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Chair: Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal



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• (1130)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.)): We'll continue our meeting in public to discuss committee business.

Last time, we adjourned debate on the motion of Mr. McLean and the amendment moved by Mr. Kmiec on February 5.

Is there consensus in the committee to resume the motion? I see a yes.

I'm going to make my decision, then. As there is consensus in the committee, we will resume the debate on the motion that was adjourned.

Mr. Kmiec, go ahead please.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): As to where we left off, I just want to make it clear that this is an IRCC issue.

I have the Hong Kong Watch report. Some \$1.5 billion is managed by Canadian insurance companies, which is equivalent to \$69 million in management fees that these companies are making. The issue is related to Hong Kongers who are Canadian citizens and Canadian permanent residents who came to Canada on the BNO passport, which was a valid document to travel here.

Hong Kong Watch notes this about the MPFA, which is a Hong Kong-based organization:

...the 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—

Those are the pension fund monies of these Hong Kongers, who are Canadians citizens or permanent residents.

—(before retirement) cannot rely on the BNO passport as evidence in support [of] an application for early MPF withdrawal.

These are pension funds of Canadians who are originally from Hong Kong or are permanent residents of Canada. When they apply, the agents of these Canadian insurance companies, who are in Hong Kong, are not allowing the transfer.

Some employees—at least in one case with, I think, Sun Life—have been arrested in Hong Kong for trying to facilitate this. This is a form of transnational repression, where the Beijing government is directing the Hong Kong government to go after these Canadian Hong Kongers and permanent residents. It's a form of the extraterritorial reach of the CCP against our people.

What I want is for us to pass this motion with the amendments in order for us to call these insurance companies to testify and explain why they are doing this, why they are facilitating this and why they continue operating in Hong Kong under these conditions.

The second part is about the IRCC issuing the PR card. For those who aren't Canadian citizens yet, when a PR card is issued, the first three letters indicate which travel document you used when you originally entered Canada. For Hong Kongers who used the BNO passport, this is shown on the card, so it's a very easy and quick way for MPF managers in Hong Kong and Hong Kong government administrators to identify them. Because of this quirk in how we do our PR cards, we're facilitating the identification of people being targeted by Beijing.

I'd like this motion to pass. It's for just one meeting, so we can call these people to testify and explain themselves.

• (1135)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kmiec.

Are there any more speakers?

Go ahead, Madam Kwan.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Just for clarity on the amendment, can we be sure that the amendment is also to invite the Minister of Finance or representatives of the Minister of Finance to the committee?

I just want to be clear on what the amendment is, because I moved a subamendment.

The Chair: I will ask the clerk to read the motion as amended.

Actually, Madam Kwan, if you are talking about your subamendment, then we will debate the motion as subamended.

Go ahead, Madam Kwan.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I think the proper procedure would be to vote on the subamendment, then the amendments and then the amended motion.

I just want to make sure that we don't skip that step because I think the Minister of Finance has a role to play.

The Chair: So that committee members are aware, at the end of the meeting on February 5, Madam Kwan said that she would like to propose a subamendment, but we never had time to discuss this with the adjournment of the meeting.

The subamendment must directly modify the amendment, which was not the case. We should vote on the amendment and then she can propose another amendment, unless there is unanimous consent of the committee.

Do we have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Subamendment agreed to [See Minutes of Proceedings])

The Chair: We are on the motion by Mr. McLean, amended by Mr. Kmiec and subamended by Madam Kwan.

Is there any more discussion on that before we take a vote?

Go ahead, Madam Zahid.

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

Is it the subamendment we will be dealing with first?

The Chair: Yes, because there's unanimous consent from the committee. The motion was presented by Mr. McLean, amended by Mr. Kmiec and subamended by Madam Kwan.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Can the clerk please read out the complete motion as amended and subamended?

The Chair: Sure. We'll do that.

Mr. Clerk, are you okay there, or do you want to suspend for a second?

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Rémi Bourgault): That's okay.

You would like to hear the entire motion, including the amendment and subamendment.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Yes.

[Translation]

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

[English]

The Chair: One person at a time, please.

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe has the floor.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: That's what I was going to say. It's important to understand that some of the people listening to us, including Bloc Québécois employees, are unilingual francophones. If people are discussing things in English and their microphones are not on, the interpreters can't do their job, and that's a lack of respect. I would like everyone to be mindful of that.

