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Chair: Mr. Robert Morrissey

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

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• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order.

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

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format pursuant to the House order of November 25, 2021. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application. Proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website, and the webcast will always show the person speaking rather than the entirety of the committee.

Given the ongoing pandemic, I assume that all members of the committee are aware of the COVID rules, and I expect them to respect them.

Members may speak in the official language of their choice. Interpretation services are available for this meeting. You have the choice at the bottom of your screen of either floor, English or French audio. If interpretation is lost, please inform me immediately and we will ensure that interpretation is properly restored before resuming the proceedings.

The “raise hand” feature at the bottom of the screen can be used at any time if you wish to speak or alert the chair, for those joining virtually. For members in the room, proceed as you usually would when the whole committee is meeting in person in the committee room.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. If you are on the video conference, please click on the microphone icon to unmute yourself. For those in the room, your microphone will be controlled as normal by the proceedings and verification officer. When you're speaking, your mike should be on. I will remind you that all comments by members should be addressed through the chair.

With regard to a speaking list, the committee clerk and I will do the best we can to maintain a consolidated order of speaking for all members, whether they are participating virtually or in person.

The committee will now proceed to the consideration of matters related to committee business. I'm going to give you a quick update.

On Monday, the committee adopted a motion inviting the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, the Minister of Labour, the Minister of Seniors and the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion to appear before the committee in view of their ministerial mandate letters prior to Friday, February 18, 2022. I have received confirmation that all five ministers have accepted the committee's invitation and will be appearing on the following days.

On Thursday, February 10 at 4:30 p.m., we will have Minister Gould.

On Monday, February 14, 2022 at 11:00 a.m., we will have Minister Hussen, and at 12:00 p.m., we will have Minister Khera.

On Thursday, February 17, 2022, 3:30 p.m., we will have Minister O'Regan, and at 4:30 p.m., we will have Minister Qualtrough.

As per the motion adopted on Monday, the committee is meeting to consider the future work of the committee and prioritize studies. If members are agreeable, I would suggest that we first consider any notices of motion before the committee. I can recognize members to move their motions for debate. Once the motions have been dispensed, the selected studies can then be prioritized.

Are members agreeable to the plan?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: I would like to advise the committee that I would like to set 10 minutes aside before the conclusion to discuss the Centennial Flame bursary. The clerk will brief us on that.

I would also like to receive direction from the committee as to the agenda of the meeting on Monday, February 7, 2022, and the first hour of the meeting on Thursday, February 10, 2022.

The floor is now open and I recognize Madam Zarrillo.

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

It's nice to see you for the first time in 2022—in person, I mean. We need more of that.

Committee members have brought a robust group of motions to address concerns in their ridings and across Canada. I'm very happy to see all of the notices of motion today.

I have three myself. I have one that addresses income support for persons with disabilities, one that addresses indigenous housing, and a third that addresses labour shortages, which are very important to this committee, from the motions that I've seen.

It's the motion around the labour shortages that I will move now, with a focus on the care economy, which includes personal support workers, care aides and medical professionals, including veterinarians and child care workers. They have all been on the front lines of care during this pandemic.

Through the chair, the motion reads:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study of the labour shortages and workers' conditions within the care economy, including healthcare workers, personal support workers, and childcare workers who have been on the front lines of COVID-19, and examine how the government, in collaboration with the provinces and territories, should implement long-term investments in the care economy; that the government, in collaboration with the provinces and territories, improve credential recognition for Canadians and permanent residents who have been trained abroad; that the committee invite the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, experts and departmental officials to testify; that the committee hold at least five meetings; and that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1540)

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Zarrillo.

We will now go to Madame Chabot.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and honourable members.

I'm glad to be here and to have heard your comments on our last motion, which sought to invite the ministers to appear before the committee. The hope was that we could make time in the committee's schedule given their availability. I think it's very important in order for the committee to undertake work going forward and achieve its goals.

I put four motions on notice: one on the labour shortage, one on the study on seniors, one on the temporary foreign worker program, and one on contract flipping in the aerospace sector.

I would like to move the motion on the labour shortage study, which I think the committee should prioritize. In fact, looking at the motions put forward by all four parties, I can see that we each have a motion addressing the labour shortage. No doubt, we'll be able to reach a consensus on that front. I hope the study will be given priority.

The motion reads as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee...

An hon. member: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Louise Chabot: My apologies. I was moving my motion, as per the chair's instruction.

[*English*]

The Chair: Madame Chabot, there is already a motion on the floor by Madam Zarrillo.

I would ask everybody to direct their comments to the motion currently on the floor from Madam Zarrillo.

Mr. Collins, did you have your hand up to speak?

Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Yes. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to speak to Madam Zarrillo's motion; it is a good one.

As Madame Chabot just referenced—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Hochelaga, Lib.): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Would it be possible to have the members participating virtually lower their hands, or unclick the raise hand feature, once they have spoken? It's quite tough to keep track of the speaking list of members participating virtually. I noticed that Ms. Chabot tends to keep her raise hand feature clicked, so it's hard to tell when she raised her hand.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: I'll lower my hand. If you tell us we can comment on the motion that was put forward, I will raise it again.

I should point out that I can't tell when members participating in person are ahead of me on the speaking list.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Chabot.

Yes, I would ask that once you're recognized and when you conclude, lower your hand so that it's clear at each change.

We're in discussion and debate on the motion moved by Madam Zarrillo.

Mr. Collins.

Mr. Chad Collins: Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Through you to Madame Zarrillo, it's a terrific motion. As was noted earlier, a number of motions have been presented to the committee that speak to labour shortages. I'm certainly supportive of what's in front of us here, but I wonder if there was an opportunity for some massaging of the language. If you would provide me an opportunity to present an amendment, I'd like to put it to the committee for members' consideration.

I'll read it out. If you need me to read it again, I'm certainly willing to do so. It is as follows: "That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study of the labour shortages and workers' conditions within the care economy, including health-care workers, personal support workers and child care workers who have been on the front lines of COVID-19, and examine how the government, in collaboration with the provinces and territories, could improve working conditions in the care economy; that the committee proceed to an overview of the impact of the labour shortages in the Canadian workforce in the first meeting of the study; that the committee invite the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability and Inclusion, experts, and departmental officials to testify; that the committee hold at least six meetings; and that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House."

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't know if you have all of that, or whether the clerk needs anything from me in that regard.

Essentially, it's changing the language in the middle of the motion and adding another meeting to the study.

• (1545)

The Chair: Currently we have an amendment on the floor. The debate will now focus on the amendment to the motion by Madam Zarillo.

I will ask the clerk to circulate it. Do you have the exact text of the amendment?

While we're doing that, I want to outline, for those who are virtual, who is in the room. There's Madam Kusie, Mr. Ruff and Madam Zarillo. We have Mr. Morrice joining from the Green Party. Mr. Collins and Madam Ferrada are also in the committee room.

