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** It is my right as a Canadian in this country to use whichever language I want to use and express my thoughts in both official languages, as I speak both official languages.

**The Chair:** Ms. Kayabaga, you have the floor. That's what I said. I did not ask you not to speak in both languages. You can speak in both languages. I'm not even saying that if you have said it in French you can't repeat it in English.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** I'm making a point, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** You have the right to do that.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Absolutely.

I'm making a point, Mr. Chair. I think I have the right to make that point. If I have to use both languages to make that point, I think I should have the right to make the point in both languages. That's why we are a bilingual country.

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

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Allow me to speak and to finish—

**The Chair:** Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, Ms. Kayabaga has the floor, please.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** A point of order. I have another question.

I completely understand that. I would never undermine my colleague, who I like very much, or prevent her from speaking in her preferred language.

[English]

**The Chair:** You're getting into a debate.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** My only question, Mr. Chair, is whether we have the right to repeat the same thing for the purpose of systematic obstruction?

Can we repeat the same thing ad nauseam for the purpose of systematic obstruction? I am wondering.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, the member has every right to express herself and speak in both languages. If the member wants to repeat it in both languages, that member has the full right to do that. I will respect that.

• (1755)

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I was just wondering.

[English]

**The Chair:** I have Mr. Ali on a point of order, and then Mr. El-Khoury on a point of order.

**Mr. Shafqat Ali:** Thank you, Chair.

It's sad to see how my colleague, MP Arielle Kayabaga, was interrupted numerous times on points of order just because she was switching languages from English to French and French to English.

It is so disappointing to see that my colleague, whom I respect... I respect all of my colleagues. I respect Alexis a lot. I think it's getting into debate with a colleague. I think it's not a good thing. We should talk through the chair. Rather than getting into debate—

**The Chair:** Mr. Ali, I have made it very clear that the member has the full right.... Whether the member is a regular member of the committee or is like Mr. Drouin, who is filling in today for Ms. Zahid, every member has the right to speak in both official languages, period.

Now we're going to Mr. El-Khoury.

**Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I believe that my colleague, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, asked if the interpretation was working well, and he has the right to know. If not, then we cannot continue the meeting. One of the conditions for continuing meetings is that interpretation should be working properly.

Can we have an answer for what Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe asked, please?

**The Chair:** Mr. El-Khoury, I have already given my decision on this, which is that Ms. Kayabaga has the full right.... I am not stopping her. Unless I stop them, any member can say whatever they want.

**Mr. Paul Chiang:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mr. El-Khoury is mentioning the interpretation to make sure it is working correctly so that all members can understand what's going on in this committee. It is fair to ask that.

**The Chair:** I agree.

Is it working, Mr. Clerk?

Yes, the interpretation is working fine.

I'm not going to further interrupt. It is very disrespectful if we continue to intervene in what Ms. Kayabaga wanted to say.

Ms. Kayabaga, the floor is yours. Please continue.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I do agree that if anyone is experiencing concerns or issues around interpretation and hearing my comments in both official languages, please do let us know so that we can make sure that we correct that.

I'll continue:

On 14 June 2023, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration will begin a study looking into the circumstances that have led 700 international students from India to be found inadmissible to Canada and to understand how this could have been prevented. Consultants hired by the students to help with their applications submitted fraudulent documents claiming to be admission letters from Canadian designated learning institutions. The “ghost consultants” created an exploitative scheme that has left many students, graduates and post-graduates facing removal orders on grounds of misrepresentation and a five-year ban from entering Canada. The committee strongly condemns the actions of “ghost consultants” in India who have preyed on international students.

The committee urges the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and the Minister of Public Safety to immediately use their discretion to stay pending deportation orders and to provide remedies to those affected, such as by offering permanent residence through the use of humanitarian and compassionate considerations or by implementing a temporary public policy.

Mr. Chair, as I finish reading this news release, in both languages, I'm still—

• (1800)

**The Chair:** Can I take a minute, Ms. Kayabaga?

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** I'm going to take a minute before I give you the floor on a point of order.

Before I continue, I just quickly want to take two seconds as the chair, because it's six o'clock. I want to wish all of the honourable members, their support staff, the interpreters, the clerk, the analysts and the technical support staff a very merry Christmas, happy holidays and a happy new year.

It is six o'clock, so—

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** I have a point of order. You don't have consent to adjourn the meeting.

**The Chair:** The interpreters have to go home, and I cannot adjourn the meeting. I can suspend the meeting.

I'm suspending the meeting until the next sitting in January.

[The meeting was suspended at 6:01 p.m., Tuesday, December 12, 2023]

[The meeting resumed at 11:05 a.m., Monday, February 5, 2024]

**The Chair:** We have quorum, and I am going to call the meeting to order.

This is our first meeting in the beginning of the new year. Happy new year to everyone, and welcome.

We are meeting in public.

Before we continue, on behalf of all of you I would love to welcome our new clerk, Mr. Rémi Bourgault. He's been a good friend for a long time.

It's good to have you here.

For technical support we have Aurée.

Aurée, welcome to the meeting as well.

Mr. McLean, because—

**Mr. Greg McLean:** I just want to get on the speakers list.

**The Chair:** Yes, we have business to continue. The floor is going to Ms. Kayabaga to start with, and then I'll put you on the list.

**Mr. Greg McLean:** That would be after this motion, right?.

**The Chair:** Let me carry on the meeting. If there are no points of order, I would rather continue.

Welcome to meeting number 89 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

The meeting was not adjourned on December 12, so today will be the continuation of the meeting.

Today we are continuing our discussion on the motion of Ms. Kwan. For the second part of the meeting, with the consent of the committee, pursuant to the motion adopted by the committee on December 12, we will begin the study on persons with temporary status and undocumented individuals. We have two witnesses from IRCC.

Officials from Public Safety Canada were not available to appear today, but the clerk is in contact with the department to schedule the appearance of CBSA officials at a later date regarding this study.

I would like to remind members of the email sent by the clerk. On Wednesday, February 7, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship will appear with officials for a briefing on the migrant trafficking motion adopted on November 30, 2023. The Minister of Public Safety is not available to appear. Consequently, Minister Miller will be present for the first hour with officials from IRCC, CBSA, and RCMP. The officials are also available for the second hour. The notice will be published later today.

Next week we will resume the study on persons with temporary status and undocumented individuals with witnesses, using the list sent to the clerk last Friday. If you have not submitted the list yet, please do so this afternoon.

For your information, the Library of Parliament prepared a background paper for this study on persons with temporary status and undocumented individuals. The document will be available on Wednesday, even though it was supposed to be available today.

Before we begin, I will need confirmation from the members that we are okay to invite the UN rapporteur for one hour on Monday, February 26. This is the witness who is available the earliest on that day.

Now, to begin on the motion of Ms. Kwan, if I'm not mistaken, Madam Kayabaga had the floor. We can start the debate.

Madam Kayabaga, the floor is yours.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. I have a point of order before you get into the motion and other business.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Madam Kwan, on a point of order.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** I'm just trying to sort out in my head here what you just told the committee, which is that we would have two separate meetings with officials. That's one with IRCC and then one with CBSA. I'm not quite sure why the committee would do that. Normally we would have officials come together at the same time. Now, instead of one meeting, we're having two meetings.

The other thing that I wanted to raise is an ongoing issue with committee members. This is that we begin many things before we finish the many things that are just sitting there. We still have, for example, the draft letter on Afghanistan that we need to finish, as an example. We do have the rapporteur piece and then we also have a couple of motions with respect to the minister appearing.

I'm hesitant to start another committee when we have so many things that are still on our agenda as unfinished business. Then, of course, we're doing it in such a way that it means having an additional meeting with respect to that study.

Could I get a clarification? I heard you say in your opening that it requires consent for us to proceed accordingly. Is that unanimous consent that's required?

**The Chair:** On the rapporteur, I would love to have the consent of the committee, because that's the only day that's available. If you want the rapporteur to appear on that day, I would love to have your consent. If you're not willing, that's fine. The committee can decide its own business.

As we go, as for the letter that you talked about, we are already addressing the rapporteur issue. Certainly we will be coming to the draft letter for Afghanistan as well, because we need time for the members to get prepared to give instructions. That's also on the go.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** I'm fine with the rapporteur, because the rapporteur needs to come. With respect to the other aspect, which is the two officials coming, on the IRCC, —

**The Chair:** I will also address that, Madam.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** —instead of starting that other study, why didn't we finish up the Afghanistan piece, for example? We're just starting a whole bunch of stuff without finishing things.

