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—
Chair

The Honourable Mark Eyking

Standing Committee on International Trade

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• (1400)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.)): Good afternoon, everyone. Happy St. Patrick's Day to those who are Irish and to those who, like me, are fortunate enough to be married to someone who is Irish.

On behalf of the committee, I think we should show a little respect for our friends in New Zealand. During TPP and other discussions at this committee, we've had the High Commissioner of New Zealand here. There have been tragic terrorist attacks there, and I think our hearts go out to them. If I may say so, on behalf of the committee, for the record, we'll pass on our condolences to them and hope for the best. If I may send a letter from our committee to the high commissioner, it would be a good thing to do for them at this trying time.

This afternoon we're gathered here, as requested by the opposition, pursuant to Standing Order 106(4). Without further ado, I think everybody wants to move along this afternoon, so if someone wants to speak to this, go ahead.

Mr. Hoback, you have the floor.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Thank you, Chair, and I thank our colleagues for showing up here on a Sunday.

This is a very important issue for western Canada. What we're talking about is the matter of China basically having put a limit on Winnipeg-based Richardson International's canola shipments two weeks ago.

I think everybody around this table understands that our canola is the safest in the world. This is not at all a quality issue with our canola. This is a political issue. Thus, this is the reason for asking the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of International Trade Diversification and the Minister of Foreign Affairs to come here: because it interacts with all three officials and all three departments.

To give you some insight on what canola means to Canada and why this is so important for everybody across Canada, about \$26 billion to \$27 billion is what the canola sector means to Canada. It's huge. It supports 250,000 Canadian jobs and \$11.2 billion in wages, and it generates a quarter of all farm cash receipts.

There are some 43,000 canola producers across Canada and, as they go into the planting season, they're all very concerned about what this looks like. China buys about 25% of our canola, so they're a big buyer, and we export 90% of our canola, so exports are very

important. We don't have a big enough domestic industry to take it all.

That's why, when it comes to a trade issue such as this, where you're seeing political interference on that quality issue becoming a factor, it's very concerning. We must have a political answer to it.

As I said, we're going into the spring planting season right now. Farmers are sitting there and looking at what they're going to plant this year. Probably 90% of that is already figured out, but when they see something like this happening, they have to take a step back and look at this. Are they going to plant 500 or 600 acres of canola on 2,000 acres now or not? I think a lot of those decisions will be based on the market price, which has been taking a nosedive since this started to happen.

We're seeing the canola sector really being hampered not only by the issue with China but by the market itself taking a downturn because of the insecurity created by China in the international marketplace. We think it's very important that we have a game plan or that we understand what that game plan is going forward. That's why we need to have all three ministers come in to speak about it.

Of course, this is an agriculture industry, so that justifies the Minister of Agriculture, and CFIA is involved, so that comes under the Minister of Agriculture. It is a trade issue, and the trade minister is the one who negotiates the trade deals and sits back and solves the trade issues. The reason I asked for the Minister of Foreign Affairs to be here is that the Minister of Foreign Affairs has inserted herself into other trade issues in the past. The USMCA is an example of where she has done that, where she has taken the lead. The U.S. is our number one customer for exports from Canada, but China is our number two, so I don't think you can not have her involved in this situation, considering the political nature of the decision that was made.

There is a lot of blame to go around on why we're in this scenario. I think the reality is, though, that we've seen a situation in Canada where our relationship with China has deteriorated since 2016. If you look at 2016, you see that the government had some lofty goals and good goals. They signed an MOU of co-operation between the Canadian Grain Commission and China's State Administration of Grain and announced a goal of doubling bilateral trade by 2025, an exploration of discussions on a Canada-China free trade agreement and an MOU with China that would secure canola into China until 2020.

If we look at it today, all of that is out the window. Basically, nothing they agreed to in 2016 has actually come to fruition at this point in time. They haven't done it. There's a variety of reasons for that not happening, but I think the Prime Minister has to take a lot of the blame on this. I think he has to shoulder the responsibility. When he laid out these goals, he didn't follow through, and he didn't do it in a manner such that it actually would allow our producers to benefit. Now our producers are paying the costs because of that.

The motion is pretty straightforward. One of the things I would maybe add to it or look at talking about would be that we would be open to discussions with officials, for sure, and then with some people in the industry. Maybe you'd want to bring in JRI and maybe the Canola Council.

I think the reality, though, is that we need to deal with this rather fast. This can't linger on. We can't dwell on it for three or four weeks. It needs to be dealt with rather quickly so that we here in Canada know and our farmers know that we have their backs and we're fighting for them.

