



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 2nd SESSION

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# Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 013**

Wednesday, January 27, 2021

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Chair: Mrs. Salma Zahid





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Wednesday, January 27, 2021

• (1710)

[English]

**The Chair (Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.)):** I call meeting 13 of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration to order. Before we go further into the meeting, I want to talk about the public health precautions we all need to take.

Public health authorities have recommended the following practices for all those attending the meeting in person to remain healthy and safe. Please maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from others. Wear a non-medical mask when moving in the meeting room, and preferably, wear a mask at all times, including when you are seated. Maintain proper hand hygiene by using the provided hand sanitizers at the room entrance and washing your hands well with soap regularly.

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

Welcome, all, to meeting number 13 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, the first meeting for the year 2021. We hope and pray that this year will be a better year for all of us.

First on the agenda is the adoption of the report of the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure. The report was circulated to all the members in December. It has also been circulated to Mr. Genuis.

Can I have the motion for the committee to adopt the report in order to ratify the motions adopted by the subcommittee? Can I have a motion?

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I bring the motion forward to adopt the report.

**The Chair:** Yes, Ms. Dancho.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Madam Chair, I'd like to speak to that before we vote.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Ms. Dancho.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** I would like to make the committee aware that since we met about a month ago in subcommittee to decide this report, there have been significant developments in Hong Kong.

Just in case the committee is not aware, we recently learned from John Ivison in *The National Post* that the Hong Kong government is forcing dual Hong Kong citizens to choose one nationality over the other. This brings considerable issues for those looking to renounce their Canadian citizenship if they so choose, limiting con-

sular access to them. If they don't, that could jeopardize their livelihood and their right to live in Hong Kong.

The second thing we've seen is the arrest of 53 pro-democracy activists. Many of them were candidates in opposition parties and organizers therein. Both these matters have come to light in January, since we discussed this report.

In light of this increasingly dire situation, I believe that an amendment to this report is in order. I would like to move the following amendment. I would recommend that we amend section 1 of the report to include the following: That, regarding the study of special immigration and refugee measures for the people of Hong Kong, the committee invite government officials to appear for one hour, the minister to appear for one hour, and invite witnesses to appear for six hours. That is my amendment to the report.

**The Chair:** I see a hand raised. Mr. Genuis, go ahead.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the important work of this committee.

I just want to speak in support of my colleague Ms. Dancho's amendment. There's a real crisis in terms of the well-being of Canadians in Hong Kong, and the threats that exist. We have heard in other places in the House that the government is contemplating the possibility of having to put in place emergency measures to bring back hundreds of thousands of Canadians in a very short time.

I think three hours of study on that large issue, which affects the well-being of hundreds of thousands of Canadians, at a critical turning point in global human rights of whether the Government of China will be able to undermine Hong Kong's freedoms.... There are so many critical issues that go into that. I would hope that members of all parties are supportive of the principle of giving this proper study. I think what my colleague has proposed—having six hours instead of a mere three so that we can hear witnesses answer the important questions that are at play—is very much worthwhile.

I want to express my strong support for the amendment. I hope that other parties will agree that we need to properly study both the situation in Hong Kong as it relates to the rights of Canadians and the response in terms of immigration measures here in Canada. Thanks.

• (1715)

**The Chair:** Ms. Kwan, go ahead.

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

I too would like to support this amendment. Given the rapidly changing situation in Hong Kong, and the urgency of the situation, I do think that it would be worthwhile for us to spend time with respect to the study.

The other issue that I think is related to this, of course, is the issue around the VFS Global contracts. Members might have picked up this news as well. VFS is a company contracted by the Government of Canada to process immigration applications in visa application centres abroad. It has been brought to light that the parent company of VFS Global is backed by a subsidiary of the state-owned China Investment Corporation. The implications around this involvement and these investments raise, I think, serious concerns around the security of the information handled by VFS.

As members know, oftentimes immigration processes are detailed and extensive. They deal with a lot of sensitive information. It has been brought to light and reported that at least one major security breach has already occurred with respect to personal data. It was also noted in the media report that Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada has no record of the Government of Canada ever being notified.

The Canadian government at this juncture is, I believe, reviewing the extension of these contracts. I think it would be worthwhile for us to look into this as we proceed with this study, particularly for its implications for the people of Hong Kong.

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

Madame Normandin, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I have read my colleague Ms. Dancho's amendment. I would have liked for it to have been translated beforehand.

That said, I do not disagree with the substance of the amendment, as I think it is always good to get to the bottom of things and to have the time to discuss important issues, especially taking into account the developments that were just announced. However, I would have liked to be able to discuss the impact of this amendment on other studies, which are just as important. They focus on different matters, but they are still not futile. We also need to figure out when we will consider the reports.

Next Monday, we will return to the study on special measures for Hong Kong residents. I know we have lost some time because of the votes, but would Monday be a good time to discuss the amendment? We must have enough time to get to the bottom of things and to get an idea of the upcoming calendar. I would like us to spend a little time on it.

Would my colleague agree with us voting on her amendment next Monday?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madame Normandin.

We have Madame Martinez Ferrada next.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Hochelaga, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to endorse what my colleague Ms. Normandin proposed regarding the amendment moved by Ms. Dancho today. We all agree with getting to the bottom of things, given the latest news. However, there are already witnesses here who are waiting to speak.

We could take a moment to discuss it and vote on the amendment at the next meeting, on Monday. That would also give us time to discuss it. We will find common ground [*Technical difficulties*].

We are here today to hear from witnesses. Yet we are spending a lot of time on an amendment that could have been sent to us before....

• (1720)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Excuse me, Madame Martinez Ferrada. There are some translation issues.

Mr. Clerk, can you please check?

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Leif-Erik Aune):** Yes, I am checking now.

**The Chair:** We were not able to hear what Madame Martinez Ferrada said towards the end.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada:** Do you want me to repeat what I said, Madam Chair?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Yes, can you please repeat? Sorry.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada:** I think all the committee members agree that it is necessary to study the special measures for Hong Kong residents. I would have liked this amendment to be proposed in advance so as not to take time away from witnesses who are already here and are waiting to speak to us.

I agree with my colleague Ms. Normandin's proposal that we vote on this motion next Monday. We could even find common ground by then, but for the time being, we are here to hear from witnesses who are already with us.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madame Martinez Ferrada.

Ms. Dancho, go ahead.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to my colleagues for their comments.

I just have to rebut that a little bit. I don't see the amendment as being overly complicated. We're just adding one hour for the ministers and bumping up from three to six hours for witnesses. It's not overly complicated.

Given that we're on committee business now, we can vote on this right now. Members themselves have said they believe this is important, given the recent very alarming development. Really, I think we should vote on this amendment now while we're in committee business and get this done so we can get in more witnesses and move forward. It's not an overly complicated amendment.

I just want to say that if we do support the people of Hong Kong, if we do stand with Hong Kong and recognize the importance of the Department of Immigration regarding the 300,000 Canadians who are in jeopardy in Hong Kong and their family members, in my opinion this should be a no-brainer, particularly for the minister to come as well and to get more expert witnesses.

I would move to vote on the amendment.

**The Chair:** Let me just check with the clerk.

We have a speakers list. A few people have raised their hands, so we will have to go through them.

Next we have Madame Martinez Ferrada, and then we have Mr. Serré.

[Translation]

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I was actually just about to ask you to adjourn the debate on this motion until Monday.

[English]

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Madam Chair, I did move to vote on it prior to her moving that motion.

**The Chair:** There was a speakers list, so—

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** There's no such thing as "move to vote".

**The Chair:** Sorry, Ms. Dancho, while we have a speakers list, we cannot go to the vote. As long as we have a list of people who have raised their hands and want to add to that debate, we cannot move to the vote.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Can you move to adjourn, then? Is that okay?

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

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Okay. Please add me to the speakers list again.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Ms. Martinez Ferrada has moved the motion to adjourn the debate. This is not a debatable motion, so we will have to vote on this.

Mr. Clerk, can you please call for the vote on Madame Martinez Ferrada's motion to adjourn the debate?

• (1725)

**The Clerk:** The question is on the motion to adjourn the debate.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

**The Chair:** The debate on this motion is adjourned until Monday.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

The nature of a motion to adjourn, according to the rules, is that you can't adjourn it until Monday. From what I understand, you adjourn until a member brings it back, which could be sooner than that. I'm not saying it will be, but.... Maybe the clerk can clarify that, but my understanding is that once debate has been adjourned, it can be reopened as long as something has happened in the meantime.

**The Chair:** We will now have to move to the adoption of report number two of the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure, the one that was distributed. I hope everyone has a copy.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Chair, I have another point of order.

