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—
Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

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•(1555)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

Welcome to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, meeting number 36. We're going to change the agenda very slightly. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are studying Canada's role in complex international interventions that involve multiple foreign policy instruments, focusing on Canada's efforts in Haiti.

We want to very quickly ratify or adopt the draft report. You have had the opportunity to take a look at the draft report.

We have very precisely made the changes that were requested at the last meeting. I know I talked to a number of people just before the meeting, and it looks good.

I have three questions to ask. First of all, is it the will of the committee to adopt the draft report, and to have the chair present it to the House of Commons as Canada's international policy?

Madame Barbot.

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ): Mr. Chairman, first, I want to comment on the last-minute changes in the schedule, which are completely unacceptable.

Last time, a committee was supposed to meet at 9:00 a.m., and we were not told that the schedule had been changed. Today, we were supposed to do this work at the end of the meeting, but we're being asked to deal with it at the beginning of the meeting. Personally, I have a problem with this and I would like you, in future, to be more attentive to this type of thing.

[English]

The Chair: Madame Barbot, there was no intention to cause any problem. I asked if it would be possible to ratify this. If we can do this at the beginning of the meeting, then we have the ability to table it in the House tomorrow.

I'm sure you're aware, as are all other members, that there is a rumour that we may adjourn tomorrow, and I think one of the wishes of the committee was that this be tabled before Christmas.

Before we made this decision, we asked all members if we could do this now, and that's why they tried to get hold of you to do it.

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Mr. Chairman, last time, a steering committee meeting was to begin at 9:00 a.m., but we were never told that the meeting had been cancelled. So, a number of us came, and then someone came to tell us that the meeting had been cancelled.

With regard to today's meeting, we had been informed that we would deal with this item at the end of the meeting. The fact that we were called at the last minute is unacceptable. I understand that people agreed, but personally, I do not agree with doing things this way and this is inconveniencing me.

With regard to the document, a number of things need to be corrected. Once again, there are a number of mistakes in the French text. I will quickly mention them. Then, if you like, I can meet with the clerk or the individual responsible, so as not to further delay the committee.

First, the corrections concern the quotes.

[English]

The Chair: There are three questions I was going to ask. The first one was asked.

The second was whether the chair, with the clerk and the analysts, would be authorized to make any necessary editorial or grammatical changes. That would then allow you the opportunity to meet with them.

How many changes are there, Madame?

•(1600)

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: There are a number of spelling mistakes in the French translation. There are also misquotes, but we could indeed go over this with them.

A major correction needs to be made where the report states that Canada is the third largest contributor to Haiti, whereas, elsewhere in the text, it states that Canada is the second largest. This is quite significant, and it needs to be corrected.

Finally, with regard to recommendations, I would like to make a general proposal. I would like us to separate the recommendations to make things clearer. This would not modify their substance in any way whatsoever, but there would be more recommendations, which would ensure a more appropriate use of the document.

I think that this could be done with the clerk's assistance.

[English]

The Chair: Are you making reference to a new recommendation or to an amendment to an existing one?

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: No. There are no new recommendations. We simply need to separate the subjects within the recommendation, which would result I believe in 14 recommendations.

[English]

The Chair: I am being told by the clerk that it has been done, although it may not be in the draft document together with the recommendations.

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: I think that we're not talking about the same thing. Perhaps she's referring to the list that should be appended at the end of the document.

For example, I would like the first recommendation, which deals with two topics, to be split into two. This would not change the substance.

[English]

The Chair: You're saying there would be two paragraphs here?

You're right.

Madame Barbot, as we're in a public meeting and this is a confidential draft report we can't discuss at this point, maybe what we'll do, if it isn't changing the content of the recommendation, is suggest that you get together with our researchers, and we will ask Madam McDonough, Mr. Patry, and Mr. Goldring to take a look at the content.

On the first question—whether it is the will of the committee to adopt the draft report and have the chair present it in the House—are we agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: On the second matter, that the chair, with the clerk and analysts, be authorized to make any necessary editorial grammatical changes, are we agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: That pursuant to Standing Order 109 the committee requests a government response, are we agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you. That finishes that.

When would you be able to meet with Madame Barbot?

It will be after the meeting then, if we want to table it tomorrow. If we can't, we can't, but we will have tried, as I said we would.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: If we can, we can.

The Chair: That's what I'm saying. It's up to you then, because they're willing to meet after the meeting.

I've already made mention that the other report on Madam McDonough's motion will be tabled tomorrow.

Pursuant to the order of reference of Wednesday, September 20, 2006, Bill C-293, an act respecting the provision of development assistance abroad, we'll continue in this exercise of clause-by-clause. We will proceed on clause 4.

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): We didn't accept clause 3.

I want to ask on a point of order if I can come back, with unanimous consent, to clause 2.

The Chair: Before we begin, Mr. Patry has asked if there is unanimous consent to come back to clause 2. We have already said one line one time, but if there is unanimous consent we could come back to clause 2.

May I ask, Mr. Patry, in what regard is it? Is it to change the general content of the amendment? How big an amendment would you like to see?

• (1605)

Mr. Bernard Patry: What I want to do is quite easy. The last time, when clause 2 was accepted, I was not here. We replaced, according to NDP-1, lines 9 and 10 on page 1. Also, we totally replaced lines 12 to 17. To me this is much too restrictive: "reduction in a manner that is consistent with Canadian values. Canadian foreign policy and sustainable development and that promotes". To me it's so restrictive because, in a sense, anything could happen that's in any country in the world. There could be an earthquake or something, and if CIDA wanted to give money for an earthquake in any country, they would be unable to do so because it wouldn't be for sustainable development; it would be for humanitarian purposes at that time. To me that's too restrictive.

Also on (b), replacing lines 12 to 17 with "Canadian official development assistance abroad shall be defined exclusively with regard to this value", I must say, to me, it is too restrictive. Instead of "exclusively" it should be "primarily". It should be willing to give latitude to the Minister of CIDA in a certain sense. This is why I wanted to come back to this. If you agree or disagree with this, we'll see what we'll do.

The Chair: Thank you.

Before we go to debate we want to be sure we have unanimous consent to go back to clause 2. It has already carried, but with unanimous consent we can go back. Do we have that unanimous consent?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Before we even do unanimous consent, where do we need to go?

Mr. Bernard Patry: I want to change it because it was changed when I was not here. If we don't agree, it's too important to me and I will vote against this bill as it is right now.

The Chair: Do we have unanimous consent?

Mr. Bernard Patry: We could go to clause 3 and discuss it after, but clause 2 needs to be changed. If we don't do it now we'll do it further—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Patry. I don't want to get into debate until we understand whether we have unanimous consent to go to clause 2.

Mr. McKay, you were signifying no.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): We went over this for an hour a couple of weeks ago. The issue of whether the minister can give emergency assistance is already taken care of by clause 5. So I don't see the basis for this.

The Chair: Without going into debate, Mr. Patry, we do not have unanimous consent.

Mr. Bernard Patry: That's fine. I'll vote against it.

Thank you.

The Chair: All right. We'll go now to clause 4.

Mr. Bernard Patry: What about clause 3, the definitions?

The Chair: Clause 3 was stood at the last meeting. We'll come back to it later.

