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Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

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● (0910)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): Good morning, everyone. Welcome. This is meeting number 40 of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

I want to begin by welcoming everyone back from our journey to Washington and New York last week. I think we had a safe and a very informative trip. Hopefully it helped us understand a bit better Canada's role in democratic development, and other countries' roles in democratic development around the world.

Today we're going to continue on our study with David Donovan here. David is the research director of the Centre for the Study of Democracy.

In our second hour we're going to hear from Warren Allmand and the World Federalists of Canada, and Fergus Watt, and a number of others.

We do welcome you, Mr. Donovan. It's been a fairly comprehensive study so far. It's been an excellent study. We've travelled to Scandinavian countries and Great Britain, and last week to Washington and New York. Some of the best experts we have are those who come right here to our committee on the Hill. So welcome.

You may know the way this works. We'll give you time for an opening statement, for ten minutes or however long it may be. Then we'll go into a round of questioning.

Welcome.

Mr. David Donovan (Research Director, Centre for the Study of Democracy): Thanks very much.

I'm familiar with the committee's work. I accompanied Thomas Axworthy — he's the chair of the centre — when he was here in October. Also, I heard good things from my colleagues at International IDEA in Stockholm.

The committee has asked witnesses to comment on three broad areas: democracy assistance as an objective, comparative lessons, and the Canadian role in democracy promotion. I'll address these aspects in order. In terms of Canada's role, I'll speak to the political party function of democracy assistance. I'll try not to be redundant, as Dr. Axworthy has outlined our case in a Democracy Canada Institute paper, so I'll focus on different aspects that he didn't touch on.

I'll start with democracy promotion as an objective. Democracy is one of the most contested concepts in political science, chock full of normative connotations. As such, aiding democratic development can be a tricky process, as the evolution of a transition to democracy will necessarily leave room for debate regarding the democratic status achieved by a particular country.

Political theorist Robert Dahl argues that representation is an essential element of a democracy, and to have democracy in a meaningful sense, political institutions must be established and entrenched that facilitate this representation. Dahl points to free and fair elections as the necessary component of this representation. Political parties are typically employed to undertake this representative role.

Next I'll talk about democratic transitions. Over what has been termed the “third wave” of democratization, several international democracy-promotion organizations have been created and strengthened in Europe and North America and in many new democracies themselves. Now, beyond the third wave, democracy promotion has taken on an even more prominent role on the international stage. Moreover, demand for international democracy assistance remains high in developing democracies throughout the world.

How do transitions to democracy occur? Thomas Carothers, a leading writer in democratic studies, notes that, broadly speaking, there are two main paths for democratic reform under authoritarian regimes. The first method sees an authoritarian regime collapse due to a lack of legitimacy through popular uprisings, revolutions, or similar overthrows of dictatorships or authoritarian regimes. The second path takes place when an authoritarian regime gradually releases control over the state through liberalization initiatives in which social, economic, and political reforms are expanded in a manageable way and a goal of consolidated democracy is eventually achieved.

Finally, I will talk about comparative cases. Allow me to highlight key features of democratic transitions in Taiwan and Afghanistan, which we have studied at the Centre for the Study of Democracy. I'll place those in the context of Carothers' categorization of how democratic transitions occur.

In Taiwan, democratic reform was a gradual, 50-year, election-driven process, from about 1946, with the beginnings of local elections, to 1996, with the first open presidential election. Participation in local elections helped to instill a democratic ethos among the Taiwanese population and facilitated the political representation of a growing opposition movement. Taiwan possessed all the right preconditions for democratic reform to occur in a gradual and relatively stable process, namely: economic success and the growth of an often foreign-educated middle class who returned to Taiwan; a system of local elections that allowed legitimate political dissent through an organized process; and outside reform pressure from the United States and other players.

If Taiwan underwent a gradual transition to democracy, Afghanistan represents the opposite case of a failed state. More than a development project for the international community, rebuilding Afghanistan has meant rebuilding and redesigning its political institutions as well. In fact, Afghanistan is undergoing a transition to democracy. Making the transition to a democratic form of government in Afghanistan is fraught with difficulties and is likely to experience setbacks. Afghanistan's economic structure has been gravely weakened, distorted, and made more vulnerable through two decades of sustained conflict. The importance of international intervention on a large scale is an essential point when determining whether a democratic transition in Afghanistan has any chance of being sustained over the long term, both in terms of military and security aid, and in terms of political and governance assistance and humanitarian aid and development.

Now I'll speak to the comparative context and how democracy assistance is structured in other developed countries. Democracy assistance organizations can be placed into three main categories: political party institutes, like the German and Swedish party models; international or multilateral organizations, like the Stockholm-based International IDEA; and national umbrella organizations and multi-party institutes, like the National Endowment for Democracy, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy in Britain, or the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy.

The international multilateral model... The field of democracy assistance benefits from mutual learning and international cooperation. Thus it is useful to highlight the multilateral model. For example, International IDEA, of which Canada is a member, is a multilateral organization with member states across all continents that seek to support sustainable democracy in both new and long-established democracies. It is important for Canada to be represented in multilateral democracy assistance bodies such as IDEA to learn from and influence the best practices of other organizations. However, the creation of an independent democracy Canada institute would promote Canadian democracy assistance priorities in a more direct way.

The political party foundation model... In democracy assistance, the political party foundation model is a prominent feature, particularly in Germany, but also notably in Sweden. The German party foundation model, or *stiftungen*, has served as a model for all party foundations. The two largest German foundations have yearly revenues exceeding 100 million euros each, although they divide resources between international and domestic initiatives. The revenue for the National Democratic Institute in Washington, for 2005, exceeded $80 million U.S. and their activities were almost exclusively geared for international projects.

In international democracy assistance projects, the foundations tend to work with sister parties with like-minded political views in partner countries. For example, Sweden's Olof Palme Foundation, the Social Democratic Party, tends to provide political party assistance to sister parties within Socialist International.

Political party foundations generally have a significant degree of independence from their affiliated parties. Because of the nature of independent party foundations, coordinated democracy promotion efforts among political parties in a given country may be difficult to achieve.

The multi-party and umbrella model... Organizations that best fit the model of the internationalization of democracy assistance and exemplify the cooperative model of working both with international partners and through indigenous organizations include the NED, the Netherlands IMD, the Westminster Foundation, and the newly created Norwegian Centre for Democracy Support.

Multi-party organizations, unlike party foundations, provide differing degrees of oversight to the democracy assistance projects undertaken by political parties. IMD, for example, employs a proportional representation from the seven major political parties in the Netherlands to undertake program activities, while maintaining a permanent non-partisan bureau staff to manage the institute's overall approach. Multi-party organizations receive core funding from public sources and maintain an arm's-length relationship with government agencies.

The multi-party model is particularly intriguing because it incorporates elements of political party independence in which parties are free to work with and develop programs with sister parties in partner countries, while at the same time having the benefit of the broad oversight of an umbrella organization to ensure policy coherence.

I'll speak to Canada's role in democracy promotion now. Thomas Axworthy laid out the Centre for the Study of Democracy's approach for establishing a Democracy Canada institute when he appeared before this committee last October. The paper can be viewed in full through the IRPP.

So that I'm not repetitive, I will highlight a key feature of our paper, the role of political party assistance in democracy promotion. Based on our analysis of existing organizations in the Canadian democracy assistance community, it is clear that no single organization focuses exclusively on political party assistance or democratization. Many organizations have elements of these, but none could be described as an institution exclusively focused on the provision of democracy assistance internationally. Specifically, Canada lacks an institution comparable to the Dutch IMD or the United States NED.

A role for Canada within the democracy assistance community... I received a study grant to examine European models of democracy assistance in 2005. I learned that not only are international political party assistance organizations thriving in many European countries, but their operations are also expanding markedly in the Netherlands and Sweden, and new organizations have been created in Finland and Norway.

The Democracy Canada institute proposal has received international attention, being referenced by organizations such as the OECD, the UNDP, and International IDEA. The CSD's international consultations made it clear that the democracy assistance community would see the creation of Democracy Canada as a very worthwhile initiative, particularly in the area of political party assistance.

● (0915)

Moreover, because Canada lacks a central democracy assistance organization, Canadians contribute to other organizations and other countries' aid and foreign policy objectives. This means that Canada is losing some of its best and brightest democracy practitioners, who therefore contribute primarily to U.S. or European foreign policy priorities.

Canada has a wealth of experience in democratic institutions and processes that can be shared with emerging democracies. I was speaking at a conference on democratic transitions in Taiwan in 2005. At the conference, a young group of Taiwanese law students, who were coming to terms with their own national identities in relation to China, engaged with me in lengthy discussions of Quebec's place within Canada — a topic on which they were quite knowledgeable.

A Canadian-based democracy institution, with its experience in a federal, ethnically diverse, multilateral, and bilingual country, would be welcome into the international democracy promotion community and would have a significant impact in assisting developing democracies.

Thank you.

● (0920)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Donovan. That was a very good summary of democracies around the world and ideas on Canada's role.

We'll go to the first round. We'll begin with Mr. Wilfert, please, for seven minutes.

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

Thank you, Mr. Donovan.

On the issue of democratic values, we're looking at Afghanistan, as an example, where there has never been a history of democratic rule. Although avenues of participation are not obviously in their nature — they're not designed to be democratic — you have an elected *Jirga* council.

In the paper that was given to us, and in your comments, you talk about the need for social and political rebuilding that must go hand in hand with the expanded security mission. We have had a lot of discussion about the military role. Can you expand on how you see the social and political rebuilding, particularly in terms of the elements you would be suggesting concerning the development of a democratic values curriculum?

That would be my first question.

Mr. David Donovan: Sure.

I don't know if the committee has had a chance to meet with Grant Kippen. He wrote a paper for our institute, which was coupled with the paper I wrote on transitions to democracy in Afghanistan. He has done a lot of work on that subject. If the committee gets a chance, he might be a useful person to call.

The Centre for the Study of Democracy conducted a major project, which was funded by CIDA, on providing democratic values curriculum to Ukraine. It is actually still ongoing under George Perlin. The centre proposed that a similar initiative should be undertaken whereby a democratic values curriculum is instituted in schools and through police academy training and military training and these sorts of areas. International experts would partner with local experts to develop that democratic curriculum locally.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: It's an interesting dichotomy here. On the election day for president, there was a huge voter turnout. Because there is not a tradition of voting, of democracy, how do you account for this? Is it the idea that people are interested in change? How do we relate the fact that there was a great turnout for voting, for something that really is so far removed from the average person in the village, yet they don't have this inculcation of democratic values at the village level?

Mr. David Donovan: The international community put a lot of effort into getting elections underway in Afghanistan, and the momentum was likely a contributing factor to the high turnout. Also, I should mention that some limited experience with democratic reform in Afghanistan occurred through the 1960s and 1970s with the experience of the development of constitutional monarchy. There were limited parliamentary elections. All the gains made under those reforms have since been washed away. But there is some experience there, so democracy isn't necessarily a foreign concept in Afghanistan; it's just that it faces huge hurdles to becoming solidified.

Robert Dahl is the eminent democratic theorist in political science. He distinguishes between normative democracy and procedural democracy. Sometimes we might get tricked a little bit by thinking that countries have undergone a democratic reform, but the roots of democracy haven't necessarily taken hold and what we see is procedural elections and these sorts of things. It takes time for the seeds of democracy to take root in a more normative or meaningful sense.

In Taiwan, for example, the ROC initially allowed local elections to take place on a limited basis. Eventually it came to mayoral elections and then finally to presidential elections, but that whole process took over 50 years. And admittedly Taiwan had more favourable circumstances than Afghanistan does today.

● (0925)

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: But that bottom-up approach is much more likely to take root.