Committee members, you have the amendment by Mr. Collins.

Madam Kusie.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): We are in support of the amendment. We appreciate Mr. Collins's perspective that this definitely is a broad topic as brought forward by Madam Zarillo. In fact, we are so in accordance with Mr. Collins's suggestion of the language change and changing it from five meetings to six that we would like to expand the scope.

I'm not sure, Clerk, if I would do that with an amendment to the amendment, or if we vote on this amendment. Probably we would vote on this amendment and then I would suggest another amendment to the main motion as amended.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Kusie.

Madame Chabot, go ahead on the amendment.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: If I understand the intent of the amendment correctly, the idea is to expand the scope of the study in relation to the labour market impacts. If I could get the text of the amendment in French, it would be appreciated, although I realize it's not required.

May I speak to the motion itself, specifically the first part?

[*English*]

The Chair: You're speaking on the amendment, Madame Chabot.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: The amendment is based on a motion, the first part of which, I fundamentally disagree with. The motion addresses the study of the labour shortages and workers' conditions within the care economy in relation to health care workers, personal support workers and child care workers.

As everyone knows, health care workers and child care workers have been on the front lines since the pandemic began. They deserve our utmost respect, and I am concerned about what happens to them. In my view, though, responsibility for this study doesn't rest with the federal government. Labour shortages in the health care and child care sectors, whether we are talking about personal support workers or nurses, are entirely the responsibility of the provinces. It's not the role of the federal government to study such issues.

I could speak at length about the situation in Quebec. We now have action plans addressing the labour shortage. The whole issue comes down to the working conditions that have been negotiated and broader public service planning, areas where the federal government has no business telling the provinces what to do. Every province has its own jurisdiction when it comes to issues affecting workers, and I am not in favour of a study on a labour shortage in a sector that is not the federal government's responsibility.

I cannot support the amendment because it is based on a motion that deals specifically with the care economy. I urge the committee members to consider the full impact of this motion. I don't think we would be helping to make any headway by studying matters beyond our purview, in other words, the conditions of workers in the provinces' care economies. That is not at all our job. Child care systems vary from province to province, as do health care delivery models. In Quebec, the issue revolves around attracting and retaining workers, a matter that is largely negotiated by sector stakeholders, major labour unions and the health ministry. Who knows where the study would lead us—a study that is wholly outside our domain. It is clearly the domain of Quebec.

I realize the labour shortage is hurting major sectors and businesses, as evidenced by a study from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and today's report from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. We all know the transportation and food service industries have been hit hard, among others. Our goal should be to conduct an impact study to determine how Canada's labour shortage in major sectors is affecting the Canadian economy. That is the issue we should be studying, not matters that fall entirely within provincial jurisdiction.

I cannot support this amendment because it flows from a motion I fundamentally disagree with.

• (1550)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Chabot.

The amendment is admissible and it's within the scope of the committee. Is there any further discussion?

Mr. Coteau.

Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.): I would say that this is a very good motion. Contrary to the last member's statement around provincial-federal jurisdiction, there is no question that labour shortages are impacted, or labour in general is impacted by federal policy, from immigration to skilled development to transfer payments.

There's a huge opportunity for us to look at the main motion as something we as policy-makers can develop to contribute to better coordination federally but also interprovincially. We can do that by working in partnership with the provinces to really put in place strategies that meet their needs from an immigration and skills development perspective.

I think it's a good motion for us to support.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Coteau.

Now Mr. Van Bynen, you have the floor.

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): In the previous sitting of the House, I had the privilege of sitting on the HESA committee, the health care committee, along with Mr. Jeneroux. The one thing we discovered throughout this pandemic is how integrated the health care system is. Those are delivery points, not from a national point of view but from a provincial, regional and municipal point of view. There's a very integrated dynamic that needs to be considered as we go forward.

In addition to that, there are a number of national studies being undertaken in terms of health care. This motion touches on some of the very fundamental dynamics of what we are trying to accomplish in terms of making this a safer and healthier place to live. I think this is quite appropriate, and I will be supporting the motion and the amendment.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Van Bynen.

Mr. Jeneroux, you have the floor.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): I want to take this rare opportunity to say that Mr. Van Bynen and I are in complete agreement. I want to get that on the record. I agree that we have had a lot of that crossover, and I appreciate my friend, Mr. Van Bynen, for bringing that up.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Jeneroux.

Ms. Zarrillo, you have the floor.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: I want to comment on Madame Chabot's comments. I would really like us to be unanimous on working on these labour shortage issues. I want to express to Madame Chabot that we will be respecting jurisdictions within our health care focus. This is really about the idea of how to get more people into this care economy, and around immigration.

This is a huge point of contact, especially for care workers and care aides. This is really an all-expansive look at labour shortages. With a lead on the care economy—and we all know a tsunami of boomers at age 65 is coming—we want to make sure we can handle another crisis. I take your point. We will respect jurisdiction, but I hope we can come to a point where we can start looking at these labour shortages and be prepared to take care of people in the future.

• (1555)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Zarrillo.

Madame Ferrada, you have the floor.

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Now it's my turn to support the statements in the motion, and especially in the amendment. It is saying that we need a general idea of what is happening in terms of the current labour shortage in the sector, while emphasizing issues pertaining to the economy and to health. In the context of the pandemic, this seems perfectly appropriate to me.

Then, as Ms. Zarrillo said, we must do so while respecting provincial jurisdiction, of course. The government must demonstrate its intention to be involved and to support the health care system all across the country. People need a health care system that meets not only their needs but also their expectations. This is important for the health of Canadians.

So I am very much in favour of the amendment that my colleague has introduced.

[English]

The Chair: Madame Chabot, speaking to the amendment.

[Translation]

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

The motion specifies working conditions. I am not surprised that a motion like this has been introduced. But it is very centralist, given Quebec's jurisdiction, so I am really disappointed. I am not opposed to our studying the issue of the labour shortage, which has a major impact on the Canadian economy and which is well documented. Actually, all the motions that have been introduced deal with that issue. The Conservative motion was much more general and the Liberal motion dealt with the labour shortage in the agri-food sector. Ours, however, had the advantage of being broader in scope, allowing us to view the situation in its entirety.

The motion that we are debating focuses on the labour shortage in health care, but the roles can vary from one province to another. In British Columbia, the role of a personal support worker in a health care team and in the way services are organized is certainly not the same role as in Quebec. In Quebec, we have professional bodies. A number of issues affect health care, such as training. The fact remains that health care is in provincial jurisdiction.