I think I'll wrap it up there, Chair, and maybe open it to discussion.

● (1405)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hoback. You and I have been on trade and agriculture for many, many years up here. We know it's a \$26.7-billion industry and there are thousands of jobs. I appreciate your comments.

I have a list of other opposition members, but I encourage other opposition members to keep their comments tight so that we can move on to business here.

Mr. Maguire, go ahead, sir.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank my colleague for the excellent—

Mr. Randy Hoback: Point of order, Chair.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Hoback.

Mr. Randy Hoback: I just want to make sure I moved the motion.

The Chair: Yes, I think it's moved.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Okay.

The Chair: I think there's discussion on it right now. Okay?

Mr. Randy Hoback: Yes.

The Chair: We'll have discussion on it, and then....

Mr. Maguire, go ahead.

Mr. Larry Maguire: When I finish, Mr. Chair, I might have a small amendment to that.

I just want to make the point that Canada has the safest food in the world. I did spend six years as a farm leader on the Canadian Grain Commission western grain standards committee, and I know the stringent requirements and standards that our Canadian grain industry has. They are tops in the world. Our companies all know what those are. The CFIA does excellent work in managing to make

sure that every shipment that leaves our country meets those standards. The Canadian Grain Commission sets standards as well that are extremely stringent so that we do end up being recognized as the country in the world that provides the safest quality of food when it leaves this country for export and to help with other areas in the world as well.

I just want to say that we have been dealing with a number of other issues. The amount of trade was brought up. The Barton report has an \$85-billion target by 2025. The canola industry is just a big, big part of it. I know that the companies have concerns with these non-compliance orders that have been coming back to CFIA. I understand that there have been 10 or 11 of them since December 1. It's a situation now where the companies are feeling that perhaps China might be a market of last resort if they don't end up coming to the table, so I would encourage the government....

We can get into that with officials, but I think an excellent case has been made to have the three ministers appear before us. It's certainly an agricultural and agri-food industry issue, because we've heard from our farmers that this is extremely concerning to them, not only because of what my colleague Mr. Hoback indicated in regard to the amount of closeness we're getting to spring seeding but also due to the amount of product that's still in the bins this year that will need to be marketed prior to the summer as well. That would have a devastating impact on many farmers who have already called me in regard to their land payments and operating budgets. It's a financial concern they have with the industry.

There is one other thing I want to say. The situation that we've seen already in trade, in terms of having the trade minister here, is exacerbated, I think, by the fact that unfortunately we do not have an ambassador to China at this particular time. For almost two months that has been the case. It would help, I think, if we had a chance to offer that to the ministers in regard to the replacement of an ambassador there, to show the sincerity and the concern we have in this industry. I know that the officials are doing the best job they can there with this, but we want to make sure that we continue to operate under these MOUs we've had and that they're not seen as just pieces of paper that can be discarded when someone wishes.

I want to leave it there by saying that that CFIA would be good to have here, and perhaps the Canadian Grain Commission as well, to talk about the standards. The CFIA could do that. Certainly James Richardson International would be willing to come and provide a short synopsis of exactly how this has impacted them and perhaps other grain companies as well. I know that our phytosanitary issues that we deal with are met stringently around the world and in the production of the daily markets we have.

With that, Mr. Chair, in closing, the original motion said that we'd like to have the witnesses appear no later than Friday, March 15, the Ides of March, and this is March 17. Could we amend that to an appropriate date, such as March 22 or 29 or...?

● (1410)

The Chair: Yes. That's a good idea. When we come to wrap up, we'll try to figure out what the dates are on that.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Okay. I will leave it until then, as long as we don't forget that we want to come back to that.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Maguire.

For anybody who is listening or watching us, if you want to get more information on canola, the Canola Council of Canada has a lot of information on it. If you look on their website, almost every province produces canola, so it's very important.

We have an MP from Quebec here.

Mr. Berthold, you have the floor.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

First, I want to thank the members of the committee very much for being here. Indeed, the canola issue does not affect only the west, it affects all of Canada as well. Thank you, Mr. Chair, for mentioning that fact.

I also want to thank the members of the committee for having given me some time today as opposition critic for agriculture and agri-food.

This matter is extremely important. As my colleague Mr. Maguire mentioned a few minutes ago, the Barton Report indicates that Canadian exports are expected to increase to \$85 billion by 2025. It is clear that stakeholders in the agricultural sector and international trade will have to work hand in hand in the future.

