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Special Committee on Afghanistan

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Monday, December 13, 2021

Chair: Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal



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• (1925)
[English]

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Miriam Burke): Honourable members of the committee, I see quorum.

I must inform the members that the clerk of the committee can only receive motions for the election of the chair. The clerk cannot receive other types of motions, entertain points of order or participate in debate.

We can now proceed to the election of the chair.

Pursuant to the order adopted by the House on December 8, 2021, the chair must be a member of the government party.

I am ready to receive motions for the chair.

Ms. Zahid.

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): I would like to nominate Mr. Dhaliwal for the position of the chair.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Ms. Zahid that Mr. Dhaliwal be elected as chair of the committee.

Are there further motions?

None being seen, is it the will of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Mr. Dhaliwal duly elected chair of the committee.

I invite the chair to take the chair.

The Chair (Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.)): Good evening.

I want to thank each and every one of you for giving me an opportunity to chair this meeting. I would also like to thank Madam Clerk for presiding over the meeting earlier.

I also welcome two analysts. We have Ms. Allison Goody and Ms. Julie Béchar, as well as the other support staff.

If the committee is in agreement, I will invite the clerk to proceed with the election of the vice-chairs. The first vice-chair will be from the official opposition. The second vice-chair will be from an opposition party other than the official opposition party.

The Clerk: Pursuant to the order adopted by the House on December 8, 2021, there shall be one vice-chair from each of the other recognized parties.

I am now prepared to receive motions for the vice-chair from the official opposition.

Ms. Findlay.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Clerk, I nominate the honourable Michael Chong as vice-chair.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Ms. Findlay that Mr. Chong from the official opposition be elected as vice-chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

None being seen, is it the will of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Mr. Chong duly elected vice-chair of the committee from the official opposition.

I'm now prepared to receive motions

[Translation]

for the position of vice-chair of the committee for the Bloc Québécois.

Mr. El-Khoury, the floor is yours.

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): I nominate Mr. Duceppe.

The Clerk: Mr. El-Khoury moved that Mr. Duceppe—

• (1930)

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): My name is Brunelle-Duceppe. Otherwise, you will have my father, and that may not be a good idea.

The Clerk: I apologize.

Mr. El-Khoury moved that Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe be elected vice-chair of the committee for the Bloc Québécois.

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe duly elected vice-chair of the committee for the Bloc Québécois.

[English]

I'm now prepared to receive motions for the vice-chair from the NDP.

Mr. Chong.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Chair, I nominate Ms. Jenny Kwan for the position of vice-chair.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Chong that Ms. Kwan be elected vice-chair of the committee from the NDP.

Is it the will of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: Ms. Kwan is duly elected NDP vice-chair.

Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Clerk.

Welcome to meeting number one of the House of Commons Special Committee on Afghanistan.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of November 25, 2021. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application, but of course all of them are present here today. Regardless, for the speaking list, the committee clerk and I will do the best we can to maintain a consolidated order of speaking for all members, whether participating virtually or in person.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind all participants to this meeting that screenshots or taking photos of your screen is not permitted.

The proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website.

Given the ongoing pandemic situation and in light of the recommendations from public health authorities, as well as the directive of the Board of Internal Economy on October 19, 2021, to remain healthy and safe, the following is recommended for all those attending the meeting in person. Anyone with symptoms should participate by Zoom and not attend the meeting in person. Everyone must maintain two metres of physical distance, whether seated or standing. Everyone must wear a non-medical mask when circulating in the room. It is recommended in the strongest possible terms that members wear their masks at all times, including when seated. Non-medical masks, which provide better clarity over cloth masks, are available in this room at the back.

Everyone present must maintain proper hand hygiene by using the hand sanitizer at the room entrance. Committee rooms are cleaned before and after each meeting. To maintain this, everyone is encouraged to clean surfaces such as desks, chairs and microphones with the provided disinfectant wipes when vacating or taking a seat.

As chair, I will be enforcing these measures for the duration of the meeting, and I thank all members in advance for their co-operation.

I also would like to congratulate Mr. Chong, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe and Madam Jenny Kwan on being the vice-chairs. I'm looking forward to working with each and every one of you.

Is there any other business?