Mr. David Donovan: Exactly. That's the lesson Tom Axworthy has been forwarding, and I tend to agree with this, that if you start at the local levels what happens through the procedural aspect is people start voting. Then, as in Taiwan, for example, the government cracked down on opposition movements. As political parties and opposition movements started forming their own parties, the authoritarian regime cracked down and then people revolted even more because they had become accustomed to voting and over time developed that sense of democratic purpose through what began as a very shallow procedural measure.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: At some point, could you talk to us about if economic development is a precursor to democratic reform in terms of policy-makers in places such as Afghanistan, what should we be doing that we're not doing currently, in terms of making sure that this base — and I'm again going back to the village level in terms of employment and security... How could we better focus that?

Mr. David Donovan: I'm not an economist, but a lot of the studies I've been reading have focused on areas such as micro-credit, small loans to women in villages to start local businesses, and that sort of thing. To be sure, there's a lot of academic literature on the links between economic development and democratic development. They don't necessarily go hand in hand, but usually democratic development doesn't occur without economic development.

In Afghanistan you're starting from such a low point. The GDP is something like $600 or $700 per capita, which is the lowest of the low. So you have to start from a low level and move up. That will take a long time. We also need to temper our expectations, I think, about how much can be developed in Afghanistan versus their starting point now.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Donovan.

Madame Lalonde, *pour sept minutes*.

● (0930)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Welcome, Mr. Donovan.

I did not read your entire text closely, but concentrated more on certain parts of it that interested me more, particularly your conclusion, which is close to being pessimistic. I would like you to explain where there still might be light at the end of the tunnel.

Right before the end, in the French version, you state the following:

> Importantly, however, the time to create significant changes through democratization is finite, and efforts must be sustained over the long term to achieve success.

This means that we must be extremely patient.

Your conclusion is as follows:

> [...] achieving sustainable democracy in Afghanistan is one of the more complex and difficult problems in the world. We should measure our expectations against that reality.

I imagine that you would not go so far as to say that we should leave Afghanistan. Could you please explain.

[*English*]

Mr. David Donovan: I came to that conclusion from interviews and with people on the ground in Afghanistan, and after reading a lot of academic literature on democracy and democratic transitions and international reports from the OECD and these sorts of organizations.

I have the quote somewhere in the paper—I think it was from an OECD report in 2003—saying something like Afghanistan represents the most miserable of political circumstances and states in the world. It's sort of coming to grips with reality when you're talking about making an economic transition to capitalism or a democratic transition. Some of the largest problems in the world are taking place in Afghanistan. Drug cultivation and so on contribute to most of the economy.

But at the same time, Grant Kippen's companion paper to my study, which was more about context and background to manage expectations, talks extensively about the electoral process and how big a success it was. The presidential elections were an overwhelming success, compared to the context within which they were undertaken.

I don't want to come across as saying that anything we do there in democratic reform is useless. Rather, I'd like to say that basically we're starting from scratch—yes, you're right, not necessarily from scratch. There are some historical connotations for democratic reform in Afghanistan, and the electoral process has also been significant. That there is a lot of work to do is basically what I want to get across.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: I am sharing my time with Ms. Barbot, but I have another small question.

The counter-insurgency aspect somewhat complicates things. One general stated that if the Afghans do not soon see the fruits of the reconstruction effort, 70% of them will move to the side of the Taliban.

What is your view?

● (0935)

[*English*]

Mr. David Donovan: Well, I'm not on the ground in Afghanistan, so I think I would have a hard time commenting with regard to sympathies for the Taliban and that type of thing.

To be sure, there has to be sustained support through electoral processes. I'd like to see more, and I think Tom Axworthy and our centre agree that we'd like to see more done in the role of democratic education in Afghanistan. The military aspect is necessary, of course, to provide security for humanitarian aid, but there could be a lot more work done on instilling democratic values, on making sure that's done with regard to the local context, and on developing a democratic values curriculum with local officials on the ground, with local academics and local universities.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Donovan.

Madame Barbot, you have a little over a minute.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ): In today's context, where Canada is more committed to the war effort than to that of democratic development — that is our impression, in any event —, could you tell us what kind of work Canada should undertake, if it so desires, according to what you have written, in order to be the leader in Afghanistan? How, therefore, should this leadership be exercised? What must change in Canada's present role in order to play that role?

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Donovan.

Mr. David Donovan: As I mentioned before, development of a democratic values curriculum is something that Canada could do. Through the Centre for the Study of Democracy we saw that be a success in the Ukraine, and a similar model could be applied to Afghanistan.

The Chair: Merci.

Mr. Goldring, and then Mr. Casey—split time.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Donovan, in your paper — which you had mentioned previously here — you say the following with regard to some years past:

> A Political Parties Act was effectively stalled by the king and failed to materialize...Because there were no political parties, the functioning of the Parliament was inefficient...

Now, in our studies we've had many people say, when we talk about democracy, that it's a very difficult thing to design. The suggestion is that there's a favouring of flexible democracy design. That may or may not include what we think of from day to day that we should have, such as political party bodies.

With a society like Afghanistan's, which has gone through a long history of foreign intrusions... As a matter of fact, even the border is by design, not by community. It separates communities.

Is there a possibility that in a unique situation like Afghanistan's, their form of elders councils and tribal councils would be an effective way to bring them in under some kind of overall parliamentary governance, utilizing some of their customary approaches to governance? Is there a possibility that your democracy approaches are flexible enough to incorporate that?

Mr. David Donovan: Yes, and I think that's key. Probably one of the most important functions is recognizing local context—

● (0940)

Mr. Peter Goldring: And a country's customs and culture.

Mr. David Donovan: Yes, exactly—culture, history, all those aspects.

In creating a democracy Canada institute, we not recommending that Canada export Canadian democracy. We want to foster democratic growth in other countries.

To speak to your point, for a lot of the party foundations that are associated with the domestic political parties we see in, say, Sweden and Germany—their socialist party, or the Christian Democratic Party or whatever—if they're going to do democracy work in certain developing countries, they find that when they get there, or ahead of time, there aren't any parties that they can work with. For example, there's no Christian Democratic Party in country X.

So they have to alter their approaches and foster democratic development in regard to the local context.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Now, along with that feeling, you've mentioned some of the other things that go along with democracy development and are very much a pillar of it. Security has been mentioned, economic success, poverty reduction, and better governance of the country itself. You had mentioned that you're not an economist, and you spoke about the micro-managing or micro-financing, which is an essential component. But from a larger perspective of improving the economic success of the country overall, it's being said that what they really need is family-sustaining jobs on a large scale. This means industrial or business development going along with it too.

Is not the democratic development of a party level, and what you've been theorizing and promoting, part of four or five other very essential elements, and that you really have to look at all of those four or five various elements in each individual country?

Mr. David Donovan: Yes, I think that's true. With Taiwan, for example, they had all the right preconditions, strong economic reform, etc., to allow for democracy to take hold. There was stability there. So yes, I think you're right in saying they have to be looked at together.

Mr. Peter Goldring: You mentioned Ukraine. It has some 45 political parties. Mexico for 80 years effectively had one political party. Zero is too few, and 45 is too many. Both create problems by approaching it that way.

How would you promote political party development on a party-by-party basis in a country that has 45 political parties? I think that would be very problematic. You might be interfering with the political progress that they're making. Would it not be better to promote this party development on a collective basis to all who wish to be informed of development?

Mr. David Donovan: Yes, I think so. International IDEA, for example, has a political party assistance branch, but they're not actually going out and developing parties in other countries. They're supporting the parties that exist through comparative information about how parties function and that sort of thing.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Donovan.

Mr. Casey, very quickly, please.

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Thank you.

First of all, I want to compliment you on your paper. It's amazing how much meat there is in this paper. Almost every word has meaning.

It confirms or reinforces a concern I have that it's hard to encourage democracy in countries like Afghanistan. You say there are 30 languages spoken, and "Afghanistan's ethnic groups tend to consider themselves to be largely distinct from one another, and generally inhabit different regions of the country." It must make it a huge challenge to develop a democracy as we know it, or even close to how we know it.

My question was going to be, is there a precedent for a country like Afghanistan, where there are 30 ethnic groups or whatever and they occupy certain specific regions of the country? Is there a precedent where a country has gone from the type of government they've always had to a democracy? Then I read a little further, and it says that many countries that have made steps towards democracy have "skilfully used a measure of state-monitored political openness to promote reforms that appear pluralistic but function to preserve autocracy". So you answered the question.

Is there a precedent for a country like Afghanistan becoming a democracy, even close to what we consider a democracy?

● (0945)

Mr. David Donovan: None that come immediately to mind. I think the point I made in the paper that you touched on is sometimes there are liberal reforms that are scaled back or they are half-measures, but other times they can stick. As I said before, Afghanistan does have some experience with democracy in the establishment of a constitutional monarchy, and there were parliamentary elections in the 1960s. So there are certain elements of democratic development, but they haven't taken hold.

Mr. Bill Casey: Is there another country you can think of that has gone through the process we're hoping will work in Afghanistan?

Mr. David Donovan: No, there are none that I can think of. There have probably been very few cases that have had the amount of international support Afghanistan has right now.

A lot of theorists will say we should maintain the support and enhance it over the long term. I don't know how long it would take, but in Taiwan it took 50 years. Who knows how long it will take in Afghanistan? I think the timetable has to be long.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Donovan.

Madam McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Thank you very much for your paper, which I've only had a chance to skim. You may have actually been quite concrete about some recommendations, but I'm hoping we can draw some out of you.

We've been involved in this focus on democracy development and democracy building for some time. As you know, we spent quite a bit of time in Europe and now in both Washington and the UN.

I would have to say that our findings are sobering, humbling, and downright depressing as to the prospects for success in Afghanistan. One of the things that was underscored this past week in the U.S. was how much the waters have been further poisoned by the Iraq fiasco.

Having said all of that, I think we're all very sensitive to the fact that the desperate conditions in Afghanistan plead for international response. On an economic level, there's the fact that one out of five children don't even reach the age of five, and 70% of the population is malnourished. The current government is very urban-bound, when 90% of the population is rural, and so on.

My question really goes to the issue of whether a lot of the focus and a lot of the attention on elections, as if it were a kind of precondition and the be-all and end-all of democracy, isn't in fact a curse in a situation like Afghanistan, where you have ten million Pashtuns who are really excluded from any participation in peace-building, economy-building, democracy-building, or security-building. We have a recipe for disaster even before you deal with some of the other tribal wars, warlords, drug lords, and so on.

I guess my very direct question is this. Do you have specific recommendations that pertain not to the theory or to the studies but to the current practical realities in Afghanistan today? Are there about three or four points of emphasis that you feel should engage the Canadian government in the attempt to improve the conditions of the people of Afghanistan? Where does democracy-building fit into that?

Mr. David Donovan: On the first point, there has to be sustained security. All the people I've spoken to and all the research I've done lead me to believe that you can't have democratic development without stability, and stability has to come from security.

Economic development is another point that's obviously been mentioned. It's very difficult to achieve.

A third point is the establishment of a democratic values curriculum. I think it's something Canada could take a leading role in.

I know George Perlin came to speak before the committee in October. He still runs the Ukraine democratic development project that the Centre for the Study of Democracy undertook. I think something Canada could do would be to model that project for Afghanistan.

To get back to your point on the focus on elections and whether or not it's positive, as I mentioned, there's the procedural aspect of democracy, which at first can be shallow. But over time it can lead to a demand for more meaningful democratic development, taking the route of the more normative aspects of democracy, rather than simply the procedural aspects.

● (0950)

The Chair: There's one minute left.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Can you conceive of sustained stability and meaningful security being attained in Afghanistan, with the continuing lack of any real representation of or participation by ten million Pashtun, and without taking a regional approach, given the potential for destabilization of various kinds from surrounding countries in the region?

Mr. David Donovan: Yes, it's obviously going to be very difficult to secure all those aspects. But the democratic values curriculum is one way to get at fostering a more deep-seated democratic belief in the country. And we're there. We could start it in our PRT, through Kabul University or these sorts of things. It's obviously a difficult problem, but I think there are small steps that could be taken in democratic development.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: I guess my question is whether small steps begin to get at the really big issues that seem to stand in the way of any possibility of the remotest success.