Mr. Bernard Patry: How can you come back later for the definitions? You say we are going clause by clause. Where's clause 3? When are we going to adopt clause 3? Before we accept clauses 4, 5, and the other clauses, we need to know what the definitions are. I want to go to the definitions.

The Chair: I'm just referencing the legislative clerk. Legislatively, I've been told we go through the content of the bill first and then come back. As we go through the bill it may change the summary, or we may want to amend the interpretation clause.

Mr. Bernard Patry: I think you're doing it upside down, Mr. Chair. If we want to get the definition of a competent minister we need to do it now, not after we accept development assistance in clause 4. It's the opposite. We get the definition, and after that we go clause by clause.

• (1610)

The Chair: At the last meeting we stood clause 3, so we would need unanimous consent to go back to it.

Mr. Bernard Patry: I've never heard of needing unanimous consent. How can we go back to definitions at the end of the bill if we don't know what we're talking about by definitions?

The Chair: We can go to clause 2. We can do the summary. As we go through these clause by clause, we ask our legislative clerks and legislative parliamentary helpers to tell us the proper way to go through a bill. They have suggested that this clause be stood until the end. Then we can deal with it. If there are any subsequent changes to the bill as it's gone through, they may change the intent.

We brought that forward at the last meeting and it was accepted. So my feeling is that you can challenge the chair and question the way we did it, but we would have to change it through unanimous consent.

Point of order.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: What my colleague is talking about is going to this bill. We made decisions on those clauses the last time, but we didn't make a decision on this clause. So when you say we are going back and we need unanimous consent, I don't think so. All we're doing is following a procedure.

I can understand the one before that, where we made decisions inside the clauses not to revisit one sentence and all that, as you stated. So why would you now say it's out of order?

The Chair: At the last meeting, we stood clause 3 until we complete the rest of the bill. Once it has been stood, that means you go through the rest of the bill and then come back and address clause 3. You're now saying we should go back to clause 3, and I'm willing to do that if there's unanimous consent to do so.

Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: We're just going back to the same stuff we've already talked about.

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): At least we can get the bill moving forward and finally deal with what is contentious.

(On clause 3—*Interpretation*)

The Chair: We have consent to go back to clause 3. Clause 3 is the interpretation of the bill, the definitions.

Mr. Bernard Patry: Mr. Chair, can we have the departmental officials who would help us sitting at the table, please?

The Chair: It's a private member's bill. The department isn't going to help Mr. McKay on his bill.

An hon. member: That's the understatement of the week.

The Chair: Mr. McKay, you're sitting at the table alone.

For clause 3, the first amendment is NDP-2, on page 2. Madam McDonough, would you bring forward your amendment?

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): The thing we all need to remind ourselves of while we anxiously try to move this forward is that this whole effort represents a broad consensus by all of us to try to move this forward, if I can just insert that.

The proposed amendment simply inserts a new section defining "civil society organization" in a way that is more inclusive than the one in the act that defines NGOs.

Does everyone have this? I can read it out. It was distributed several meetings ago.

• (1615)

The Chair: Everyone has the amendment here.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: The amendment proposes that clause 3 be amended by adding, after line 19, on page 1, the following:

"civil society organization" means a not-for-profit or charitable organization whose governing structure is independent of government direction, and includes, but is not limited to, registered charities, non-governmental development organizations, community groups, women's organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, trade unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions, human rights organizations and advocacy groups.

I so move.

The Chair: That's moved.

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I do understand the attempt made here to define "civil society", but on a basic concept basis, we understand "civil society" to be a broader definition. Although you put it up, if you leave it as "civil society", whatever you are trying to achieve is already there. We are not restricted. As a matter of fact, by just leaving the words "civil society" and not identifying what "civil society" is would leave broader room to get broader organizations involved. At a given time, we may not have known that they would be part of a "civil society".

So I think it would be prudent for us to go with the broader aspect of it and leave "civil society" as "civil society". Why do we need to define it? Just leave it open, and everybody can come in. More groups can come in. More representations can be made.

At times, Alexa, we may have groups that we never anticipated that could be included under a civil society. By just leaving "civil society", we will achieve the objective you are trying to achieve, which is to make it broad by just leaving it as "civil society". Why would you not just leave it as "civil society"? Why would you have difficulty with that?

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Actually, the argument you just advanced is precisely the reason why we thought making it more inclusive was the appropriate way to go. It's true that one can't always contemplate, for all time, what might evolve into an additional form of civil society. It seems to me that the point is to make it as inclusive as possible, as you've suggested. At some future date, then, one could make a change if somehow it wasn't inclusive enough.

But when I listen to your argument, it seems to support the amendment that I've put forward.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam McDonough.

Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: This is why the clerk's advice was valuable. You build an act first, then you build your definitions to supplement your act. We're going about it backwards.

The reason that "civil society organization" exists as a definition is to be able to have precise meaning for other anticipated pieces of legislation that will pass.

The Chair: Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): I think the attempt to define it really defeats the purpose of it, because while it is giving a number and a list of definitions, it also is saying "but is not limited to". In other words, the list could go on and on, when in reality you're talking about a word that is very difficult to define and is best left under its own interpretation, on its own, without trying to put a definition to it that really is not a complete definition anyway.

The Chair: I don't have as extensive a tenure here as others, but certainly one of the considerations that I've heard from other departments in other Parliaments is that when you start listing a comprehensive list like we have here, and then you miss one, they tend to say "They weren't specifically listed, so if they meant that, it

would have been there even though it says it's not limited to that". So I accept what Mr. Goldring says on that one.

Does anyone else want to comment on that amendment?

Mr. Menzies.

Mr. Ted Menzies (MacLeod, CPC): I appreciate your intent, Ms. McDonough, but that is the case. It's the same thing when any of us stand up to make a speech and we want to recognize some individuals. You can bet your bottom dollar that you'll forget one person. You're better off never to start if you realize that you might not recognize everyone.

There will be associations evolving. There will be associations and NGOs in other countries that don't have Canadian chapters. To start defining the ones that we recognize today as civil society organizations may not reflect what we're going to see in the future. I'm concerned that we may end up leaving out some that would be valuable partners.

Mr. Patry, you're the one who wanted to talk about definitions. I'd be interested in whether or not this is a concern of yours, and more so, why we're talking about the definitions first.

• (1620)

The Chair: Mr. Patry, and then Madame St-Hilaire.

[Translation]

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

I simply want to say that I fully agree with Ms. McDonough's amendment.

Following representations by different departments, including CIDA, we obtained the comments of the Department of Finance and the Department of Foreign Affairs. So, the definition of the term "civil society organization" is quite conclusive, and I think that it really includes any non-governmental organization. We need a definition. In fact, we cannot consider a bill without defining an NGO. I really think that this term encompasses all organizations that may be referred to as civil society organizations.

So I am in favour of this definition.

[English]

The Chair: Madame St-Hilaire.

[Translation]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): I want to add to what my colleague said. To reassure the government members, the word *notamment* has been included. So I think that this is all-inclusive.

Consequently, I ask that the chair call the question on the amendment.

[English]

The Chair: I'll pose the question on amendment NDP-2.

(Amendment agreed to)

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Chairman, could we go to the Bloc Québécois amendment?

[English]

The Chair: We have a second Bloc amendment to clause 3. Its reference number is 2567892. It's in regard to Canadian values.

Madame Bourgeois.