I don't think you can proceed to a vote on the main motion when we have adjourned debate on the amendment, because the amendment is an amendment to the report.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clerk, can you please clarify this?

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Mr. Genuis is right.

**The Clerk:** I understood that the committee was debating the amendment, and Ms. Martinez Ferrada moved to adjourn the debate. If you'll allow me to get the exact language, I'll come back to you in just one moment, if that would be acceptable.

**The Chair:** I'll suspend the meeting for a few minutes until we have the clerk back with the line on that.

• (1725)

(Pause)

• (1730)

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

I will ask the clerk to please clarify the procedure.

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

Members of the committee, I am researching precisely whether adjourning the debate on Ms. Dancho's amendment means that the committee resumes debate on the main motion, or if the committee must proceed to a different item of business. I want to make sure that I provide thoroughly researched advice.

If the committee proceeds to witness testimony on the Hong Kong study, which was adopted by the committee on October 20, then before the end of the meeting, I will provide specific language to the chair. The committee should have time to dispose of this issue if it wishes.

• (1735)

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Mr. Clerk, I have a procedural question.

**The Chair:** Just one second. We will maintain a list. If there is something you want to say on this....

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** I'm thinking that it was out of order, the way you ruled. My understanding is if you put a condition on an adjournment motion, it is open to debate. Could you please confirm that?

**The Chair:** Ms. Dancho, please raise your hand, and we will come to you. Please raise your question through the chair and not to anyone else. Please raise your hand and I will keep a list, and we will provide you the opportunity to speak.

Let me first ask the clerk to clarify, and then we can go on.

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

My understanding was that the motion was to adjourn the debate. I didn't hear any condition placed on it. As a result, it's a superseding motion and not a substantive one.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Pardon me. It was to Monday. That was the condition.

**The Chair:** Ms. Dancho, I will provide you the opportunity to speak. I want the clerk to clarify the situation, so please wait for your turn.

Mr. Clerk, please continue.

**The Clerk:** As I recall, the motion was to adjourn the debate. Following the vote, the chair pronounced that the debate was adjourned until Monday. I don't believe the condition to adjourn until Monday was in the motion itself, if I recall correctly.

**The Chair:** Ms. Martinez Ferrada, when you brought the motion to adjourn the debate, did you mention that we adjourn the debate until Monday?

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada:** I moved to adjourn the debate. If the member wants, she could bring this back on Monday, or at another meeting.

I moved adjournment of the debate.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for the confusion. The debate was adjourned on that.

We will now go to Ms. Dancho.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** I actually believe Mr. Dhaliwal was ahead of me, so I will go after him.

**The Chair:** Mr. Dhaliwal, go ahead.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Madam Chair, we should maintain decorum here. Things were going really well, but the way things are going right now, we're wasting the time of the witnesses. We are just trying to move this to Monday. I think that's a very reasonable ask.

If they really wanted to go at it, they had time before they came to this meeting to have negotiations with other parties. We could have been into the witnesses, who are here to provide valuable input. We should finish this topic, as it's very true that we should go to the witnesses right now.

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

Ms. Dancho, go ahead.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Since the member wanted to pull some partisan barbs there, I will say that if the Liberal members really did support Hong Kong and perhaps weren't so worried about an election forthcoming, they could easily approve this very simple amendment, which they all agree they support in principle. They did not provide a compelling reason that we should wait until Monday to debate it. The only reason I can assume the Liberal members want to wait until Monday is so that they can figure out a way to not bring the minister into committee to face Ms. Kwan and the questions she raised as well, and a number of other issues that have developed.

I do not understand why we are waiting until Monday. It's a simple amendment.

**The Chair:** Madame Martinez Ferrada.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Regarding my colleague's comments, I think it is important to clarify that we have no intention of preventing the minister's appearance before the committee. I think that Ms. Dancho is imputing to us motives we do not have. It is 5:39 p.m., and witnesses have been waiting to testify for 30 minutes. Their testimony is about an issue we all agreed on in December as part of a study that seems extremely important to us.

I would like the clerk to clarify something. Would it be possible to postpone the adopting of the subcommittee's report until next Monday, so that we could have the time to discuss Ms. Dancho's amendment, which was put forward today, and so that we could undertake the study we all agreed upon last December? We could hear from the witnesses who are with us.

In the context of this study that everyone seems to consider important, I don't think partisanship on this matter should exist.

● (1740)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madame Martinez Ferrada.

We have Madame Normandin.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** I was not aware of the amendment. That is why I simply asked that we postpone it, so that we can debate it and come to an agreement. I am far from wishing for the minister not to appear before the committee. So I don't see how I could be accused of partisanship on this issue.

I was simply not aware of the amendment. I think it is reasonable to debate it a bit later in order to come to a consensus instead of wasting our time and, more importantly, making witnesses who are here waste their time on account of "procedural wrangling".

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We have Ms. Kwan next on the list.

Ms. Kwan, go ahead, please.

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

I wasn't aware of the motion either. It was the first I heard of it when Ms. Dancho moved it. But in light of the situation that's going on in Hong Kong, I thought that was a good amendment, and I certainly would support it. Of course, as mentioned, the VFS issue has also surfaced since December. It was brought to my attention in December, so I thought it would be worthwhile for us to look at these issues in this study.

With that being said, if I'm understanding correctly from the clerk, while he's investigating the question about the adjournment of the debate on the amendment related to the subcommittee report, while he's sorting out the answer to that—

**The Chair:** Ms. Kwan, I have the clarification. He got the clarification.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Oh, do we? Okay.

**The Chair:** I have that. There were some raised hands, so I just wanted to provide the opportunity for the members to speak. But I have the clarification, so once we are done with the list, we will proceed.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** I was just going to say, if we can proceed to hear the witnesses, I think it's worthwhile to go ahead and do that, given that they're already here and we've already lost so much time.

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

Ms. Dancho, did you want to speak?

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I do agree with Jenny in that regard, to go straight to the witnesses, and we can bookend the officials, if that works.

I just wanted to make the final point that amendments to subcommittee reports on the fly are very common. This is not an uncommon procedure amongst committees. Thank you.

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

Ms. Martinez Ferrada.

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada:** I just wanted to move to the witnesses, but it's fine. I'll lower my hand.

**The Chair:** Okay.

I have the clarification from the clerk. Adjourning debate on the amendment means that the whole motion is adjourned, so the same committee must then proceed to another item of business.

I would propose...and ask for everyone's unanimous consent. The motion for the study of immigration and refugee measures for the people of Hong Kong was adopted last year by the committee. Based on that, without adopting the subcommittee report, we can proceed to hearing from the witnesses. As the witnesses are here, I think it would be in the interest of everyone that we proceed to hear from them.

Ms. Kwan, go ahead.

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

On a very quick point of order, will the witnesses get a full hour? Will the committee get a full hour for our questions? I just want to clarify that because our time is all mixed up.

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

We started the committee meeting at 5:10 and we will end the meeting at 7:10.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Okay.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** I have a point of order, Madam Chair. There is no interpretation.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Clerk, can you look into it?

• (1745)

**The Clerk:** Madam Chair, you can proceed.

**The Chair:** The interpretation is back.

Ms. Kwan.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Are we going to the panel of officials for one hour and then to the rest of the witnesses for one hour, or are we just going to go to the second panel for one hour?

**The Chair:** My suggestion to the committee would be that we hear from the first panel and give the second panel a full hour. My suggestion is that we reduce the time for the officials. Whenever we can start, we proceed with hearing from the panel of officials and end this panel at 6:10, and then proceed to the second panel from 6:10 to 7:10. We can only have the committee meeting until 7:10. It's a full two-hour meeting.

We will now proceed. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee is meeting on a study of immigration and refugee measures for the people of Hong Kong.

Today's meeting is taking place in the hybrid virtual format, pursuant to the House order of January 25, 2021, and therefore members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application. The proceedings will be made available.

You may speak in the language of your choice. You will also notice that the "raise hand" feature is now in a more easily accessible location on the middle toolbar, should you wish to speak or alert the chair. All members participating in person can proceed as they usually would when the whole committee is meeting in person in a committee room.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. If you are on the video conference, please click on the microphone icon to unmute yourself. I remind you that all comments by members and witnesses should be addressed through the chair. When you are not speaking, your microphone should be on mute.

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

With that, I would like to welcome our witnesses for the first panel.

We have officials from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration appearing before us today. For the first panel, we have Natasha Kim, associate assistant deputy minister, strategic and program policy. We are also joined by Nicole Giles, associate assistant deputy minister, operations.

Welcome. Thank you for appearing before the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration today. I'm sorry for the delay.

You will have five minutes for your opening remarks.

Please proceed. The floor is yours.