Unfortunately, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food who has been in the position for three years has not taken part in the discussions on international trade. I wanted to mention that, because it is important for agricultural representatives, farmers and Canadian producers to know that the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food is an active participant in important activities like international negotiations. When the previous government was in power, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food took part in these international negotiations. Unfortunately, since 2015, no place is being set for this minister at the negotiation tables.

I wanted to mention that fact to the committee because it is important. I strongly encourage you to ask the government to see to it that the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food take an active part in the various international negotiations, especially when agriculture is being discussed.

As you mentioned, Mr. Chair, canola is an important part of Canada's agricultural exports. Forty per cent of Canada's canola exports are sent to China. In 2017, this amounted to about \$3.6 billion. This is a major crisis, and that is why the members on this side of the table requested emergency meetings. We also asked the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food to hold a meeting on this subject, but unfortunately, for all kinds of reasons, our NDP colleague could not approve such an emergency meeting.

I commend the decision of the Standing Committee on International Trade to hold this meeting, because it is very important to show Canadian canola producers as well as all other Canadian agricultural producers that their government, their Parliament and their MPs are concerned and are focusing on what is happening to relations between Canada and China.

What is at stake is maintaining the trust of buyers and of producers who export their products, as well as the agreements that were established. Unfortunately, doors are closing. Companies have stopped buying and producers are stuck with their products. We absolutely have to head off this situation, all the more so since there are already issues with grain transport to the west despite the adoption of Bill C-49. We thought that this project would miraculously solve everything and allow the export of Canadian products. We thought it was a panacea and that everything would be settled as if by magic. This year we can already see that that is not the case. We are going to have to be even more vigilant in the future.

The trust of producers and buyers is at stake. Buyers have to know that Canadian producers can provide the merchandise. Without going into all of the details of the context and of China's claims, it's important to know the political response of the Canadian government to this situation.

That is why I unreservedly support the motion that this committee to simultaneously invite the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, the Minister of International Trade Diversification, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. This is a political crisis, and we have to obtain answers from the people who are politically responsible for the current situation.

More than half of the agri-food products grown in Canada are exported, which makes agriculture highly dependent on exports and international markets. We can't simply observe this crisis and expect it to magically resolve itself.

• (1415)

I strongly urge the members of the committee to hold this meeting with the three ministers as soon as possible. This crisis urgently needs to be resolved. We cannot wait for other productions to be threatened or for the advent of new obstacles to the Chinese market. We must react as quickly as possible.

I know that the budget will be tabled this week, but I think that nothing prevents the members of the committee from showing good faith. We can hold a meeting with the ministers as early as this week, at any time of the day or night. We are here today on a Sunday, which proves that we are willing to travel at any time. We are ready to receive the ministers and you will have the full support of the opposition if you decide to hold this meeting this week at any time of the day. We are available.

The members of the committee are ready to hold this meeting to shed light on this topic and obtain answers to the questions of Canadian canola producers with regard to the current crisis.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

We're going to move to Mr. Barlow.

Go ahead, sir.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Thank you very much—

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Chair, on a point of order, I'm not sure, but I think there are three Conservatives normally and they get their time, but I don't know if we extend the courtesy.... I'm happy to let everybody speak, but I don't know if we have to follow any procedure to make that happen.

Mr. John Barlow: I'll be very quick, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: I'm happy to let you speak. I just don't know if we have to ask for unanimous consent. I'm happy to have everyone speak who wants to speak. I just don't know if we have to do something procedurally first.

The Chair: From my perspective, some of the members are visiting members to our committee. You'll find that this is a very efficient, not very hyper-partisan committee. We like to give everybody the time they require, but keep it short and tight.

I figured I'd do the opposition first, and then—

● (1420)

Mr. Kyle Peterson: That's what I was going to say. Whatever courtesy we need to extend, we're happy to do so.

The Chair: Yes, and for the record, we moved this to be an hour earlier for the opposition because at three o'clock they have some important things they have to be at. I want everybody to keep that in mind.

Let's keep it tight and short, and let's move on.

Go ahead, Mr. Barlow.

Mr. John Barlow: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I do appreciate the committee allowing a few of us the opportunity to speak here. I know that is not traditional, but, as you mentioned, Mr. Chair, this is an issue that impacts just about every province in the country, and we want to ensure that we have almost every province represented here.

I want to touch on only two issues that haven't been addressed thus far. The one thing I really want to stress as part of why we're calling for this emergency meeting with these three ministers is the critical timing around this issue. I think a lot of people don't understand. They may be thinking this is an issue that's going to impact the crops they are going to be seeding in the next month or so. That is absolutely not the case. This isn't something that's going to impact them when they harvest next fall and start shipping next winter. This impacts the canola that was harvested last year, which is in the storage bins now.

