



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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# Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 038**

Monday, November 21, 2022

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Chair: Mr. Ali Ehsassi





## Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

Monday, November 21, 2022

• (1535)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.)):** Welcome to meeting number 38 of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of June 23, 2022. Members are attending in person in the room as well as remotely using the Zoom application.

I'd like to make a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses and members. Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mike, and please mute yourself when you are not speaking.

Interpretation for those on Zoom is at the bottom of your screen, and you have a choice of floor, English or French. For those in the room, you can use an earpiece and select the desired channel.

As a reminder, all comments should be addressed through the chair.

In accordance with our routine motion, I am informing the committee that all witnesses have completed the required connection tests in advance of the meeting.

Pursuant to the order of reference of Wednesday, June 1, 2022, the committee resumes consideration of Bill S-211, an act to enact the fighting against forced labour and child labour in supply chains act and—

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Point of order, Mr. Chair.

Can I just interrupt for one second?

**The Chair:** Yes, you can, Ms. McPherson.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Thank you.

I would just like a bit of clarity from you, if I could, because this meeting was not what I understood the committee was doing, and we didn't get the notice of meeting until Sunday night. We've never received the list of witnesses—which witness was brought forward from which party—and it makes it very difficult for us to do our work when we don't have that information.

I'm wondering if you could provide some clarity on why that was the case and if there are ways we can avoid that in the future.

**The Chair:** Yes.

The reason why the notice did not go out is that, first of all, I think the calendar had been sent out to the members previously, so everyone was aware that that was occurring. However, insofar as the notice was concerned, the clerk was good enough to send it to me on Friday by email, but I did not see it until Sunday night. I am entirely responsible for the delay in sending out the notice.

As for the witnesses, I had no say as to which witnesses were selected.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Receiving the list is what I would like. Usually we receive the list of witnesses.

**The Chair:** For sure.

I'll ask the clerk to kindly clarify.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Ariane Gagné-Frégeau):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Indeed, I have not distributed the compiled list, because I have not received the suggested witness list from all parties. I'm still missing witnesses from one party.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Could we get the list of the parties that have submitted witnesses, then?

**The Clerk:** I can do that, for sure.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Yes, Mr. Genuis.

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

I wanted to raise something about the committee agenda as well. We had adopted a calendar on October 26, and the clerk subsequently sent out a proposed revised draft calendar, but the revised version was not adopted by the committee. In terms of what the committee has adopted, it was the original version adopted on October 26 that the committee had agreed to.

That agreed-upon version had a discussion of the situation in Ukraine scheduled for this coming Wednesday for the full two hours. I notice the meeting was published for Wednesday, but that does not align with the agreed-upon calendar. We're certainly open to a discussion about potential changes to the calendar—in particular, we have an urgent motion on the situation in Iran that we plan to give notice of today—but in the absence of agreed-upon changes to the agreed-upon calendar, I think it is important that we schedule meetings in accordance with the agreed-upon calendar, not with things that were not agreed on.

My suggestion would be that either we stick to the agreed-upon calendar, which is the two hours on the situation in Ukraine, or we try to set aside some time today for a discussion of committee business. Again, we're open to that discussion, but in the absence of an agreement.... The agreement was that this coming Wednesday we would have two hours of discussion on the situation in Ukraine.

**The Chair:** As you're well aware, and as was explained to you, Mr. Genuis, the clerk did change that last Monday, and that was out of a concern to make sure that the committee's time is being used efficiently, because as you know there are many issues the members would like to consider.

Yes, that did change, and Bill S-223 is now scheduled for Wednesday.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Chair, I understand all that. My point would just be, with great respect for the clerk, that the scheduling decisions are made by the committee. The committee has agreed, in the agreed-upon version, that we do consideration of the draft interim report—

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Outremont, Lib.):** I have a point of order, Chair.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Sorry, I am speaking to a point of order.

My point of order was this. We received a notice for Wednesday's meeting that is not consistent with the unanimously agreed-upon calendar of the committee. There may be good reasons that informed someone's opinion that we should adjust the calendar, but I think it is incumbent on the chair to schedule meetings in accordance with the agreement of the committee, unless that agreement changes.

• (1540)

**The Chair:** That's fair enough.

The clerk is pointing out that the chair does have the power to move it around to make sure that we proceed in the most expeditious fashion and to make sure that all those issues that are being considered are considered.

That said, we will go to Ms. Bendayan.

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** I simply wanted to see, Mr. Chair, if we could get to our witnesses.

I would like to respond to my colleague, and we can discuss the schedule, but given that witnesses are waiting, perhaps there is a better time for this.

**The Chair:** For sure. My apologies to the witnesses.

Can we proceed with the witnesses?

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Yes. Let's proceed according to the agreed-upon calendar for the rest of the month, and let's hear from the witnesses.

**The Chair:** No. We've moved it around just to make it more efficient.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** We can hash it out on Wednesday if we want, but we're going to have a problem on Wednesday if we are not proceeding in accordance with the agreed-upon calendar. That's my only point.

**The Chair:** How is that a problem, Mr. Genuis?

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** It's because we have an agreed-upon calendar. I mean, we're supposed to—

**The Chair:** Yes, but a chair can also make sure that we move along apace to make sure that all those issues that are of concern to the members are actually dealt with.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ):** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** We can discuss this on Wednesday, but I don't think the chair can just change the calendar if it's been unanimously agreed on.

I'll leave my comments there. I won't have anything to add. I've made my point.

Thank you.

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

Yes, Mr. Bergeron.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Mr. Chair, I certainly would not want to question the clerk advising you that you can change the calendar at your leisure to render committee business as efficient as possible. However, to avoid this kind of issue, it might be useful for you to consult with the two vice-chairs of the committee, who, along with you and another member from the Liberal Party, make up the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure. It would be more legitimate if you go through the subcommittee to make these kinds of changes.

I understand very well that sometimes changes have to be made to the agreed upon calendar to make committee business more efficient. However, look at the trouble it puts you and the committee in when we have witnesses present.

Mr. Chair, I simply and respectfully suggest that you go through the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure in the future, which should prevent these kinds of situations.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Bergeron. We'll certainly consider that.

If we could now go back to our study—

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.):** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Yes, Mr. Zuberi.

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi:** I'd like to say that I respect the fact that you as chair have the prerogative to make swift decisions that reflect the overall will of the committee. I would ask that all members also respect that fact, that it is your prerogative to do exactly what you are doing. The decisions you have taken thus far are right and appropriate.

I hope we can get into what we need to study right now.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

I think that in the terminology Mr. Bergeron used, he said it was to add to the legitimacy of the process. I wasn't bringing up anything new. This was something that all members of the committee had agreed to consider, and I simply moved around an hour, but going forward perhaps that would be a better approach.

Now, if we could go back to the study at hand, allow me to say that concerning the drafting of amendments, I'd like to remind all the members to contact Alexandra Schorah, the legislative counsel, should there be any amendments of the draft.

All that having been said, it is now my pleasure to welcome our witnesses today.

We have with us Mr. Martin Dumas, a lawyer and a professor of industrial relations at Université Laval; Mr. Matt Friedman from The Mekong Club, who acts and serves as chief executive officer; Mr. Stephen Brown, from the National Council of Canadian Muslims, who serves as chief executive officer, with Ms. Fatema Abdalla, the advocacy officer; and finally, from the Shareholder Association for Research and Education, we're happy to have Mr. Kevin Thomas, who serves as chief executive officer.

Each of our four witnesses will be provided five minutes for their opening remarks, after which we will open the floor to questions by the members.

Mr. Dumas, you have five minutes. Once you are down to 30 seconds, before you hit that target, I will put up a paper to guide you so you have a sense that you should be wrapping it up soon.

Thank you, Mr. Dumas. Please do proceed.

● (1545)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Martin Dumas (Lawyer and Professor, Industrial Relations Department, As an Individual):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to make it clear to committee members that my English is good enough that I can answer any questions they ask in English after my presentation.

I'm appearing before the committee today not only as a lawyer and professor, but more importantly as a researcher. I completed my doctoral studies in labour law at the London School of Economics. My field of study was specifically child labour in countries or regions that are not as developed as Canada, and specifically in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh and in Africa.

I'd like to summarize my three comments on Bill S-211.

My first comment is about the preamble.

The first whereas of the bill's preamble suggests that forced labour and child labour are forms of modern slavery. I agree wholeheartedly that forced labour constitutes a form of modern slavery, but I wouldn't say that all forms of child labour constitute modern slavery. In my opinion, the definition of what constitutes slavery is problematic. Many forms of child labour do not constitute slavery. For terminological reasons, it would be important to correct that, in my view.

My second, more substantive comment concerns the very definition of child labour found in the "Definitions" section of the bill. This definition should not be used. Let me elaborate.

