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Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

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● (1535)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): We'll call this meeting to order. It's the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, meeting number 6, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), a study on Canada's role in complex international interventions that involve multiple foreign policy instruments, focusing on Canada's efforts in Haiti.

We are fortunate today to have with us two guests. One is Dr. Yasmine Shamsie, assistant professor, Department of Political Science, from Wilfrid Laurier University.

We welcome you.

We also welcome Dr. Andrew Thompson, research associate, from the Centre for International Governance Innovation.

I should also say that besides their being involved in those different groups, at the university and at the Centre for International Governance Innovation, they have also together written a book *Haiti: Hope for a Fragile State*, which we have not read, but we look forward to it.

We welcome you this afternoon, on a warm Ottawa day. As is the custom here, we will give you an opportunity for an opening statement.

Members, if I could just have your attention, I would intend today to keep fairly strictly to the clock, to five minutes, so everyone gets an opportunity to question our guests.

Welcome. The time is yours.

Dr. Yasmine Shamsie (Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Wilfrid Laurier University): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members of Parliament, people in the audience.

First, I'd like to thank you for inviting me. I look forward to hearing your questions.

[*Translation*]

If there are questions in French, I will also answer them.

[*English*]

My presentation today is going to focus on the economic development strategy that Canada and other donors are advancing in Haiti. I plan to outline our approach and make some suggestions on how, in my view, it might be improved.

Just to be clear from the outset, I'm using today a poverty reduction lens to judge our economic development plan in Haiti. In other words, I'm interested in exploring how the economic development approach we are using will affect the country's poorest citizens. The emphasis on poverty reduction is in part normative, but it is also due to the importance that both peace-building experts and development experts have assigned to this goal.

For example, the International Crisis Group notes that much of the violence that plagues Haiti is due to the “chronic failure to tackle the poverty, social deprivation, and exclusion that endanger most of the population”. Basically, donors have accepted that poverty and inequality are among those factors leading to violence, insecurity, and political instability in Haiti. In fact, in a recent strategy paper on Haiti, CIDA argues that Canada's primary challenge is to find and implement strategies that will foster poverty reduction.

Over half of all Haitians, about 56%, live on less than one dollar U.S. per day, making the country's poverty deeper and more pervasive than in the rest of Latin America. Haiti's peasant farmers make up the most destitute segment of the population, with rural residents accounting for 75% of the country's poor. Haiti also suffers the starkest division between rich and poor of any Caribbean country.

Canada and the international community have a threefold strategy for economic renewal in Haiti. The first goal is to build stronger links with members of the Haitian diaspora. The second is to strengthen the private sector, which is viewed as the primary engine of economic growth. The third is to re-establish Haiti's assembly manufacturing export sector.

Today I will argue that while these focuses may help to reactivate the economy, they are unlikely to significantly improve the lot of Haiti's poor. This is because there is very little in this plan for the country's rural majority. But I will expand on that later. Due to time constraints today, I will say only a few words about two of these strategies—boosting the private sector and re-establishing the export assembly sector.

With regard to the first strategy, although the country's private sector is fragile and weak, it is a major development objective of the Canadian government. For instance, Ottawa is supporting an initiative designed to train Haitian business leaders inside Haiti. Canada also recently acted as host for the first ever meeting between the Inter-American Development Bank, President Enrique Iglesias, and members of the Haitian private sector. This was to discuss the private sector's role in rebuilding Haiti.

While the private sector can contribute to economic renewal, this focus is not without challenges. For instance, international development agencies have tended to view the Haitian private sector with suspicion. Haitian business elites have long been suspected of being more interested in turning a quick profit than in long-term economic development. Moreover, past links between private sector players in Haiti, former Haitian dictators, the army, and paramilitary groups are a continued source of concern for many development agencies, and rightly so.

Progressive elements in the private sector are beginning to alter this perception, but this is a very slow process. The fact that Canada hosted this IDB-private sector meeting will undoubtedly help create the kind of valuable links between these two partners, but again, the democratic and development credentials of this sector remain tainted.

More importantly, though, if we turn back to the objective of poverty reduction, it's important to note that there is little data to support the assumption that the poorest Haitians, most of whom make their living from the rural areas and the informal sector, will automatically benefit from a more robust private sector.

● (1540)

Even the World Bank, a staunch supporter of private sector development, notes that the evidence on small and medium-sized businesses, growth and poverty, does not support the contention that small and medium-sized businesses are particularly effective job creators. The bank's analysis also reveals that the size of the small and medium-sized business sector is not significantly associated with the income of the poorest quintile of society, or the percentage of the population living below the poverty line, or the poverty gap.

So while prosperous and thriving economies usually have a strong small and medium-sized business sector, cross-country comparisons do not indicate that the small and medium-sized business sector exerts a particularly beneficial impact on the incomes of the poor.

Regarding export assembly operations, this part of the economic development plan is very much in line with conventional economic thinking. A country like Haiti's comparative advantage lies in its cheap labour and proximity to U.S. shores. Hence, encouraging export assembly operations seems reasonable. Interestingly, though, this was actually tried in Haiti during the 1970s and 1980s. What I want to point out today is that this earlier attempt to promote light industry through assembly production failed to spark development. In fact, it actually increased inequality and poverty levels.

Jean-Claude Duvalier championed export development manufacturing between 1971 and 1986, offering various incentives: a tax holiday of 10 years, complete profit repatriation, and a guaranteed non-unionized workforce. This did lead to a massive expansion of assembly operations. Exports from light industry grew at an average annual rate of 40% during the 1970s.

By the early 1980s Haiti was second only to Mexico among US-centred subcontracting territories in the western hemisphere. It had about 240 multinational corporations, employing between 40,000 and 60,000 workers, depending on whose numbers you're going to choose.

In 1985, one year before Duvalier was forced into exile, Haiti was ranked ninth in the world in the assembly of goods for U.S. consumption. In fact, it's often said that every baseball in the United States at that time was made in Haiti. The sector generated more than a half of the country's industrial exports and earned one-quarter of its foreign exchange.

Despite this tremendous expansion, the effects on Haiti's overall economy were disappointing, especially in terms of the number of Haitians living at or below the poverty line. The country's debt increased; foreign exchange reserves were exhausted by 1981. Commenting on Haiti's balance of payments, World Bank officials conceded that the assembly industry had, in the long term, made “almost no fiscal contribution” to the economy. Repercussions for Haiti's poorest citizens were significant as well.

First, faced with a shortfall in revenues from imports, because all manner of imports, goods, luxury goods were now entering the country free of taxes on the pretext that they were essential to assembly firms, the Haitian government turned to consumption taxes, which studies have shown adversely affected rural peasants and members of the urban lower classes, in particular.

Another effect of this plan was that food costs increased as production diminished. The production diminished because of the mass exodus from rural areas to Port-au-Prince, which was the primary site of the manufacturing sector. Between 1975 and 1985 the average price of all foodstuffs more than doubled, again hurting the poorest households the most.

Although the model provided some economic growth, it also increased poverty and economic polarization by favouring the economic development of Port-au- Prince, the urban sector, over the rest of the country, the rural sector. In short, poverty was not reduced, mostly because the slight industry strategy explicitly averted the rural world, although I have to admit that appalling levels of corruption under Duvalierism were also an important contributing factor here.

Ignoring the needs of the agrarian sector has been customary in Haiti, and it also reflects a long-term pattern among donors. The economic development plans of the 1990s allocated only 7% of assistance to agriculture, the source of income for 80% of all Haitians living below the poverty line. Current donors, including Canada, argue that agriculture in Haiti is neither sustainable nor ecologically sound. To be sure, rural development is a daunting challenge.

Haiti's landholdings are small, mainly on steep slopes, making mechanical farming virtually impossible, and close to one-third of all plots are in agriculturally marginal areas. Still, Haiti experts argue that it is these abysmal conditions that make rural development absolutely essential, if for no other reason than to prevent the rural poor from slipping further into poverty. Restoring agricultural production and improving food security for rural households must be established as a strategic priority for international donors who make poverty reduction their primary objective.

● (1545)

Canada showed real leadership when it released its 2003 policy paper entitled *Promoting Sustainable Rural Development Through Agriculture*, especially since it did so on the heels of substantial cuts to aid to agriculture and rural development by bilateral and multilateral agencies throughout the 1990s. Regrettably, though, Ottawa decided in 2005 to drop agriculture as a focus of its foreign aid program. This has enormous repercussions for countries like Haiti, where promoting sustainable rural development through agriculture is crucial to poverty alleviation. Aid to peasant agriculture would encourage small-scale producers to remain on the land and improve their livelihoods through production of food for consumption and for sale to local markets.

To be sure, Canada's priorities, its new priorities—health, education, good governance, environment, and the private sector—are important; however, it is difficult to imagine putting an end to extreme poverty in Haiti without a strong and sustained plan that targets the rural world.

In conclusion, when it comes to addressing economic development, that is, reducing poverty and inequality, and building a viable economy, Canada has decided to follow the lead of other major donors in applying a predominantly urban-based development strategy. This approach proved unsuccessful in the 1970s and 1980s when the Haitian government chose to overlook its rural sector in favour of promoting export processing zones, and it also proved unsuccessful most recently in the mid-1990s when donors overlooked this sector as well.

The argument here today is not that Canada or foreign donors should orient the bulk of their aid and loans to the agricultural sector. Given the level of environmental degradation in Haiti, overpopulation, and increased division of land holdings, agriculture will never become Haiti's primary engine of economic growth. However, if poverty reduction is indeed a primary objective for Canada, restoring agricultural production and improving food security for rural households must be a strategic priority.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Shamsie.

Mr. Thompson.

Dr. Andrew Thompson (Research Associate, Centre for International Governance Innovation): Thank you, Mr. Chair and honourable members of the committee.

My involvement with Haiti dates back to 1998, when I spent the summer in Limbe at a non-profit hospital. Limbe is in the northern part of the country. Since then, I have written on the human rights situation in Haiti and have worked, and continue to work, with Amnesty International's Canadian section and its international secretariat on Haiti.

What I thought I would do today is give a brief overview of the human rights situation in Haiti and then make a case for why Canada's engagement in Haiti and with Haiti should centre on human rights.