**Ms. Natasha Kim (Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic and Program Policy, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** Thank you.

[Translation]

Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee, for asking us to join you today.

We are here today to update you on measures that Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada is taking to support Hong Kong residents, including youth, to come to Canada.

[English]

As you are aware, the Government of Canada has joined the international community in expressing its concerns over China's imposition of new national security legislation on Hong Kong.

On November 12, 2020, Minister Mendicino, in response to the situation, announced new immigration measures. These included measures to encourage Hong Kong youth to choose Canada as a place to study, work and settle, given the skills and education that many of them would bring to support our economy.

[Translation]

Let me note that Canada already has an extensive array of pathways that Hong Kong residents can use to come to Canada either temporarily or permanently, including for work, to study, for permanent immigration or for family reunification.

[English]

In addition to the existing options, the department is implementing a new initiative specific to Hong Kong youth, which will provide open work permits of up to three years, with eligibility centred on post-secondary education obtained in Canada or abroad. IRCC is working hard to ensure that this measure will be available in early 2021 to applicants from Hong Kong who are both in Canada and abroad.

In addition, the department is creating two new pathways to permanent residence, available later this year, for those who come under the first initiative or who are already in Canada and have been working or studying.

The first pathway will target former Hong Kong residents who have gained a minimum of one year of authorized work experience in Canada and who meet other criteria, such as minimum language and education levels.

• (1750)

[Translation]

The second pathway will benefit those who have graduated from a post-secondary institution in Canada. These individuals will be able to apply directly for permanent residence and will not require work experience.

[English]

In addition to these new measures, Canada is also introducing measures such as priority processing of documents for Canadian citizens and Canadian permanent residents in Hong Kong and allocating resources to speed up processing of applications, including family sponsorship.

[Translation]

We do, however, understand the impact that the current border restrictions could have on when some groups are able to travel.

[English]

For Hong Kong residents already in Canada on a temporary basis, we are waiving application processing fees for those who apply to renew their status in order to extend their stay here.

I would also like to note that Hong Kong residents who are already in Canada continue to have access to our asylum system, including to make their case to the Immigration and Refugee Board.

Given the change in circumstances in Hong Kong, we have also eliminated the 12-month PRRA bar, the pre-removal risk assessment bar, for Hong Kong nationals. Under normal circumstances, individuals who received a negative decision on their refugee claim would not be eligible to apply for a PRRA for at least 12 months.

Finally, Madam Chair, I should note that individuals who flee Hong Kong and fear persecution may be referred to Canada for resettlement by the United Nations refugee agency or may be privately sponsored.



As per the 1951 refugee convention and Canadian legislation, foreign nationals need to be outside their home country to be eligible for our resettlement program. As a result, we cannot accept asylum claims at the mission in the country of alleged persecution. This is consistent with the international legal framework that takes into account state sovereignty.

[*Translation*]

However, to complement resettlement efforts, Canada—like other countries—relies on diplomatic and international aid efforts to support those in need around the globe.

Moreover, it is important to note that those facing persecution can also avail themselves of regular immigration pathways, if they are able to.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Sorry for interrupting, Madame Kim, but perhaps you could speak a bit more slowly. The interpreters are having a problem catching up.

Thank you.

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** My apologies, Madam Chair, and my apologies to the interpreters as well.

This would include those new measures that I spoke about earlier in my remarks.

Madam Chair, the measures announced by the government in November expand opportunities for those who wish to leave Hong Kong, and complement the measures announced by our allies. In doing so, they demonstrate that Canada stands with the people of Hong Kong.

We appreciate this opportunity to outline this important work.

[*Translation*]

We would now be happy to take your questions.

Thank you.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madame Kim.

We will now proceed to the round of questioning, based on the time. We will have one round of questioning for this panel, for five minutes each. We will start with Ms. Dancho.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Ms. Kim, for being here today.

Ms. Kim, on November 16, I believe, when we last spoke at the Canada-China committee, you said, “The permanent resident pathways are expected in 2021. We’re aiming to have the open work permit temporary pathway in place by the end of the year.”

Do you have any updates as to when the permanent resident pathways will be open? Did they, in fact, open before the end of the last calendar year?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** Thank you, Madam Chair, for the question.

Indeed, it certainly was our hope to have it open by the end of last year. Due to some technical difficulties, as well as certainly

other priorities, such as COVID-19 measures, we have been quite busy over the last few months. We hope to have that in place very soon, but we were not able to open it by the end of last year as was my hope.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Okay, I understand.

Do you have an estimate of what “very soon” means? Is that days, weeks or months?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** I would certainly think weeks rather than months.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Okay, thank you.

Ms. Kim, you also mentioned in the Canada-China committee that there are approximately 7,000 people who hold valid study or work permits who possibly would be in Canada. Do you have any idea of how many work and study permits exist as of today?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** Madam Chair, the information I have on that is as of November 30, 2020. As of that date, the number of valid study permit holders in Canada was 5,250. The number of work permit holders was 3,450, or 7,650 unique individuals. I should qualify that we don't know for sure that these people are actually in Canada, but they had valid work permits and held them at that time.

• (1755)

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Thank you, Ms. Kim.

We haven't had any new information since November 30. That was about two months ago. Is there any way to know if there's been any uptake in those work and study permits, or would we not have that information either?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** We do have some information comparing it to the same period last year. For example, the number of applications we received, as opposed to processed, up until November 2020 had increased quite a bit. In terms of comparing that to the same period in 2019, there was almost a doublefold increase. Work permits had increased a bit, but not to the same extent.

I think we are seeing increased interest in our study program.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Okay. Was that specifically for Hong Kong folks who were applying, or was that across the board?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** That was specifically for Hong Kong.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Okay, thank you.

I want to ask about the grandparents and parents lottery last fall. The minister, and I believe also the officials—it might have been you or others—insinuated that the grandparents and parents lottery that was launched last fall—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting, Ms. Dancho. The interpreters would like you to please move your mike closer to your mouth, please.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** I apologize if you hear me breathing as a result.

Pardon me, Ms. Kim.

Regarding the parents and grandparents lottery, it was announced last fall to have 10,000 folks from around the world come and join their families in Canada. It was sort of positioned by the minister and others as a bit of a solution to what they're facing in Hong Kong.

My understanding is that with regard to all of the 10,000 applicants who were approved, their families in Canada were notified on January 5, or around that date.

Can you tell the committee how many grandparents and parents were approved from Hong Kong?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** I would qualify, Madam Chair, that the 10,000 invitations that were issued earlier this year were invitations to apply, as opposed to approvals of applications. I don't have the information currently in terms of how many of those would have been to those applying or sponsoring someone from Hong Kong.

I would note that in terms of family reunification, there's also the super visa program that is available generally, which allows parents and grandparents to come temporarily. For those in Hong Kong, they would be eligible to come on an eTA as a visitor and be exempt from travel restrictions.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Thank you, Ms. Kim.

This is my last question. I just have a few seconds left.

Regarding the 300,000 Canadians in Hong Kong, are plans being made currently if they and their family members want to evacuate? What is the department doing in the event that we have a mass evacuation to Canada from Hong Kong?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** I believe our consul general has stated in other forums that there has been continuous planning under way at the mission since late 2020 for such an occasion. We are not currently seeing evidence of a mass exodus or an emergency situation, but contingency planning is in place.

**The Chair:** Sorry for interrupting, Ms. Kim, but the time is up.

We will now move on to Mr. Dhaliwal.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Mr. Dhaliwal, you have five minutes. You can please start.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I will share my time with the parliamentary secretary.

With regard to my first question, carrying on from what Ms. Dancho asked about the trends of immigration over the past while, Ms. Kim mentioned the different streams or pathways that already exist. I would like her to elaborate on that. I would also like her to tell the committee whether they have already taken advantage of those increased numbers of immigrants we are bringing in over the next three years.

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** I'll begin with the first part of the question, regarding the pathways that are available, particularly for those in Hong Kong. I would add the layer of who can currently travel under the existing COVID-19 travel restrictions, because that is an important consideration as well.

Certainly, anyone who is a Canadian citizen or permanent resident and who is in Hong Kong can return at any time and is exempt from the travel restrictions. IRCC in Hong Kong is available to provide travel documents and passports in that case.

Also, there are existing work and study programs. If there is someone who has a work permit and a valid job offer, that person can be exempt from the current travel restrictions. Someone can study at a Canadian institution if that institution has a COVID-19 readiness plan that's been approved by the province or territory, so with those permits they can enter Canada.

We also have existing economic permanent resident streams, as well as our humanitarian streams. If someone was approved before March 18, under the current travel restrictions they could also enter. As many of you know, family reunification streams are also available. This can be sponsorship of a spouse or a parent or grandparent. People can also come on a temporary status, whether that's on an eTA or on a super visa.