We've seen the price of canola drop by more than a dollar a bushel. That means the value of the crop that is in the bins now waiting to get to market has been reduced by more than \$1 billion. I really want to emphasize that this is something that is impacting the pocketbooks of the 43,000 canola growers we have across the country. Over the next few months the bank is going to be calling on them to pay their mortgages, their equipment bills, and the loans and things. They are going to have to be getting contracts ready for shipping next year. This is something that impacts their planning right now.

Some people in Canada are going to be asking why they don't plant something else this spring. Our farmers make these strategic decisions years in advance. They are rotating the crops in their fields.

They are looking at the futures market. They can't decide now, because we've lost a very critical market, to go back home and say they will not plant that 1,000 acres of canola this year and will move to barley or something else. These decisions are made years in advance, and this is impacting what they've already harvested.

That's why the timing of this is so critical. That's why I think having an emergency meeting with those three ministers is so important when we have an industry that contributes \$26.7 billion to the Canadian economy. As the shadow minister for employment, workforce development and labour, I am saying that there are 250,000 Canadian jobs that rely on this industry.

I spent the constituency week speaking to the producers in my riding, who are extremely frustrated because the timing of this could not be worse, as I said, as they plan for their seeding for this spring but also because of the impact it has on the harvest they have just had, which is in the storage bin.

I appreciate your giving me the opportunity to speak on that.

The last thing I want to touch on is that it's important we have the opportunity to speak to those ministers, because when I was on the agriculture committee—and this was touched on briefly—we had commitments from the agriculture minister and the trade minister at that time to ensure that we would maintain the level of CFIA personnel in our consulates and embassies around the world. I want to make sure we still have those people in place in China, on the ground, having discussions with our counterparts in China to ensure that this can be addressed expeditiously to ensure that we can access that market once again.

We've seen a trend in which our trade in peas and pulses to India has dropped by more than \$1 billion. We can't keep losing these markets for our processors and certainly our producers. That's what I want to get across, Mr. Chair, just how critical the timing is.

Again, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak here today.

The Chair: We're going to move to Mr. Sopuck.

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Neebawa, CPC): Mr. Chair, I agree with everything my colleagues said, so I will not repeat what they said.

Canola is an iconic Canadian crop. It was developed from a plant called rapeseed, which was used to produce just industrial oil, but through the magic of modern plant technology, Dr. Baldur Stefansson from the University of Manitoba developed canola from rapeseed. In fact, "canola" actually stands for "Canadian oil, low acid".

This is an iconic crop. This is not something that the rest of the world grows. A tremendous amount of canola is grown in my constituency and the constituencies of my colleagues. I think it's important to put in perspective how iconic this crop is and the importance that those of us who represent canola producers place on this particular crop.

Just to finish, I want to make the point that it's absolutely a farmer issue. A farmer talked to me this morning and said that for him and his family, it's the canola that buys the farm machinery and pays the mortgage. It's very, very important.

Let's not forget as well the thousands and thousands of other jobs right across the country. We tend to focus on producers, and rightly so, but when a crop is grown or an animal is fed out, it sets off a chain of employment that ripples right across the country. In my particular case, there is a canola processing plant at Harrowby in my constituency. I don't know how many of the workers there actually farm or produce canola themselves, but they are part of the canola value chain.

Our briefing notes talked about processing, truckers, local industries and port facilities. Just as the oil sands are often mistaken for an Alberta-only issue, this ripples right across the country. I guarantee that every one of us has constituents who work in the oil sands, and I can almost guarantee that the canola industry creates employment right across the country. Therefore, it's important for us to keep in mind the canola value chain and the workers who depend on the production of this most highly valued crop, which is actually producing the best oil in the world. It's no accident that canola is valued around the world. I think McDonald's french fries are cooked in canola oil, and we all use it at home. We know it's the best. Palm oil cannot hold a candle to canola in terms of all its characteristics.

From a contextual standpoint, I think we should appreciate not only the history of canola but also its widespread ripple effect through our country and economy.

• (1425)

The Chair: Mr. Masse, do you have a few words to say today?

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks for the opportunity to be here.

I think it's a good opportunity to bring forward something that's timely for not only this committee but also others with regard to non-tariff barriers that are put in front of Canadian businesses, and in this case a number of different independent members of the canola industry. I think that's where there is some government responsibility to act.