I am not opposed to our studying the labour shortage as an issue. But I am not sure whether committee members realize that we are focusing on a sector that is completely provincial. Working conditions in daycare services, for example, come under a program that has existed in Quebec for 25 years. We have ratios for preschoolers, and the Department of Families is responsible for them. We have specific training and we have measures to address the labour shortage. It's all documented and managed by provincial public finances.

We do not need to do a major study if we want to help the care economy. We just all need to be convinced that, to help the provinces, the feds should pay their fair share of health care costs.

Economic immigration to Quebec is also in provincial jurisdiction. The temporary foreign worker program affects the care economy much less than the economy in general.

I feel that we have broad consensus on the labour shortage, because it has an impact on the Canadian economy. However, I don't understand why we want to focus on the care economy, which is the exclusive responsibility of the provinces.

• (1600)

[English]

The Chair: Before we move on, I would remind committee members that we are speaking to the amendment.

I will recognize Madam Kusie next, who will be followed by Madam Zarrillo.

Madam Kusie, you have the floor on the amendment

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Again, we are open to the amendment as presented, but I know my colleague, Ms. Chabot, is always interested as to the differentiation between the federal and provincial jurisdictions. I certainly understand that concern and her input there.

I just want to indicate that our concern remains that this study not be too narrow. As a result of having the six meetings, we've begun to broaden it with the amendment on discussing the labour shortages in the Canadian workforce at the first meeting of the study, but I just want to have it known that I'll make an amendment to the main motion once this amendment is dealt with, to follow through on our intent of having the possibility of a broader study.

Certainly, while the care economy is incredibly important and crucial, as we've seen throughout this, the labour force jobs report, which is due out again tomorrow, has shown historic numbers within other sectors, including retail, hospitality and manufacturing. I think we're on the right path here with this amendment in terms of extending it to six meetings from five. The impact of labour shortages, that last part of the amendment, and inserting the words "the Canadian workforce in the first meeting", that's just to say that the direction we're moving in is to make it broader.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Kusie.

Madam Zarrillo, you have the floor on the amendment.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: I wanted to say I am open to the amendment and removing "the investment" and making it "working conditions". I'm looking forward to hearing the subamendments that will come from Madam Kusie.

I wanted to address Madam Chabot. I am also open to amendments, if there are restrictions she would like to narrow in on as far as jurisdictions are concerned.

I wanted to share that it is difficult to talk about women's issues. I'm a female politician, a woman politician, and it's awkward sometimes to talk about women's issues. The care economy is disproportionately a women's issue, and I needed to be elevating the conversation around how much women have carried the burden of care during this pandemic. I also wanted to share that I was fortunate enough, I feel, and that I'm sitting in this chair today because of the \$5 daycare in Quebec. I was one of the first parents to be able to take advantage of that program in 1998, and I was able to go back to school. I feel strongly that it's a wonderful program. Two of my kids benefited and I benefited.

Lastly, I want to say my constituents are asking me for some accountability around transfers that are coming from the federal government, so I'm always open to exploring how we can get more people into these professions.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Zarrillo.

Seeing no further interventions on the amendment, I would ask the mover of the amendment to repeat the amendment, and then we'll move to a vote on the amendment.

Mr. Collins.

Mr. Chad Collins: Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

It's as follows: "That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study of the labour shortages and workers' conditions within the care economy, including healthcare workers, personal support workers and childcare workers who have been on the front lines of COVID-19, and examine how the government, in collaboration with the provinces and territories, could improve working conditions in the care economy; that the committee proceed to an overview of the impact of labour shortages in the Canadian workforce in the first meeting of the study; that the committee invite the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, experts, and departmental officials to testify; that the committee hold at least six meetings; and that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House."

• (1605)

The Chair: The amendment has been moved and you've heard it. We will have a recorded vote on the amendment.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 10; nays 1)

The Chair: I believe Madam Kusie has the floor.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Building on the amended motion, as I mentioned, our greatest concern is that we not limit ourselves in the evaluation of the labour shortage, which, I believe, is the second-greatest economic crisis facing our country at this time. It is second only to inflation, and I believe the labour shortage feeds into inflation in terms of allowing fewer goods to go to market as a result of not having processors and producers, etc.

In keeping with the spirit of the amendment by Mr. Collins, which was, I believe, to expand the scope of the study, I would like to build on that spirit and amend the original motion to read, “That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study of the labour shortages and workers' conditions within the entirety of the Canadian economy, including but not limited to....”

It's really just to expand the scope. I think it's wonderful that Madam Zarrillo feels such passion for this segment of the labour force, and I agree with her on the impact that it has felt, but I believe that as we as a nation look forward at rebuilding our economy, we must also consider the other sectors that have been significantly impacted by the labour shortage, a situation that is, as I said, greatly influencing the lives of Canadians, their businesses and the goods available, including retail, hospitality and manufacturing.

I'm hoping it will be the will of the committee to expand the intention of the study so there is an opportunity to examine all significant facets of the economy and significant sectors that have been affected.

The Chair: To be clear, this is an amendment to the main motion.

Madam Zarrillo, go ahead on the amendment currently on the floor.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: I thank Madam Kusie for her amendment.

Actually, we might find that there are many similar barriers. We might find that if we expand to look at some other areas, we uncover some other problems.

I am open to the amendment. I'm wondering how we allocate topics for days in meetings, but uncovering barriers for all is an interesting idea.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Call whoever is next, Chair.

• (1610)

The Chair: It's Mr. Coteau, and then I will go to Madame Ferrada and then Madam Kusie.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Thank you, Chair.

Can we see the wording for that?

The Chair: It will be circulated in a moment. That's supposed to be controlled from behind me.

Thank you for pointing that out. Have you concluded, Mr. Coteau?

Mr. Michael Coteau: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have concluded.

The Chair: Madame Ferrada and then Madam Kusie.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Zarrillo, we can discuss how we want to structure the study and the number of witnesses we will invite. The motion asks us to focus primarily on health care. We have also given ourselves a minimum number of days in which to do the study. But we can decide to give ourselves a little more time, if we feel the need to extend the study so that everyone has the time to question the witnesses and so that we can produce a report that properly reflects the intent of the motion.

I am also in favour of the amendment.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Ferrada and Madam Zarrillo.

If the motion is adopted, then how the study will be conducted will be determined by the committee, with respect to who comes, dates and meetings. That will be a further discussion, should the motion be carried.

Madam Kusie, you had your hand up?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: I wanted to thank Madame Zarrillo for her goodwill in being open to this amendment, and I feel confident that perhaps our analyst, with the clerk, could provide some structure as to how we might see the study structured, keeping in mind the original intention of Madame Zarrillo's motion, but broadening beyond that.

The Chair: Thank you.

We have Mr. Ruff, Mr. Coteau and Mr. Van Bynen.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): I wanted to voice my support. Obviously, I'm behind this amendment. Every one of our ridings is slightly different. We all have different sectors, but by far the thing I heard about most just during the federal election was the labour shortages and the challenges right across all sectors. It's really important that we take the opportunity to broaden this out. I have a few hospitals, obviously—I think we all do, in each of our ridings—and I have no issues with the care economy.