It seems to me that two paragraphs in the proposed definition are somewhat inappropriate for an initiative aiming to realistically reduce child labour. I'm referring to paragraphs (a) and (c).

Paragraph (a) refers to work or services that are "provided or offered to be provided in Canada under circumstances that are contrary to the laws applicable in Canada".

Paragraph (c) refers to work or services provided or offered by persons under the age of 18 years that "interfere with their schooling by depriving them of the opportunity to attend school, obliging them to leave school prematurely or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work".

In my opinion, these two paragraphs are problematic and I will quickly explain why.

Based on the studies I've done in developing countries, I would say that the types of work some children are found to do are quite acceptable from the perspective of parents who are in absolutely dire straits. However, we don't always consider such dire straits when taking a critical look at child labour around the world.

I will simply give you a typical example to clarify my opinion.

Sometimes children find themselves in situations where, although their work forces them to postpone or suspend their schooling, it doesn't necessarily harm their health or safety and it's legitimized. When a ban on child labour is strictly enforced, situations arise where children are essentially forced to perform even more dangerous work, with their parents' permission. This is what we've observed on the ground. For example, children who were forbidden to weave carpets found themselves making bricks a few weeks later in even more dangerous circumstances that were detrimental to their health. We have seen situations where young girls who were forbidden to weave saris would later find themselves on the street working as prostitutes.

• (1550)

I'll give you a very simple example—imagine a mother whose husband has died and must have her 13-year-old son work to support her family.

That's the gist of what I wanted to tell you today. I'll save the rest of the time to answer your questions.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Dumas.

You will have more time during the question period to conclude any remarks you may have.

Now we go to Mr. Friedman.

The floor is yours. You have five minutes for your opening remarks.

**Mr. Matt Friedman (Chief Executive Officer, Mekong Club):** Thank you very much for this opportunity.

My name is Matt Friedman. I have been working on the issue of addressing modern slavery for over 35 years in over 40 countries. I now run an organization that works with the private sector in a positive, supportive and non-naming and shaming way.

I can't emphasize the urgency of the fact that we really need to do more to address the issue of modern slavery. According to the slavery index and ILO, the new number is 50 million people, up from 40 million people, as a result of COVID and many other things that are going on around the world. That translates to about 25,200 people entering per day. With a \$150-billion industry and with all of the collective work of all the organizations only resulting in 100,000 people being rescued each year, which is about 0.2%, we really have to do much more in order to address this issue.

As we have seen from the statistics, 75% of what we're dealing with is forced labour. Of that, 60% is associated with supply chains, which basically brings the private sector into this fight. As a result of that, it's very appropriate that we are moving in the direction of talking about legislation that basically brings the private sector into addressing modern slavery.

Transparency legislation has been around since 2012. The first legislation was the California Transparency in Supply Chains Act. It basically just said that if you're a big company, you have to put on your website what you're doing to address modern slavery. That's all it said.

The U.K.'s Modern Slavery Act came and added more bells and whistles, which basically said you have to have an annual report that you submit that addresses a number of things. As a result of that, you will have to have that signed by the board of directors. With each incarnation of this transparency legislation, you see more things being added.

This is important because it helps to sensitize the private sector to what they need to know, not only in Canada but in their supply chains around the world. It also allows for consumers to get a general sense of what companies are doing or not doing. This is a very

relevant and important part of what needs to be done in order to offer the transparency that this legislation is proposing.

Why is this bill needed? It will help to educate and inform the companies as well as the government. What's interesting about this legislation is that it includes procurement for government agencies as well, which is a twist that we haven't really seen in a lot of the other legislation.

This will increase the basic understanding. I know this is needed and essential, because I recently did a presentation tour across Canada for three weeks. I was going to Vancouver, Toronto and Ottawa. I was hearing from a lot of companies that they didn't really know much about this issue. They recognized the importance, but they didn't really have the basic information.

This bill will allow for that to happen. It will allow companies to submit their basic submissions. If they don't, fines and penalties will be in place. A lot of the other transparency legislation implies that this happens, but they don't actually have that in place. This is really encouraging because it will ensure that companies take this seriously.

It will encourage other countries to add the public sector element to this because with each incarnation of transparency legislation, the other countries go back and try to revise and add things so it's consistent with the global norm. This will create peer pressure because the companies that are submitting will be able to look at the public inventory that's online to compare themselves to other organizations. That's an amazing increase.

Lastly, the kind of emphasis on forced labour and the child labour clause that focuses on customs and border protection is essential. I think a lot more clarity is needed in order to identify exactly what that means, but in reality that's a plus.

My advice is that if this legislation gets enacted, it should actually get operationalized. We have seen in other countries that they have it on paper and things are done, but a lot of organizations don't necessarily comply with what is required of them.

I think it's important to get feedback from the private sector. The private sector has a lot to offer when it comes to helping to understand the complexity and the range of supply chains around the world. The people who are actually overseeing this and who will be managing the process really need some training to understand what's needed. I say this because I have met with customs and border protection organizations that have similar types of oversight. Many of them just don't have the kind of experience that's needed to really address this.

I think it's important that we not reinvent the wheel. A lot of these companies really don't know where to start. They are willing to be in compliance. We have tools available. We have organizations that know how to address this issue and we have, basically, consultation series and procedures. Add something in there that ensures there are resources to ensure that the private sector can get up to speed.

• (1555)

We saw this with the U.K.'s Modern Slavery Act. Initially, there was some grumbling from the private sector, but once it crossed over the line, they asked, "What do we need to do?" When it comes to that, what you need to do, there are organizations such as mine and others that are able to help, and, within a fairly short period of time, a lot of these organizations could be brought up to speed.

With that, I'm done.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Friedman.

We go to Mr. Brown.

You have the floor for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stephen Brown (Chief Executive Officer, National Council of Canadian Muslims):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and members of the committee, for providing us the opportunity to offer you our thoughts on the study of this committee on Bill S-211.

My name is Stephen Brown. I'm the CEO of the National Council of Canadian Muslims. I'm joined today by Fatema Abdalla, the advocacy officer for the council.

There are two key submissions I want to provide to this committee.

First and most important is the issue of urgency. We must move swiftly, as there should not be another day in which Canada tolerates the products of forced labour on our grocery shelves.

Second and critical is amending the language of Bill S-211 to clearly indicate that all products arising from East Turkestan, also known as Xinjiang, should not be allowed to come into Canada, subject to a reverse onus provision where companies operating in the area need to demonstrate that those products do not arise as a product of forced labour. Such an amendment is not novel and would bring us into alignment with the current legislative schema of countries like the United States.

We want to be clear. This is a strong bill bolstering transparency obligations pertaining to forced labour risks. We are here to ask you to pass this bill urgently, but with one key amendment. For the three key reasons that I will lay out below, we submit that there are reasons that inexorably compel this House to amend the legislation to ensure that Canada does not tolerate forced labour products from East Turkestan specifically. That is because I'm here on behalf of those who, until recently, were forgotten.

In 2006, our organization called for the Government of Canada to secure the release of Huseyin Celil, a Canadian Uighur activist who has been detained in China and rendered to the concentration camps. We still do not have definitive evidence as to whether he is alive or not. His wife, Kamila, continues to fight and pray for his return.

Let's start with reason number one. This House passed a motion that, while non-binding, labelled what is happening in China right now as a genocide. There is simply no reason to have any equivocation as to whether the CBSA has to use discretion in ascertaining whether products arising from East Turkestan violate Bill S-211. Rather, based purely on this ground, it offends common sense and, more importantly, our collective humanity to allow products to be coming to Canada from East Turkestan specifically. Therefore, we have a duty to ensure that the ambit of the legislation captures what is happening in East Turkestan clearly as a *prima facie* case of forced labour.

Second, this brings us to the issue of enforcement. Presently, despite memorandum D9-1-6, the CBSA has been unable to deal with forced labour products arising from East Turkestan. To quote CBSA director, John Ossowski:

Unlike most other inadmissible products, there is no visual clue for a [customs officer] to understand the labour standards by which a particular import was produced. Establishing that goods were produced by forced labour and compiling evidence requires a significant amount of research and analysis in coordination with other government department partners.

The CBSA should not have this level of difficulty in turning back shipments from East Turkestan, and the current context of Bill S-211 will not fix the issue.

Third, amending Bill S-211 would allow Canada to come into line with other jurisdictions when it comes to removing forced labour from supply chains. The United States is a good example in this case, since it has already taken a similar measure by passing the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, ensuring that all goods, wares, articles and merchandise mined, produced or manufactured wholly or in part in the Uighur region are denied entry to U.S. ports.

We know that you and your colleagues may wonder whether this critical amendment is out of scope or whether it opens a can of worms by raising the question of other specific countries that should be listed. We think both of these concerns are overstated, for reasons I'm happy to expand upon.