Very briefly, since the insurgency of February 5, 2004, the human rights situation in Haiti has been in a state of crisis. Despite the presence of the UN stabilization mission in Haiti, the human rights situation in Haiti has remained perilous and in desperate need of strengthening. Even with the successful election last February the country remains politically polarized, while lawlessness and violence are common. A deeply ingrained culture of impunity, widespread police abuses, including arbitrary arrests, torture, ill treatment, prolonged detentions, and extrajudicial executions, along with a judiciary that appears to lack independence, high levels of criminal activity, deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians, rape, death threats, and intimidation, and an overall climate of insecurity are some of the major problems that currently plague Haiti and are in need of remedy.

Those responsible for the abuses include a wide range of actors. These include armed gangs, with or without political ties to former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, rogue police officers, former rebels, demobilized members of the former Haitian armed forces, and members of organized criminal gangs.

Haiti is in desperate need of a police force that is able to police the tiny island nation in a fair, equitable, and just manner that is consistent with international norms. Unfortunately, this is not a new problem for Haiti. The country has a long history of corrupt and abusive police forces, despite considerable international aid in this area. Indeed, the international community's attempts at police reform in the 1990s produced disappointing results. By the end of the decade, slightly less than one in five of all police officers had been dismissed because of charges of corruption, drug offences, and human rights abuses. Moreover, elements of the force are highly politicized, and some of its members are responsible for some very terrible human rights abuses, often involving lethal force. As I mentioned before, arbitrary arrests are frequent, while extrajudicial executions remain common and are rarely investigated.

Part of the problem involves human resources. Currently there are several thousand officers who are responsible for policing a population of about eight million, which simply is not sufficient. Often, they are required to handle situations involving political violence and heavily armed criminal gangs.

Haiti's justice system is also badly in need of reform. Described by many as being highly dysfunctional, the country has been plagued by a culture of impunity. Furthermore, the independence of the judiciary remains very much in doubt. Prison conditions are deplorable; they are overcrowded and incredibly unsanitary. Freedom of expression continues to be under constant threat, and in this climate the rule of law has been largely absent in much of the country. Women and street children are particularly vulnerable. The former are often targets of terror campaigns that involve rape, while the latter are susceptible to attacks by the police.

MINUSTAH, the UN force, has been operating in Haiti since June 2004. Its presence in Haiti has been a source of controversy, particularly while the transitional government was in power. Part of the problem with MINUSTAH is that it has a relatively weak mandate. Security Council resolution 1542 requires that MINUSTAH work alongside the Haitian national police on all issues involving policing. As such, MINUSTAH does not have either the authority or the resources to engage in independent policing activities, although it does have power to vet and certify new and existing Haitian national police personnel for service.

Because of this a number of questions have been raised about its neutrality, as it is seen by some sectors of the Haitian population to be in league with the Haitian National Police. Compounding this legitimacy deficit is that UN forces have been unable to provide security for all sectors of society, even though the number of UN troops was recently increased to 8,000 soldiers.

● (1550)

The abuses taking place in Haiti have been exacerbated by the presence and accessibility of thousands of small arms in the country. Indeed, a number of non-governmental organizations have argued that the most pressing issue facing Haiti at the moment is the proliferation of approximately 170,000 small arms—and this is a very conservative estimate of the number of guns that are in the country. These weapons have helped fuel violence between insurgents, criminal gangs, and pro-Aristide supporters.

Efforts have been taken to demobilize members of the former military through the National Commission on Disarmament that was established in February 2005. However, results to date have not been terribly encouraging. At present, few weapons have been collected. More definitely needs to be done in this area.

To conclude, I have five recommendations for the Government of Canada, all of which are intended to better the human rights situation in Haiti.

The first is to promote international human rights standards within Haiti. Two weeks ago, I saw the announcement in which the Government of Canada pledged $48 million to promote good governance and democracy in Haiti. While I'm not familiar with the specific details of the program, I wish to commend the government for making that commitment to human rights and to peace. I urge the government to continue with these priorities and to publicly condemn human rights violations when they do occur.

The second recommendation is to continue to invest in police, judicial, and penal reform. If Haiti's police are to become a functional, depoliticized institution, then all members need to be trained according to international standards. The benchmarks for success should be standards found in key international human rights documents. The same holds true for the judicial and penal systems, both of which need to be brought up to international standards of due process.

The third is to assist with a nationwide disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration program. This means working towards disarming all non-state actors, but also insisting that the Haitian National Police use their weapons in a lawful and proportionate manner.

The fourth recommendation is to help ensure that Haiti does not fall off the international agenda.

The constant uncertainty and scaling back of resources that plagued numerous international missions has hurt the prospects of genuine reform. MINUSTAH's current mandate is set to expire in the middle of August. Canada can work at the UN to ensure that, come August, MINUSTAH's mandate is renewed, and insist that the human rights mechanisms within MINUSTAH have the necessary resources that they need in order to carry out their functions.

This also means insisting that MINUSTAH take into account the provisions of both the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and Security Council Resolution 1325, which lists steps that the international community must take in order to protect women and children caught in conflict environments and fragile and failing states, and they must make this a priority of the mission.

The fifth recommendation is to be patient. With Haiti, there can be no quick fixes. Those who have been given the task of assisting Haiti should be prepared for setbacks. The absence of short-term results may make it tempting to forgo a long-term commitment. I would argue that this would be a very short-sighted view of the situation.

Nothing I've said today should come as a surprise. In one form or another, these recommendations can be found in various UN Security Council resolutions. My point is that the solutions are there. It's now just a matter of acting on them and seeing them through. This is essential if Haiti is to one day become a functioning society.

Thank you very much.

● (1555)

The Chair: Thank you to our guests today, and to Mr. Thompson this last time for bringing forward his report and his recommendations.

We'll now go into the first round, in which I will try to keep everyone to five minutes.

Mr. Patry.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Ms. Shamsie and Mr. Thompson.

My question is for Ms. Shamsie. Since I have only five minutes, there is no point in asking too many questions, because I will not get answers to them

Dr. Shamsie, you have looked at Canada's approach in Haiti concerning poverty reduction, knowing very well that even though poverty is widespread in urban areas, including Port-au-Prince, the situation seems to be beyond hope in rural areas. You point out quite rightly that in the past, under the dictatorial regime of Jean-Claude Duvalier, the assembly plants and exports created jobs in the cities, but not in rural areas. You seem to be in favour of an agricultural approach, which is not being pursued at all right now and which Canada is not supporting either.

I have two questions. First, what can be done to support this agricultural approach, knowing very well that, among other problems, farm plots in rural Haiti are very small and it is difficult to make them any bigger?

Second, do you not think that what you describe as a failure in terms of generating substantial income to reduce poverty in Haiti, that is, the assembly plants that were in operation 15 or 20 years ago, was really the result of the dictatorship, which controlled the 240 companies you mentioned?

Thank you.

● (1600)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Patry.

It's up to our guests. Ms. Shamsie or Mr. Thompson?

Dr. Yasmine Shamsie: Do we take one question at a time?

The Chair: Yes, that's right.

Dr. Yasmine Shamsie: Okay.

The first issue relates, in a way, to how we would envision a development policy that's centred around rural areas in Haiti, in terms of the size of plots of land and so on.

Since I have a moment, I want to say that Canada and the IDB and other donors have been targeting the rural sector in a way that is supporting infrastructure, for example, working on environmental degradation and promoting export crops and aquaculture farms. These are all worthwhile goals.

What I'm trying to get at is more of a peasant path to development that would prioritize food security. Some policies in that direction would be aimed at reducing the gap, for example, between capitalist farmers and peasant farm sectors; adapting existing modern technologies to the needs of the peasant sector given the conditions there; creating more peasant-friendly, appropriate sustainable technologies; and also, as part of this, promoting broader social and political conditions to make rural peasant production sustainable and productive.

What I mean is that it was clear to donors in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s that the liberalization of Haiti's markets and the lowering of protective tariffs on rice, for instance—the country's most basic staple—would devastate Haitian rice producers. This was well known. USAID came out with two reports, one in 1987 and another one in 1995, that said that if they lowered their tariffs, it would basically bring a loss of about $15 million a year to rice-growing peasants, further reducing their already poor standard of living. That was in a USAID report. In other words, we are advancing macro-economic policies that we know will impoverish these sectors. So maybe a "do no harm" policy would be a good way to start, regarding not decimating it further and pushing people out of rural areas into the slums of Port-au-Prince, where of course there is no employment.

The second point is around the regime of Duvalier. This was the failure of the export assembly, in part due to the fact that this was a dictatorship. That's why I mentioned corruption. I think one part of the problem was corruption. There is no question that the Duvaliers were experts at this. They managed to funnel unbelievable amounts of money out of the country and used the export promotion strategy to do this.

The other thing to remember is that social scientists who have looked at the export manufacturing sector say that it would only employ—even at its strongest, when it was doing the best, 60,000 workers, if you take that number—about 4% or 5% of the population. There are some political science and Haiti experts who have said that it would barely act as the kind of employment generator that people think it would.

So I think there are flaws in the strategy itself, which are aside from the actual political structure that would underpin it—whether it's the Duvalier dictatorship or something else.

The Chair: All right, thank you.

I'll just remind the committee that five minutes is for the questions and the answers. Let's try to be concise so that we can get in as many questions as possible.

Madame Lalonde.

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): That's for everybody.

The Chair: For everybody.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Thank you.

Good afternoon. My colleague will be addressing her questions to you, so do not worry, Mr. Thompson.

Ms. Shamsie, I found your text very interesting. There were many similarities with both the 2003 CIDA study, which was an interesting report that admitted that mistakes had been made, and the latest study by the International Court of Justice, the ICJ, on the first 100 days of the Préval government.

I would like to know what you think about the political cohesion talked about by the ICJ. Among other things, it proposes using the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, sponsored by the World Bank, to establish a national dialogue, which is something that never happened under the transitional government, because using the PRSP would promote the active participation of marginalized populations, community groups, women, farmers, etc.

Expectations are too high. I understand what is being called for. We also need to help people be patient. Donors need to be patient, but the local people also need to feel that things are progressing and that they are being heard.

What do you think of that element, given the work that you have done?

● (1605)

Dr. Yasmine Shamsie: : I completely agree with you.

[*English*]

Previous plans regarding economic development in Haiti really did not have any kind of support from the general population. There were not consultations of the various sectors of society—women's groups, agricultural groups, and so on. This is why, as Haiti crafts its poverty reduction strategy paper, which it will have to do in the coming months, there is a suggestion that there be these kinds of meetings.

But I think it's also important in terms of political reconciliation to bring these different sectors together—the private sector, peasant communities, the women's sector. Haitians have gone through a very decisive political moment, and they need the space not only to have input into the development program that is going to be undertaken but also to mend fences between these various groups. It's absolutely essential, and I think donors need to be patient and to truly allow it to happen and make it work and allow it to have an impact on whatever is decided.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Thank you very much.