Mr. David Donovan: There has been success in terms of electoral outcomes and voter turnout and these sorts of things. It's only been two or three years since the presidential elections, and then only about two years since the legislative elections. That's a very short timeframe, and most people will say that any sort of timeframe will have to be in the decades.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Donovan.

Mr. Casey, you have time for a really quick one, and then we have Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Bill Casey: I want to go back to this democracy issue again. Also, in your paper you said that the World Bank has indicated that Afghanistan... I'll quote here; it's quite amazing:

> ...Afghanistan, which has always been at the bottom of the poverty and social indicator rankings of countries, must now be considered the poorest, most miserable state in the world.

That must create incredible challenges in creating a democracy, when people can't find anything to eat or can't put a roof over their heads. So how can we best help create democracy in the poorest country in the world?

Mr. David Donovan: I've touched on that already. I think one thing that Canada can do is create a democratic values curriculum through universities, and foster that through the education curriculum. More people are going to school in Afghanistan now, especially women, so I think there's a lot of room to —

Mr. Bill Casey: So you're saying it should be in schools, not just in university but in schools from the ground up?

Mr. David Donovan: Yes. The Ukraine project targeted all sorts of areas: universities, colleges, police academies, military training, and the regular education system. And a lot of academics and teachers and government officials were brought to Queen's University in the mid-1990s and were given training seminars on democracy and democratic government, and then went back, and experts from Queen's and elsewhere — and this was sponsored through CIDA — helped them develop locally democratic values curricula in all sorts of areas.

● (0955)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Donovan.

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Thank you very much.

Some of the questions that have been coming out here deal with the forms of democracy. As Alexa said, elections are not the only route to that.

Let me challenge your conventional thinking. Many of these societies, for example Afghanistan, prior to being colonized and everything, had their own forms of government, their own forms of local structure that for centuries had worked very well. In all the debates that we are seeing, nobody ever refers to democracy as getting down to looking at whether we build on those models of — call them democratic values — human rights and the ability to have women's equal rights and things like that, which are called strong values across. Nevertheless, the basis for all these things would be what existed there before.

All the documentation that we see and everything we see, including yours and everybody else's, says we've got to go have a democracy. You just mentioned building Afghanistan from scratch. There existed a society prior to that. There existed a system prior to that, which may have certain values we don't agree with, but which we can build on.

Why is nobody moving into that arena, picking up there and building it from there? Doing so, in my point of view, would have a better chance of success in that particular region. Can we not have our kind of democracy, but...

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Obhrai.

Perhaps on the same thing, is it possible to have that type of governance at more of a local level, or municipal or county level? We're not necessarily talking about the whole country.

Mr. David Donovan: Sure. As we saw with our study in Taiwan, I think the local level is where democracy really takes root. It took a long time to build up democratic values through local elections and the elections were really what drove the democratic transition. People came to rely on the elections as an outlet for political expression and over time different opposition factions learned how to use the elections to their favour and eventually that trickled up to open presidential elections.

On your point, which is why can't Afghanistan develop their own indigenous democratic form of government, I called my paper "Afghanistan: Democratization in Context" specifically because I wanted to reference the fact that Afghanistan does have experience with liberalization and certain democratic aspects. Before 9/11 and everything, they had their own process of developing *loya jirgas*, and parliaments, and this sort of thing.

What I mean when I say they are building from scratch is that they've gone through two or three decades of sustained conflict where all of those reforms that they had developed on their own had been basically washed away. I don't know the exact figure off the top of my head, but I think there are four million or so Afghan refugees who have left the country since the 1960s and 1970s. So when I say starting from scratch, I don't mean there's no tradition of liberal values or human rights or democratic values. It's just that today, at this point, all those gains have been washed away, so we have to start building again.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Donovan. That pretty well concludes the time that we have available for you to be here. We appreciate your attendance and your frank answers and your presentation.

I would encourage all committee members that if they haven't seen his paper, not just the statement but *Transitions to Democracy—Afghanistan*, which, as Mr. Casey has referenced, is a very good study, a very good read, please do read it.

We will suspend for a few moments to give our guests the opportunity to leave or to leave the table and we will welcome our other guests. Let us do this as quickly as possible please.

● _____ (Pause) _____

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● (1005)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order. I remind you that we have committee business on the schedule today, which we'll try to take around 10:45 or 10:50.

In our second hour we're pleased to have the Honourable Warren Allmand, president of World Federalists of Canada; and Fergus Watt, executive director. We'll also hear from the Canadian Coalition for Democracies, Naresh Raghubeer, executive director; and Mr. David Harris, who is not a stranger to Parliament Hill and the security issues we face.

These presentations are in conjunction with our study on democracy.

Mr. Allmand, please begin. Welcome back. It's always good to have you here. You know the way we operate. You can make opening comments, and then we'll have some questions from our committee.

Hon. Warren Allmand (President, World Federalist Movement—Canada): Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, on behalf of the Canadian section of the International World Federalist Movement, let me say we appreciate this opportunity to contribute to the committee's examination of Canada's role internationally in promoting democratic development.

I'm making this presentation not only as president of the World Federalists of Canada, but also based on my experience of 31 years as a member of Parliament, and five years as the president of the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, now known as Rights and Democracy. I'm also on the boards of CANADEM, the international civil liberties monitoring group; and the aboriginal rights commission of KAIROS.

The World Federalist Movement of Canada is one of the 35 national and regional citizen-based world federalist organizations. World federalists support the application of democratic federalism to world affairs in order to advance the rule of law and promote a more accountable framework of global governance.

Today we'll touch on four subjects as briefly as we can: the international political context for democracy promotion; the essential principles and constituent elements of democratic development; some observations and guideposts for Canadian policy and programs, including the role with civil society; and democracy promotion and democratization of global governance institutions.

I now call on Fergus Watt, our executive director, to speak on the international environment for democratic development.

Mr. Fergus Watt (Executive Director, World Federalist Movement - Canada): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Many of your witnesses, as well as some of the expert commentators published on the democracy promotion section of the Foreign Affairs Canada website, have remarked that democracy promotion has become such a controversial vocation for governments.

President Bush has been outspoken about the importance of spreading democracy as a cornerstone of his foreign policy, but in many parts of the world democracy promotion is associated with regime change or other unwelcome interferences in the daily lives and security of citizens.

We do not want to dwell on this aspect; it's obvious. However, the point worth highlighting is the continuing broad international acceptance of democracy as an ideal form of governance. Even while the activities of some governments in the name of democracy promotion have become more controversial, the underlying support among the world's citizenry for democracy itself continues to grow.

The standing committee's background document for this study on democratic development includes a list of questions under review. One we note in our brief is the question about whether the world is moving toward acceptance of global principles of democracy, similar to the development of international human rights standards.

In the appendices to our brief we reference a study by Professor Roy Lee at Columbia, who is also the former director of legal affairs at the United Nations. His study comprehensively documents the growing acceptance by the international community of the principles and practices of democratic governance. This may be helpful for your research staff in preparing the report. I believe it's one of the most comprehensive documents on the normative growth and acceptance of the principles of democratic governance.

● (1010)

Hon. Warren Allmand: Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, what do we mean by democracy, and what are we trying to accomplish by democratic development?

At Rights and Democracy, where I was president for five years, democracy was much more than free, fair, and regular elections. In evaluating democracies, we had developed ten indicators: firstly, free, fair, and regular elections, including a multi-party system; second, full respect for all human rights, including minority rights and gender equality; three, full respect for the rule of law; four, an independent judiciary; five, an independent legislature; six, an equitable distribution of wealth; seven, control of the military and police by the civil authority; eight, public accountability and an ongoing process for consultation; nine, transparency and access to information; and ten, a free and active civil society.

Consequently, we don't have an ideal democracy when a freely elected majority suppresses a minority, when a freely elected majority does not respect the rule of law, or when they corrupt the justice system.

Briefly, we would define democracy as a political system that is based on the freely expressed will of the people that fully respects the entire family of human rights. Democracy is a political system through which human rights achieve their full expression. Democracy should not be confused with good governance nor with a free market economy, both of which might be desirable but not essential elements of democracy.

It is our view that you can't have democracy without human rights, and you can't have human rights without democracy. Human rights and democracy always advance together.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights includes the principles of democratic elections in article 21, freedom of expression in article 19, and the freedom of peaceful assembly and association in article 20. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights includes the same rights, but more explicitly in articles 1, 18, 19, 21, 22, 25, and 27. They are also included in article 23 of the American Convention on Human Rights, under the OAS, and in the American declaration on human rights in article 20. The Vienna declaration of 1993 stated in article 8 that “Democracy, development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.”

Therefore, this broad concept of democracy should be the goal of democratic development, if we are serious about implanting a true democracy in other parts of the world and in our own part of the world.

The second question is, what are the methods of pursuing democratic development? As stated above, the best approach to democratic development is based on the premise that full respect for the entire body of human rights is a necessary condition of a fully functioning democracy.

At Rights and Democracy, we developed a three-step framework approach to democratic development. The three steps are as follows.

First is a study on the status of democracy in a specific country, using the ten indicators I mentioned, to evaluate the democratic situation in that country.

Second, a report on this study is distributed to a wide range of civil society representatives and government officials in the country concerned, who are then invited to discuss the report at a conference, where they can criticize, modify, or add to the provisions in the report. They then agree on a set of recommendations flowing from the study in the conference that are geared to improving the democratic situation in their country.

Third, steps are then taken to program the implementation of the recommendation from phases one and two. The implementation of various recommendations will be assigned to different civil society and government offices, including international ones.

A high priority in the process is the development and strengthening of civil society in said country. An active and free civil society is a key element in determining whether an effective democracy exists. To have a strong democracy, we must have a deeply entrenched commitment to human rights and democracy to the extent that civil society will defend and promote these rights against any attack by governments or other power elites.

● (1015)

We define civil society as the sum of all non-family institutions that are autonomous and independent of the state, and capable of influencing public opinion and policy. This would include NGOs, unions, churches, business associations, universities and academia, professions, media, and political parties.

It is fundamental that this democratic development process should only be pursued with partners in the target country, and through their invitation. A certain level of cooperation in the host country is essential, and priorities must be set within those countries.

In this context, I strongly encourage that this standing committee recommend to the Government of Canada that it also incorporate in its democratic development policy robust procedures for consultation with civil society, both in Canada and internationally.

Democratic development should be a specific objective of Canadian foreign policy. It should be coordinated by some central office in the government, but may be carried out by Canadian government or civil society agencies such as — and these are only examples — Elections Canada, CIDA, the Canadian Human Rights Commission, Radio Canada International, and then on the civil society side, NGOs, unions, churches, professions, and also by parliamentarians through their various interparliamentary associations and international exchanges.

It should, of course, be carried out, as I said, with partners in the focus country. It may also be carried out multilaterally, through the United Nations, the Organization of American States, the Commonwealth and Francophonie, the OSCE, and others.

Democratic charters have been developed by the Commonwealth. You have the Harare Commonwealth Declaration of 1991 and the Millbrook Commonwealth action program on the Harare Declaration of 1995, by the Francophonie; the Bamako Declaration of 2000; and by the Organization of American States, the Inter-American Democratic Charter of 2001, which got its start at the conference in Quebec City; and also, of course, by the Council of Europe.

The Organization of American States also has a unit for the promotion of democracy, established in 1990 and adopted as the Washington Protocol in 1997.

I will now go to Fergus for something on the context of international organizations.

Mr. Fergus Watt: Thank you.

The last section of our presentation focuses on the importance of an enabling international environment for democracy promotion.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights reminds us, in article 28,

> Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

There are a number of historical examples we might point to. For example, the European Union has expanded horizontally, bringing in more countries, and vertically, becoming itself gradually a more democratic pan-European institution. The OSCE, following the end of the Cold War, when democracy was spreading to the countries of the former Soviet Union, itself deepened its institutional basis and created a more effective parliamentary assembly, its commissions, and so on. So the international enabling order is important in terms of democracy promotion multilaterally.