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Mr. Chairman, I move that Bill C-293, in clause 3, be amended by adding after line 19 on page 1, the following:

"Canadian values" means values of global citizenship, equity and environmental sustainability, as well as Canadian interests regarding security, prosperity, and good governance.

[English]

The Chair: This addition would appear after the definition of civil society organization.

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: I think that this addition is very respectful of what the House of Commons and the Canadian government stand for.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: I regard this as generally a friendly amendment, Chair. However, I would ask the honourable member to consider ending her Canadian values definition at the word "sustainability".

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: I fully agree.

I wasn't aware of that. So we would stop immediately after the word "sustainability". I apologize.

[English]

The Chair: So we have the friendly amendment that Bill C-293, in clause 3, be amended by adding, after the definition of civil society organization, which we've just put in, that Canadian values will mean values of global citizenship, equity, and environmental sustainability—period.

Mr. Menzies.

Mr. Ted Menzies: I have to raise some concerns here. If in fact we decide to either include the words "Canadian interests" or stop prior to them, I'm not convinced that this will cover all of the reasons, all Canadian values. We could go on and on about Canadian values. Human rights isn't in here: is that something we're not going to talk about? And we just took out security, prosperity, and good governance.

So I'm not too sure we're going in the right direction here. "Canadian interests" is very vague, but we've taken out three other points, and I'm just not sure we've covered all of these points. Is this relevant today? Is it going to be relevant in the future?

• (1625)

The Chair: Madame Bourgeois, Mr. McKay, and Mr. Goldring.

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Mr. Chairman, I simply used CIDA's definition of Canadian values.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: I always appreciate the contribution of the Bloc to Canadian values.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. John McKay: I would make the distinction between interests and values. Interests are not of relevance to this particular legislation; values are. You need only to define what is in the framework of the bill. You don't need to define everything else in addition.

That's the rationale for having in there "Canadian values", a term referenced throughout the bill.

And no, it's not an exhaustive list; it never can be.

The Chair: Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Looking at this, and seeing how we just dropped off the words "security, prosperity, and good governance", I really have the feeling that defining so narrowly the term "Canadian values" will limit it in this bill. Not only that, but what other issues that could be defining the term are not in here?

We just went through another clause where it had been mentioned in another way that Canadian values means—I'll use it in this way—such-and-such; it includes but it's not limited to. So at least if you're including and not limiting it to it, you're not narrowly defining and limiting yourself to your interpretation of Canadian values.

The Chair: Madame Bourgeois, you brought this amendment forward. Can you explain what you mean when you say "Canadian values" means values of global citizenship?"

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: When we, that is members of the Bloc Québécois and civil society organizations, had discussed this, we preferred to use CIDA's definition because this is the definition used by cooperative groups, and groups in Quebec including the Association québécoise des organismes de coopération internationale, or AQOCI. Even if we refer to Canadian values, all cooperative organizations are trying to achieve the same thing as CIDA and subscribe to this definition. That is why we chose this definition.

Now, I think you are right when you say that Canadian interests regarding security, prosperity, and good governance are on a different level. So, in terms of poverty, these are the Canadian values that prevail, for CIDA.

Mr. Goldring knows this, we talked about it often enough. We both sat together on the subcommittee, and we addressed this issue. These are CIDA's definitions, and this is what all international cooperation groups, including the AQOCI of Quebec, subscribe to. That is why I kept this definition.

[English]

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Obhrai.

•(1630)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Once again, we are attempting to define.

To be very blunt, global citizenship and equity are absolutely confusing words. I can understand environmental sustainability. That is okay. But unless we go further to define “global citizenship” and “equity”, again, we may be missing something, such as we did in the last argument in the last amendment.

Leave it open. What are you trying to say? To be very blunt with you, I don't know what global citizenship is, and I don't know what equity is. You're asking me to vote on “global citizenship”. Well, I have no concept of what global is. I don't know what equity is. I can see environmental sustainability. We need to be more definitive if you want to put Canadian values in. If you just leave Canadian values, it leaves a wide-open door, which I think is more appropriate.

The Chair: Mr. Menzies.

Mr. Ted Menzies: Madame Bourgeois, can I ask where from CIDA you get this definition? Was it from their website?

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Yes. It was in a document from CIDA. On CIDA's website, the fourth point refers to Canadian values. Perhaps someone could go and get this. It is defined there.

[English]

Mr. Ted Menzies: Thank you. I appreciate—

The Chair: To jump in, is that CIDA's definition, or do they use it on that website as a definition? There may be other definitions, such as “democratic development” or “human rights”. None of that is being mentioned here. CIDA certainly has that as part of their definition of values too. Because it's on the website, is that their comprehensive definition of Canadian values?

Mr. Menzies.

Mr. Ted Menzies: That's basically the same point I was going to make. I think if we're going to define it, we've missed a few. Because it's on the website, I'm not sure that it makes good legislation. They may have missed some on the website. Whoever posted that on the website may have missed some relevant points that might leave an entire sector of a country out of official development assistance. We're trying to make the best definitions we can with this legislation—if it becomes such. We don't want to miss anything.

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Mr. Chairman, I have proposed this amendment in the best spirit possible. So, I ask that you call the question.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Madam.

Mr. Patry was on the list, so we'll take Mr. Patry.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Patry: In the French version, it says that Canadian values mean “Values of global citizenship, equity and environmental sustainability [...]”

What if we said instead that Canadian values mean “among others”, to ensure that this is not overly restrictive? We could be forgetting some, but if we added the words “among others”, this would mean that these are some of the values.

Do you understand what I mean? I am not taking anything away from the motion. I would add the words “among others”, because we may want to add other Canadian values later. So, if we added the words “among others”, this would allow us to add other Canadian values, because it would not just be those values. There are other values too.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: But we have to make sure we understand each other correctly. I accept your view, because we should be inclusive, but it is not true that all groups in Quebec accept all the values regarding Canadian security, and so on. So the definition needs to be broad so as to include everyone. That is why I drafted it in this way.

Mr. Bernard Patry: If you agree to add the words “among others”, I have no objection to the amendment.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Excellent.

[English]

The Chair: All right, we have a friendly amendment to that.

Mr. Patry, then. I don't see anyone else who wants to speak to this.

I'll just read what we have here: That Bill C-293 in clause 3 be amended by adding, after the former one:

“Canadian values” means, among others, values of global citizenship, equity and environmental sustainability.

I call the question on this amendment.

(Amendment agreed to)

•(1635)

The Chair: We now move to amendment NDP-3, on clause 3. Madam McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: The proposed amendment to clause 3 simply deletes lines 20 to 22 on page 1. This is a response to persuasive concerns from practically all the officials from whom we heard that the inclusion of “advisory committee” here was problematic. There was wide agreement on that, so it just simply deletes references to the advisory committee.

The Chair: Delete lines 20 to 22, the definition of committee. Is there no one to speak to that?

Mr. Patry.

Mr. Bernard Patry: I must say that I fully agree, because we don't have clause 6 any more. We cannot refer to a clause that doesn't exist.

Thank you.

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: Madame Bourgeois.

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: In clause 3, after line 19, I believe.

[English]

The Chair: The reference number is 2573062.

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: We just want to define democracy, Mr. Chairman.