[English]

The Chair: That is an excellent point by Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe. As I always stress, there should be no cross-conversations. Only one person should be speaking. Please respect that.

I'll give the floor to Madam Kayabaga.

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

I just want to understand this. We just passed a subamendment. We're now on the amendment that our colleague made, as subamended. Then it will be up for a discussion and up for a vote. Is that correct?

The Chair: We are debating the motion as subamended. Then we'll have a vote—

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: No, we're on the amendment as subamended, not the motion. It's the amendment.

The Chair: Yes. That's right.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Our colleague moved an amendment and then our other colleague subamended it, so we're debating the amendment, not the motion.

The Chair: Exactly.

I'll now give the floor to the clerk, so let him speak.

Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

The Clerk: Ms. Kwan, I think you mentioned—it was at the end of the meeting, so let me know if not—changing “representatives” to “minister and officials” in both places in the motion.

The new text, including the amendment, would be as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study of pension transferability and access to 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 the minister and officials of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, ministers and officials of Global Affairs Canada, and Finance Canada, representatives of 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.

[Translation]

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, do you want me to read it in French?

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: No, it's fine, thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Ali has his hand up, so we'll go to Mr. Ali.

• (1140)

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

I'm wondering if it would be possible to circulate this motion with the amendment and subamendment, as just read by the clerk. That would be helpful for me to take my position before for the vote.

The Chair: We will do that.

I will suspend the meeting for a few minutes.

• (1140) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1150)

The Chair: I have the go-ahead from the clerk.

Members got the amendment as subamended. Is there any discussion on that?

Mr. El-Khoury, please go ahead.

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

I have no problem supporting the amendment. However, I would like to subamend the amendment by adding the following: “and that pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests a comprehensive government response to the report.”

That's it.

The Chair: Madam Kwan, is it okay with you?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Yes, of course. I'd love to get a government response.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Kmiec.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: I haven't raised my hand.

The Chair: Okay. We have the go-ahead.

Now we are back to the subamendment.

Is there any more discussion before we go to the vote?

Go ahead, Madam Zahid.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Are we voting on the subamendment proposed by Mr. El-Khoury?

The Chair: That's right.

First we'll have a debate, and when there are no more hands up, I will call the vote.

If there's unanimous consensus, we can call it by unanimous consent.

(Subamendment agreed to)

The Chair: We are back to the amendment as subamended. All in favour?

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

The Chair: Now we are back to the motion as amended. All in favour?

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

The Chair: Go ahead, Madam Kwan.

• (1155)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: We're on a roll so let's try this one on for size. I move:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee invite the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and department officials to appear before the committee for two hours to update the committee on the temporary immigration measures initiated in response to the ongoing conflicts in Sudan and Gaza.

With what's going on in Gaza, I think this meeting is absolutely urgent so we can hear from the minister on the special immigration measures. We know there are a lot of issues and problems with the measures. I won't go into all the details here, but suffice it to say that people who have applied have not heard back. They can't get their code in. They are rejected and they don't really know why; it's not made clear to them. Even for those who have gotten the code, we know that no one has actually made it out of Gaza.

This is of utmost importance, as the situation continues to escalate and lives are literally being lost minute by minute as we speak.

The other one, of course, is the Sudan special immigration measure that was announced just before Christmas—quietly, I would say—by the government. There wasn't a whole lot of attention on this, but the issue there is not any less urgent. To my understanding, that quota is filled, so I think it is really important that we get the ministers and officials to speak to our committee about these matters.

After that, Mr. Chair, I will have another motion, but I will wait for this to be completed first.

The Chair: I have a speaking list.

It's Madam Zahid and then Mr. Ali.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Thank you, Chair.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ms. Kwan for this important motion. It's very important that we hear from the minister on those temporary immigration measures.

So many people are caught in the war conflict, and I've been hearing stories from many of my constituents in my office. They are fearful for their loved ones, who are trapped in the war. There is a humanitarian crisis there with no humanitarian aid getting into the region.

I want to thank the minister for bringing forward these special measures, but there is a lot of confusion. I think the committee definitely needs to hear from the minister on how this process is going.

As Ms. Kwan said, some people have received the code; some people have not received the code. They have no clear indication of when and how they will be able to get their loved ones out of the war zone, and with added firing in the Rafah region, we really need to look into this ASAP.

I would like to propose an amendment to this motion. After the words “to appear before the committee”, let's add “as soon as possible” because it is very time-sensitive. We need to hear from the minister. I would also like to add, after “hours”, “and have officials appear for an additional hour following the minister's appearance”.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Zahid.