I have Madam Zahid.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Thank you, Chair, and congratulations on being elected as chair. I'm looking forward to working with you.

With your permission, may I read the routine motions?

The Chair: Yes. Please go ahead.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: I'll read them one by one and then we can go from there.

The first one is on analyst services. I move:

That the committee retain, as needed and at the discretion of the Chair, the services of one or more analysts from the Library of Parliament to assist it in its work.

• (1935)

The Chair: Madam Clerk, do you want to elaborate on these routine motions?

The Clerk: No, thank you.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Should I read them one by one or all together?

The Chair: We can do them all together if that is the will of the committee.

Hon. Michael Chong: Why don't we just adopt them one by one?

The Chair: Okay.

(Motion agreed to)

Mrs. Salma Zahid: On the subcommittee on agenda and procedure, I move:

That the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure be established and be composed of the Chair, one member from each recognized party; and that the subcommittee work in a spirit of collaboration.

(Motion agreed to)

Mrs. Salma Zahid: On meeting without a quorum, I move:

That the Chair be authorized to hold meetings to receive evidence and to have that evidence published when a quorum is not present, provided that at least four members are present, including two members of the opposition parties and two members of the government party, but when travelling outside the Parliamentary Precinct, that the meeting begin after 15 minutes, regardless of members present.

(Motion agreed to)

Mrs. Salma Zahid: The next motion deals with time for opening remarks and questioning of witnesses. I move:

That witnesses be given five minutes for their opening statement; that whenever possible, witnesses provide the committee with their opening statement 72 hours in advance; that at the discretion of the Chair, during the questioning of witnesses, there be allocated six minutes for the first questioner of each party as follows for the first round: Conservative Party, Liberal Party, Bloc Québécois, New Democratic Party. For the second and subsequent rounds, the order and time for questioning be as follows: Conservative Party, five minutes; Liberal Party, five minutes; Bloc Québécois, two and a half minutes; New Democratic Party, two and a half minutes; Conservative Party, five minutes; Liberal Party, five minutes.

The Chair: Ms. Kwan, do you have a question?

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): I do, Mr. Chair. I just want to see whether or not there is any appetite from committee members for the following. I know that in other committees, when we go to the second round, as we sort of wrap-up, oftentimes the chair would actually allow the Bloc and the NDP to have one last minute to round up the rotation.

I want to see whether or not there's appetite from committee members to follow that practice, which has been done at some other committees I've sat on.

The Chair: Is there any discussion on what Ms. Kwan has brought forward?

It is at the discretion of the chair. If every other party agrees, I don't see any issues.

Go ahead, Mr. El-Khoury.

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

I would like to ask Ms. Kwan, if it's possible, what committee uses this practice?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: In the last Parliament, it was the committee that I sat on as a substitute, actually. I was a deputy health critic. The health committee, for example, adopted that.

At the CIMM committee, we also went through rotations where the chair from that committee also engaged in that practice.

Those are two committees with which I have experience.

The Chair: I will recognize Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, and then I'll come back to the other speakers.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I would like to add something.

In the Subcommittee on International Human Rights, speaking time in the second round is divided equally among all parties. I think that's even better, but that's not even what we are asking for here. Since the committee was created unanimously and the amendment and the motion were also passed unanimously, I think we can all be wise together and accept this proposal from the NDP.

● (1940)

[English]

The Chair: Parliamentary Secretary Damoff, please go ahead.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): That's so formal.

In committees that I've sat on before, which were not those ones, it wasn't in the routine motions. However, the chair always did do that, and sometimes, if we were running out of time, he would shorten the time to three minutes per party.

There's lots of discretion for the chair to do that, and there's certainly the will to hear from all parties. I don't know that we actually need to amend the routine motion, but given the discretion the chair has, there's certainly a desire to hear from everybody when we have the time.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mrs. Zahid.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Thank you, Chair.

Ms. Kwan referred to the citizenship and immigration committee. We had nothing in the routine motion in regard to that. It is at the discretion of the chair, and we have full confidence in you that, based on the meeting and how much time is left, we will work collaboratively to see if there is a need.

The Chair: Mr. Chong.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you.