The suggestion to bring in the appropriate ministers fits within some of the things that need to be looked at. The non-tariff barriers affect everything, but we have a supply chain that needs to be looked at as well if alternative markets need to be considered in this.

As well, if government policy has impacted the market.... They have had a lot of investment. This is no accident and it's been well spoken to in terms of the planning and production with regard to not only the planting but also penetrating the market to be successful. You can't just flip that around rather quickly. In fact, the supply chain elements remind me of the auto industry that was active and engaged, because in terms of the standards and quality expectations, there is very little forgiveness.

I think a lot of Canadians would be sympathetic to the plight of these people. It's not just a matter of doing something different really quickly, and I don't think we want to. We have actually invested and strategically come into an industry that we can be proud of. We hope the government's reaction to this will be unified and will support our farmers at the end of the day. If some subsequent action needs to take place, it affects everything from borrowing and lending, and it affects equipment that's been purchased and mortgaged and

amortized, as well as food safety in this country, in terms of planning.

I think this is a good start and I think a lot of industries would be very sympathetic, because it's not just a simple matter of getting something from the ground to somebody else across the world really simply. This is a fully engaged industry that we should be proud of.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Masse.

We're going to go to Mr. Dhaliwal.

I see that in British Columbia there's over half a billion dollars' worth of canola.

Mr. Dhaliwal, do you have some comments on this?

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): First, I want to thank you, Mr. Chair, for your comments on the New Zealand situation. I was in New Zealand last week. It was a very sad situation on Friday and Saturday. In fact, I joined my Muslim sisters and brothers in my constituency to mourn, to grieve and to be with our peers. I want to thank you for your thoughtfulness in writing a letter, and I thank all the committee members for supporting that unanimously.

I also want to thank my friend and colleague, Mr. Hoback, for bringing forward this important issue. This is important not only for western Canada, but as Mr. Berthold mentioned, this is an important issue for all of Canada.

Randy, thank you for bringing this forward.

I also want to thank the opposition members on the committee for how constructively we have worked over the last three and a half years. We have achieved a lot on this committee.

It has been a pleasure working with you, Randy, on all the issues.

• (1430)

Mr. Randy Hoback: It sounds like you're retiring.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: It's not about retiring. The way I see it now is that this issue is very important on our side as well, and I speak on behalf of all members here and even on behalf of the Liberal members who are not present. This issue is very, very important.

When it comes to standing up with the canola farmers, the Prime Minister has stood strong when it comes to our agricultural industry's issues. From time to time, many other issues have come forward. When it comes to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the record is very clear. She has taken on leadership and has stood with Canadian exporters, whether that was on the NAFTA issue or other issues.

Our canola farmers are the leaders in this industry. They produce the highest quality of canola in the world, and we have to be.... It is a time-sensitive issue, as Mr. Hoback mentioned, so we don't want to distract them and go outside the framework. I think our focus should be only on this issue at this time, the issue of the canola farmers.

I agree with Mr. Hoback that we should have officials here as well. I'm certain that members on this side also agree that if we bring the officials here next week, on Thursday, to talk to us and give us the details.... This issue is related to agriculture and agri-food and also to international trade. I would suggest that to make this concise, time-sensitive and effective, we should invite those two ministers and leave the Minister of Foreign Affairs out of it. Those two ministers should appear in the week of April 1, when we come back. That is what I would like to see. That is the best way of moving forward.

The Chair: Are you moving an amendment?

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Yes. I would move an amendment that, concerning the recent revocation by the Chinese government of Richardson International's canola export registration to the Chinese market, the committee invite the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Minister of International Trade Diversification, and that the officials appear next week but the ministers appear during the week starting April 1, 2019.

The Chair: Before we go to that amendment, there are two quick things, just for the record.

As far as next Thursday goes, we do have an opening. Mr. Hoback, you had a suggestion that we bring in the officials on Brexit. They can't come, but are suggesting, of course, that they come later, because of the big thing that's unfolding. Just on that point, Thursday is open for us, which is good.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: It's open, but is it good for the officials?

The Chair: The other thing is that I'm guessing from the Liberals that you must have a sense from the ministers that they're available for that week.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: They will make themselves available in that week for sure.

The Chair: Does everybody understand the amendment?

The amendment also changes the date, of course, because the date was the 15th, right?

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Yes, to the week of April 1.

The Chair: Does anybody have questions on the amendment?

Go ahead, Mr. Hoback.

Mr. Randy Hoback: First of all, thank you for your comments.