We have an amendment on the floor, so now we will be talking about the amendment, if we have consensus in the committee. Do we have consensus?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Madam Kwan, if you want to speak about the amendment, it's over to you and then to Mr. Redekopp.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Yes, I will speak to the amendment, which would add the words “as soon as possible” and add that “officials appear for an additional hour, following the minister's appearance, to update the committee”.

I support the amendment proposed by MP Zahid. There's an issue I want to be clear about. With this amendment, the minister will appear for two hours with officials, and then in addition to that the officials will stay for one extra hour. That's what it means.

The Chair: Madam Zahid, go ahead.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Yes, that's what I'm proposing. Let's have a total of three hours for the meeting, because it's an important issue. We need to hear about different issues, because we are hearing a lot of stories from our constituents. We need to go deeper into this.

• (1200)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Redekopp, go ahead.

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): My brilliant question was asked by Madam Kwan and answered, so I'm good.

The Chair: Good.

Are we all in favour of the amendment?

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

The Chair: Now we will go to Mr. Ali and then Madam Kayabaga.

Mr. Shafqat Ali: Thank you, Chair.

I thank Ms. Kwan and Salma Zahid for this very important motion.

I might have an amendment to the motion. I'd like to see if we can circulate it in writing.

The situation in Gaza is devastating. I met with one of my constituents a couple of weeks ago, who has about eight family members with numbers, but they're still waiting. They don't know what's going to happen. I was with Ms. Salma Zahid in a town hall, and

one Canadian who came said his son was stuck there. There are so many stories, and we need to ask questions about the cap and why Canadians are not able to get out of there.

In my opinion, even three hours is not enough, but if we can circulate the motion as amended, I might be able to bring forward an amendment to it.

The Chair: Mr. Ali, do you have the amendment to the motion as amended right now? Do you want to see the motion first?

Mr. Shafqat Ali: I'd like to see what's in it, yes, and then I will be able to come back.

The Chair: Thank you.

I will ask the clerk, Mr. Bourgault, to distribute the motion as amended.

The Clerk: I won't be able to translate it.

The Chair: Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, go ahead, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Obviously, I'd like it to be in both official languages. Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Ali, would it satisfy you if the clerk reads this slowly so that you grasp it? Committee business has to be in both official languages, and the clerk will not be able to do that the right way. If you are okay with that, I will ask the clerk to read it slowly so that you can grasp it.

I will give the clerk a few seconds to talk to Madam Zahid.

• (1200)

(Pause)

• (1200)

The Chair: The meeting is back to order.

The clerk has the floor.

Mr. Bourgault, go ahead, please.

• (1205)

The Clerk: The motion would read as follows with the amendment of Ms. Zahid:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee invite the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and department officials to appear before the committee as soon as possible for two hours and have officials appear for an additional hour following the minister's appearance, to update the committee on the temporary immigration measures initiated in response to the ongoing conflicts in Sudan and Gaza.

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: This time, Mr. Chair, I'd like the clerk to read the motion to us in French. I don't want to put all the pressure on our interpreters for translation. I want to make sure I understand. It's less clear than it was in the previous motion.

Would someone please read us the motion in French?

[*English*]

The Chair: I have to suspend the meeting if that is the case, because I cannot carry on. I can see that Mr. Ali has the same concern as Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

The meeting is suspended until we get the French version.

• (1205) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1220)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

Honourable members, did you get the motion from the clerk?

An hon. member: Yes.

The Chair: Good.

Mr. Ali, did you receive it?

Mr. Shafqat Ali: Yes, Chair, I did.

The Chair: Okay, go ahead. You have the floor now.

Mr. Shafqat Ali: Thank you, Chair.

I want to add to it:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee invite the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and department officials, and Global Affairs Canada officials, to appear before the committee as soon as possible for two hours and have officials for an additional hour following the minister's appearance, to update the committee on the temporary immigration measures initiated in response to the ongoing conflicts in Sudan and Gaza.

I added "and Global Affairs Canada officials" because IRCC and Global Affairs work hand in hand on the ground. They are doing amazing work, but they face many challenges. The committee would benefit by learning from them what sort of challenges they face.

I think it would be good to learn about that and bring forward a report on this issue.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ali.

Are members good with it?

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: Now we will move to debate. I have a speaking list.