I share some of the same concerns as Madam Chabot in terms of staying within our jurisdiction at the federal level and not interfering in our provinces. However, there are great ways we can continue to contribute and make sure the policies coming down from the federal government enable and help our provinces, so I'm very much in support of this amendment. It will allow all of us to get the respective issues brought forth and debated so that we can come up with the best policy going forward.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ruff.

I have Mr. Collins and then Mr. Van Bynen.

Mr. Chad Collins: I think Mr. Van Bynen was before me, if you want to go to him and come to me next.

The Chair: Mr. Van Bynen, Mr. Collins has ceded to you.

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: I support the general thrust of the motion and the intent.

My only concern is that if we broaden this far too much, we might dilute the effectiveness and the impact of it. At a time like this, we need to make sure that we are in better condition in the event that we have yet another pandemic in front of us. That's the reason I was keen to see us focus on the care economy.

I understand very much that it's important for us to do that for the rest, but I was hoping we'd be able to prioritize that, simply because the sense of urgency is there, and I wouldn't want to dilute the effectiveness of the study and the recommendations by making it too broad.

• (1615)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Van Bynen.

Mr. Collins, you have the floor.

Mr. Chad Collins: I was going to raise a very similar issue to Mr. Van Bynen, Mr. Chairman. I'm on for it, and I agree with Mr. Ruff—so many sectors have been affected by labour shortages, and we're looking for ways and means by which to assist them.

I know that in my own riding, as Madame Chabot highlighted, agri-food is a big thing. One company, Salerno, has reached out to talk about its challenges. Then, of course, there are all of our home builders across the country. Supply shortages and those things, and finding skilled trade workers to assist them in building homes and units have been a tremendous challenge, not just in Hamilton but across the country.

I'm anxious to have a discussion about how we follow through with Madam Zarrillo's motion, understanding that we can't look at everything and that we really need to narrow that scope down in terms of a couple of sectors.

Those are my comments. I'm certainly supportive of Madam Kusie's amendment.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Collins.

Seeing no further interventions, we'll proceed to vote on the amendment of Madame Kusie. I will ask the mover to restate the amendment.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Thank you so much. I move as follows: “That pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study of the labour shortages and workers' conditions within the entirety of the Canadian economy, including but not limited to the care economy, including health care workers, personal support workers and child care workers who have been on the front lines of COVID-19; and examine how the government, in collaboration with the provinces and territories, could improve working conditions in the care economy; that the committee proceed to an overview of the impact of the labour shortages in the Canadian workforce in the first meeting of the study; that the committee invite the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, experts and departmental officials to testify; that the committee hold at least six meetings; and that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House.”

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Kusie.

The committee members have heard the amendment. I will ask the clerk to call a recorded vote.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 10; nays 0)

The Chair: Before we move to the main motion, Madame Ferrada has the floor.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to move one final amendment. I have not had the time to send it to my colleagues and I apologize for that.

My proposal to the committee is to add the following at the end of the motion:

...that, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House; and that the committee request that the government table a comprehensive response to the report.

We should also add “that this be the first study the committee undertakes”. We have not talked about that, but I feel that it is worthwhile to add that amendment to the motion, if my colleagues agree.

[*English*]

The Chair: The clerk will circulate the amendment moved by Madame Ferrada.

Madame Ferrada, do you want to include in the amendment the first studies we would be prioritizing, or leave that for a later time?

• (1620)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: We could all agree to put it at the end, as the committee's wish, without necessarily making it an amendment.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay. Thank you for your direction.

Does everybody have the amendment?

Seeing no discussion, I will ask Madame Ferrada to restate her amendment, and then we'll proceed to the vote.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: You don't need me to read the motion in full, do you? Or do I have to?

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Do you want me to read the motion in full?

[*English*]

The Chair: No. I'm sorry.

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Okay. Is it just the amendment part? Are we okay with that?

The Chair: Yes.

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Okay. I'm sorry.

[*Translation*]

...that, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House; and that the committee request that the government table a comprehensive response to the report.

[*English*]

The Chair: You've all heard the amendment. Do we have unanimous consent for the amendment?

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: We're now returning to the main motion as amended.

I see no raised hands. We'll proceed to a recorded vote.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 10; nays 1 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

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

Mr. Chad Collins: I would like to introduce one of the motions I had submitted to the committee, if you don't mind. I believe the clerk has a copy and has distributed it. I'd like to introduce it before I read it out.

With regard to my municipal background, over the last number of years I've focused on affordable housing in Hamilton. I've waited several months to introduce a motion related to housing that will help people not only in my riding of Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, and certainly not just those in Hamilton; it will also deliver assistance to people across the country.

We know that the pandemic has been hard on people. We've seen in some communities our affordable housing wait-lists get a bit bigger. In response, over the last number of years the federal government has introduced a number of programs to assist not just municipalities but also non-profits and other housing stakeholders.

The motion in front of you, which I'll read out, speaks to an existing program that the government has in place, and that of course was advertised through the campaign and has received a lot of attention recently.

My motion reads as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study regarding options for the design and rollout for the government's proposed housing accelerator fund, including but not limited to investments in staffing and technological support for municipal planning departments, property purchases, infrastructure upgrades, and policy development (i.e. inclusionary zoning and transit-oriented development bylaws) for the purpose of reaching the government's goal of 100,000 new homes by 2024-25;

That the study also investigate how the government can build on the Federal Lands Initiative to identify federally owned properties that might be made available to municipalities and/or other stakeholders for the purpose of increasing housing supply;

That the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House; and

That, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee request that the government table a comprehensive response to the report.

• (1625)

The Chair: Mr. Jeneroux, you have the floor. Then I will go to Mr. Coteau.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: I like a lot of this. I'm wondering if there's a possible way in which we could merge it with mine, which basically looks at a lot of the similar programs—they're identified in my

motion—but also ties it into CMHC and the Minister of Housing, talking about those programs.

If you're amenable to it, Mr. Chair, I will put forward an amendment to his motion.

The Chair: You have the floor. Are you going to move an amendment?

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Yes, in the Collins motion—if I can just refer to it as that, and not read it all out—I would include the piece from my motion in addition: That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee invite the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to update the committee on the housing crisis, including but not limited to the national housing strategy, the rapid housing initiative and the first-time homebuyer incentive.

That's the end of my amendment, Mr. Chair. We'll get that to you in writing.

It specifically outlines what I think Mr. Collins is getting at when he speaks about some of the government's proposed programs, in particular the goal of 100,000 homes by 2024-25. This just outlines those three programs. It also invites the CMHC and the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion to weigh in on this.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Jeneroux, and we will circulate that when we have it.