Democracy promotion is often considered as an activity affecting governance at the national level only; however, the enabling international environment, as I've said, is one that not only promotes democracy, but is also becoming increasingly democratic. Increasing adherence to the principles of democratic governance nationally proceeds in lockstep with the democratization of these international institutions above the level of the state.

I guess the benchmark internationally for this line of analysis was the former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's agenda for democratization. There's some discussion of his document in our brief.

Lastly, I would mention one possible initiative that parliamentarians here may want to consider. There is a campaign under way to create a more fulsome parliamentary assembly at the United Nations, and a conference is being organized in Geneva this fall under the patronage of Mr. Boutros-Ghali himself. There is an appeal that some 318 parliamentarians from over 70 countries have signed. I believe one or two members of this committee have signed it. That is appended to our brief.

That is just one example of ways in which parliamentarians can be involved as well in the deepening of democratic institutions multilaterally.

Thank you.

● (1020)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Watt.

Hon. Warren Allmand: I just have a short conclusion.

The Chair: Okay, very quickly.

Hon. Warren Allmand: In conclusion, I think we must recognize that if we are to promote democracy abroad, we must continue to improve it at home. We cannot convince others when we continue to tolerate racial profiling, security certificates, or the marginalization of aboriginal peoples, the disabled, the mentally ill, and the elderly. In other words, if we're going to promote democracy abroad, we have to continue to improve it at home.

Finally, we must promote democracy as a universal value, not just a Canadian or western value. As I mentioned before, democracy is already a key value in the International Bill of Human Rights, which is supported by over 150 countries of the world out of 191 in the United Nations.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Allmand.

We're always working to improve our democracies at home. I noticed you mentioned a lot of different groups. You didn't mention the Senate, but maybe we'll pick up on that later.

Mr. Raghubeer, please.

Mr. Naresh Raghubeer (Executive Director, Canadian Coalition for Democracies): My name is Naresh Raghubeer. I am the executive director of the Canadian Coalition for Democracies.

I brought 20 copies of my presentation with me. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, they were not translated into French this time, but I've left them with the clerk.

First of all, the Canadian Coalition for Democracies would like to thank the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development for the opportunity to meet with you this morning, as you undertake this major study of Canada's role in international support for democratic development around the world.

Joining me today are David Harris, senior fellow for national security with the Canadian Coalition, and Clement Mugala, founder and director of Trace Aid. Both Mr. Harris and Mr. Mugala will be prepared to answer questions following our presentation.

Before I begin, allow me to tell you a little about the Canadian Coalition for Democracies and Trace Aid.

Founded in 2003, the Canadian Coalition for Democracies is a non-partisan, multi-ethnic, multi-religious organization of concerned Canadians dedicated to national security and the protection and promotion of democracy at home and abroad. CCD focuses on research, education, and media publishing to build a greater understanding of the importance of national security and a pro-democracy foreign policy.

Clement Mugala is the founder and director of Trace Aid. He has worked throughout Africa as a senior executive in state companies and has been a witness to different types of unethical business practices perpetrated by African bureaucrats, politicians, suppliers, and contractors. To quote Mr. Mugala:

> While in public the government gave an appearance of commitment to fighting corruption, in reality, these same politicians were at the forefront of looting the national treasuries and stashing the stolen money into the banks accounts of the developed countries.

While the Canadian Coalition for Democracies supports Canada's willingness to help those in genuine need around the world, we are concerned about the effectiveness of Canada's development assistance and the lack of accountability to the Government of Canada and to the Canadian taxpayers whose money is being spent.

CCD is also concerned about the refusal of CIDA to acknowledge deficiencies in its aid program and its lack of willingness to demand accountability from governments that actively work against the interests of Canada and her democratic allies. Beyond our concerns of Canadian aid dollars being wasted as a result of corruption and poor management, we're even more concerned about those situations in which Canadian tax dollars may actively be used to promote hatred and incitement to violence and to undermine Canadian interests.

CCD is also concerned that CIDA, with a budget of over $3.1 billion, is not prepared to establish effective strategies for promoting good governance programs that encourage responsibility, accountability, transparency, as well as the advancement of Canadian values of rule of law, free media, independent judiciaries, open and accountable government, gender equality, equal treatment and respect for minorities, religious freedom, and free and fair elections.

To address our concerns, let us look at a few examples.

On supporting corrupt governments, according to the international policy statement released by the previous government, Canada was prepared to focus the majority of its financial assistance on 25 countries. These are the countries of CIDA's aid programming. Of these nations, Freedom House identified 19 as dictatorships or unfree nations. All 25 were identified as nations where corruption is rampant.

Not only did such facts fail to deter CIDA's investment in these countries, but little to no effort was made to oblige local governments and aid agencies to demonstrate that moneys reached their intended recipients and produced intended results.

The lack of accountability and transparency runs counter to the Government of Canada's recent commitment to accountable government, as expressed through the Federal Accountability Act. Not only is CIDA acting irresponsibly with regard to its programs, it is demonstrating a flagrant lack of respect for Canadian taxpayers and an indifference to the plight of the needy, both of which run contrary to the spirit and intention of government policy.

On supporting China, last year Canada provided approximately $56 million in foreign aid to China, a country with the world's largest army, a GDP of $7 trillion, and 700 missiles aimed at peaceful democratic Taiwan.

A fair amount of foreign aid was directed to training communist Chinese judges, who rule in a communist system of state-controlled law. There can be no rationale or reasonable excuse as to why Canada continues to train Chinese judges, knowing full well that these state-appointed judges are and can only be responsible to Beijing first and foremost.

● (1025)

Rule of law does not exist for Chinese or foreigners. The Chinese government, through its courts, actively persecutes minorities such as Tibetans and Falun Gong practitioners. State-enforced punishment includes forced re-education, physical torture, imprisonment without trial, and execution for the purpose of for-profit organ harvesting.

It is useful to note that unlike China, democratic India has of late declined aid as the basis of its economic and social progress. India recognizes that strength and prosperity are a result of using foreign aid as a means to build essential infrastructure and institutions, not a perpetual right that invariably leads to permanent dependency.

On Arab Palestinian aid, Canada has provided over $390 million to the Arab Palestinians since 1993. CIDA's continuing investment from its limited resources into providing for Palestinian development is a textbook example of betraying hardworking Canadians. Over the past 14 years, the return on Canadian aid to Palestinians has little to show in terms of gains for freedom and democracy. Sadly, our aid has done much more to perpetuate a terrorist death cult and internecine warfare as various factions seek to outdo each other in hatred directed at Israel, the lone oasis of values that Canadians cherish in a part of the world where those values are under siege.

Should Canadian tax dollars support President Mahmoud Abbas, who governs under a charter that calls for the annihilation of Israel and whose armed faction, the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, is designated as an illegal terrorist organization in Canada? Should Canadian tax dollars fund UNRWA, whose connections to incitement and violence are well documented?

With respect to focused aid, CIDA can draw upon the history of Canadian aid disbursement. This history indicates that wide and non-strategically focused aid disbursements have been inefficient, ineffective, and provide little evidence that such provision of aid, anywhere, has broken the link between dependency and constraints on freedom and democracy.

Canadians generously contributed the amount of $425 million in emergency assistance and development funds to the Asia tsunami victims in 2004-05. To date, Canadians cannot be provided with a clean audit of where and how these funds were distributed and what measures of success follow as a result.

An example of focused and sustained aid would be to help Afghanistan recover from the ravages of war to its people and society. CCD counsels that the Government of Canada, through CIDA, make Afghanistan its top priority in the greater Middle East and South Asia region, complementing the sacrifices of our brave soldiers in the NATO-UN mission to Afghanistan.

Focused aid by CIDA to a few carefully selected countries where our assistance can make the critical difference in breaking vicious cycles of dependency and non-democratic rule would send a message that Canadian assistance is not untied. In other words, Canadian aid will flow to countries where people and government become committed to overcoming poverty and build free and open societies. This will also meet our own accountability test and advance the cause of democracy, freedom, and hope for women and children, who are often the first to suffer.

In conclusion, CCD sees the work of this committee of Parliament to be extremely important. This is especially so given the over $3.1 billion managed annually by CIDA and the Government of Canada's policies and statements about accountability and transparency.

We acknowledge that CIDA is implementing a new four-part agenda for aid effectiveness, which includes a strategy focus of aid programming; strengthening program delivery; effective use of the agency's resources, including strengthening field presence; and clear accountability for results. However, this initiative does not satisfy the reasonable test of political, bureaucratic, and parliamentary accountability required under the Federal Accountability Act.

All of this leads CCD to call on members of the standing committee for the following:

First, ensure that the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development has the authority, as recommended by the Honourable Justice Gomery, to retain research personnel and legal administrative staff and experts as needed to monitor the work of the department.

Ensure that all aid provided by the Government of Canada meets the accountability requirements of the Federal Accountability Act.

● (1030)

Ensure that the Auditor General of Canada is able to follow aid dollars and independently audit all recipients of aid, whether domestic or international, government or non-governmental.

Ensure that the Canadian development assistance does not support corrupt governments, bureaucrats, or those who support, glorify, sponsor, or promote terrorism.

Ensure that recipient nations justify and obtain approval for aid from their parliaments before Canadian development assistance is released.

Direct CIDA to take to heart the example being set by India as a democratic reformer and adopt in full measure the idea of development as freedom, based on India's experience promoted by Amartya Sen, the Nobel Prize winner in economics.

Direct CIDA to support local NGOs that advance the strategic aims of development as freedom and direct Canadian development aid to be disbursed as an incentive to recipient countries to advance freedom.

Focus Canadian development aid on a few nations, such as Afghanistan, where we can make a valuable and effective contribution.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you to both groups for your presentations.

We will go to the first round. Mr. Eyking, please.

I would like to suggest too that we have committee business. We will only get in one round, so make sure your questions are succinct and we can hear the answers. There will only be one round.

Mr. Eyking.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. These documents have not been translated into French. Why?

[*English*]

The Chair: We just received them this morning.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: You have just received them. It might have been worthwhile to hear the witnesses once their documents had been translated.

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes. We will get them translated as soon as possible.

Mr. Eyking.

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is changing from the start. I wanted to ask Mr. Allmand quite a few questions, especially about the trip we just came back from.

My role is CIDA critic, and I really have to address some of your comments on CIDA and your constructive criticism of CIDA, because we are concerned about CIDA. Our funding is increasing every year, and we're hoping that over the next few years we'll be up to $5 billion, but my sense from you is that more money is not going to help the situation and that CIDA is in need of a total overhaul, the way it's managed, the way it distributes funds.

Can you elaborate on that? Should we be following other models in the world, other countries? If we're going to focus on fewer regions and give more money, is that...? Apparently it's not the right way to go. I think you even mentioned how many regions we are going to help that have dictators, that you are almost implying are a waste of time. Can you elaborate on some of that, where we should be going with CIDA? Does it need an overhaul? Is there a better model?

● (1035)

Mr. Naresh Raghubeer: I'll address the first part and the second part regarding dictators and so on. I'll refer to my colleague, Clement, to help address that, based on his first-hand experience.

In terms of a model we could follow, Norway targets its foreign aid and its programming to a few specific countries. Norway has invested heavily in Sri Lanka and Kenya to build democracy and freedom there and it has invested heavily to promote a peace movement or a peaceful dialogue between the two parties in Sri Lanka. I think we could look at other nations and learn from them.

With CIDA aid as it is expanding, I think the Parliament of Canada owes Canadians and itself the role of ensuring that CIDA funding falls in line with the Federal Accountability Act, which was just passed, and that all CIDA aid can be audited and tracked by Canada's Auditor General to guarantee accountability to Canadians.

In terms of the domestic situation with aid and certain countries, I'll ask—

Hon. Mark Eyking: To follow up on what you said, even though it sounds like the right thing to do, accountability for every dollar spent by the Canadian taxpayers, do you see a danger of it hamstringing aid going out where CIDA would be so concerned about every dollar that there would be no risk out there any more, that we would go with the safe—is that a concern?

