House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

FAAE • NUMBER 009 • 2nd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Wednesday, March 11, 2009

Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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● (1535)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): Order, please.

This is meeting number nine of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development on Wednesday, March 11, 2009. Today we are continuing our review of key elements of Canadian foreign policy.

Testifying before us today we have Howard Mains, a member of the board of directors from the Canadian American Business Council.

I must say we have one guest who has not shown up yet and we haven't had any information as to him not being here.

But we are also very pleased to have Jack Granatstein, historian and professor. He has appeared before our committee in the past and has authored a number of books. We've always appreciated your comments at committee.

Our committee provides time for opening statements from each one our guests. Then we would proceed into the first round of questioning, which would be a 10-minute opening statement and then seven minutes.

Perhaps I'll start with Mr. Mains, because it's my understanding that he's filling in for someone who couldn't be here and he does have to take a conference call in about 20 minutes. Mr. Mains, please go ahead.

Mr. Howard Mains (Member of the Board of Directors, Canadian American Business Council): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'm here today on behalf of the Canadian American Business Council and as a representative of the board of the Association of Equipment Manufacturers, which sits on the board of the CABC. Just to give you an idea who the Association of Equipment Manufacturers is, it's the trade association that represents the manufacturers of heavy equipment used in fields and mines and other such things. We have members from southwestern Ontario, such as Sellick Equipment, and members from western Canada, such as MacDon Industries out of Manitoba.

Let me begin the testimony. As the chair said, I'm sitting in on behalf of somebody who's become tied up at an airport, due to our lovely weather here in Canada. So bear with me.

Committee members, fellow witnesses, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for inviting the Canadian American Business Council to address your committee. My comments here do not reflect the position of AEM member companies; I'm here to address you in my capacity as a representative of the board of directors of CABC.

Since 1987, the CABC has championed close cooperation between Canada and the U.S. and has been a leader in advocating the private sector perspective on issues that affect Canadian-U.S. relations. In particular, the council promotes the truly unique relationship between Canada and the U.S. and the multiplicity of ties that bind the two countries. The focus of our presentation today will be on the new era in Canada-U.S. relations.

The Canadian American Business Council promotes the benefits of free trade and opposes the protectionist efforts that surface from time to time on either side of the Canada-U.S. border. The council helps foster a collaborative approach to energy supply and security and a joint approach to climate change initiatives.

The council also advocates for better facilitation of the movement of legitimate goods, services, people, and natural resources across our common border, particularly during these difficult economic times. Indeed, these difficult economic times provide an opportune time for Canada to play a key role in influencing American policy. One message that Canada can help deliver to U.S. policy-makers is that adopting protectionist trade measures, regardless of intent, will only exasperate and prolong the current economic crisis.

The council and its member companies, which include businesses based across Canada and the U.S., are active on both sides of the border and are very involved in the Canadian-U.S. dialogue. The CABC has played a key role in supporting bilateral and regional initiatives, such as the work of the Pacific Northwest Economic Region and the North American Competitiveness Council.

The Canada-U.S. relationship is based on commercial interdependence and shared prosperity. Our 200-year-old history sheds light on the admiration, mutual respect, and loyal friendship that have solidified over time and made possible the, until now, robust North American economy. The unique cooperation between Canada and the U.S. has been and will continue to serve as a model for peace and prosperity around the world. The special partnership between Canada and the U.S. has been a pillar of the world economy. It is imperative that we maintain this leadership role.

As President Harry S. Truman so eloquently said in his 1947 address to the Parliament of Canada:

> Canadian-American relations for many years did not develop spontaneously. The example of accord provided by our two countries did not come about merely through the happy circumstance of geography. It is compounded of one part proximity and nine parts good will and common sense.

Both Prime Minister Harper and President Obama recently echoed this sentiment in the context of the unique Canada-U.S. relationship. Indeed, Canada and the U.S. share the world's most unique partnership. The ties between our two countries are stronger than those between any two nations on earth. This leads me to the focus of my discussion with you today: the new era of Canada-U.S. relations.

My colleagues and I at the CABC recently outlined our priorities for the Canada-U.S. collaboration for the coming months. Leading up to President Obama's visit here to Ottawa, we publicized on both sides of the border our message about the significance and impact of the Canada-U.S. relationship.

● (1540)

On behalf of the CABC, I'm pleased to offer some ideas to your committee about the steps Canada can and should take to improve Canada-U.S. relations.

As you know, there are many new players on the U.S. political scene. In addition to Obama's new team, several of whom have yet to be confirmed, there are new members of the U.S. Congress, congressional committees, and gubernatorial governments. Now is the time for Canada to educate and engage these new U.S. legislators —federal and state—about the importance of the Canada-U.S. relationship to Americans.

I will couch my comments in terms of their importance to Americans purposely, in order to highlight to the committee that American lawmakers are focused on and concerned about American interests. In presenting its position to the U.S., the Government of Canada would be well advised to lead with what is in the interests of Americans. Just as the Government of Canada endeavours to protect the interests of Canadians, so the U.S. government is concerned first and foremost about what is best for Americans. For example, lobbying efforts by Canadian governments to impede "buy American" legislation should include arguments about the negative impact such legislation has on jobs in the U.S.

