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Chair: Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal



Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

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• (1550)

[English]

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

Welcome to meeting number 115 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

Before we begin, I will ask all persons participating to read the guidelines written on the updated card on the table. These measures are in place to help prevent audio feedback incidents and to protect the health and safety of all participants, including the interpreters. You will also notice a QR code on the card, which links to a short awareness video. Please watch that.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, but I see that all honourable members are present in person.

I would like to remind participants of the following points.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. All comments should be addressed through the chair. Whether participating in person or by Zoom, please raise your hand if you wish to speak. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can. I would also like to remind the honourable members, again, of the process we follow in this committee. If you feel a witness is going too long, I would like you to raise your hand instead of interrupting them. I will stop the watch so your time is not taken away from you. Thank you for your co-operation.

Now we are going to our study.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on February 12, May 1 and June 12, 2024, the committee is resuming its study of pension transferability and access to the mandatory provident fund and delays in permanent residence and visas for Hong Kongers.

On behalf of the committee members, I would now like to welcome our witnesses for today's meeting.

I will start with Mr. James McNamee, director general, family and social immigration, Department of Citizenship and Immigration. From the tax legislation division, we have Ms. Stephanie Smith, senior director, tax treaties. From the financial sector policy branch, we have Mr. Jeffrey Smith, senior economist. Last but not least, we have Ms. Kathleen Wrye, director, pensions policy, financial crimes and security division.

Welcome to all of you. Up to five minutes will be given for opening remarks, after which we will proceed with the rounds of questions.

I am going to invite Mr. McNamee for five minutes.

Please go ahead.

[Translation]

Mr. James McNamee (Director General, Family and Social Immigration Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would first like to acknowledge that I'm speaking today on the traditional and unceded lands of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

I would also like to acknowledge that I'm joined by my colleagues from the Department of Finance.

Canada stands shoulder-to-shoulder with the people of Hong Kong. We continue to monitor the situation as they navigate the impact of article 23 of the new national security legislation. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, or IRCC, has also implemented special measures to allow individuals from Hong Kong to come to Canada with pathways to permanent residence. The demand for these pathways remains high.

To help ensure that no one loses their status in Canada while waiting for a decision on their permanent residence application, a new public policy was launched on May 27, 2024. This policy will give most permanent residence pathways applicants an opportunity to obtain a new open work permit and to remain in Canada while they await a decision.

As I said in my previous appearance before this committee on June 5, 2024, IRCC is responsible for issuing Canadian permanent resident cards. These cards intend to prove permanent residence status. Some individuals from Hong Kong are also using them as proof that they have left Hong Kong permanently.

In March 2021, the Hong Kong government indicated that it would no longer recognize British national overseas, or BNO, passports as identification. It appears that, at that same time, individuals with a permanent resident card associated with their BNO passport were no longer able to access their pension funds.

IRCC remains committed to taking action, where possible, to help Hong Kong nationals settle in Canada.

Thank you again for the opportunity to join you today. I look forward to answering your questions.

• (1555)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We are going to Mr. McLean for six minutes.

Please go ahead.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): I'm sorry, Mr. Chair, but is there a separate introduction coming from the officials from finance, or are we hearing the same...?

The Chair: It's just one.

Mr. Greg McLean: It's just one introduction. Okay. Thank you.

My questions are mostly for the finance officials who are here, so thank you very much.

Mr. Smith, you have been here before. Welcome, Ms. Wrye. Welcome, Ms. Smith.

The main questions we have are about your department's role—in finance—in regulating two Canadian entities, particularly Sun Life and Manulife, and how that regulation impacts them when they have foreign subsidiaries that are regulated by a separate entity. It's that overarching regulatory authority where you're looking after how they behave in Canada with respect to people in Canada who might be permanent residents.

Can you give us a little explanation of how you're overseeing the way you regulate these entities in Canada once they're dealing with people who are Canadians who've come here, in this case, from Hong Kong and can't access their Hong Kong pensions?

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Smith.

Mr. Jeffrey Smith (Senior Economist, Financial Sector Policy Branch, Department of Finance): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

There's no precedent for this situation within the financial regulatory framework. I can say that unequivocally.

Mr. Greg McLean: There's no precedent... This is the second time you and your colleagues have been before this committee, Mr. Smith. We're trying to see how you might be influencing decision-makers here, particularly the minister, on the way the government deals with the situation regarding people who've come from Hong Kong who are trying to get their pensions moved over to Canada.

Have you given any advice to any minister about how this should be dealt with?

Mr. Jeffrey Smith: Thank you.

No, we have not given any advice to the Minister of Finance on this issue. The operations—

Mr. Greg McLean: Excuse me. I said, “any minister”.

The Chair: Honourable member, I said to please raise your hand because it's very hard on the interpreters.

I will stop the watch, and I will ask Mr. Smith to continue.

Mr. Jeffrey Smith: Pardon me for the lack of specificity. We have not given any recommendations to any minister on this issue.

Mr. Greg McLean: Your role here is overseeing the regulated entities, which are Canadian entities. Is that correct?

Mr. Jeffrey Smith: Canadian and foreign entities operating within Canada, yes.

Mr. Greg McLean: The issue we're trying to get to the bottom of here is how you regulate Canadian companies that have contradictory regulatory requirements in foreign jurisdictions through their subsidiaries.

Is there a way of getting through that morass and ensuring that those regulated Canadian entities fulfill the requirements to get Canadians—new Canadians, in this case—the funds they are due from their retirement funds?

• (1600)

Mr. Jeffrey Smith: The foreign operations of Canadian financial institutions are subject to the laws and regulations of the foreign jurisdictions in which they operate. We don't have any authority to compel Canadian financial institutions operating in a foreign jurisdiction to disobey the laws of that foreign jurisdiction.

Mr. Greg McLean: When those Canadian entities are trying to get funds for Canadians—no matter where those Canadians come from—from a fund that exists elsewhere that they have put money into, is that where your regulatory authority looks into their Canadian operations?

Mr. Jeffrey Smith: Our regulatory authority applies strictly to their Canadian operations.

Mr. Greg McLean: Yes, that's what I'm asking. They're Canadians who are in Canada, and those are Canadians being served by, in this case, a Canadian registered company. Are those Canadian registered companies subject to Canadian laws and regulations about how they deal with Canadians who have put money in pensions elsewhere?

Is there any protection for those Canadians for getting their repatriated pension earnings back to Canada?

Mr. Jeffrey Smith: In this instance, no. We regulate the domestic operations of those financial institutions that are operating within Canada.

As I previously noted, any Canadian financial institutions operating in a foreign jurisdiction must still comply with the laws and regulations of the foreign jurisdiction in which they operate.

Mr. Greg McLean: Can you let us know if there's any way you're involved in this situation at all?

Mr. Jeffrey Smith: Could you kindly elaborate on “involved”?

The Chair: I'll stop the watch.

Please, go ahead, honourable member.

Mr. Greg McLean: By “involved”, I would mean that you're providing any input or policy advice to any part of government regarding how this situation should be dealt with or ameliorated.

Mr. Jeffrey Smith: No, we are not involved in that respect.

Mr. Greg McLean: Can you please tell us in what respect you are involved in this matter?

Mr. Jeffrey Smith: We have met with Hong Kong Watch in the past—about a year ago—and we have met with the Canadian financial institutions in question. Those meetings had a common theme, that we were trying to understand the issue a little bit better.

Mr. Greg McLean: Did your meetings with these people lead to anything regarding a course of action that would fix the situation at hand?

Mr. Jeffrey Smith: There is no course of action under which the Department of Finance has any authority.

The Chair: Thank you very much, honourable member. The time is up.

We will go to Mr. El-Khoury.

We will give you six minutes.

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

I would like to mention to you that I would like to share my last minute with my colleague, Mr. Paul Chiang.

[*Translation*]

I want to welcome the witnesses and thank them for joining us.

Mr. McNamee, in your opinion, what specific challenges do Hong Kongers holding BNO passports face when immigrating to Canada?

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

Mr. James McNamee: I would say that the first challenge concerns the lack of recognition of the BNO passport. As a result, the Hong Kongers holding this passport can't access the pension fund that they contributed to for years in Hong Kong.

With this passport, they can obtain a permanent resident card without any issues. The card is also valid. It can be used for anything that the card allows. I would say that the challenge lies in accessing the pension fund built up in Hong Kong.

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury: What steps is the department taking to address this challenge?

Mr. James McNamee: We offered to provide another permanent resident card for people who want to use a new passport or new piece of identification. For example, if a person holds a passport from another country, even from Hong Kong or China, they can have their permanent resident card changed. This will make it easier for them to access their pension fund.

• (1605)

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury: In your opinion, is this easy to do?

Mr. James McNamee: It's an open process. The people who want to change their permanent resident card can apply online. An option is also available to do this more efficiently than before, if necessary.