Since we removed lines 20 to 22 when we passed Ms. McDonough's amendment, I move that Bill C-293, in clause 3, be amended by adding after line 3, on page 2, the following:

"Democracy" means political and civil rights as defined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

[English]

The Chair: We have democracy defined by the Bloc.

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I think we are having difficulty when we try to define these things. We are actually narrowing these definitions down completely.

Mr. Patry, you came along in the beginning and said you wanted a wider definition here. I'm having difficulty, in that we are making this bill more and more narrow with this attempt to define something that is of a broader definition than it actually should be, as happened in the last one here.

Our objection will be the same as on the last, that instead of opening this up and defining it more strongly and making the bill stronger, we feel it is making the bill weaker by narrowly defining what democracy is.

The Chair: Mr. Obhrai, would a friendly amendment taking out the word "means" and putting in "includes"...? "Democracy includes political and civil rights as defined in international"....

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: That makes the bill slightly better, but I think Mr. Patry was maybe talking about some—

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Patry: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a question for Ms. Bourgeois.

I do not know where you found this definition of democracy, but that is not my question. I would just like to know why you're adding a definition of democracy. Is there a reference to democracy in Mr. McKay's bill, C-203?

If there is a reference to it, there could be a definition, but I would like to know where the word democracy is used in this bill. Should we be providing official development assistance as such? If so, should this assistance be linked to democracy? I'm not exactly sure where the word "democracy" appears in the bill.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: At a previous meeting, which I missed, I believe something was added regarding democracy in clause 2. Perhaps the researchers could tell me this. Is that correct?

A voice: Yes. There was an amendment that referred to democracy. You are right.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: So I just wanted to say that it is important to define democracy, because article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights reads as follows:

Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions mentioned in article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions:

(a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives;

(b) To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of electors;

(c) To have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country.

So it would be extremely beneficial to add something about democracy to the bill.

● (1640)

[English]

The Chair: I see a couple of problems with this. First of all, we've already passed clause 2 with an amendment that included democratic development or democracy promotion, and we've already included that. Now we're going to define it later.

My question, Madame Bourgeois, is whether this is defined in the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. This has never been referenced in testimony as we've studied this bill. So do you have the definition? Before we adopt this definition, I think it would be important that we hear the definition as defined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, because it's never been referenced in a meeting that we've had in studying Bill C-293. So do you have that definition here? Do we have that definition?

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: I just read the definition, Mr. Chairman.

[English]

The Chair: Is that straight out of the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights?

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: That is correct.

Is the legislative clerk aware of this? No.

I have article 25 here. Shall I reread it?

[English]

The Chair: I think we had better hear it again, yes. I apologize, I wasn't aware that that was the part you were in.

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights reads as follows:

Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions mentioned in article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions:

(a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives;

(b) To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of electors;

(c) To have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country.

That is what is stated in the international covenant.

That is why I would like to add the definition of democracy. We would like to add the Bloc Québécois amendment which states that democracy means political and civil rights as defined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

[English]

The Chair: I'm the chair. I'm not supposed to....

We'd better go to Mr. Menzies or to Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Ted Menzies: I believe Mr. Goldring had his hand up first.

The Chair: Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring: I had difficulty with this on different levels. First and foremost, it would make it easier if it "includes but is not limited to", but what exactly is the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights? What body crafts that? When and how often is it amended? Does it tie you to a version that may change at any time, any place?

In a Canadian bill, should we have to be going to an international kind of statement on what democracy is? Should we not be able to do that ourselves without referencing a document that may very well change at some time in the future?

The Chair: The majority of that definition deals specifically with elections. When we talk about democracy, there's been so much to say that it's not just about the election; it's not that once you have the election you have.... There's not very much about human rights or about other principles of good governance. I would say that narrow definition could be problematic.

Mr. Menzies.

•(1645)

Mr. Ted Menzies: I have no argument with the fact that's written somewhere, but in what context?

For us to be approving that as an amendment to what potentially could be Canadian government legislation, I'm very uncomfortable with that, because I don't know what it's based on. To take that as relevant to what we are talking about here, I don't think we should be accepting it as a definition in what we're discussing today. I have great difficulty with that.

The Chair: Mr. Obhrai, and then Mr. Patry.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I'll let Mr. Patry go on, and then I'll go on.

The Chair: Mr. Patry.

Mr. Bernard Patry: Do you want me to go on first? You're so nice.

[Translation]

Ms. Bourgeois, I'm going to make the same comment I made earlier about the preceding amendment, namely, that this may be too restrictive. I am not sure, because I am not an expert at defining the word "democracy", but if we were to say that democracy means "among others" political and civil rights, and so on, that would take nothing away from the fact that if we wanted to add something later to the definition of democracy or if democracy could mean something else, there would be no impact on the bill. It is somewhat similar to the amendment regarding Canadian values.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: There are various interpretations of democracy. We do not have a definition of it here in Canada. The

committee is looking into this, but at the moment, there is no definition of democracy. We know what it is, but there is really no one hard and fast definition.

So in that context, I think we could consider such an amendment. You would like to add the word "among other things"?

Mr. Bernard Patry: Yes, "among others" or "includes but is not limited to", because we could add political, civic, human rights, and so on. Other rights could be included in the definition of democracy. So I would not want to limit the word "democracy" to political and civil rights.

I think we could say "includes, but is not limited to, political and civil rights", and so on.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Obhrai, and then Madame St-Hilaire.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First, let me ask this question. Has Madame Bourgeois accepted Mr. Patry's friendly amendment?

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Apparently not.

[English]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: No?

An hon. member: Call the question.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Chair, would you tell this gentleman that we do have.... For him to say "Call the question" is absolute nonsense.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: You said talk about democracy and do not allow anybody to talk about democracy. What kind of a democracy is this? Just keep quiet and let me finish my talking. Talk about democracy.

This is an attempt to define something that is larger, more important, and a fundamental right to Canadian values and democracy.

This is a very limited attempt to define this thing, and if Mr. Patry's amendment was even accepted, why are we going in this direction? You are absolutely right. We are learning about democratic reform here and doing all these things.

You and I have travelled in the world, and we find that democracy is far broader than as described here. So it would be very difficult for a Canadian bill to enter something that is this restrictive. If you leave it as democracy, I don't see any problems with the wider things.

All the time we have the same situation. This bill is becoming more and more restrictive in an attempt to define something that is a broader concept, a broader understanding. It will come to a state where this will be a totally regressive bill.

The Chair: Madame St-Hilaire.

•(1650)

[Translation]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: We tried to improve the bill. As was already said, a new aspect has been added to clause 2, namely the promotion of democracy, and we felt that it should be defined. We humbly referred to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

If Mr. Patry wants to include the words "includes but is not limited to", that is one thing, but it is almost as if there were no more definition. Essentially, the definition is very broad. You can add the word "including" in referring to the covenant, but at the same time, it could be this or it could be something else. Personally, I would prefer not to include the words "includes but is not limited to" and leave the definition as is.

If this definition does not suit the committee members, we'll have to come to an agreement to find another one. We are not yet out of the woods. The government party does not seem to agree with the definition of the word "democracy", but its representatives did not propose another definition. I am not sure that they are able to do so.

That being said, I would humbly submit that the words "includes but is not limited to" are, in my opinion, limitative.

[English]

The Chair: All right.