I will begin my summary of the three CABC priorities with a few analogies that I hope you'll find informative and amusing.

First I encourage you to retire Prime Minister Trudeau's elephant-and-mouse analogy in favour of what has been described as the "binocular syndrome". The binocular syndrome depicts the way our two countries look at each other. Canada looks to America as one would ordinarily look through a pair of binoculars, and sees America clearly. America, on the other hand, looks to Canada through the same pair of binoculars, except from the wrong end. They see Canada in a fuzzy and uncertain way. Instead of looking the same way through a single set of binoculars, Canada is looking to America and America is looking back through the same lens. The two countries should put aside the binoculars and see each other for who we really are.

I also present you with something to consider about the way in which the closeness of the Canada-U.S. relationship is perceived on this side of the border by our electorate. Former U.S. ambassador to Canada, Gordon Giffin, coined the term "the Goldilocks syndrome" to describe the fine line Canadian leaders walk when building relationships with their U.S. counterparts. Like Goldilocks and the three bears, Canadian prime ministers have to find a relationship that is perceived to be at just the right temperature by Canadians—not too hot, not too cold, but just right.

Let us hope that President Obama's popularity among Canadians will provide Canada with some leeway in walking this political tightrope. Support for engagement with the U.S. is vital to the economic viability of the Canadian economy, and Canadians must be willing to tolerate a close relationship with the U.S. if our economy is to recover quickly. Canadian leaders must be willing to stand up and advocate in Canada and among Canadians for engagement with the U.S.

The first of three CABC priorities that I will present to you today is our organization's support for free and comprehensive trade. Governments in Canada and the U.S. must work together in defence of free trade. For many reasons, this is imperative for economic recovery on both sides of the border. Governments must unwaveringly oppose protectionism and condemn such efforts by state and provincial governments. The organization I represent is a champion of free trade and has consistently opposed protectionist efforts by governments in both the U.S. and Canada.

Let me move to the second priority. The council promotes a collaborative approach to energy supply and security and a joint approach to climate change.

● (1545)

Canada is the single largest supplier of energy to the U.S. and the country best suited in terms of safety, security, and predictability to supply U.S. requirements for energy. Given this reality, it is in the best interests of both countries to collaborate on implementing strategic policies to achieve a safe, secure, reliable, and sustainable North American energy supply.

The CABC encourages the environmentally responsible development of the oil sands through collaboration and cooperation among governments, industry, and communities on both sides of the Canada-U.S. border. The CABC supports the development of new technologies and innovative programs to reduce environmental impacts and the consumption of water and gas in the development of such resources.

Third, the council stands for facilitating the efficient movement of legitimate goods, services, people, and resources across the Canadian-U.S. border. The close and extensive relationship between the United States and Canada is reflected in the staggering volume of bilateral commerce—the equivalent of $1.5 billion a day in goods—as well as in people-to-people contact. About 300,000 people cross our shared border every day. Since Canada is the largest export market for most states, an efficient and streamlined Canada-U.S. border is critical to the well-being and livelihood of millions of Americans.

Governments are at a decisive point in the administration of border crossings. Governments in Canada and the U.S. should take a careful look at measures aimed at tightening the ability of imports and exports to reach their destinations. In this new era of Canada-U.S. relations, and during this window of opportunity with the new U.S. administration, there is an opportunity for Canada to get its message to the Secretary of Homeland Security, Janet Napolitano. Canada could frame its efforts to improve border efficiency by making the case that the Department of Homeland Security portfolio is an economic security portfolio as much as it is any other type of security portfolio.

Let me close by making one final observation, and I think everybody who has seen commerce work in Canada will agree with this. Our trade with the United States is not simply a trade of consumers on one side and manufacturers on another side. We make things together; we manufacture things together. Plenty of examples show that certain components, whether it's a piece of machinery that our manufacturers in southwestern Ontario or the west make...those pieces of equipment make their way back and forth across the border. I would encourage the committee to ensure that this is a key understanding, that Canadian and American companies make things together, so we should do everything we possibly can to allow that to happen.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mains.

We'll move to Mr. Granatstein, and we welcome Mr. Douglas.

Dr. Jack Granatstein (Historian and Professor, As an Individual): Chairman, honourable members, thank you very much for inviting me.

Let me begin by stating a few truisms. Canada is part of the world community, and it has and will continue to have multilateral interests and obligations, but we're inescapably part of North America, and however much some Canadians may wish they could alter this fact, they cannot. We're joined to the United States hip and thigh, and this will not change. The Americans may make major alterations in their strategic dispositions around the world, but our location along the Americans' northern border guarantees that the United States must take an interest in Canada for pressing American strategic interests.

President Roosevelt in 1938 said, “I give to you assurance that the people of the United States will not stand idly by if domination of Canadian soil is threatened by another empire.” A few days later, Prime Minister Mackenzie King offered a reciprocal pledge: “We, too, have our obligations as a good friendly neighbour, and one of them is to see that…our country is made as immune from attack or possible invasion as we can reasonably be expected to make it, and that…enemy forces should not be able to pursue their way, either by land, sea or air, to the United States, across Canadian territory”.