It's over to Madam Kayabaga and then Mr. Chiang.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Speaking on the motion that our colleague—

The Chair: That was the amendment to the motion.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: I'm speaking to the motion, not the amendment.

The Chair: It's the motion as amended by Mr. Ali.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Okay. Are we on Mrs. Zahid's as well?

The Chair: Madam Zahid's amendment has already been agreed to. Now we are debating the motion.

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

There's been a bit of confusion this morning, but I am very glad to see this motion come forward. I'm happy to support it because as we know, right now these two countries, Sudan and Gaza, are places where.... Direct members of our communities have been reaching out and asking for support, not just to support family members who are still in these places, but also to bring back family members who are Canadian.

I'm going to reference some of people from my riding—the Kou-ta family. This is a family of about 16 people, and eight people have already been able to leave Gaza and come back to the city. There are still four family members with Canadian citizenship who have not been able to come home. That is very problematic, and we look forward to seeing what the rationale behind it is and how we can get them home safely and as soon as possible.

We're doing the reunification of family members of people who have been displaced, and I want to give some numbers for Sudan because a lot of people don't know what's happening in Sudan. As my colleague rightly said, there has been very little information on the Sudanese crisis.

More than seven million people have been displaced through this crisis. I have community members with family members in Sudan, and not only do they not have access to leave, but they can't even get a visa. We're putting in measures, and I want to talk to officials to understand how these measures are going to help when offices on the ground have been closed.

Women in Sudan are being raped in broad daylight. It is recorded. War crimes are happening, and there is no infrastructure in place to help people leave this place.

Canada is known for supporting a lot of people when they go through these crises. That's why we have a really good reputation. There are a few crises I can think of where we stepped up, which is exactly who we are, and did what we do, which is give a compassionate response.

When it comes to Sudan, many community members have asked why we haven't seen an equal response to their crisis and why a lot of our community members can't bring their families here. A member of my community is a hard-working taxi driver who can't reunite with his family members because there is no infrastructure for them to even get visas or to get an ID. The process it takes now for them to process their papers and be reunited with their families, and even prior to the crisis, is something we really need to discuss.

To what my colleague Mrs. Zahid said, I think Gaza is a very unlivable place right now for anyone, for any child, and if Canadians are still stuck in Gaza, it is our responsibility to bring them home. We have put in measures that allow families to be reunited, but the numbers are limited. What is the rationale behind that?

Our response to other crises, like Ukraine, has been very different, and I think we should step up. We need to do more. This is why I'm supporting my colleague's motion. I hope everybody else will as well.

• (1225)

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Kayabaga.

I'm going to Mr. Chiang, the honourable parliamentary secretary.

Thank you for your patience, Mr. Chiang. I know you had your hand up. I didn't mean to ignore you.

Go ahead, please.

Mr. Paul Chiang (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, for allowing me to speak.

I support this motion, and I'm happy that we are able to do something about this.

Since this crisis in Gaza started on October 7, I have had numerous meetings with families and people who have families stuck in this crisis. They are pleading with us to get them out of Gaza. The atrocities happening there are unimaginable for us as Canadians.

As Canada has been a beacon for many nations through conflicts and war, I think we should step up and help the people stuck in Gaza and Sudan. The atrocities happening are terrible things. The images we see on social media and in the news really break my heart when I see them.

Since October 7, I have had numerous meetings with leaders from the communities in my riding. I have two large mosques in my riding, and the leaders from both mosques have been to my office. We have had numerous meetings in regard to this and how we as the government and a country can help bring refugees and people in crisis out of Gaza and Sudan.

I'm fully in support of this motion, and I hope we can move ahead and help the people who are in dire need in the Middle East and Sudan. I'm hoping to work with my colleagues across the aisle to ensure that we can expedite this, with all parties working together.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, for allowing me to speak.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chiang.

Madam Zahid, please go ahead.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Thank you, Chair.

I'm really thankful to my colleagues for supporting this motion. The last 125 days have been very heavy on all of us. It has not been easy for me, as a mother, to see all the horrific pictures coming from there. In the last 125 days, we have lost close to 30,000 innocent lives, many of them children and women.

I've been having meetings with my constituents and hearing from a lot of people. On Friday I hosted a town hall in my riding, and many people came all the way from different parts of Ontario to talk about their loved ones trapped in Gaza, who do not have anything to eat. They don't have drinking water. It's a humanitarian crisis, and I think Canada has always stood for making sure that we build peace. It's very important that we schedule this meeting as soon as possible because so many Canadians are looking to us to get their loved ones out of that humanitarian crisis.