You are right to talk about agriculture. Where many underdeveloped countries are concerned, not enough emphasis is placed on agriculture, which can provide work and ensure food self-sufficiency for people.

I did not hear you say anything about the deforestation problem. Only 1 per cent of the land is covered by forest. Could there not be reforestation programs where infrastructure is completely non-existent, where it has been destroyed? Of course, that would take money, but can there be development when there are no roads, electricity, etc.?

Dr. Yasmine Shamsie: You are right. The donors are in agreement about that. Canada and the major multilateral banks are also working on environmental projects, reforestation, etc.

[*English*]

It is an *eje*, as they say in Spanish, a main axis of development, and I think all development actors, including Canada, are involved in it.

I didn't mention it. All I did mention is that the rural sector tends to be targeted through it. In other words, Canada will say, we are working on agricultural and rural sectors: we are helping to plant trees. But although that's essential, I think we also need to be working with small producers and so on for provision of seeds and other kinds of things as well.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Excellent. Has my time expired? No.

[*English*]

The Chair: You have 10 seconds.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Thank you. I will not get any answers in that short a time.

[*English*]

The Chair: We'll go to Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Thank you for appearing here today, Dr. Shamsie and Dr. Thompson.

I'd like to make a comment first about your comments, Dr. Thompson, because both of these issues are certainly interrelated. You made comments on the need to reform the judiciary and the police force; in other words, to bring security to the country at a point in time where we have one of what I would call the poster symbols of Haitian civil unrest, the Cité Soleil, an area that's not under control by the government at all. When you add that to the other complexities, the security problem and the civil rights problem, I think it had been mentioned before that past regimes have in fact taken away money and funds from the manufacturing sector, which didn't go to the government for good governance and for continuing society. There was quite a bit of interreaction that was detrimental to even the future of the manufacturing sector.

We're talking about the agricultural sector too. I agree with Ms. Lalonde that an important consideration is the environmental aspect. It's very difficult to begin agricultural improvement and reform without addressing the problems of serious erosion.

My question will be in and around that. I certainly recognize that we need to increase food production in the country for all of society.

In the manufacturing sector, you identify 60,000 workers who are really producing $2 to $4 per day in today's money, and you've identified a poverty level of less than $1 a day. I would think it would be a dramatic increase and it would bode well to try to rework it to encourage more in the manufacturing sector rather than to abandon it. Is it your feeling that you would really want to abandon that type of economic input? At one point in time, 25% of the country's economy could be returned. Why would we not want to concentrate on bringing that back and renew it—and reform the judiciary and the other parts of society that obviously made more profit on that than did the citizens of the country?

● (1610)

Dr. Yasmine Shamsie: First of all, 60,000 is a generous number; it's between 40,000 and 60,000. Out of 8.5 million people, that's not a huge chunk.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Use a multiple of 10.

Dr. Yasmine Shamsie: The assumption that underlines your question is that this money trickles down. In other words, if this person is now making the fantastic sum of $2 a day, this will trickle down through the community to spark other development or increase the standard of living for folks.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Spinoffs.

Dr. Yasmine Shamsie: We found it doesn't seem to happen that way. In other words, the detrimental effects of this strategy and the fact that food prices more than doubled have actually hurt more people than the small number who are making that wage. In other words, the effects of the strategy at that time, in the 1970s and 1980s, had many more detrimental effects. There just wasn't any evidence....

It's the same thing with housing prices that went up. All of a sudden, people quickly moved to Port-au-Prince to take advantage of possible employment, which increased the cost of housing there.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Isn't that a normal progression of society?

Look at what has happened in China, where it was mentioned in a periodical that the average wage for a factory worker there is now $120 per month. But relatively speaking, there's no hunger in China, people have housing, and they have all of the necessities of life on that $120. I would think it would be a very worthwhile goal to achieve.

Maybe $2 a day sounds ridiculous to us here, but $2 a day that leads to $4 a day for trained workers is apparently a sustainable living. I would think it would be an immediate goal. You're already talking about an average wage of less than $1 a day.

It would seem to me that $4 a day would be a 400% increase in a sector that seems to be willing. Gildan has opened up two new manufacturing plants there for up to 5,000 people. I would think it would be very beneficial to encourage that sector throughout.

The Chair: We're pretty well right out of time. I'm going to be fair to all, so we're going to go to Ms. McDonough.

If you can incorporate that answer into another question, go ahead, Ms. McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Actually, I'm interested in pursuing more or less the same issue. I see the direct link between what you're both talking about as well.

I want to ask two very specific questions. I've just come back from the parliamentary group that went to Haiti. Again and again it was explained to us that one of the reasons for the massive police corruption, quite apart from the past history, is that it's not uncommon at all for police to be working for months and months with no pay, and that given the choice of not feeding your family and receiving bribes to feed your family, it's fairly understandable why people take bribes and engage in corruption. I see it as completely linked to the issue of economic development.

The second thing is that although I think most of us would agree that the participation of civil society is actually quite important both in terms of genuine economic development and in terms of human rights protections, I was actually quite alarmed by what looked to me as a fairly deliberate kind of strategy to generate civil society organizations—and I say that in brackets—that were actually both business-driven and driven by U.S. interests, to have actually a fairly exogenous kind of force that was speaking on behalf of Haitians.

I asked, where is any indication of a trade union movement, which often is quite important in standing up for human rights? Absent. Where is any indication of primary producers, of peasants who are organized as small producers? Absent.

I'm wondering if you could comment on that, because it seems to me that both of those need to come into play if the two major concerns you've brought to our attention are in fact to be addressed.

● (1615)

Dr. Andrew Thompson: I think you're quite right on a number of fronts.

In order for Haiti to shed the label of being a fragile state, state institutions need to be strengthened. This includes the police force, and it means making sure there are funds available so that wages can be paid on time.

A second component of a vibrant society—no question—is a vibrant civil society. There are quite a number of NGOs and civil society groups working in Haiti right now. Many of them are faith-based groups and are doing some very important work in Haiti. These groups should be encouraged to continue what they're doing and their efforts should be supported. They are definitely a part of the solution.

Dr. Yasmine Shamsie: I think you bring up an interesting point, which is what I call "the building civil society agenda", which I'm very nervous about, because when we're building civil society, what we're actually doing is propping up certain social forces in countries, which then affects the political balance of power. Who we build up has a political consequence. I think that's really important.

One of the things I would say is that Canada, when it supports civil society groups, needs to know and understand who they represent—do they have a popular base?—and really research this. I think the NGOs that work in Haiti, which are mostly Québécois—Inter Pares, Development and Peace, Oxfam-Québec, and so on and forth—are very connected and have been there for a long time, and I trust who they fund.

But I have to say it is difficult, because it has become an industry, a way that people make a living now, to become an NGO. It's really absolutely essential that we know who we are funding and that we, I have to say, fund the right groups. We know we're going to be altering the balance of social forces on the ground. We need to alter them in the right direction—groups that support human rights, women's rights, labour rights, and so on and so forth.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: I'm sure you didn't mean it in this sense, but what I saw was a lot of funding of the right groups, not so much of the left groups, or the progressive groups.

Dr. Yasmine Shamsie: Yes, well—

The Chair: You just had to correct that, Ms. McDonough.

Dr. Yasmine Shamsie: There was a study done in 1991 by Bob Maguire at Trinity College that showed that international donors—including Canada, the IDB, all the big donors—proportionately selected elite-driven NGOs for support over popular-based NGOs. This was a strategy after Aristide was first elected; he showed it through the different groups. So we need to be aware of that, who we are funding.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Van Loan, for five minutes.

Mr. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): The point of our study is to try, through the lens of Haiti, in particular, to look at Canada's interventions, because we had a whole lot of them in a whole lot of different ways over time, and determine what works and what doesn't work.

My question for both of you is this. Can you point to what Canada, in its interventions, has done wrong or has done poorly, either in the recent past or in previous interventions before that? Obviously in previous interventions we must have been doing something wrong, because we keep coming back, and the record keeps replaying.

● (1620)

Dr. Andrew Thompson: My comment isn't directed solely at Canada, but rather at the entire international effort.

One of the problems with the 1990s and the intervention that took place there—Secretary General Kofi Annan has made this point on several occasions—is that the constant scaling back of the international presence throughout the mid- to late 1990s really meant that any reform efforts, be they police reform or judicial reform or penal reform, really were never given a chance to take hold. In my presentation I said there really can't be any quick fixes with Haiti. So my criticism of past efforts would be that perhaps we ended our involvement prematurely. Again, Secretary General Kofi Annan has made this point to the generals.

Dr. Yasmine Shamsie: I would agree with that. I just want to reiterate what Francine Lalonde has said. In terms of what we've done, we did poorly in the past. CIDA applied what I would call strict conditionality to Haiti in 2000, trying to alter its good governance policies and so on, and its macroeconomic policies. What CIDA found in the 2004 studies is that this strict conditionality, i.e., pulling aid away in order to change Haiti's behaviour, actually contributed to the intense political instability we saw in 2004. As Andrew pointed out, it didn't produce the desired reforms that we were trying to advance—police reform, judicial reform, and so on. Money dried up. So I think pulling out and using that kind of conditionality was not effective.

I think CIDA has learned from that. Its most recent strategy paper also outlines that it plans to be much more patient in terms of the way it looks at its work in Haiti, in expecting a little less and so on in terms of how things are going to shape up.

Once again, I would like to be able to respond to Mr. Goldring. I think we don't spend enough on the rural sector. My contention is not that we should abandon export processing zones, but I think to focus on that as the engine of development for Haiti is as erroneous as focusing on the agricultural sector as the engine of growth. What we have done as donors is completely abandon the agricultural sector. We're hoping that this export sector is going to be enough to take in the other eight million people who are left and that they will somehow jump on board with this plan.

I certainly want to say that I'm not advocating abandoning it. I'm saying it will not be successful as a development strategy for an island where most of the people are still in agriculture and where food security is the problem and so on.

Mr. Peter Van Loan: I was going to say I keep asking the same questions. If the answer from both of you is to stay longer and that the international communities shouldn't pull out, and it's not just directed at Canada, how do we get others to stay engaged? Canada carries a huge share of the freight. As I pointed out yesterday, the Spanish have already pulled out their military commitment to keep the peace there. So how do we keep others engaged?