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury: What initiatives are in place to inform Hong Kongers in Canada of their rights and options when they face barriers and issues in accessing their assets abroad?

Mr. James McNamee: Thank you for the question.

Our website contains information on how clients can change their permanent resident card. In addition, we have the option of issuing a press release to inform everyone that the option is available.

However, we found that some people had already taken advantage of this option and had their documents changed. The current demand isn't as high as expected. This means that we can do more to inform our clients that the option is available.

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury: You said that you could do more. Why don't you?

Mr. James McNamee: The department hasn't received the request. We know that a number of our clients have taken advantage of the option. However, we're wondering why the demand hasn't increased since the issue first arose a few years ago.

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury: Thank you, Mr. McNamee.

Ms. Wrye, have any agreements or frameworks been implemented to make it easier for Hong Kongers, in particular people who have become permanent residents or Canadian citizens, to access the mandatory provident fund, or MPF?

Ms. Kathleen Wrye (Director, Pensions Policy, Financial Crimes and Security Division, Department of Finance): Mr. Chair, I want to thank the member for his question.

I'll respond in English, if I may, Mr. El-Khoury.

[*English*]

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury: Yes, go ahead. It's no problem.

Ms. Kathleen Wrye: To confirm, when you speak to an agreement, I'm just not familiar with.... I can speak to federally regulated pension plans and how non-residency unlocking occurs here, but I'm not aware of any agreements in existence that would facilitate the unlocking of the MPF pension benefits.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Next is Mr. Chiang.

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

I would like to move the motion, which I put on notice on Friday:

That, upon the tabling of the Supplementary Estimates (B) for the fiscal year 2024-25, the committee invite the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship to testify on the Supplementary Estimates (B) by no later than the end of the current supply period.

The Chair: Thank you.

We have the witnesses in place.

The motion is in order. We have to debate this.

MP Kwan, please go ahead.

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

Before we get into debate and all the next steps, perhaps you could clarify something for me.

Isn't it the practice of this committee to actually invite the minister for supplementary estimates? That is our regular practice. We have been inviting the minister.

The Chair: If everybody is in agreement, then we can.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I'm sorry. I just need clarification because it is the practice of this committee to invite the minister. We have been inviting the minister. If the minister chooses not to attend, that is the reality of what this committee is faced with.

To move this motion, of course, is stating the obvious because it is the practice of this committee to have the minister attend for supplementary estimates.

Thank you.

• (1610)

The Chair: I would like to say that it's not a necessity, but it's usually been the practice here to have a motion brought forward. I would say that the motion is in order and I'm going to go to debate.

If there's no debate, I'm going to take a vote.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I just want to make a final comment.

I'm not going to oppose the motion. It's a redundant motion. That is my point. The point is that it is a standing practice of this committee to have the minister show up for supplementary estimates in a timely fashion.

The fact that the minister doesn't is not because of this committee's lack of action, but rather the minister's refusal to show up.

I just want to state that on the record.

The Chair: Thank you.

Is there any more debate? Otherwise, we can take a vote.

Mr. McLean.

Mr. Greg McLean: I'll second what Ms. Kwan is saying. That is exactly the case. The minister has a responsibility to show up here. It's not a motion that can be voted up or down. He has a responsibility to show up here to present his estimates to this committee, so they can be forwarded to the House of Commons.

I don't know why we have a redundant motion here.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McLean.

I will go to MP Zahid and then Mr. Chiang.

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

Yes, it has been the practice that the minister comes, but we have always passed a motion.

Once the motion is passed, then the clerk sends out the invite and finds out the date on which the minister can appear before the committee. For the last nine years, that's the procedure we have fol-

lowed. We have to pass a motion so that the clerk can send the request.

The Chair: Thank you.

MP Chiang, do you want to add something?

Mr. Paul Chiang: No, I'm good.

The Chair: You're good. Everybody's good, so we can take a vote.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Your time is up, Mr. Chiang.

Now, we are going to my dear friend, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, for six minutes.

Before I start the watch, I know it's a French-French conversation sometimes, but there are English speakers here, too. They need interpretation, so I will make sure I keep your time in mind.

Please, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's always good to have your recommendations.

Before I begin, I would like to thank the witnesses for joining us today.

I want to file a notice of motion. The clerk will obviously send it to our interpreters and colleagues. The motion isn't translated. However, since it's tabled as a notice, it will be translated subsequently.

The motion reads as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study on the implications for Canada of the measures announced by Donald Trump during the U.S. presidential campaign regarding the deportation of persons who are in the United States illegally, as well as on the Canadian federal government's plan to ensure border security and compliance with federal immigration statutes and policies;

That the committee invite the following witnesses to appear:

1. for two hours each, accompanied by senior officials from their respective departments:

- (a) Marc Miller, Minister of Immigration and Citizenship; and
- (b) Dominic Leblanc, Minister of Public Safety;

2. for one hour each:

- (a) Kirsten Hillman, Canadian Ambassador to the United States; and
- (b) David L. Cohen, U.S. Ambassador to Canada;

3. as well as any other witnesses the committee considers necessary, in accordance with the usual practices of the committee; and

That the committee prioritize this study and report its findings to the House.

I hope that everyone will give this motion the attention that it deserves.

• (1615)

[*English*]

The Chair: You have four minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you.

Good afternoon, everyone.

On June 3, 2024, Aileen Calverley, co-founder and chair of Hong Kong Watch, told this committee that some Hong Kongers in Canada had been prevented from accessing their own retirement savings in the mandatory provident fund, or MPF.

Ms. Calverley told us that research carried out by her organization shows that over 80% of Hong Kongers surveyed who moved permanently to the United Kingdom and Canada and who applied to withdraw from the MPF had their applications rejected.

Yet, according to Sun Life data, between 2021 and the first quarter of 2024, the company rejected 1.2% of the 14,590 applications received from Hong Kongers around the world for failure to meet criteria or for minor administrative reasons.

Mr. McNamee, does your department have the figures for MPF withdrawals? If so, what prompted the rejection of the applications?

[English]

The Chair: Mr. McNamee.

[Translation]

Mr. James McNamee: We don't really have the figures for the rejection rate. The data belongs to the organizations that handle this process, meaning Sun Life and the other insurance company.

[English]

The Chair: Honourable member, go ahead.

[Translation]

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

Are you in contact with these insurance companies?

Mr. James McNamee: We're in contact with them, but indirectly. We've been in touch a few times to find out the reasons for this situation. As my finance colleague said, according to these companies, the process is managed by the legislation in place in the applicants' country of origin. The companies are forced to reject these applications.

[English]

The Chair: Honourable member, go ahead.

[Translation]

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

Mr. McNamee, another question comes to mind on this topic.

You told me that you didn't have these figures, so you didn't necessarily know the reasons for the rejections. However, you also told me later that you had been in contact, but indirectly. So contact has been established.

Did it ever occur to you to ask the insurance companies for these figures and the reasons for the rejections, since you just said that you were in contact with them?

[English]

The Chair: Mr. McNamee, go ahead.

[Translation]

Mr. James McNamee: I want to thank the member for the question.

I think that we contacted these companies to find out the reasons for this situation. However, we haven't really delved into all the details of the rejected applications. The data is their responsibility, not the responsibility of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[Translation]

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

Mr. McNamee, you have been in contact with these insurance companies. You tried to understand why the applications had been rejected, but you didn't go any further.

It's hard for us to understand. We're dealing with people who are experiencing outright transnational repression. Hong Kong has set up criteria to prevent these people from withdrawing their funds. Hong Kong indirectly uses the criteria established by both insurance companies and by your department. You're indirectly involved.

I know that this isn't intentional. However, do you realize that you're participating in transnational repression by failing to adapt your criteria and to ask the insurance companies to do the same?

[English]

The Chair: Mr. McNamee, the time is up, so please provide a brief answer.

[Translation]

Mr. James McNamee: I want to thank the member for the question.

We chose to provide an option that gives these people access to their pension funds. We gave them the option of changing the information on their permanent resident card.

In some cases, people's applications have been rejected because of the codes on their cards. We use these codes to check the cards.

The option provided by the Department of Citizenship and Immigration gives us the opportunity to help people by adapting the policy. However, we can't change the code. We don't have the right to do so. Instead, we've given clients the option of changing the information on their permanent resident card.

• (1620)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now, we will go to MP Kwan for six minutes.

Please go ahead.

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

Thank you to the officials for appearing before our committee today.

In an opening statement, it was said that the Government of Canada “stands...with the people of Hong Kong”. Special immigration measures have been implemented, part of which will extend temporary status for Hong Kongers.

Could the officials confirm that those who qualify under that program are provided with an open work permit, and therefore an LMIA is not required?