Both nations were serving their own and each other's interests with these promises. Sensible Canadians, then as now, understood that their nation's defence ultimately was provided by the United States. They also recognized that Canada could never allow its defences to decay so much that the United States believed itself in danger because of Canadian weakness. That would oblige the Americans to take over the complete defence of the northern half of the continent, whatever Canadians might say about it. The impact of any such action on Canadian sovereignty is obvious, and nothing today differs from the Mackenzie King years. Indeed, the attacks of September 11, 2001, guarantee that the American interest in Canadian geography remains as focused as it ever has been in the last century.

Canada's economic prosperity similarly depends on the American market. Efforts to switch our trade from the United States have always failed. Canada-U.S. trade has slowed lately during the recession, but it is vastly greater than it was 15 years ago when NAFTA was signed, with almost $2 billion in trade crossing the border each day, almost 80% of Canadian merchandise exports going to or through the U.S., more than 20% of American exports coming north, and the Americans buying more than a third of our GDP.

Canada's dependence on the American market for its economic survival is clear. Still, Canadians' ambivalent attitude towards their American neighbour remains stubbornly unchanged. Canadians like to think they understand the Americans better than others, though there is little evidence of this. We want to enjoy all the benefits of the North American standard of living and we consider it our right to trade with and visit the United States, all the while reading American books and magazines and watching its television. At the same time, we sneer at America, bemoan its flag-waving patriotism and aggressive bumptiousness on the world stage, and we have half persuaded ourselves that we could really run the world better.

The endemic anti-Americanism in Canada, a product of history, proximity, and different institutional culture, does Canadians no credit. This attitude will not change, however, without leadership from the same political and cultural and media elites who regrettably continue to use anti-Americanism for their own purposes.

The present government, much to its credit, does not traffic in anti-Americanism for political purposes, but it should be obvious to everyone that anti-Americanism hurts Canada in dealing with the superpower with which we share the continent. Unfortunately, too many Canadians are oblivious or deliberately blind to this basic truth. Combatting anti-Americanism, temporarily at a low ebb as we bask in the admiration for President Obama, should be a government priority. Today's rosy glow of warmth for the U.S., if history is any guide, simply will not last.

● (1550)

Let me turn briefly to Canada's national interests.

We have values that we cherish, such as our support for freedom and democracy, our belief in a liberal, secular, pluralist society, but the fundamental truth is that these few but important Canadian traits aside, values are for individuals while nations have interests above all.

Canadians need to know what their government considers to be Canada's national interests, and this is particularly important in dealing with our superpower neighbour.

National interests are not difficult to detail for most nations, and Canada's in fact are very clear. First, we must protect our territory, our people's security, our unity. Second, we must strive to protect and enhance our independence. Third, we must promote the economic growth of the nation to support the prosperity and welfare of Canadians. Fourth, we must work with like-minded states in and outside international forums for the protection and enhancement of democracy and freedom.

Those principles, those interests, are deliberately stated bluntly, and of course I omit many subtleties. The first, second, and third are unquestionably our domestic goals, and they threaten no other nation or people. They state simply and clearly what any nation must do in its own interests. Our foremost national interest clearly is that we must keep our territory secure and protect our people. This requires that we cooperate with the United States while simultaneously being careful not to allow the Americans to encroach upon us.

The question of unity is much more difficult, given our long history. All that needs to be said is that it is a mistake to act against the will of any large region of the country. At the same time, it is an error not to act abroad if most of Canada wishes to do so. Managing this national interest carefully and properly is critical for any government.

The second national interest, protecting our independence, could be interpreted by some as being directed against the United States, the only state that can jeopardize our sovereignty in the foreseeable future. The Americans don't pose a military challenge to us and have not for more than a century, but the United States is nonetheless a benign threat. Its powerful, magnetic pull can put Canadian independence in question.

It's in our clear interest that this not occur, and we have to find the ways to ensure our survival as an independent nation, vigorously protecting our sovereignty, the control of our territory, and ensuring that our ability to defend our portion of North America is never in doubt, especially in Washington. Anything else can allow an American administration to make us offers of help if we cannot refuse.

The third national interest, promoting our economic welfare, all but forces Canada's government to promote beneficial trade with the huge market to the south. The tension between the two interests, the two national goals, will always be present, but it must be managed. Getting the balance right between these interests is a key test of any government's capability.

The fourth statement of national interest, working with like-minded states to defend and advance democracy and freedom, is a means towards the furtherance of Canadian security, and that may be more contentious to some of today's Canadians than it was to our forefathers, but it merely reflects our own history, the global record of the last century, and the troubling way this century has begun.

Cooperation with our friends and allies has been the means through which we have survived and prospered. Canada has been threatened in the past by the rise of dictatorships and oligarchies, and the spread of liberty, democracy, and economic freedom remains the best guarantor against future risks to us. We have a genuine interest in working with our friends, and that usually means with the United States in the lead, to help protect and encourage the spread of political and economic freedom around the world. We can, of course, decide when and how to participate abroad, but we must weigh all our national interests in making such decisions, and it would help Canadians understand the importance of Canada's interests if our government leaders once in a while stated them, explained them, and definitely acted to defend and advance them.