We are urging this committee—we're begging you as parliamentarians—to ensure that we take this opportunity of legislation that has strong bipartisan support to give it enough teeth to make sure that Uighur human hair doesn't end up in Canadian pillows. That's all we're asking today.

Also, I note in closing that we expand significantly on the submissions before you today in our brief, which will be submitted next week.

Thank you very much.

• (1600)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Brown.

We now go to our last witness for this first panel, and that is Mr. Kevin Thomas.

Mr. Thomas, you have five minutes for your opening remarks.

**Mr. Kevin Thomas (Chief Executive Officer, Shareholder Association for Research and Education):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you for inviting me to present today.

I am the CEO of the Shareholder Association for Research and Education, which is also known as SHARE.

We regularly coordinate investor advocacy on environmental, social and governance issues alongside most of the major pension and asset management institutions in our country and also with international coalitions of investors with trillions of dollars in assets under management.

We represent a group of direct institutional investor clients of SHARE, on whose behalf we engage in regular dialogue with boards and management at over 120 Canadian and international companies in which—

**The Chair:** I'm so sorry, Mr. Thomas. Would you just pause for a second?

I'm being advised that your mike is not connected.

• (1605)

Can you try unplugging and plugging it in again?

**Mr. Kevin Thomas:** I just tried that.

Is it any better?

**The Chair:** Could you also select, on the left-hand side, the microphone on your screen?

**Mr. Kevin Thomas:** Yes, that is selected.

**The Chair:** It appears that we have a technical problem. The interpreters can't hear you.

I will ask that we go straight into questions.

In the interim, Mr. Thomas, you will have someone calling you to ensure that you can connect with us and respond to some of the questions. Thank you.

Now we're going to open it up to questions. For the first round, every member is being provided four minutes for their questions.

We will first go to Mr. Genuis.

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

As I signalled at the beginning, I want to use the first minute of my time to provide a notice of motion regarding an urgent and deeply concerning situation related to Iran. This notice of motion is as follows:

That given recent reports of threats to lives of individuals in Canada from the Iranian regime, the ongoing freedom movement in Iran and the killing of dozens of Canadians by the regime including the shooting down of flight PS 752, and pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study of the threat to Canadians from the Iranian regime and how the Government of Canada should respond; that the committee invite the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the

Minister of Public Safety, the Commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and the Director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) to testify as part of this study; and, that the committee seeks to hear from these officials prior to Friday, December 16, 2022.

That is the notice of motion, Mr. Chair.

I think, given what all members would understand to be the urgency and sensitivity of the situation, and that the calendar seems to be more fluid than we thought it was anyway, this motion would be worth discussing as soon as possible. We would propose that it be considered for discussion on Wednesday.

I'll now turn back to the witnesses. Thank you so much for being here.

I want to start by asking our friends from the NCCM whether there are different models proposed for what some would call a regionalized approach to responding to forced and child labour—recognizing that there are specific situations, especially in the case of East Turkestan, where forced labour is not something that happens in the shadows. It's actually being organized and coordinated centrally by the state as part of a genocide, which is very different from some of the other kinds of forced labour we see in other parts of the world.

You mentioned the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act in the United States and other cases of targeted legislative instruments. I very much agree with you that Parliament needs to act on this. We have Bill S-204 from Senator Housakos, which would ban goods coming from East Turkestan. We could do what the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act does and provide a reverse onus, where no goods come in unless there's proof that no forced or child labour was involved.

Could you speak to why you think it's important to have a regionalized approach as part of our response to forced and child labour? Why is it not good enough having the same piece of legislation apply to the whole world? Why do we need to specifically, either in legislation or regulation, name regions and respond to the particularities of those situations?

**Mr. Stephen Brown:** Thank you very much, Mr. Genuis.

I'd also like to thank everybody here for their work on getting this bill to where it is, and the senators who sponsored the bill.

On your question specifically, yes, I agree. The reason why we believe it's so important to mention East Turkestan, in this specific case.... We think there are three key reasons that compel, specifically.

First, we have to remember that the House passed, while non-binding, a motion that labels what's happening right now in East Turkestan a genocide. There's no reason to equivocate about what's happening over there. Everybody knows exactly what's happening.



The second brings us to the issue of enforcement. Given the fact that there's no legislative framework that relieves.... The CBSA has no visible cues to determine what is coming out of East Turkestan. It's very difficult to ascertain what is coming in. How do you source those goods? Having legislation that relieves them of the very onerous process of trying to determine where those products come from or were manufactured, and having a reverse onus provision that places responsibility on companies operating in the region, allows the CBSA to do their job.

The last thing is coming in line with our other partners. The United States, the U.K. and Australia have all passed legislation recently. I think there are many examples of how to do this. There are many reasons why we should do this. The fact that there's a genocide happening over there is clear. We need to give law enforcement the tools to do their job.

Thank you.

• (1610)

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** That was four minutes, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Yes, that's correct.

We'll now go to Mr. Zuberi.

You have four minutes, Mr. Zuberi.

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to start with Mr. Friedman.

Could you please map out this piece of legislation—Bill S-211—for us, how it's situated within the framework of similar legislation in other jurisdictions—in particular, you talked about the evolution of transparency legislation—and how it lands within that evolution over the years?

**Mr. Matt Friedman:** Basically, what you have with this legislation is many of the same components that you would find in Australia, the U.K., and the California act. As I mentioned, there is a progression over time. California was simple; the U.K. and Australia were a little bit more. What you have added that's different is the procurement emphasis of the public sector, which is extremely relevant and important.

There is more of a benchmarking of the fact that if a company does not comply, there will be fines and penalties associated with this. As I indicated, the other acts imply that some type of punishment will occur if compliance doesn't take place, but it's really not spelled out and we really haven't seen that applied in the other transparency legislation component. As a result of that, there are a lot of companies that simply don't submit anything at all.

What makes this different is that you have criteria that are a little bit different in terms of the revenue, the assets, and the number of employees related to companies, and so on. This emphasis on ensuring that companies submit and go into a public registry is what puts this further along in the transformation of transparency legislation.

What will happen over time, as I said, is that other countries will catch up to where you guys are, so you're setting the bar up higher than what we've seen in other legislative presentations.

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi:** Very quickly, Mr. Friedman, how important is it to get the buy-in from the corporate sector within Canada for legislation like this? How important is due diligence as well?

**Mr. Matt Friedman:** Many of the companies are already doing this for other transparency legislation. If you have products in the U.K., you're already submitting. I think corporate sector inputs are essential in helping to clarify the direction of this, but the writing is on the wall. This needs to happen. It's going to happen in many other countries as well, so let's go ahead and get this legislation across the line.

I really don't think it's going to be a burden or a problem. What it does is sensitize the corporate sector to what they need to do. It educates them, informs them, and the peer pressure will get them to actually be involved.

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi:** Mr. Friedman, thank you for that.

What you said about getting this legislation through the door and passed is echoing what other witnesses have said, including from the National Council of Canadian Muslims.

I'm going to give the remaining time to my colleague, Ms. Bendayan.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** Many thanks to my esteemed colleague.

Mr. Dumas, I found your opening remarks very compelling. I wanted to give you some time to explain the amendments you are proposing in greater detail. You could always explain them in writing after the meeting as well.

Your second comment had to do with the definition of child labour in section 2 of the bill. If I understood you correctly, you want to strengthen that definition. I'm very curious to know why. Could you give us more details about that?

I'd also like you to tell us about—

• (1615)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Ms. Bendayan, you're out of time. We're out of four minutes.

Can we get a very brief response, less than 20 seconds, please?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Martin Dumas:** All right, Mr. Chair.

Actually, I don't know that it would strengthen the definition of child labour, but I would focus the definition by removing the two problem paragraphs that I mentioned, paragraphs (a) and (c).

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** So, that broadens the definition, it doesn't strengthen it.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Ms. Bendayan, you're out of time.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Martin Dumas:** Actually, removing those paragraphs focuses the definition on the worst kinds of child labour, and that's definitely more effective, in my opinion.

I'll give you an example. Sometimes standards will look great on paper, but in reality, they end up very poorly enforced because it's extremely difficult to track child labour. If you want to go out there and check whether or not children are working, local communities must permit and trust you to—

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I'm afraid you're out of time, Mr. Dumas.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Martin Dumas:** Already? My apologies.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** My apologies.

I'm sorry. I asked for a 20-second response and then there was a follow-up question.

We will now go to Mr. Bergeron.

You have four minutes, sir.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First, thank you so much to all the witnesses for being here today and enlightening us with your remarks.

If I may, Mr. Chair, I'm going to pick up where Ms. Bendayan left off. She asked Mr. Dumas a question, or at least she was about to ask him.

Mr. Dumas, in your presentation you stated that you had three comments about the bill. The first one was about the preamble. The second one had to do with paragraphs (a) and (c) of the definition of child labour. If I'm not mistaken, you had a third comment to share with us. Would you like an opportunity to enlighten us on that third comment?