The Chair: Mr. McNamee, go ahead.

Mr. James McNamee: I would say that's generally the case. If the work permit they obtained was originally connected to the public policy, that's correct. I don't know if that's the situation in all cases. In some cases, applicants may have had an LMIA-based work permit to begin with.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: That's right. However, under the special immigration measure, the LMIA is not required.

I have a list of applicants in those circumstances. Their work permit renewal application was rejected. They were asked to submit an LMIA, which makes no sense. I want to flag that as a deep concern now emerging for people whose open work permits are being rejected as they wait for their permanent resident status. At this rate, given the immigration levels plan numbers and the processing delays happening, and with the number of applicants in place, you can imagine that it's going to take something like eight years to get through the backlog of people getting their PR status. This means that if they are trying to get their pension, they will not be able to do so for eight years, because they are required to provide proof of permanent residence.

I want to flag this as a major concern. I hope the department will take action to fix the error being applied to applicants whose open work permits are being rejected under this stream.

Can I get a confirmation from officials that this will be undertaken?

The Chair: Mr. McNamee, go ahead.

Mr. James McNamee: Yes, that issue has been raised with the department already, and we're looking into it to see what exactly happened in those situations.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Okay. Officials are aware of it, and yet it's still happening. I have cases coming to me that are happening. I'm about to prepare a giant pile of this stuff for the minister, so I hope the officials will fix that.

The other thing related to the pension, of course, is lengthy delays for people to get their permanent status.

Based on the immigration levels plan and the number of applicants in place, is it the officials' anticipation that it will take about eight years to get those applications processed?

The Chair: Mr. McNamee, go ahead.

Mr. James McNamee: We have looked at that possibility. Certainly, it will take longer than we had previously indicated to the committee. I would note that the first year of the levels plan is the fixed year. The years that follow, in this case, 2026 and 2027, are flexible. There are opportunities to adjust those numbers in the future, and that could affect that timeline. It's hard to say whether

eight years will be the timeline, but it will be longer than had been originally predicted because the numbers have gone down.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: What's the projection of the officials for the timeline in which these applications would be processed based on what has been tabled by way of the immigration levels plan?

Mr. James McNamee: Overall, because we don't break down the specific targets for specific subgroups within the H and C and public policy categories, our estimates would be that it would take four years for those applications to be processed. That was our base estimate, but you're correct that, depending on where those numbers go, it could be longer or it could be less. I'm saying that only the first year of the plan is a fixed year, and plans can change and adjustments can be made.

• (1625)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much.

The government decided to table a rolling three-year immigration levels plan, so those are the numbers we're using, assuming that those are the numbers. Of course, in subsequent times, perhaps even a changing government may well adjust all of those things; we don't know. What we do know are the numbers that are before us, and based on my calculation, with the number of people who have applied, it's going to be at least eight years to get through the backlog. By the officials' calculation, it's at least four years.

For people who are desperate to actually get resources, is it reasonable that they won't be able to apply for their pension funds for at least four years?

Mr. James McNamee: We acknowledge that is a challenge, so we're looking at what we can do to help facilitate and expedite that process. The H and C category is oversubscribed. We have a lot of competing priorities, which include high priorities like other categories of people who we must process under the same space.

The Chair: You have 30 seconds, Ms. Kwan.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much.

Yes, there is a desperate need in the global context of people who are displaced and who are fleeing persecution, and Canada wants to claim that it's doing its part, but it's not doing it in an effective way for people. Is it feasible for people to be in limbo for years on end without knowing what their status is? Meanwhile, they run into problems with respect to applications for jobs. For students who are under student visas, their fees are at least five or six times those of a domestic student. People who are trying to get their pensions will not be able to do so for years on end.

Is that a feasible way, and is it a reasonable thing for the Canadian government to say that they stand with the people of Hong Kong?

The Chair: Thank you. Your time is up, but I will give Mr. McNamee the opportunity to speak.

Mr. James McNamee: To that, I would say that the primary job of that public policy was to enable people to leave Hong Kong and find the safety of Canada, and I think, by and large, that has been achieved. People have been able to come here, obtain temporary status and benefit from the protection of Canada, so from that score, I think it's been successful in doing so.

Yes, there are challenges with the transition to permanent residence, but in light of what the purpose was originally, which was to take them away from a situation of risk, that has been delivered, for the most part.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will go now to Mr. Kmiec for five minutes.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Mr. McNamee, first of all, on this PR card change, I've never heard of this. When did this policy change?

Mr. James McNamee: From the outset, people have had the opportunity to modify their PR cards with the submission of a new document, be that a new passport—

Mr. Tom Kmiec: I'm going to interrupt you. I'm going to ask a lot of rapid-fire questions.

Where did they submit that request?

Mr. James McNamee: We have information on our website to do that. It's a \$50-process today, which we're looking to facilitate because of the situation.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: I'm sorry, but you have to be much more specific. There are a lot of Hong Kongers watching this. What is the form number? Where is it on the website?

Mr. James McNamee: I can provide that information to the committee. I don't have it here. It is a standard process, one that doesn't happen frequently but which we're looking to expedite.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Is this just for Hong Kongers, or can anybody request a PR change for that nationality code?

Mr. James McNamee: If they submit information regarding a new passport, yes. You can modify your PR card to reflect the new information.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Are you saying that this has always been the case?

Mr. James McNamee: Yes.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: That's news to me. How many requests from Hong Kongers for such changes have there been since the last committee meeting?

Mr. James McNamee: My understanding is that the number has been quite small. I can provide that information to the committee.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: When you do provide it, I would also like to know how many requests came in and how many were accepted for the change from the GBN to something else. The source of the problem for BNO passport holders to Canada is that this is how the MPFA is able to identify a person who has left the country on a BNO passport.

You're saying this has always been the case. That's fine, but we would like that information for the entire committee so that we could post it online, including the precise form that is needed and where it must be sent, including email contact information and a phone number, so that the Hong Kongers coming to MP Kwan's office, my office and all of our offices stop doing that and go to see your department.

Your department's inability to fulfill the requirements on time is causing all of them to inundate our offices with problems. I have the same sheets MP Kwan has of individual cases where they've been refused the renewals.

You said during your introduction that a person has implied status. Is that implied status until the application is considered for PR?

• (1630)

Mr. James McNamee: Yes. An application is submitted. The maintained status is retained until a decision is finalized.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: I have two letters here from two Hong Kongers, who say that their implied status will expire five months after they apply. I'm going to finish now. It says for them to attach the letter to their present work permit number, which is obviously a filled-in form, as proof that they are authorized to continue working under the same conditions as their original work permit until December 25, 2024. That's a big merry Christmas to them, I guess.

I also have one here that was issued on July 26. It says that their temporary status will expire on January 22, 2025.

Based on your own testimony today, you've basically said that none of these people will get it within five months. The timeline for processing for their PRs can be up to eight years. That's a number that MP Kwan has. That's because Hong Kongers are telling us this number.

If we use the target numbers you have, it's 14 years. All these people will lose their implied status.

How, then, could you say to this committee that they do have implied status until their PR is processed when the letters the department is issuing say the complete opposite, that they have merely five months?

Mr. James McNamee: I haven't seen one of those letters in a while, but I believe they also say, "or until you have a decision, the faster of the two", or something—

Mr. Tom Kmiec: It's whichever is first. January 22, 2025, will come first if it's an eight-year timeline. That means on December 25, 2024, merry Christmas to that person. It's an optician in my riding, and the husband will lose his job because he won't be allowed to work. It's whichever comes first. The wait time is eight years, according to the testimony we've heard here.

Mr. James McNamee: I can tell you today that this is an error. That letter should not state that.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: I have hundreds of letters here. Is this an error, or is it a process issue?

Mr. James McNamee: It's an error in the wording of that letter. The regulations state that folks have maintained status until they receive a final decision on their application. Be it one year or 10, they have maintained status. That's the law. The letter states that, and we're looking to amend it.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: I'm sorry. When it comes to legal, this is what the lawyers get, this is what immigration consultants get, and this is what every MP's office is getting right now. It says very distinctly "or until a decision is made on your application, whichever is first", and the timeline is always less than eight years.

If this is incorrect, your department has been sending out hundreds and hundreds of letters in the mail. There are 60,000 Hong Kongers here through this pathway program. Are you saying they're all getting a wrong letter?

The Chair: Thank you. The time is up, but I will give the floor to Mr. McNamee to address those concerns and in the best interests of Hong Kongers.

Mr. James McNamee: I will say that when the form letter was originally created, we were within a much faster processing time. That date that was given in the future was many months in the future, and usually clients got a decision way ahead of that. In recent months, with delays it's taking longer.

We have therefore asked them to amend that letter and remove that reference to make it clear that persons can maintain status until they get a decision, period. There's no limitation on that.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now go to MP Kayabaga for five minutes.