Mr. Naresh Raghubeer: Sir, the federal government spends over $600 billion annually, and there's no great concern when the Auditor General is obliged to audit that amount of money. Parliament has just approved the Federal Accountability Act, which raises the bar for accountability for all departments of the Government of Canada. It shouldn't raise any alarm or any concern to want to apply those same standards to CIDA.

Mr. Clement Mugala (Canadian Coalition for Democracies): To be very brief and to the point, the aid is addressing the symptoms. It's looking at what the problems are, including health issues, education issues, and things like those, but it's not addressing the fundamentals. The fundamentals that have been spoken about by Naresh are issues of transparency, accountability, responsibility, corruption, and all these things.

If you look at CIDA, they have their programs and their statements on what they want to do, but you don't see evidence of them doing those things. For example, they talk about strengthening the accountability of institutions, but when you look at their aid, it's going toward things that don't strengthen those institutions.

At the end of the day, what you are saying is that you have a system that's corrupt, but you give it money and you expect it to deliver. In some cases, you know CIDA gives money to institutions that they can't audit for some reason. Because CIDA can't audit them, Canadians will never know how the money was used.

In short, what we're trying to say is that you should deal with the fundamentals, and then development aid will be effective. We support the idea that we should increase aid, but aid should be given in such a way that, although it's increasing, it's made effective. It has to reach the people for whom it's intended, and you have to be able to see the results of the aid.

Hon. Mark Eyking: Is that it? Do I have any more time?

The Chair: Mr. Eyking, you have more time, but I'm giving thirty or forty seconds at the end to Mr. Patry.

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): I have a comment for Naresh Raghubeer.

I totally disagree. I don't think what you said is fair, that it is not okay to restate old statements in general. Let's just say that Mr. Abbas and the Palestinian Authority didn't call for the annihilation of Israel. That paragraph of the Palestinian charter that you refer to was changed and voted out in 1995, during Mr. Clinton's visit to Gaza.

You say Canada should follow, in a sense, the Norway model. You just pinpointed that. I must say in reply to you that Norway is the greatest contributor to the Palestinians right now.

I just want to ask you one very specific question. Give me one example of where Canadian aid in Palestine contributed to a terrorist attack.

● (1040)

Mr. Naresh Raghubeer: First of all, let me address your false assumption that the paragraph in the Palestinian Authority charter was changed.

Mr. Bernard Patry: It was voted out.

Mr. Naresh Raghubeer: Mr. Patry, if the paragraph was not changed, would you, as a member of Parliament, change your position on that? I could refer you immediately to the website of the Palestinian Authority, where it has not been changed. Article 8, article 12, and article 19 of that charter are still there. I'll be happy to meet with you, and you and I can both go together, live on the Internet website, to visit it.

Mr. Bernard Patry: I don't take my notes from the Internet. I take them from the Palestinian Authority.

Mr. Naresh Raghubeer: I'm sorry, but their governing charter is their governing charter. It's their website. It's the Government of Palestine's website.

Mr. Bernard Patry: Answer my other question. I disagree with you about how Canadian aid has contributed to terrorist attacks.

Mr. Naresh Raghubeer: Canadian aid, sir, contributes in a number of ways. Our textbooks that Canada funds through UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, promote incitement against Israel, incitement to wipe Israel off the map. Those textbooks delegitimize Jews. When Palestinian teachers who are members of Hamas, the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, and Fatah promote and support *shahids*—these are suicide bombers who kill themselves and glorify terrorism—I think we have a concern.

The challenge here with CIDA is that CIDA is not allowed to audit UNRWA in order to provide parliamentarians with an accountable, honest impression of what's taking place in the Palestinian textbooks. A number of reports have been presented to the minister's office and to other offices, but our concern here is to give Parliament and to give the Auditor General the powers to audit this aid independently. Canada does not audit multilateral organizations, so you, as parliamentarians, do not have the opportunity to get the facts for yourselves. That's what we mean by—

Mr. Bernard Patry: I'm sorry. We have the opportunity because UNWRA people came in front of this committee, the foreign affairs committee, everything was discussed, and we were very pleased with their answers. The previous textbook might have contained what you said. As for the new textbook, I don't agree with what you said.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Patry, thank you. We're at nine minutes.

We have to go to Madame Barbot and Madame Lalonde.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: What I can say, following the statements that have just been made, is that in my view, any vision that divides the world between the good guys and the bad guys should be considered by us, as Canadians, with great caution. Human reality is much more nuanced than that, and any such statements are to my mind harmful to the work that we must do as parliamentarians. If we can be of any assistance, it is certainly not by siding with one to the detriment of the other, and in a way that is to me, in any event, inappropriate.

I would have a question for Mr. Allmand. We have many questions with regard to the very concept of democracy. You have mentioned elements that in your view would encourage an ideal democracy, and I understand. However, in reality, there is no State in the world that fits all of these characteristics, and you even went so far as to say that there is also work to be done locally to continue putting in place elements that would enhance greater democracy.

In your opinion, how should we go about working with those States that have what I might call lesser quality democracies? How can Canada define its role in the implementation of improved democracy, if you wish, through democratic development?

Hon. Warren Allmand: Madam, as I mentioned, more than 150 countries in the world have ratified the international convention on civil and privacy rights. This convention includes several provisions that are in support of democracy, the freedom to hold elections, the freedom of expression, the freedom of association, the freedom of assembly, the freedom of public assembly, etc. Unfortunately, despite the fact that it is not just Western countries that ratified it but also Latin American countries, African countries, Asian countries — 150 is a lot —, these countries have not always followed through on their commitments, nor even enforced the provisions they adopted, even within their own constitutions, because in several cases they have charters of rights.

As I mentioned, at Rights and Democracy, we have our own program. We had implemented it in eight countries at the time of my departure; there are perhaps a greater number of them now. We had been invited, along with the people, the NGOs or the unions in those countries, to implement a democratic development program using the ten indicators that we have mentioned. We determined what the problems were in those countries, for example Pakistan, Haiti, El Salvador, Peru, and we took note of the positive and negative aspects of their democracies. We prepared a report that was then discussed in the context of a major conference, not just with civil society, but also with government officials, members of Parliament, the police, the army, etc. The report was prepared by people in those countries with our support and financial assistance. They then built a program based upon the two first steps aimed at improving the situation. Today, the program belongs to Rights and Democracy, but my suggestion is that there be more coordination within the government of Canada.

● (1045)

[*English*]

We should have a central unit that would coordinate democratic development. It might include Rights and Democracy as one of its operators, but I also mentioned Elections Canada, CIDA, Radio Canada International, and so on. There could be many players on the Canadian side and many players on the side of the country in question that we want to deal with and that wants us to deal with them.

Finally, we should also work through multilateral programs. We can do so through the OAS, the OSCE, and so on, on democratic development, because sometimes with partners in other countries and partners in the countries that are the recipients of the assistance, you're more successful.

It takes a long time. I think the question was asked earlier, at the last session, “What do we do with countries that have, for a long time, dealt with things in a way that we would not consider democratic?” If we look at the history of Europe, in Europe they supported slavery for hundreds of years. They supported supreme monarchies for hundreds of years. There was a death penalty in Britain in the 19th century for about 25 crimes. Was that part of the culture of Europe? No.

These are universal values. The values in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are not just Canadian values. They're values that have been supported by people throughout the whole world, and we have to work together to bring them into force.

I also just want to apologize that our brief is not in French. We just finished it yesterday. We only have one staff person and we just got it this morning. I apologize that it wasn't here sooner, but we are very limited in our resources.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Allmand.

Madame Lalonde, very quickly.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: I must say that I was very disturbed by several of Mr. Naresh Raghubeer's statements.

I do not always defend CIDA. However, you stated that 19 of the 25 countries that CIDA has gone into were under the rule of dictators. One must not forget that a great number of countries are at present under-developed. These countries are headed by dictators, but there have already been democratic leaders in some of these countries after their liberation, which occurred everywhere in the 1960s. But by whom were their regimes often overturned? By the former colonial powers who preferred dealing with dictators. Today, the mining companies also find that more practical. When CIDA finds a way to help through education, not that of the governments but of the people, the idea is to help people survive. As a matter of fact, the World Food Programme and other international programs are financed by CIDA.

With regard to the Palestinians, if you know your history, you know that they find themselves where they are today because they were chased from their burnt villages when the State of Israel was created. One must take into account history in helping develop countries that are under-developed.

Forgive me, but I am angry.

● (1050)

[*English*]

The Chair: Madame Lalonde, I want to leave time for committee business. We cannot extend this forever, so please go very quickly.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: I have a short question for Mr. Allmand.

Mr. Allmand, you talked about broadening parliamentary democracy, and I am in full agreement with you. I am a member of the OSCE's parliamentary association, and it is just wonderful. However, I would like to know how we might participate in the United Nations parliamentarian initiative, because I believe that it too is wonderful.

Hon. Warren Allmand: There a numerous possibilities. Mr. Watt mentioned the possibility of an assembly that would be elected by the United Nations, similar to that which exists in the European Union. We could also participate more in the OAS. For example, Canada has not ratified the American Convention on Human Rights. We are not big players in this area. There are many other possibilities, but I know that you already have much to do.

[*English*]

Your table is pretty full right now, and the chairman is saying we're out of time.

The Chair: Yes, I have to cut this off. We're at ten minutes for the Bloc.

Madame Lalonde, I just keep giving the Bloc too much time.

Let's go to the government side, please. Mr. Casey.

Mr. Bill Casey: Thank you very much.

I have to tell you that when we first started this study, I wondered why we were doing it, and I thought this was going to be a boring project. But it's turned out to be one of the most interesting and stimulating things I've ever been involved with, so I envy you all being involved with it.

I have one question for Mr. Allmand and two for Mr. Raghubeer.

Mr. Allmand, you said that democracy development should be a key policy for the Government of Canada. If you were in the Canadian Tire store trying to convince people that Canada should spend money on this, what are the top three reasons you'd give them?

Hon. Warren Allmand: Well, if we don't develop democracy and human rights abroad — and I say they're interchangeable — it will soon affect us here. It will affect us through war and conflict. It will affect us through massive waves of refugees coming to our shores, as they did after the Vietnam War, as they did when they overthrew the government in Chile, and so on. We had thousands...They were good people; they came here.

But if we don't take care of human rights and democracy abroad, it will seriously destabilize the world and destabilize our own country and cost us much more in the long run in human lives and in everything — in culture, in business, in economic development, and so on. So I think it's in our basic interest to promote democracy and human rights, and I always put the two together.

Mr. Bill Casey: Thank you very much. Those are good reasons.

This is my other question. You painted a pretty negative picture of corruption and foreign aid. Ms. McDonough and I just came back from Kenya. We met with a dozen or maybe 15 local NGOs that asked us to please tell them how to be accountable, because they don't know how to be accountable. They don't know what the standards are. So do you see a role there for Canada on accountability training?

We also spoke with several groups that paid a big price, because money was held back because there were questions of accountability. People in hospitals suffered because of lack of health care and medication and things. How far do you go with that? Do you hold back money, even though it will help people?

Finally, you mentioned that we supply money to multilaterals. Should we stop doing that if we can't audit that money?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): You have his three questions, and you have 30 seconds for each answer.

● (1055)

Mr. Clement Mugala: Yes, the role of Canada in corruption training we feel is very much at the top of the agenda. Institutions have to be accountable. Parliament should have oversight of government and what they are doing, and we say that that should be at the top of the agenda. In fact, at Trace Aid, we are drawing up a training program for bureaucrats in these institutions to bring them to the forefront in fighting corruption within government departments.

Mr. Bill Casey: Is your organization developing that program?

Mr. Clement Mugala: We are developing a program, yes. So I agree with you that we need to be more or less in fourth gear to ensure that this is at the top of the agenda.