Dr. Andrew Thompson: Perhaps I could just go back to one point from the last question. One of the things that weren't done in the 1990s was a sustained disarmament program, and that is something that could be done. In terms of keeping Haiti on the international agenda and making sure that many stakeholders contribute to Haiti's growth and that Canada continues to raise the case of Haiti in international forums, that's where I think diplomacy comes in.

The Chair: Mr. Wilfert.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Shamsie, you mentioned that ending poverty will not occur without a strong and sustained plan that targets the rural areas. One thing we seem to have not talked about today is the issue of political culture, development culture in Haiti, and obviously a reliable partner. It has to be the government. You cannot impose a non-Haitian solution on Haiti. First of all, do you see a partner in Haiti? Do you see the beginnings of any kind of plan that could be coordinated with donor states such as Canada?

The theme I always like to talk about is empowerment at the village level. Clearly, in Haiti the fact is that you may have a national election, as you did in Afghanistan and some other places, but we learned a lot in Cambodia about commune elections and doing it right at the local level.

From my perspective, I would like to know how you see that type of engagement building from the ground up, which will then lead, in my view, to some of the other areas you talked about in terms of good governance, environment, education, etc.

Through you, Mr. Chairman.

● (1625)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Wilfert.

Mr. Thompson, Ms. Shamsie.

Dr. Yasmine Shamsie: I completely agree with a bottom-up approach, and I think it's interesting—-and you might be aware of this fact—that in Haiti there are local elections for CASEC, and even though Canada promotes democracy and we are $30 million in there on federal elections, we are not really in there when it comes to local elections. The local elections have drawn about 10% of Haitian voters.

I agree with you, this is absolutely essential for community development and so on. We should also be supporting those electoral processes, helping Haitians get those off the ground as well, which we haven't done in the past since the new constitution of 1987.

The Chair: Mr. Thompson.

Mr. Wilfert.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Following that theme, I think the question is, why aren't we doing it? The fact is that you're not going to be able to empower people unless they have economic opportunity. At this stage, what do you suggest are appropriate vehicles to do that? We know the state of agriculture. We know that people have migrated to cities and have found no jobs and have turned to crime and other activities. Obviously there is no fix.

Dr. Thompson talks about how you have to be in it for the long haul and how patience is a virtue, but the question is that often in donor countries people don't have a lot of patience. How do you measure this to be able to at least get some markers on the table in a way that will continue to say here are some minor successes that we can build on and therefore continue the flow and maybe get the Spains and others back into the equation?

Dr. Yasmine Shamsie: I think there have been success stories in Haiti that have then not been supported—for example, the work of CECI in Quebec. They've done excellent work in the agricultural sector. In fact, they were awarded from the World Food Programme an award in the mid-1990s for their work on food security and so on. CIDA dropped that project later. There have been success stories, and we just need to support those and encourage more of them. That's one point.

I want to very quickly say something about diplomacy and how to keep others engaged. Canada doesn't have the biggest voice internationally, but on Haiti we have a voice. People listen to what we say because we have had a long-term engagement in that country, because of the francophone nature of Canada, and because we've put our money where our mouth is, and so on. I think we can build that kind of coalition to keep other players there, but I also think Canada needs to put Haiti higher on the docket.

We've given $2 billion to Afghanistan. I could list five reasons why we should be in Haiti, but I can't list that many for why we should be in Afghanistan. I'm not saying get out of that, but I'm saying it makes sense for us to be there. We have a strong voice there, people listen to us there, we can be a leader when it comes to development in that country, and we should be there.

The Chair: Thank you.

A very quick one to Mr. Van Loan, and then we go back to Madame Bourgeois.

Mr. Peter Van Loan: I want to pick up, Professor Shamsie, on your answer to Mr. Wilfert on the local elections. There's a broad consensus among donor countries and among the folks who have been running the elections, as we heard yesterday, on the importance of going ahead with the municipal elections relatively soon.

There's a lot more concern about the local elections. The result would be 9,000 more officials on the public payroll, more rounds of elections to hold, and the argument is that there simply aren't the resources available. Haiti can't afford that many elections. Redistricting would have to be done, and they don't have a clear constitutional definition of what they'd be doing in any event within the structure.

Your view is very much in contrast to what we've heard from those others. What's your comment on the resources being diverted there instead of to other places?

● (1630)

Dr. Yasmine Shamsie: Are you saying there are only so many resources and that donors don't believe they should be going towards something like municipal elections?

Mr. Peter Van Loan: Municipal elections, yes; local elections, not yet. They're not in a position yet where they have the districts arranged and have a clear definition of what they would do. They'd put 9,000 people on the payroll, which they can ill afford right now, simply in those positions, and they'd rather see those reserves directed elsewhere as they build up.

Dr. Yasmine Shamsie: Is that the Haitian government's position?

Mr. Peter Van Loan: I haven't heard it from the Haitian government, but we've heard it from the people we've had there internationally running the elections, and we've heard it from the other donor groups, the people working on the ground. Your view is a very different one.

Dr. Yasmine Shamsie: Yes. My view is that donors only have so much funding that they've made available for this and that donors tend to prioritize big showy national elections. I see the point—the national election is essential—but if we really want to provide the kind of participation needed and build from the bottom up, it takes time, money, resources, and so on.

It's always a choice, but if you asked Haitians and the Haitian government, when the time is right once these things were in place—I didn't know about the redrawing of districts, and hadn't read about it—I think the Haitian government, if it could get the funding, would want to have these kinds of elections.

It's also a question of the moment. This is a kind of third moment that I see for Haiti. The first moment was when Aristide was elected in 1991. The second moment was when he was brought back to power and the military was booted out in 1994. This is the third moment, and I'm afraid it's the final moment. I really feel that Haiti needs to be given every possible chance, and local elections are important if we want to do development from the ground up.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Ms. Bourgeois, you have five minutes.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for being here. Your testimony is extremely interesting and important.

My question is for Mr. Thompson. In your document, you talk about a culture of impunity, abuse of power that is widespread in the police force. That does not come as a surprise, since we have heard about that before. However, Canadian assistance to Haiti, CIDA assistance, has enabled the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to participate in or coordinate the participation of a number of Canadian police officers in successive missions to Haiti. Since 1994, the RCMP has been in Haiti. On February 22, 2005, Mr. Zaccardelli made a speech in which he lauded the services of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Haiti.

I am extremely surprised that there is such widespread abuse and so much impunity. Given the length of time that Canada has been there, how is it that it has not been possible to put an end to that? There have even been Haitians who have come to Canada for training so that they could go back to their country with at least a minimum capability to maintain security properly.

How is it that we Canadians have not been able to eliminate that culture of impunity, after all the efforts that we have made? What would Canada have to do to fix that?

[*English*]

Dr. Andrew Thompson: There are two points. One is that there are elements of the Haitian National Police that take their duties very seriously and elements of the force that are doing the best they can given the circumstances. There is a rogue element of the Haitian National Police force that has used the position for personal gain and has committed human rights abuses, and these continue. The need is there to vet them, and under Security Council resolutions, UN forces have the authority to vet the abusive elements of the national police. It's a question of having the resources and the political will to do it.

So following through on UN Security Council resolutions is one thing. In terms of the culture of impunity, there's a long tradition of impunity in Haiti, and it involves more than just the police sector. It involves actually bringing human rights abusers, both past and present, to trial and ensuring that the court system is able to try them in a fair and equitable manner.

These are not easy things to fix, and they will take time, but they are priorities that have been outlined by the UN. This may not seem like a very satisfactory answer, but it's a question of seeing it through and not settling for expediency or quick fixes.

● (1635)

Dr. Yasmine Shamsie: May I add one thing?

Although Canada has been generous in this area, we haven't sent that many police officers, given that CivPol is at 1,500. Right now, we have 100 police officers, we sent 25 extra for the elections, and the head of CivPol is a Canadian, but there are 1,400 or 1,300 other officers from different countries—and they've had different levels of success.

When I was there in 1998-99, countries from West Africa had the best success relating with Haitians on the ground, and so on. I don't think we can say that Canada sent over half of CivPol forces to help train the police. It was a small contingent out of 1,500. So we have done something very good, but in terms of training, it hasn't been as large in sheer numbers, given that 8,000 police officers had to be trained.

The Chair: Just a very quick statement, Ms. Lalonde.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: I would like to point out that, when it comes to recognizing mistakes, CIDA has said that it is in the area of security where there have been the most problems. However, training new police officers has been a very good thing, but there were not enough of them. Then when Aristide came back, he politicized the police. When that happens, it takes away the justification for a police force that we are trying to train properly, that is to uphold the law and everyone's rights.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay, are you finished? All right.

In summary, there is one thing you did mention. Yesterday we had Elections Canada present, and also the chief electoral officers for the elections in Haiti. When we talked about the presidential elections, I think the voter turnout was 63% for the national elections, and they mentioned 30% for the local elections—up from 15%. Is that correct?

Mr. Peter Van Loan: It's legislative.

The Chair: Those were legislative. When you say 10% voter turnout, are you—

Dr. Yasmine Shamsie: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

The Chair: All right.

You also mentioned that CIDA applied strict conditionality. Have we been too broad in our mandate? Do you believe that we've been too broad? Or perhaps we have to become more focused?

We can talk about conditionality, but as governments that are sending money, certainly we expect accountability. A new government—and all governments—expect a certain degree of accountability with the money. Maybe you could give us a little clearer indication as to how you would define that we were too strict in the conditions CIDA had for how the money would be spent.

Dr. Yasmine Shamsie: I think the conditionality that was applied in 2000 was because of the senatorial elections. It was because there had been some electoral irregularities during those elections, and it was to kind of push Aristide to either hold new elections for these seven senatorial seats or to somehow give up the seats or something. So it was to push him to change. That's what they were talking about when they talked about governance.

Of course he resisted, and it wasn't just Canada that pulled back aid. The IMF, the World Bank, USAID, and most of the OECD countries cut their aid to Haiti during that time. The situation was getting worse and worse.

So I see the point in that you want to push a government to do the right thing when it's questions of corruption or whatever, but I think this wasn't working. When it finally did work and Aristide was ready to give in, the political opposition in Haiti was basically asking, by that time, that he resign. In other words, that was the only thing they were willing to accept.

The international community at that point should have said, “Look, he's saying he's going to redo these elections; that's good enough. We're going to turn the taps back on.” Instead we sided with the political opposition and we still waited. We were waiting for the political opposition in Haiti to say, “Okay, these are terms we can accept”, when there were not going to be any terms that they could accept.