Please, go ahead.

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

I would like to keep the conversation going on the letters that my colleague on the other side has.

Can we get an answer on how these letters that contain errors and incorrect information got out? Were you aware that these letters were being sent out?

Mr. James McNamee: The standard form letter has stated that for several years now. It was the timeline that was well within our processing service standard for that type of application, a work permit, for example. In recent months, as that timeline has been exceeded, that date now sometimes arrives before a decision arrives. We've taken measures in the department to modify that letter, and we're hoping that this change can happen sooner rather than later so that it doesn't state that anymore.

I just want to confirm that maintained status is maintained status, and it is valid until a decision is made, whenever that decision comes.

• (1635)

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Can I get on the record that people who received those letters will be getting other letters with the correct information? When will that be happening?

Mr. James McNamee: I'll come back to the committee on exactly what the process will be, but we are modifying that letter.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Your department is also tracking the hundreds of these letters that are out, as well—

Mr. James McNamee: Yes.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: —and it has the resources to address this issue.

Mr. James McNamee: I would note that many people get a decision before that timeline. In certain circumstances, they don't, but many do.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Thank you.

I want to get to a finance question.

From the finance perspective, what is your point of view on what your actual role is in all of this? What is the core of the issue here with regard to providing pension benefits to Hong Kongers in Canada who have made claims?

The Chair: Mr. Smith, could you speak closer to the mic? The interpreters are having a bit of difficulty.

Please go ahead.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: I'm sorry. I'll just repeat that. What is your perceived role?

Mr. Jeffrey Smith: Do you mean our perceived role in this issue?

We regulate financial institutions on a domestic basis. We have no authority to compel those financial institutions to disobey the laws of the foreign jurisdictions in which their subsidiaries operate.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Thank you.

What accountability measures exist to ensure that financial institutions like Manulife and Sun Life are actually representing their approval rates and following the fair practices?

Mr. Jeffrey Smith: Global Affairs Canada maintains the national contact point office, which would be the appropriate point of contact for any groups or individuals who feel that Canadian firms operating abroad are not behaving responsibly.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Perhaps you can elaborate on how IRCC collaborates with Global Affairs Canada to address the concerns raised by Canadian residents and citizens about accessing their financial resources overseas.

Mr. Jeffrey Smith: I'm sorry. I think that question would be better directed to my colleague from IRCC.

The Chair: Mr. McNamee, do you want to address it?

Mr. James McNamee: I apologize, Mr. Chair. I missed the question.

The Chair: I'll stop the watch, and I will ask the honourable member to repeat the question.

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

What is the collaboration between Global Affairs Canada and IRCC to address the concerns of Canadian residents and citizens with regard to accessing their financial resources overseas?

Mr. James McNamee: We have been working with Global Affairs to look into this issue. It's through this process that we were able to understand what was happening in terms of a lack of access to those funds due to that change that happened in 2021. We continue to work with them to see what can be done about that. As a result, we've taken it upon ourselves to look at a change in the card for those who can provide another passport as a solution that could help overcome that challenge in the short term.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: I have another finance question.

What is your role in monitoring financial institutions' compliance with international standards and fair treatment of Canadians with PRs and citizens?

Mr. Jeffrey Smith: It's my understanding that we don't have a specific role in monitoring Canadian financial institutions meeting their obligations within the HKSAR.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Kayabaga.

We will go now to my dear friend, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

You have two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

Mr. McNamee, perhaps my last question wasn't clear enough. I don't want you to think that I'm blaming you. I'm really not.

The Hong Kong authorities are currently using the Canadian government and insurance companies, such as Manulife and Sun Life, for transnational repression purposes.

I'm by no means saying that this is deliberate on your part or that you don't want to change things.

That said, do you realize that the Hong Kong authorities are engaging in transnational repression using the department and insurance companies? Are you aware of this?

• (1640)

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. McNamee, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. James McNamee: I want to thank the member for his question. However, I don't really have an answer for him.

The Hong Kong government changed its practice with regard to access to the types of documents that—

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Chair, there are really two ways to answer my question.

Mr. McNamee, unfortunately, I can't accept that you don't have an answer for me.

I'm asking you whether you realize something. The answer to this type of question must be yes or no. You can't tell me that you don't know.

Does your department realize that it's unwittingly participating in transnational repression by the Hong Kong authorities? The answer may be yes or no, but it can't be in between.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. McNamee, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. James McNamee: I'm sorry, but I can't say whether I agree or disagree with this position. It isn't my role, as a public servant, to have an opinion on these situations.

We comply with our regulations. We try to do whatever we can in our area.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I understand, but if we look—

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Mr. McNamee.

[*English*]

The Chair: Now we will go to MP Kwan. She will be the last honourable member before we switch to the next panel.

MP Kwan, you have two and a half minutes.

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

I want to get back to these letters that have been issued to tell people there's a deadline with their interim status. Will the officials be issuing a public statement to let people know that this is an error—it's an old template that has been used, where the processing time used to be more expeditious—so that they're now not caught out in this situation thinking that their implied status would actually be expiring towards the end of the year?

How will the officials fix this problem? I'm aware that when some people went to apply for jobs, and they could only tell the employer that their implied status would last for only a couple of years, they were declined an offer for the position. The damage is already done.

Mr. James McNamee: I will take that back to the department to see exactly how we're going to proceed.

As a first step, we are amending that letter—

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Sorry. I get it. You're amending it going forward. But the letters already went out. The damage is already there. What will the officials do to fix that problem for people? That's the question.

With regard to the letters that Mr. Kmiec has put on the record, I met with the Hong Kong young professional association folks during the break week. Literally scores of people came to tell me about the problems they are faced with. This is as a result of the government's failure to properly process their applications and to expeditiously process their PR applications. This interim measure has created further problems for them.

This has to be fixed. It has to be fixed expeditiously. Then there's a question about what work needs to be done and what action will be taken by the officials retroactively for the people who have already been negatively impacted as a result of this error.

The Chair: You have 15 seconds, Mr. McNamee.

Mr. James McNamee: I would say that we'll take this back to the department and come back to you on our approach going forward.

• (1645)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Chair, I would request officially that there be a formal response to the committee from the officials on this problem that we have identified, and that they outline exactly the timeline and what the steps will look like to rectify this problem.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Kwan. The time is up.

On behalf of the committee members, I want to thank the panel members for being here and sharing the information.

I wish you the very best.

With that, I will suspend to set up the next panel.

• (1645)

(Pause)

• (1650)

The Chair: Welcome back.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on October 24, 2024, the committee is resuming its study of the recent reforms of the international student program.

I would now like to welcome our witnesses for the second panel.

We have Professor Herb Emery, who is online.

We also have Professor Christopher Worswick in person.

We also have, from the Université du Québec, Mr. Maxime Colletet.

Up to five minutes will be given to each of the speakers.

Who wants to go first?

There are no hands up, so I will give Mr. Emery the floor to speak first.

Please go ahead for five minutes.

Professor Herb Emery (Vaughan Chair in Regional Economics, University of New Brunswick, As an Individual): Thank you. I was hoping that Professor Worswick would go first.

I'm Herb Emery. I hold the Vaughan chair in regional economics at the University of New Brunswick. My research is focused on policy options for growing the regional economy and understanding labour market adjustment in a subnational context. I benefited from working with the UNB-based New Brunswick Institute for Research, Data and Training, led by Dr. Ted McDonald, which allows for access to de-identified, linked administrative data, which provides new perspectives on subjects like immigrant retention in the region and post-secondary graduate outcomes in New Brunswick.

Recent changes to the cap in numbers of international students and to raise financial barriers for international students seeking to attend Canadian post-secondary education institutions, which include limits on work hours off-campus, will have important impacts for our PSE institutions, post-secondary education institutions, in the Atlantic region. They may have important impacts on regional labour supply, population growth and productivity growth but, given the economics of our labour markets in this subnational setting, I expect the main impacts of the region will be for the post-secondary education institutions and their finances, and a large number of small employers relying on labour-intensive production and service provision.

Since 2016, when I moved to the Atlantic region, I've encountered five major reasons that stakeholders and governments provide for growing numbers of international students enrolled in colleges and universities in the region.

The first one is a population growth goal. The four provinces that make up the Atlantic region all face challenges of population aging and out-migration of their own residents. Immigration was identified as an effective way to backfill for interprovincial out-migration and eventually grow the size of the region's population. International students were just one more provincially targeted entry program to increase immigrant numbers in the region.

Second, with the population aging and a declining demographic of the usual ages that attend post-secondary education, it was seen that international students would provide revenue for post-secondary education and also boost enrolment numbers, which was going to be a problem when you have stagnant provincial grants to the institutions along with caps on increases in fees for domestic students. Immigration was going to solve a revenue problem for post-secondary education institutions.