I think the principle of committee is the same as the principle in the House, which is that every member should have equal time, other than the chair, of course, to provide commentary or to ask questions of witnesses. There are four Conservative members of this committee and we only have three slots in the first 49 minutes of questions and comments from members. If you add to that five to 10 minutes of statements from witnesses at the opening, it means that in the first hour—we only have three of four slots—one of our members will be denied a slot in the first hour on this routine motion as it currently was agreed to by the whips. I don't support anything that would detract from the ability of my colleagues here to have time for questions or comments.

I note that the New Democratic Party has two slots as it stands in the routine motions, and the time allocated to the New Democratic Party, which is eight and a half minutes out of 49 minutes, is above their standing in the House of Commons. I don't think we should derivate or deviate from what has been proposed in the routine motions. The whips have agreed to it for a reason. It's fair to even the smaller parties in the House. In fact, it accords more time to the smaller recognized parties in the House than their standing would warrant. Any dilution beyond that means that our members here—and the Liberal members, frankly—get even less time for questions and comments at committee meetings.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, honourable Mr. Chong.

I don't see a consensus.

Madam Kwan, do you want me to take a vote, or do you want to leave it to my discretion as chair?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Chair, I would support leaving it to your discretion. I would certainly hope that we can follow the practice I've suggested.

I know, Mr. Chair, that you were also on the CIMM committee, so you would have seen how that was done previously as well.

The Chair: Thank you.

I will take the vote on the original motion proposed by Madam Zahid.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: We will have the next motion, please.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Thank you, Chair.

The next one is with regard to document distribution. I move:

That only the clerk of the committee be authorized to distribute documents to members of the Committee provided the documents are in both official languages, and that the witnesses be advised accordingly.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: We will have the next motion, please.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: It is on working meals. I move:

That the clerk of the committee, at the discretion of the Chair, be authorized to make the necessary arrangements to provide working meals for the committee and its subcommittees.

(Motion agreed to)

Mrs. Salma Zahid: The next one is on travel, accommodation and living expenses of witnesses. I move:

That, if requested, reasonable travel, accommodation and living expenses be reimbursed to witnesses not exceeding two representatives per organization; and that in exceptional circumstances, payment for more representatives be made at the discretion of the Chair.

(Motion agreed to)

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Next is access to in camera meetings. I move:

That, unless otherwise ordered, each committee member be allowed to be accompanied by one staff member at in camera meetings and that one additional person from each House officer's office be allowed to be present.

(Motion agreed to)

• (1945)

Mrs. Salma Zahid: The next one is on transcripts of in camera meetings. I move:

That one copy of the transcript of each in camera meeting be kept in the committee clerk's office for consultation by members of the committee or by their staff; and that the analysts assigned to the committee also have access to the in camera transcripts.

(Motion agreed to)

Mrs. Salma Zahid: The next is on notice of motion. I move:

That a 48-hour notice, interpreted as two nights, be required for any substantive motion to be moved in committee, unless the substantive motion relates directly to business then under consideration, provided that: (a) the notice be filed with the clerk of the committee no later than 4:00 p.m. from Monday to Friday; (b) the motion be distributed to Members and the offices of the whips of each recognized party in both official languages by the clerk on the same day the said notice was transmitted if it was received no later than the deadline hour; (c) notices received after the deadline hour or on non-business days be deemed to have been received during the next business day; and that when the committee is holding meetings outside the Parliamentary Precinct, no substantive motion may be moved.

(Motion agreed to)

Mrs. Salma Zahid: On orders of reference respecting bills, I move:

That in relation to orders of reference from the House respecting Bills,

(a) The clerk of the committee shall, upon the committee receiving such an order of reference, write to each member who is not a member of a caucus represented on the committee to invite those members to file with the clerk of the committee, in both official languages, any amendments to the bill, which is the subject of the said Order, which they would suggest that the committee consider;

(b) Suggested amendments filed, pursuant to paragraph (a), at least 48 hours prior to the start of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill to which the amendments relate shall be deemed to be proposed during the said consideration, provided that the committee may, by motion, vary this deadline in respect of a given bill; and

(c) During the clause-by-clause consideration of a bill, the Chair shall allow a member who filed suggested amendments, pursuant to paragraph (a), an opportunity to make brief representations in support of them.