So I think we have to have some judgment on our side as well when we see an economic situation getting to the point of a crisis in that country, given the fact that Haiti is so dependent on foreign aid. We have to also make some judgments and say, "Well, you guys will have to work it out, but we think this solution, another set of elections for these seven senatorial seats, is good enough and we're going to turn the aid tap back on." And I have to say this was the U. S. pushing this agenda. I don't know what Canada's position was on that, but I think it went along with the rest of the multilateral donors and USAID.

● (1640)

The Chair: Thank you.

Certainly we do appreciate your appearing before our committee today. I think it has been good. We've all learned and look forward to looking at your book. Thanks again for coming.

We will suspend briefly and ask the new witnesses to please take the seats.

● _____ (Pause) _____ ●

● (1645)

The Chair: Welcome back.

We're continuing our study of Haiti and multiple foreign policy instruments focused on Canada's involvement in Haiti.

This afternoon we are pleased to have with us Chief Superintendent David Beer, director general of international policing with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police; also, from our Canadian International Development Agency, Suzanne Laporte, vice-president of the Americas branch, and Yves Pétillon, program director for Haiti, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic in the Americas branch.

We welcome you to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

The procedure here is that we offer opening statements—I know a number of you have opening statements—and then we will move into questions from our committee members.

Welcome. The floor and the time are yours.

Ms. Suzanne Laporte (Vice-president, Americas Branch, Canadian International Development Agency): Thank you very much.

You'll recognize the gentleman sitting with me, who has been so kind as to offer me the opportunity to speak first.

I thank you very much.

C/Supt David Beer (Director General, International Policing, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): Madame Laporte has the money.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Suzanne Laporte: Mr. Chairman, you have the text in both languages, so I will be addressing the committee in both languages. I would first like to thank you for giving us this opportunity to appear before your committee on a subject that is of such importance to us.

The timing could not be better, since today Haiti is at the crossroads. I believe that those are the very words that Minister MacKay used yesterday. Neither Haiti's leaders nor the international community can or should once again disappoint such a destitute people, so eager to get out of the vicious cycle of poverty.

The massive voter turnouts throughout the electoral process and President Préval's speech about national reconciliation paved the way for sustainable development. But history reminds us that there is no development without security or security without development. That is why CIDA is involved in this area with so much determination.

[*English*]

There are many ways to define what we mean by security. I would like to start by clarifying that for CIDA and the international community generally, security rests on three basic pillars: the police, justice, and prison administration. We must address all of these in order to achieve sustainable results, because they are essentially all of one piece. This is the framework in which CIDA conducts its activities in the security sector in Haiti.

The challenges to be met are substantial. The national police force does not have enough police officers. It is ill-equipped and not up to professional standards. The justice system has major deficiencies. Inadequate jails overflow with inmates, some of whom are guilty; about others, we don't know. Think of a security system that is based on a ratio of one police officer for 2,000 residents, while in Canada the proportion is 1:500; in Europe, 1:450; and in the rest of Latin America and the hemisphere, about 1:600.

Canada's commitment to Haiti's security sector is also based on a whole-of-government approach. We rely extensively on the expertise of our colleagues from the RCMP and Foreign Affairs and on our own in-house expertise.

● (1650)

[*Translation*]

My remarks today will focus on three main points: the issues, our activities and achievements, and future courses of action.

First, there are five major issues in Haiti's security sector.

The first issue is the timeline. The lessons of the past teach us that, in a fragile state such as Haiti, the presence of numerous outside forces has a stabilizing but limited effect. This effect is temporary and has no sustainable impact, since these forces are a substitute for local security forces. This presence must thus be coupled with institution building and ongoing long-term efforts to develop professionalism. The long term is at least 10 to 20 years.

The second issue is political will. Haitian authorities must show political will if reform of the security sector is to succeed, otherwise, it will be impossible to depoliticize the security sector, professionalize the police service, and combat corruption. This political will was weak from 1996 to 2004. CIDA thus suspended its program and shifted to a new approach, which we will discuss later.

The third issue is a common vision of the reform process. All stakeholders involved in reforming the security sector must agree to work from common reform plans for police and justice, led by Haitian authorities. These plans must be developed in consultation with civil society, and a system must be established to coordinate the various stakeholders. A single vision is crucial to generate synergy and rally all stakeholders in the security sector.

The fourth issue is complementary actions. Security cannot be approached solely as a matter of control and repression, but also as an issue of socio-economic development. Thus, at the same time, major activities must lead to poverty reduction.

Finally, we must not underestimate the role of Haiti's social and cultural environment, in which we carry out our work. The lessons of the past clearly show that understanding this can make the difference between success and failure.

[*English*]

Let me turn now to the activities that CIDA has financed over the years and some of the results we achieved in the reform of the security sector.

From 1994 to 2002, CIDA supported a number of bilateral initiatives. It had to gradually withdraw from these initiatives, essentially owing to the Haitian authorities' lack of political will to deal with the problem to any significance. There was increased politicization and increased corruption, which caused CIDA to terminate its bilateral program in the justice sector in 1999 and in the police sector in 2001.

However, we did maintain through the United Nations some assistance in justice, human rights, and prison administration. There were sustained efforts also to strengthen the Haitian civil society. All these activities resulted in, for example, building a networking system between the public prosecutor's office and the courts, in training clerks, in training correctional staff, in the creation of an inmate database—imagine, they didn't even know many prisoners were in the prisons—and increasing, also, public awareness of civil rights and civil obligations, and we are working through international human rights norms.

The advent of the transitional government in March 2004 has now created a new political will, somewhat hesitant but sufficient for us to maintain our multilateral commitment and resume our programming in the security sector. As I said before, we realize there can be no development without security. First and foremost, however, security does depend on its government and on its citizens.

What have we supported since the advent of the interim government in 2004?

● (1655)

[*Translation*]

With respect to justice, we are working with the United Nations, the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie and the Organization of American States (OAS), as well as non-governmental organizations in Canada and Haiti to help strengthen the Ministry of Justice, improve present administration by training correctional officers, to establish a fair, accessible, and timely system of criminal justice. Finally, we are trying to improve present conditions and the respect for the rights of inmates.

To strengthen the police sector, CIDA funded the deployment of 100 Canadian police officers for two years under the leadership of MINUSTAH and administered by the Department of Foreign Affairs and the RCMP. We also sent 25 additional police officers to reinforce security during the elections. My colleague David Beer will provide more details on UNPOL.

Again with regard to the police sector, I consider this perhaps as one of the most important achievements of the past two years. We responded to the appeal by the Minister of Justice, who is responsible for the police, in developing a joint strategic plan. This reform plan was approved by the Supreme Council of the National Police which, to date, has provided a framework for the actions of the community as a whole. This plan also resulted in the creation of a new strategic development branch of the police, with technical support from Canadian experts and MINUSTAH.

Moreover, to offer tangible, visible proof of progress in the sector, CIDA funded a general survey and technical manuals for the repair of 20 police stations and 14 court houses that had been vandalized. Four of the stations are being repaired with CIDA funding, while information about the other 16 stations was shared with the other donors and MINUSTAH. CIDA has also funded the repair of four courts and the government of Haiti has repaired eight. We are currently re-establishing the legal infrastructure.

Finally, we are funding social appeasement projects in the hot spots of Port-au-Prince. I heard the Cité Soleil mentioned a number of times earlier. We have a presence there. These projects aim to support efforts to stabilize security by creating jobs and generally improving living conditions.

[*English*]

I would like to emphasize that all of these activities reflect the priorities that have been outlined in the Interim Cooperation Framework that was adopted by the international community and the Haitian government and that has been guiding all of the commitments from 2004 until now.

As far as the future is concerned, we are at a crossroads. We have a newly elected government in place, and so far this government has shown positive signals of political will to undertake genuine reform. The coming weeks will be decisive in defining the roles and the responsibilities of all our international stakeholders. It will underline that Canada does not act alone.

MINUSTAH's current mandate ends on August 15 and must be renegotiated. The Organization of American States is now redefining its mandate for its special mission. And we will know that there will be a pledging conference for the donors on July 25, most likely in Haiti, for the extension of the cooperation framework. All of these events will guide our future interventions.

Mr. Chairman, before closing, allow me to give you just a few insights of what we could do in the security sector in the future.

● (1700)

[*Translation*]

In Canada, the departments and agencies concerned are joining together to develop a new joint action strategy for the security sector. This strategy must reflect the priorities that the new government will outline in the near future and be consistent with the renewal of MINUSTAH's mandate.

Some avenues are already emerging. With regard to CIDA, there is a consensus among the Haitian authorities and members of MINUSTAH about its long-term role. We intend to focus on creating a new police academy to train officers, which will have a major impact on making this force more professional.

[*English*]

We will also continue our efforts to support NGOs that are active in the area of human rights.

Finally, we are working in very close coordination with the RCMP as it is deploying its police officers—and certainly my colleague David Beer will provide you with further details on this—and we are working in close cooperation with Foreign Affairs.

[*Translation*]

In conclusion, I want to reiterate that CIDA remains fully committed to the security sector, since the issues are critical to the development and recovery of Haiti's economy and stability, not only in that country, but also in the subregion.

[*English*]

I thank you, and I look forward to your questions and your comments.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Laporte.

Chief Superintendent Beer.

C/Supt David Beer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee—

The Chair: We'll try to keep it within about 10 minutes, if we can. Is that going to work?

C/Supt David Beer: Certainly.

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

C/Supt David Beer: First, on behalf of the Commissioner of the RCMP I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to appear today.

The RCMP is justly proud of a long-standing tradition of assistance in international police development and of the highly successful partnership of the Departments of Public Security and of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Canadian International Development Agency in deploying police to international peace missions and as partners in the Canadian Police Arrangement. In many ways the tradition and the partnership have been tempered by missions in Haiti.

The current United Nations mission in Haiti, MINUSTAH, is the seventh since 1993. The RCMP and its Canadian policing partners have been involved in all of them, in addition to years of bilateral development assistance financed by CIDA.

While there have been successes, the context of our meeting today speaks to the failure to sustain and build on the successes. While I haven't, Mr. Chairman, prepared a lot of information with respect to our current activities, I have provided to the committee an appendix to my introductory speech that gives, first of all, an outline of the current activities as well as basically a chronology of police deployments to Haiti since 1994.

The committee has no doubt heard or will hear of the crisis situation in Haiti from many perspectives: human rights abuse, violence, poverty unequalled in this hemisphere, environmental degradation, the ineffectiveness of government and its institutions, class struggle, racism, the need for protection of women and children, and more. While my appearance here today focuses on policing in particular, we must not lose sight of the fact that there may be no aspect of Haitian society that is not in crisis. Haiti may be the quintessential example of what we call the “fragile state”.