Third, the goal was to create a pool of labour for low-wage jobs for students who need to work while they are pursuing their studies. This was coming on the heels of the region losing its traditional glut of low-skilled, low-wage labour, which had been a source of competitive advantage in many of its industries, like manufacturing. With that glut gone, it was ideal to find a source of labour that would take jobs that a lot of Canadians, particularly younger ones, weren't keen to take. That was the second avenue, and it's what led to some of the lobbying for very long work hours for full-time students.

Fourth, economic growth and innovation objectives were to be met by international students graduating from programs in the region and being retained, who would become entrepreneurs, innovators and skilled workers to raise regional productivity.

Last, it was also identified that, with the out-migration of highly qualified personnel, having regionally educated international students could backfill in strategic sectors, like IT and ICT, to keep some kind of strategic advantage for the regions seeking to grow some of these new industries.

It should be immediately apparent that higher numbers of international students in the region were to address a number of diverse goals and challenges—population growth, growth of university and college resources—provide a pool of low-cost labour and, over the long run, increase productivity in the region. The goals may have differed across interests and stakeholders in the region, but the interest in higher numbers of students did not. Consequently, support for higher numbers of international students has generally been high, and it was seen as having a number of diverse benefits for the near term and over the long term for the region.

Research that I and colleagues at NB-IRDT have carried out suggest that the main impacts of all this increase in international students would have been for post-secondary education finances and for providing a transitory supply of low-cost labour for the region's employers. There hasn't been an increase in retention rates of immigrants over the long run in the region. There isn't a large supply of transitions of students into permanent residency in the region. It is higher when they have work permits, but it's still, I would say, a minority share of the total immigration increase that has been coming in.

• (1655)

In evaluating the impacts of the recent steps, more discussion needs to be focused on what goals are trying to be achieved with the international student program and how the powers and responsibilities of the provinces and their post-secondary education institutions, which are recruiting the students, align with those interests for meeting the stated program goals versus meeting their own needs and goals that they're setting on their own.

I think a big problem for the region has been this misalignment of the agency of the institutions and recruiting with what was trying to be achieved with some of the larger goals of that program related to growth of the region in terms of its economy and population.

It's also important to recognize that high numbers of immigrants and international students are not the only ways to address labour supply concerns in the region or university finances. It may have been an expedient solution in the short run, as it's been very difficult to deal with some of these other longer-term challenges with the labour market, like EI reform and what is a sustainable size of a post-secondary education sector. As a consequence, we've now run into the problem where the region has gone out on a limb, relying on international students to solve a number of different problems. That's now going to potentially be capped—

• (1700)

The Chair: Professor Emery, you are at six minutes and 13 seconds. Please wrap up.

Prof. Herb Emery: I'm done.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will go to Mr. Maxime Colleret for five minutes.

Please go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Colleret (Government Relations Specialist, Université du Québec): Thank you for giving me the floor.

Mr. Chair, vice-chairs and members of the committee, my name is Maxime Colleret. I handle government relations at the Université du Québec.

Thank you for having me here today to talk about international students, more specifically about the federal government introducing a cap. I think it's important to hear the Université du Québec's point of view on this, particularly because of its mission to make university studies accessible in French and its province-wide presence, as it operates 10 establishments in over 40 municipalities across Quebec.

To give you an idea of its influence, the Université du Québec accepts 100,000 students, and one in two of them is the first in their family to go to university.

The Université du Québec was created in 1968 by an act of the Government of Quebec. Since then, it has awarded 850,000 degrees. Today, nearly 7,500 professors and course instructors work at the Université du Québec. There are also 5,000 doctoral students, and 30,000 scientific articles have been written over the past five years, 52% of them in international collaboration. This shows not only the Université du Québec's reach, but also the importance of international collaborations and the role of international students here at home. We'll come back to that later.

Once all this data is put together, the Université du Québec, whose network includes 10 establishments, becomes the largest university in North America. In terms of size, with 100,000 students, it's even bigger than the University of Toronto.

Of our 100,000 students, 18% are international students. Over the past 10 years, that number has increased, but in a controlled manner. We went from 11% to 18% international students, so that's seven percentage points.

Over the past year or so, the federal government has announced a number of measures to reduce or monitor international students in Canada. In 2024, a cap of 485,000 study permits was established. At the time, it was understood that the objective was to crack down on abuse, particularly by certain individuals who have turned immigration into a business model.

It was also understood that Quebec exercised its immigration jurisdiction, particularly by issuing acceptance certificates to international students. I would remind you that in the announcement, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration cited Quebec as an example to follow.

As a result, the cap the federal government established for Quebec exceeded the number of students enrolled in establishments. However, we were witnessing the application of a Canada-wide measure to solve a problem that seemed specific and intended to make those engaged in fraudulent practices stop doing so, which does not concern the Université du Québec or the other Quebec universities.

After that first measure, we learned recently that the federal government wanted to lower the cap for 2025. According to the announcement, the cap of 485,000 study permits in 2024 will indeed be reduced by 10% in 2025.

Apart from that reduction, we also learned that master's and doctoral degrees would now be included in the cap. Even though we don't yet know the cap that will be set per province, the Université du Québec is concerned about this new measure.

Including graduate degrees in the cap seems to me to be a particularly worrisome avenue. At the Université du Québec, for example, over 50% of our international students are enrolled in graduate studies. In practical terms, this means that a significant number of students who were excluded from the cap last year will now be included.

We understand that the purpose of this measure is once again to counter the practices of certain individuals outside Quebec who have started offering master's programs to get around the previous cap that excluded graduate degrees, for example. However, I would like to remind you that master's and doctoral degrees are regulated in Quebec by the Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, which oversees universities and CEGEPs. It seems to me that this is a general measure and it doesn't address the realities of Université du Québec establishments and Quebec establishments in general.

I also want to say that Université du Québec establishments have assumed their responsibility to ensure that they welcome students and facilitate their integration as well as they can. We've put in place a host of measures, which we can discuss later.

I also want to remind you that Quebec university establishments, as well as international students and the communities that benefit from their presence, may be penalized as a result of this Canada-wide measure.

However, if there have been abuses and some individuals aren't following the rules, action does need to be taken.

• (1705)

That said, it has to be done in a targeted way, not by introducing measures that apply to everyone, even those playing by the rules.

Thank you for your attention.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Colleret. That's perfect timing—five minutes and five seconds.

Now we will go to Professor Worswick for five minutes.

Professor Christopher Worswick (Professor and Chair, Department of Economics, Carleton University, As an Individual):

I just want to say that I'm not getting the translation. I just thought I'd bring that up now.

The Chair: Mr. Worswick, can you hear the translation now?

He's not hearing anything.

The mic might be an issue. We're going to change the mic, so we'll pause until we get this fixed.

It's working, so I'm going to call the meeting back to order.

We're going to give the floor to Mr. Worswick for five minutes.

Prof. Christopher Worswick: Thank you for giving me this opportunity. I thought I would make some high-level comments on international students and immigration programs, which is sort of my area of research.

As I'm sure everyone knows, international students can represent a large win for a country like Canada, with a very high-quality post-secondary education sector and a high standard of living. The tuition gained by universities and colleges can be significant, allowing them to put on high-quality programs that benefit both international students and domestic students. Things like the rental income that international students pay to Canadian landlords can also be significant, an important part of the Canadian economy.

Where I think the situation becomes more complicated is if we have a two-step immigration system where temporary residence as a temporary foreign worker, or international student in this case, leads to preferred access to admission under the permanent immigration system. I think this type of two-step system is appealing in that we often learn a great deal about particular international students through their performance and their studies in Canada. That's all good. It also helps avoid problems of foreign credential recognition for immigrants to Canada, which have been significant for many years.

Let me quickly say what I think are the risks of this type of program with international students in particular. First, a large international student population can create pressure to greatly expand the immigration system beyond what is likely optimal. In my research with colleagues on this, we find that one would want immigrants arriving under the economic categories to be raising the average skill level of all residents in Canada. I think it's reasonable to expect that if a person is doing a university degree, that will be the case. Their earnings after they enter the labour market and get established will be higher than the average. It's raising the average skill level. It becomes less clear at the public college level that this would be true, and especially at the private college level.

My suggestion would be to prioritize international student visas such that they only go to programs where the graduates have expected labour market earnings after graduation that are likely to be above average in Canada, at least within a reasonable time frame of, say, five to 10 years or something like that.

I think this would not be difficult to do, as we have a lot of data in Canada and analysis on earnings of graduates from Canadian programs and universities. To my mind, this is feasible to do. This criterion for the allocation of international student visas would likely eliminate all private colleges in Canada. Whether it would eliminate public community colleges might depend on the academic program, but I think this should be ultimately an empirical question for any academic program, whether it be university or college. One could address it in a scientific way, using available data rather than having universities and colleges lobby government for these visas.