(Motion agreed to)

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Thank you.

The next one is with regard to technical tests for witnesses. I move:

That the clerk inform each witness who is to appear before the committee that the House Administration support team must conduct technical tests to check the connectivity and the equipment used to ensure the best possible sound quality; and that the Chair advise the committee, at the start of each meeting, of any witness who did not perform the required technical tests.

(Motion agreed to)

Mrs. Salma Zahid: The last one is with regard to linguistic review. I move:

That all documents submitted for committee business that do not come from a federal department, member's offices, or that have not been translated by the Translation Bureau be sent for prior linguistic review by the Translation Bureau before being distributed to members.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Zahid.

Madam Kwan has the floor. I will ask Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe to speak second.

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

I'd like to move an additional motion for the committee's consideration in relation to the in camera meetings. It would be helpful for us to have clear parameters on what items should be dealt with in camera, so that we don't end up spending valuable time debating what should and shouldn't be in camera.

To that end, I move:

That the committee may meet in camera only for the following purposes:

- (a) to consider a draft report;
- (b) to attend briefings concerning national security;
- (c) to consider lists of witnesses; and
- (d) for any other reason with the unanimous consent of the committee.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'll recognize Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: We'll wait for that.

The Chair: Thank you.

Is there any discussion on this motion?

If there is no discussion, I would like to take a vote.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, could I speak?

On this proposal, the difficulty with it is that it says that all votes taken in camera....

• (1950)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I didn't move that part.

Hon. Michael Chong: You didn't move that part. That's what I have here in front of me.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I only moved (a) to (d). Shall I repeat it, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Sure. I think it's better to be clear.

Go ahead, Madam Zahid.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Do we have that motion? Is it available in both languages?

The Chair: I'll ask Madam Clerk. In the meantime, I would acknowledge Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

Did you want to add something?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: We'll have to wait and see what happens to Ms. Kwan's motions, because I have another motion.

[*English*]

The Chair: I would like to deal with Madam Kwan's motion first, and then I'll come back to yours.

Mr. El-Khoury, you have.... Is it on Madam Kwan's motion?

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury: Mr. Chair, if it's possible, I would like to receive the motion in writing to understand it perfectly, and then we could discuss it.

The Chair: Okay.

I'm going to suspend the meeting for a few minutes so we can solve this issue here.

We're suspended.

• (1950)

(Pause)

• (1955)

The Chair: Madam Clerk has already circulated the motion, which you should have received on your P9 account. It's pretty clear.

Mr. Chong, is it clear now?

Can we take a vote on this now?

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, with respect to Madam Kwan, I don't support the motion because I don't think going in camera should require unanimous consent. I think if it's the will of the majority of the committee to go in camera, to adjourn or to do anything, the committee should so proceed. I don't think we should subject it to unanimous consent.

There are other tools available for members who have the minority of views on this committee other than requiring unanimity.

Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you.

Before I go to a vote I will give Madam Kwan the last opportunity, if she wants, to say something. Otherwise, I will call the vote.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm ready for the vote.

The Chair: Thank you.

Do you wish to have a recorded vote?

Madam Clerk, please call the roll.

(Motion negatived: nays 10; yeas 1)

The Chair: I will now give the floor to Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Chair, does that conclude the introduction of the routine motions?

[*English*]

The Chair: No, there are additional routine motions.

Mr. Chong, please continue.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will introduce a routine motion that was passed by the Standing Committee on Finance.

• (2000)

[*English*]

I believe it was adopted earlier today, so the meeting minutes may not have been prepared yet to show that.

This motion was proposed by Liberal members on that committee, I believe, and adopted by the committee. It's a very simple motion.

I move:

That the committee authorize the clerk to distribute all committee documents to Mr. Alex Ruff.

Let me explain the logic behind this motion.

Mr. Ruff was an infantry officer in the Royal Canadian Regiment. I see him actually looking at me on the big TV screen in front of me. He served in six operational deployments overseas, two of which were Operation Athena in Kandahar province in Afghanistan, and in the city of Kabul, in 2007 and 2012.