I've heard from grandparents who have lost their children. Their grandchildren are without parents, so they have custody and really want to bring them here because there is no one to look after them. Thousands of people are housed in UNRWA schools—14,000 to 15,000, on average—and using one washroom. That's what life is like for people living in Gaza. There are many people who have children over the age of 24 trapped there. They have siblings trapped there. Some people, I have heard, have lost their siblings, and their kids are with their mother. There's no one to look after them. It's very important that we get people who are trapped there here so they can be reunited with their loved ones and we can bring peace to them.

I would request that this meeting be scheduled, because it's a time-sensitive issue. Every day, every second, people are being killed in that area, so it's very important that we schedule this meeting as soon as possible so we can hear from the minister what efforts are being made to make sure we get to the people trapped there and reunite them with their loved ones.

• (1230)

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Zahid.

I don't see any more speakers, so is there consensus to carry the motion as amended?

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

The Chair: Before we move forward, I want to thank the clerk and in particular the interpreters today because it is not the duty of the clerk and the interpreters to translate when we bring in amendments.

If members in general—I'm not pinpointing anyone—know prior to coming to the meeting that there will be subamendments or amendments to motions, they can ask their party officials to translate and bring them in both official languages. That will help us.

Thank you to all honourable members and in particular the interpreters and the clerk.

With that, the floor is open.

Madam Kwan, please go ahead.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I thank the committee members for supporting the last motion.

I have another motion that I'd like to move at this point. Notice has been given for it. It reads as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee invite the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities and relevant officials together for two hours, or invite the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship with relevant officials for two hours, and the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities to appear separately with relevant officials for one hour to update the committee on:

- (a) the work of the task force addressing the exploitation scheme targeting international students as many students are still reporting that they are in limbo and have not heard back from officials about their status;
- (b) the measures taken by IRCC and institutions to help prevent and protect international students from fraud schemes;
- (c) the justification to increase the financial requirements for international students by more than 100% to \$20,635;
- (d) the justification for putting a cap on international study permits; and
- (e) the plans to address the housing crisis for international students and efforts made to collaborate with provinces, territories and post-secondary institutions.

I think the motion is self-explanatory on all elements, and I think we would benefit from having the two ministers appear before our committee. We've also deliberated this issue at length at another meeting, so in the interest of time, I won't revisit all of those points.

I hope committee members will support this motion.

• (1235)

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Kwan.

The motion was put on notice on February 1. It's in order, so I will go to the discussion.

I'll go to Mr. Redekopp and then Mr. Chiang.

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

I appreciate this motion. Of course, it's very similar to the motion we put forward, which was defeated unfortunately, but there are a couple of things in it that are important for us.

Obviously, we've been working with international students, so it would be great to hear back about what the status of that is. The government seems to have responded in certain ways and not in others, and I know there are still students who are very much in limbo and trying to find answers. I think it would be great to have the minister and other people here to talk about that, so that's good too.

As to the cap on international study permits, there are many questions about how this is going to work and what the numbers are going to be. It seemed like a very last-minute, haphazard thing put in by the government, so I think it would be great for us to have the opportunity to dig a little deeper and find out exactly how this is supposed to work—what the rules are, what the regulations are for the provinces, what the caps are and those kinds of things.

I think this study is important and we need to do it, so I'll support this motion.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Redekopp.

We'll go to the parliamentary secretary, Mr. Chiang, and then to Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

Mr. Chiang, go ahead.

Mr. Paul Chiang: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to amend the motion so that “two hours” is “90 minutes”. If they appear separately, it should be 90 minutes instead of two hours.

The Chair: Madam Kwan, do you accept that friendly amendment to your motion?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: If I'm understanding it correctly, the amendment is that instead of having the two ministers come for two hours, we'd have the two ministers come for 90 minutes.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Chiang.

Mr. Paul Chiang: No, it's a total of 90 minutes—the two ministers coming in for a total of 90 minutes.

The Chair: It's 45 minutes each.

Mr. Paul Chiang: Yes.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: The ministers would come for 45 minutes each.

Mr. Paul Chiang: That's right.

The Chair: Madam Kwan, is that okay?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Can we take a pause for a minute?

The Chair: Sure. I'll suspend the meeting for two minutes.