As I see it, the other problem with a large international student program, as we've seen in Canada in recent years, relates to what traditionally has been called absorptive capacity. The idea here is that there's concern that a large number of new immigrants arriving in the country each year could be so high that this distorts wages, prices or access to key government services. We should be cautious in setting targets or limits on the number of international students, given that we do not want the number to be so high as to lead to large-scale rental increases or reductions in access to such services as public health care. I believe the expansion of the non-permanent resident population in Canada from roughly 786,000, or 2.18% of the population, in 2016 to over three million, or 7.27% of the population, in 2024 was likely to far surpass what the Canadian economy was able to absorb. The limits that the federal government has put in place on the different international migration programs, but in particular the international student programs, I think are justified, if perhaps happening much later than they should have.

Finally, the reports that an increasing number of international students facing the end of their visas may be lodging false refugee claims are very concerning. This would be very costly for the Canadian economy and greatly limit our capacity to control the size of the population. One way to minimize this risk is to use the earnings criterion that we grant student visas only in cases where the person's earnings are likely to be so high, or high enough, after graduation that they would qualify for admission as a permanent resident under the economic category. If this were the case, it is unclear why a person would ever file a false refugee claim.

In summary, the recent reforms to the international student program represent a good first step in terms of regaining control of a program that has been growing at an alarming rate.

• (1710)

Recognizing that international students typically wish to gain permanent residency after graduation means that we can have a successful international student program that benefits Canadians. To do this, we need to focus the allocation of student visas to students entering academic programs that are likely to make them both highly successful in the Canadian labour market and eligible for admission as economic permanent residents to Canada.

Thank you again. I would be happy to answer any questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Professor Worswick. It was five minutes and 30 seconds, good timing.

Now we are going to honourable members.

I'm going to start with Mr. Kmiec.

[*Translation*]

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

Given the time, are we going to have two turns?

How much time do we have in total? That wasn't mentioned.

[*English*]

The Chair: I will go until 5:45 or 5:48 at the latest.

Okay?

Thank you.

With that, Mr. Kmiec, I'll start the watch now.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Thank you, Chair.

Professor Emery, at the first meeting this committee had, we heard from officials. They mostly said they didn't know anything, but they did mention in their opening statement that the cap and other policy measures that were introduced were because of "unsustainable growth"—that's the quote from them—and to reduce student vulnerability. In your opening statement, you talked about the goals the government may have had.

What do you think the government's goals were in putting on the cap? Do you think those are the right ones, or do you have different goals that should be reached?

Prof. Herb Emery: I'm going to focus my response from the perspective of the Atlantic region, which I think has a different context from the cap, which was addressing more of an Ontario-centred problem with the massive growth particularly in colleges.

Atlantic Canada has had increasing dependence on international students, but not at the same rate as the rest of the country. In New Brunswick in particular, it's only been the last couple of years that we've seen what I would even call large growth, but it's not particularly large compared to what you see in some cities in Ontario. As a consequence, the challenge with the cap is that the first mover, Ontario, has done a lot of this expansion in a way that it seems like it's had some pretty negative consequences. The cap, in a sense, makes sense for Ontario, maybe for the large cities, but it is hamstringing the opportunities for other regions like Atlantic Canada to test the waters to see are the students more effective for staying.

• (1715)

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Thank you, Professor Emery. I'm going to interrupt you.

Do you think a one-size-fits-all policy for all of Canada is the right approach then?

Prof. Herb Emery: Of course not, but it's the one that has often been used for a number of things, including climate policy. It shouldn't be a surprise that we get a one-size-fits-all policy because that's what sells across Canada, but it doesn't work for the Atlantic region.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Professor Emery, do you think this is going to harm Atlantic Canada and its university and college systems?

Prof. Herb Emery: I think it will put a lot of strain on the university and college systems in terms of the labour market. It's not clear to me what the bottom line impact will be because we also depend on in- and out-migration, which could include international students from other regions.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Professor Emery, do you know if any of the governments, the universities or colleges were consulted before these changes were introduced?

Prof. Herb Emery: I'm not privy to those kinds of conversations, so it wouldn't be fair for me to speculate on what role they might have had.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: My next questions are for Professor Worswick.

I was going to ask about the absorptive capacity which you spoke about. Do you have suggestions on how that would be calculated?

Prof. Christopher Worswick: I actually submitted a grant application on Friday.

What we'd like to do is use the surge of the population we've seen over the last seven years to try to estimate it empirically. I think there are things you could do without going to that much trouble. For example, people have compared growth in the housing stock to the growth in the population. If you see that housing is not growing proportionally with the population, that would be a sign that this could be an issue.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: You mentioned at the end of your opening statement the case of fraudulent applications at the Immigration and Refugee Board. There are also other instances of fraudulent activity. We learned at the last meeting of this committee that up to 10,000 fake acceptance letters or fraudulent acceptance letters were identified by IRCC. This was big business. They said that it was only in one year. This is only after they had introduced this two-step or another layer of security on it.

Do you have any other concerns that all these changes introduced have led to more chaos in the immigration system and especially in the processing of applications?

Prof. Christopher Worswick: When you change policy and programs too often, there's going to be confusion and uncertainty, but I think there was an issue of just the volume of people coming into the country. Cutting back on the volume coming in is probably going to help, but that isn't really my area of expertise.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Going back to absorptive capacity, you mentioned in your opening statement that a lot of individuals are seeing their work permits or their study permits expire. They don't have an opportunity for renewal, so they're choosing—and this is being reported in the news—to make an application to the Immigration and Refugee Board.

Does that speak to anything else, like more chaos? Will we see that keep growing, and will there be even more questions as to the absorptive capacity of Canada? People will be waiting years before they'll know whether they'll get permanent status in Canada. There's all the uncertainty related to that and the types of survival jobs they'll have to take on in the meantime.

Prof. Christopher Worswick: Ideally you would want an international student system and temporary foreign worker system where the people coming in realize that they're here temporarily and they would leave if they're not eligible for permanent residency. I think what you're saying is true, that there obviously are processing limitations.

One could consider extending the work permits, I think, temporarily.

Again, this isn't really my area of expertise, but it strikes me that we are in a moment of tremendous expansion of our international mobility programs and we're now trying to ratchet them back down. I would not be averse to saying that maybe we extend these permits for a year or two.

Beyond that, I think either the immigration system should be able to process all these applications or people should be leaving if they no longer have a legal right to stay in Canada.

● (1720)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Kmiec.

I will go now to MP Ali for six minutes.

Mr. Shafqat Ali (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

My question is for Mr. Worswick.

As you know, last month our government introduced a reduction in permanent resident numbers and published population targets for temporary migrants for the first time. In a *Globe and Mail* news article you recently wrote, you described these changes as a “sensible response to the evolving immigration and macroeconomic situation in Canada.”

Could you elaborate for this committee on your views on these recent changes, as well as changes made earlier this year to Canada's international student program?

Could you also expand on what your recommendations would be for the federal government to consider, to ensure integrity in the system?

Prof. Christopher Worswick: The first parts are easier for me.

We've not had limits on a lot of temporary migration pathways in the past. I think that's proven to have been a mistake. I think we should always have targets and limits because of this concern about absorptive capacity.

I would admit it's a notion that immigration economists have been talking about for decades, but it's not that well defined. To get at Professor Emery's point, there might be a different absorptive capacity in Halifax than there is in Toronto. It could well be a regional thing, especially if it's rents that we're concerned about.

I've been very critical of the government allowing the situation to expand to the point where, in July 2024, 7.27% of the population were temporary migrants. I mean, to put it in perspective, the foreign-born population of the United States is 14%. We have the equivalent, per capita, of half of the immigrant population of any age and any vintage of the U.S. that are now temporary residents of Canada.

I was responding to the changes in policy. They made sense. I think this is the direction we have to go. It's an unfortunate circumstance, but that's the situation.

Again, on the integrity of the system, I'm an economist. I'm not a public administration expert, so maybe I'll stop there and answer other questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Worswick.

I'll go to the honourable member.

Mr. Shafqat Ali: I represent the riding of Brampton Centre. I had a chance to visit a protest encampment of international students. Professor Emery was talking about different provinces, like Ontario. There's a migration of students from one province to another province. For example, they come into one province and then they move to a different institute, and they transfer to a different province.

Do you think the provinces have a role to play to balance it out by not approving those camps, satellites or mergers in the different areas?

Prof. Christopher Worswick: Are you referring to the satellite campuses?

Mr. Shafqat Ali: Yes.

Prof. Christopher Worswick: It's a good question.