He also served in Operation Inherent Resolve in Iraq from 2018 to 2019. He may, from time to time, sit in on this committee to participate as one of the members of this committee. He would like to be on the same email list of members of this committee who receive documents from the clerk, so that he can keep track of the committee's business and participate in the proceedings when he substitutes in for one of the four of us here.

I note that the finance committee did a similar thing with Mr. Fragiskatos, who was recently appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue. He has been put on the distribution list through a routine motion adopted by the finance committee, so that he can keep track of the proceedings of that committee.

That's simply the reason for moving this motion, and I hope committee members will support it.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, everyone.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

If there's no discussion, I would like to take a vote.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: That's it for these motions.

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, please go ahead.

[*Translation*]

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

Congratulations on your election, Mr. Chair. My congratulations also go to all the vice-chairs. I'm sure we are going to do some important work on this committee.

I would like to move the following motion, which the clerk, Ms. Burke, already has:

That, pursuant to the order of the House adopted on December 8, 2021, the committee assess the humanitarian assistance measures to be put in place by Canada to bring relief to the Afghan people; that the Committee invites representatives of the World Food Program, groups of veterans involved in the repatriation of Afghan interpreters and NGOs working in Afghanistan—

[*English*]

Ms. Pam Damoff: On a point of order, Chair, there's no interpretation.

[*Translation*]

My colleague may be reading too fast.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I am very sorry. I must treat my friends the interpreters to a drink.

I will read the motion more slowly.

[*English*]

The Chair: There are translation issues right now.

Hold on, Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe, for a second, please.

Okay. Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Okay. I will read the motion more slowly:

That, pursuant to the order of the House adopted on December 8, 2021, the committee assess the humanitarian assistance measures to be put in place by Canada to bring relief to the Afghan people; that the Committee invites representatives of the World Food Program, groups of veterans involved in the repatriation of Afghan interpreters and NGOs working in Afghanistan, to do so, that the Committee hold a minimum of three (3) meetings.

• (2005)

[*English*]

The Chair: We'll have Madam Damoff, please.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you, Chair.

It's a wonderful motion. I wonder if the mover would be agreeable to expanding it to other humanitarian organizations.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I have no problem with that.

[*English*]

The Chair: Are you okay with this, Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe? Okay, there are no issues.

There is consent. I will take a vote on this.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Hold on, Chair. If we're going to add other humanitarian organizations either we decide that we're going to submit other witnesses, or we name them now. I think it might make more sense to adopt your motion as is, but add something that says, "and other witnesses".

I would like to hear from an organization that's assisting Afghan women and also from World Vision Canada, which I know has approached me about their challenges, but there may be others.

Could we submit additional witnesses by a certain date? I'd be open to that.

The Chair: Madam Damoff, how about we leave it a blanket "other organizations"? That includes those anyway. Are you okay with that?

Ms. Pam Damoff: Sure. Is that okay?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Yes.

Hon. Michael Chong: Could Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe read the motion that he introduced again so that it is clear?

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: You want me to read the motion as amended?

I will do so, but I would like to make a comment first.

[*English*]

Hon. Michael Chong: Okay.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Chair, I agree with my friend Ms. Damoff. However, if we invite other witnesses and other organizations, it makes sense to add a minimum of two sessions.

If we invite more witnesses, it is logical that we will need more time. So I could reread the motion and add "and other humanitarian organizations." Also, instead of "three sessions", it would be "five sessions".

Would that work for everyone?

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay.

Is there any further discussion on this?

Hon. Michael Chong: Just to be clear, can we have the words of the original motion that Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe presented repeated, please?

The Clerk: You should have received it by email.

Hon. Michael Chong: I don't have it. Can you send it to my P9?

The Clerk: Yes.

The Chair: I'm sorry, Madam Damoff. I will come back to you. Let me sort out first whether Mr. Chong has received the wording of the motion.

He has. Now the floor is yours.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Can you send it to all of our P9s? I didn't get it either.

The Chair: Madam Clerk, could you send it to the P9s?

I will suspend the meeting for a few minutes to fix this, and then we'll come back.

• (2005) _____ (Pause) _____

• (2010)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

Could you please confirm if all members received the text of the motion?

A voice: Yes.

The Chair: Madam Kwan, did you get it?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Yes. I just got it. I'm looking at it now.