● (1555)

Let me stop here. To me, our policy towards the United States must be based on our national interests and on an enlightened self-interest that recognizes that we secure great benefits from living next door to a giant. Carping criticism is a Canadian trait, but it is surely time to realize that it does us no good at all in dealing with our superpower neighbour.

Thank you very much.

● (1600)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Granatstein.

Mr. Douglas is from the Plattsburgh-North Country Chamber of Commerce. He is the president and chief executive officer. Welcome.

Mr. Garry Douglas (President and Chief Executive Officer, Plattsburgh-North Country Chamber of Commerce): Thank you. Greetings, first of all, from Plattsburgh, New York, Montreal's U.S. suburb.

In looking at Canadian-U.S. relations, I suggest there are two realities that are in dire conflict with one another. The first is summarized by my favourite Canadian philosopher, Wayne Gretzky, who tells us to skate to where the puck will be. I suggest where that puck will be is global competitiveness and the reality that no nation alone can be globally competitive in the future. Binationally, we have a chance. Eventually, multinationally, we need to form the kinds of blocs that will give us the intellectual and other capital to compete through this new century.

The other reality that's in great conflict with that comes from a philosopher from the other side of the border, Al Capone, who once said, “I don't even know what street Canada is on”. I don't say that to be insulting, but that is virtually not an overstatement of the dearth of awareness, understanding, and knowledge in places like Washington, where that knowledge is so critical for Canada. They kind of know you're up here. They kind of know some things about you, like hockey, good whiskey, and some other good things. But in terms of the economic importance of Canada to their own country, even though they are decision-makers on a daily basis about the future of the United States, they don't even know what street things are on.

Those are the great conflicts we find ourselves in when trying to manage the effectiveness of Canadian policy in the U.S., and that's what I'm going to address myself to, rather than policy in and of itself. General ignorance is what we confront, particularly in Washington and among American decision-makers and opinion-moulders, and I include the media in that. Understand that ignorance is always a threat, but especially such broad and deep ignorance about something so important and potentially so fragile.

The other great threat confronting us now that's been referenced here is protectionism, which, because of ignorance, is a threat even in good times but becomes an even more serious concern during a recession such as we are both facing today. As one who regards himself as one of Canada's best friends in the U.S.—and I take pride in considering myself that—I offer these thoughts on how Canada, its provinces, and stakeholders can build awareness, understanding, and positive engagements south of the border in pursuit of the economic interests and opportunities our two countries share.

Number one, recognize the importance of grassroots partnerships. Across the continent there are various organizations, coalitions, and alliances engaged in the promotion and development of binational prosperity on a regional or corridor basis. Our own Quebec-New York Corridor Coalition, co-led by the Plattsburgh-North Country Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Quebec Chambers of Commerce, has taken a leading role since 2001 in fostering partnerships between Quebec and New York in transportation, border facilities and operations, technology sectors, tourism, energy, and other opportunities.

This has included active, shared advocacy in Washington, building direct linkages with U.S. senators, House members, and others, and achieving advancements for Canada that could never be achieved through Canadian efforts alone. I spent 14 years running a congressional operation. I know how Washington works. That's why I don't sleep well at night. I go to Washington at least once a month, sometimes twice a month. I frequently take my colleagues from Quebec with me, including representatives of the Quebec government, of chambers of commerce in Quebec, and Quebec companies, because I know that's what's going to give them relevancy in front of senators and congressmen, as opposed to the courtesy meetings that —if they could secure one—they otherwise would have.

The Quebec-New York Corridor Coalition and other binational groupings, large and small, present the very best pathway for pursuing Canadian interests in Washington and elsewhere in the U.S. In our region, the Canadian consulate general in Buffalo has been and remains an active partner, and I want to acknowledge that. There's no criticism here of the outstanding commitment and work of our partners at the consulate. But I suggest that Canada can and must do much more to tap the power of grassroots networks and to foster additional ones wherever possible. This is especially true in effectively engaging officials in Washington.

Number two, in line with the foregoing, Canada must also fully recognize and embrace the crucial role of provincial governments and cities in the pursuit of positive partnerships in Canadian economic interests. Indeed, unlike Europe, NAFTA was clearly more of an end than a process for both Canadian and U.S. governments, leaving the field open to states and provinces to emerge as leaders in setting fresh agendas for cross-border progress and collaboration. They've filled the void since NAFTA was ratified.

● (1605)

In our region, the Quebec government has been a long-standing force in support of grassroots efforts in the development of new relationships and connections and in the pursuit of shared opportunities of all kinds. The excellent work at the provincial-state level must always be valued and encouraged and must certainly never be diminished or seen in any way as somehow some unwelcome competition with what the federal government's diplomatic efforts may be.

In this regard, let me cite an interesting fact. In my last 16 years as president and CEO of the Plattsburgh-North Country Chamber of Commerce, with all of my engagement in Canada-U.S. and border-related matters, I have been frequently invited by the Quebec government to join the Quebec premier and other Quebec officials in U.S. visits, to be part of various programs and discussions, and to offer advice and assistance in various matters in the U.S. In contrast, we enjoy active engagement with the Canadian consulate in Buffalo, as I have mentioned, but not in a sustained way from the ministry or from the embassy in Washington. There is much to be learned from Quebec, and from some of the other provinces that also work actively in the U.S.