• (1235)

(Pause)

• (1240)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

The floor goes to Mr. Chiang.

Mr. Paul Chiang: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My apologies, colleagues. Let me clarify my amendment.

If they're appearing separately, Minister Miller would be appearing for 90 minutes alone, with Minister Fraser appearing for one hour separately. If both ministers appear together, then it will be for two hours.

In the motion, Mr. Clerk, for the second two-hour part—“officials for two hours”—it would be 90 minutes.

• (1245)

The Chair: Is every honourable member clear about this? Is there any more discussion before we take a vote?

Is there consensus to carry this forward?

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

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I'm sorry, now I'm the one moving an amendment that I didn't have translated. I discussed it with the clerk. As you'll see, it's not very complicated. It's my fault; I should have thought of it before.

After item (e), I would add item (f):

(f) the justification for the new measure regarding open work permits for spouses of international students.

[*English*]

The Chair: We have an amendment from Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe on the floor.

I see Madam Kwan. If there is anyone else for the speaker list, please raise your hand so I can put you on the list.

Madam Kwan, go ahead, please.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I'll speak quickly to this.

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe is correct. That should have been part of the motion. I had forgotten about that. It is an important piece, so I appreciate it. I hope committee members will support it.

The Chair: Thank you.

As there is no more discussion, all in favour?

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

The Chair: We are doing really well.

Does the motion as amended carry?

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

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Redekopp.

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

I'd like to—

The Chair: Sorry, hold on Mr. Redekopp.

Madam Kayabaga, you were on the list of speakers for this motion. I'm sorry. The floor is yours.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: It's on the motion, not on the amendment.

The Chair: Okay. The motion is—

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: It's amended. I get that.

The Chair: It carried. Are you okay with that?

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Yes, I'm good with that. Thank you so much.

I just want to echo my support for this motion. I think it's important we hear about the measures to ensure that international students aren't blamed. The goal here is to ensure the integrity of the system.

I want to get back to some of the comments that have been made in this committee around the blame being put on the students. The false phrasing from last week on the intention and words of the minister when fixing a system that we know the Conservative minister expanded and let run rampant.... We've cleaned it up, but it's

important that we not use international students as scapegoats. It's important that we get factual information.

In 2010, the Conservatives introduced the Balanced Refugee Reform Act, which aimed to deter refugee claims and undermine Canada's humanitarian tradition and commitment to protecting the vulnerable fleeing persecution. They did that. The minister expanded the international student program, and he let it run. It's on the record. We've fixed that, so it's not true that we are the ones running the system rampant. We're fixing the problems they created.

Every single time there's a cut to any program or there is any change made to reduce them, it has ripple effects. These ripple effects can go on for years.

The result of what we're seeing and what's happening with the international students is not their fault. I think it's important that everybody knows that. It's important that they understand we are not saying it's their fault. The minister never said that. This is a system they broke and that we're fixing, and they're yelling at us.

Where were they when their minister, in the Harper era, broke the system, when they had an opportunity to protect vulnerable people and they didn't? They're trying to switch it around, switch the language, to blame us when we're cleaning up the mess they've created. That's unacceptable. I think international students need to know that.

I have pages, records, of things they've done on housing, and we're stepping up and trying to fix them to make sure there is infrastructure in place so that when international students come, they have the proper supports to succeed.

Talking about housing, as I said last week, housing is a provincial issue, yet we're stepping up and we're supporting municipalities. We're working with municipalities. Do you know what the Conservatives did? They cut housing agreements with Quebec, with Nunavut and with cities across Canada, and they have the audacity to come to this committee and blame us for that. That's unacceptable.

They voted against programs for over 86,000 new apartments in December. How are they helping international students? Why are they misquoting what the minister said and the intent of the work that he's trying to do? I don't think we have any lessons to take from them—absolutely none.

I really think this is a good motion that we should all support to make sure we allow the ministers to come here and explain.

● (1250)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Point of order, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I just realized that we're still discussing the motion, but it has already been adopted.

Should we be discussing a motion that has already been adopted? I think we can move on.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: I was allowed to speak to the motion because the Chair had skipped my turn.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Oh, okay.

[English]

The Chair: She was on the speaking list and it was, on my part, overlooked. She wanted to support the motion and say that, even though the motion was passed. Members are welcome to speak.

Now we will go to Mr. Redekopp.

Please go ahead.

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

I'll just make a quick comment on what we just heard.