The Chair: I will open the floor for discussion on this one.

Go ahead, Madam Zahid, and then Mr. Sidhu.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Thank you, Chair.

I agree with that. I would also agree with Ms. Damoff's suggestion of adding more organizations to this motion. It would be right to add more organizations and not restrict ourselves to the ones that are mentioned in the motion.

The Chair: Go ahead, Parliamentary Secretary Sidhu.

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Lib.): It's a great motion presented by my colleague. Canada was one of the top 10 donors to Afghanistan before the turn of events. There are a lot of organizations that we need to hear from about the important work that they were doing in Afghanistan, from supporting women and girls to our food program.

I like the wording change suggestion of "and other organizations". I'm just worried that... I really want to get viewpoints from different organizations into what the situation on the ground is—because these organizations have direct ties—and how we can assist in humanitarian efforts. I understand Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe's urgency on this one.

Instead of three meetings as you suggested, five meetings would be ample time. We should also set a date for when these witnesses should be submitted so that we can get to work. I don't know what date is the will of the committee for when we can submit these witnesses to the committee.

• (2015)

The Chair: The next speakers are Madam Kwan and Madam Damoff, and then I'll come to you.

Hon. Michael Chong: On a point of order, are we on the amendment now? If so, what is the amendment on the floor?

Are we on the main motion?

The Chair: We are on the main motion with a friendly amendment.

Hon. Michael Chong: What is the amendment?

The Chair: Madam Damoff, do you want to repeat that?

Ms. Pam Damoff: Originally, I said "other organizations", but while we were suspended, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe pointed out to me

that it already says "and NGOs working in Afghanistan", so I don't think that particular wording is needed.

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe is going to amend his own motion to a certain number of meetings. Can he do that? If not, I would amend it to five meetings.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I think you should do that.

Ms. Pam Damoff: If I amend your motion, we're going to debate the number of meetings.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Yes.

The Chair: Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe cannot amend his motion. You have to bring forward an amendment. We can have a discussion on the amendment first.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I was going to amend it to five meetings, but a little birdie told me there might be consensus for four meetings, so I would amend it to be four meetings.

The Chair: Can you read it again, please?

Ms. Pam Damoff: I would change the word "three" to "four" in relation to the meetings.

The Chair: Is there any discussion?

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for clarifying that.

We're on the amendment to amend the motion to four meetings. I support that, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chong.

Madam Kwan.

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

I support that amendment. I support the motion, but I'd like to do a subamendment, if I may.

Of urgency is the need to look at immigration measures to bring Afghan refugees and their families here to Canada, particularly those who served Canada.

I'd like to propose a subamendment to add the words "immigration measures" after the words "humanitarian assistance". It would then be that, pursuant to the order of the House adopted on December 8, 2021, the committee assess the humanitarian assistance measures and immigration measures to be put in place by Canada to bring relief to the Afghan people; that the committee invite representatives of the World Food Programme, groups of veterans involved in the repatriation of Afghan interpreters and NGOs working in Afghanistan and family members; to do so, that the committee hold....

I would further amend then—

The Chair: Madam Kwan, this can't be amended because it is altogether a separate motion as per my discussion with the clerk.

I would focus the discussion now on the friendly amendment by Parliamentary Secretary Damoff and then I'll come back if you want to propose your motion again.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Okay, we can't do that. I thought we could do a subamendment.

The Chair: No, it's not an amendment to the number of meetings. It's altogether a different motion. You could move it as an amendment.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: That's fine.

The Chair: We are just working on the number of meetings. Then we can come back to your motion once that is finalized.

Is there any discussion on the number of meetings? If there is no discussion, I'll take a vote on that motion as amended.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Is it just the amendment?

The Chair: Yes.

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: Now we can go back to Madam Kwan.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Now I'll move another amendment to the amended motion.

I'll go back to what I was saying. I think it is important to also look at immigration measures as an urgent matter in addition to the humanitarian assistance measures. I'd like to propose an amendment to add "immigration measures" after the words "humanitarian assistance measures".