Currently we are beginning work with our friends and partners at the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal to specifically combat potential protectionism in the U.S., helping to identify and connect with chambers of commerce in targeted American cities to explore potential visits and other activities to expand awareness of the great importance of Canada to the economy everywhere in the U.S., including those cities. This is another of many examples of effective ways to promote Canada's interests from the ground up.

All of these types of outreach must be expanded and actively supported as part of Canada's foreign policy agenda, valuing and recruiting partners in the U.S. that can open doors, ears, and minds for you.

Third, focus on hot topics. One pathway into the hearts and minds of American policy-makers is to grasp open opportunities to demonstrate shared interests. Right now, and likely for some time to come, all economic discussions in Washington and at other levels in the U.S., including at the state level, turn sooner or later to the pursuit of green agendas, from alternative and renewable energy development to the generation of various green technologies as job generators, to more efficient transportation and supply chains.

Canada has much to offer in this broad new realm of public policy and economic development, so we must look to every opportunity to work this into our shared efforts and outreach. When you can talk with the person you want things from about something they're already interested in, that's the way into having a meaningful conversation. Here again, however, grassroots partners such as provinces, states, cities, chambers, universities, and others will be crucial if this is to move beyond lofty pronouncements and ambitions and photo opportunities and translate into tangible endeavours and outcomes that will then truly reinforce Canada's profile amongst those we seek to ultimately win over.

Fourth is to act bilaterally, not trilaterally. Whenever possible Canada must act outside the NAFTA framework to engage in bilateral conversations and efforts, and this must include the already often-noted importance of grassroots stakeholder groups and communities. President Clinton and Prime Minister Chrétien began something potentially powerful in 1999 with the launch of the Canada-U.S. Partnership forum, CUSP. This was designed to be a long-needed vehicle for broader and deeper engagement of U.S. and Canadian interests of all kinds, and it enjoyed two major gatherings before it was, unfortunately, quietly abandoned by the new Bush administration. It is time for Canada to seek the revival of this or some similar framework for stakeholder engagement in the U.S.-Canadian conversation in a major and sustained way.

Fifth, we can't forget the border. Understandably, 9/11 focused unprecedented attention on border security. Happily, many of the measures implemented at the border by the U.S. and Canada carried out in the name of security were in fact actually initiatives we had long been seeking in the name of modernization and facilitation. With recent changes in Washington, we may be able to avoid having to expend quite so much energy combatting wrong-headed or ill-considered ideas and instead work in the spirit of the shared border accord toward common sense policies and practices, due recognition of economic security as well as physical security, and the many shared economic opportunities we have been in part distracted from while consumed, for example, with trying to postpone and manage the western hemisphere travel initiative.

Let me state three things with regard to the border in the context of my remarks today.

First, we must continue to find ways to move toward a shared perimeter away from North America whenever possible if we are to ultimately reduce pressures on our internal borders.

Second, we must see the provincial, state, and grassroots partnerships previously referenced as Canada's best means for addressing its concerns at the U.S. border. What has been accomplished at Champlain-Lacolle is a perfect example of this, where we are just putting the finishing touches on a $107 million new U.S. border-crossing campus. While most other areas of Canada are complaining about thickening of the border and delays in commercial traffic, we have totally eliminated truck delays at Champlain-Lacolle. So through grassroots efforts in Washington, solutions can be found and resources can be mustered.

● (1610)

Third, at the same time, Canada must do all it can to help ensure that there is never a terrorist incident in the U.S. that can in any way be connected to Canada or to anyone entering the U.S. from Canada. The severe reaction from the populace and from Congress would be unstoppable. It would plunge Canada, as well as the U.S., into deep economic crisis. We should have no doubt that those who want to harm us and western interests know this all too well.

Finally, a new vocabulary is needed. As much as possible, we must move firmly away from the vocabulary of trade in discussing the Canada-U.S. economic relationship. While we are not the European Community, now, with virtually no border from Sofia to Dublin, we are also clearly not the U.S. and Bulgaria, and not Canada and Thailand.

We increasingly make and do things together and are increasingly interconnected, intertwined, and economically integrated, yet the outmoded vocabulary and measurements of trade misrepresent our relationship by obsessing on supposed surpluses versus deficits, feeding the lack of awareness and understanding we need to reverse, and simultaneously fueling the protectionist voices we need to quiet.

The notion of somehow treating the availability of oil, gas, and hydro power from a secure and friendly neighbour in our own continent as an economic negative by making it part of some calculated trade deficit is bizarre in the extreme, I suggest.

Words matter, and the old words of trade no longer serve the reality of the U.S.-Canada economic relationship. They do, however, serve the agendas of those who would take us down the disastrous road of protectionism.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Douglas.

We'll move into the first round.

Mr. Patry.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

Thank you, Mr. Granatstein and Mr. Douglas.

[*Translation*]

First Mr. Douglas, I would like to congratulate you for providing us with the document in Canada's two official languages, English and French. That is a sign that you very much appreciate when you come from Quebec.