With these new measures, these would be additional measures available to Hong Kong residents in order to come to Canada, if they also meet exemptions in the travel restrictions. Of course, anyone coming into Canada at this time would have to abide by public health requirements in terms of quarantine and pre-testing before boarding a plane.

To those who are here and can stay, we've offered a few waivers for them to extend their stay or to restore their status. There are also measures for visitors here to apply for a work permit within Canada.

I believe the second part of the question was about the number of immigrants we are looking forward to over the next three years. The Government of Canada tabled the immigration levels plan last fall. Some 401,000 new permanent residents are targeted for 2021, and it goes up to 411,000 next year. This is something we are working on at IRCC.

• (1800)

[Translation]

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada:** Madam Chair, I would like to take the floor.

[English]

**The Chair:** Yes, please go ahead.

[Translation]

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada:** Thank you.

Ms. Kim, I will put two questions to you at the same time to give you time to answer them.

The current immigration system has a number of economic immigration programs to bring immigrants to Canada. The government has studied those programs' objectives in great detail. Can Hong Kong residents access those programs in addition to the special measures? Can it be deduced that the special measures for Hong Kong residents were developed for reasons beyond economic objectives? That is my first question.

Can you also quickly provide the international context as it relates to immigration measures for Hong Kong residents? How do Canada's measure compare to them, and what considerations have been used to standardize the measures, especially between Canada and the United Kingdom?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

There are a number of questions. I will try to answer them.

First, all the measures I highlighted are available to Hong Kong residents. However, the new measures are intended for young Hong Kong residents. Those two measures are aimed only at them.

As the member said, this measure is....

[English]

**The Chair:** Sorry for interrupting, Ms. Kim, but time is up.

[Translation]

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** I apologize.

[English]

**The Chair:** We will now move on to Madame Normandin.

Madame Normandin, you have five minutes.

[Translation]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Thank you very much for answering our questions, Ms. Kim.

I would like to begin by discussing the situation of people who are currently in Hong Kong and who the government would like to come to Canada.

My colleague Ms. Dancho placed a question on the order of paper concerning electronic travel authorizations, or ETAs, for which certain criteria must be met, including the criterion whereby applicants must not have a criminal history. The question was raised because, in certain cases, Hong Kong residents were charged with an offence under the Hong Kong national security law. However, according to what I understand, no directive has been given to officers as far as criminal history goes.

So I would like to know whether, going forward, you plan to potentially ensure that charges laid in Hong Kong would not be a criterion for not authorizing the issuing of an ETA.

• (1805)

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** Madam Chair, I will let my colleague, Nicole Giles, answer this question.

**Dr. Nicole Giles (Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Operations, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** Thank you for the question.

[English]

Canadian immigration officers are trained to consider applications on a case-by-case basis. Generally speaking, for crimes committed outside Canada, an immigration officer must determine whether the same act, if it occurred in Canada, would be considered a crime in Canada. As part of this, we examine what the underlying action was. For example, a person who was arrested or charged for peacefully demonstrating or being at a protest would not be inadmissible, as those actions are not considered crimes in Canada. Similarly, being part of a mass arrest would not automatically lead an immigration officer to approve or refuse an application.

We provide program guidance regularly to our officers all across the globe, including in Hong Kong. That program guidance reflects changes in risk considerations and also provides information on local and regional contexts in certain circumstances. Our officers also receive regular and ongoing training on these and other matters.

[Translation]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Thank you very much.

In July 2020, Great Britain announced that it would facilitate access to citizenship for Hong Kong nationals.

Is something similar planned by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** Thank you for the question.

The new measures announced are complementary to the measures introduced by our partners in other countries. Great Britain decided to do something because of its special history with Hong Kong. In Canada, we have created new pathways to facilitate their immigration to Canada and to give them a better future here.

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** I have two questions.

The announced programs mainly target students. What do you intend to do for Hong Kong residents who may be activists who were arrested, but are not part of the student population?

Moreover, there are probably many among the student population who do not speak French or English and who are not eligible for a study or work permit. What do you plan to do for people who are also young and activists, but who do not meet the permit issuance criteria?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** Madam Chair, I would like to say that those new measures are complementary to others that already exist within Canada's immigration system. However, those measures are intended for students and diplomats, such as those who recently completed their post-secondary studies. So there are many young people who are there and will be eligible under those new temporary measures. What is more, once they arrive in Canada to acquire work experience, they can also qualify for other permanent immigration pathways.

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Do you have an idea of the number of people who could qualify for those programs? Have you conducted a study to determine what percentage of Hong Kong's population that accounts for?

[English]

**The Chair:** Sorry for interrupting, Madame Normandin, but your time is up. Maybe the opportunity will come some other time.

Now we will move on to Ms. Kwan.

Ms. Kwan, you have five minutes. The floor is yours.

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

Thank you, Ms. Kim.

My first question is this: With respect to the special measures that the government brought in, was there any consideration with respect to the special measures that were utilized during Tiananmen Square back in June 1989?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** These measures were designed and developed by the government to look at the situation in Hong Kong. As we were looking at what was available from our allies and what was happening on the ground, certainly we were looking at the specific situation in Hong Kong, as opposed to past initiatives.

• (1810)

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Has the ministry issued any minister's permits to date for the people of Hong Kong?

[Translation]

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** Thank you for asking that question.

[English]

We're not able to disclose specific case information in terms of permits that have been issued to individuals in Hong Kong, for their safety and security.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Sorry, I'm not asking about names. I'm just wondering if any have been issued. If so, how many—one, two, five, 10?

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** There have been a few permits that have been issued, but again, for the safety and security of the people of Hong Kong, we will not be issuing those specific numbers at this point.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Okay, so even numbers are not being disclosed.

I just highlight this as an issue because minister's permits were utilized during the Tiananmen Square situation. In fact, they were used quite regularly by the ministry then. I'm wondering whether or not they are being utilized at this time. I do think that it is important to actually adopt some of those measures that were utilized during that time because there are similarities in terms of the risks for the people of Hong Kong at this point.

As well, related to the H and C stream, back in the Tiananmen Square situation, it was clearly indicated, "all persons who have in some way individually embarrassed their government and in so doing have exposed themselves to severe sanctions should they return." Those were the instructions that were given to officials then to consider H and C applications. Have there been any special instructions given by IRCC for consideration of H and C applications for the people of Hong Kong?

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** Our highly trained officers continue to look at each application on a case-by-case basis and based on the totality of

evidence before them. H and C is one of the considerations that they look at.

I'll give you an example. In 2020, from January until November 30, there were 21 H and C or public policy permits issued to residents of Hong Kong.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** I appreciate that, but I'm just wondering whether or not special instructions were given, given the situation that has occurred and is increasing, in terms of the dire situation in Hong Kong. If officials can check and see whether or not special instructions have been given and advise the committee, I would really appreciate that.

I'd like to turn for a moment to VFS Global and the contract, in case I don't get a chance to come back to it. I mentioned it earlier. The ministry, as I understand, is reviewing this situation with respect to renewal of contracts. Is the ministry considering bringing those services back in-house in light of the situation that's happening for the people of Hong Kong?

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** The current VAC contracts are valid until October 31, 2023. The VACs provide administrative support services and biometric collection services. They play no role in the decision-making process. They are expressly forbidden from providing any visa-related advice to applicants or from making any type of determination. By having the VACs abroad, we're able to provide a higher number of administrative services to a higher number of applicants and for a higher number of collection—

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Sorry, I'm just going to interrupt because I have very little time.

In light of the situation in Hong Kong, is the ministry at all concerned that if somehow Chinese officials find out that applications are being made, these people could be in jeopardy? Is that being considered?

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** We have very strong safeguards in place governing the protection of personal information. There's an extensive oversight program in place and technological safeguards ensuring that client information is collected, stored and transmitted securely—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting, Ms. Giles. Your time is up.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Except that there was a breach in—

**The Chair:** Ms. Kwan, the time is up.

With that, our first panel comes to an end. On behalf of all the committee members, I would like to thank Ms. Kim and Ms. Giles for appearing before the committee today. I'm sorry for the delay.

I will suspend the meeting for a few minutes so that we can give some time for the witnesses in the second panel to log in and allow the IT team to do their sound check.

The meeting is suspended for a few minutes. Thank you.

• (1815) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1815)

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

I welcome our witnesses in the second panel to today's study on immigration and refugee measures for the people of Hong Kong.

For this panel, we have with us Avvy Go, clinic director, representing the Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic. Welcome, Ms. Go.

We are also joined by Eric Li, vice-president of Canada-Hong Kong Link. Welcome, Mr. Li.