Madam McDonough and then Mr. Patry.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: In the interest of moving forward here, I think this is an honest attempt to respond to the fact that we have included democratic promotion, which government members were anxious to see happen, and are now trying to define democracy, as I understand it.

My question to government members is, in the spirit of trying to find some consensus, are you agreeable to the suggested change by Monsieur Patry that "democracy includes but is not limited to", or «notamment», *en français*? I think you're saying you don't consider it perfect, but maybe it's a reasonable consensus that we could achieve so we could move forward.

The Chair: To the government, then Mr. Patry.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Yes, I think that would be.... It would leave open what we have been arguing and not define it very narrowly. We have no problem in attempting to define democracy, but it's a subject we could all discuss for hours to see what we can do. In the interest of time, we can go ahead and do that.

The Chair: In the interest of time, Mr. Patry.

Mr. Bernard Patry: As suggested, that's fine as an amendment to the amendment. We'll see what's going to happen.

Thank you.

The Chair: Are we including it then, Madame St-Hilaire?

She says yes, a friendly amendment.

All right, so we'll call the question. I'll read it as the clerk has it transcribed:

"democracy" means political and civil rights as defined by but not limited to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

No, that's the wrong spot.

Hon. Keith Martin: So it's "...civil rights as defined by but not limited to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights".

The Chair: Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Perhaps, Mr. Chair,

"democracy" includes but is not limited to political and civil rights as defined by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The Chair: That might be a better place to put it.

(Amendment agreed to) [See *Minutes of Proceedings*]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: On a point of order.

The Chair: On a point of order, Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: They should not limit my democratic right. We should fight for the right to talk.

The Chair: We will go to NDP-4.

•(1655)

Ms. Alexa McDonough: I'm looking to Keith Martin for a nod. I think I'm prepared to withdraw my amendment in favour of an amendment he's going to put forward. I don't mean to sound so tentative, but I want to make sure I know exactly what we're doing. It's a friendly alternative rather than a friendly amendment.

The Chair: Mr. Martin, is that reference 2561052?

Hon. Keith Martin: Yes. The friendly amendment is adding after line 11 on page 2 "international assistance means funding provided by government agencies".

The Chair: Keith, she's making reference to the official development assistance, not the international assistance.

Hon. Keith Martin: It's 2561052.

The Chair: You can write down that Madam McDonough has withdrawn NDP-4.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: We won't move it because we have an alternative here.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Martin.

Hon. Keith Martin: The reference number is 2561052—that Bill 293 in clause 3 be amended by adding after line 19 on page 2 the following:

"official development assistance" means international assistance

(a) that is administered with the principal objective of promoting the economic development and welfare of developing countries, that is concessional in character, that conveys a grant element of at least 25%, and that meets the requirements set out in section 4; and

(b) that is provided for the purpose of alleviating the effects of a natural or artificial disaster or other emergency occurring outside Canada.

The Chair: It's adding "humanitarian assistance". This is including emergency relief.

Mr. Patry.

Mr. Bernard Patry: Mr. McKay has the same new definition of "development assistance". Now we have "official development assistance". What's the difference between them?

Hon. John McKay: "International assistance" is the universe of assistance we give. "Official development assistance" is what this bill captures.

Mr. Bernard Patry: What's going to happen with your definition of "development assistance"?

Hon. John McKay: "Development assistance" will stay as a reference.

Hon. Keith Martin: ODA is a subset of international assistance. International assistance is this big circle, and inside that big circle is a slightly smaller circle called ODA. It represents the bulk of international assistance.

• (1700)

The Chair: Could we have Mr. Goldring, and then Mr. Obhrai?

Mr. Peter Goldring: Looking at this amendment—and it's mentioning a grant element of at least 25%—where would that 25% be coming from? Is that a type of an internationally understood...? Isn't that very restrictive and going to be restricting you, on what type of aid would be administered or what type would be given? The 25% sounds to me as though it would put you into a box and terribly restrict you. Is that something we should be limiting ourselves to?

The Chair: We'll go to Mr. Obhrai, and then we're still waiting for Mr. McKay's answer to Mr. Patry.

We'll go with Mr. Obhrai first then. Go ahead.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Thank you. We have total confusion here when we're talking about the bigger picture and the lower picture, and we have this thing here. And then we go further down there, and we talk about 25% ground where we lose the business of accountability out here. An attempt is being made over here to grab somebody else's concept that is coming along to see how money can be directed to them in particular.

We are clashing with OECD definitions. We are clashing with our own definitions. We are clashing with what we want to achieve. We were talking about achieving poverty reductions. In the beginning, this whole thing was directed towards poverty reduction, and now you're talking about giving 25% as a grant so the organizations led by Mr. Gerry Barr can get a lot of money out of it. All these things here are totally—

An hon. member: Oh come on. That's just—

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Let me just finish, man. It is my right to talk.

An hon. member: It's his democratic right.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Did we not finish democracy over here?

An hon. member: That's inappropriate.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Well, let me finish democracy here. It's my right to talk. If you don't like it, too bad for you.

An hon. member: Then hurry up and get to your point.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Why should I hurry up?

The Chair: Mr. McKay.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Then I'm going away. Why should I hurry up? You just talked about democratic policy.

Hon. John McKay: To try to speak to Mr. Patry's point, the concept is international assistance. That's the universe of everything that Canada gives on the international front.

Mr. Martin then defines what official development assistance is, which is a sub-universe of that larger universe. The consequence of that is that you would remove development assistance as a definition so that you would then have your definition of international, and you would have your definition of ODA, but you would remove "development assistance" from the bill. Does that make sense?

Mr. Bernard Patry: I am facing two definitions, one from you and one from Mr. Martin. I just want to know if that means you will withdraw your definition, and we'll just be looking at the official development assistance, or whether we are going to keep both.

Hon. John McKay: We will have to keep both, because we want to have a universe, and we have to have a sub-universe, and then we have to eliminate development assistance.

The Chair: Mr. Menzies was next, and then we'll go to the question.

Mr. Ted Menzies: You're saying "sub-universe"?

Hon. John McKay: Define that one.

Mr. Ted Menzies: Are we not getting two different definitions of "official development assistance" inside one bill? Nobody has convinced me that we don't have two different definitions in here. That's my question. I'd like someone to prove to me that that's not the case.

I share Mr. Obhrai's concern about the grant element of at least 25%. I'd like someone to explain to me why this isn't going to tie our hands in the future.

The Chair: I'm going to ask our researcher if he can jump in here on the 25%.

Mr. Gerald Schmitz (Committee Researcher): The 25% is set by the development assistance committee of the OECD. It would have to be at least 25% in order to qualify, to be eligible as "official development assistance". Since 1986, in Canada we've been at 100% grant element, so it's not an issue for Canada.

Mr. Ted Menzies: We've been at 100% grant element?

Mr. Gerald Schmitz: Yes, we give no more loans at all. The effort is 100% grant element. We stopped making ODA loans in 1986.

• (1705)

Mr. Ted Menzies: I understand that differentiation then. Okay.

Mr. Gerald Schmitz: It's the international development assistance OECD floor, if you want to call it that.

The Chair: Mr. Patry.