**The Chair:** It's not. It's an agenda on the go.

The officials from CBSA were not available today. The clerk is going to contact them to make sure we'll be able to deal with this first. The Afghanistan letter is also on the agenda. We will certainly adopt that as well.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** I know.

Wouldn't it have been better, for the second hour, to do the Afghanistan letter instead of actually splitting out the other meeting? That would have been a better option.

**The Chair:** Certainly, Madam Kwan, there are many things we can do.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Instead, they decided to do this and then start another study without finishing off the other work that has yet to be done. I don't agree with that, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** I appreciate that, Madam Kwan.

I know you had a family emergency, so I'm with you on that. I tried to contact you folks, and the only response I got was from the Conservatives. They were okay with the officials appearing, and that's how the decision was made.

We can continue.

Madam Kayabaga, the floor is with you.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. I'm going to have to respond to that.

You used the WhatsApp platform, which is a platform that we don't normally use for committee. Then the message was delivered only in English and not in French as well, which is also inappropriate. In about an hour, a decision was made.

You are correct that I was dealing with a family emergency. My mother was in the hospital, so I did not get to WhatsApp and all the different platforms. I was checking my emails, and then that didn't happen.

On a different note, Mr. Chair, you were inquiring about last week with respect to the meeting. You actually called me to ask for my opinion. With respect to this latest issue, you didn't do that. You did not follow the same protocol or even proper protocol, to be honest. It's just kind of all over the place, however you want to do it.

Then one party responded, and that became the decision. I don't think that is appropriate, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Let me say this, Madam Kwan. I've been very fair and I've been very open with the committee members. I already apologized to Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe on this French thing and I deleted the group right away. We are all human beings. We make mistakes.

I personally went to Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe on that issue. When it comes to French, if you go to the B.C. Francophonie, they will tell you I'm a big supporter and a big advocate of French, outside of even Quebec. That was an honest mistake or an oversight on my part. Certainly when it comes to the issues that you are talking about, the rapporteur is already on the schedule. When you're talking about the letter to be drafted on Afghanistan, that's also on the go.

Let's continue with the meeting.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** No, Mr. Chair. I'm sorry.

**The Chair:** What do you want to gain out of this now?

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** What I want is for us to actually set proper protocol and proper process.

What you ended up doing here was deciding on committee business without proper consultation with all the parties and without the proper process. That is the issue. You just want to gloss over it and then move on. It is not appropriate, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Do you want to amend the agenda today? If you believe in that, we can continue that as well. That's no issue.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Yes, I would like to amend the agenda. I would also like to ensure that in the future, this kind of process doesn't repeat itself or we don't embark on the same kind of process that just happened.

**The Chair:** It has never happened before and it will not happen again. I can assure you of that.

I hope that will satisfy you. I apologize if it hurt your feelings and you personally feel that I didn't follow the procedure in the right way. I will make sure I do due diligence moving forward.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** It's not about hurting my feelings, Mr. Chair.

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

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** I would simply add to this discussion that I think there's a lot of committee business that we need to do, and Ms. Kwan mentioned some of those things. I think we need to ensure that we allocate enough time at the committee to deal with those things, whether it be motions or finishing studies or whatever. Let's not get ahead of ourselves too much with witnesses and let's make sure we have enough committee business time in the schedule to do that.

You can add me to the speakers list, please.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Madam Kayabaga, the floor is with you.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to wish everyone a happy new year and a happy return to Parliament.

I would also like to move that we adjourn debate on this motion.

**The Chair:** It's non-debatable.

Is there unanimous consent or do we take a vote?

**Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Vote.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clerk, I will request that you call the vote.

The vote is to adjourn debate on the ongoing issue that we suspended the meeting on.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 4)

**The Chair:** The motion is carried.

On the speakers list I have Mr. Redekopp, Mr. McLean and then Madam Kwan.

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

I'd like to move a motion. This was provided previously. I move that:

Given that,

a. The current Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities was the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship when record high immigration targets were set, and that he has now admitted that those immigration targets helped to fuel the housing crisis, in a press conference on January 15th;

b. The current Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship admitted that his department was responsible for fuelling the housing crisis when he admitted that his department is running a "system that's run a bit rampant for far too long and is causing an impact that is not unappreciable";

c. The Premier of Quebec has described the immigration system as putting Quebec "very close to the breaking point due to the excessive number of asylum seekers arriving in Quebec month after month [and that] the situation has become unsustainable";

The committee invite the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities to appear separately for two (2) hours each to explain their remarks, within 14 days of the passage of this motion.

This issue has been in the news a lot. A lot of us are talking about it. It's something that's really critical to this committee. I think it would be very helpful for us to have a chance to question both ministers to get to the bottom of what exactly is going on here, so I would move that motion and I would hope the committee would agree with it.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We will go to Mr. McLean, and then Madam Kwan, Mr. Kmiec and Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

**Mr. Greg McLean:** I also have a motion to introduce to this committee at this point in time.

Are we debating my colleague's motion first, or are we going to go with a new motion? Are we debating that motion?

**The Chair:** Yes, certainly. That motion is in order.

**Mr. Greg McLean:** Okay. Then I'll park my motion, if I can. Would you like me to present the motion now or discuss his motion?

Let's discuss his motion and let's come back, please, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Go ahead, Madam Kwan.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I just want to put this on the public record with respect to the adjournment of the other motion, which I know we passed. Just to be clear, that issue is yet to be dealt with, but I supported it because I want to move a motion with respect to Gaza, which I think is an urgent situation, as peoples' lives are literally at risk minute by minute and second by second. We'll get to that motion when we get to a chance to.

With respect to this motion, there's this perspective or this narrative out there that somehow blames newcomers for Canada's housing crisis. The truth of the matter, in my opinion, is that newcomers are not the people to blame. Rather, it's successive governments, both Liberal and Conservative, that have failed Canadians by not ensuring that there is proper housing for them, housing that they can afford and can have access to. As a result, we have this housing crisis, this escalating housing crisis.

Now, I could go on for days about housing, which I won't. I recognize that this is the immigration committee. However, that said, I do believe that both the Minister of Immigration and the Minister of Housing should come before the committee on some relevant aspects.

I have another motion about that, and it ties into a number of things.

One is the international students. The crisis that the international students have faced as a result of the fraud scheme that happened and the scam that the students were subject to is a crisis that has not yet been resolved, in my opinion. There are still a lot of problems with respect to that, and a lot of students have not had any communication about their current situation.

I also think that the minister made a decision around a cap for international students, and I think that the minister needs to come and talk to the committee about that cap. The minister also announced the increase in financial requirements for international students. I think that this, too, needs to come before the committee so that the minister can talk to committee members about it.

The housing issue really ties into the government's role, I think, with the provinces and territories, and with institution, in ensuring that there is a plan for student housing. I want to have that conversation, Mr. Chair, but it has to be cast in the light of talking about the issues rather than blaming newcomers. I have another motion with respect to that, Mr. Chair, which I would like to move at the appropriate time.

For those reasons, I will not be supporting the Conservative motion.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Now we have Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe and then Mr. Kmiec.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I am in favour of the motion.

I think we have to be careful about immigration and, in that regard, I agree with Ms. Kwan. I know that the immigration file will be a priority in this session for most of the political parties. This file has to be addressed in a responsible way. I do not want to see people insulting each other or blaming communities or newcomers.

The Conservative motion is entirely legitimate because those statements have received a lot of media attention. We could add a fourth point, however. Unfortunately, I do not have the exact wording, but we would have to say that the committee agrees that newcomers are not responsible for Canada's housing crisis. That would provide a framework for us to study the file responsibly and calmly, and behave like adults. This is a central issue, and a very sensitive one for most of the people following us.

I do not know exactly how to phrase this addition.

Could we break for 30 seconds so I can confer with my Conservative colleagues before I propose a suitable amendment?

Would that be possible, Mr. Chair?

[English]

**The Chair:** We'll suspend the meeting for a few minutes.

• (1125) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1125)

**The Chair:** I'm calling the meeting back to order.

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, the floor is still yours.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I would like to propose an amendment to Mr. Redekopp's motion.

[English]

**The Chair:** I'm sorry to interrupt. The interpretation is not working, somehow.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I would like to propose an amendment to my friend Mr. Redekopp's motion.

I would like to add the following: “d. and considering that newcomers are not responsible for the housing crisis in Quebec and Canada.”

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Redekopp, do you accept that?

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Yes, I'm good with it.

**The Chair:** He's good with it, so now the debate will continue on the amendment by Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

Does everybody agree to the amendment?

Go ahead, Ms. Kwan

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Mr. Chair, I would like to have a recorded vote.

I agree with the comment that newcomers are not to blame, but I do not agree with the way in which the motion is framed. I would prefer it to be very clear and concise, like the motion I tabled.