[*English*]

My question is for you, Mr. Douglas, and we don't have that much time.

First of all, I was quite surprised when you said in your remarks that there is a lack of awareness and understanding in your country of the importance of Canada to America's current and future economic prosperity. Going a little bit further, you said that the Canadian consulate in Buffalo is mostly working very well with your association, but it's quite difficult with Washington.

Because we are looking at the border, and your last comment was about the border between our two countries, as a co-chairman of the Canadian-American corridor council, can you tell me if this council reaches from the east to the west, from the eastern provinces to the province of B.C.?

Were you consulted by both countries on the issue of border security? It seems that every time we meet our counterparts, the congressmen in the United States, they are all talking about how they are scared of anything coming from Canada because of the long border.

Mr. Garry Douglas: The simple answer to your last question is no. It's not wilful, but I do think there has not been a concerted enough effort on Canada's part to identify—and I don't think it's hard to identify them—active stakeholder interests, groups, and effective advocates in the U.S. for Canada, across the continent, and to utilize them in a much more coordinated, consistent, and sustained way to help Canada with its messaging and its access.

If I leave here having imparted no other message, it would be that a much more concerted, sustained effort needs to be made in that area. There are well-meaning efforts now and then, here and there, but they're not sustained and they're not consistently coordinated.

Mr. Bernard Patry: You talked about the congressmen of every state and you said you had good relations with them. We had a problem, not in meeting with the state congressmen, but with the Washington ones. It's political. We're looking at the possibility of going to Washington at the end of the month.

What would be your advice for us? Under the circumstances, when we meet with them, it's for a very short period. In which way should we engage with them? Do you have any special advice? It seems that with the border and Quebec, you have had really good success.

● (1615)

Mr. Garry Douglas: Any time you're dealing with a U.S. congressman or senator, the more you can take advantage of opportunities to have American friends with you in those conversations, or at some point during that visit, the more powerful it will be—just as in your ridings you're going to care a lot more about a company, business person, chamber of commerce, or citizen from your riding than someone from the U.S. telling you how important the U.S. is to Canada. The opposite is just as true, and in fact even more so given how vast the U.S. is. The vast majority of U.S. congressmen and senators aren't anywhere near the northern border, so they have never had any real reason to deal with that subject, learn about it, or really care much about it.

I cannot overstate the extreme lack of awareness among members of Congress and senators—and even more so at the staff level with those who are driving the writing of papers, position papers, press releases, schedules, etc.—about how important Canada is to the economy of every American. And that's not just Americans who live in Michigan or New York, but Americans who live in Iowa, Kentucky, and Florida. Much more needs to be done for all of our sakes to get that message across, but it needs to be done in partnership with Americans in order to be effective.

So it's not the nice courtesy sort of thing of receiving some colleagues from another country, having a conversation, and being undoubtedly very well-meaning about that conversation. When that meeting is over, it's not going to stay on the agenda as something very important to them when their own constituents pull them back in other directions.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Douglas.

We'll move to Mr. Crête, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): This morning, there was an article in the *Globe and Mail* reporting that Mr. Obama's investment plan—he's going to spend a lot of money—doesn't contain any protectionist measures in relation to the U.S. government's expenditures. However, where expenditures are made by states or major cities, there will be an obligation to buy from American suppliers.

There is a very concrete case in my riding. A business that sells aluminum was told by an American client that it had unfortunately received an order to buy from a U.S. supplier. You said so yourself: we have a very integrated economy. A spokesperson for the water and sewer equipment manufacturer's association even said this will paralyze the economy.

Let's suppose you are the prime minister of Canada or that you hold a top-level position. What could you do to convince the people concerned in the United States that there is no basis for this practice because it harms both the Canadian and U.S. economies? Given your knowledge of the United States, what would you do to find a solution to this situation, at least in the short term?

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Crête.

Mr. Douglas.

Mr. Garry Douglas: As I mentioned, protectionism is looming because of the economic realities. It raises its ugly head when everybody is thinking about jobs and not understanding that you lose more jobs than you gain through protectionism. If you happen to be somebody with one of those interests who's looking to be protected, it's a hard argument to see the other side. That's just a reality.

I can only stress again that the importance needs to be understood amongst not just policy-makers in Washington, but governors, mayors, union leaders, and the news media in particular. They have such a role in defining what becomes a story and how that story gets spun even when they're talking about things such as these kinds of provisions in order to understand how fundamentally important the economic integration is. Again, I think the more you get away from the discussion of trade, the better.

Trade is a dirty word. I don't know why it is. It doesn't make any sense. It's been the single most positive economic force in raising the quality of life for people globally through all of history. It has very little constituency. Get away from that vocabulary and talk in terms of the job impacts and the economic impacts of the average person in Iowa, or the average person in South Carolina who doesn't think Canada is relevant to them at all, except what they hear in the media occasionally about how we somehow might be losing jobs because of NAFTA.

There again, too often Canada kind of gets sucked in with realities and prejudices in American opinion related to Mexico. NAFTA is NAFTA, and therefore everything is bad because it's NAFTA. Again, it has to be bilateral. You have to break the Canadian discussion away from being tied up to the different realities of Mexico and you have to engage American stakeholders.