Mr. Bernard Patry: Regarding (a) and (b), when you say that official development assistance is international assistance "(a) that is administered", that's fine. With regard to "(b) that is provided", is it that we need to have both together, or one or the other? Because you could have "administered" and you could have "promoting the economic development" if it's not a natural or artificial disaster. I just want to know about the wording. That's why we don't have just one, because it's (a) and (b). "Official" means (a) and (b).

Hon. Keith Martin: Well, it's both. You have "and" after (a). At the bottom of (a) there is "and", so it involves both of those.

Mr. Bernard Patry: But it means something. If we want to promote economic development in a country when there's no emergency, no natural or artificial disaster, we'll be unable to do it, because it says (a) and (b).

Hon. Keith Martin: That's exactly what it involves. So (a) and (b) involve the two components: (a) is a non-emergency situation and (b) is the emergency situation. It involves both. That's why you have "and" after "section 4".

The Chair: He's saying that official development assistance is both, not...

Mr. Bernard Patry: I want to get it done properly. I'm not against it, but to me, the way I read it, if you don't have (a) and (b), you cannot give any official development assistance.

Hon. John McKay: I don't think you're reading it properly, but I think you have a point. So would "and/or" do it?

The Chair: Madame St-Hilaire.

[Translation]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Mr. Chairman, I would tell you, with all due respect, that I think that Mr. Patry should quite simply suggest to his colleagues that we withdraw clause (b), because it contradicts clause 5 on humanitarian aid.

I would by far prefer Ms. McDonough's amendment, with all the respect that I have for Mr. Martin. We have some reservations with respect to clause (b),

[English]

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: The reason clause 5 is there is to exempt the minister from the obligation in the bill to provide emergency relief. Obviously emergency relief may have nothing to do with poverty alleviation. That's why you have clause 5 in the first place.

The Chair: So when there's a tsunami, she can still respond and she isn't going to be tied to that disaster assistance because of this. I think that's positive. It's saying that if there's a tsunami that hits Sri Lanka, the minister can respond immediately. What it also says is that both are eligible to be counted as ODA. All right?

We have Mr. Patry.

Mr. Bernard Patry: I just want to know something. You see in the first definition by Mr. McKay, when you talk about the one you want, that development assistance means funding that is transferred to developing countries and multilateral institutions by government agencies.

After that, we find out the rest. That's perfect. But it doesn't mean that it's not provided. We don't say to whom is provided the official development assistance. It could be provided also to developing countries and multilateral institutions. We don't say that. Is it necessary to say that or not?

Hon. John McKay: No, that would be far too restrictive.

Mr. Bernard Patry: Because by accepting the one that's in front of us right now, we aren't talking about the funding transferred to developing countries and multilateral institutions by government

agencies that is administered for the principal objective. We don't talk about this. Do we need to talk about this situation, yes or no?

The Chair: Are we all right with "and/ or"?

Some hon. members: Yes.

(Amendment agreed to) [See *Minutes of Proceedings*]

• (1710)

Hon. John McKay: I have a point of order, Chair, and I'd seek the guidance of the clerk on this.

We also had Mr. Martin's amendment, and I can't remember whether he's moved this or not. It's reference 2566760 on international assistance and international human rights standards. My recollection was that we dealt with that.

We did not deal with that?

As a point of order, so that members try to maintain some coherence to their thinking, and subject to what the clerk and you would say, Chair, we should deal with international assistance as the global universe of assistance of Canada and with international human rights standards, which I think there was some discussion about, but we didn't actually move the last time. That would ultimately lead to a withdrawal of NDP-5, which would be redundant then. Subject to Ms. McDonough and to Mr. Martin, I suggest that as an order of procedure.

The Chair: If we dealt with this and accepted it, it would automatically mean that hers are withdrawn. We don't have to ask her permission to withdraw, as long as she's aware. I appreciate that, because if there are going to be some consequential changes down the road, I want to warn those movers down the road.

Madam McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: John's quite right. I already made a note that when we got to it, having withdrawn in favour of Keith Martin's amendment, the consequences were that we would also withdraw NDP-5.

Hon. John McKay: We still have to put forward Keith's 2566760.

The Chair: That would be the next one.

All right, Mr. Martin.

Hon. Keith Martin: On 2566760, I'll state that clause 3 be amended by (a) adding after line 11 on page 2 the following:

"international assistance" means funding provided by government agencies for international development, international financial institutions, global peace and security, crises overseas and international development research.

and by adding after line 11 on page 2 the following:

"international human rights standards" means standards that are based on human rights conventions and on customary law.

That is 2566760. It's pretty basic, actually.

The Chair: Mr. Menzies.

Mr. Ted Menzies: This is in two separate amendments, but divided into two parts, (a) and (b). Are we going to vote on it separately and deal with it separately?

The Chair: No, it's one amendment.

Mr. Ted Menzies: I have to raise a few concerns about this. It may limit what we can do. We're talking about official development assistance, and now we're down to international assistance. Is there an international platform for deciding what is international assistance?

Hon. Keith Martin: I truly cannot fathom what else one would want to include in the definition that I've offered, Mr. Menzies, unless you can provide the committee some—

Mr. Ted Menzies: Is it different from development assistance? Is it different from emergency assistance? Is it different from ODA?

Hon. Keith Martin: International assistance is like this container. ODA is the water in the container. Not all international assistance is ODA, but ODA represents the bulk of international assistance. International assistance is the omnibus. It is, as Mr. McKay calls it, the universe. The sub-universe is ODA, which we identified.

Seriously, if you can think of anything else that would be construed as international assistance that would not be covered by that definition, please provide what it would be.

The Chair: Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: On a point of clarification, I'd direct Mr. Menzies' memory to the testimony. You'll recollect that Department of Finance officials came to talk about providing police officers in Haiti, judges in China, and things of that nature.

It becomes a long stretch between poverty alleviation and money. We don't want to limit Canada's ability to do those kinds of things and simply cut off what might otherwise be good programs, but the bill ultimately wants to focus on the fact that what we're counting as ODA is for poverty alleviation. It's the sub-universe of the bill. We don't want to be put into a position where we inadvertently cut off the Government of Canada from doing those other kinds of things.

The minister might say he can't use the budget to provide police officers for Haiti, and that might not be a very good thing. He can't make a direct correlation between it and poverty alleviation. It's the reason we reworked the definitions.

The consequence of the two definitions passing, which I hope they will, is such that development assistance in the bill should be taken out. There would only be two definitions of assistance; you'd have international assistance and ODA assistance. The concept of development assistance, which is at the top of page 2, would be eliminated.

•(1715)

The Chair: Mr. Menzies.

Mr. Ted Menzies: Thank you for the clarification.

If I can continue, I have a concern. I've talked to development agencies from different countries, and they share some of these concerns.

We're not able to recognize that we have a number of groups. In fact, the House of Commons supported us in aiming at the goal of 0.7%. But by making these definitions too tight, all of a sudden it becomes unattainable. We've put some of the definitions to some of what Canada does, the good things Canada does, the RCMP helping with elections in other countries, and those kinds of things.

As long as this limits it and leaves a big gap between international assistance and what we can claim as ODA, so as to embarrass us in the world, we're not doing what we set out as a goal in attaining development assistance that is recognized. I'm struggling with this to make sure we're not making too fine a definition.

The Chair: Okay. I have a speaking list here.

I'd like to hear that answer from Mr. McKay, but I'm going to go to Mr. Patry. He's been waiting for a while.