I would like to have a recorded vote on the amendment and then a recorded vote on the actual motion.

**The Chair:** Debate has not adjourned yet, so first of all, is there any debate on the amendment?

**Mr. Greg McLean:** It's a friendly amendment. Does it require a vote?

**The Chair:** Even though it's a friendly amendment, it requires a vote.

Go ahead, Mr. Ali.

**Mr. Shafqat Ali:** Is this a vote on the amendment?

**The Clerk:** Yes, exactly.

**The Chair:** (Amendment agreed to: yeas 6; nays 3 [See Minutes of Proceedings])

The amendment is carried.

We will now have the debate on the motion as amended by Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

Mr. Kmiec has the floor.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Now that we've fixed the problem that the NDP mentioned, I agree that the the motion is very clear.

Why are we here? The ministers have been making multiple policy announcements and pronouncements in the media, either blaming international students for their decisions over the last eight years or pointing the finger at newcomers and immigrants, and they've said that the housing crisis is their fault.

I have a bunch of articles, and I'm going to point out why we say in every single part of this motion what other people have said, which is why these ministers have to come in to explain themselves. It's because they've contradicted each other and they have blamed newcomers and they have blamed immigrants. I'm glad that the committee is now going to pronounce itself on the housing crisis by calling the two ministers in and asking whose fault it is, which is eight years of Liberal government decision-making.

This is the Prime Minister's fault. It's not the immigrants' fault; it's the Prime Minister's fault. He made the decision, and it's his government, so he's the one who needs to be held accountable. The cabinet ministers are the ones following his lead and doing what he has asked them to do. They have mandate letters; they're making those decisions.

I have five articles I'm going to mention, because they have key quotes from these different ministers who are responsible for both the immigration file and the housing file. Let's start with the first one.

Global News reported on January 15 that “Tying immigration to homes [was] a 'good' idea” according to the housing minister, formerly the senior immigration minister. It quotes him, and this is a direct quote: “Is the idea of tying the number of people who come to Canada to the number of homes available a good one? Yes. In fact, it's one of the factors we have considered over the past number of years,” said Fraser during a housing announcement in Halifax on Monday.”

I'd like to know how he considered it. How was that taken into consideration?

There's a briefing note that's been talked about. Journalists have referred to it—they've asked me about it—that says that housing was part of the formula to set the targets. I've never seen this briefing note. I don't know where it comes from. I don't know the date it was issued. I don't know its content or the advice given in it, so I want the minister to explain to me what was going on.

On immigration specifically, again this is Sean Fraser. I'm going to call him the senior immigration minister, the supposed housing minister: “Fraser says temporary immigration programs are putting pressure on the housing system and creating a 'serious issue we need to address'.”

Obviously, that relates back to newcomers. He's pinning the blame directly on them.



The next article is from the National Post. This is a direct quote from the immigration minister, the current one, Marc Miller. “Out of control! Immigration minister says he wants to reduce international student arrivals”. In the article, the journalist goes on say, “The increase is considered one of many factors leading to housing shortages and rent hikes across the country.”

On CTV *Question Period* on Sunday, January 15—these are direct quotes from the minister—he said, “That volume is disconcerting. It really is a system that has gotten out of control.” This is, again, the minister saying this, not us Conservatives. These are the minister's own words. He's saying that after eight years, the system is out of control.

He goes on to say, “The federal government is the only actor here not making money off of this”. That's the minister's quote, as if making money off international students is somehow a consideration in whether the program should be operating or not. I don't know why that is, but the minister chose to say that on CTV's *Question Period* on Sunday.

National Newswatch from The Canadian Press said, “Federal government announces two-year cap on international student admissions”. It goes on to say here.... Again, these are the minister's quotes, but I have to say which one, the junior or the senior minister for immigration. This one is the junior one. “It's a bit of a mess,” he said of the student visa system. “It's time to rein it in.” He goes on, “It is not the intention of this program to have sham commerce degrees or business degrees that are sitting on top of a massage parlour that someone doesn't even go to and then they come into the province and drive an Uber.”

That was a direct quote. Here's another direct quote: “If you need a dedicated channel for Uber drivers in Canada, I can design that, but that isn't the intention of international student programs.”

He kind of implies that there are sham commerce degrees or business degrees for which the federal government—IRCC, the Liberal government—has been issuing visas, visas for sham commerce degrees, sham business degrees. Obviously these persons, when they come into Canada, need a place to live and need services.

I've shown already that this is the responsibility of the Prime Minister and the Liberal government. They bear responsibility for all of these decisions, which is why this motion must pass.

Another quote from is Bloomberg, because we've captured international media attention with the bumbling: “Canada to Cap Foreign Student Visas Amid Housing Shortage”. Again, it goes on to quote numbers and figures. It does mention that there are now over one million international study permit holders in Canada. That was based on an Order Paper question by one of our colleagues.

The minister says he blames the provinces, which is why he's putting a cap on the provinces. In this particular article, it says that “Miller has already pledged a designated-institution framework that will prioritize visas for post-secondary schools that provide higher quality education and adequate supports, including housing”.

He says, “including housing”. I'd like to know, then, why housing is so important to the international students' stream. A briefing

note has been circulated. There's a deep connection being made by the minister between newcomers—international students—and housing. Some Conservatives were making the connection. It's the Liberal government ministers who are making this connection. We just want to hold them accountable. We want to find out information.

That's why this motion needs to pass. The fix proposed by the Bloc member has addressed all of the concerns that the New Democrats had and mentioned. This motion doesn't blame newcomers. It doesn't blame immigrants like me. It basically says that the ministers have been making these comments. They've been alleging it and they've been connecting the two together, and they've been doing it since August. However, they've really ramped up the rhetoric in the last 45 days.

The last one is from the National Post, from journalist Jamie Sarkonak. She says, “Crackdown on student visas is a welcome change, but will it be enough?”

Then the article goes on to relate the numbers. It talks about “exploitation of international students” going on in the greater Toronto area, and mentions two specific studies. It mentions how common it is for extortion, exploitation, sexploitation. It mentions that a specific “international education industry magazine echoed [these findings], reporting that a number of Toronto massage parlors were advertising Indian students for sex.” When did the ministers know about stuff like this? And it goes on and on in this format.

This motion is very specific. It refers to what ministers have said repeatedly. It now has a very good amendment from the Bloc MP, whose suggestion is exactly our point, which is that this is not the fault of newcomers and international students. They have been the targets of exploitation in some cases. Some of these plaza colleges do not provide legitimate education. The post-graduate work permit system has been abused in some cases. The ministers have been pointing fingers at each other, and at international students and newcomers, blaming them for the housing crisis.

We need to pass this motion. The two ministers must appear. They have to explain themselves on why this is the situation and how they made decisions and why they made these types of comments in the media.

Thank you, Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We have Madam Kayabaga, then Mr. Redekopp, and then Madam Kwan.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will not be supporting this motion for lots of reasons, one of them being that the words the minister said were actually taken out of context. I have gone back to the quote that the colleague has raised. The minister actually said that he recognizes that this has “added pressure”. Saying “added pressure” means that there was pressure already existing in the housing sector in our country. As far as I'm concerned, the housing minister has been working towards addressing that pressure that exists in the housing system of Canada.

These are also files that directly lie on the different provinces across the country, which are currently mainly led by Conservative premiers. The housing accelerator fund has been a system that we've been using to support municipalities. We're working with municipalities directly to give them money to build housing faster, housing that is green, and to make sure that people get affordable housing in our communities. Where are the provinces across the country on that? These provinces are led by Conservative premiers.

For this motion to point out all the comments that our colleagues have made, comments that have been misinterpreted.... There is a comment here that says the minister has said his department has agreed that they're responsible. That is not what was said, and that is misleading. That is misleading to this committee. It's also misleading for Canadians to think that housing shortages are caused by immigrants. That's not factual. Housing crises are caused by the fact that we're not building more on the land that we have in our provinces. Maybe we need to have conversations with the Conservative premiers to tell us why we're not building fast on the land that we have. We are addressing that through the housing accelerator fund, through the different initiatives that we've put forward through housing to make sure we have more housing, not just for immigrants but for all Canadians.

To another point that he made on the international caps, the cap is specifically to international students. We've studied this in our committee here. We've talked about where the challenges were, and we're taking action and actually responding to some of the motions that they've brought forward.

This motion is very misleading. They are choosing wording that is specifically pointing to immigrants being the problem. I will be voting down this motion.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madam Kayabaga.

Go ahead, Mr. Redekopp.

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

It's interesting to hear the Liberal perspective on this. It's, “You have to take what the minister said, but you have to understand it in a certain context.”