**Mr. Eric Li (Vice-President, Canada-Hong Kong Link):** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We will start with the opening remarks of Ms. Avvy Go.

You will have five minutes for your opening remarks. Please start.

**Ms. Avvy Yao-Yao Go (Clinic Director, Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic):** Thank you very much.

As mentioned, I'm the clinic director of the Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic. I'm also a board member of the Toronto Association for Democracy in China, TADC.

I want to thank the committee for the opportunity to comment on the new immigration measures to support Hong Kong pro-democracy activists.

Since the announcement by Minister Mendicino in November 2020, we have seen more arrests being made by the Hong Kong government. On January 5, the Hong Kong police arrested 50 former lawmakers and activists for allegedly violating the national security law. Their only crime was to organize unofficial election primaries for Hong Kong. More than 600,000 Hong Kongers participated in this electoral exercise, despite warnings from Beijing not to do so.

The continuing arrests of pro-democracy activists confirm our fear that no one is safe in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong police could and would, without warning and without cause, arrest anyone on suspicion of violating the national security law.

Activists have become sitting ducks, as their liberty can be taken away any time. We have heard reports of activists being detained for up to 36 hours in a frigid room as part of the intimidation tactics. Their arrests also allow the police to access the activists' personal contact information and seize their travel documents.

We know that the democracy movement in Hong Kong has been driven to a great extent by the youth. Some of the MPs have commented on that. It's in this context that we examine the special immigration measures that Canada has adopted today.

While the new initiatives will broaden the immigration pathways for some select groups, these measures have fallen short of responding to the worsening climate of white terror and constant surveillance experienced by many activists.

There is also a glaring absence of humanitarian measures to assist those who are most at risk and would not qualify under these measures. For instance, the new open work permit is being offered only to recent university graduates. The criteria would exclude high school students and those who are not university-educated.

Just to put things in perspective, neither Joshua Wong nor Agnes Chow, two of the most prominent activists, would qualify, because they have not yet finished university, nor would a number of Hong Kong activists working in blue-collar jobs who have managed to come here to seek asylum. By failing to recognize the protestors' diverse demographic and educational backgrounds, these measures send the wrong message that Canada's commitment to protect them is limited only to those who will bring immediate economic benefits to our country.

There are some Hong Kong residents, including young students, who are already here. They, along with the dozens of asylum seekers, should be granted permanent residence under a special program similar to the one in place for Chinese nationals after the Tiananmen Square massacre.

For protesters who are currently stranded in another country, Canada should allow them immediate entrance under private refugee sponsorship programs or temporary resident permits, with an exemption from the travel ban. TADC and a number of other groups in Canada have offered their assistance to help bring these activists to resettle here. We need our government to put the appropriate programs in place so that we can transform the goodwill that many Canadians have shown towards Hong Kongers into concrete action.

The pandemic has not stopped the oppression of political dissent from happening in Hong Kong or anywhere else. Pro-democracy activists are racing against time and running out of options. That's why we're urging this honourable committee to call on Canada to take immediate action to bring in more Hong Kong residents and grant them permanent status, irrespective of their educational and occupational backgrounds.

Thank you.

• (1820)

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

We will now move on to Mr. Eric Li.

Mr. Li, the floor is yours. Please start. You will have five minutes for your opening remarks.

**Mr. Eric Li:** Madam Chair and distinguished members of the committee, I thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

My name is Eric Li. I'm the vice-president of Canada-Hong Kong Link. Our group works to protect and promote the furtherance of human rights, the rule of law and democracy in Hong Kong.

We commend the Canadian government for announcing the new lifeboat program that will broaden the pathway for selected groups of Hong Kong residents to take refuge in Canada. This is encouraging news, as political persecution is dramatically increasing under Hong Kong's national security law. From our perspective, the lifeboat program is to save Hong Kongers from the unjust and threatening environment that is plaguing Hong Kong. It is not a new immigration policy for people based on their socio-economic status.

However, we are concerned about how the lifeboat program will be applied, that it may not prioritize those who are truly at risk or that it may even be abused by harmful groups in Hong Kong. It is important to distinguish the members of the harmful groups in Hong Kong from using the lifeboat program to infiltrate Canada. By "harmful groups", I'm referring to groups and individuals who impose threats on Hong Kong's democratic development, such as the groups endorsing Hong Kong's national security law and the Hong Kong police force.

I'd like to show you the demographic of the ordinary citizens who fought for their freedom in Hong Kong. Since June 2019, more than 10,000 people, with ages ranging from 11 to 80-plus, have been arrested. They came from all walks of life and sacrificed their livelihoods to participate in the protests. A large number of youth and protesters suffer from PTSD as a result of the police brutality they endured during their arrests. Those are the people who need our help. They all suffered because they wanted to restore the freedom and the political system they were promised to have until 2047.

We would like to make the following recommendations for your consideration.

First, consider lifting the current essential travel ban for pro-democracy activists who are at risk of persecution because of such activities. They would have to respect each province's COVID-19 guidelines upon arrival.

Second, the open work permit criteria should address the diversity of Hong Kong pro-democracy activists in terms of age and educational and occupational backgrounds.

Third, applicants for the open work permit or study permit should be offered a five-year visa with an expedited pathway to permanent resident status, similar to what our Five Eyes allies have offered.

Fourth, we urge the Canadian ministry of foreign affairs and the consular staff in Hong Kong and nearby countries to help arrange emergency travel documents for high-risk activists whose passports have been confiscated and also to help recognize asylum seekers support and allow our community to sponsor them through the existing refugee sponsorship program.

Fifth, Hong Kong international students and temporary skilled workers in Canada, along with political asylum seekers from Hong Kong who are proven to be at risk of political persecution when returning to Hong Kong, should be granted permanent resident status under a fast-tracked and special program.

Sixth, family reunification could be broadened to include siblings and extended family, such as uncles and aunts who can support nephews and nieces. Costs of family reunification could be waived for those fleeing persecution.

Seventh, since the lifeboat program is designed for those fleeing persecution in Hong Kong, applicants should sign a declaration that they did not have gross misconduct on hindering the democracy movement in Hong Kong. The consequence of a false declaration will result in deportation from Canada. This recommendation will safeguard that the lifeboat program will serve the intended group of Hong Kongers.

Eighth, Hong Kong police and immigration officers should be excluded from the lifeboat program, unless they are subject to serious vetting by CSIS or the RCMP and it's proven they were not involved in anything against the democracy movement or against human rights. This step will help prevent infiltration that threatens our national security.

I think I'm running out of time now. Please refer to my submitted recommendations to enhance this current immigration policy in the spirit of the lifeboat program to save Hong Kongers.

I'm happy to answer questions related to my recommendations, in the Q and A session.

I urge you to give these recommendations your serious attention and lend your support towards opening our doors to those facing political persecution.

Thank you very much.

• (1825)

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

We will now move on to Mr. Cliche-Rivard, president of the Association québécoise des avocats et avocates en droit de l'immigration. Mr. Cliche-Rivard, you have five minutes for your opening remarks.

The floor is yours.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guillaume Cliche-Rivard (President, Association québécoise des avocats et avocates en droit de l'immigration):** Thank you very much.

The Association québécoise des avocats et avocates en droit de l'immigration, or AQAADI, was founded in 1991 to bring together immigration and refugee law practitioners of Quebec, and to provide them with better representation with the Quebec bar association and various political and judicial bodies, both in terms of federal and provincial immigration.

We intervene before the Federal Court of Appeal, the Supreme Court of Canada and the Superior Court of Quebec. We also participate in various House of Commons committees, like today, and in different Quebec National Assembly committees.

The current situation in Hong Kong is very worrisome. We applaud the Government of Canada's positions to facilitate and accelerate the processing of certain applications for permanent residence. However, we think it is possible to do much more in that area, and we will focus on two points that could be implemented quickly.

When it comes to refugee protection, we are asking that files currently being processed by the Consulate General of Canada in Hong Kong be accelerated and finalized. It is important to enable the quick resettlement of sponsored refugees recognized by Canada and of certain applicants on humanitarian and compassionate grounds who are in Hong Kong. It would be important to finalize those files as quickly as possible, so that those people could be safe again in Canada.

If certain files are not finalized, temporary resident permits, or TRPs, should be issued quickly, so that those refugee protection claimants, often sponsored privately or through what is referred to as refugee sponsorship agreement holders, can get to Canada as safely and as quickly as possible. Canada should also assess the possibility of granting refugee protection directly to individuals in Hong Kong who may need protection quickly so that they can come to Canada as soon as possible.