Yes, I appreciate that it makes sense to bring in the officials next Thursday. Again, I'd like to bring in the ministers next week, if possible. Is that at all possible?

The only other thing is that when we bring in the ministers, I don't want to lump them together, because I need an equal amount of time to question them both. I can't have them sharing that time. To have the first hour with one minister and the second hour with the other minister independently I think would be important—

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: That's doable.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Then, on the officials, what are you thinking? Is it an hour for the officials and then an hour for industry people, too, for Thursday?

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: I think we should do the officials and keep it internal for now, because we want to make sure we go to the root

cause of the issue. The officials will be able to tell us from the end-station management perspective the questions we will have, and then we will bring in those two ministers. They are willing, and I'm sure will make sure that they'll be—

• (1435)

The Chair: The sense is that it will be Thursday with the officials to kind of give us the lowdown and prep us for when the ministers come.

Mr. Hoback, your suggestion is that the ministers would come separately in that week.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Yes. It can be at the same meeting, but one hour with one minister and the other hour with the other minister.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Sure. I think that's good.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Then we have two rounds of questioning with each minister.

The Chair: [*Inaudible—Editor*] I could put that request in.

Mr. Masse, do you have some comments?

Mr. Brian Masse: Yes. If the amendment is to drop the Minister of Foreign Affairs, I won't be supporting that, so I'd like to make sure we have two separate votes on that. I think it's a little bit naive to have a complete review of this without the Minister of Foreign Affairs as part of it. I want to be clear on that and to have those two separate votes. I'll support the motion with the deletion, but again, on the same point, I think the international affairs minister should be part of this. It makes a lot of sense.

I want to clarify that when we go to a vote, there will be two votes: one on the amendment to the main motion and then the main motion itself.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Let us call the vote—

The Chair: Does somebody else want to speak?

Go ahead, Mr. Berthold.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Would it be possible to reread the amendment in French? You may also reread it in English so that I may hear the interpreters' version. I want to be sure I understand the amendment clearly. I think it's important. I believe I heard nuances I had not caught the first time you read it.

Afterwards, I'd like to make a comment.

[*English*]

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Okay. I can do that.

The Chair: No. I think here's what we can do, if you don't mind, Mr. Dhaliwal. If you could speak slowly and read your amendment, the translator will translate it. Is that fine?

Good. We're good to go.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: The motion is as follows:

That the Committee invite the following witnesses to appear concerning the recent revocation by the Chinese government of Richardson International's canola export registration to the Chinese market:

a. the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food;

b. the Minister of International Trade Diversification; and
 c. the officials of both ministries;
 and that the officials appear on Thursday, March 21, 2019; and that both the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Minister of International Trade Diversification appear during the week starting on Monday, April 1, 2019.

The Chair: We have Mr. Masse on a point of order.

Mr. Brian Masse: I'll leave it to you, Mr. Chair, but that seems like a new motion.

Wouldn't it be, if it's an amendment to a motion, deleting item "c.", inserting a new date, and then adding "officials"? It's more procedure to me. That's what I think the intent is, but I'll leave it to you.

I just want to make sure that two votes take place here. I don't want to spend a lot of time on it, but that we agree we should have.... I have no objection—

The Chair: Well, it's up to the committee. I'm just trying to get through the day here.

We could vote on the first motion, if that's what you want, I guess, and then we'll vote on the new motion.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: The vote will be on the amendment as amended. If it doesn't pass, then we'll go to the—

Mr. Brian Masse: That is my point of order, though, because really we're talking about a whole new motion here. If we just vote on the amendment, it's been altered significantly and it doesn't include the Minister of International Trade Diversification, which was in the original motion.

My question is a procedural one, because three-quarters of the main motion is now changed to a new motion.

The Chair: Well, that's debatable, because the main motion is the same. It's not the Minister of International Trade Diversification; it's the Minister of Foreign Affairs who's not in there.

Mr. Brian Masse: I'm sorry. I stand corrected.

The Chair: Mr. Hoback, do you have a comment since, I think, it's your motion?

Mr. Randy Hoback: I'm okay with the amendment as proposed, but I do agree that we need to have a second motion, then, that talks about the Minister of Foreign Affairs, because I do believe we should have her here. As I said, there is a political issue here that she will have to oversee. There are questions we have for her, as far as her game plan with China is concerned, with regard to ag exports into China, which she will have to have oversight on.

Another issue is that we don't have an ambassador sitting in China, as we speak, so she is the person in charge. We need to know what she's doing in relation to the fact that we don't have an ambassador there and in terms of how we're actually handling not only the technical side of things but also the political side of things. That's why I want to see foreign affairs included.