The exact words the minister said, to the point of my colleague, were these: “Fraser says temporary immigration programs are putting pressure on the housing system and creating a 'serious issue we need to address.'”

You can find this in videos in numerous places. It was the senior immigration minister and housing minister, Sean Fraser, who said this specifically. I'll read it again. It says, “Fraser says temporary

immigration programs are putting pressure on the housing system and creating a 'serious issue we need to address.’” That's pretty clear.

If we back up a bit, your point is valid and it really reinforces that we need to bring the ministers here to talk about this situation. You're talking about your interpretation. The way you're hearing it is one way, and we're interpreting it in a different way, according to you. That's a reason why we need to get these ministers in here. It's to clarify it and figure out what they're saying.

I am absolutely happy to add in the amendment from my colleague Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, because I don't want to blame this on immigrants either. We need to find a solution.

You talk about the provinces. In my home province of Saskatchewan, we need solutions as well. In my city of Saskatoon, we need solutions to this situation. Fortunately, Saskatoon doesn't have quite the high housing prices that Toronto has, but even so, it's very difficult to find a place to live in Saskatoon. Rents have gone up significantly after eight years of this Liberal government. We definitely need to have solutions for housing in Saskatoon and right across the country.

My home province wants solutions to this too, and wants to make sure that we're bringing in the right people. We don't want to shut down immigration in any way, but we need to make sure that we have housing. That's where we, as Conservatives, have thoughtful plans that are going to work to build more housing. That's what we need in this country and that's where we're going to go.

In the province of Saskatchewan, and every province, there are certainly needs, but what the federal government is pushing on them is not working. That is why we absolutely need to bring both of these ministers here to clarify these questions, clarify the comments and clarify these quotes. As I said, these are their quotes.

We have to make sure that we are getting to the bottom of this and truly understanding what's going on. Our job here on the immigration committee is to understand these things and make sure that we help and support the government in putting forward programs that actually work for this country.

Starting from the words right out of the ministers' mouths, these programs aren't working. We need to do what we can as a committee to help support them and make them better.

Thank you.

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

I have Madam Kwan and then Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

If you look at the motion and the language and the tone of the motion, even though there's an amendment—which is why I supported the amendment to say that newcomers are not to be blamed—the tone and the insinuation within the motion already blame them.

Let me just put it on the record, because I don't believe that the motion that was moved was actually put on the record in this language. Let's break it down so that we understand what the insinuation is in pointing fingers at newcomers, and yes, at the minister too, and they do need to explain.

However, I want to be very clear in the way we do it that we do not leave any room for misunderstanding with respect to who is ultimately responsible. Here's the language:

That, given that:

- a. The current Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities was the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship when record high immigration targets were set, and that he has now admitted that those immigration targets helped to fuel the housing crisis, in a press conference on January 15th.

That language in and of itself already blames newcomers, as though newcomers, with the immigration targets, are the people to blame.

The motion goes on to say:

- b. The current Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship admitted that his department was responsible for fueling the housing crisis when he admitted that his department is running a “system that's run a bit rampant for far too long and is causing an impact that is not unappreciable.”

The Minister of Immigration will have some explaining to do, but again, this directly ties the housing crisis to the newcomers, as if to say that the newcomers are responsible for the housing crisis.

Then it goes on to say:

- c. The Premier of Quebec has described the immigration system as putting Quebec “very close to the breaking point due to the excessive number of asylum seekers arriving in Quebec month after month [and that] the situation has become unsustainable;”

Here we're tying asylum seekers to other streams of newcomers to Canada and tying it all in to say that newcomers are to blame for the problems that provinces are faced with and for the housing crisis that Canada is seized with.

It ends with saying that:

- The committee invite the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities to appear separately for two (2) hours each to explain their remarks, within 14 days of the passage of this motion.

That's what it says.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** On a point of order—

**The Chair:** Go ahead on a point of order, Mr. Redekopp.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** I just want to point out that you forgot to mention paragraph “d.” as part of the full amended motion.

**The Chair:** Let's carry on with the debate.

Madam Kwan, the floor is yours.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just with regard to that point, I did mention the amendment, and I said that the amendment in and of itself does not negate the language in the motion, which already insinuates and points the finger directly at newcomers, Mr. Chair. If Mr. Redekopp was listening carefully, he would have caught that.

However, let me go on to say this: I do think that it is important to talk about Canada's immigration system. I do think that it is vitally important that we also address the housing issue. As it happens, I'm the NDP housing critic, and this issue was brought up in study at the housing committee through different motions and in different ways. Most certainly the NDP has been going after the government with respect to its lack of action in addressing the housing crisis and its failure to make good on its own promise that housing is a basic human right.

Now the reality, of course, is this: We have had successive Liberal and Conservative governments for the last 30 years, and what has happened in the last 30 years? They heavily relied on the private sector to deliver housing, housing that is not affordable for Canadians. Hence, we have this housing crisis because successive Liberal and Conservative governments cut housing programs.

How does that tie into immigration? It ties in because when you don't ensure that housing is developed, you do actually create a crisis for both domestic people—Canadians and people who are already in the country—and newcomers. There's no question.

With regard to this point more specifically on immigration, what do I think needs to be done instead of engaging in a process that continues the narrative that blames newcomers? Mr. Chair, I think that we need to be very specific and say what we need to have the minister come and address.

I want the minister to come and address the work of the task force in addressing the exploitation scheme targeting international students. Many students are still reporting that they are in limbo and have not heard back from officials about their status. That is an issue that all committee members were seized with. We have had the minister come back to report, to say that, yes, there wasn't good enough communication, and we asked for a bunch of information. However, do you know what? The situation is not finished.

I just talked to some students who are faced with deportation. They have gone before the task force and still have not had any outcome. That, to me, Mr. Chair, warrants ongoing study. We need the minister to come back to explain that and why students are still in a state of limbo. Why isn't the task force engaging in communication with these students?

I think we need to continue to have that, Mr. Chair. I think we need to understand from the government the measures that are being taken by IRCC and institutions to help prevent and protect international students from fraud schemes. We know it's happening, so what is being done? I think the public needs to know. I would like to know. I think the students deserve to know. We need to have a serious conversation with respect to that.

I think that we do need to have the government, and the minister more particularly, provide information to the committee on what the justification is for increasing the financial requirements for international students by more than 100%. I want to be very specific about that, because that was an announcement that was made. What is the justification for that, Mr. Chair? I think we need to have a conversation about that and we need to be able to ask the minister questions about it.

I also think we need to have the minister come to talk about the justification for the cap on international students. There are a lot of repercussions, by the way, with respect to the cap. It's not just to say we're not going to let international students come in anymore, and the insinuation is that somehow they are responsible for the housing crisis. There are international students, for example, who are elementary students. Many of them actually come into a homestay environment. Are they captured as part of that cap? They per se are not renting apartments. Many families take on homestay students for additional income to help with their mortgage and so on. Is that all going to be shut down now, Mr. Chair?

What about international students who have a scholarship with the institution, a scholarship that provides all the resources and support that they need when they come? Are they also eliminated? I know there are a number of Afghan women who won those scholarships and whose costs are all taken care of. Are they now also excluded? There are many questions with respect to the cap.

Then, of course, there is this whole notion that international students are to be blamed for the housing crisis. There is no talk about the contributions by international students either, or of how Canada is constantly on the record—both the Conservatives and the Liberals have said this—as saying that we want to attract talented young people. What are the implications of this with respect to that, Mr. Chair?

I also want to talk about the responsibility of governments with respect to housing for students—the federal government, the provincial governments, the territorial governments and the institutions. What plan is in place to ensure that housing is provided for students? I want to be very specific about the work that needs to be done and the issues that need to be addressed, with no innuendos, finger pointing or blaming, as though somehow those things will help solve the problem, because they won't. All those things will do is hurt people even more and escalate this idea that newcomers are to be blamed.

Lord knows—and I've been around long enough to know—that I am literally blamed for everything because of who I am, all the time. With COVID—Jesus—people called it the Kwan virus. Do we really need to go down that track with innuendo that will escalate the tensions? It seems to me that whenever there are challenges in the community, the easiest people to blame are newcomers. We have to stop that. We have to be responsible for that, and let's be clear on what we need to study and not put in language that frankly inflames the situation, as opposed to de-escalating it. As an elected official, I take that responsibility and that part of the job very seriously. I think about how I can help address the issue and not just do it for political calculus and a political win. If those are the only reasons we're here, Mr. Chair, then we should not be here.

I will not be supporting the amended motion, because the thrust behind the language of the amended motion is dishonest, in my view. I really do appreciate my friend's, my Bloc colleague's, amendment. I really do, because it does add that, but that is insufficient because the main motion itself is problematic.