**Mr. Martin Dumas:** Yes, thank you.

The third comment is that it's very difficult to effectively monitor a ban on child labour, and it's even more random when monitoring relies on written reports, as is intended here.

That being said, if you are planning to check your facts against written statements, ideally it should be about the worst forms of child labour, to avoid two problems. First, the unintended consequences of a strict ban should be avoided, that is, one prohibited job being replaced by another, like prostitution or child trafficking, that's even more dangerous. The second issue to avoid is the concealing of visible forms of child labour through clandestine employment. If the definition of child labour is too broad, communities that consider some forms of child labour to be legitimate will hide evidence of such work and turn it into a form of clandestine labour.

Some adverse effects of regulation have been observed in the past, and I'd like to draw the committee's attention to them.

Focusing on the worst types of child labour is a good thing, because in any event, the situation would be improved for a child facing difficult circumstances. In other cases, one would risk affecting situations in which the child's work and pay provide crucial assistance to their family in dire straits. For example, imagine a single-parent family where one parent has died and a 13-year-old boy becomes the sole breadwinner for the family. Some countries don't have the social safety net that we have in Canada, and parents find themselves in dire straits there. It's much more common than you might think.

So that's a realistic perspective that I'm trying to put forward here.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Thank you, Mr. Dumas. I find your insight on child labour very compelling, and even a little disturbing.

As I listened to you, I thought to myself, even here, where we do have a certain social safety net, we allow some forms of child labour. For example, look at work in family businesses, or work in the fields in the summer for young people under 16. This is becoming more and more common with parental consent, keeping in mind that school is mandatory until the age of 16. More and more young people are working for fast food companies, for example, due to the labour shortage.

I find the perspective you bring fascinating, in that it sounds like we're berating and lecturing developing countries, when we see forms of child labour happening right here in Quebec and Canada that could probably be considered objectionable under paragraphs (a) and (c) of the definition in the bill.

• (1620)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Bergeron, I'm afraid you're over time, but we will provide the witness with 25 seconds to respond briefly to the concern you identified.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Martin Dumas:** It's important to understand, however, that even if we do allow some forms of child labour in Canada, we're still in a situation where we can prevent these working children from sacrificing too much of their education. On the other hand, in some countries, suspending studies can be the lesser of two evils, as I explained earlier. It also prevents undesirable situations where one prohibited job is replaced by another job that's prohibited but even more dangerous.

Therefore, I'd like to warn the committee about this problem that often arises in the fight against child labour.

That said, even if you change nothing in the bill, I'm convinced that out there, it will be hard to fully enforce a ban on child labour, because you won't have the cooperation you need from local communities to prevent it.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Dumas. We're considerably over time.

We go now to Ms. McPherson for four minutes.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses for being here today to talk about this very important legislation. It's very interesting to me.

My concerns stem from the difference between asking for reporting and for companies to do the reporting due diligence versus action being taken. I definitely hear what our friends from NCCM have been saying, that we need to act with the urgency that this requires. I also have concerns about how we are operationalizing this, because this is a concern we have with regard to other things, such as the sanctions regime and whatnot.

I might start by asking you how many shipments CBSA has seized. How is Canada doing compared with other countries? Perhaps that can illustrate a bit the urgency with which this legislation needs to be brought forward.

**Mr. Stephen Brown:** Absolutely, MP McPherson. Thank you very much for your question.

The CBSA has actually intercepted one shipment. The United States of America has intercepted about 1,300 since they passed similar legislation. We have a lot of catching up to do.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Yes. Thank you.

One thing I'm interested in is how we can make this legislation stronger and make sure that it is not just giving businesses or companies an opportunity to report on forced labour within their supply chains but actually making them responsible for ensuring that it is not there. What countries have been doing that best? Which countries do you think have been models for us? We have heard that other countries have moved faster. Is it the French? Is it the Germans?

I'm wondering who has moved furthest, because that's where I would like us to go.

**Mr. Stephen Brown:** Different countries have actually taken different models. Some countries in Europe, for example, have placed very onerous responsibilities on companies, but they have a cap at very large companies.

I think the legislation in front of us today takes an interesting approach in that it covers a broad range of companies, including mid-sized companies. However, if we look at the results and at our neighbours to the south, the results speak for themselves. They've seized 1,300 shipments and they're continuing to do more.

• (1625)

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Thank you.

I'm not sure if Mr. Thomas is able to finish his thoughts. We were having some struggles with his mike. If he can, though, I would like him to comment.

**The Chair:** Yes. I can assure you that he is now properly connected. He should be audible.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Perhaps I could give him the last little bit of time.

**Mr. Kevin Thomas:** Can I proceed now?

**The Chair:** Yes. Please do.

**Mr. Kevin Thomas:** Great.

Before I speak to the contents of the current bill, maybe I can provide a brief example to demonstrate the challenge that Ms. McPherson just mentioned of only requiring modern slavery reporting versus requiring an obligation to perform human rights due diligence.

Last year, on behalf of its shareholders, we began engaging a Canadian-headquartered multinational renewable energy company after it was reliably identified as having supply chain links to forced labour in the Xinjiang region of China. Actually, shipments of its product were even reportedly detained by U.S. customs officials, as we were just talking about, on suspicion of these links. We had a clear case of very material risk to the company and its investors.

Despite those credible allegations, the company said, "There's no forced labour in our supply chain. We don't believe there's forced labour in our industry." In fact, the company, and many of the investors we reached out to, said this company has a modern slavery statement. It's right there on its website, and it says everything is fine. They have zero tolerance for forced labour anywhere in their supply chain.

But this statement didn't include any detailed information that would help the investors know whether the company is taking meaningful and effective action to implement these commitments. There's no indication of how they identify human rights impacts, which stakeholders are consulted, how many instances were investigated and acted on and what corrective actions the company has taken.

In fact, our review, when we looked closer, found that the company didn't have any system for investigating or addressing human rights impacts in the Xinjiang region, and for good reason: Investigators can't even get into that region to check allegations of human rights abuses. When we continued to try to push the company on this and develop a due diligence system, they said, "Just trust us."

I tell you that story because it's indicative of the primary challenges we have as pension plans, banks, and asset management firms here in Canada when we're trying to meet our fiduciary duties, to assess risk. We can't properly assess it without this kind of—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, but we are considerably over the time slot that was provided.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Mr. Chair, I'm wondering if we could let him finish. We did invite him to come and I'm prepared to give him my time, but I—

**The Chair:** That's fair enough, but we're also eating into every other member's time as well.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** We would have normally given him the time to speak, though, I think.

**The Chair:** I'm terribly sorry for this technical difficulty, Mr. Thomas.

We have received your statement. We will ensure that it's translated and sent to all of the members. If there's anything additional that you would like to explain to members of the committee, we would welcome that as well.

Thank you.

**Mr. Kevin Thomas:** I appreciate that, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

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

We will now go to the second round, and each member has three minutes.

Mr. Epp, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the witnesses.

I'm going to begin with a statement to Mr. Dumas.

I appreciated your comments clarifying child labour. With my own background, growing up on a family farm, my parents did not interfere with my education, and the four daughters on our own farm were raised with love and an encouragement to work. So I understand those nuances.

I have not brought tomatoes to this committee yet, but I will today, because that is my background.

I'd like to go to Mr. Brown, please.

The world produces about 37.2 million tonnes of processed tomato products. China did 6.2 million tonnes last year, of which five million came from Xinjiang province. There are certainly allegations of forced labour from the Uighur population, particularly in the tomato industry. I'm wondering if you have any comments or any specific knowledge regarding exactly the extent of that.

I grew up hand-picking tomatoes and my kids grew up on a machine. My understanding is that most of the production is hand-harvested and forced in China.

Do you have any comments specifically on the tomato industry?

**Mr. Stephen Brown:** Thank you very much for your question.

As many people have heard, we hear anecdotal evidence of some of the practice of slavery happening right now in East Turkestan.

In terms of specific data, I don't have any to provide to you right now, but I can follow up with your office afterwards.

• (1630)

**Mr. Dave Epp:** Thank you.

Regarding the exemption to import prohibition from companies, how would you work with that if COFCO, which happens to be one of the main tomato purchasers in Xinjiang, is a state-owned enterprise?

**Mr. Stephen Brown:** That's an excellent question. It comes back to the main request that we have for amending the bill. I think anything coming out of East Turkestan, any product that's being produced, any business having operations there, should have a responsibility to prove that their products do not contain forced labour.

Right now the situation in East Turkestan is such that it only makes sense to assume that everything being produced there is a result of forced labour, and therefore it shouldn't be on the shelves of Canadian grocery stores.

**Mr. Dave Epp:** Thank you.

In my remaining time, I'd like to go Mr. Thomas, please.