I don't tend to blame the institutions. I don't think universities and colleges have staff members who are trained as economists necessarily to be able to think about this. Definitely, the federal government has a responsibility. I think the provincial governments have some responsibility. I think this went off the rails. It's either or both, depending on how you think about it.

Mr. Shafqat Ali: You have described our government's recently announced immigration levels plan as a "return to the previous levels of immigration to Canada."

From your perspective, how might this shift and the recent shift to the international student program contribute to the integrity of Canada's immigration system?

Prof. Christopher Worswick: These changes were needed on the immigration front, the temporary foreign worker front and the international student front.

The international student was probably the most problematic sector in the sense that it had grown the most, so I think the targets are.... Our challenge right now is we have a stock of temporary resi-

dents in Canada that's very large. I watched the Prime Minister's video. I guess it was released on the weekend or maybe late last week. They were relating it to the long-run trend of the population and trying to get back. That's not a bad way to think about it. It's to say we're way off trend, so how do we get back to it?

One way is to let the temporary resident visas expire. The people who aren't eligible for permanent residency go home or on to somewhere else, and then we get back to a sustainable system. That all makes sense to me.

• (1725)

Mr. Shafqat Ali: I'll pass that on.

In your article that I just quoted, it also says "reduce the pressure on our housing and healthcare sectors". Do you want to elaborate a bit more based on your expertise on that?

The Chair: You have 15 seconds, Professor Worswick.

Prof. Christopher Worswick: Coming out of the COVID pandemic, we knew the health care system was severely constrained. Then we brought in a million or two million new people, and very few of them were able to work in the health care system, so it's hard to see how the health care system was going to expand. Cutting these numbers back makes sense.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Before I go to the next round, I would appreciate it if, before you start questioning, you could mention who the question is for, because the two witnesses online can't see our facial expressions. I'd appreciate that.

With that, we'll go to Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe for six minutes.

[Translation]

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

I'd also like to thank all the witnesses who are with us today.

My first question is for Mr. Colleret.

Mr. Colleret, as you said, having international students at your establishments comes with its share of challenges. On that note, you tell us that the universities in the Université du Québec network are assuming their responsibilities.

Can you give us some examples of measures you are putting in place in this regard?

Mr. Maxime Colleret: Thank you for the question.

I think everyone is aware of the growing number of international students. At the Université du Québec, our numbers have gone up significantly, but we haven't left it unchecked. It does bring a host of challenges, though. I'm thinking in particular of agencies that send out mass applications for admission. For example, we received 99,000 applications for admission in 2023, a 269% increase over 2018. Obviously, not all of those applications were accepted. At the Université du Québec en Outaouais, 4,000 applications were submitted in 2024, but 431 applications were deemed eligible and 355 students registered. It's important to note that we're currently addressing a number of factors and that we're assuming our responsibilities.

Recently, asylum claims have been getting some media coverage. A question was asked about it earlier. As universities, we assess university records. Assessing the risk a candidate poses is more the responsibility of the Quebec and federal governments.

We nevertheless try to make sure that the students attending our establishments have a serious study plan and that they're really coming here to study. A number of establishments now require a deposit with admission applications. In other words, a deposit is required while applications are being assessed, but it is then reimbursed. This stops the agencies and ensures that the candidates who are accepted have a serious study plan.

We have now a massive guide at the university, an encyclopedia of all institutions around the world and the programs they offer. We also have a computerized decision support system, which helps us ensure that the people we accept are genuine graduates and really have the education they say they have.

Unlike some individuals who are mainly outside Quebec, the Université du Québec does not use immigration as a business model. On the contrary, we want to make sure that candidates are serious about doing their studies here, and we're taking the necessary steps to do so. Things are obviously not perfect yet, but we're working on it.

• (1730)

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: In your opening remarks, you talked about Canada-wide measures. Last week, the committee realized that the department in Ottawa perhaps didn't have a solid grasp of Quebec's education system, which does things differently than the rest of Canada.

Take, for example, the measure on post-graduation work permits. Does this measure affect you?

Isn't there a disconnect, in that a measure is enforced Canada-wide, but there might be a lack of familiarity with the Quebec system, especially the university system in your case?

Mr. Maxime Colleret: Yes, Quebec's system is unique, since universities fall under the Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur. When it comes to the post-graduation work permit, as we understand it, bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees would be exempt from this measure. However, all short-duration programs, including those leading to Quebec's specialized postgraduate diplomas, or DESS, which are offered in most, if not all, universities in Quebec, will be subject to this measure.

Obviously, we expect that this could have an impact in the long term on enrolment in these programs. However, universities develop programs over five, 10 or 15 years, and these programs can't be changed overnight. Some Université du Québec institutions are working with the Government of Quebec to create DESS programs that will address certain shortages. I'm thinking in particular of the DESS in education, which aims to address the shortage of teachers in the Quebec education system, and the DESS in administration, which aims to address the current labour shortage.

Université du Québec's 10 universities are rooted in their communities. These institutions are located not only in Montreal, but throughout the regions. Most of the time, they develop their pro-

grams in tandem with the communities, with the very needs of those communities in mind.

A Canada-wide measure is ill-suited to take into account the realities of those communities and the institutions rooted in them. For example, if a sector is needed in a given community but isn't on the federal government's list of priority sectors, that can mean that a program won't be offered. In the regions, the cohorts are sometimes relatively small, and the absence of international students in these programs can literally mean that the cohort won't start up.

In that context, even Quebec students wouldn't have access to those programs. It's a specific measure, and it's very difficult to adapt it to the realities of each region, particularly in Quebec.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Is my time already up, Mr. Chair?

[English]

The Chair: Ask a short question.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I'll try to come back to you later, Mr. Colleret. This has been a great discussion.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now go to MP Kwan. After MP Kwan, we will give two minutes to the Conservatives, two minutes to the Liberals, one minute to the Bloc and one minute to the NDP. Then that's it.

MP Kwan, please go ahead.

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

Thank you to the witnesses for appearing before our committee today.

My question is for Professor Emery.

In a podcast that came out around November 7, I think, you and your co-hosts made comments about the decision the government announced with respect to the immigration levels plan and the changes regarding international students. They were somewhere along the lines that they were more of a political response and that the government was doing things that are politically expedient in the short run to take the heat off of the current government.

I wonder if you could expand on that comment with respect to the decision on the changes regarding international students.

Prof. Herb Emery: Sure.

The challenge is.... Again, I should have been a bit more careful about inferring motive on the part of government. However, I will say that the lack of study and discussion prior, the speed with which those caps came in on the heels of crises like affordable housing and things like that, perception of bad actors in Ontario, growing intense pressure on Ontario universities and colleges for finances, the fact that it happened so quickly without study and without this kind of consultation prior.... To me, it seems as if there's been more discussion after about what the impacts have been. That was behind a lot of those comments.

It's also the case in the maritime region. A lot of the discussion around immigration numbers and the role of international students.... It wasn't being studied in terms of absorptive capacity or some of those factors like Professor Worswick has brought up. It was really just "We need more numbers." This goes back to 2016 when the idea of just growing international students, immigration numbers in total, was also a politically expedient way to try to grow the regional economy, because there was no clear evidence that it was going to work in a small open economy. You need to stimulate labour demand to get population up; you can't push it by increasing labour supply.

We've had a period of at least 10 years where governments tend to study things after they make the policy decision instead of in advance. That's part of why I believe that a lot of these things are reactionary and that they tend to be changes made when things don't go as expected.

• (1735)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much. I really appreciate those comments.

This has been said already by others. They seem to indicate that the government's decision was, in fact, a political response to the housing crisis, which, by the way, was not necessarily caused by newcomers but by successive Liberal and Conservative governments that failed on the delivery of housing that people need. I won't expand on that now. I'll save that for another day.

People are also saying that they fear there will be unanticipated consequences as a result of these decisions and the announcement that the government has made. You touched on this in your podcast, saying, "We're about to see a lot of dominoes fall, like the financial crisis about to hit a lot of the Ontario post-secondary system, and this is going to have knock-on effects because firms aren't going to find workers, so we'll see plants starting to close or threatening to close."

I wonder if you can share with the committee your thoughts on the broad economic impacts of the international student caps for different provinces and different regions, particularly rural regions or smaller communities.

Prof. Herb Emery: You have a Canadian economy that is increasingly urbanizing around a small number of very large cities and centres, and you have a large number of traditional industries like fishing and agriculture that are being hollowed out in terms of the traditional working-age population. They are aging more rapidly than the cities. Getting workers into those regions to maintain production in plants that are not investing in automating and remain highly dependent on labour, that's where, again, a lot of these deci-

sions around immigration were coming through as a reaction to the lack of investment we see in Canada in advanced manufacturing and in automation. We were keeping the legacy plants going by finding a new supply of labour to replace the traditional younger Canadian labour supply that was no longer there.