Second, we believe that Canada should allow the reactivation of the Canadian citizenship of certain Hong Kong residents who may have lost it owing to the non-recognition of dual citizenship by the People's Republic of China. It would be important for certain individuals to be able to once again validate or reactivate the Canadian citizenship they lost because they had to choose between the two citizenships after deciding to continue their life in Hong Kong.

For former Canadian citizens, the minister could issue a policy in light of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to allow their Canadian citizenship to be reactivated, so that they could easily return to the country as Canadian citizens, without having to start the immigration process from the beginning.

These are some ideas among many others, but I think that a bit more could be done in terms of those two aspects—refugee protection and the reactivation of those individuals' citizenship.

Thank you.

• (1830)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We will now move to our first round of questioning, for six minutes.

We will start with Ms. Dancho.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much to the witnesses. Your opening testimonies were excellent.

It's very nice to see you here again today, Ms. Go, and I'm really happy to have your expertise on this panel.

I took a number of notes of the things you said, and I appreciated how you laid out very clearly the fear that no one is safe and that the activists' liberty is being ripped away as they are put in jail for 36 hours under terrible conditions. It is very alarming to hear what is happening.

Ms. Go, given that there are 300,000 Canadians in Hong Kong and thousands in Canada with close ties to more family in Hong Kong, you've outlined that you don't believe the government's response is adequate at all. Can you outline what some other countries are doing and reiterate some of your recommendations of what measures the Government of Canada should be taking now to support Hong Kong?

**Ms. Avvy Yao-Yao Go:** Sure. Maybe I'll use the example of the U.K. government. They agreed to take in all the Hong Kong people with a BNO passport, but that doesn't apply to all the activists. It's only for people who were born before 1997 and whose parents are not from China. That excluded a number of people as well, but those with a passport will have a pathway to citizenship five years later, I believe.

With respect to the 300,000 Canadians you're mentioning—and I want to echo the last speaker—some of them may have chosen to give up their citizenship when they ran for election in Hong Kong. We know at least a couple who are in that situation. More importantly, for the Canadians who are there, their family members may not be Canadian citizens or permanent residents. It might be easier if it's a spouse or children because they can apply to sponsor them. It's more difficult for parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts.

That's why I think Mr. Li's concept of expanding the family-class reunification is very important. I don't think that relying on the super visa—which is what Minister Mendicino mentioned in the announcement, to give parents a super visa—would address this issue, because the super visa is a temporary status. Again, those people would have to return to Hong Kong, while their children and grandchildren are living here.

I think, certainly, that it will be important to make sure they can come here any time before China wholesale announces that all of these people are non-Canadians, and it would also be important to allow them to bring their families over.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Thank you, Ms. Go.

Several of the committee members, including yourself, outlined that many of the activists are not recently educated and have not worked in Canada. I think you outlined this really well. This impacts blue-collar workers. Joshua Wong, a very famous pro-democracy activist, is, I believe, facing perhaps five years in prison.

Can you outline again what the Government of Canada should be considering? I think what you've mentioned really limits it to almost an elite group of people who will make Canada the most money if they come here. It ignores all these blue-collar workers. Could you just expand on your thoughts on that?

• (1835)

**Ms. Avvy Yao-Yao Go:** Sure. For instance, they are saying that you can come here as a student. That's true, but if you come here as a student, they expect you to pay the international student tuition fee. I'm sure a lot of these individuals, including some of the 12- and 13-year-olds who were arrested last year, may not have the money to do so. That option is just not open to them. If they can somehow make their way here, they still have to finish high school and then university before they qualify for that open work permit program for post-university students.

I think it's important to recognize that if these are activists, they leave Hong Kong because of their political beliefs, and we should treat these people almost as asylum seekers. Then, rather than going through the refugee determination process, we have another way. I think what the previous two panellists mentioned, and what Ms. Kwan also mentioned in the last panel—having some kind of program similar to the one that was in place after the Tiananmen Square massacre—would be good as well. You'd basically allow the Hong Kong nationals to apply for permanent resident status in Canada.

I'm not so sure—I'm sorry, Mr. Li—about the requirement for them to sign a declaration. Certainly you can do a security check on these individuals. Just because they may not have.... They might be in a situation where speaking out could put them at risk, so I think it's important that we think carefully before we impose that kind of requirement on applicants.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Thank you, Ms. Go.

We have just a few seconds left. I wanted you to comment, if you could, on the Hong Kong government saying they have to renounce either their Canadian citizenship or their Chinese citizenship. What impact is that going to have on folks there?

**Ms. Avvy Yao-Yao Go:** We know that some of the Canadian citizens who have moved back to Hong Kong have given up their citizenship in the past, especially those who wanted to seek electoral office in Hong Kong. What we're worried about, however, is the Chinese government—

**The Chair:** Sorry for interrupting, Ms. Go, but your time is up. Maybe you will find another opportunity.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Thank you, Ms. Go.

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

We will now move to Ms. Dhillon.

Ms. Dhillon, you have six minutes for your round of questioning. You can start, please.

**Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.):** Thank you to the witnesses for coming in and waiting as long as they did to testify and speak with us on this very important question.

My first question, for all three of you, is on the measures that are presented by our government. Do you believe there are areas for

improvement with regard to what has been proposed? I think it would be very helpful to us if you can give us some best practices or any ideas of things we can improve. Thank you so much.

**Ms. Avvy Yao-Yao Go:** Maybe I'll go first. I would suggest that the open work permit, which is currently reserved for people with post-secondary degrees, be made open to anyone from Hong Kong. Of course, we may not want 12-year-olds working in Canada, but there may be other people who want to come here to work and to seek refuge but don't have university degrees. Just with that alone, I think it will open the door to many more people.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guillaume Cliche-Rivard:** As I already said, broadening the definition of the family class could also be a very good solution for people who initially or fundamentally do not qualify. So Canada could allow that broadening and better qualifications.

Authorities could also do better in terms of refugee protection. In fact, many people are waiting to be resettled in Canada. That must be done very quickly, through a temporary resident permit, or TRP. The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act allows this. It is very important.

It is a matter of opening the door, of reducing as much as possible the wait time on Hong Kong soil and, perhaps, granting temporary residence permits as quickly as possible, so that people can not only come to Canada as visitors, but more importantly work there, be integrated and be safe again as quickly as possible.

Thank you.

• (1840)

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** Mr. Cliche-Rivard, do you think the measures our government has taken will be effective for people who want to come to Canada on a temporary or a permanent basis?

**Mr. Guillaume Cliche-Rivard:** It all depends on individuals' situations, but it is certain that coming to the country with a temporary status and waiting a long time for permanent residence is difficult for everyone. Everyone must make a living, be quickly integrated and have the assurance that they will remain safe. I think it is important to finalize files as quickly as possible. The more quickly permanent residence is granted, the more quickly people can know they can be safe with their family.

This could also avoid the doubling of the number of procedures such as applications for visas, TRPs or permanent residence. The quicker the residence confirmation and the more those people can work and contribute to society, the better it is for Canada.

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** Very well. Thank you.



[English]

My next question is for Mr. Li. Can you give us an understanding of the current situation for residents of Hong Kong and the reaction they're having to the Canadian measures that were taken on the ground? Maybe from people you're connected with, you can give some feedback to the committee regarding that. Thank you so much.

**Mr. Eric Li:** Can I go?

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** Yes, the question was addressed to you.

**Mr. Eric Li:** Okay. Actually, I'll go back to the first question. I think that right now we have a good refugee sponsorship program, but it's like the chicken and the egg: We will never get the refugees because there's nobody to certify the refugees in Hong Kong or a nearby country. There's no UNHCR there, and the Canadian consulate staff are not doing that. That's why one of our suggestions is that if we can identify refugees from Hong Kong from abroad, then we can use the existing refugee sponsorship program to sponsor Hong Kongers to come here.

I echo all the comments from my fellow witnesses. I think those are grave concerns, especially when the elected officials from Hong Kong all gave up their Canadian citizenship. I think we should have some way that lets them reinstate their citizenship and then come back here, because the situation in Hong Kong is really hostile.

They usually try to arrest you with harassment. They will come to your house at 6 a.m. and then put you.... Actually, they've been detained for more than 36 hours. I think a couple of them have. Even a 71-year-old barrister from Hong Kong was detained for 44 hours in a cold cell. He's really old already, but they still tried to harass him. When they cannot find the right law to prosecute somebody, they will just use the national security law.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting, Mr. Li. Your time is up.

**Mr. Eric Li:** Okay.

**The Chair:** We will now move onto Madame Normandin.

Madame Normandin, you have six minutes for your round of questioning. Please proceed.

[Translation]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Thank you very much.

I thank the three witnesses for their presentation and their recommendations.

My first question is for Mr. Cliche-Rivard. As everyone said, the current government programs are very restrictive and are not really targeting a large part of the population. I am talking about work permit or study permit programs that potentially lead to permanent residence.