Can you talk a little bit more about the impact of threshold for reporting in this legislation, and what are the opportunities to get at the intent of this legislation with companies? I'm thinking about small tomato importers in Canada that might not meet that threshold.

**Mr. Kevin Thomas:** The thresholds are important, because we want to make sure that companies have the capacity to institute due diligence systems. There's no point in asking your corner store to develop that kind of thing just because it's incorporated under the CBCA, so I think those thresholds are appropriate.

We've consulted with a lot of businesses in the retail sector, particularly around the thresholds, and we found that they're more or less in the right place. We're not really concerned about that as a problem in the legislation.

We are concerned that there's a requirement that there be a due diligence system, and that's the part that we haven't seen in the legislation. So far, there is a reporting requirement, but the answer could simply be no. The key here is making sure that there's a positive obligation to due diligence.

**Mr. Dave Epp:** Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

We now go to Mr. Sheehan for three minutes.

**Mr. Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses today for their excellent testimony and also their advocacy on this important subject, and thanks to the committee for undertaking this important work.

Since I only have three minutes, I'm going to ask Martin Dumas a question.

The bill before us sets out a transparency framework for businesses and government institutions but has not set out a due diligence framework. It's a two-part question.

If Canada were to adopt this transparency-based approach, how would it compare to other international jurisdictions? Also, in your opinion, is there any way that we could include not only a general set of transparency obligations that cover entities, but also due diligence obligations for a subset of the universe of covered entities under the bill?

[Translation]

**Mr. Martin Dumas:** I'm not sure how much better we'll do in terms of transparency than other countries. However, I do know that even if we want to achieve a very high level of transparency, it will be very difficult in practice to get assurance that the monitoring will actually be done on the ground.

As I was saying earlier, if we want to ensure that children aren't involved in the manufacture of particular products, we need to gain the trust of the local community to prove it. Personally, I've been there, and that's how it works. Otherwise, it's very easy to hide child labour. To gain that trust, we have to target the worst forms of child labour. Otherwise, we won't have access to barriers that are sometimes even guarded by armed men. So to overcome the difficulty of obtaining this evidence, there has to be a local consensus on what forms of child labour are unacceptable.

If we're looking at a definition of child labour that is too broad, we're demonstrating a certain western paternalism. That's what should be avoided. We must avoid having a form of transparency that would be overly paternalistic. I would caution the committee on that.

For the more administrative aspects, the same reasoning must be followed. If we want to improve the effectiveness of our monitoring and transparency, we must first ensure that the forms of child labour we are targeting are the worst. That is how we will improve our model in all areas, both administratively and in terms of effective monitoring afterwards.

Otherwise, I think it's a bit of a smoke and mirrors game.

• (1635)

[English]

**Mr. Terry Sheehan:** I'll ask Matt Friedman the same question.

**The Chair:** I'm afraid you're out of time, Mr. Sheehan.

**Mr. Terry Sheehan:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** We now go to Mr. Bergeron.

You have one minute and a half, Mr. Bergeron.

[Translation]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Isn't that three minutes?

[English]

**The Chair:** No, in this round every member is getting three, and you get a minute.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** I'm not a member?

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a quick question for you, Mr. Brown.

You yourself mentioned the difficulty customs officers have in determining whether something is coming from Xinjiang or not. I look forward to receiving your brief to get the details of your proposals. That said, aren't your proposals likely to come up against the same constraints, that is to say that we won't be able to distinguish, among products coming from China, what specifically comes from Xinjiang, just as it's impossible for us at the moment to determine whether a product coming from Israel was made in the occupied territories?

How can we get around this difficulty?

**Mr. Stephen Brown:** What we'd like to see is for all companies doing business in this area to be responsible for proving that the products in their supply chains aren't being made with forced labour.

When you read our detailed brief, you'll see that other countries, like the United States, have really good systems. There are lists that detail the evidence that must be demonstrated before goods that are produced can be approved and brought into the country.

Once a company does business in this geographic area, it has a responsibility to prove that all of its products are not the result of forced labour.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Thank you, Mr. Brown.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We now go to the last question, with Ms. McPherson.

You have a minute and a half.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Thomas, you spoke about how you would strengthen this bill. I'd like to give you a moment to tell us about any amendments that you would be interested in having brought forward and what those might look like.

**Mr. Kevin Thomas:** Thanks.

One that I think we should speak about is the question of scope. Right now, it's narrowly focused on child labour and forced labour, and I appreciate what the other witnesses have brought forward on this question. Those are, obviously, egregious human rights abuses. However, as we speak to, perhaps, what Mr. Dumas has been speaking about—what happens with children—one of the solutions to address child labour is also to make sure that the human rights and workplace rights of the parents are respected.

Every company we deal with on human rights due diligence doesn't stop doing due diligence just for child labour or forced labour. We believe the scope should be human rights, as defined under the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and under the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. That will capture the whole essence of what's happening in these supply chains and, I submit, will actually help us address the question of whether there are adverse affects for children when their parents are not receiving their rights at work as well.

I would definitely expand it that way: make it a mandatory requirement that there is a due diligence system and expand the number of reporting requirements to include things like grievance systems, which are, again, well established in OECD guidance on this and in the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

That's where I would go, short and simple.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Thanks very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you ever so much, Ms. McPherson.

We will now be moving to the second panel.

Before we do so, allow me to thank all the witnesses who have appeared here and assisted us in better understanding this bill. We're very grateful for your expertise.

Allow me to reiterate one more time, Mr. Thomas, our apologies for the technical challenges you experienced.

Thank you.

The witnesses can leave, and we will suspend for a couple of minutes.

• (1635) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1645)

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

We are very grateful that three witnesses will be joining us for this hour. We have with us here, from the Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability, Ms. Emily Dwyer, policy director, and Ms. Kalpona Akter, director of the Bangladesh Center for Workers Solidarity.

We also have, from the International Justice Mission Canada, Ms. Cheryl Hotchkiss, who is the director of strategy and operations. She is joining us virtually.

Last, we have, from the Regroupement pour la responsabilité sociale des entreprises, Ms. Alice Chipot, who is the executive director.

Each of you will be provided with five minutes for your opening remarks. After we have concluded that, we will open it to questions from the members.

Thirty seconds before your five minutes are up, I will put this up to ask you to kindly wrap it up as soon as possible.

That having been said, we will go first to Ms. Emily Dwyer.

Ms. Dwyer, you have five minutes.

**Ms. Emily Dwyer (Policy Director, Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability):** Good afternoon. Thank you very much for the invitation to be here.

My name is Emily Dwyer. I'm the policy director at the Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability, or CNCA.

[*Translation*]

We are grateful to parliamentarians for taking this issue seriously, and we urge them to act swiftly to address the many reports of human rights violations in Canada's global supply chains.

[*English*]

Modern slavery exists, and some Canadian companies are profiting from it. Canadians from coast to coast to coast want Canada to take decisive action to eradicate forced labour and other human rights abuses from Canadian supply chains, but in its current form, Bill S-211 would not prevent exploitation and abuse. Bill S-211 would do more harm than good.

Our network of 40 organizations and unions from across the country was formed in 2005 to collectively call for mandatory measures to require companies to respect human rights and the environment in their global operations. We represent the voices of millions of Canadians, and our members have long-standing relationships with communities, women, indigenous peoples and workers around the world.

Our membership does not support Bill S-211, because the bill as currently drafted would allow Canadian companies to continue to profit from human suffering and environmental damage. The harm we're talking about is not trivial. It ranges from forced labour to land and water contamination, workers' rights violations, killings and gang rapes, many of these linked to Canadian mining and oil and gas operations abroad.

Canada needs the right legislation if we are serious about tackling corporate abuse. Simply put, a law that requires you to report but does not require you to stop the harm you're causing may be easy to pass with all-party support, but it is also meaningless.

What is needed is a law that goes beyond a basic reporting requirement.

To get widespread support of civil society and to catch up to global momentum, supply chain legislation should, first, focus on preventing and remedying harm, rather than reporting; second, help impacted people access remedies; and third, apply to all human rights.

At best, Bill S-211 is meaningless, as it will not improve the situation for those who are harmed. At worst, the bill is damaging because it creates the appearance of action to end modern slavery without actually having any such effect.

Bill S-211 does not require companies to stop using or to stop profiting from child or forced labour. It does not require companies to take any steps to identify whether slave labour is in their supply chains. It does not require company directors to certify that their supply chains are free of forced labour.

If companies do make use of child or forced labour, the bill doesn't offer help to the victims at all. This means that a company could comply with Bill S-211 by taking no steps or by taking patently inadequate steps, remaining wilfully blind and continuing business as usual.

The evidence from other countries confirms that reporting-only laws have not been effective in addressing corporate abuse. For example, a five-year review of the U.K.'s modern slavery reporting registry "revealed no significant improvements in companies' policies or practice" and also said that it "failed to be an effective driver of corporate action to end forced labour".