I think what the Montreal Board of Trade wants to do is get out to places like Pittsburgh, for example, and engage with the Chamber of Commerce there to get greater awareness of the importance of Canada to a place like Pittsburgh, where right now the concern may be about selling American steel, and make them understand what the real balance of interest is. That's the pathway.

● (1620)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: Mr. Granatstein, in a longer term perspective of Canada-U.S. relations, what efforts should Canada make to really reestablish with the Americans the relationship that it may have had 10 or 15 years ago? Perhaps we're nostalgic, but what action would it be important for the Prime Minister, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, to take so that we can hold more advanced discussions in the near future?

[*English*]

Dr. Jack Granatstein: Relations were good 15 years ago when Prime Minister Mulroney was in charge. They were so good that a lot of Canadians thought we were sleeping with the Americans all the time, and they didn't like it very much. It's very difficult to find the right balance. As the first witness today said, really we have to find a way to learn to tolerate the relationship with the United States. That's precisely what we must do.

We have to work with the Americans in our interests, but we have to remember that they are a superpower. They have global interests. And sometimes we must do our share of the dirty work in the world. The Americans have thought for a long time—really for about 50 years—that we have not done our duty in carrying out our responsibilities as a member of the west and as someone who can do a bit of the dirty work. They know we're not a big military power, but they also know that we have a tendency, as John Manley put it some years ago, to go off to the washroom when the bill comes. We can't do that any more. It's a different world, and we have to demonstrate that we are willing to do our part.

I would suggest to you that being in Afghanistan, costly as it has been to us, has had a very substantial impact in the United States in making the American government—previous government and current government both—think that Canada is somewhat more reliable and somewhat closer a partner than it has been in the past.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Granatstein.

We'll move to Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'll be sharing my time with Mr. Lunney.

The Chair: You have about five minutes, so you're really going to have to hustle.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Welcome, gentlemen.

Mr. Granatstein, you talked some on the long history of security with the United States. As we discussed a few years ago, it's epitomized by the monument on the walls of Quebec City with Roosevelt and Churchill. Unfortunately, for some reason, we'll celebrate the other leaders who were participating in it, but not our own Canadian Prime Minister, who was left out.

My question is on the Northwest Passage and the American position on it versus, say, the Russian position. The Russians agree that it's Canadian territory. The Americans feel it should be an international waterway. On a point of strategic security, would it not be better for them to conclude that it is indeed under Canada's sovereign jurisdiction and is not international? Quite frankly, if it is considered an international waterway, does that not leave it open to be used by any other? That's when it's in its liquid state. What about when it's in its frozen state? Can they drive on it too?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: Yes, they can drive on it, and yes, they can fly over it, if it's international. It causes serious problems for the Americans if the Northwest Passage is internationalized.

On the other hand, the Americans are far more concerned at this point with other international straits elsewhere in the world where there isn't a problem with ice a good part of the year. So far, they haven't managed to focus on the differences between the Northwest Passage and other warm water straits.

From our point of view, obviously we want to see it as Canadian territory and sovereign. But realistically, we need to face the international law fact that we might not win such a case, and we may be better off—*may* be—thinking of ways to have an internationalized joint responsibility in the northwest than trying to have it only for ourselves.

We also need to recognize the reality that if global warming continues at its present rate, in 10 to 15 or 20 years the Northwest Passage may very well be open water, and in fact the North Pole may be open water. If that happens, the Northwest Passage will disappear as a significant route. Why go through Canadian waters, through a torturous, winding course, if you can take an over-the-pole route that is shorter and doesn't get you involved with Canadian environmental regulations? That is probably coming in the near future.

● (1625)

The Chair: Mr. Lunney.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Thank you.

I'll just pick up on the same theme.

I appreciate many of your remarks, Mr. Granatstein, about the attitude of some Canadians in the past not being particularly helpful. I like your comment about our enlightened self-interest and that Canada actually has shown itself to be a little bit of an ally that perhaps got on the U.S. radar as a significant ally.

But going back to the border issue and to the north and our efforts in the north in establishing a presence there, expanding training facilities, scientific institutions, and monitoring activities in the north, do you have other recommendations about what we might be doing to enhance the situation of our perimeter, North American perimeter security, along with the Americans? And of course also on our common shared border, what else might we be doing?

Dr. Jack Granatstein: I'm no expert on the border. I wouldn't claim any expertise on perimeter security.

I think we are inevitably being forced toward perimeter security. It will cause us serious problems. It will force changes in our immigration policies, in our refugee policies. But I think we will, in our own enlightened self-interest, namely our economic self-interest, be forced to recognize that we will need to make those changes in order to keep access to the market that is most important to us.

A lot of Canadians think that the great China market or the great India market is going to displace the United States with us. I don't believe this for a minute. The United States is the world's richest market and will remain so, and we simply must keep access to it by whatever means necessary. If that means a common security perimeter, we will be forced to do that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lunney.

We'll move to Mr. Dewar.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you to our witnesses for their presentations today. Mr. Granatstein, I've read most of your books—

Dr. Jack Granatstein: There will be a test.

Mr. Paul Dewar: There will be. Make sure you include Creighton and some others in there—having taken some history courses and a degree in some of our institutions.