For those who manage to leave their country without getting arrested by Chinese authorities and to set foot on Canadian soil, and who would like to make a claim for refugee protection, what would be the main pitfalls they will face, as far as you know?

● (1845)

**Mr. Guillaume Cliche-Rivard:** Right now, it is very difficult, as there are major issues with the consideration of the eligibility of

refugee protection claims filed at ports of entry or inside Canada. It takes a long time for the famous refugee protection claimant document to be issued and for a work permit to be obtained.

More particularly in the case of claims filed on Canadian soil, a very long wait time puts people in situations of considerable vulnerability. So telling them they can come and simply claim refugee protection here, in the current context, is very problematic. A major effort must be made to accelerate the interviews to determine claim eligibility, as some files dating back to March 2020 have still not been processed. So there is nearly a year of waiting before certain files that give access to work permits are processed. That's certainly an important element.

Then, once the refugee protection claim has been received, within two to three years from the arrival in Canada, if it is accepted, people must still wait two more years to obtain permanent residence. So that brings the total wait time to four to five years, which is excessively long for someone who wants to bring their family to Canada and know whether they will be safe over the long term.

I think solutions must be found so that status can be granted quickly, as a number of people are facing the real possibility of having to return to their country.

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Thank you very much.

Ms. Go, Mr. Li, do you want to add anything?

[English]

**Ms. Avvy Yao-Yao Go:** Madam Chair, I would like to add to that.

I think one of the biggest challenges is whether or not they can actually enter Canada because of the travel ban. For instance, we are working with a number of activists who are stranded in the U.K. They managed to leave Hong Kong and that's the first country they were able to get to. They can't even come to Canada right now.

Those who actually managed to come here are the lucky ones. In fact, the process has been relatively quick, compared to the normal refugee determination process for the Hong Kong asylum seekers, but the fact that they can't come in is one big problem. That's why we have been pushing for having some kind of temporary resident permits for these individuals to come here. At least they'll be safe, and then, hopefully, we will have some kind of pathway for them to get permanent resident status.

**Mr. Eric Li:** I just want to add to that.

A number of study visas have been rejected by the Hong Kong consulate office, because if they think the person will stay in Canada after their studies, they would not qualify. That defeats the purpose of our current lifeboat. We want people to come to study and then get a job and stay here, so I hope those consulate staff will be more accommodating to all these study applications, especially in regard to the age limit. Some people might go back to their MBA program, or something, when they are 40 or 50 years old, so I don't think we should set any age limit on those study programs or those special measures that we have right now.

[Translation]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Thank you very much.

My next question is about confirmations of permanent residence. We can assume that a number of people currently in Hong Kong have already received their confirmation of permanent residence, but as of March 18. So they face travel restrictions.

Should travel restrictions be lifted specifically for Hong Kong residents who have received their permanent residence confirmation?

**Mr. Guillaume Cliche-Rivard:** Those restrictions should be lifted not only for Hong Kong residents, but also for all travel bans. Someone who has received their permanent residence confirmation is not dangerous. They will not repeatedly enter and leave Canada. They have received a permanent residence confirmation for them and their family. I think it makes no sense for future permanent residents not to be able to come to Canada right now, while people can come here as visitors to see their spouse or their children.

I do not want to favour one category over another, but applicants who have a permanent residence confirmation should be able to come to Canada right away, especially Hong Kong residents. Of course, the order should also introduce an exemption. Individuals who want to obtain refugee status must be able to use that exemption, so that they can take the plane and make their claim when they arrive at the airport.

There is nothing in Canada's international obligations under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.... It is important for Canada to respect its international commitments and allow refugee protection claimants from Hong Kong and from around the globe who are in danger....

• (1850)

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Cliche-Rivard, I'm sorry for interrupting. Time is up.

We will now move on to Ms. Kwan.

Ms. Kwan, you have six minutes for your round of questioning. The floor is yours. You can please proceed.

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

Thank you to all the witnesses for their very thoughtful presentations.

I'd like to go to Ms. Go first, on the following question.

With respect to measures, back in 1989, the government brought in a variety of measures to deal with the Tiananmen Square situation. We just heard from officials that they did not consider those measures. I take a different view; I think the government should be looking to that situation, learn from that history and apply it to the current day.

One of the measures brought in was to ensure that all removals of Chinese nationals in Canada were suspended for an indefinite period. That's something we have not done. Do you think the Canadian government should do that?

**Ms. Avvy Yao-Yao Go:** Yes, for sure. I think it's in keeping with that spirit that we recognize that there is a political crisis in Hong Kong, just as there was a crisis in China at that time, and we allowed Chinese nationals at the time to apply for permanent residence, just like that. In fact, I remember that through my work with the Chinese Canadian National Council at the time, we were helping people apply for permanent residence.

The moratorium on deportation lasted beyond the period of that program, until, I think, the early 1990s. That, for sure, is something we should consider right now.

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

Just related to that, the official also said that the government did not consider, and will not consider, refugee status because of the UNHCR designation, and so on.

In the 2019 mandate letter to the Minister of Immigration, the Prime Minister actually instructed him to "[i]ntroduce a dedicated refugee stream to provide safe haven for human rights advocates, journalists and humanitarian workers at risk". Do you think we should be adopting those measures? If we do not, those folks who do not qualify under these various streams will never be able to get to Canada, even on the privately sponsored refugee stream. What are your thoughts on that?

**Ms. Avvy Yao-Yao Go:** Yes, I agree. In all the history of Canada, we know that, over time, we have created different refugee programs in recognition of a political situation happening in another country. Just off the top of my head, former Yugoslavia is the first one I can think of. Certainly we can create a program for this particular situation, knowing there is no UNHCR in Hong Kong and they have nowhere to go. Some of them have gone to Taiwan, but Taiwan is not a country that has signed on to.... Well, Taiwan is not even recognized as a country, and they have not signed on to the UN convention on refugees.

A lot of these people are stranded in some other countries as well and are not able to access any of the UNHCR offices, so I think we should definitely create a program for them.

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

I see Mr. Li nodding on that issue. Can I get you to quickly comment on that, as well?

**Mr. Eric Li:** I totally agree. As I said, like chicken and egg, we never get the refugee status for those people, so we cannot use any of our existing programs to support them. I totally agree with your suggestion that we should have a blanket policy like the one we had in 1989.

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

I wanted to jump into another area because, again, learning from history is really important.

One of the directives that came forward with Tiananmen Square was to say to the officials at the time that we should always keep in mind whether individuals have somehow “embarrassed their government”—and in this instance it's the Chinese government—and in so doing have exposed themselves to severe sanctions should they return.” Yet that directive has not been given here to the people who are processing H and C applications.

Do you think the government should say that outright and clearly as a directive?

**Ms. Avvy Yao-Yao Go:** Is that a question for me?

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Yes, Ms. Go.

**Ms. Avvy Yao-Yao Go:** I don't think the H and C process is the way to go, because H and C is a very discretionary process. It's up to the individual officers, and who knows if these officers support or don't support the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong. If anyone needs to sign a declaration, maybe the immigration officers should sign declarations about their commitment to human rights.

Putting that aside, I think the best way is to create a special program so we are not relying on the discretion of individual officers, similar to the Tiananmen Square program. It's simple, it's efficient and it will be much more inclusive than what we have right now.

• (1855)

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** That's fair enough.

I absolutely agree, but in the absence of that, I certainly hope there's a clear directive on H and C claims, because I'm quite worried about that process.

I'm noting my time.

You've all mentioned the limitations of the existing programs, because only a very small group of people would be able to access entry into Canada. If the government extended family-class reunification and even allowed those who are students here to apply to sponsor extended families to come to Canada, that would expand it a lot. I think I heard agreement from everyone that the government should indeed expand the family reunification measure to extended family and lift the travel restrictions, without which nobody can get here.

Can I get a quick answer from everybody on that?

**The Chair:** There are five seconds left.

**Ms. Avvy Yao-Yao Go:** I agree, but you have to relax the income requirement.

**The Chair:** Time is up.

Thank you, Ms. Go. I'm sorry.

We will now move to our second round of questioning. Based on the time, we will have four minutes each for the Conservatives and the Liberals, and then two minutes each for the Bloc and NDP.

We will start with Mr. Genuis. You have four minutes for your round of questioning. The floor is yours.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you so much to the witnesses for their testimony, but especially for the important work they're doing.

It seems to me that the government's program in this area is odd, because it's about economic categories and criteria, for the most part, instead of trying to identify human rights defenders and people who are most vulnerable to political persecution. It's great to have economic migrants coming from Hong Kong, but there are so many people who would face charges under laws unrelated to the security act. There are people who are not eligible but who are most at the epicentre of these human rights issues.