You asked whether emergency aid should be stopped, and I say no. People are suffering. But how do we direct that aid? Should we give it to the bureaucrats, who are going to put it in their pockets? Or should we give it to institutions like CARE Canada, which we know is a credible NGO. It delivers; it has gotten results.

So my answer would be to give them aid. It's an emergency, they need it, and the people are suffering. But give it to people who are going to deliver that aid and that are going to get results.

Mr. Bill Casey: What about multilaterals?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): That's it, Mr. Casey. We still have Madam McDonough and Mr. Goldring.

Go ahead, Madam McDonough, please. We have five minutes left.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have to say, the characterization of support for Mahmoud Abbas as — and I think I'm accurately quoting — "funding a terrorist death cult" causes me a great deal of concern about how counter-productive, provocative, and dead wrong many of the things I've heard from your organization today really are. But I don't want to pursue that.

I'd like to ask a question to both groups with respect to the government's — the government likes to call itself the new Conservative government — creation of the Office for Democratic Governance, which is now having funding rolled out to support its activities. My question is whether either of your organizations was consulted in the process of the creation of that new Office for Democratic Governance. And what would you hope would be the results of its creation?

Second, given the amount of focus the Canadian Coalition for Democracies has expressed about transparency, accountability, and so on, what is your position on Bill C-293, which this committee has been dealing with and which is largely inspired by the need for ensuring effectiveness, transparency, and greater accountability?

Mr. Naresh Raghubeer: I can take the first question, and I will ask Clement to speak about Bill C-293.

Regarding President Mahmoud Abbas, article 8 of their constitution states that "The Israeli existence in Palestine is a Zionist invasion..."—

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Excuse me, Mr. Chair, I have a point of order. I did not ask a question about that. I said I would like to ask two very specific questions, which I asked.

I would direct you to that request, please.

Mr. Naresh Raghubeer: I just want to correct the record, but I will do that by leaving a note.

The Chair: Actually, we don't have time to correct the record.

Mr. Naresh Raghubeer: Okay.

The Chair: We had better stick to the questions that are posed.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Bill C-293, and the new Office for Democratic Governance....

Mr. Naresh Raghubeer: We were not consulted regarding the creation of the Office for Democratic Governance. I believe that was an interdepartmental creation.

As for Bill C-293, Clement has written about this, and I will ask Clement to comment.

Mr. Clement Mugala: My comment on that is, in my own opinion, it is addressing the issues that we are trying to address — effectiveness in aid development. I would support the principle. I don't know about the mechanics of how it is going to work. I think that is before the committee. In principle, it embraces the issues that we are addressing.

The Chair: Mr. Watt had an answer on the other.

Mr. Fergus Watt: We can only address the consultation process. We were not formally asked for our views, but I'm involved in an international UN-related process, the international conference of new and restored democracies, and my work with officials in foreign affairs there led me to have numerous conversations about this process.

Your question raises a very good point, because the government has a democracy council, and that is its consultation mechanism. We feel it is deficient because it doesn't involve a sufficient number of civil society organizations. There are some very good organizations. Many of them have appeared before you: the Parliamentary Centre, CANADEM, Rights and Democracy, some government agencies, CIDA and IDRC. There is nothing wrong with consulting them.

To get critical feedback in a consultative process, you need to consult more than just the organizations that are also getting their funding from the government. You need to discuss bona fide civil society organizations. That is why we recommended a greater investment by Canada in democracy promotion, which also requires a more effective consultative process, one that includes more civil society organizations.

● (1100)

The Chair: I will give you an extra 30 seconds. You still have it.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: I would like to follow up on that point. You know that in the most recent budget there were actually cutbacks to the consultative processes, through DFAIT, with civil society, on a number of fronts, and also in terms of diplomacy-building. I wonder if you could comment on that. I don't want to put words in your mouth, but it seems like it is going in the opposite direction of what you are recommending.

Mr. Fergus Watt: The answer is you're right. It is worrisome. Many of the important achievements in Canadian foreign policy and also of the United Nations are the result of government and civil society partnerships. These don't always have to be expensive. In this information age, there is a lot you can do that doesn't cost a lot of money.

What is more important is the will to consult. It is important that civil society and government relations be an important part of this committee's purview. Government officials don't wake up and decide to consult civil society. It's a pain in the neck and they would rather avoid it, but they need to be told to do it. I am hopeful this committee would consider including something like this in its report and its study.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Watt.

I promised Mr. Goldring he could have the last 30 seconds. Go ahead.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Most would consider that Canada has been a democracy since 1867 — in the very beginning — yet I am looking at these ten indicators of democracy that you have here now, and many of those issues would not have applied through the years of Canada, from the rights, to women not having the vote. One of the difficulties that we have been seeing is perhaps we are trying to define democracy too tightly. What we should be doing, rather, is trying to define "democratic improvement", as opposed to some idealistic example of what a democracy is. As long as there is democratic improvement, that is the real goal.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Goldring.

Hon. Warren Allmand: Could I briefly answer?

Democracy is a canon of perfection you aspire to. It's like Christianity. There's no perfect democracy in the world, and there's no perfect Christian except one fellow. So it's something to aspire to. We can all improve, and we improve on those ten indicators I was referring to.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Allmand.

Thank you to both groups for coming today. We appreciate your input.

We are going to suspend and I'm going to ask the committee to stay. We're going to have ten minutes of committee business. We have a number of motions we want to deal with. We'll give the guests time to clear.

● _____ (Pause) _____

●

● (1105)

The Chair: Committee, we're going to move back to committee business here. I'm not certain how many motions we have. We have motions that go way back to the summer, but we for certain want to look at a number of motions.

The first one we want to deal with is Mr. Wilfert's motion, then Mr. Obhrai's motion, then Madam McDonough's motion.

Mr. Wilfert.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Chairman, would you like me to read it?

I move that the committee invite senior officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade responsible for the decision to close the Canadian consulates in Milan, Italy; St. Petersburg, Russia; as well as Fukuoka and Osaka, Japan, to appear before the committee by February 20, 2007 in order to examine the rationale, the cost, and implications of such a decision.

I put this forth, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, because in the Kansai region of Japan, for example, the Osaka area, with 25 million people, there's no question that in terms of outreach, in order to be able to trade and do business, this is the second-largest market out there. With this closure, which employs one Canadian and seven locals, with companies like Sony and Panasonic, I want to find out what the rationale is. I think it's very important: if we're going to be scaling back our operations in the second-largest market, I think this should be debated.

As far as Milan goes, Milan has four Canadians and 18 locals, and that consulate is a jumping-off point for much of the business in eastern Europe. We have heard, certainly, concerns raised on the Fukuoka and Osaka closures by Ambassador Numata, etc.

I could go on, Mr. Chairman, but in the interest of time, I will close there.

● (1110)

The Chair: I thank Mr. Wilfert for bringing this motion. It was on the order paper for a week ago Thursday.

My question is, does the February 20 date still apply?

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I could, Mr. Chairman, suggest February 22. The reason is that the closures are to take effect as of March 31, and if we're going to respond in any effective manner, I think we would need a month to be able to respond.

The Chair: So you might be open to a little change there?

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Yes.

The Chair: Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Chair, before I go into the merits and demerits of the motion, I wish to state at this time that I think this motion is actually out of order, because it is the Government of Canada that made the decision to close these consulates, not the officials of the department. It was the cabinet that made the decision. The motion is asking for the senior officials responsible for this decision, but they were not responsible for the decision; they had nothing to do with this decision. The decision was made by the government, and the department has nothing to do with the decision. Therefore, as it is worded, this motion is out of order.

The Chair: You may believe that the motion, as presented, is out of order. Indeed, the way this motion is written, they're calling, for the senior departmental officials who are responsible for the decision. You're saying it's cabinet's decision.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: And they were not responsible for the decision. Therefore, in calling the departmental officials, this motion is wrong, because they were not responsible for the decision.

The Chair: Are you proposing an amendment to that, then?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I'm not proposing anything. It's their motion. I'm not proposing anything.

The Chair: The wording of the motion is problematic in some ways. I think the date may also be a little bit problematic, given that we travelled last week and this was on for the week before.

Were you finished? They're going to want to look at a friendly amendment now.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I just want to say before I give my rationale and debate on this motion here—because I tell you, I want to debate on this motion—at this given time, this motion, as far as I'm concerned, is out of order.

The Chair: Maybe we can make it in order. I think there are some problems with who is responsible. Now, if you're saying that the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade...

Madam McDonough, you had a...

Ms. Alexa McDonough: I'd just like to propose a friendly amendment. I think we're all concerned about the issue, and we don't want to get hung up on something that can become an excuse for not focusing our attention on the concern. I would propose an amendment:

> That the committee invite the responsible minister(s) and appropriate officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade....

The minister both deserves and usually demands to be supported by the appropriate officials who have been a part of doing the due diligence and coming up with the recommendations that eventually are carried forward to cabinet.

I think it's very much a friendly amendment in order to try to focus us on what the real issue is here.

● (1115)

The Chair: Could you maybe just read that one more time? Our clerk will try to get it.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: The motion is "That the committee invite the responsible minister(s) and appropriate officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs..." etc..

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Chairman, I had my hand up for that very purpose, so I would consider that a friendly amendment.

The Chair: All right.

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I still say that would be out of order, because this was a cabinet decision, not a single minister's decision.

The Chair: But it is the minister's —

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: No. The minister was not responsible for the decision. Your motion is saying the minister responsible for the decision and the... What I'm saying is that it was a cabinet decision. The minister did not make this decision, and therefore you can't have somebody coming in here on something for which he's not responsible.

Mr. Bernard Patry: That way nobody is responsible, just the cabinet. There is no minister responsible, amen.

The Chair: Order.

Madame Lalonde.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: I do not understand Mr. Obhrai's last argument. We want to have information. The minister and the deputy minister can certainly tell us why certain consulates have been closed. This is what we want to know. They can tell us that they defended their viewpoint. They probably will not, given the positions they hold. What we want is information.

I am announcing that I am in support of this motion.

[*English*]

The Chair: All right.

Madam McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Mr. Chairman, I would think if Mr. Obhrai can get beyond his initial reaction, that referring to "responsible minister" with an "s" after it allows a lot of latitude for whoever it is who is the most appropriate person to come before the committee, and if the contention of Mr. Obhrai is that nobody less than the Prime Minister can account for this because it was a cabinet decision, then we'll act accordingly. We'll interpret that the intention of your objection is that there are no ministers, plural, who can be asked to account for this, so by deduction then the Prime Minister could be invited, but I don't really think that's your point, is it?

We want to get at how and why the decision was made and the possibility that some alternate views could actually change a decision that has enormous impact on the lives of a lot of people.

The Chair: I don't want to take away from the spirit of the motion, but would it answer the problem if we say "That the committee invite senior officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade to explain" — or something to that effect — the decision or the rationale or whatever else?

We're saying here who's responsible. Maybe we're worrying —

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Chairman, I have no problem with this. My intent is to explain the rationale, to look at the cost implications and the implications generally. So if in fact Mr. Obhrai in the spirit of cooperation is willing to accept that, I have no difficulty with it. I simply want to know what led to this decision. Clearly someone provided advice. With all due respect to members of the cabinet or to the minister, I don't think somebody woke up one morning and said we're going to close four consulates. They obviously received advice. I'd like to know what the rationale was and we can go from there. And I don't expect it to take a lot of time, but I would like to have the appropriate information.

The Chair: Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Raymond Bonin (Nickel Belt, Lib.): On a point of order.

The Chair: Point of order.

Mr. Raymond Bonin: Mr. Chairman, the committee can invite who they want.

There was a call by a member that this motion is not in order. Everyone else seems to disagree. I think you should rule whether it's in order or not, and we should get on with it.

The Chair: We're trying. We've already made one friendly amendment.

Mr. Raymond Bonin: You can't amend it unless you accept it as an acceptable motion.

The Chair: We would do that. What we're trying to do is find the right people to invite. At the present time we're saying the people responsible for the decision come to the committee, and then they say this was a cabinet decision or this was a government decision and this is why we're carrying it out — this is the rationale. Maybe that's acceptable.