In the mid- and late 1990s, the security environment was nearly perfect for focused development. There was no open violence between competing interests, and organized criminal activity as we see it today did not yet have a firm hold. Governmental attention went to policing development, not policing operations. Over 5,000 police were identified, trained, and deployed. Advanced programs were under way. There was continuity in leadership. Standards of performance and internal discipline were being established. Though there was much to do, progress was being made.

Today, the situation has changed. Organized crime—including drugs, weapons, kidnapping, and smuggling, in particular—has taken hold and seems to have been woven into the political fabric of the country. Corruption in the police and at all levels of bureaucracy is debilitating. The necessary attention to operations is complicated where violence is perpetrated by criminal and insurgent gangs, sometimes acting with political motivations and with tactics, weapons, and commitment that represent low-intensity guerilla warfare. Where there is no functioning justice system, this problem can be overwhelming.

Further, over 50% of the UN's 1,800 police resources on the ground are focused on security operations. Of the percentage available for development tasks, an important number have no Creole or French-language skills.

Financial and material commitment to police development by the international community in the 1990s was enormous but not well coordinated. Partnership was often impeded by state self-interest, sustainability mechanisms were absent, and accountability was inadequate.

In 2000, fatigued donors moved to other priorities at a critical time of Haitian government change. When we returned to Haiti in 2004 once again to address security and police development, it was evident that virtually nothing—equipment, materiel, infrastructure, or training—had survived theft, looting, wanton destruction, or in the case of training, the simple abandonment of principles and procedure.

Today the list of committed partners in Haiti is shorter. Though many countries self-identify as friends of Haiti, the United States and Canada continue to be the major committed donors in policing development. Still, Haiti's reliance on bilateral donors is clear, and donors, once burned, twice shy, need accountability and transparency if they are to contribute the millions necessary yet again.

Combine these elements—hesitant bilateral donors, a fledgling police organization rank with corruption, an uncertain security environment—and the challenges are evident.

● (1705)

We must commit to improving the justice sector as an integrated system. The dysfunctional judicial and corrections systems must be addressed in parallel with policing. Without parallel development no amount of progress in policing is sustainable. Vetting of corrupt, politicized officials must be addressed earnestly and urgently, as very visible signs of governmental commitment to change.

Predicting the future of policing in Haiti is no simple task. On the positive side, the major donors seem of one mind in terms of the challenges and strategies, and seem determined to stay the course over time. But we know there will be no magic solution and no quick fix. A new emerging plan will not look much different from plans that have been tabled before.

What remains an uncertain variable in the formula is the political will of the new Government of Haiti, a will wrapped transparently and characterized by commitment to fundamental justice reform, establishing the rule of law, addressing human rights issues, and tackling systemic corruption. Without it, no amount of resources or training, time or effort, will be enough.

A government committed to change will encourage donors, establish a basis for public confidence, and set standards of behaviour across the public sector. There will be no sustainable change in policing, or any other sector for that matter, without political will as the key in the lock. A Préval-led government demonstrated certain progress in the past. It must be quickly replicated and built upon. If justice is indeed the foundation of sustainable development in all sectors, the future of those Haitians who truly need our assistance depends on it.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Beer.

Mr. Pétillon, did you have a presentation?

Mr. Yves Pétillon (Program Director, Haiti, Cuba and Dominican Republic Americas Branch, Canadian International Development Agency): No, it will be Madame Laporte.

The Chair: All right, we will go into the first round of questions.

Mr. Patry, five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Patry: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

First, I want to thank the representatives from CIDA and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Social Development for its sustained involvement in Haiti, as well as for the professionalism demonstrated by RCMP officers and police officers from across Canada. During my visit, I was able to see the extremely positive impact of their involvement. I wanted to tell you that officially.

My first question is for Ms. Laporte or Mr. Pétillon. I will come back to Mr. Beer later.

[*English*]

I have some other questions afterwards.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Préval has just been elected. He has appointed Jacques Edouard Alexis as prime minister, who will have the difficult task of forming the new government and presenting his vision for the country's future to both Houses.

Given that the party led by Mr. Préval has a minority in both Houses and that no political party has a majority in either House, do you believe that the newly elected political class has the majority required to set aside political differences and truly support Haiti's development?

We can develop all sorts of strategies, be it to reduce poverty, restart the economy, reinforce security or anything else until the cows come home, but without the cooperation of the newly elected political class, there can be no progress.

What is your opinion on this?

● (1710)

Ms. Suzanne Laporte: Thank you for your question. This goes right to the heart of the matter, meaning this country's transformation. You are correct, Mr. Patry, to ask what the political class will do.

I accompanied the Governor General to the inauguration of President Préval. During our four-day visit, we had the opportunity to meet with him on a number of occasions, as well as with other members, and we clearly heard a great deal about this will, this desire to begin a process of national reconciliation, dialogue, not only among the political class, but also with civil society. Our Governor General also delivered this message, and she encouraged Haitians to participate in this reconciliation.

I understand that the Préval government wants to begin a process of Estates General in the coming months, in order to strengthen a common vision for a major development project over a 25-year period.

Furthermore, in order to help the political class mature, CIDA has already committed along with the Parliamentary Centre here to help train newly elected representatives. Many of them have never been members before, they have never been elected, and they need to understand to some extent the democratic process and their role. They need the tools to analyze information and research subjects so that their interventions are not only anecdotal but rather based on disciplined work.

So, there is the political will, a process will be implemented with the Estates General, and, third, CIDA is providing assistance to the newly elected members.

The Chair: Ms. Laporte, you mentioned the 2004-2006 Interim Cooperation Framework that has just been extended until the end of December 2007. Truly, this is an excellent decision.

What is your assessment of the impact of this cooperation framework over the past three years? Do you feel that very positive measures are being supported and that this is truly benefiting Haiti?

Ms. Suzanne Laporte: This framework has been in place for approximately two years. The donors have committed to providing a little more than one million dollars US. In fact, the international community has committed even more. Quite recently, I went to Brasilia with Mr. Van Loan to take part in a donor conference. We had confirmation that over $764 million had already been paid out.

Of course, the impacts on people's everyday lives are not so clear. People cannot see yet the impact on their wallets. However, this framework has created a solid foundation, including institutional reform. Work on infrastructure has already begun. In any case, it is impossible to expect to build the country in two years.

In my opinion, a common vision and a commitment are what is essential. Important objectives have received support. The international community and MINUSTAH have worked hard to ensure that the elections would take place and would be transparent. They were delayed over four times. Already, this important step bodes well for the future.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Laporte.

Madame Lalonde.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Good day, Ms. Laporte. I am going to put your speech in a safe place, particularly the beginning. That way we won't forget it.

I want to refer to the assessment report that the Canadian International Development Agency published in 2003, since you talked a lot about past initiatives. According to that report, the targets were not reached, because of the political climate in Haiti, the lack of will shown by the Aristide government and the excessive scattering of Canadian programs in Haiti.

In my opinion, the announced funding is insufficient, even if we consider the overall contribution being made by the international community. The report also states that Canada's contribution can be described as marginal, given the scope and depth of the problems. I believe that this also applies to the overall contribution.

It is not a matter of providing funds over which we would have no control. However, do you not believe that now, because there is a real government and not a transitional government in place, the entire international community involved — and, in passing, it should be expanded — should invest more? Haiti cannot be allowed to fail. It now needs the time and the means.

Mr. Beer, you are talking about security, but how do you see the disarmament? Do you agree with the ICG plan?

● (1715)

Ms. Suzanne Laporte: Ms. Lalonde, I want to thank my team, which worked hard to prepare this presentation. I think that you raised a fundamental point when you mentioned political will, the lessons learned and the right timing. Aristide was a big disappointment. In my opinion, when he came to power, the entire community rallied behind him. In fact, we had taken a positive position with regard to this new leader. However, he completely disappointed us.

The newly elected president, Mr. Préval, had already served and had not left the country. He is the only president to be re-elected.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: So this is positive.

Ms. Suzanne Laporte: He is the only one to have completed his term in office to have remained in the country, returned to his community and to have contributed to development. Already, this gives us an idea of his will and love for Haiti. We are not yet familiar with all his ministers, but he is surrounding himself with a competent technical team.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: So, you think they...

Ms. Suzanne Laporte: He is actively seeking competent individuals throughout the Haitian diaspora to rebuild the country. To me, this indicates very strong will.

It is clear now that he also has a very long-term vision. I think he showed great maturity when he said that he would attend the donor conference and present his social appeasement plan. He knows that security is important and that this plan will respond to the needs of all Haitians, not only those in urban centres—you discussed this earlier—but also everyone throughout Haiti, in all communities.

The World Bank and donor countries are currently working with him and his government to develop a long-term anti-poverty strategy. Therefore, obviously, in July, we will have an opportunity to reinforce the Interim Cooperation Framework, thereby providing a sufficient period of approximately 18 months to develop a long-term strategy. It will not be a strategy decided by donor countries, but rather by the Haitian government in consultation with Haitians.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Are you prepared to invest additional funds?

Ms. Suzanne Laporte: The government will have to make that decision.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: But that is your recommendation.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Laporte.

Mr. Beer, yes.

C/Supt David Beer: The question was asked some minutes ago and I don't know if I jotted it down correctly.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: It was concerning disarmament.

[*English*]

C/Supt David Beer: I'm trying to find a polite way to answer the question. I served as police commissioner in Haiti last year. Frankly, the interim Haitian government of the day was preoccupied with other priorities. It was not interested in the disarmament program that was being offered by the UN, and at the same time, the UN didn't have sufficient resources on the ground to press home the resolve that was necessary to make it happen.

Soon, when it was apparent that progress wasn't being made, the focus operationally, administratively, and in terms of preparedness went towards the elections and the entire notion of disarmament, immobilization, and reintegration of military resources fell aside. That's the short story.

Over the long term, disarmament will be an extremely difficult problem in Haiti, simply because there are so many separate factions and groups who have armed themselves, both legally and illegally. Private security institutions have replaced or filled the gap created by the absence of legitimate security forces in the country. So over the long term, disarmament will be very difficult, and to be honest, I don't think the Haitian government will focus on disarmament as one of their major priorities.

● (1720)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Beer.

Mr. Van Loan.