Europe is moving away from reporting-only approaches towards mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence laws. Canada should do the same.

It is urgent that communities and workers harmed in Canadian supply chains be protected from abuse and have access to remedy in Canada. We hope the process currently under way will ultimately lead to such a result, but we want to be very clear: Our network's position is that if Bill S-211 as currently drafted were to go to a vote today, we would be advising MPs to vote no.

We also believe that this committee needs to hear directly from impacted people and workers, and we note their absence from the speakers list. Kalpona Akter, herself previously a child worker and today a world-renowned labour rights activist from Bangladesh, joins me today and can intervene during the question and answer period.

We hope the committee will expand the number of sessions it holds so that it can hear directly from the directly impacted people around the world.

● (1650)

Thank you for your time.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Dwyer.

We now go to Ms. Hotchkiss for five minutes, please.

**Ms. Cheryl Hotchkiss (Director, Strategy and Operations, International Justice Mission Canada):** Thank you.

Greetings, committee chair, committee members and fellow witnesses. My name is Cheryl Hotchkiss, and I am from IJM Canada, or IJM.

IJM is a global organization seeking to protect people living in poverty from violence. We partner with local authorities in 29 program offices in 17 countries to combat trafficking and slavery, violence against women and children, and police abuse of power.

It is now estimated that nearly 50 million people are enslaved around the world. Of these 50 million, 28 million are caught up in forced labour. The combined impacts of COVID-19, conflict and climate change have pushed more people into poverty, making them vulnerable to all forms of exploitation, including forced labour, and pressed parents and families to remove children from schools to work to help their families survive.

In countries where there are high rates of poverty, particularly extreme poverty, you will find broken systems caused in part by governments unable or unwilling to provide leadership to creating and maintaining healthy justice and social systems. COVID-19, conflict and climate change cause further degradation of these systems. Unhealthy systems enable all forms of lawlessness, create instability and breed fear. People living in poverty are forced into jobs where they can make a meagre income in risky jobs that often take them away from families, leaving them further isolated and at risk of exploitation. For women in forced labour there's an increased risk of violence, particularly sexual violence.

IJM is exposed to this grim reality in our efforts to help the most vulnerable receive protection and support from systems that didn't prevent and maybe even enabled exploitation. We know that an unhealthy legal system needs many actors to improve it and make it work for the most vulnerable so that they can find decent work where there's no fear of violence and exploitation. We believe that corporations have a critical role to play in helping unhealthy systems to improve and effectively protect vulnerable people. We appreciate that corporations are focused on generating good returns for investors and creating products that consumers want. They are not responsible for playing the role that governments should. But they have influence that can encourage and help governments undertake their responsibilities to protect their citizens effectively.

This is why for IJM, Bill S-211 is important. We know corporations have a positive opportunity to impact justice system reform. The governments in these countries where there is forced labour need corporations to have stable environments in which to do their work or gather resources they need for their products. Unhealthy justice systems mean an unstable society for everyone, including corporations. Voluntary codes of conduct or individual corporate efforts to address exploitation in supply chains create an unlevel playing field for corporations importing and selling products in Canada. Those who want to address forced labour and child labour in their supply chains bear the costs associated with that on their own and pass that on to the consumers.

Bill S-211 will enable justice and labour protection reform. It will do this by creating the conditions where corporations can work together, and will be encouraged to work together, to know what is in their supply chains. We've seen this happen with the Seafood Task Force in Thailand and Malaysia, where companies collaborated to create a level playing field to operate in the wake of similar legislation regarding forced labour in the fishing industry. With that information, they can act on their own or as a collective to press governments to take concrete action to improve justice systems for the most vulnerable, which includes listening to people who've been caught up in exploited labour and forced labour.

The bill will provide a collective and impactful deterrent to end forced labour and child labour through the imposition of the import prohibition. This ban levels the playing field for corporations that are making efforts to address forced and child labour in their supply chains to compete with those who aren't taking any action.

Finally, it will give Canadians, who care about the impact of their consumer choices, information to help them make better choices and use market forces to improve the supply chains for all products sold in Canada.

• (1655)

IJM is encouraged by Bill S-211 and wants the Canadian government to be involved in progressive efforts taken by other G20 nations so that the next ILO report on modern slavery has the numbers going in the right direction—downward.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Hotchkiss.

We will now go to Ms. Chipot.

You have five minutes as well.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Alice Chipot (Executive Director, Regroupement pour la responsabilité sociale des entreprises):** Good afternoon, everyone.

Members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, I'd like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to appear before you today.

My name is Alice Chipot, and I'm the executive director of the Regroupement pour la responsabilité sociale des entreprises, the RRSE.

Our organization is located in Montreal and is comprised of more than 50 committed investors, including religious communities, foundations, non-profit organizations, research centres and individuals. For more than 20 years, we've been working for business practices and corporate behaviours that are in line with the expectations of Quebec and Canadian society. We work for greater social and environmental justice.

RRSE has joined with the Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability, or CNCA, to push for a comprehensive due diligence framework in Canada.

There are several points I'd like to highlight.

First, we applaud Parliament's efforts to eradicate modern slavery and all forms of forced labour in internationalized supply chains. That said, we believe that the bill currently under consideration misses its purpose and target by seeking to segment the human rights issue without providing effective legislative mechanisms.

The current wording of Bill S-211 espouses the philosophy of small steps and, at it stands, is too weak to have the right effect. It's based on the idea of reporting and on marginal, even symbolic, penalties and fines for bad actors among companies.

At RRSE, we're a group of investors. We've been doing shareholder engagement for 20 years. What does that mean? It means that we work with the concept of reporting, with data based on ESG criteria, that is to say environmental, social and good governance criteria, and that we look closely at information on value chains. We work with what companies report, with what they agree to report, and with the information made available by rating agencies and other institutions.



While some companies are showing improvements in human rights, it's easy to say that reporting isn't enough to really have the desired effect and avoid negative consequences for the environment and the human condition.

Only a review of Canada's legislative and regulatory framework to protect against and punish repeat bad actors will provide an appropriate response. It's essential to identify existing risks, but also to provide mechanisms for condemnation and redress in the event of abuse. To do that, judges must be given a role and a place, because that is the only real deterrent.

There are good practices. They're not present or represented in this text. They should be looked at on the European side, particularly in France, Germany and the Netherlands. This would allow us to create a common basis, a reality of territories that complement each other.

We've just come out of COP27, where we heard the claims of the people of the southern part of the globe. So I add my voice to that of Jacques Nzumbu, a Jesuit expert on Canadian mining companies, who came to see you a few weeks ago and who repeatedly explained the reality of his community, that is to say the reality of the children and women who work in mining companies in the Congo.

I would also like to add my voice to those of the Uighurs in Montreal who came to see us at the RRSE to ask us to help them and to make visible the reality of modern slavery in supply chains, wondering what action Canada was taking.

Finally, I would like to add my voice to that of Kalpona Akter, who travelled a long way from Bangladesh to come and talk to us about the reality and condition of the workers she is working with.

In a nutshell, from the RRSE's perspective, reporting is not enough. In this day and age, we need a more ambitious and effective voice that provides a stronger ethical framework for the practices of large companies.

Thank you.

• (1700)

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Now, for the first question, we will go to Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Genuis, you have four minutes.

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

Thank you very much to all of our witnesses.

I want to make a comment about consideration of this bill, just at the beginning.

I know we've had proposals for amendments, and there may be other members who are considering amendments. I think it will be very worthwhile for anyone who is considering putting forward amendments to ensure that members of this committee have an opportunity to review them in advance. I think it would be worthwhile actually for witnesses to be able to see and comment on amendments in advance, because dropping amendments at the last minute that important witnesses haven't had an opportunity to provide

feedback on is not really a very effective way to legislate. I do hope that those who are contemplating those kinds of proposals will share them with the public and with committee members in sufficient time that allows some of the folks who are here and other witnesses to be able to provide feedback—if not verbally, then certainly in writing. That seems like a best practice when it comes to legislating.

In terms of my questions, I want to start with Ms. Hotchkiss.

I wonder if you can just share a little bit more about the work of IJM when it comes to these issues. The committee is looking at some other issues, such as the situation in Haiti and the breakdown of the rule of law there, where your work on police reform, on justice, might have some relevance as well. If you could maybe take a minute to share more broadly for those who are less familiar with what IJM does, I think it would be very worthwhile.

**Ms. Cheryl Hotchkiss:** Thank you. Sure, I'd be happy to do so.

I think where IJM's focused is inside the systems, people working within the systems. I can't speak specifically to the situation in Haiti, but I do know that in situations like that in Myanmar, where there is instability in the government, the training we've done of police and other officials on the ground has continued to ensure that efforts related to trafficking into forced labour, into the Thai fishing industry for example, continue.