It shows the problem with the government's thinking and approach to this. You can realize both benefits, of course. People who come here who face persecution can still bring a great deal of benefit economically, and that includes people who may not have that much money in their pockets when they come. The reason people are calling for immigration measures around Hong Kong is not that someone saw an economic opportunity; it's the human rights and the political situation.

I want to hear your thoughts specifically on what kinds of measures we could have around immigration to target the most vulnerable human rights defenders. You can use Hong Kong as an example. However, perhaps it's applicable to other contexts around the world as well, that when we have people who are at the centre of advocating for human rights and who become politically exposed as a result, those people would make great Canadians in virtually every case.

We do this, but it seems we do it on more of an ad hoc basis. The minister uses his or her discretion to say we're going to have this person from Saudi Arabia or whatever. However, thinking in a more systematic policy way, how do we identify those important human rights defenders and give them a path to Canada?

Maybe Ms. Go can be first, and I'd love to hear the thoughts of others.

**Ms. Avvy Yao-Yao Go:** It's hard to think of it as a broad policy mechanism, because every country's situation is different. Using Hong Kong as an example, you can say that a lot of people are at risk right now, but we don't know exactly at what point they will become at risk. We know the police can arrest them at any time, but we don't know on what day. Technically, let's say you are a democracy activist in Hong Kong and you have not been arrested. Are you considered at risk under our definition of conventional refugee? Maybe not.

In the case of Hong Kong, I think what our government can do is work with community groups like ours, which have connections in Hong Kong, identify people who we think are potentially at risk because of their involvement, and try to find a way to bring them here through the temporary resident permit or through some other way.

Even if the Canadian government doesn't want to advertise it, because it doesn't want to make the relationship with China any worse, there are ways we can work together.

• (1900)

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** I would like to drill down for a quick follow-up while my time lasts here, Ms. Go.

Do you think there's a process where we can ask Canada-Hong Kong organizations to help us identify a certain number of individuals who have not yet been arrested or charged but are particularly exposed or vulnerable, and say, "We want to identify a certain number of people. We want to work with you, as civil society groups, to identify those individuals so we can create a special path for them"?

**Ms. Avvy Yao-Yao Go:** Yes, I think that's doable.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Sorry for interrupting, but your time is up.

We will now go to Madame Martinez Ferrada.

Madame Martinez Ferrada, you have four minutes for your round of questioning.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

If time permits, I will share my four minutes with my colleague Mr. Regan.

I thank the witnesses for being with us and for their comments.

According to what we are hearing, Hong Kong residents are worried they will be refused entry into Canada if they were charged with a crime under the National Security Law. However, a bit earlier today, the department representatives told us that, if it has been established that those individuals had not committed an equivalent offence in Canada, that criminal charge would have no impact.

For example, a peaceful protest does not constitute criminal activity in Canada, so a charge or a conviction for that abroad would not lead to admission into the country being refused.

Do you think this is well understood by Hong Kong residents who may be likely to be arrested under the National Security Law?

[*English*]

**Ms. Avvy Yao-Yao Go:** First of all, the way arrests are being done right now, they are not going to tell you that you are being arrested because you peacefully participated in a protest. They are going to tell you that you have breached the national security law based on treason, sedition and so on. The charge itself is not peaceful protest; the charge is treason or sedition.

I think we can go beneath that to understand the conduct leading up to the charge, but rather than doing that and relying on the individual officer's interpretation of the facts and the law, we should look south of the border, as an example. I can't remember whether it's the U.S. Congress or Senate, but I believe they have basically stated that anyone charged with a criminal offence because of their peaceful participation in the protests in Hong Kong would not be barred from entering the U.S.

We can work something out that is similar to that requirement so we don't have to rely on individual CBSA officers, particularly in light of the fact that CBSA has recently tried to make the case for giving itself more power, as opposed to the immigration division, to decide who is criminally admissible and who is not.

**The Chair:** Mr. Li, would you like to add something?

**Mr. Eric Li:** Yes. Actually, I tried to answer Mr. Genuis' question.

The first thing we have to do is educate or maybe instruct our staff in the Canadian consulate in Hong Kong. I know of a Canadian who has been vocal in Hong Kong. He rides a motorbike in Hong Kong. He was almost run down by somebody. Somebody deliberately almost ran him down. He asked for the consulate's help, but was refused. Our staff should be more helpful in helping our activists in Hong Kong. I'm not sure he needs a special passport right now, but our staff should be more helpful.

• (1905)

**The Chair:** Madame Martinez Ferrada, you have 15 seconds.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Madam Chair, she was sharing with me, but 15 seconds isn't enough to ask my question. Thank you.

**The Chair:** We will now move on to Madame Normandin.

Madame Normandin, you have two minutes for your round of questioning.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Thank you.

A bit earlier, I put the following question to the IRCC representatives. Last July, Great Britain set up programs to facilitate access to citizenship. I asked why the same thing was not being done here, and I was told that Great Britain has a special connection to Hong Kong. I was told that more emphasis was being placed on complementary measures.

Without going as far as citizenship, could we consider a program that would allow the granting of permanent residence? Is that a possibility that could be considered?

**Mr. Guillaume Cliche-Rivard:** Yes, absolutely. A special program was recently created for people working in the context of the pandemic. We have seen over time that, in exceptional or special circumstances, special programs could be created. A special program could very well be created to enable Hong Kong residents to access permanent residence, be it from Hong Kong or from Canada. This would be an accelerated process that would lead to permanent residence.

There was a program in Toronto for out-of-status construction workers. There are regularization programs. The ministerial power of the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship makes it possible to enforce public policy. Public policy stemming from the department could be established, so that an access to permanent residence program, along with relatively flexible criteria, would be created for Hong Kong residents. That would help us save as many people as possible and give them safety.

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Ms. Go, Mr. Li, perhaps you would like to add something. I see you nodding your head.

[English]

**Mr. Eric Li:** The most critical thing right now is for them to come to Canada. It would be good to have a special program—a fast track—for them to become permanent residents or citizens, but the critical thing right now is to let them leave Hong Kong and come to Canada to settle, because of the hostile situation. They can be arrested at any time. I'm not sure how many can survive from now on, so we need to have some kind of mechanism to let them come in.

**The Chair:** Sorry for interrupting, Mr. Li, but time is up.

We will now go to our last round of questioning, and that will be by Ms. Kwan.

Ms. Kwan, you have two minutes for your round of questioning. Please proceed.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** On the point about bringing a special program—a refugee program, in fact—working with NGOs... Rainbow Railroad was a pilot program that the Canadian government did to support people from the LGBTQ2 community. I think we can duplicate that. Is that something you were referring to earlier, Ms. Go?

**Ms. Avvy Yao-Yao Go:** Yes, that would be another example. We need to work with NGOs to identify the activists—not just in Hong Kong, I would add, but also activists who are now stranded in Taiwan or the U.K. because that's the country they could exit to within that short period of time. We need to make sure they will also have a pathway to Canada.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Just very quickly, we were talking about the 300,000 Canadians who are abroad, some of whom may have given up their Canadian citizenship. Some of them were actually lawmakers in Hong Kong and had to give it up in order to run.

Should the Canadian government bring forward an initiative so that those who have given up their Canadian citizenship can now ask for it to be reinstated in light of the situation, if they're at risk?

**Ms. Avvy Yao-Yao Go:** Yes, I agree with that.

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

I have another quick question. We learned about VFS Global, which is a company that is now apparently doing contract work for the Canadian government, processing visa application information. Should we bring that work back in-house? I'm very worried about the people of Hong Kong.

I would like quick answers from everybody.

**Ms. Avvy Yao-Yao Go:** Yes.

**Mr. Eric Li:** Yes, definitely, because I heard that some information was leaked already. I cannot fact-check that, but I was told that some information was leaked because of... Somebody went through that process. I'm really afraid this was not a single instance—it's probably quite common there.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** The Globe and Mail actually reported that there was a breach of security and IRCC wasn't even notified of that breach. That, to me, is very concerning.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting, Ms. Kwan. The time is up.

With that, our second panel comes to an end. I want to thank our three witnesses for appearing before the committee and for providing important information as we start this study today.

Before we adjourn, I want to let everyone know that in regard to the adoption of the subcommittee's report, I will review the blues. Before we hear from the witnesses, we will start with the amendment that was proposed by Ms. Dancho so that we can adopt the subcommittee's report. We will start Monday's meeting with that. I will also review the blues if there is any confusion on that.

With that, I would thank everyone. I thank all the witnesses once again, and I thank all the members for today's meeting.

The meeting is now adjourned. I will see you all on Monday.





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