Mr. Peter Van Loan: The question I keep asking people is this, and if you want to comment on it, either of you, I invite you to do that. In looking at the several interventions by Canada, what have we done wrong or poorly over time? Obviously we have not yet met with positive results, and we're trying to examine, through our exercise, whether those interventions are of value.

I think we just heard something from you, Superintendent Beer, on that.

In your report, Ms. Laporte, you say: “CIDA has gradually had to withdraw from these initiatives”—these were the 1994-2002 ones—“owing to the Haitian authorities' lack of political will to deal with the problem of reforming the security sector. Politicization and increasing corruption caused CIDA to terminate its bilateral programming in the justice sector in 1999 and the police sector in 2001”.

What we keep hearing from people is that the biggest thing we've done wrong has been disengaging in the past, that we have to stay in for the long term. Is this an example of that? Was it a mistake to disengage when there was a lack of political will in 1999 and in 2001? Was it a mistake then? If it wasn't, what do we do if we face the same kinds of problems of politicization, interference, or lack of political will to move with reforms in the future? How should we respond?

The Chair: We'll start with Ms. Laporte or Mr. Beer, either way.

Ms. Suzanne Laporte: Okay, I'll go first.

There are judgment calls and very difficult choices to make. I think we have to balance the notion of continuity, ensuring that we're not in a stop-and-go mode with the notion of accountability and the showing of probity in the management of the resources given to a government.

When CIDA withdrew in 2001, there were four basic conditions that pushed the agency in that direction. First of all, it was clearly evident that there was no political will on the part of the President at the time. For example, he named his driver the chief of the police force. The chief of palace security is now in prison in the United States.

Secondly, there was no budget line for the police force. How was this financed? There were examples of obvious corruption. Could we continue using Canadian taxpayers' money under these conditions? I think the judgment at the time was an appropriate one.

So we need some basic elements. We are observing today that some of these elements are there. We hope they will continue, and it is clearly something we have to monitor.

The current director general of the police force is a highly professional individual. Commissioner Muir, who replaced Commissioner Beer, has indicated so himself, and that director general is actually surrounded by bodyguards because his life is in constant danger from some of the actions he has taken to reduce corruption and imprison some very senior police officials. Indeed, we are more confident that these measures are there at this point.

Mr. Peter Van Loan: And in the future?

Ms. Suzanne Laporte: In the future, in terms of....?

Mr. Peter Van Loan: If you start seeing the same kind of...I'll call it backsliding—

Ms. Suzanne Laporte: We constantly monitor the progress and actions of the police force. With the renewal of the MINUSTAH mandate, we are going to work with our partners, and we share information to ensure that before we move ahead on our new programming, the conditions of success and probity are there.

● (1725)

The Chair: Mr. Beer.

C/Supt David Beer: I think the issues today make the challenge of developing the police more onerous than the first time—albeit Haiti had never previously had a civilian police. We now have a situation in which we essentially have to clean out the wound before it's going to heal. So there has to be a very significant vetting process. There is a number of fairly high-ranking people who have to be vetted from the organization.

We need a stronger organization within the inspector general's office, and in fact this has been identified in current planning. The vetting of some of these people will be a test of the government's will to make substantive change. I echo Madame Laporte's assessment of the current director general of police, Mr. Mario Andresol. To give emphasis to a CIDA program that was run in the 1990s, he is a graduate of our middle and senior management program, which was designed through CIDA. In fact, it's a program that the Haitian national police have asked to be reinstated.

But the challenge will be to clean out the organization before it can be healed, in order to ensure that from a fiscal perspective, the government is prepared to sustain what we can develop—albeit I think a previous witness talked about a future of 8,000 police officers. That doesn't include a border guard customs service, which will be part of the federal police organization, increasing significantly the resources for the inspector general's office—plus the personal security for government officials. So it may well be that we are talking 10,000 to 12,000 people being necessarily to do all of the related security functions within a country that hopes to have all these pillars under one umbrella.

It will take a significant amount of time and a significant amount of money. We need to have the donors committed in terms of staying the course, working collaboratively, because no one donor—and certainly Canada, and I include the United States, with its deep pockets, in this—is prepared to take this on as a singular project. We have to do it collaboratively.

Our contributions have to be well timed and well coordinated. We have to put accountability mechanisms into place and, frankly, hold the Haitian government's feet to the fire on some of these issues. They must lead, they must be partners, but in any partnership, in any partner arrangement, there are obligations on both sides of the fence, and we have to see those carried through.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Superintendent.

Madame McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I appreciate the opportunity today to hear from you as witnesses. There are so many questions that could be asked. I guess I'd like to start by raising a question with Superintendent Beer.

It appears, from time to time—and I think it goes like this—that MINUSTAH and CivPol have been in Haiti for some time now, and it seems to be very widely acknowledged, and the evidence is all there, that there is horrendous corruption with the Haitian National Police. There have been many criticisms directed at MINUSTAH and at CivPol for complicity—and I say that in parenthesis—suggesting that the sins and omissions and unacceptable actions of the Haitian National Police have been sort of tolerated, or overlooked, or whatever.

What is the structural relationship between MINUSTAH, CivPol, and the Haitian National Police? In the instance of abuses under use of force, the allegations seem very severe, all the way to very targeted killings of political adversaries, and so on. What is the accountability structure? What is the capacity to actually deal with those kinds of situations that arise? If there is insufficiency in the mandate, or the reach, or the oversight of the Haitian National Police, then how can we be certain that we're discharging our responsibilities in a way that is consistent with the rule of law with our objectives? That's the drift of my question.

The second thing is around the disarmament process. It's quite alarming to imagine, when you think of 170,000 small arms at large, in people's hands, that there would have been very little interest in this process by the provisional government. What indication is there at this point, and what needs to be done to try to increase or intensify the commitment and the mandate to be able to move forward in a really effective way with disarmament? It seems pretty obvious that, if that doesn't happen, it's going to be awfully difficult to see anything but continuing lawlessness.

● (1730)

The Chair: Mr. Beer.

C/Supt David Beer: Those are two very valid questions. Perhaps I could address the second first.

I've spent over three years serving in Haiti, and during that time—and I don't want to understate what I think is perhaps a problem—I've always questioned the figures about the extent of arms in Haiti. During the 1990s, when there was a large, significant multinational force, and in 2004 when there was a large multinational force, during all the time I spent there, there was never once a seizure of a large cache of weapons. I don't think there were ever any more than a dozen weapons, at any one time in any investigation or any military or police action, ever seized. I question exactly how many weapons are there. But that's an aside.

Secondly, I don't want to downplay the notion of disarmament, but I truly feel that the Haitian government will ignore it, to a certain degree. They will go through the motions, as we want to go through the motions, but I'm not sure it's the first thing on the list of priorities that we need to address. So many of these things, within the context of Haitian law, are in the hands of security companies, etc., which from one day to the next could be illegal, or could be gang members who the next day come to work and are part of a private security force.

I don't know how we can do the disarmament. I'm leading into a response to the first question.

The security situation, as difficult as it was in the most recent year I spent there and in this past year, has basically been focused within an area of about six square kilometres in downtown Port-au-Prince. This includes the roads to and from the airport from the downtown core, the port area, and from the ocean towards the central core of Port-au-Prince, perhaps two kilometres. This is the main corridor for the economy of the country. It's where the vast majority of the banditry is going on, where the vast majority of the kidnappings are going on. It's the area surrounding Cité Soleil and areas such as Fort National that are also tangent to *bidonvilles* or slum areas in that area that have historically been controlled by the gangs.

By and large, the security situation in the country has not been problematic, but because that area of Port-au-Prince is the economic pump, if you will, of the country, everything that went on in that particular area was accentuated and put under a microscope. As surprising as it is, one kidnapping of a key individual would bring the city to a halt. There would be general strikes. The media would use the opportunity to criticize the presence of MINUSTAH, criticize the effectiveness of the interim government.

I'm not trying to downplay the security situation, because God knows, the people who worked for me in downtown Port-au-Prince came under fire every day I was there, for 365 days. I went to bed every night waking up thinking I might have lost somebody—every day. It was very difficult.

Dealing with that situation and being in an environment, first of all, where there is no justice system, where the police mission was what we would call a hybrid mission—we didn't have executive authority, weren't the police of jurisdiction, and had no justice system in which to operate—you find yourself working very close to what the military call “rules of engagement”, which is totally contrary to the way police operate in civil society.

● (1735)

We were there with a dual chapter 6, almost chapter 7 mandate of the UN charter, with, on the one hand, development responsibilities, where we were required to demonstrate, mentor and advise, and train the Haitian National Police on how to operate within a justice system, within a justice sector, to be part of that system, to be accountable to that system. On the other hand, over 50% of the people who were working under my responsibility as foreign police units were coming under fire and in fact were doing battle on many days in a very densely populated environment, where they were expected to essentially work under rules of engagement as opposed to the rule of law and to exercise a use of force policy, which is common within the civilian police. It was an extremely difficult situation for the people on the ground, for the management of MINUSTAH, on the one hand.

Secondly, we had the whole notion of very corrupt elements of the Haitian National Police. We could talk about that all day as being the largest organized gang within the country and responsible for the vast majority of kidnappings, etc.

If the truth be known, for the vast majority of the engagements, if you will, with gangs, with the criminal element, where human rights abuse would have been called into question, where we would have been under the microscope of human rights organizations, and correctly so, we couldn't get in to investigate. You would be under fire. You couldn't go and knock on doors and take statements like you would here, in a post-major event or a post-major crime investigation. You'd go back into the *bidonville* or the neighbourhood where you had that engagement and you would be under fire again in a guerilla war-like environment. There was no investigation to be done.

On the other side of the coin, there were certain situations where we pushed very diligently and actually started investigations, like the large prison escape in the spring of last year. We strongly suspected that was orchestrated by elements within the cocaine trafficking community and with the complicity of the corrections people at the prison and the police. An investigation was conducted, but because we were not the police of jurisdiction, you basically made your inquiries and you poked and you prodded and you took the police along with you in situations like that and in situations that were under investigation, where the police were considered to be responsible or were being accused of human rights abuse.

The long and the short of it is that we could get investigations so far and then we couldn't get them past the minister of justice. We couldn't get any more assistance from the inspector general's office. We were simply back to the whole notion that we'll just push it under the rug; we'll let it go.

The minister of justice whom we worked with—or at least whom I worked with when I was there—actually did nothing. He was not wilfully blind, but he was participating in the blocking, if you will, of the course of justice by simply doing nothing.