I do want to say thank you to my colleague for his valiant attempt to make it right, but I'm sad to say that even the amendment doesn't make it right. I do appreciate the effort, which is the reason I supported the amendment. I want to say thank to my Bloc colleague here for that.

For that reason, Mr. Chair, I will not be supporting this motion. At the appropriate time, when there's a chance after this has been dealt with, I would like to move an alternative motion that brings both ministers to this committee so that we can get answers from them in a responsible way.

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

The speaking list is like this: Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, and then Madam Zahid, Mr. McLean and Mr. Redekopp.

I will give the floor to Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I do not want to take too much time because I think we already know how the vote will turn out. Let me simply correct what my colleague said. The Liberals and Conservatives have been taking turns in power for not just the last 30 years: it has actually been 157 years. It is not easy.

Some people have said that this motion blames newcomers for the housing crisis. I have to disagree with that. We have actually made an amendment that clearly states the following: “and considering that newcomers are not responsible for the housing crisis in Quebec and Canada”. It couldn't be any clearer.

This is the citizenship and immigration committee. The housing crisis is what everyone is talking about right now. We have heard that public servants warned the ministers and that the immigration minister capped the number of international students as a direct result of the housing crisis. Since this is in the public domain, the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration has a duty to look into it. Everyone is talking about it and it is in all the newspapers right across Canada.

In Quebec, we began that dialogue a long time ago. At the time, people were calling us all kinds of names. Now that the rest of Canada is talking about it, people think we are more honest than they were before the discussion in Toronto.

So it is our duty to look into this.

Looking at this motion, I do not think it blames newcomers; rather, I think it raises questions about the targets and government policies that were established. It was indeed the government that decided to set those targets. I am not blaming newcomers; I am simply wondering whether we have the right to ask questions about immigration policies and levels, regardless of the program, whether we are talking about temporary or permanent immigration.

In a G7 country, can we have this kind of debate without throwing insults at each other and accusing each other of attacking newcomers? I am not attacking newcomers. On the contrary, I would say that, since we in the Bloc Québécois are in favour of immigration, we want immigration to be successful and to support newcomers.

Moreover, if you look at the statistics carefully, you will see that the first victims of the housing crisis are often newcomers, for the simple reason that they do not have any family or friends and do not necessarily have a network when they arrive here in a new country. Similarly, refugee claimants really have no network. When there is a housing crisis in a given jurisdiction and people arrive without a network or contacts, they are definitely the ones who will suffer first. This has to be studied and we have to make recommendations about it.

As to immigration targets, that is something to be discussed in the House of Commons once the policy discussions have matured. We have to be able to discuss immigration there. We mustn't bury our heads in the sand. It is bad for newcomers and for all communities. We also have to try to understand the special characteristics of Quebec and of francophone communities outside Quebec. We have to make sure that those people are part of the discussion. I am very interested in the foreign student issue. I will therefore be voting for Ms. Kwan's motion when we get to that.

We know that a cap has been set on the number of foreign students we can accept, but we don't know how that affects the numbers for Quebec. A measure was also announced. The only thing that was clear in the minister's announcement is that open work permits for a student's spouse will only be available if the student is at the master's or doctoral level, or if they are studying medicine or law because, as the minister said, we want to keep the brightest people.

That is tantamount to saying that a nursing student from Cameroon enrolled at Cégep de St-Félicien is not as bright as a law student at McGill.

I have to question that.

I know a lot of law students who attended McGill University. Comparing them to women from Cameroon who enrol at Cégep de St-Félicien... I'll leave it at that. There is certainly a difference in their IQs, but I won't say who is brighter.

We have to call attention to this. Decisions have been made without consulting Quebec, the other provinces, people from post-secondary institutions or educational institutions, in Quebec or the rest of Canada. This warrants our consideration. We have to ask those ministers some questions.

For my part, I support the motion. If it is defeated, I will support Ms. Kwan's motion, but the ministers have to appear to answer those questions. Once again, I invite my colleagues to be responsible and stay above the fray on the sensitive issues of immigration and immigration targets. We owe that to our constituents and to newcomers. No one should be ostracized. It is our duty as parliamentarians to act accordingly.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

I want to bring to the attention of committee members that we have with us Ms. Kingsley and Ms. May, officials from IRCC. If there is no consent for them to appear before us, I have to let them go. They can appear some other time. Therefore, I would like to get direction from the committee regarding consensus.

Do you want to carry on with the witnesses for the second hour or do you want to continue the debate?

**An hon. member:** Continue the debate.

**The Chair:** I am hearing to continue the debate.

Go ahead, Ms. Kwan

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** We should continue the debate.

**The Chair:** Great. We will continue the debate. Thank you.

I'm sorry, Ms. Kingsley and Ms. May. Thank you for coming and being here as scheduled. We'll make sure that our clerk contacts you to come back to share your thoughts with us at some other point in time. Thank you.

We'll continue with the debate.

Mrs. Zahid, please go ahead.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair.

I just want to put on record that I voted against the amendment because the language, the way the main motion is, is putting the blame on newcomers. Canada is a country that has been built by newcomers. Many of us sitting around this table came to Canada to build a better future.

The issue right now, what we are discussing, is international students. The federal government has a certain jurisdiction. Provincial governments have a certain role. All this blame is not for the federal government. Who gets admission at which college and which university is the decision of the designated learning institutions, and who gives accreditation and who lists them as designated learning institutions? It's the provincial governments.

In my home province of Ontario, it's the provincial Conservative government. The issue is not the international students; the issue is that many international students are being defrauded. We definitely need the talent of the international students, but at the same time, we have to make sure that those international students who come here are protected also. The issue is with those private colleges, which, if you go there, you see are one- or two-room colleges, but they have thousands of students listed as students there.

The provinces have to step up and make sure that before they admit students or before they identify an institution as a designated learning institution, they do their full homework and make sure that those institutions that have no capacity to absorb those students are not listed as designated learning institutions. It is really very important that provinces look into this issue seriously to determine which colleges can be designated learning institutions and to establish a process before these students are admitted.

I hope the provinces will look into this issue, because it is adding to many issues for the international students. In talking with international students and their deputations, I have heard that in many cases international students have been defrauded either by their institution or by some lawyers or consultants. As we are all here, it is really very important that we look into this.

Housing definitely is an issue. We definitely need to build housing, and since we came into government in 2015, we have created a national housing strategy. I was with the Prime Minister back in December at an announcement of a significant chunk of money being given to the City of Toronto to build more houses through the housing accelerator fund, so we are stepping up and we are having agreements with many cities to make sure that we build those houses faster.

There is no one thing that can be done to build more houses. It's different, and all governments have to take responsibility. Provincial, federal and municipal governments all have to step up to make sure that we have appropriate housing for those students who are coming to Canada to build a better future.

I definitely will not support this motion, but it is important at the same time that we make sure that we don't put the blame on the immigrants. This country has been built by immigrants. If you heard, last week there was a study showing that the birth rate is declining here in Canada, so it is important that we welcome new immigrants but at the same time it is important that we make sure that no fraud is happening with the international students.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. McLean, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Greg McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, colleagues.

At the beckoning of my colleague from the NDP, we went through my colleague Mr. Redekopp's motion word for word on getting the ministers before this committee to answer to the decisions they've made in this respect. I have gone through it word by word right here in committee, at the request of everyone. There is absolutely nothing in here that puts any blame on the victims, and anybody who wants to put out the narrative that there is victim blaming here is producing something that doesn't exist. We've even added, at the behest of my colleague from the Bloc Québécois, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, a clause that specifically states that the victims here are not the ones to blame.

We're a compassionate Canadian society. We're bringing in immigrants from around the world. In order to do that we have to have places for them to land and live here, and we've shirked that re-

sponsibility as Canadians. Who's the lead on that, as far as immigration goes? It is the federal department of immigration, led by the minister of immigration. It's led by two ministers of immigration now, one of whom seems to be undoing some tracks of his predecessor and stating very publicly that this was done wrong and that we would like to make sure that these mistakes don't happen again.

However, I go back to the point that there's nothing in here, in these words written in very clear English, that has anything to do with victim blaming. Those words come out the mouths of certain people who are establishing a narrative, and it is not anything written on paper that does that.

Yes, as Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe points out, there have been 157 years of either Liberal or Conservative governments in Canada, but I will point out that since my time here in 2019, this Liberal government has only been in government with the support of the New Democratic Party. The New Democratic Party here might want to look in the mirror and say, "Maybe there's a better way of doing this," as opposed to giving carte blanche support to not having ministers appear here to answer for what they've done and why they've done it, which is the nature of this motion.