We also know from a prevalence study that we have done in Tamil Nadu related to bonded labour that IJM's work directly impacted the reduction of 77,000 people in bonded labour, and we also know that our efforts in system building, educating judges and police and so on resulted in over 430,000 people being freed from bonded labour.

We believe very strongly in the role and the opportunity of government and government actors to be trained to understand their roles and responsibilities with their citizens in protecting citizens, and the knock-on effects that has on others who may be potentially victimized by criminals who are operating and forcing people into labour.

• (1705)

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** What do you think Canada's international development assistance can do to strengthen justice systems and promote police reform around the world?

**Ms. Cheryl Hotchkiss:** Where we have seen some successes is in the ones that I've mentioned to you, partnering with organizations like IJM that are doing judge training. In fact, we have just had an IJM volunteer who's a judge, Justice Dallas, return from Bolivia, where they were doing training with judicial officials there. We're looking at continuing that, and we know that the impact it can have is in ensuring that cases move through the court system, and where there's a crime of sexual violence or forced, exploited labour, those cases can actually be brought before the courts and the criminals are brought to justice and receive punishment.

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

My next question is for Ms. Dwyer.

I understand that there are amendments you're seeking in terms of changes to this bill. It would seem to me that regardless of those other proposals, taking what most people recognize as a step in terms of exposing awareness, encouraging companies to be reporting on this, would be a constructive step at least in bringing more attention to this, and that's generally what we've heard from witnesses.

I know your network feels differently. Help us understand why it wouldn't be worthwhile to still take this step. I'd love to hear your feedback.

**Ms. Emily Dwyer:** The evidence in other jurisdictions where this kind of modern slavery reporting law has been brought forward is that it hasn't had an impact in changing corporate behaviour. It hasn't had an impact in helping to root out or deal with forced labour abuses. So it doesn't help solve the problem, and at the same time it has also quashed momentum towards more effective laws.

If you look at the situation in the United Kingdom or in Australia, their civil society space to move forward other laws closed. The time for Parliament to speak about those issues closed. So by making it look like the government is doing something, because there's a law on the table, the momentum towards more effective legislation gets pushed back.

I think there's a parallel that we can put in place with the situation in Canada. It's almost five years since the Government of Canada announced the creation of an ombudsperson's office to independently investigate, and we're still waiting for that to happen.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** I would just say that this isn't a government bill.

**The Chair:** I'm afraid, Mr. Genuis, that we're well over the allotted time.

We now go to Ms. Bendayan.

You have four minutes, Ms. Bendayan.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd be pleased to ask the RRSE representative some questions, but I'd like to give notice of a motion first.

[*English*]

The motion is this:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the chair be instructed to schedule the first meeting of the study on women's sexual and reproductive health and rights no later than Monday, December 5, 2022.

I give notice of the motion. I am not moving the motion at this time, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

Thank you for your opening remarks, Ms. Chipot. I really liked how you expressed your concerns. You made it very clear that reporting isn't enough, and I quite agree with you.

You mentioned the examples of France and Germany, which have due diligence mechanisms. Should we focus more on such mechanisms?

If so, can you give us an idea of which organizations would be covered by the due diligence requirement? Are we talking about using the same definition as Germany? What would you suggest to our committee?

• (1710)

**Ms. Alice Chipot:** I'll refer the question on the definition proposals to Ms. Dwyer from CNCA because I know they've done a lot of work on this.

We certainly need to broaden our understanding of human rights and social and environmental consequences. We shouldn't be segmenting things as we are doing now with a bill that specifically targets modern slavery. We need to look at things more broadly.

The strength of the German and French bills, for example, is that they are broader in scope, meaning that there are more types of organizations and companies targeted, while at the same time providing for sanctions and the possibility of going to court, before a common law judge, to obtain a conviction.

If you want further clarification, Ms. Dwyer will tell you exactly what the definition should be.

Have I answered your question?

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** Yes, thank you.

I don't have a lot of time, so I'd ask Ms. Dwyer to continue.

**Ms. Emily Dwyer:** Would you prefer that I answer in French?

[*English*]

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** Answer in either English or French, as you wish.

**Ms. Emily Dwyer:** Because of the time, I'll be faster in English.

In terms of the laws that you put forward, both Germany and France.... Just to put it out there, the Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability put out a model law in May 2021 that studied the legislation that has advanced across Europe, consulting with other partners—

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** I'm sorry, but with the limited time that I have.... Who are you proposing that this apply to, the due diligence that you have suggested?

**Ms. Emily Dwyer:** It should apply to Canadian companies and those importing into Canada—those who are doing business here.

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** Is it all Canadian companies?

**Ms. Emily Dwyer:** The obligation to respect human rights according to the UN guiding principles and the OECD guidelines that Canada has signed on to applies to companies of all sizes.

We have recommended that this obligation be placed squarely on all companies, and if there are going to be exclusions for companies of smaller sizes, that it be done via regulation in low-risk sectors, for example.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Dwyer and Ms. Bendayan.

We now go to Mr. Bergeron.

You have four minutes, sir.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Once again, I'd like to thank the witnesses for being with us and for their remarks.

My question is for Ms. Dwyer and Ms. Chipot.

I imagine that you realize how counter-intuitive what you are asking for is, in that no one can be against apple pie and virtue. Consequently, what is being proposed is really in line with what everyone wants, but it may not go far enough.

Don't you see this as a first step toward something that would be more elaborate?

**Ms. Alice Chipot:** I would like to seize this opportunity, after the comment that was made to your colleague a few minutes ago.

There is currently a movement building around this issue. However, there is a risk of slowing this momentum by implementing ineffective legislative mechanisms. The European Union has adopted directives. Canada could also have more effective and efficient rules.

Ms. Dwyer, would you like to round out my answer?

**Ms. Emily Dwyer:** In fact, we must recognize that our basic mission is to ask parliamentarians to put in place legislative mechanisms to hold companies accountable. So it's difficult for us, as a network and as a civil society, to do otherwise; we have to ask you to support and implement such legislation. It is urgent that Canada act. However, we want the proposed legislation to address the problem. We don't want legislation that won't address the abuses.

I think we've been very clear about the three elements we think are essential for this legislation to be effective. First, it must require companies to prevent human rights violations. Second, it must help victims access remedies. Third, it must apply to all human rights, not just one.

• (1715)

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** I understand from your remarks that you favour Bill C-262 over Bill S-211.

How would passing Bill S-211 prevent the subsequent passing of Bill C-262?

**Ms. Emily Dwyer:** The two pieces of legislation that would be enacted could be complementary. Just because a piece of legislation exists doesn't mean that another can't be passed.

International experience to date has shown us that none of the countries that have passed legislation requiring reporting on modern slavery have taken the second step of passing due diligence legislation or legislation that requires companies to respect human rights and provides access to remedies. That's why we're urging the government not stop at legislation that only requires companies to report.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** The Minister of Labour's mandate letter instructs him to "introduce legislation to eradicate forced labour

from Canadian supply chains and ensure that Canadian businesses operating abroad do not contribute to human rights abuses".

The two bills before us, Bill S-211 and Bill C-262, are parliamentary initiatives.

Do you expect anything from the government in addition to these parliamentary initiatives?

**Ms. Emily Dwyer:** As you said, the Minister of Labour's mandate letter is clear. His parliamentary secretary is here with us today, so I think the minister is very interested in our discussions to come up with something fairly ambitious and robust in Canada as well. We hope that will be the case.

The Canadian government hasn't taken a position on whether new legislation will be introduced or whether it would use a bill that has already been introduced in Parliament. We don't think it's important if it's done through a bill—

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Ms. Dwyer, we are considerably over the time for this slot.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Emily Dwyer:** I'm sorry.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We will now go to Ms. McPherson.

You have four minutes, Ms. McPherson.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much for your testimony.

I am moved by the fact that we had earlier testimony talking about the urgent need for this legislation to be put in place. We have seen other countries, like Germany and France, move on this. However, I also recognize, when the witnesses say that if we don't get this right it could cause more harm than good, that, in fact, it is imperative that we get this right.

Because of that, I'm going to take a moment, as well, to give notice of a motion:

That pursuant to Standing Order 97.1, the committee request an extension of thirty sitting days to consider Bill S-211, An Act to enact the Fighting Against Forced Labour and Child Labour in Supply Chains Act and to amend the Customs Tariff.

I will tell you that I would like to have the minister join us here. I'd like to hear from the government. I would like to give all parties, particularly parties that have not yet put any witnesses on the witness list, the opportunity to do that.

I would also like to hear the words.... You talked, Ms. Dwyer, about the need to listen to impacted communities. I would like to take a moment to ask Ms. Akter if she would like to share the impact that this has had on her and her community.