● (1740)

Ms. Alexa McDonough: I'm just going to take a few—

The Chair: No, no more questions. We're going to very quickly go to Mr. Patry. We were on new ground there, so I didn't want to interrupt him as he was going along.

Mr. Patry, one quick question.

C/Supt David Beer: I'm sorry, I used up the entire 12 minutes.

Mr. Bernard Patry: It's a little along the same line as Ms. McDonough's question.

We know that MINUSTAH has been operating in Haiti since June 2004. In a sense, its presence has been problematic and sometimes divisive. Part of the problem, I really feel, is the weakness of the mandate. Security Council resolution 1542 now requires that MINUSTAH work alongside the HNP on all issues involving policing. That's a problem. Because of this, a number of questions that people talk to us about raise the neutrality of the MINUSTAH, as it has been seen to be in league with the HNP.

Knowing that MINUSTAH's mandate is coming up in August of this year, my question is the following. If the RCMP and Foreign Affairs—I don't know which department—made some representations with some other donor country—I don't know which UN representative—to, in a certain sense, modify the mandate of MINUSTAH to stop this, to separate MINUSTAH from the police, from the HNP, because it seems that the problem, the corruption you talk about.... Do you have any recommendations? Is there anything you would like to see to improve the mandate of MINUSTAH, in a sense?

C/Supt David Beer: There was discussion in the spring of 2005 when the MINUSTAH mandate was renewed. There was consideration given behind the scenes, if you will, to giving executive authority to MINUSTAH. I took the position then, and I take the position now, that executive authority must come within the context of the justice sector. You cannot have executive authority without a justice system that's up and running. Now, whether it's the Haitian one or an international one that's in place, the police cannot take action, go out and make an arrest, put someone in jail, knowing that person may never get to see legal counsel, may never get to see a judge, or answer their charge, because you've then committed a human rights violation by simply doing your job in that particular circumstance.

I would say, sir, that the same situation applies. There must be 5,000, 7,000, or 8,000 United Nations police officers there if we're going to have executive authority for the country. And there has to be a judicial system in place, whether it's a Haitian justice system or an international justice system in order to make that happen.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Goldring, and then Madame Bourgeois.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Thank you for your submission today; it's been very enlightening.

Mr. Beer, just to carry on with this part of the discussion, it was mentioned when we had our discussions in Haiti that one of the difficulties with corruption in the police force was that many of them aren't paid, that wages and salaries are nonexistent or very sporadic, leading you to believe that part of the corruption is simply from people trying to put food on the table for their own family. Of course, the toughest law that you break in your lifetime is always the first one, and the next are easier and easier. Is there a certain element of truth to that or not?

Also, regarding the resources that you have, I note that you mentioned there are 65 Canadian police officers there, out of a commitment of 100. There were 70 or 75 when we were there, leading to a comment being made that it's continually understaffed and that there's an absence of full commitment. Of course that leads to the question, what about the other contributing partners to this issue? Are they also shortchanging their resources by one-third?

As you were saying, I would think it would be an untenable circumstance to not be able to carry out your total policing duties because of a lack of a firm and fully detailed mandate to do so. I guess I would repeat that it sounds as though that's absolutely essential to have established, even if goes to the extent of the judiciary, too, having some international component to be able to cope with that. Is this really not what's continuing the problem in Haiti? In other words, is this not the background to why there is the large Cité Soleil area that is held by others and the UN can't control? When you're talking about resources, if you had the exact setup that you wished to have in your police and judiciary, would Cité Soleil simply not be there?

Maybe you could help me on some of these.

● (1745)

C/Supt David Beer: We haven't spoken about the size of the military component. We could talk about that, but I would like to focus on the police resources. Today I think there are very nearly 2,000 additional formed police units that were added during the election period.

Understand that over 50% of the UN police resources on the ground are what are called formed police units; these are order maintenance units, essentially paramilitary police officers, who are there for an operational purpose—to provide security. They provide no capacity for development assistance. There are probably only a handful who speak French among the 1,000. They come from Jordan, they come from Pakistan, they come from China, they come from Nepal. They are formed police units, a paramilitary group that works closely on the streets of the urban areas to provide security. They offer no development capacity in terms of the UN.

Among the remaining 900 or 1,000, not all of them speak French. In fact probably only about 60% of the remaining 900 speak any French whatsoever—and this is a guess based on the reality when I was there, which I know hasn't improved significantly. A good portion come from countries who have very generously contributed these people to the UN mission, but frankly a lot of them don't have a whole lot more experience, training, or knowledge than the Haitians whom they are expected to assist.

That's the reality of the UN police mission in Haiti. Frankly, it's the reality of the UN mission in many places.

The Chair: Very quickly, Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Would it be fair to characterize our shortfall of one-third as having a dramatic influence on it? Could it help considerably if we were up to a full commitment, because of the numbers of Canadians who speak French, if not Creole?

C/Supt David Beer: We're actually one of the few bilingual components, so we can speak both with the people...who are neither francophone nor anglophone.

It's important, and we in the RCMP have to work harder to get that commitment up. We are in a transition period right now. Historically in the past we have deployed to peace missions on a mission-by-mission basis and on a very ad hoc basis, which was an enormous strain on our domestic resources. We've now been working with government over the past year to find permanent funding for peacekeeping operations. That process is moving along very rapidly, but we are in a period of transition, and we have to pull up our socks and we have to make the commitment to get the people on the ground during this period of transition.

● (1750)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Beer.

The final question is to Madame Bourgeois.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for being here today, ladies and gentlemen. Your presentation was most interesting.

I would first like to congratulate you, Mr. Beer, for your frankness in explaining the problems faced by police officers or members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police over there. I had asked a question of Mr. Thompson, who preceded you, about why we did not have any conclusive results. I do not find you very positive, so I will direct my questions to Ms. Laporte.

Ms. Laporte, I am familiar with the work done by CIDA employees in the field, because I was the critic for the Bloc Québécois on CIDA, and I would not want you to take my questions as reflecting poorly on CIDA. I simply want to understand what happened.

Impunity and corruption have long existed in Haiti. I have a friend who went there in 2000 to do a doctoral thesis and who came back saying that the system is rotten and impunity is omnipresent. In the place where he was living, there were about 5,000 police officers for eight million inhabitants. People describe the situation as horrific.

Since CIDA has been in Haiti for a long time and since I know its workers there well enough to know that usually they are very well informed about what is happening on the ground, why is it that CIDA nevertheless continue to invest in Haiti? It disengaged gradually and has less and less of a financial investment, but it has nevertheless invested in this country. Did we not have an obligation to produce results?

In an announcement on May 1, 2006, the Minister said that CIDA would be investing $48 million in Haiti. Twenty million dollars will go to the local development program to help communities assume responsibility for socio-economic development, and $5 million will be used to support democracy.

There are two major problems in Haiti. First, people must have food. So the first problem is agriculture. The second is security.

Is it not strange to spend $20 million on socio-economic development to promote small business and only $5 million on democracy, when we know that this is such a big problem? You were saying earlier that there was no development possible without security, and vice versa.

What official guarantees do we have that this time this will work? Earlier, you gave some guarantees, but are there any others? Do we have any guarantees from the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the UN, or do people simply assume that Préval will take certain actions?

I noticed that it was a joint statement by CIDA and the RCMP. Can any pressure be applied to ensure that this works?

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Bourgeois, for an excellent speech.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: I had four questions. I had to group them together.

[*English*]

The Chair: Madame Laporte and Mr. Beer, Mr. Superintendent.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Suzanne Laporte: On your question regarding corruption, there is no doubt that we are constantly aware of these situations, and of the culture of impunity that exists there. This culture is changing very gradually. I think that for the time being, the approach is very gradual. I referred to the fact that the director general of the national police force has dealt with some difficult cases. We think that others will appear. You will appreciate that in the interest of the success of the operations, we do not announce them beforehand. He must use very high-level models to send out strong signals to the rest of the population that this culture of impunity is changing and will disappear someday. I think these are very promising steps for the future.

It goes without saying that in managing its projects and programming, CIDA has risk-reduction measures for each project. We have follow-up project officers and control procedures for financing to ensure that the money is spent for the purpose intended and that it does not end up in the pockets of individuals who should not get this money. So we have some very effective financial management procedures in place, together with follow-up officers and financial controls.

We have an obligation to produce results for all of our projects. When we look at the country as a whole, there are a number of factors over which we have no immediate and direct control. We must proceed by means of a political dialogue with other members of the community. I am pleased that you referred to the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and others.

In order to provide budget support to the government for something in its budget, we need mechanisms to demonstrate that money is for the salaries of police officers, to take this example. The same is true in the case of teachers who were not paid for a number of months. Before we consider whether or not we are going to fund a program, control procedures must be put in place.

With respect to local development, the amount of $48 million does not reflect our entire cooperation effort. I think you will be hearing from Ms. Verner, the minister, who will be appearing before you next week. She will be talking to you about cooperation generally.

CIDA is focused mainly on four areas: governance, democracy and the essential needs in healthcare and education. We are also doing a great deal of work in the area of economic recovery, with credit unions being set up for access to credit, in order to set the economy on its feet. We are also working in the area of electricity infrastructure. We work both with the government and with civil society. I do not think these are choices that have to be made. We have to look at the entire situation and determine which areas are the most promising. The donor community is making a concerted effort to determine where our value added lies. Thus, local development was necessary.

I believe that the speaker who preceded me emphasized the importance of rural development. We don't want to focus all of our efforts on Port-au-Prince. We must take the regions into account.

Are there any guarantees? The guarantees are what they are. We take steps and make provisions to ensure that funds are managed properly. We carry out evaluations to correct the situation when difficulties arise. It would be presumptuous of me to provide absolute guarantees. This is part of the political dialogue and the administrative measures in place.

● (1755)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Laporte.

I think that pretty well wraps up our meeting.

I have just one quick question to Mr. Beer. Does my memory serve me correctly, that perhaps one year ago we suffered the loss of an RCMP officer in Haiti?

C/Supt David Beer: Mr. Bourque was actually a contractor. He was part of the election security group of 25 who came down.

The Chair: He was retired RCMP?

C/Supt David Beer: He was a retired RCMP officer. They were contracted by CIDA and Foreign Affairs through CANADEM.

Yes, you're correct. He was killed there.

The Chair: Is that the only loss we have incurred directly because of our involvement there?

C/Supt David Beer: It's the only loss Canada has ever received on a police peace mission anywhere in the world.

The Chair: All right.

Thank you so much for being here. Also, thank you for staying a little longer than we were originally scheduled to go. Thank you to the committee.

We are adjourned.

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