The challenges in Ontario with its post-secondary system are different from the challenges we're facing, let's say, with labour supply needs in the Atlantic region. In Ontario, I don't know if they were planning to use the increase in college-educated personal service workers coming out to solve some of the health care problems like they were in Atlantic Canada, but with the direct ties in the college system in our region, we're looking at programs that would produce graduates who could go to work in, say, the care sector, so there was at least some thinking around how to find the care workers for the population that isn't getting access to the services they need. Again, there was no study in advance on whether that works. It was based on a belief that you'll train them, that the jobs will be there and they'll take the jobs.

It's a rambling answer, but the real reason I think we did a lot of this was the labour shortage narrative that came in. A lot of employers were struggling to make ends meet with a lot of the margins and labour market policies coming in. If you can't raise your wages, you need to find another supply of labour to keep the lights on. I think that's what was happening in a lot of places.

The Chair: Thank you. The time is up.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Can I make one quick comment?

In other words, to summarize that, it's bringing in cheap labour, and now that the government has another crisis, it wants to blame the people who were brought in to provide cheap labour for the crisis that the government itself created.

• (1740)

The Chair: Thank you, MP Kwan.

Now we will go to Mr. Redekopp for two minutes.

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

Mr. Worswick, I want to clarify something. You talked about how when we bring immigrants in, we should be raising the average skill level. You talked about the average wages and things like that, and to me, you seemed to imply that applies to universities for sure, to colleges maybe, and to private schools not often.

What about polytechnics and some of the trades jobs in some of the areas where we have a great need and wages are very good? Are you saying that we shouldn't be bringing people in for that?

Prof. Christopher Worswick: No, what I'm suggesting is we should make the decision for allocation of international visas to higher education institutions based on expected earnings. At the polytechnics you're talking about, if the graduates have high earnings, then we should allocate international student visas to them, and maybe there are programs at universities that don't meet that criteria.

The way we use the comprehensive ranking system for immigration, we should try to develop something that's similar for international students, because otherwise, lobbying and politics are going to drive this, and we're going to end up placing international students in the wrong institutions.

I do think we have absorptive capacity issues, so we're constrained in that regard. Our health care system just can't expand fast enough to handle the volumes of people coming in that we've had.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Thank you.

Mr. Emery, the Prime Minister talked about bad actors taking advantage of the programs, essentially blaming the problems in the immigration system on them. He talked about too many colleges and universities using international student programs to raise their bottom lines, and he talked about scammers targeting vulnerable immigrants.

Do you agree with the Prime Minister that the designated learning institutions, universities and colleges, essentially, are to blame for the fraud and the errors that happened in this program, or does the government bear some blame in this?

The Chair: You have 30 seconds, Mr. Emery.

Prof. Herb Emery: It sounds to me like there's been a failure of oversight in the implementation of who had the right to invite students in. I don't believe universities were abusing it to the degree we saw in some of those private colleges, so I think it's a regulatory failure or a policy failure.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

I would like to welcome you, Mr. Chahal to the committee.

You probably want to ask questions, but I have to go to Mr. Chiang for two minutes.

Mr. Chiang, please go ahead.

Mr. Paul Chiang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Through you, my question is directed to Mr. Colleret.

In a 2021 study, economist Pierre Fortin found that Quebec would have to invest an additional \$1.4 billion per year in universities to bring the funding in line with that of other Canadian provinces. In light of reports that provinces underfunded their post-secondary institutions leading to an over-reliance on international student tuition, don't you think the recent federal changes to the international student program were a direct result of provinces not adequately addressing the needs of post-secondary institutions? Also, do you have other recommendations for the committee to consider, especially in light of Quebec's jurisdiction on immigration and the bill regarding international students?

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Colleret.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Colleret: I thank the member for the question.

The economist Pierre Fortin, whom you quoted, is absolutely right to say that universities in Quebec have a recurring underfunding problem. In fact, just last year, the Université du Québec submitted a brief on the budget envelope to the Government of Quebec. In that document, we talked about a historic shortfall of \$100 million that we had to make up just to get funding equivalent to that of the other universities. Every year, all universities accumulate a significant shortfall.

That said, I would still like to point out that, for the Université du Québec network, we charge about \$21,000 a year for international students. For a Quebec student, we get about \$18,000 a year. However, we have to take into account the costs associated with educational tools, as well as support and integration measures for international students. We need to dispel the cash cow myth, if I may call it that. International students bring in an enormous amount of money for university establishments, at least they do in the Université du Québec's case.

It's still relatively hard to say what the federal government could do to improve the situation. I know that the Quebec government is currently looking at this issue, which makes things even more complex. The federal government and the Government of Quebec are both taking action, so we're currently stuck between the two, that is to say between the federal government and Government of Quebec measures.

Certainly, if we want to improve the situation, if we want to keep the situation viable at universities, at the very least, the federal government should take the Quebec context into consideration and exclude graduate studies from the cap.

• (1745)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Colleret and Mr. Chiang. We went over time on this one.

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, go ahead for one minute.

[*Translation*]

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

Mr. Colleret, you told us earlier that about 50% of international students at your university do graduate studies.

To what extent will the federal government's measures have an impact on research at your establishments?

Mr. Maxime Colletet: Yes, 50% of our international students study at the graduate level. However, according to a figure that I think is even more telling, 8,000 international students are studying at the graduate level, which means they make up 40% of our graduate students, at the Université du Québec and all universities combined.

Scientific research depends on the presence of graduate students. The professors work with these students. They're the ones who do the research in the labs, in collaboration with the professors. Quebec's entire innovation and knowledge advancement system depends on the presence of international students.

This is all the more important because, in some programs at the Université du Québec, for example, professors aren't able to initiate research projects because there aren't enough students in the laboratories. If we were to reduce our number of international graduate students by 40%, we would still find ourselves with a glaring issue in terms of innovation and scientific research in the university environment, particularly at the Université du Québec.

The measure doesn't say that we're going to cut off all access for international students. However, we don't know at this point what's going to happen. Things aren't clear.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: It was—

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, you're already at one minute and 21 seconds.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Okay, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Colletet.

[English]

The Chair: We'll go to MP Kwan for one minute.

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

I want to go back to Dr. Emery.

I remember when the government announced the Atlantic provinces special immigration measure. Given that this is where we are now with this situation, do you have any recommendations for how the government should adjust their plans, especially in addressing the problems that you anticipate for rural and smaller communities?

Prof. Herb Emery: I think that the big missing discussion is a statement of the goals you're trying to achieve with this type of immigration policy.

In a lot of the discussion that even we've had this afternoon, it's been about numbers and absorptive capacity, but not so much about what we're trying to achieve. Is it innovation? Is it labour supply? Is it growing the high-skill population? If you don't know what goal you're trying to achieve, then I don't know what we can actually recommend. If the goals were to bring in lower-skill labour for the short term and to boost up some university finances, it was working well, and putting the cap in was probably a mistake. If the goals were long-run population development and skills development, it probably needed to be more tailored to where the labour market

needs are and which innovation system you're trying to seed, but that's not the discussion we're having.

The Chair: Thank you very much, members.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Chair, I'd like to ask—

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Morrice.

Mr. Mike Morrice: Chair, I'm asking for unanimous consent from colleagues for a minute and a half to ask questions.

The Chair: Are all in favour?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: We're all good, so I will give Mr. Morrice one and a half minutes.

Mr. Mike Morrice: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, colleagues.

Professor Worswick, I want to share with you why this is of particular interest to me. When the temporary resident population went from 786,000 to three million, you called that "going off the rails". In my community, there's a college that has raised their population of international students from 760 and some to over 30,000 within a decade. That has had significant impacts on my community. You spoke about the ability to absorb. The ability of my community to absorb that population growth has been challenged.

Over a year ago I put forward a number of measures that I was able to work with the minister on. Four of them have been put forward, but a number haven't, and I'm looking to continue to build support for these. I'd like to put one of those to you, which is that, for designated learning institutions that have more than 15% of international students who never actually enrol in a course, there would be, maybe, a limiting of visas from IRCC to those DLIs. That's something a number of countries around the world have already done, but Canada hasn't yet. Is that something that's on your radar already, and is there a comment you'd like to share with the committee on a proposal like that?

• (1750)

The Chair: You have eight seconds, Professor Worswick, to respond.

Prof. Christopher Worswick: It seems like a very good idea to me. I think there's a real concern that our international student program at times is turning into a de facto temporary foreign worker program, which is not the intent, so I would support what you told me about it, anyway.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

On behalf of the committee members, I thank Professor Emery, Professor Worswick and Monsieur Colletet for their input for the committee members here. With that, I wish the very best to you.

I also thank the honourable members for staying a bit late today, and the staff, of course—the interpreters, the clerk and the technical support. Thank you very much.

With that, I will see you next Thursday.

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