The other people I think we should consider are the actual industry people like the Canola Council, the Canola Growers, and maybe JRI, since they are in the centre of all of this, just to get their overview on how they're finding the Chinese reaction in comparison to that of other markets, for example. They might give us some oversight to explain to everybody on this committee just how politically charged

this action from China has been. That's why I would maybe consider that too.

I'll throw that back at you guys to see what you think.

• (1440)

The Chair: Mr. Peterson.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Mr. Chair, I believe what was presented by Mr. Dhaliwal is actually an amendment. He read out what was staying and then inserted his own wording. It just has to be presented as deleting "c." and replacing it with what he said, and then it will become an amendment.

The Chair: It would be "c." and the date.

Mr. Brian Masse: We don't have any of that in front of us. That's not what he said.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: He just read out the existing motion. By reading it out, he has implied that he doesn't want to change it. All he changed was "c."; the amendment was to paragraph "c."

Mr. Randy Hoback: Just entertain the other motion from Brian.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Procedurally I think we vote on the amendment first, and if it passes, then we vote on the amended motion. There is not an opportunity to vote on it.

The Chair: In all fairness, Mr. Dhaliwal, for translation, you said the whole thing, right? It sounds as though a lot was changed, but there is not a lot of change, and "c." is out. If that makes it clearer, that "c." is out, and then we vote on the main motion.

I think, Mr. Dhaliwal, in all fairness to you, you were just trying to be helpful in explaining this. But do you want to make the amendment that "c." and the date are taken out?

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Sure. I would say that "c." should be taken out, and where it says—

Mr. Kyle Peterson: —and replace it with "officials".

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: —and "c." is replaced with "the officials".

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, before discussing the point of order, I had asked that the amendment be read again so that I could comment on it. If I may, I would now like to speak to the text of that amendment. There was a point of order on the amendment but I had not heard the wording. As a result I did not get an opportunity to comment on it. If you give me a few moments, before we vote on the amendment, there are two things I'd like to say.

First, I thank you for the clarification because that is indeed what I thought I had heard. I think it is deplorable that we want to withdraw the invitation to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, for a very simple reason: the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food herself, during a Radio-Canada interview on the program *Les coulisses du pouvoir* said that it was Ms. Freeland, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who "does the follow-up that is needed regarding diplomatic relations with China."

Today, you are proposing that the committee not invite the Minister of Foreign Affairs, that is to say the person who is responsible for our diplomatic relations with China, and directs them, since Canada does not have an ambassador there at this time. With all due respect to my colleague, I understand that we want to accelerate things, but in the current situation we cannot voluntarily deprive ourselves of an essential actor. I am not the one who says so; the Minister of Agriculture, a minister of this government, says so. I think the committee would be very remiss if it were to withdraw Ms. Freeland's name from the list of witnesses to be invited to address the canola issue. If we do not invite the person who holds discussions with China, people will wonder who is responsible for the file. Her presence is thus absolutely necessary if we want to obtain answers for our producers.

The previous minister of Agriculture was not involved in international discussions. The Minister of International Trade Diversification is, in part, but he is not sitting at the table. If we deprive ourselves of the only person who is able to give us the straight goods on negotiations with China, the committee will be making a serious error. Moreover, that minister is the person responsible for all of the international agreements signed by Canada.

Mr. Dhaliwal, you said earlier that the Prime Minister deems all agricultural files to be a priority. I remember that during his trip to India, the Prime Minister agreed with his Indian counterpart on settling the issue of legume fumigation by the end of 2018. We are now in March 2019, and there is still no solution. I'd like to understand why, and I want to have a chance to put questions to the person who seems to be the only one responsible for negotiations in the current government. Her presence here is indispensable, and our work would be futile, to say the least, if the government's main spokesperson did not appear.

• (1445)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

We've heard all sides here. Mr. Dhaliwal, if you want to say a quick few words, go ahead, and then we'll go right to a vote on the amendment.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Chair, the ultimate responsibility for this file goes to the Minister of International Trade Diversification. I think we should not delay this issue. As Mr. Hoback said, this is a time-sensitive issue. Let's get those two ministers, the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of International Trade Diversification, and the officials, who are very key to this issue, and get this resolved.

The Chair: Okay, let's bring it to a vote.

Mr. Brian Masse: I'd like a recorded vote.

The Chair: Okay.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 5; nays 4 [See Minutes of Proceedings])

The Chair: Let's go to the main motion.