How did this situation arise? Can you please explain whether you undertook this effort without considering the consequences to housing in Canada and where our newcomers would be housed? I mean, for Pete's sake, some of these students are living four people to a box, and that is not what we expect in Canada. We expect to be open and welcoming and to have housing, food, health care and services available for all the people who come to this country.

I'm going to speak a bit about economic development in housing, because somehow there's a narrative that if the private sector weren't building this, the public sector would do better. I've yet to see one example, including in this ministry, of the public sector actually performing better than the private sector. The private sector does respond to price signals. Is there an ability here to build something that provides a profitable outcome and makes a product available? All the bureaucracy built into building houses right now in Canada needs a solution beyond the government throwing more money at a wall. There are all kinds of impediments to building houses.

Let's look at this from a time perspective. I can tell you that four years ago in Calgary, there were a lot of vacant places. There aren't right now, partially because people have come from jurisdictions run by the New Democratic Party after they recognized that things had gone too far out of control in housing costs and they moved to jurisdictions where housing is actually cheaper. As a result, the cost of housing has gone up significantly in jurisdictions like mine, but the costs are still not as high as they are in the NDP-run province to the west of Alberta, and that's, as I said, the construction of a narrative that is neither constructive nor realistic.

The last part I want to discuss here is this diversion from responsibility. If we're going to divert from who's responsible here as far as the immigration system is concerned—and that is the intent in not supporting this motion—because we're not looking at who should be or is responsible, then we're not holding the decision-makers to account.

All of us around this table are supposed to be held accountable by our constituents. You show up here and you make decisions with Canadians' money, with Canadians' social system, with Canadians' futures, yet there's no accountability whatsoever.

I would prefer if my colleagues passed this motion so that we would actually be able to discuss this matter with both ministers. We can then find out how we arrived at these decisions and how we can do better next time, as opposed to just sweeping it under the rug.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

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

The speaking order is Mr. Redekopp, Mr. Ali and Ms. Kwan.

Mr. Redekopp, the floor is yours.

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

Mr. McLean did a great job of explaining our intent with this motion, but someone said he heard it differently or he experienced it differently. If you experience it differently, it's fine, because points (a), (b), and (c) are simply quotes of people. We're not editorializing anything. They're just quotes. If you experienced it differently than we did, that's the whole reason to get them in to ask the questions and get the answers.

As for this issue of the public sector building houses versus private enterprises doing it, I was a home builder before I came here. I don't know if you guys knew that. I still believe I've built more homes than the current government has with its housing accelerator fund. Until such time as there are homes that are actually built by the government, I'm still in the lead. It is kind of amazing that a small entrepreneurial guy can be more successful than a multi-hundred-billion-dollar organization.

Finally, to Ms. Kwan, I'm open to amendments to my motion if you want to throw some of your amendments in there. I'm ready to have a vote on this if we can get to that, once we get through the speaking order.

**The Chair:** Unless you move a motion to adjourn the debate, the debate continues.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Why don't I do that?

I move to adjourn the debate.

**The Chair:** The motion on the floor is to adjourn the debate.

Mr. Clerk, call the vote to adjourn the debate, please.

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

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Mr. Redekopp. Your motion is defeated. Debate will continue.

Mr. Ali, you have the floor.

**Mr. Shafqat Ali:** Thank you, Chair.

I just wanted to put on the record why I voted against the amendment. I have a problem with the main motion, which uses language from the Conservatives to say that the immigration targets set were too high.

I'm an immigrant myself. We know immigrants and international students contribute to our country, our economy and our society. Putting the blame for the housing crisis just on students or immigrants is not fair. I think we're missing the point here. Housing...

In the provinces where we have Conservative premiers, they're not stepping up. The federal government is taking initiatives through the housing accelerator fund. In the city of Brampton, the Prime Minister announced that the federal government was providing \$114 million to the city for its ambitious housing initiative. The mayor of Brampton said about the federal government, "We are thankful for the Government of Canada's continued partnership and investment in our community".

Mayor Patrick Brown said that to the federal government. He thanked the Minister of Housing and the Prime Minister for making the announcement to address the housing crisis in Brampton.

The federal government is doing its part, and the provinces also need step forward to address this situation. We need to work together, but putting the blame on high immigration targets is not fair.

I just wanted to put that on the record. That's why I won't be supporting the motion.

Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Brad Redekopp):** Thank you, Mr. Ali.

Madam Kwan, you're next on the list.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you very much.

I want to touch on a couple of points.

The idea that in not supporting this motion we'll somehow give the government a pass was the insinuation here. I want to be very clear that I have zero intention whatsoever of giving the Minister of Immigration and the Minister of Housing a pass. I intend to move a motion that does call for both of them to come to this committee to talk about the issues that I raised previously.

On the issue around housing, there were some offhand comments about the private sector. I want to be very clear about this. I'm not saying that the private sector has no role to play. However, over the last 30 years, the Conservatives cancelled the national co-op housing program. Then the Liberals cancelled the national affordable housing program. They walked away from providing support and helping provinces and territories to develop community housing, which is critically needed. Community housing versus private sector housing is very different, because community housing has an affordability component. That is not there, necessarily, for the private sector.

Private sector development in housing has not met the needs of Canadians because it is not affordable. Much of the conversation, even today, on the housing crisis centres around supply and not affordability. While supply is needed—I will grant that—building housing that is not affordable for Canadians will not address the housing crisis for many people. You have to have both elements in place.

I know the Conservatives think—and their leader, Pierre Poilievre, has already said—that co-op housing is “a Soviet-style takeover of housing.” I absolutely disagree with that. We need co-op housing. We need social housing. We need non-profit housing.

Prior to being elected to this place, I worked for a non-profit. Like my colleague Mr. Redekopp, who developed housing for profit, I developed housing, but I was part of a non-profit that developed housing for non-profit purposes. It developed housing to house the people who were most in need and who needed social housing so that they could be housed.

The project I worked on particularly targeted youth at risk, as an example. The organization that I worked for, with the late Jim Green, was among the largest non-profit developers in Vancouver.

I have to say that yes, everybody has a role to play, but from my perspective, what is very critical is developing housing that people can actually afford. That is lacking.

With the motion that I intend to move, we'll talk about a housing plan that you need to actually plan and develop. The federal government needs to provide leadership in that regard, which sadly, I have to say, has been missing for far too long.

If we want to address these issues in a way that addresses the problem and holds the government to account, I'm all in. We have to hold the government to account. We need to find the solution and then we need to act on it and not just talk about it, Mr. Chair.

For those reasons, as I indicated already, I will not be supporting this motion.

I will have my own motion to move, Mr. Chair. When it's the appropriate time, I would like to do that.

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

There are no more speakers.

I will ask Mr. Clerk to take the vote on the motion of Mr. Redekopp, as amended by Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

(Motion as amended negatived: nays 6; yeas 5 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Madam Kwan.

**Mr. Greg McLean:** I think I'm next on the list.

**The Chair:** You said you didn't want to speak on the—

**Mr. Greg McLean:** I didn't want to speak any more on the issue we just spoke on. I didn't want to be taken off the list to speak before I had the motion.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** The motion is defeated, so—

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** On a point of order, Mr. Chair—

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

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Mr. Chair, I believe what he is saying is that he didn't want to speak to the motion. He wanted his name on the speaking list for the next—

**Mr. Greg McLean:** That's what I spoke to you about.

**The Chair:** I understand, but I thought you would raise your hand right after the motion was defeated, so—

**Mr. Greg McLean:** You put me on the speaking list at the beginning of the meeting. I tried to be first, as you know.

**The Chair:** Certainly you were, but just give me a second, please. I'm going to suspend the meeting for a few seconds.

• (1225) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1230)

**The Chair:** I want to clarify something to the membership so that the committee members are very clear.

Mr. McLean came to me and clearly stated that after the debate on the motion that was brought forward by Mr. Redekopp and amended by Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, he should be put first on the speaking list. Madam Kwan raised her hand as well.

From my discussions with the clerk, it is very clear that the floor should go to Mr. McLean. If there is any objection from the committee members, speak now; otherwise, I will give the floor to Mr. McLean.

Mr. McLean, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Greg McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Further to that, the beginning of the meeting is when we established the speaking order about when these motions will be heard. The first one has gone now. I think I was second on the list. We should maintain that decorum in how we do these things. Thank you very much.

The motion I want to put on the table has to do with the British national overseas pension.

I'll read the motion first and then describe a little of the stuff behind it.