It would read that, pursuant to the order of the House adopted on December 8, 2021, the committee assess the humanitarian assistance measures and immigration measures to be put in place by Canada to bring relief to the Afghan people; that the committee invite representatives of the World Food Programme, groups of veterans involved in the repatriation of Afghan interpreters, and NGOs working in Afghanistan, and family members; to do so, that the committee hold a minimum of... I'd like to amend the amended number of meetings from four to eight.

• (2020)

The Chair: Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, you wanted to speak on this.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Yes.

I understand the spirit of the amendment proposed here, but I think the motion, as amended, already provides for four meetings and focuses on the humanitarian crisis. In fact, that's the spirit of the motion that was passed in the House to create this committee: to focus on the humanitarian crisis. So I think we have already agreed to four meetings on the humanitarian crisis and everything that's already written down. As far as the immigration issue and everything else, I think that will be studied in later meetings. It will be the subject of another motion as a result of the meetings that we'll have under the motion that I introduced and that was amended by Ms. Damoff.

So, I'm opposed to that, so that we don't complicate things and get lost in it all.

[*English*]

The Chair: Madam Kwan, it is my understanding that you have to withdraw this motion unanimously, and then you can bring it back with unanimous....

Madam Kwan, the floor is yours.

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

In an effort to be collaborative, I would like to withdraw my amendment. I will move that as a separate motion. Maybe that would simplify things.

(Amendment withdrawn)

The Chair: Thank you.

Madam Zahid, you had your hand up.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Thank you, Chair. I had just wanted to add to what Ms. Kwan proposed, but now—

The Chair: It's not on the floor right now.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Yes.

The Chair: Okay.

Madam Damoff, go ahead, please.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Through you, Chair, does the mover of the motion want to add a date by which the witnesses' names need to be submitted to the clerk? I'll leave it to his judgment.

The Chair: Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, do you have anything to add before we take a vote?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I did not hear the interpretation of the end of the sentence, which seemed to be really important.

Could you repeat it, please?

[*English*]

Ms. Pam Damoff: It's about whether we should add a date for the witnesses.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Yes, okay.

To be realistic, we would first have to know when the committee is going to meet for the first time so that we can determine a deadline. I don't think we have decided that yet. I think it should be a week before the first meeting of the committee. That's sort of how it usually works.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

I think it's very clear, Madam Damoff.

I don't see any other member who wants to speak, so I would like to take the vote on the motion as amended.

(Motion as amended agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you.

Madam Kwan, before I go to you, can I just quickly check with the honourable Mr. Chong to see if he has something to say on the same motion that got passed?

Mr. Chong.

Hon. Michael Chong: No, I had another point to make after—

The Chair: After Madam Kwan...? Okay.

I will give the floor to Madam Kwan on her motion.

● (2025)

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

I'd like to move a new motion. It really mimics the wording of this last one that we just voted on. The motion would read as follows:

That, pursuant to the order of the House adopted on December 8, 2021, the committee assess the immigration measures to be put in place by Canada to bring relief to the Afghan people; that the Committee invite groups of veterans involved in the repatriation of Afghan interpreters and NGOs working in Afghanistan and family members; to do so, that the Committee hold a minimum of four meetings.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Kwan.

I would like to ask you, just as a friendly thing, if you would like to distribute this motion and bring it to the next meeting, or if you—

Ms. Jenny Kwan: No. I'd like for us to debate this motion and vote on it today.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

I will go to Madam Zahid and then Mr. Sidhu.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Can we have the motion in both languages? Perhaps the clerk can email it to us. If Ms. Kwan has the motion written in both languages, perhaps it can be distributed to all the members so that we can have a look.

The Chair: Honourable Mr. Chong, I have Mr. Sidhu before you, but I would skip this and give you an opportunity to speak.

Hon. Michael Chong: While the motion's being distributed, I'm a little concerned about adopting this motion, not so much because of the substance of it but rather because we just adopted a motion setting aside four meetings for the committee to call witnesses—that will take two weeks—and then, if we adopt this motion, that will take another two weeks. It will be four weeks before we're able to hear from departmental officials and ministers. I think that we should be hearing from ministers and departmental officials earlier than that.

I point to the terms of the order from the House. In paragraph (k), it says clearly that a whole range of ministers and other senior officials are to be invited to appear, so I think it's really important that you, Mr. Chair, ensure that the clerk invite those witnesses and that those witnesses appear in front of this committee. They're not witnesses, technically, but those ministers should be invited to appear in front of the committee before too long.