Next we have Mr. Collins and then Madame Ferrada on the amendment, followed by Mr. Jeneroux.

Mr. Chad Collins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and through you, I certainly appreciate the offer in terms of the amendment. My concern is that my motion is dealing specifically with affordable housing. I know we have two issues related to housing that have received a lot of attention in the House and a lot of attention from the Canadian public, namely housing affordability and affordable housing. My motion speaks to the affordable housing component.

My concern about expanding the motion is that, as you know, the minister and ministry have asked for input from stakeholders about the municipal accelerator fund in terms of what it will look like when it's funded, so I'm anxious to understand how this committee can contribute to the comments that the minister and the ministry will receive. I know my own municipality has submitted comments relating to its desire to see more affordable housing and what it would like to see from the municipal accelerator fund. I know that CityHousing Hamilton, which is Hamilton's largest affordable housing provider, has requested land from the federal government.

If we expand this—with all due respect to Mr. Jeneroux—into other areas, it gets into some of the comments and concerns we had on the last issue, and that is watering down the motion to the point where we'd spread ourselves too thin. I'm all for talking about housing and I will support other housing motions at this committee—there's no doubt about that. However, on this particular motion, I'd like to continue to focus on the municipal accelerator fund, understanding the timing and knowing that the minister will be before us on other issues quite soon.

• (1630)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Collins.

Next is Madame Ferrada, and then Mr. Van Bynen. My apologies, Mr. Van Bynen, for shortening your name earlier.

Madame Ferrada.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My thanks to my colleague Mr. Collins for this motion. It deals with a matter that I work on every day and that is really important to me.

We can see the housing crisis all over the country. My thanks to my colleague Mr. Jeneroux for introducing this amendment.

I have a thought, though. The minister will be coming to the committee to talk about his mandate letter. Currently, the Standing Committee on Finance is also conducting a study on housing. So I would like to propose that, this time, we remain focused on what is coming, on the future needs, specifically those designed to meet the needs of the program, as my colleague states in his motion. I would be very happy to support my colleague in a future motion. It could well give us another perspective when we have read the results of the study by the Standing Committee on Finance and when we have heard from the minister.

Today, we have to quickly agree that the needs are there. Programs must be implemented. A lot of housing is needed. We have work to do, together with the municipalities. The housing accelerator fund is more needed than ever.

I would also like to thank my colleague for the interest he is showing in the issue of housing. I know that he has introduced two motions on the issue. Once again, I will be happy to work with him on a future motion. In that motion, we could hear from witnesses from the Société d'habitation du Québec, without unduly broadening the motion to the point that we lose sight of what we want to do with the housing issue.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Ferrada.

I will call on Mr. Van Bynen and then Mr. Jeneroux and Mr. Ruff.

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: While I can appreciate the intent of the amendment, it's important for us to make sure we focus on the way forward. Some programs have been announced, and I know that many municipalities are eager to find a way to make sure we start delivering the new options—affordable housing options—on the

ground. Our greatest benefit would be to focus on the way forward and make sure we bring in the municipalities at all levels so there's a program we can implement going forward.

It was mentioned earlier that Finance is already looking at some of the elements that are being proposed in the amendment, and I'm agreeable as well to having CMHC focus on the way forward with us. We'll also have the minister in front of us when we're reviewing the mandate letters as we go forward. There is plenty of opportunity to take a look at what's in place now, and if we want to do a deep dive on that, we'd probably have a more effective outcome if we focused on that at another time.

In my mind, the urgency is the way forward and how we develop programs so that they're deliverable on the ground at the municipal level or where people are seeking the housing.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Van Bynen.

Next is Mr. Jeneroux. Then we'll go to Mr. Ruff.

Mr. Jeneroux, I believe everybody has the amendment that we're now discussing. You have the floor.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: I'm making a habit of agreeing somewhat with Mr. Van Bynen today; we'll have to end this after today's meeting. I think he's probably right with regard to the minister. Probably getting the minister back on this one is an overreach right away, because he will already be here on the mandate.

I don't know how procedurally we would do this, Mr. Chair, but I'm thinking that under where Mr. Collins put the “Federal Lands Initiative” piece and “other stakeholders”, I know we don't necessarily have to identify that in the motion, but certainly I think that one of the other stakeholders might be the CMHC in that particular discussion, which would then get to some of the questions we might have.

Again, I don't know if we necessarily, from a procedural standpoint, have to put that in, but knowing that it will be a stakeholder that I will likely be submitting as part of this study, that's the first piece I wanted to address. I'm happy to rescind my amendment if it's the understanding of the committee that the CMHC is one of the stakeholders we'd like to pursue.

Then, also, the second piece I'm wanting to flag is just Mr. Coteau's comment that he's looking forward to supporting housing motions put forward. I know we have two housing motions on there, so I'm hoping to move that next, Mr. Chair, if I'm able to get the floor once we deal with this one.

• (1635)

The Chair: In fairness, before the committee considers Mr. Jeneroux's position of rescinding his amendment, Mr. Ruff had his hand up.

Mr. Alex Ruff: Obviously things have changed a bit, Mr. Chair, with Mr. Jeneroux rescinding it, because it ties into the same sort of point that I wanted to raise, which is the importance of having the CMHC as one of the stakeholders.

As well, I'm a big believer—maybe it's the military background in me—in how things nest together. My biggest criticism and my observations of a lot of federal programs are about that lack of nesting and interconnection. On the national housing strategy, this is all part of what's being proposed here in that feedback, so if we're not even mentioning it, we risk being disconnected on how everything interacts together. However, in light of Mr. Jeneroux's rescinding of the amendment, I think that ends this part. Maybe we can discuss it if we're going to bring forth any other tweaks to the motion later.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ruff.

Madame Ferrada, did you want to speak?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: I just wanted to know whether my colleague is withdrawing his amendment. Is that what he is going to do?

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, I'm going to get to that.

Mr. Jeneroux, the committee needs to give unanimous consent for you to withdraw your amendment. Are you requesting that the committee give you unanimous consent?

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Yes, I'm requesting that.

The Chair: Committee members?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Yes.

(Amendment withdrawn)

The Chair: Now, Madame Ferrada, we return to debate on the main motion.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My thanks to my colleague for his contribution. I would like to propose an amendment. I think we will be able to agree on it. Perhaps we should add into the motion that the study that my colleague Mr. Collins is proposing be undertaken immediately after the study on the labour shortage and Ms. Zarrillo's motion. I would like to formally propose an amendment to this motion, that Mr. Collins' study be the second one that the committee undertakes.

• (1640)

[*English*]

The Chair: You've heard the amendment to the motion. Is there any discussion?