It's pretty clear—and it was right from the minister's mouth—that the immigration system is broken and is not functioning well. You can't change public opinion by just wanting it to change. It's not like that. I just wanted to mention that.

I have a motion to move, and it is as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee invite the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship to appear for one hour with officials, and invite departmental officials along with officials from the Immigration and Refugee Board to appear for one hour, on the Supplementary Estimates (C) for the fiscal year 2023-24 after they are tabled in the House of Commons, and that they appear before the end of the current supply period.

This is standard procedure for us, and I know we will do this, so I just wanted to get on the record that we should do it. I'm sure all of us agree that it is important to get the minister to talk about the supplementary estimates (C), so I'd like to move that motion.

The Chair: The motion is on the floor.

Is there any more discussion before we take a vote?

Go ahead, Madam Zahid.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Are we debating this motion or are we looking into some time frames? Where would it fall approximately?

The Chair: The motion is on the floor, and the debate is on the motion as presented by Mr. Redekopp.

Go ahead, Mr. El-Khoury.

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury: I think we have no issues. I believe we can support this motion and go to a vote, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Chiang.

Mr. Paul Chiang: I'm just making sure we're all here to vote on this matter. There's a motion in front of the committee, and we would like to review it just to make sure we are okay with everything.

I think we should be okay with voting for it, but give me a moment, please, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: We'll give you a moment—no worries.

Do you want me to suspend for a moment?

Mr. Paul Chiang: Yes, please, for 30 seconds.

The Chair: Okay. We'll suspend.

• (1250) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1255)

The Chair: Mr. Chiang, you have the floor.

Are you good?

Mr. Paul Chiang: Yes, we are good to go. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Is there consensus in the committee to carry the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Go ahead, Madam Kwan.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Chair, there is so much consensus that maybe we'll have consensus here as well.

I seek the committee's support to ensure that after the minister comes to the committee as soon as possible on the Gaza-Sudan motion, we prioritize the motion on the international students, because that too is very current and urgent.

For the sequential order, we'd have the minister appear on Sudan and Gaza, and then the next priority would be the international students.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Kwan.

I see that Mr. Redekopp wants to speak.

As soon as I'm finished, I'll give the floor to you, Mr. Redekopp.

We have many things going on. We have a letter to be drafted and a rapporteur coming in. In March, we are sitting for only one week, so we are already moving into April and May.

I will pass this on to the clerk, because he will prepare the schedule according to the will of committee members. He will then distribute it and we can make comments.

Mr. Redekopp, go ahead, please.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Thank you for saying that. That's similar to what I was going to say.

We already have a standing motion that ministers are a priority second only to legislation, which we don't have before us at the moment. I would agree with my colleague Ms. Kwan that we need to prioritize the ministers' appearances. Since we have so few meetings in the next month, I would urge the chair and the clerk to work very hard to get ministers here for the few meetings we do have. I really encourage you in this regard.

The Chair: Okay. Here's my question for the committee.

As we said earlier, on February 26 we bring in the rapporteur. Is everyone in favour of that meeting? The clerk will distribute the draft letter on Afghanistan on that date. On February 28, are we all in agreement to work on that letter? I'm asking so that the clerk can put a schedule together.

I'll give the floor to Madam Kwan and then to Mr. Redekopp.

Go ahead, Madam Kwan.

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

I would rather that, if the minister is available to come, we prioritize the minister's appearance before we get into debating the draft letter. I want to prioritize this because it is of the essence. For the other piece, we can do it according to our schedule. My preference is for the minister's appearance to be a priority ahead of the other work.

• (1300)

The Chair: Thank you.

I will now go to Mr. Redekopp, then to Madam Zahid and Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe. These are the only speakers I will be able to entertain, unless we have further resources.

Mr. Redekopp, go ahead.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: I agree a hundred per cent. I think we have to prioritize the minister over everything else.

The Chair: Okay.

Go ahead, Madam Zahid.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: I also want to emphasize that point. The motion has been passed, and it's really important that we hear from the minister as soon as possible. We should schedule that meeting at the earliest availability of the minister.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I just want to make sure that our meeting with the special rapporteur won't be moved and that it's a sure thing, regardless of whether the minister is ready or available that same day. This is the last witness for our study on closed permits. We really need to wrap it up.

I just want to be clear.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay, everyone agrees with that.

We are already past one o'clock. Is there a will to adjourn the committee meeting?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

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