● (1120)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: No. The problem is very simple. The way the motion is amended, it says now “the department officials”. They can come over here and make one statement and say we were not responsible for the decision, end of story, because your motion is saying “those responsible”. That's why I'm saying this is out of order, you see, one statement—

The Chair: The motion is in order, and whether or not it's the best wordsmithing that could have been done is beside the point.

I'm sure we can give an invitation to someone and see whether or not they are willing to appear before the committee.

Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I can give you all the rationale you want. I have the rationale right here.

The Chair: We'll come back to it.

Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring: I'm sure there are many reasons that could be the rationale, such as cost savings, among other things. But could we not take an alternative step and ask for a written rationale from them on the reasoning for it?

We do this time and again with many ministers on many other issues and situations. Would it not be an alternate thing to go for a written reason on why they made this change?

The Chair: Mr. Wilfert, have you made a request to the minister? Have you asked the department for the rationale?

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Yes. We even asked the department if they could provide us with the appropriate individuals to call to the committee. We were refused. We were refused the names.

Therefore, given the implications for Canada in this field, I think it's incumbent that we call them before the committee. This is not going to be a two-day or three-day operation. There will be one day to get the information, and members of committee can then decide what they'd like to do, if anything.

Mr. Peter Goldring: You were refused.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Yes, I was refused. I could give you a litany of the times, as a critic, I've been refused by the foreign affairs department in terms of getting information from the department, but that's a different story.

If you want to say it's the person responsible for the decision or the person who was involved in the process of coming to this conclusion, I don't care. I think essentially it's simply to get these people here and to get the information before committee.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Mr. Chairman, as a follow-up, could we as a committee not have a request from the committee for a written response to the request one more time?

The Chair: Yes, we could, but the motion is here today and that's not what the motion is asking for. It certainly would have been another alternative.

Mr. Peter Goldring: We have to look at the best use of our resources.

The Chair: Each member has the opportunity to bring forward a motion. He has obviously thought about that, but it's not what he's asking for. It's why we have a motion here.

Mr. Obhrai, do you have a comment?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Yes, I certainly do.

You want to rule the motion in order.

The Chair: The motion is in order.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Then I'm saying that it's factually incorrect.

Do I or do I not have time to talk on this?

The Chair: Well, we'll give you some time. How long are you going to be?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Well, I can provide the rationale.

The Chair: Do we need a time clock or a calendar?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I'll provide the rationale on what was done.

Listen, buddy, keep quiet.

The Chair: Mr. Obhrai, continue. We'll try to keep with the spirit here.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Do I have time?

● (1125)

The Chair: You have time.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I have time.

The Chair: You have some time.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Thank you very much.

As I said, I was the spokesperson on this closure on behalf of the Government of Canada. In the spirit of cooperation, I will lay out the reasoning the government had on this.

It was basically that this was a mission closure based on the spending restraints by the Government of Canada. It was announced in September 2006 that there was going to be a review of all the expenditures.

You can see, Mr. Chair, that nobody is listening.

The Chair: Okay. You're getting the answers to your question.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I wanted to put the motion, but no one even listens.

The Chair: Continue, Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Thank you.

It started as a restraint exercise by the Government of Canada on September 26, 2006, which was a review of all departmental expenditures undertaken on the order of the cabinet.

As part of the cabinet decision that was made, these four missions were identified for closure. They were identified for closure for a couple of reasons. They were identified for closure because there would not be an impact on the services that were going to be provided, which were just alluded to. We were talking about countries that have very strong infrastructures. It was felt that with the review undertaken by the government with this prerogative, the closures would not have an impact on any kinds of services anywhere.

As Mr. Wilfert said, in Japan, we have the embassy in Tokyo. Therefore, having taken a look into that, it was seen to have no impact on it.

Let me finish.

Mr. Raymond Bonin: The motion didn't ask for you to explain it; it asks for other people to explain it.

The Chair: The problem with the motion is that it asks for those responsible.

Mr. Raymond Bonin: That's right, but he's not responsible. Why are we wasting all this time?

The Chair: So who is responsible?

Mr. Raymond Bonin: Well, let's find out.

Mr. Bernard Patry: Those are the people we want to have come to the committee.

The Chair: So if they send Mr. Obhrai to committee, would you be happy with that?

Some hon. members: No.

The Chair: Why?

Mr. Bernard Patry: Because we have you every day, even when we are travelling.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Chairman—

The Chair: Let's have some order here. Mr. Obhrai has the floor, and he has the time to continue.

When you debate motions, you're given as much time as you decide to take. But if we can work together, we may be able to cut some speeches down.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I'm giving you the reasons. These are the reasons you're going to get, and I'm going to lay it down.

The Chair: Okay, keep going, Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I'm going to give the reasons for the others. Maybe you don't want them, but the others do.

Because it was felt that there would be no repercusions at all on the services that these three G-8 countries, with their infrastructure and so on, were providing to these countries, it was decided that this consolidation—it's not a closure, but a consolidation of this mission—would have zero impact on that.

Taking that into account, the Canadian officers based there would be reassigned to other duties, and the local staff would follow the contract, which was the service package and everything out there.

The Government of Canada normally reviews its embassies and these things periodically, whether we open up new embassies or close old ones. This is what governments have been doing, including yours.

In the past, we had 43 new missions open up, but 31 were closed as we evaluated their effectiveness—where we were going to go and how best to do it. This was the exercise that cabinet followed.

There is going to be no change, as far as the loss of officers is concerned. The total savings on these closures is going to be $3.6 million, as part of the restraint that the cabinet directed for 2007 and 2008.

We worked with and informed the local governments as well. This is part and parcel of the government exercise that took place out there. This was the rationale, the reason for the consolidation of these things.

This is the answer you're going to get, Mr. Chair, if the minister comes—not the department officials, but the minister, if they want to listen to him, not to the one responsible, but to the one who will speak on behalf of the government. And I've just spoken on behalf of the government.

If the committee wants to carry on doing it and waste money, so be it.

The Chair: All right. Thank you, Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Wilfert.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Chairman, my aim was not to debate it today.

I appreciate Mr. Obhrai's explanation. Therefore I'm sure that somebody must have informed him, so those appropriate officials must be able to come before the committee.

Also, in the spirit of openness and transparency, I am sure that the reaction I saw from the Japanese ambassador and others indicated that consultation was clearly not part of the process.

I've already done an access-to-information request in writing, but in the meantime it would be very useful for members of the committee to have the information. Obviously whether it's the officials or the appropriate minister, someone made a decision and provided the advice. I want to know on what basis that was.

We've seen your critique, but I didn't think it would be appropriate for me to debate it today. What is appropriate is simply to call the question and move on to other business, Mr. Chairman.

I call the question.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring: I think we have a responsibility here all the way around to maximize the benefits and cost analysis of what we're doing in committee. If there is a rationale that's available, and the parliamentary secretary has clearly enunciated it, we could certainly make it much clearer by an official letter from the minister.

Rather than tying up everybody in a committee meeting and having the minister's office here for the sake of having this information confirmed, I think we have a responsibility to go that route. Failing that, we could call a committee meeting on it.

I think it's irresponsible to go ahead with this when we have another avenue that is much more palatable and far less costly to the government.

● (1130)

The Chair: We have two studies going now. We have the study on democratic development. There are going to be times on Afghanistan here. So to take another day...but the motion has asked for that.

An hon. member: It's irresponsible.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Obhrai is correct, and I guess one hour of the committee's time is an hour well spent.

An hon. member: It's irresponsible.

Mr. Bernard Patry: Mr. Chair, we Liberals agree we could have an extra day, just an extra one-hour meeting. No problem with this.

The Chair: Okay, then we'll call the question.

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

The Chair: The way this motion is worded, if he's unable to come before... We didn't vote on the friendly amendment, did we? It was accepted. All right, it was accepted. I think the wordsmithing on the motion, now that it's passed, is poor. If he's unable to come before February 20 or 22, there is nothing saying then that he should have to come on February 27. But the motion is carried.

The next motion. We'll go to Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Chair, my motion deals with one of the NGOs....

The Chair: Read your motion, Mr. Obhrai. It's not that long.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I move that the committee recommend to the Government of Canada that CIDA establish agriculture as a priority sector using the strategies and policies developed in the CIDA policy document entitled "Promoting Sustainable Rural Development Through Agriculture", focusing on sustainability and the reduction of poverty and hunger.

Mr. Chair, this deals with the agriculture NGO for food. So I think this motion is a very strong motion, sending a very strong message that agriculture is a priority for this country, for the food grains. It is one of the strongest strengths of international development assistance.

The Chair: Mr. Eyking, Madam McDonough, Madame Lalonde.

Hon. Mark Eyking: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'm surprised this motion is coming from the other side, but it's a really good one.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Don't be surprised.

Hon. Mark Eyking: Anyway, in all seriousness, the intent of this motion is very good.

I think we should have the CIDA officials here to describe to us a bit of the background on how we should implement this policy and go forward from there.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Eyking.

Mr. Bernard Patry: Are there amendments?

Hon. Mark Eyking: I suggest an amendment.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: No, I don't want any of your amendments.

The Chair: Madam McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: I speak strongly in support of this motion. I think it's a reflection of repeated representations before the committee.

I don't want to follow the partisan rabbit tracks, but the reality is that this plea has been made again and again, with very good documentation from the food grains folks, from the food security network. Most recently again, I think it is a very appropriate follow-up to the witnesses we heard just a couple of weeks ago. I would hope that in a spirit of unanimity, we would respond appropriately.

I think we've all seen the reasons why this is so incredibly important. I hope it would be a positive signal that we're asking that this be implemented. At a later date, if we want to hear more details, fine. But I'd hate to see the date and the proposal to have witnesses become an obstacle to our passing this today without reservation.

The Chair: Madame Lalonde.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: I too am extremely pleased to see this proposal, all the more so because we all observed, at the time of the study on the policy for foreign affairs, that this is cruelly lacking.

Several witnesses came to tell us that in under-developed countries, in particular, between 60 and 80% of the people are dependent upon agriculture. I am in full agreement with the idea that agriculture be considered with the context of sustainable development.

We must vote on this now and plan into our schedule the appearance of a witness from CIDA to come and discuss this with us.

● (1135)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Lalonde.

Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring: I certainly think it's an excellent motion, but I also feel and sense from the parties opposite that it's important we bring this about with unanimity, instead of trying to tinker with it and perhaps spoiling something on which we really could get together and come together to sign and agree on. If there are amendments or whatever, I think it's important to consider that factor and consider that the important thing here is to show unanimity.

The Chair: All right.

Hon. Mark Eyking: That's not what I said before. I will follow through on what Ms. McDonough said. It's okay to push this motion through, but we'll follow through with CIDA officials coming here and explaining the...

The Chair: Well, the motion will, as it stands, but certainly we're open to having CIDA here at a later date. I too want to thank Mr. Obhrai for bringing this forward. This motion recognizes the importance of agriculture. We know that in our study of Haiti and of other countries, so much frustration was talked about in regards to providing food but not really being able to get any kind of sustainable agriculture up and going, so...kudos.

I'll just put my two cents in here: if this can be passed unanimously, it would be a real treat.

Anyway, I'll call the question.

Mr. Bernard Patry: Will we have what he puts on the motion?

The Chair: CIDA will appear at a later date, and we'll be able to bring this up sometime, but it won't be part of the motion.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: We can always put another motion later on—

Mr. Bernard Patry: Yes, but you're always against our motion. That's the problem.

The Chair: No, no, we won't be against. CIDA's here, they can be asked. They'll be here in regard to other matters as well, and we will ask them about this motion that received unanimous support. What are they going to do? I think they are quite open to this.

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

The Chair: Thank you.

Now I'm in your hands. We're at 11:40, and I was going to go until 11:15 and give 15 minutes for committee business.

How long is this going to take, Madam McDonough?