Seeing no discussion—

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: I'm sorry. Do you mind if I just get a clarification? It's more of a process-related question. Is there a subcommittee as part of this committee that meets to discuss the order of things? That's been successful in other committees I have been a part of. You and a member from each of the Liberal, Conservative, NDP and Bloc caucuses would all meet together to set that agenda

item, which would then mean we don't necessarily have to include these as part of motions going forward.

It would just be a common understanding, but I guess just getting some clarification from you would help.

The Chair: I will ask the clerk to comment.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Danielle Widmer): I'll just provide a quick comment. There is a subcommittee that has been adopted as per the routine motions. That was adopted on December 13. It is up to the chair and the committee in the future to organize a subcommittee meeting.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Ferrada.

We have Madame Chabot.

[*Translation*]

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

In the past, our committee has regularly called on the subcommittee to prioritize our topics, while always bringing them back to the committee, of course. I am not sure that the rule is set in stone, because it depends on how each committee operates. Whatever the case may be, I see no problem with prioritizing the study on the labour shortage and then beginning the study on housing. We can look at that question in the subcommittee or we can decide on it today. However, we must bear in mind that we have a lot of other motions to deal with. If we decide to set the priorities right away, we are not giving ourselves a lot of time. I hope that we will have the time to introduce other motions and put them in order, so that everyone's priorities are included.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Chabot.

Madame Ferrada, the amendment currently being debated would establish this as the second study.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Yes, I understand.

My thanks to my colleague Mr. Jeneroux for asking the question. It somewhat clarifies the way the committee operates.

If there is unanimous consent, I will withdraw my amendment too. At that point, we will be able to discuss it. I am fine with that.

[*English*]

The Chair: Is there unanimous consent for Madame Ferrada to withdraw her amendment?

(Amendment withdrawn)

The Chair: Seeing no further debate, we will have a recorded vote on the main motion of Mr. Collins.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

The Chair: The motion is carried.

I now call on Mr. Jeneroux. You have the floor.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Is this a new motion you're entertaining, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Yes. We've dealt with two motions currently.

You have the floor, Mr. Jeneroux.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: I will move the motion. I tried to make an amendment initially, but we'll move the motion as a separate motion.

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee invite the Minister for Housing and Diversity and Inclusion and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to update the committee on Canada's housing crisis, including but not limited to the National Housing Strategy, the Rapid Housing Initiative, and the First-Time Home Buyers Incentive.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Jeneroux.

You've all heard the motion.

Madame Chabot, you have the floor.

• (1645)

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot: I wanted to introduce a motion. Should I wait or can I do it now?

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Chabot, but currently we have a motion moved by Mr. Jeneroux.

Madame Ferrada, you have the floor.

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just wanted to thank my colleague for introducing his motion. We will be supporting it, of course.

[English]

The Chair: I have Madam Zarrillo on the motion of Mr. Jeneroux.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: I just wanted to ask this, Mr. Jeneroux. I have a motion on indigenous housing, and I just wonder if there's way to fold this under when the minister comes, so we could also get an update on indigenous housing. I don't know if that could fit under here as a subamendment.

The Chair: That's just an amendment, Madam Zarrillo. If you want to make an amendment, you have the floor.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: I guess I'll suggest as an amendment, so that if it passes that the minister is to come, the minister and the Minister of Indigenous Services can update this committee on the progress on the strategy for indigenous housing that the government committed to in 2017. That's it. I don't have to do the hour-long thing, but it's if they could come and speak to it.

The Chair: We have Mr. Jeneroux and then Madame Ferrada.

Mr. Jeneroux, do you have your hand up?

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

Thank you, Ms. Zarrillo.

I think that's great. I was reading that one, and I thought that was great as a stand-alone one. I also think you can fit it in already under where we said "including but not limited to", but I guess, if it's

the will of the committee to amend this, it's probably more worthwhile than being its own stand-alone one.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Jeneroux.

I have Madame Ferrada on the amendment of Madam Zarrillo, and then I'll go to Madame Chabot.

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Actually, I was going to say the same thing: it's included in the wording of the motion. So we can do it, especially since the minister is going to be here to talk about his mandate letter. It's included in his mandate letter and so he will be able to report on it to the committee when he appears.

I would propose that my colleague perhaps wait until the minister appears here and reports to the committee on his mandate letter. If she then wants to debate this motion, I will be the first to support her.

I would invite my colleague to withdraw her amendment, if she is willing, so that we can limit the topics somewhat. This will give her the opportunity to question the minister when he is here at the committee.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Ferrada.

We have Madame Chabot and then Mr. Ruff on the amendment of Madam Zarrillo.

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot: I have read and can understand the arguments in Ms. Zarrillo's motion. I took part in the major study on the national First Nations housing strategy, the report of which has been submitted to the government. Some measures and recommendations must be implemented.

I feel that we will have the opportunity to ask questions in order to clarify things, either in the motion that has been introduced today, or in the coming testimony about the mandate letter. That is the route I would prefer. The report on that strategy was tabled recently. It seems to me that it would be a good idea to ask the minister all our questions when he appears.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Chabot.

Mr. Ruff, you have the floor.

Mr. Alex Ruff: Madame Chabot actually sort of captured my thought process on this fairly well. The key addition is obviously the Minister of Indigenous Services, and I think if we wait until we get the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion here, we can ask those questions. We'll all be able to ask any of those questions on the indigenous housing situation. If the answer's there, and if he passes the buck to the Minister of Indigenous Services, then I think as a committee we can decide to call that minister forward at a future date.

• (1650)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ruff.

Being a new member to committee, Madam Zarrillo, do you want to proceed with your amendment?

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: I'm fine to do the unanimous consent withdrawal, and we can discuss it again after we've seen the minister.

The Chair: You're requesting the unanimous support of the committee to withdraw your amendment.

(Amendment withdrawn)

The Chair: I see consensus, Madam Zarrillo. Your amendment has been withdrawn.

Seeing no further debate, we will proceed to a vote on Mr. Jeneroux's motion as presented. The committee is familiar with it; I don't think we have to have it repeated. It was clear and there were no amendments, so we will now proceed to a recorded vote on the motion of Mr. Jeneroux.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

The Chair: Continuing with committee business, Madame Chabot, you have the floor.

[*Translation*]

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

I want to introduce a motion that you have received. It is about a study on seniors. I will read it and then explain the context a little.

The motion reads as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study on the impact of COVID-19 on the financial, social, health and overall well-being of seniors; that the committee review existing and announced programs for seniors; that the evidence and documents received by the committee during the second session of the 43rd Parliament regarding this study be considered by the committee during the current session; that the committee make recommendations to improve support for seniors; that the committee hold at least one (1) two-hour meeting on this matter; that, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House; and that the committee ask the government to provide a comprehensive response to the report.