It says:



That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study of pension transferability and access to the Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) for Hong Kongers now residing in Canada; that the committee allocate one meeting to pursue this study; that the committee invite representatives of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, representatives of Global Affairs Canada, Manulife Financial, Sun Life Canada, immigrants from Hong Kong who have tried to move their funds from the MPF, as well as any other witnesses the committee deems relevant; and that the committee report its observations and recommendations to the House.

This I move in this motion.

I also want to go through a bit of the detail on this, because I know I have colleagues on this committee who are part of the Canada-Hong Kong Parliamentary Friendship Group. We hear a lot from groups that are very concerned about two Canadian companies in particular when certain parties are emigrating from Hong Kong to Canada. Sun Life and Manulife Financial are the ones that oversee part of this fund in Hong Kong. It is supposed to be transferred when people move overseas, but that's not happening.

We want to gain an understanding about what is happening here when only some people are able to access their pensions when they move from Hong Kong to a different jurisdiction, particularly Canada. These are two Canadian companies, obviously with Hong Kong subsidiaries. It's about understanding how this is happening and what the pressures are to make sure these people can get their mandatory provident funds out of the old jurisdiction and into the place where they're going to retire. It's very important that we have a reciprocal system so that people moving from jurisdiction to jurisdiction know the laws that govern the funds they've invested in pensions in their old country and how those come to the places they immigrate to.

Now, we know we're going to be facing more immigration from Hong Kong to Canada. This continues, and this is something on everybody's radar screen. I implore my colleagues on the other side of this committee who are in the Canada-Hong Kong Parliamentary Friendship Group to come to some resolution here so that people coming to Canada have certainty about how their funds are going to arrive from their pension funds—the savings they've been mandated to withdraw from their earnings in Hong Kong.

I can go on and explain this further if anybody doesn't understand it, but this is a service we're going to be doing for people coming to Canada. I think it's very important and will be very illuminating. We'll get some people outside the usual bureaucracy we have here. We'll get some Canadian companies in here telling us about how they operate the financial arrangements they manage between Hong Kong and Canada.

I hope this motion has been clearly stated. I will let somebody second it.

**The Chair:** I have Mr. Kmiec and then Madam Kwan.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** The reason that this is important for this committee is that there are two Canadian companies involved in preventing this for Hong Kongers when they enter Canada with a BNO passport. They are Sun Life and Manulife. There is about \$69 million being withheld from Hong Kongers.

What's happening is that when these persons come to Canada, they have temporary status. As they work through it, they become PRs, permanent residents. Once they have PR, they get a PR card.

On the PR card, the first three digits show what document they used to enter the country. If they came in on a BNO passport—the British National Overseas passport—it is basically an indicator to the Hong Kong offices of these two Canadian companies as to how you came in.

Because PRC Beijing no longer recognizes the BNO as a travel document, it is now being used to deny Canadian Hong Kongers who are permanent residents of Canada or Canadians their ability to transfer from the MPF—which is their pension monies—to Canada. It's a form of transnational repression that is being used by Beijing to target Hong Kongers in Canada. This is one of these examples of transnational repression by an authoritarian regime.

The one in Beijing is the best example, but Hong Kong Watch has done a lot of work. I actually held a round table on this subject on November 23. I will also mention that the Liberal research bureau was in the room, so they have the same documents that I do on this subject.

It's related to immigration, because IRCC is the issuer of the PR card. The PR card that shows those three letters, those three numbers, at the front, indicates to the pension company, when it's making the filings in the Hong Kong jurisdiction, how they entered the country. Then that is what's being used, because of Hong Kong law, to target Canadian citizens and Canadian permanent residents in Canada who are from Hong Kong. This is why we need to call in these companies involved. They need to explain themselves. Global Affairs needs to be called in to see what they know. I know for a fact that Hong Kong Watch has been trying to get the government's attention on the matter. As far as I know, there's been no real response to it.

This is very short. This will take only one meeting, just to look into it. I know that the Hong Kong community in Canada would really appreciate it. These are people who in some cases have lost everything to come here—everything—because the Communists will either push them out or chase them all over the world wherever they go. Withholding their pension monies is a form of transnational repression. IRCC, the immigration department, is deeply related to this.

I want this motion to be passed so that we can call these companies to account. Otherwise, we're just protecting big business.

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

Madam Kwan, the floor is yours.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

On this issue, as far back as June 2023, I actually wrote to the Minister of Immigration and the Minister of Finance.

Just to be clear so that people understand what the issue is about, the barrier for Hong Kongers is this: They have the inability to withdraw their retirement savings from the mandatory provident fund, the MPF. As they are British national overseas visa holders, they are legally permitted to withdraw their savings on the grounds of permanently leaving the country once they prove that they have departed Hong Kong permanently, with no intention of returning.

For those who fled Hong Kong in an effort to escape persecution from China's authoritarian control, access to their retirement savings, as you can imagine, is critical. However, these Hong Kongers are not able to access their funds if they apply for their visa application with their BNO passport.

Commanding 40% of the MPF market, Canadian banks have extensive control over Hong Kongers' financial ability to escape China's draconian policies. I call on the government to ensure that Canadian banks properly evaluate early MPF withdrawal claims. Banks like Manulife, Sun Life and the Royal Bank of Canada are preventing thousands of Hong Kongers from accessing the approximately \$1.5 billion Canadian of pension savings that they're entitled to. Many have presented more than sufficient evidence, including proof of a U.K. address and a biometric residence permit, to warrant a favourable exercise of discretion on their withdrawal claims.

I think that urgent action is needed here, but I think that this is properly within the Minister of Finance's bailiwick, because it is the bank that is withholding the funds, with no justification to allow for that. I've written letters as far back as June of last year to both ministers, and I have not received a response from the Minister of Finance.

I would love to get into this. However, I am not sure that it is an immigration issue. I do, rather, think that it is a Minister of Finance issue, and I think we should pursue it. I'd be happy to work with Mr. McLean to see how we can modify this motion to try to get to the bottom of this issue, and perhaps work collaboratively with the finance committee with respect to it.

I have been on this issue. I have written about it. I have spoken with various different advocates, including Hong Kong Watch and others. I've spoken with people who have been impacted, who are unable to withdraw their retirement savings, and the implications with all of that.

This needs to be dealt with. The Canadian government needs to deal with it. However, I do believe that the avenue to deal with it is actually through finance and ensuring that the banks observe the laws that are there that allow these individuals to withdraw their funds. They have no right to withhold that funding. What is the rationale? I think that we should be calling for the banks to come before the committee to answer those questions.

Perhaps it's a joint meeting, Mr. Chair, with the finance committee, because I think it's properly the banks that should be held to account here. Most certainly, the government should be doing everything it can to assist these individuals as well, so I would love to hear from the Minister of Finance exactly what it is that she's doing, or not doing, in this regard.

I extend a hand because I think that we are in agreement that this is an urgent issue that should be dealt with. However, I want to make sure that it goes before the right committee and with the right people so that we get the proper answers that are required that will help the people to move forward on the issue, Mr. Chair.

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

I will ask the clerk to take the vote, because there are no other speakers.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Mr. Chair—

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

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** I was just going to add to that.

The document I have from Hong Kong Watch does not have any of the banks on it. The trustees I have are Manulife Provident Funds Trust Company Limited, Sun Life Trustee Company Limited and Sun Life Pension Trust Limited.

I think I heard a lot of goodwill from the New Democrats and I think we want to resolve this, but the issue is not legislation in Canada, as far as I understand it from Hong Kongers. The legislation is in Hong Kong, because when you apply, you have to provide documentation that you have left Hong Kong and you have no intention of returning. When you provide the Canadian PR card, a picture of it, that's how they're able to identify that you came to Canada and entered here through your BNO passport. This is why it's an IRCC issue.

I agree that we should invite Finance Canada, so I'm going to make an amendment to Mr. McLean's motion. After "Global Affairs Canada," add the words "and Finance Canada," and then it continues on to "Manulife Financial, Sun Life", and then after the words "Sun Life Canada," add "and financial institutions," and then continue with "immigrants from Hong Kong". I think that will then call all of these individuals here, and they can send the representatives they wish.

Truthfully, this is a foreign relations issue. This is a banking issue in Canada, based on what Ms. Kwan was saying; however, it is also an IRCC issue, because IRCC is essentially facilitating the identification of Hong Kongers in Canada whose intention is to stay here. They're residents or citizens of Canada. It's facilitating the transnational repression by the Communists in Beijing, so to prevent that, we have to address this issue of these three letters, digits, at the front of the PR card. That's the problem on the IRCC side.

Beyond that, I think it's an open question as to why these big businesses are facilitating transnational repression by foreign actors, by these authoritarian regimes.