**Ms. Kalpona Akter (Director, Bangladesh Center for Workers Solidarity, Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability):** If I may, with permission from the chair and with all due respect, what I understand is that this is a bill for supply chain people. You are the champions for the bill. You know what to do with that.

What I can say is how workers are living today. What they want is any kind of bill that is taken by a country like Canada, countries in Europe or the U.S.

The workers are earning \$78 a month. I really want you to know what you are talking about with forced labour...in your eyes, what forced labour is.

I was in the factory. Before me, my mom went to the factory. She had to leave the factory because she had a two-month-old infant at home, so she had to send me and my brother, rather than work herself. The two of us were the breadwinners for the seven of us in the family. The whole reason for us to go to the factory was because my mom was not paid a living wage. I don't see that anywhere.

Child labour will not be eliminated. Forced labour will not be eliminated from any supply chain if the parents don't get a living wage, if the parents don't have freedom of association on their production floor or in their factories where they are working, and if other labour aspects that are supposed to be respected are not respected.

It is so difficult for a woman to live with the little money she is getting today, let alone if she has two children in the family. She is toiling every day of her life in these factories. She thinks there will be some changes in the sourcing country and that their legislation will make some difference in our lives. However, what I can see from the discussion that you are having is very minimal.

Yes, we are looking at the European Union due diligence law. The directive they just proposed includes a living wage. It includes freedom of association. It includes health and safety. It includes the elimination of forced labour. It includes human rights.

I think you are talking about one of the elements of it. My feeling is that Canada can do it way better.

To give an example, many of you may know Bangladesh for Rana Plaza. Rana Plaza was a factory that collapsed with 5,000 workers inside. That was nine years ago. A binding agreement has made a huge difference back home. Now, over 2.2 million workers are working in safe factories because we have the Accord for Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh. The beauty of this is that it is a binding agreement.

For every law, if you cannot bring these corporations to account under any mandatory act, there will be no difference made down the supply chain.

Thank you.

• (1720)

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

We now go to the second round.

We only have four members who can ask a question. For this round it is two minutes, with the exception, of course, of Mr. Bergeron and Ms. McPherson. The first slot goes to Mr. Chong.

You have two minutes, sir.

**Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm not going to ask a question, because I simply don't have enough time. I'm just going to make a comment for the benefit of the committee.

Parliament can pass and adopt all the legislation it wants on forced labour and child labour, but if the government doesn't enforce that legislation or if it doesn't operationalize the legislation, it's all for naught.

I'd like to use Xinjiang as an example of what I'm talking about. Clearly a genocide is taking place in Xinjiang. Parliament recognized that. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said the birth rate plummeted between 2017 and 2019 by 50%, from 16 births per 1,000 people to eight births per 1,000 people.

Canada and the United States, subsequent to the USMCA, adopted legislation to ban imports using forced labour. Parliament amended the Customs Tariff act on July 1, 2020, to come into conformity with the USMCA. A year later, in June 2021, the United States changed its laws. In the two years since these laws have come into force, the United States has stopped thousands of shipments from Xinjiang from coming into the United States, but not Canada. In fact, there was a single shipment that was stopped at the border, but later released, of cotton products that had come in from the People's Republic of China.

I say all this simply to say that if there is no enforcement of the laws Parliament passes, all of this is for naught. I think the government needs to back up the legislation Parliament adopts with real action to enforce the laws of this country.

• (1725)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chong.

We now go to Mr. Zuberi.

You have less than two minutes.

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi:** I'll give the start of my time to Mr. Sheehan.

**Mr. Terry Sheehan:** Thank you very much.

I just wanted to inform the committee and the witnesses that Minister O'Regan wanted to be here today, but he was already scheduled for some in-person consultation with employers about the replacement workers and the anti-scab legislation. He is available on Monday for the committee.

Thank you very much.

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi:** In the remaining time, I'd like to go to Ms. Akter in terms of what happened several years ago in a garment factory in Bangladesh. There was international attention and focus put on this.

Do you feel that when we debate and discuss this over here, when we pass legislation over here, it does have a positive impact in places like Bangladesh and other countries where forced labour is happening?

**Ms. Kalpona Akter:** If it has mandatory accountability and it keeps companies accountable, yes, it does. But without any teeth in the legislation, that doesn't help at all.

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi:** Thank you. I agree with you that we need to have teeth behind things. I'm also of the opinion that any attention and focus on these issues helps the situation. We know this.

I'd also like to echo what Michael Chong, our colleague here at committee, said concerning the importance of implementing the rules on the books with respect to forced labour. Thankfully, we've had robust conversation around forced labour in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region and other parts of the world. We need to, as a Canadian family, act to halt these things from happening so that those across the world are not negatively impacted.

I'll give the rest of the time to the committee.

**The Chair:** That's five seconds.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** Thank you for those five seconds, Mr. Zuberi. We're very grateful.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** On a point of order, Chair, based on the offer from Mr. Sheehan, is there unanimous agreement for the committee to have the minister on Monday? I suspect that there would be, but we should clearly delineate that.

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We now go to Mr. Bergeron.

You have one minute, sir.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Rumour has it that the government will introduce amendments to Bill S-211. Government colleagues have had the opportunity to see these amendments, but opposition members haven't yet had the opportunity.

If, as is rumoured, some of these amendments would strengthen the bill, do you think we should be open to them? Or do you think that, in order to achieve the objectives you are pursuing, we should reject this bill out of hand and come up with something that isn't piecemeal and is more coherent overall?

**Ms. Alice Chipot:** We could indeed try to add a few elements to this bill that would apply in a gradual way, but it's the very spirit of the bill that's problematic, since the bill is based on the idea of reporting. In fact, whenever bills are based on the idea of reporting, we find that the only externality is that it stimulates a service sector of the economy that is used to collecting information on large companies. In the responsible investment community, we can already

see that actors are preparing to be able to report on issues surrounding modern slavery.

The basic problem is the spirit of the bill. If we want to eradicate the problem and have a real impact, the challenge isn't to better identify the phenomenon, but rather to have a coherent due diligence framework inspired by European best practices. I think we're at that point.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Thank you.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We now go to the last questioner.

Ms. McPherson, you have one minute.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** I will direct this last minute to you, Ms. Dwyer.

We know that Bill C-262, which was brought forward by MP Julian, is strong legislation. It's available. We'd be happy to have the Liberals adopt that. What do you see in that bill that you don't see in this bill?

You have a very short time, but what's the last word you would like to share with us?

**Ms. Emily Dwyer:** I would repeat that, for us, effective legislation is legislation that requires companies to actually take action and not only report, that helps people to access Canadian courts, and that applies to all human rights. That is represented in Bill C-262 and it is not represented in Bill S-211.

• (1730)

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** On that note, allow me to thank all four of our witnesses. Your testimony was invaluable and we're very grateful. Thank you, Ms. Dwyer, Ms. Akter, Ms. Chipot, and Ms. Hotchkiss.

You can leave as you wish.

Before adjourning, if I may, there are several things I wanted to bring to your attention. There were three budgets that have been submitted by SDIR, the subcommittee on human rights.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Thank you. That was the first thing.

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** I apologize for not reading any of those three budgets. Do any of them include our travel?

**The Chair:** No, none of them does. It has to do with SDIR.

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** Could I ask for an update on our travel?

**The Chair:** Yes.

The clerk will respond.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chair, a detailed budget is being prepared regarding your travel. It has to be submitted definitely by December 2, and it will be presented to you on Wednesday of this week.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Chong, go ahead.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Mr. Chair, on that item, can we deal with the budget concerning the travel of this committee at the beginning of Wednesday's meeting? I ask to set aside the first five minutes for the consideration of the budget concerning the travel of this committee.

**The Chair:** Sure, that sounds reasonable. Is everyone in agreement?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Yes, we'll do that.

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

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** Mr. Chair, I think we could leave you the discretion to figure out when we can discuss this. I think all committee members are interested in having the discussion.

**The Chair:** Absolutely. It's understood.

That was the first thing.

Second, is it the will of the committee that the clerk make the necessary hospitality arrangements for an informal joint meeting with the Standing Committee on National Defence—in a few minutes—with the President of Estonia?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Excellent. That's unanimous consent.

Finally, the committee will meet on Wednesday, November 23. The notice has already been published.

**Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC):** I have a point of order, Chair.

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** On Monday, with the minister coming, is that going to be an hour with the minister?

**The Chair:** That is what the PS said, but let's make sure.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** I'm just curious how it's going to flow on Monday. That's all.

**The Chair:** I don't want to say anything that I could be wrong on, but I think we'll be—

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Can you let us know by Wednesday?

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** If he's available for two hours, that would be great.

**The Chair:** No, I think it's going to be an hour.

Thank you.

Please don't forget that the President of Estonia will be joining us in a few minutes. It's being jointly done with the members of the defence committee.

The meeting stands adjourned.

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