We have more new members of the committee than former members like us. Mr. Long, I know that you were here in the last session, but let me remind my colleagues that the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities conducted a study on seniors, including everything described in this motion. Unfortunately, we were not able to complete the study because an election was called, which put an end to the session.

The objective of this motion is not to begin the study again and hear witnesses. It is just to finish what we started, which is to get to the report stage and submit a report to the government. The study was very important. We heard from a number of witnesses and we received a number of briefs. Several groups came to talk about the topic and it was really interesting. It would be a real shame if all that work were simply to disappear.

It would be good if we could have at least one meeting at which the analysts could bring us up to date on what could be in a draft report. Then we could look at that and submit the report to the government.

• (1655)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Chabot.

I'm going to go to Madame Martinez Ferrada, and then Mr. Long, but before that, could the clerk speak to the status of the report, as requested by Madam Chabot? What's the status of the report she was referring to? Could you clarify?

The Clerk: As Madame Chabot stated, we did a study last Parliament, and as per the motion at least one two-hour meeting was initially projected to occur prior to the end of the last Parliament, but the committee never had the opportunity to complete that last session. Madame Chabot's motion clearly outlines at least one two-hour meeting on this matter to complete the study, and it will provide the opportunity for the analysts to take into consideration all the material that was received last Parliament and prepare a draft report for the consideration of the committee.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Clerk.

Madame Martinez Ferrada, and then Mr. Long.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I was not here when that study was done, but I understand that the matter is very important. I will be very pleased to support my colleague's motion. I would really like to read the briefs and see the work that was done. I feel that it behooves us to appreciate and support the work of the research and analysis services and to conclude the work done in previous Parliaments. If the committee can table a report, it will be to its great credit.

With that said, I would like Ms. Chabot for one clarification. If I understand correctly, we are writing a report, not hearing from witnesses. The idea is to finish the work that was started in the previous Parliament.

Can she tell me whether the motion implies that we could invite witnesses?

I would just like some clarification about the witnesses and the report.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Long has the floor; then I will go back to you, Madame Chabot, to respond to Madame Martinez Ferrada.

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothsay, Lib.): Chair, I wanted to reiterate and thank MP Chabot for bringing this motion forward. It was a good study we didn't have the opportunity to finish it off, and I fully support it. I'll echo that it's not to recall witnesses or anything like that; it's simply to finish off the report, which certainly has my support.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Long.

Madame Chabot.

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot: I can confirm that the intention is not to recall witnesses.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Chabot.

As an informal discussion, this could possibly be scheduled for Monday's meeting in the first....

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot: I can't hear anything anymore, Mr. Chair.

[English]

The Chair: Sorry, Madame Chabot. I'm consulting with the clerk. I wasn't speaking.

Just a moment.

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Mr. Chair, I propose that we take a break for five minutes.

[English]

The Chair: We'll have a five-minute suspension, Mr. Long and Madam Chabot.

• (1655) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1705)

The Chair: With everybody present again, we will resume the meeting. We're on the motion of Madame Chabot.

Madam Kusie, you have the floor.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: We would be in support of this motion to return this study for completion to the House.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Kusie.

Seeing no further discussion on the motion of Madame Chabot, I shall go to a vote.

(Motion agreed to: 11 yeas; 0 nays)

• (1710)

The Chair: The motion is carried.

There are two items now. I've been informed that the meeting is not being recorded, so we might not want to proceed much further. It's up to the will of the committee.

I have a suggestion. Given Monday, the committee might want to consider having the analyst in, in camera. Providing the analyst is comfortable and able to come and give a briefing during the first hour on Monday, that's an option, but we cannot confirm that without checking on the availability of the analyst.

I see Mr. Ruff, and then we'll go to Madame Chabot.

Mr. Alex Ruff: I reference your point.

Are you talking about the analyst here, in specific reference to Madame Chabot's motion?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Alex Ruff: As I expressed earlier, I don't think it's the right time. There is other committee stuff we could be dealing with.

The Chair: Okay. That's fair.

Madame Chabot, or Mrs. Kusie—did you have your hand up too?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: No, we can go to Madame Chabot.

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot: I would like to discuss the schedule you are proposing, Mr. Chair. If that is possible, I have no objection. As I see it, the idea is to do it at an appropriate time, as soon as we can. If Monday's schedule allows us to do it then, we should do it.

Once we have finished this discussion, I am going to introduce another motion. So I will raise my hand a little later.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll come back to the committee on timing and scheduling for a briefing, because I don't see a consensus on moving it on Monday.

Given that, the motion has been carried.

Is there any further committee business?

Madame Chabot had raised her hand; then I'll go to Madame Kusie.

[Translation]

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

I would like to introduce another motion.

[English]

The Chair: Go ahead. Madame Chabot, you have the floor.

[Translation]

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

This is a proposal we submitted on December 13. It was distributed to committee members on December 15. The proposal is about the temporary foreign worker program.

The motion reads as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study on the effectiveness of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and the LMIA process; that the committee invite the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion and all other relevant stakeholders to address this issue; that the committee hold a minimum of four (4) meetings on this issue; and that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House.

When we do the study on the labour shortage, a study that will probably be a priority, the issue of temporary foreign workers will be front and centre. Since the government intends to review this program, I feel that it is perfectly appropriate to add this study to our schedule. Furthermore, if I recall correctly, Mrs. Kusie has introduced a motion along these lines.

I would like to have the committee's support.

Thank you.

• (1715)

[*English*]

The Chair: You've heard the motion moved by Ms. Chabot.

Mr. Long, go ahead on the motion.

Mr. Wayne Long: Chair, the issue I have is that we did a study on temporary foreign workers not that long ago. I'm not sure if Ms. Chabot has seen or read that study. I wouldn't think a lot has really changed. We brought in witnesses. We talked to companies. I remember specifically that in Manitoba, I think, we talked to HyLife and Maple Leaf Foods about temporary foreign workers and the challenges and things that they face—challenges yet opportunities.

I'm not sure I can support that one, because the report is there. Sometimes we're guilty of doing a report and ignoring the report we've already done that's sitting on the shelves. I would say on that one that I think we need to not support it.

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

Mr. Alex Ruff: I'm actually going to disagree with Mr. Long. I'm not disagreeing with the importance of going back and reading that previous report. I'll definitely look into that, but some things have fundamentally changed, in particular due to the pandemic, which has impacted so many of our different sectors that utilize temporary foreign workers in the LMIA.

I would suggest that our passing this motion as a future study isn't prioritizing it, and we can always come back and agree as a committee to not bring it forward as a priority if we all feel that the information in the previous report...

I would request that the clerk ensure that the previous report be distributed to all the new members of this committee. That's one way we could then deal with it. I actually do support the motion.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ruff.