Does everybody understand the main motion?

Go ahead, Mr. Hoback.

Mr. Randy Hoback: On a point of order, Chair, Mr. Masse talked about a separate motion for the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Even though that was dropped from the original in the amendment, we still want to have a standing vote on the Minister of Foreign Affairs, I believe.

Mr. Brian Masse: I'd like to move that motion—

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: First there's the vote on the motion as amended.

Mr. Randy Hoback: I agree with your procedure. I just want assurances from you that we can record the second motion. It's a substantial motion. It's dealing with the topic of the day, so it's all within the orders of the standing order.

You're going to vote it down anyway, so what do you care?

The Chair: The clerk has noted that the amendment has been voted on, so now you have to vote on the motion as amended.

Yes, Mr. Barlow.

Mr. John Barlow: Just really quickly on the amended motion, you are saying that the date would be the week of April 1. I have a concern with that and I'm just going to voice it. I am more than willing—I think all of us have spoken that we're more than willing—to come back on the break week for this. I can't emphasize enough the timing of this in terms of waiting another two or three weeks. I appreciate that you are going to have the ministers here, but we can't be waiting on the decision. We need an explanation. Do we have the CFIA people on the ground? The prices of every other commodity are being dragged down by this decision on canola.

I appreciate Mr. Dhaliwal saying that the Prime Minister is standing up for agriculture, but as my colleague said, he made a promise to address the fumigation issue with India. That was more than a year ago, and we still don't have that. Our exports on pulses to India have gone down from \$4.2 billion to \$158 million. That was a significant loss in the last year and a half. Now we're losing another significant market for another product. Our producers cannot handle this. They need these markets or they will not survive.

In terms of waiting two weeks, when we have a break week right there, I am willing to come back. My colleagues are willing to come back. The minister should deal with this. Having the Minister of International Trade Diversification say he is satisfied to leave this in the hands of officials.... We need to understand what our ministers are doing. Are they meeting with their colleagues and their counterparts in China or are they just hoping that their officials will resolve this? That isn't good enough. I would prefer that they were here, and if we can't do it next week, then the week after.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1450)

The Chair: Are there some short comments?

Mr. Maguire.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Chair, I know that we were looking at bringing in the officials from the grading groups and that sort of thing and the officials of the ministers to look at the issues, but I think it would be imperative, as my colleague and I mentioned earlier, to have someone particularly from JRI. They are the ones who have been suspended in trade here. I wonder if the government would allow that person to come and give us just four, five or six minutes, or whatever the others have, with regard to speaking on the issue.

The Chair: This issue is very important, but as the chair, I had calls over the weekend that we have this meeting at two o'clock because MPs had to leave at three o'clock. I listened to their wishes, and that's why everybody moved their schedule to be here earlier.

I would appreciate not repeating this. I think we have to bring this to a vote. If something else comes up afterwards, so be it. An amendment has already been put forward, so I'll bring it to a vote right now.

Yes, Monsieur Berthold.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: I had asked for the floor. I will be very brief.

I was given this little hourglass by the Canola Council of Canada. I simply want to illustrate the urgency of the situation, as pointed out by my colleague Mr. Barlow. Allow me to read what it says on this little hourglass that contains canola.

[*English*]

It says, "By the time this canola runs out, the Canadian canola industry will generate more than \$6,000 for our economy."

You see? It's over. It's gone. We must act quickly. We must have the ministers here sooner than April 1. As was just demonstrated, time is running out.

Thank you.

The Chair: I could talk to the ministers to see if they could come earlier and we could see what happens, but right now we have a commitment.

I'll bring this to a vote right now.

Do you want a recorded vote?

Okay.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 9; nays 0 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Are all in favour that we close this meeting?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: In conclusion, Mr. Chair, I want to remind you that you said, just before the vote, that you would make representations to ministers to have them appear sooner. Thank you for that. This is urgent, and it seems to me that it is in the interest of the committee that the ministers appear as quickly as possible.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

I thank all the visiting MPs. This is a very important issue.

Go ahead, Mr. Masse.

Mr. Brian Masse: Just for clarification, moving another motion to have the Minister of Foreign Affairs attend is redundant now, because it was excluded in the previous one that we actually had a separate vote on. However, the New Democrats want it to be clear that we believe that's an essential part of the hearings. You're having a number of different parties come in, and the non-tariff barriers are just as important as anything else. Really, we already dealt with that in the first defeat of the motion.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, for your time.

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

Enjoy the rest of St. Paddy's Day, everybody.

The meeting is adjourned.

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