Mr. Bernard Patry: I want to ask a question to Mr. Martin.

Keith, you said international assistance means funding provided by government agencies. What's happened? Is CIDA a government agency? It's a department.

I only want to know about it. Which agency do you want to tell me about?

On the other hand, we have IDRC, which is a crown corporation. Where do you put IDRC?

To me, it's very important. They have an independent board of directors, and they've created great jobs through research and a lot of things. Where do you put this for assistance? To me, IDRC is a must, and we need to keep it.

What main funding is provided by government agencies? Is it foreign affairs? It's not an agency. It's the Department of Foreign Affairs. It's the Minister of Finance who gives money and grants to some other places.

I only wanted to clarify this.

The Chair: If we took out "agencies", would that solve the problem?

Hon. Keith Martin: I only want to ask Mr. Patry this. Would you like to change the definition? Is there some other term?

Mr. Bernard Patry: I only saw it this afternoon. I was only given this now.

Hon. Keith Martin: Is there another commonly used term to describe those elements of government that are responsible for this?

The Chair: How about "provided for by government"?

Hon. Keith Martin: Sure.

Mr. Bernard Patry: It's why I wanted to get some clarification.

Hon. Keith Martin: We have a friendly amendment, "provided for by government".

Mr. Bernard Patry: What did you say?

Hon. Keith Martin: We can add "provided for by government" and remove "agencies".

The Chair: Yes, "provided by government for international development".

We have a friendly amendment.

We'll go to Mr. McKay, Madam McDonough, and Mr. Menzies.

Hon. John McKay: That's fine. I think that's a useful clarification.

I'd just say that the five pools that are in international assistance are what the Government of Canada has used for the last 12 years to categorize, if you will, their international assistance. So it's not as if we're just picking this thing out of the middle of the air.

As to Mr. Menzies' issue, the whole point of the bill is to try to give some discipline to Canada's official development assistance. And the discipline is whether you can meet the three tests—poverty alleviation, human rights standards, and taking into account perspectives of the poor—so that it's not flavour of the month or flavour of the year.

If in fact the government wants to go to flavour of the month or flavour of the year, that's fine. But if it can't meet the test, it won't be ODA-able. That's the issue. That's the point of the bill.

Now, I think the testimony of the finance department people, or maybe it was the foreign affairs department, was that 90%—I think that's the number—of our international assistance is in fact ODA-able. So all this bill does is ultimately provide more precision, definition, and accountability to what we're trying to achieve here.

• (1720)

The Chair: Madam McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: I agree with the point that John McKay is making, but I was trying to respond to Ted Menzies' concern, if I understood it, with respect to the definition of international assistance. He was raising the concern about whether this itemization was sufficiently broad or sufficiently inclusive. His concern was that we not narrow the definition.

I guess all I would say, partly reiterating the point already made, is that if you think it's too narrow and if you can think of another single solitary thing that could go in there to make it even more all-inclusive, then fine, suggest it. But otherwise, it seems pretty darn broad. Any example you can think of seems to me to be covered by those categories.

A voice: This is what the government uses anyway.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: That's what the government uses now. If what you're saying is that you don't think the government's definition now is broad enough, then throw something else into this pot. But otherwise, I would hope we could move forward.

Hon. Keith Martin: It's a standard budgetary definition, on your budget as well as ours.

The Chair: Mr. Menzies.

Mr. Ted Menzies: Don't get me wrong. If this is going to become legislation, we want to make sure that we don't miss a big chunk. This was just handed to us this afternoon, so I don't have any template to gauge this by. I'm just trying to make sure we're doing it right.

Are we talking about taking the word “agencies” out of here? Let's just question, is IDRC an agency of the government? It's a crown corporation. We want to make sure that we don't drop IDRC out of this.

The Chair: It's still money from the government.

Mr. Ted Menzies: But if it's an agency of the government, then we've dropped it by taking “agency” out.

The Chair: It's still dollars that are—

Mr. Ted Menzies: From government to an agency, then.

The Chair: Let's try to keep the dialogue between the chair and the others. That way, we aren't going to have any....

Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: Just to speak to Mr. Menzies' point, we have a specific amendment taking IDRC out of the obligations of the act. It's in here, in the package.

The Chair: Are we ready for the question?

It's (a) and (b). It's both together. It's one amendment.

Mr. Ted Menzies: Can I make a friendly suggestion?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Ted Menzies: To me, customary law is very narrow. Should we not look at international customary law, customary law in Canada, in Asia...?

The Chair: Mr. Patry.

Mr. Bernard Patry: “International human rights standards” means standards that are based on human rights conventions and on customary law. I would prefer it to say “human rights international conventions”, because it could be local conventions, and then which convention applies at that time?

We have a definition of “international convention”. I think it would be much better if we put “international conventions”.

The Chair: There are still two questions. First of all, Mr. Menzies is still on the international customary law. Mr. Patry is also trying to include “human rights international conventions”.

• (1725)

Hon. Keith Martin: If it's a friendly amendment, put “international human rights conventions”. I don't have a problem with that, Mr. McKay.

The other one, Mr. Menzies, what—

Mr. Ted Menzies: It's “international customary law”. Maybe we could use “international” once and combine it, just to make it simpler.

Hon. Keith Martin: So “international human rights conventions and customary law”.

Mr. Ted Menzies: Maybe we need it in there twice to be very specific. Probably we do.

An hon. member: There's nothing like redundancy.

Mr. Ted Menzies: There's nothing like clarity either, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: This is being passed on from our researcher—the way it may sound the best. How about this: “International human rights standards” means standards that are based on international human rights conventions and on international customary law.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: The friendly amendment has passed.

(Amendment agreed to) [See *Minutes of Proceedings*]

The Chair: All right. Our time says it's 5:25. We have five minutes. Let's try to do another one. NDP-6.

Point of order, Mr. Martin.

Hon. Keith Martin: Given the commitment that I think we've seen around the table to complete this bill before we finish for Christmas, I'd seek unanimous consent that we call our colleague—with regret—to not appear in front of the committee tomorrow and that we go to clause-by-clause on this bill tomorrow.

The Chair: Yes, I've already instructed him that it's unlikely we'll hear from him.

That's Mr. Williams and someone else, on GOPAC and the other one. That was for the second hour. That's why we kept the final hour for the Ottawa witnesses. We can postpone them if we aren't finished this. It has already been done.

All right, very quickly, Madam McDonough. Is it possible?

Ms. Alexa McDonough: I hope so. I'm having trouble finding my amendment, but I know why we're doing this.

The definition of the minister in the bill is the “Minister of International Cooperation”. But the Minister of International Cooperation is not a minister by statute, right? So the reason for this amendment is that it expands the definition to include other ministers as deemed appropriate by the government of the day.

We're talking about clause 3 being amended by replacing line 13 on page 2 with the following: “Cooperation or any other minister designated by the Governor in Council as the Minister for the purposes of this Act”.

I so move.

The Chair: All right.

Mr. Menzies.

Mr. Ted Menzies: I wonder if we need the word “Cooperation”. With standard government language, if you will, “minister” means the minister designated by the Governor in Council. I think we're referring to “competent minister” in many places here. I wonder if we couldn't just refer to the “minister”, meaning the minister designated by the Governor in Council.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Well, I guess that's what we're trying to achieve. Are you suggesting a different wording? I'm sorry, I'm not understanding.