Ms. Kusie and then Ms. Chabot and then Mr. Long.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Further to Mr. Ruff's comments, I was hoping perhaps the clerk could provide the date on which the last report was completed. If it was prior to the pandemic, I think these labour shortages within the targeted sectors existed previously, but I believe they've been incredibly exacerbated by the pandemic and the current environment. If we could find out what date that was, if it was completed in the last 18 to 24 months even, I think it would be acceptable, but if it was previous to that, I agree with Mr. Ruff's comments.

It may not be a priority given these other priorities we've identified, but it remains a critical piece of solving the labour shortage as well as, I believe, contributing to the economy well into the future.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Kusie. I will see if we can get that.

Ms. Chabot, you have the floor, and then Mr. Long.

[*Translation*]

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

I did not have the pleasure and the good fortune to be with you in 2016. If I recall correctly, that last report was submitted in 2016,

five years ago. During those years, as a union leader, I was dealing with working conditions for staff in health care, education and day-care services in Quebec.

Today, I feel that the situation has changed. I am not saying that nothing in the report is still relevant, but, five years on, against the background of the pandemic and the labour shortage that the pandemic makes worse, the situation is not the same. Demographic factors are also involved, as we will see.

Since I came into politics, the temporary foreign worker program has been very important in meeting the needs of companies in certain sectors. We have been urged from all sides to make changes to the process. I feel that it would be appropriate to focus on it as part of our work on the labour shortage, because questions will really need to be asked. So it could be an interesting study to do.

• (1720)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Chabot.

For the benefit of the members, the previous report was presented in the House in September 2016.

Mr. Long, you have the floor, and then Madame Ferrada.

Mr. Wayne Long: All of us certainly acknowledge that we're in a pandemic. There have been a lot of challenges through that, but when we did this report in 2016, it was an extensive report. We studied every sector.

I come from an aquaculture background. I'm on the east coast. I worked for a company called Stolt Sea Farm. It doesn't exist anymore, but it was an international salmon company here on the east coast.

I know the aquaculture industry certainly has challenges with temporary foreign workers. I was thrilled to do the study. Again, I want to tell the committee that the study was extremely extensive. We talked to every sector and had a lot of input, a lot of good testimony and a lot of very interesting witnesses. Again, I go back to the two companies in southern Manitoba—Maple Leaf Foods and HyLife—and pork producers and the challenges they faced with respect to temporary foreign workers. It was fascinating that without the support of temporary foreign workers they would literally leave \$1.2 billion of unsold product on the table.

Again, I'm asking the committee to read that report. Take my free advice, which is that what you want to get at and what you're looking for are already there. There's absolutely no need to do it again.

At times we get caught up on doing a report. We feel good about the report and then it's shelved. A few years later we want to do the report again. On this one, there's just no need to do it. That's my opinion. It was a very extensive report.

I ask all committee members to take the time and get that report. There are a lot of other important issues, Chair, that we can bring forward as a committee that would be a lot more important and will have an impact on so many Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Mr. Chair, again, I want to reiterate that I was part of that study. It was extensive. It was a very good report. I ask all committee members to get it.

I can't support this, because it's duplication. We have a lot more that we could do.

The Chair: Madame Ferrada, Mr. Coteau and then Mr. Ruff want to speak.

Madame Ferrada.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We have just decided on a motion introduced by our colleague Ms. Zarrillo that dealt with the labour shortage. The amendment made by my colleagues in the Conservative party suggests that we do not limit ourselves to studying the care economy.

That study will allow us to ask questions and perhaps even to see what has changed since the report was tabled in 2016. My impression is that the effect of Ms. Chabot's motion would be to plunge us back into a major study that has already been done. The minister will be coming before us to talk about her mandate letter. Furthermore, we are going to do a study on the labour shortage, which will allow us to address some aspects of the issue that interests my colleague Ms. Chabot. I would therefore propose that she wait a little and see whether we are able to undertake a more specific and more in-depth study on the issue of foreign workers. I would also propose that we see what the 2016 report contained, rather than passing a motion that is so broad that it might well deal with the matters addressed in the 2016 study five years ago.

I studied the foreign workers issue when I was sitting on the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. I invite my colleague to familiarize herself with the report that was tabled less than a year ago. I would be happy to talk to her about it, but I feel that, if we want to talk about foreign workers, we will also be getting into the issue of immigration. I would invite my colleague to suggest her idea to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. I feel that our committee could be interested in a number of other topics. I also see that my NDP colleague wants to introduce a motion on income security payments to persons with disabilities. In my opinion, that is extremely important. At the moment, on balance, I would prefer to do that kind of study in order to support those who are most vulnerable.

As part of the study on the labour shortage, we will have the opportunity to discuss and work on the issue of foreign workers. It seems to me that we can give ourselves some room to conduct other studies. That is my opinion, and, unfortunately, I will not be able to support this study. To me, it seems to be too broad and repetitive.

We hear an awful lot about foreign workers, but I urge us to collectively decide on the best way to study the issue.

• (1725)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Ferrada.

It's Mr. Coteau and then Mr. Ruff, and we'll be conscious of the clock as well.

Mr. Coteau.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Mr. Chair, what happens at 5:30? Do we just stop?

The Chair: Yes, and then debate will resume during the next committee business, Mr. Coteau.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Okay, so there's roughly two minutes left.

I listened to what MP Long said with regard to previous studies on this subject matter. Of course, temporary foreign workers are an important component to fulfill labour shortages, increase productivity and just really work to help build a better economy in this country. In Ontario, I know it's something the province takes seriously with regard to its continued production and economic development.

If Mr. Long, who was a member of the previous committee, understands that there was a report that was commissioned by the committee and he believes there's value there, as a new member I would like to take some time to look at that report and be able to weigh in on the issue.

What I don't want to do is repeat what was done in the past, and really if something is being done, I think we owe it to ourselves not to commit to doing things over and over and repeating things. Obviously citizens do not want their policy-makers and decision-makers to just repeat the same thing over and over again.

I would ask the committee to take a pause and consider looking at that report. I think we just passed a motion looking at labour shortages, which would definitely include different strategies and components—including, I'm assuming, temporary foreign workers—when it comes to increasing labour capacity.

Considering it's 5:30, maybe we should move to adjourn and deal with this sometime in the future.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Coteau.

Just so the committee members are clear, there are two ways it can come back. We will resume debate at the next committee meeting under business, or Madame Chabot can reintroduce the motion, so calling it 5:30 does not conclude it.

It is 5:30, and we have a motion that the meeting now adjourn.

(Motion agreed to)

• (1730)

The Chair: Thank you, committee members. There was a lot accomplished today. There are a lot of substantive motions currently before the committee, and in the next committee business we have more on the agenda to discuss as well, so thank you. We have the

minister scheduled, which was the primary desire of this committee.

Again, thank you. Have a good weekend. We'll see you on Monday.

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