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Well, I think we can deal with this very quickly in the spirit of unanimity and the spirit of giving a strong signal.

Frankly, I've had this motion before the committee now for at least two and a half months, so I'm not really happy at the idea of having it bumped by ones that came in very much later.

I really hope we can recognize that if there's one thing around the world that people associate with Canada's leadership on the meaningful security front, one thing that's enduring and that never stops giving to children, to elderly people, and to the vulnerable, it's the land mines leadership and bringing in the land mines treaty. It's very much in that spirit and that tradition that this motion comes forward, following a lot of public education, to actually call upon ourselves, our Parliament, and our government to step forward in the same spirit and support the call for the ban on cluster bombs.

I don't know anybody who could seriously advocate that cluster bombs should be permitted in today's world. We know they are intended to damage people and kill them. After wars are over, what could be more heartbreaking than to have people finally achieve a peaceful resolution of a violent conflict, only to find that the most vulnerable in society are killed through cluster bombs that go off because there is no way to protect people from them?

I don't want to go on and on; I just want to say that it's very timely, because in Oslo at least 26 countries, and I don't know how many more, are coming together on February 21 to move forward on this agenda. I think we're all very pleased to know that Canada is sending representation to that meeting. What could make us prouder and make others respect us more around the world than to see us providing this kind of leadership around cluster bombs, consistent with what we did on land mines?

Therefore I so move.

● (1140)

The Chair: Thank you.

I'll come back to committee business, and I apologize for this little bit of division. We have other meetings, I know, at 12 o'clock. Even the subcommittee of this committee is meeting. What we're jeopardizing here is the steering committee.

Are we in favour of continuing with this motion and postponing the steering committee until possibly tomorrow or Thursday? Oh, Thursday we have a conference. It would be sometime on Wednesday or Thursday.

Hon. Mark Eyking: Mr. Chair, can we just bring this motion to the question?

The Chair: No, you can't just bring these to the question.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Yes, we can.

The Chair: Well, then, if we don't have mutual consent, do we...?

Anyway, we're going to forfeit our steering committee. Are we all in favour of that?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: All right.

Mr. Obhrai.

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

We understand the rationale and we understand the desire behind this motion. Cluster bombs are a concern for a lot of people, everywhere, and as you have rightfully pointed out, Canada has agreed and will go to the Oslo meeting.

Our concern is we do not know at this given time what kind of an instrument is going to come out of Oslo. Your motion is actually saying a lot of things that may or may not be in the instrument that is going to come out in Oslo. So our suggestion here, at this stage, is let's wait and see what happens in Oslo, what kind of an instrument comes out in Oslo — I am saying with Canada's participation — debate it, and see if that is the right instrument that we would like to support or not. Doing a motion prior to going to Oslo and talking about this instrument here means we are pre-empting what is going to be discussed, which is why the government is having difficulty in supporting this motion. We do not have any problem; we understand it's important, which is why the desire to go to Oslo has been made.

I will recommend at this stage for Alexa to put this on hold and wait until the instrument comes out of Oslo...what kind of instrument comes out of Oslo, and then we'll be in a better position to actually discuss, debate, and bring forward all those points that you are saying. Otherwise, we are pre-empting and saying something up in the front. That is the government's position at this stage.

So my recommendation is to put it on hold — I am not saying withdraw it — until we see. The Oslo convention is not too far away, anyway. It's happening in only a week from now, so we will have a very good idea of what is happening in Oslo.

The Chair: Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring: My concern is along the same lines, but I suppose maybe it's my own personal...not understanding exactly what defines a "cluster munition". I would think that out of Oslo there could come better knowledge applied to coming together with a definition, if that's what the outcome is going to be. I would think that just saying "cluster munitions", whether it's from air delivered or ground delivered... I'm not sure and I don't know what is in military arsenals right now and whether hand grenades and other things like that could be included in that kind of a definition, because they do splinter and fall apart. So I would have a concern over having a very appropriate and definable definition for what the concern is and also how that meeting in Oslo would look at it and view it, because I'm sure they would have those kinds of discussions with modern military procurers and manufacturers.

● (1145)

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Goldring.

Madame Lalonde, Madam McDonough.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Chairman, because we believe this is important, I would like to convince my colleagues to do this now, instead of waiting for Oslo, in order for the Oslo process to move ahead at a good pace. We believe that this is something that it is important we do.

Canada played the role of leader during the negotiation of the Convention on landmines. However, if countries had waited to see what was going to happen at the conference before coming on board to show their interest, that would in no way have helped the process along. In any event, we know that there are more than 26 countries today: there are probably 30 some countries now, perhaps more. It is therefore very much in our interest to do this.

The United States can yet again refuse and say that these are weapons that they do not wish to deprive themselves of. We have seen far too many of the effects of these weapons that stay there. In Lebanon, some old landmines that dated back some 20 years were recently uncovered. These cluster bombs are of the same kind. Remember what happened in Afghanistan, where the cluster bombs were small in size and yellow and blended in with the parcels of food that were being thrown down from airplanes, because they were of the same colour. Several children were hurt and even killed. Then they stopped running out to collect the food parcels. Those are just two examples, but there are many more.

I would like to say to the chairman and to the clerk that we have a translation problem. In the French text, you use the term "bombe à dispersion" in the first paragraph and "bombe à diffusion" in the third paragraph. There is also the term "bombe à fragmentation", which I prefer. We should be using the same terminology in the first and third paragraphs, and in all of the others. In English, it is the same term, "cluster bombs", that is used in all ten paragraphs.

So shall we use the term "bombe à fragmentation"? Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

That's not an amendment; it's just a translation difference.

We'll have Mr. Patry, and then Mr. Wilfert.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Patry: Thank you.

[*English*]

I just want to say that we're not asking for that many things; we're asking that Canada would "join with the...countries" — we can delete "twenty-six" because now there'll be 30 — "leading efforts in developing...an international treaty", not a new one, because there's not one in the sense that if there was an old one, then we'd get a new one. For an international treaty, we'll just say we'll join the people who want to lead the world to stop these cluster bombs. That's something that, to me, is quite easy. We don't need to wait to see what's going to happen. We can join the efforts of the world, see what's going to happen over there, and after that, just push, in a sense, our government.

Your government, Mr. Obhrai, didn't... If my colleague Mr. Wilson had not asked the question last week... You were undecided as to whether you wanted to go to Oslo. You decided after the United States had decided to go as an observer.

Under the second bullet, I would like to delete "until".

Mrs. McDonough, when you say “Declare a moratorium on the use, production, trade, transfer, or procurement of cluster munitions” — bombs — “until humanitarian concerns about them are addressed”, I think we should delete this. My understanding — I'm francophone — is that it means “when humanitarian concerns are addressed, at that time, we won't have any more moratoriums”. We could delete this, in a sense.

At the next bullet, I would put, “Complete the destruction of the cluster munitions in Canada’s military arsenal.” Period; that's it. We're just asking for Canada to be one of the leading countries, because we showed leadership, for instance, with the Canada convention on anti-personal mines. That's all we are requesting. We're not requesting anything else.

● (1150)

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Are you finished, Mr. Patry?

Mr. Bernard Patry: Yes, I'm finished.

The Chair: Mr. Wilfert, and then Madam McDonough.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: When I asked the minister ten days ago, he said that they were undecided as to whether Canada would go. Now the question becomes is Canada going to show real leadership? Do they have proposals? Does the government have proposals they're going to bring to Oslo? Or are they going to be a spectator?

We were not a spectator when we developed the Ottawa convention. We took leadership in that role. I think it's incumbent upon us to know if the government is prepared to...

And I think Ms. McDonough, in terms of her motion, is trying to get the government to show some leadership. You don't lead from behind. So either they're prepared to, if they've got specific proposals, and Mr. Obhrai obviously is a fountain of knowledge on all of these things lately.

Maybe you could tell us. We don't even need the minister. I'd just like to know, are you going to show leadership? What is it you're going to be proposing at Oslo? Or are you simply going to be in the back seat watching?

The Chair: I'm going to run to Mr. Obhrai, because we always look to Mr. Obhrai for leadership.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Then we're in trouble.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Actually, Alexa....

The Chair: Yes, Alexa was first.

Madam McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: There are two things.

This really is a call for us to move out of the shadows on this and join those who are providing leadership. That's the thrust of this motion. I think we would all agree, in order to be seen to be willing to provide leadership, we would surely, in stepping forward, want to make it clear that we're putting our money where our mouth is: we're declaring a moratorium on cluster bombs.

Let me also remind people what it is we're doing here. What we're doing here is sending a recommendation from this committee to the government, through the House, right? We're reporting to the House that we're asking the government to step forward in this manner. It's not in any way precluding, predetermining, pre-committing Canada to the details of what will be in the treaty. What it calls for is for us to join those who are involved in the effort of developing a treaty. That's what it says. It's simply a recommendation from this committee to the government, to which they will have an opportunity to respond in an appropriate way in due course. That's all this is.

I think, honestly, there's been an ongoing international campaign around this for some time. I've had this motion before the committee now for about, I think, two and a half months. Surely it isn't committing some kind of crime for people to agree in general with the thrust of this motion to the extent that we're willing to report it back to the House. That's all we're calling on. If we had the power to force the government to do these things, I guess we'd try to do that too, but we don't.

So I would urge support for the motion, in that spirit.

The Chair: All right, who's up next?

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: First of all, I want to thank Bryon for giving me such great credit. Thank you very much.

Back to the main point of this thing, we took quite a leading role in protocol V when it was being developed out there. It is now going through the interdepartmental final analysis, before it is signed. Canada has played a very important role. The decision taken to go to Norway is to participate. It is not a decision to go there and be an observer. We are going to be participating fully in everything.

An hon. member: Why didn't the minister go —

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Why don't you let me finish when I'm talking? You already had your turn. Please listen intently.

Let me go back; this is an important issue.

So we are going there. The difficulty coming from the government here is that you want to declare a moratorium, you ask for actions to be taken before the instrument is signed...and what is negotiated by the instrument, taking a lot of other things into account, the legalities and everything here.

Now, if you were to make a general motion, something to the tune of Canada is participating in Norway and we would like Canada to be heavily engaged in this, with an objective of achieving...whatever, then one could see something different coming out here.

This motion, from the point of view of the government, is that we want to go to Oslo with the idea of seeing what is happening and how to negotiate...not how to negotiate, but to be there. So our concern here is that this motion...

I would just ask you if you could park it until the instrument over there is done, and then you'll have a better idea which direction you would like to go with a subsequent motion, if you want to put forward two.

I just want to say that we do have this concern, and because of that, the government may vote against this, which we don't want to do, because we want to send a message of unanimity out there that cluster bombing is a very important issue to all officials here in the department. So if this motion is worded in a manner that we can all support, it will send a unanimous message.

These guys have been in power for 13 years — which was a disaster — but they do know how governments operate. That is why we're having this little difficulty.

We do understand cluster bombing is an important issue with Canadians.

● (1155)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Obhrai.

An hon. member: Call the question, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Goldring first, and then we'll call the question.

Madam McDonough, you get the final chance, if you want it.

Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring: To my understanding, the main concerns in regard to cluster bombing have to do with the after-effects, the residue, with the delayed-fuse ones that may be sitting there for children to pick up, the ones that are in danger of exploding again or being a hazard to people. Other cluster munitions explode on impact, when they're delivered.

So they may very well be strategic weapons for a military to want to have, but they're still cluster bombs. This agreement in Oslo may very well be trying to define that, to say that the delayed-explosion ones, or the ones that just lie there waiting for somebody to approach the proximity and pick up or disturb them... It may well be that some of those cluster munitions could be banned and could be regulated against while still allowing for others that don't have those characteristics.

Once again, I think if you wait to see what is the collective wisdom that comes from Oslo...and I would agree to join with them, to be part of the discussion to see whether there isn't that type of defining coming from it, with the overall intention of doing what you want.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Goldring.

I will now call the question on Madam McDonough's motion.

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

The Chair: Thank you.

We are adjourned.

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