The Chair: That we strike “Cooperation or any other”, and that it be defined as “minister designated by the Governor in Council as the Minister for the purposes of this Act”.

Mr. Ted Menzies: The earlier line of the bill would also have to be amended. We've just gone through this, when we were talking

about RCMP and a number of development assistance portfolios under different ministers.

The Chair: No, no, Mr. Menzies. Take it in context with the bill as written. “Cooperation” is the final word of the title “Minister of International Cooperation”. You would say “Minister” means the Minister of International Cooperation.

• (1730)

Mr. Ted Menzies: That's my point. We're not always referring to the Minister of International Cooperation. We're referring to the Minister of Finance in some cases. IDRC funding comes from the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The Chair: Are you suggesting, then, that “Minister” means any minister designated by the Governor in Council?

Mr. Ted Menzies: Yes, pertinent to wherever the development assistance is coming from.

The Chair: So it would be an amendment to the two lines. It would then read, “‘Minister’ means any minister designated by the Governor in Council as the Minister for the purposes of this act.”

Hon. John McKay: I don't know that deletion of “the Minister of International Cooperation” actually does anything to the legislation, the point being that the CIDA minister is going to be the main minister for the purposes of this bill. It would be almost inappropriate that you not recognize that in the definition.

And because witnesses said that while there are other ministers who could be involved in the administration—the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Finance and who else, we don't really know—that's why we added on, “or any other Minister designated by the Governor in Council.”

So you're going from more precision to less precision, and I don't see how you gain anything. I would therefore stay with the way it has been put forward in NDP-6.

The Chair: Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring: The point is that we may not have a Minister of International Cooperation at some time in the future, and to have it in here would be confusing.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Therefore, “any other minister designated” would apply.

Hon. John McKay: I just don't see what is accomplished by the proposal.

The Chair: I think what he's saying is that at the present time we have a Minister of International Cooperation. After Christmas, we might have a Minister of CIDA or something else, and then it would be included. But this would—

Hon. John McKay: For the purposes of what we're doing here today, in the year of our Lord, 2006, it is a Minister of International Cooperation and any other designated minister. If, over Christmas, the CIDA minister does in fact get bounced, then—

The Chair: Her title might get bounced, but I'm sure she'll....

Mr. Menzies.

Mr. Ted Menzies: The existing relationship now is that CIDA is within the confines of the Department of Foreign Affairs, so we already have a conflict.

I would defer to a government lawyer to confirm this, but this is standard language when you are referring specifically to “the Minister” as designated by the Governor in Council. The Minister of International Cooperation is under the jurisdiction of the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Martin.

Hon. Keith Martin: In the spirit of the universe, to continue our line of thinking here—

An hon. member: The big picture?

Hon. Keith Martin: The big universe, the big picture. That's right.

Would it not be acceptable to you, Ted, if we defined “Minister” as meaning “the Minister of International Cooperation or any other minister designated by the Governor in Council”? That is a global definition that would encompass Mr. McKay's intent, Ms. McDonough's intent, and your concern. It would reflect any changes you're concerned about, but it would also encompass the reality of 2006.

The Chair: Mr. Menzies, and then Mr. Patry. Quickly.

Mr. Ted Menzies: Minister of International Sports. “Any other minister” encompasses a lot of ministers.

The Chair: As defined by “as designated by the Governor in Council”.

Mr. Patry.

Mr. Bernard Patry: I really think amendment NDP-6 is a good amendment. I really feel so, and I think this is what it should be. Yes, any other ministry could be sports for sure, but it depends on what you intend to do. If it means “any minister”, that depends on what is going to happen. The definition, to me, is the definition that we should accept.

The Chair: We're calling for the question.

Mr. Menzies, do you want...?

Mr. Ted Menzies: I'm just concerned. Does the Governor in Council appoint this minister for every decision, or for that Parliament?

• (1735)

The Chair: I think the understanding here is that if it isn't that minister, it's the minister designated by the Governor in Council for the purpose of the act.

Mr. Ted Menzies: There are only two: the Minister of International Cooperation or the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

An hon. member: It could be the Minister of Finance or the Minister of—

The Chair: It's for the purpose of this act.

Mr. Ted Menzies: It's a defined relationship now in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Act.

The Chair: All right, the question's called.

(Amendment agreed to on division) [See *Minutes of Proceedings*]

The Chair: All right, it is 27 minutes to six. We are going to adjourn, and we are coming back tomorrow if we're still here.

Madame St-Hilaire.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Mr. Chairman, I do not want to spoil the party, but if the House were to adjourn tomorrow, would the committee meet again?

[*English*]

The Chair: What do you mean? Do you mean if the House adjourns?

There's a rumour that the House may adjourn tomorrow evening, but we're still going to meet. But if it adjourns at two o'clock and the House rises, we aren't sitting.

Madam McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Oh, come on. I would strenuously urge that we have enough commitment to what we're doing here, that we've spent literally two and a half years trying to move it forward and put it in place, that we'd be willing to stay for two extra hours. I, for one, can't imagine an explanation to the people of Canada or people around the world who want to know what on earth Canada's up to these days. How would you possibly explain that? There's nothing—

The Chair: We're all prepared to sit here tomorrow. In consultation with the government, that's why we told the witnesses for tomorrow afternoon that they aren't going to be here, because we're going to be doing this. But procedurally, if the House rises, the committee isn't sitting. There's another process for getting the committee to sit, as I understand it.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Well, I'm not a procedural whiz—I'll admit to that—but there's nothing that could preclude this committee, in good faith, holding the necessary discussions to move forward. If we have to do something procedurally to ratify the consensus that we've achieved when the House meets again, fine, but surely we have enough commitment to see this through.

It would just be unbelievable if we dropped the ball like that. It would also be very bad faith in terms of the many attempts on our part to get us to tackle this sooner, and the assurances again and again by certain members that we had lots of time to make sure we get this through before the Christmas break.

The Chair: I think we've all worked together on this. You know what? I don't want this to be one of those hypothetical questions of “If the House rises at two o'clock tomorrow, or three o'clock, are we still going to...?” I think the day is going to finish out tomorrow, from what I understand. I think this is hypothetical. Certainly I've never once heard from the government or from any opposition that we will not meet.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Mr. Chair, it's not a hypothetical for us to address ourselves to the question of whether we will meet tomorrow afternoon at 3:30 regardless. It's not hypothetical for us to make that commitment, so I'd like to move that we make that commitment. I so move.

The Chair: All right.

Does anyone want to speak to that?

Mr. Bernard Patry: I just want to say that I don't mind coming here, but if the House closes at 2 o'clock, I don't want to meet at 3:30. Do you know what I mean? We don't know. If you want to be hypothetical, we can be hypothetical about every issue. I don't mind staying until 5:30, but I'm not going to stay here until 10 o'clock. There's no doubt about it.

The Chair: Okay, let's leave it at this. The intention is that we will meet for two hours tomorrow. If the House rises at 11 o'clock, we

will try to get a room and get these two hours done so that we aren't sitting here until 3:30 and waiting in the afternoon. Just let us work. We're all agreeing that we want to get this done tomorrow. If we have a chance and the House shuts down at 11 o'clock, we may try to get a room from noon until 2 o'clock.

Thank you, folks. We're adjourned.

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