Obviously, ministers have busy schedules, and they may not be able to make an appearance in the first two weeks or so that the committee begins its proceedings at the end of January, but I certainly expect that they would appear in front of this committee by

mid to late February. In that context, I'm a little concerned about the motion in that we might be pushing these appearances off until March or even April, which, in my view, is far too late, considering that this committee is to report back to the House of Commons by the end of May or early June.

If we are to adopt Madam Kwan's motion, I would hope that you, Mr. Chair, would ensure that the committee invite those individuals in paragraph (k) before too long, so that we don't have to wait until March before we hear from ministers and other departmental officials.

The Chair: Thank you.

I will go to Mr. Sidhu and then Madam Kwan.

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: My colleague, Ms. Zahid, already made my point, so I'm okay.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madam Kwan, do you want to say the final words? It's going to be 8:30, so if you want to get this motion finalized, I would like you to make the final remarks. Then we can take a vote on this one.

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

I just want to be clear. This motion is not meant to sidestep or to usurp the opportunity to invite ministers and officials to this committee. I guess maybe this committee operates a little bit differently than the other committees that I normally sit on, because we would move a bunch of things and then we would have a subcommittee to organize the dates we can bring witnesses forward, and so on and so forth.

This is not meant to sidestep that. I do think, though, that we should hear from officials and ministers, absolutely. The urgency of the situation, in my mind and for New Democrats, is that, yes, we need to get humanitarian aid to the people in Afghanistan, but we also need to bring people to safety. Those two things are of the utmost urgency in my mind. That's the reason I moved my motion. I want to make sure that this committee looks into immigration measures in order to bring people to safety.

● (2030)

The Chair: I just want to make sure that every member realizes that there's only one meeting a week. There are not two meetings a week as is usual. We don't have much time, so, Mr. Chong, I agree with you. I think we have to bring in all those witnesses, but if we keep on adding, we're not going to get anywhere.

Do you support this motion now or do you want...?

Hon. Michael Chong: I'm prepared to support it under the understanding—even in light of the one meeting a week—that ministers and departmental officials will be invited to appear, not after these witnesses concerning humanitarian assistance and concerning immigration measures are invited to appear, but some time during those other scheduled periods.

The Chair: Do you want to amend the motion, then?

Hon. Michael Chong: No, I don't, because the House motion is the House motion.

The Chair: A House motion takes precedence.

Hon. Michael Chong: I'm asking you as chair to give us assurances that if this current motion is adopted, that motion, along with the previous motion adopted, doesn't mean that we're not inviting ministers and departmental officials to appear at the very end of the eight meetings that we are holding on these two particular issues.

The Chair: I have Madam Zahid and then Madam Damoff.

Please go ahead.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Thank you, Chair.

I think we are already at 8:30 p.m. and we have decided. We have passed one motion and we will have four meetings on that, so maybe Ms. Kwan can bring that motion to the next meeting, because we need to look into the language also.

The Chair: Sure.

Madam Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I was just going to say that the motion actually says that the witnesses Mr. Chong mentioned would appear from time to time as the committee sees fit. I'm in complete agreement with the motion that we passed, and I think that's the motion the committee has passed at this point. Then we can work on a work plan moving forward. I too would like to see Ms. Kwan's motion in writing before I vote on it.

The Chair: Madam Kwan, do you—

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I've just sent the motion to the clerk.

The Chair: It's already 8:32 p.m.

I have Madam Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I would move that the committee adjourn debate on the motion.

The Chair: I will suspend the meeting for a few seconds here.

• (2030) _____ (Pause) _____

• (2035)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

Madam Kwan, Madam Damoff has proposed a motion to adjourn the debate, and that is a non-debatable motion. I have to take a vote on that one.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Could we have a recorded vote, please?

[*Translation*]

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

Could you tell me again what we are voting on, please?

[*English*]

The Chair: Madam Damoff brought in a motion to adjourn the debate on that motion, so that's what we are voting on.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

The Chair: The debate is adjourned. It is already 8:35. I would like to see if we can end the meeting right now.

The meeting is adjourned. Thank you.

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