That's my amendment, Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Madam Kwan, I'll come back to you. There is an amendment on the floor right now, so I have to deal with that first.

Mr. Kmiec, can you provide the wording to the clerk, please, so that he can read it clearly so that committee members clearly understand it?

**Mr. Greg McLean:** I want to make sure of the wording.

**The Chair:** Just a minute, Mr. McLean. The floor belongs is with Mr. Kmiec. I'm dealing with the amendment, and then Madam Kwan and then you.

Do the committee members accept the amendment so that we can debate on—

Go ahead, Madam Kwan.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Because I think this is an important issue, and I think we're on the same page of wanting to address it, instead of rushing through to see whether or not this amendment would actually address the issue properly and we have the right witnesses before us, I'd like to suggest that we table this—not to get to get rid of it, but to actually really work through it to make sure we have the issue properly addressed.

My understanding is that the issue here is not that Hong Kongers are violating the rule, because the rule is such that if they're leaving Hong Kong permanently, they are allowed to legally withdraw their savings once they prove they have departed Hong Kong permanently with no intention of returning. In fact, I would assume that it is the PR card that says that it is the BNO exit that, in and of itself, is the cause for the funding to be withheld. As long as they show that their intention is to permanently leave Hong Kong, they should be able to withdraw the funds. That is the law, so why are the financial institutions not allowing people to withdraw that funding? That is, in my mind, the crux of the issue, but we can work through this.

What I'm going to move is for us to table this, Mr. Chair, for the time being so that we can work through all of the nuance details and make sure we have the right language and the right people so that we can find a path to properly address this issue.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I'm going to see if there's unanimous consent to table it. If there's not, then, Mr. McLean, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Greg McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This has been tabled with this committee since November now. There has been all kinds of time for members to look at it and see if there was a way of wording it better or putting their own amendments into it.

I appreciate the comments from Ms. Kwan that were worded into the amendment brought forward by my colleague Mr. Kmiec. It clearly identifies what the problem is here.

There obviously are overlaps here between the Department of Finance, Global Affairs and IRCC. We're the immigration committee. We could push this in front of any committee, but we have the ability at this committee to call as witnesses any of these government officials and these private sector entities that are operating in both Hong Kong and Canada, and sometimes withholding the Hong Kong pensioners' money from immigrants who come to Canada.

Getting to the bottom of this quickly, I think, is better than parking it and saying, "Okay, maybe we can put some words in here or in here." There is some openness towards the end of this motion. You'll see before "and that the committee report its observations and recommendations" the phrase "as well as any other witnesses the committee deems relevant". We've already added in the finance department officials who are going to be involved here.

We've stated clearly what the problem is. I will reiterate that it is an immigration problem. We identify, clearly, the people who come to Canada who left Hong Kong on a BNO passport, a British na-

tional overseas passport, but once they're in Canada, they have a stamped number saying, "This is how you came over", and that's what Manulife and Sun Life, which are the two that I'm quite familiar with, and their various subsidiaries, are using to withhold the pension transferability from the mandatory provident fund in Hong Kong to those who have become Canadians.

I think it's pretty clear what we're trying to accomplish here, and it is bringing witnesses in. If there are other amendments that we need to consider outside of the ones that my colleague has already acquiesced to in my motion—and I agree with—to make sure that it is an open and inclusive dialogue and covers all of our bases, then I'm happy to entertain them at this point of time, but I'm not happy parking this further.

Let's address this quickly. Let's get through this. Let's start this study so we can help Canadians who have immigrated here who have money due them from the Hong Kong mandatory provident fund.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Kmiec, please go ahead.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Just to clarify that this is, in fact, an IRCC issue and not a banking regulation in Canada issue, as far as I understand it. Hong Kong Watch has a document titled "Hong Kong's Mandatory Provident Fund: BNO Visa Holders Denied Access To Their Savings". It says:

[T]he MPFA released a statement on 10 March 2021 saying that because the British National (Overseas) (BNO) passport was no longer recognised by the Hong Kong government as a valid travel document as well as proof of identity as of the end of January 2021, those trying to withdraw their MPFs early (before retirement) cannot rely on the BNO passport as evidence in support an application for early MPF withdrawal.

Because the PR cards indicate the BNO passport, that's now being used to deny Hong Kongers the ability to withdraw their savings from Hong Kong. It's not a direct finance department issue. This is really an IRCC-connected issue, because that's how these Hong Kongers are being identified in Canada as having used a BNO passport to travel.

This is this committee's issue, and I really think it's also an international relations issue, because we're essentially allowing Canadian financial institutions, the trustees—in this case, Sun Life and Manulife—to be an extended arm of transnational repression against Hong Kongers.

I would like this voted on today. If we could just have one meeting and call on these people to explain themselves as to why this is allowed to go on.... Maybe they have fixed it, but I have not heard anything about it being fixed.

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

Go ahead, Madam Kwan.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Can you read the amendment again, please, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** Sure. Mr. Bourgault will read the amendment.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Rémi Bourgault):** It will say “representatives of Global Affairs Canada, Finance Canada, Manulife Financial, Sun Life Canada and financial institutions, immigrants from Hong Kong who have tried”. We add “Finance Canada”, and on the other line, “and financial institutions”.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clerk, can you read the whole motion as amended, please?

**The Clerk:** The motion is, “That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study of pension transferability and access to the Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) for Hong Kongers now residing in Canada; that the committee allocate one meeting to pursue this study; that the committee invite representatives of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, representatives of Global Affairs Canada and Finance Canada, Manulife Financial, Sun Life Canada and financial institutions, immigrants from Hong Kong who have tried to move their funds from the MPF, as well as any other witnesses the committee deems relevant; and that the committee report its observations and recommendations to the House.”

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We have Madam Kwan and then Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** The motion actually says representatives of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and representatives of Global Affairs”, and then the amendment adds representatives from the finance department.

I just want to get clarification. Are we talking about officials or are we talking about the ministers?

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

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** I'm open to either ministers or officials. That's why it says “representatives”.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Madam Kwan, is it clear?

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** It is clear.

I just want to comment on that.

In my estimation, because the issue can have political implications, I think it would be important for ministers to be invited, and not officials.

As much as I love officials—they're really good—they can't answer some of those political questions. Because there are geopolitics going on here, as was mentioned—I think it is a tactic to use suppression so Hong Kongers can't access their funds—I do think that we need to have ministers come.

To that end, I would like to subamend where it says “representatives” so that it says “minister and officials”.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Kmiec and Mr. McLean are next.

**Mr. Greg McLean:** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, can we see that we don't recognize consent to adjourn, so that we don't just adjourn directly at one o'clock and we finish this debate?

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. Did you say you want to adjourn the debate at one?

**Mr. Greg McLean:** No, I want to not adjourn the debate at one, so that we can finish the study.

**The Chair:** I have already checked with the clerk. We have the resources until 1:15. At 1:15 we would not have any resources. If the debate is not adjourned, I'll have to suspend the meeting.

I will ask Mr. Kmiec if he had anything to say.

No?

Go ahead, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I am sorry. I thought we were continuing until 1:15 p.m. Has that just been decided?

I cannot stay. I have a national press conference soon because I am going to be introducing a bill, which you will all vote for eventually, but I still have to attend the press conference. I have to leave at 1 p.m.

I'm sorry. No one asked my opinion; otherwise, I would have found a replacement.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

As the chair, I'm doing my duty. Mr. McLean asked that the debate continue. I told him and the committee members that the clerk has resources only until 1:15.

If you want to bring in a motion to adjourn the committee, you have every right as a member. You can bring that motion and I'll have to take a vote on it.

Do you want to bring in a motion to adjourn the committee meeting?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I have no choice. I am truly sorry, my friends, but I have to leave at 1 p.m.

Is the meeting suspended? Thank you.

[*English*]

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** You don't have consent to adjourn.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** He doesn't have consent to extend the time. Isn't that the thing? We adjourn at the normal time.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** He has to suspend the meeting if he doesn't have consent to adjourn.

**The Chair:** Do you want to suspend the meeting?

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** On a point of order, Chair, my understanding of the rule is that normally the chair seeks consent to adjourn the meeting. I'm just telling you that since you do not have consent to adjourn the meeting at one, you may suspend the meeting for Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe to go do his press conference. I'm just letting you know that you don't have consent to adjourn.

**The Chair:** I'll go to Madam Kayabaga and then at one o'clock I will suspend the meeting if there is consensus.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Mr. Chair, I move to adjourn the meeting.

**The Chair:** There is a motion on the floor to adjourn the meeting. There is no debate.

Mr. Clerk, take the vote, please.

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

**The Chair:** The meeting is adjourned.

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