You mentioned this notion of Canadian values, and you talked about freedom and democracy. I don't think anyone would argue with that. But there are also the Canadian values of peace, order, and good government. What we see presently is that—particularly when you juxtapose our governance structure with that of the American structure—when it comes to regulation, certainly we're the envy when you look at our banking system.

I have to say, just for the record, I know our government likes to declare that this is something that is an advantage—I agree with them—but I also note that in the 1980s the present government wanted to deregulate. So I think we have to be clear about how we remain a strong system that people envy.

I want to just lay that out, because if we're going to remain with the kind of dichotomy you presented, of being independent—but of course geography dictates that we're together—when it comes to regulation and policy, what pitfalls do we have to be aware of?

I couldn't agree with you more in terms of it being easy to bash the Americans for this or that. That doesn't get us anywhere. It also insults my cousins who live there. But it is something we have to be smart about. When it comes to both foreign policy and continental policy, it's not all-in. We don't want to just tip the hat.

So what are some of the pitfalls and things that we should be really cautious about when it comes to our relations with Washington?

● (1630)

Dr. Jack Granatstein: That's a good question.

If we did what I suggested we do, which is to have a consistent application of our national interests to the choices we have to make in defence, foreign policy, and economics, then at least we have guidelines. I don't think we have applied a national interest test to what we do. We wouldn't have done some of the things we do if we did. I think that is the key way for us to operate. We have to recognize we can win a lot of the battles with the United States on individual issues, but we have no hope of winning the war. They are always going to be bigger, and their will will prevail, if it comes down to it. So we have to be very shrewd when we want to fight and when we want to back off. In other words, we need to know what we must protect, advance, defend. If we have that clearly in mind, we can do very well in any negotiation with the Americans.

But we also need to recognize, as I suggested, that if it gets down to a real slugfest, we cannot win. The big battalions always prevail. That's the reality of life. It's still in our interest to negotiate with the Americans. We have no choice; we must. It's always in our interest to do that, but we need to recognize that sometimes we're not going to win. Sometimes we will get half victories; sometimes we might even get a complete victory, but that will be a rare occasion.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Thank you.

Mr. Douglas, quickly, because I think I'm running out of time, you mentioned the green economy. We've been looking to the new administration, and some of us very happily see a change there. Cap and trade is a policy that many of us advanced in the past. We're looking to see that happen in North America.

What are some of the advantages along the border in particular around developing green initiatives, and maybe give some examples you're already working on right now between the two countries?

Mr. Garry Douglas: This green agenda I think is an example of something that has become very popular, but nobody has quite defined it yet. You can talk to six people and they'll give you six definitions of what it means. It means cap and trade and carbon footprint, it means clean technology, it means alternative energy—it means all those things. It's becoming defined. Canada has a chance to help define that, because again, I think virtually every policy-maker, decision-maker, media mogul, whatever, on the U.S. side of the border is hot on the topic right now, and Canada has a lot to offer.

I'm particularly familiar with the Quebec situation, because those are the folks we most closely work with. The hydro power has an enormous potential. It's already a huge supplier. It has enormous potential for much more, to meet the northeast U.S. electricity needs through a renewable clean source in the future. An awful lot needs to be done with the grid to get it from where it is to where it would need to be in the future.

I think there's some real synergy with wind energy development. It's occurring in New York; it's occurring in my region of New York in a very big way. A lot of the equipment is coming down from Canada. I think there is a technology base in Canada that can be very supportive of that.

There's a lot of university research, a lot of academic research, a lot of R and D work going on. Canada, particularly, tends to be more advanced than the U.S. many times on the R and D end of things. It puts a lot more value on that than we do in the U.S., so it therefore has a contribution to make to new, clean technologies.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We want to thank both of you for appearing here today.

We do apologize for the little bit of a late start we had. We had a death last night in the press folks, a colleague and friend of many of us, so there was a tribute paid in the House of Commons. I think I need to explain why we were about five minutes late starting.

Certainly we do thank you for your presentations. Let me say that what you have said goes into the blues, and we will all have the opportunity to review the comments you've made. If you would like to forward other ideas, what we are studying in our committee now is a review of Canadian foreign policy, with different key elements, and of course this first one being Canada-U.S. So if you have other thoughts you would like to supply our committee with, we would very much appreciate it.

We're going to suspend for one minute. We'll allow our guests to take leave and the three other guests to take the seats, please.

● _____ (Pause) _____

●

● (1635)

The Chair: We'd like to call this committee back to order.

In our second hour today, continuing on our review of key elements of Canadian foreign policy, we have, from the University of Quebec in Montreal, Professor Stéphane Roussel. He holds the Canada research chair in Canadian foreign and defence policy... Canada-U.S. relations in the Arctic.

We also have Steven Staples, chair of the Rideau Institute on International Affairs.

From the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Colin Robertson is distinguished senior fellow and director of the Canada-U.S. project at the Centre for Trade Policy and Law.

Our committee provides time for each witness to make an opening statement, and then we go into the first round of questioning. We're going to look forward to your comments.

I think Madame Deschamps, who is a valued member of our committee—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): I would like to transmit a message, with your permission, and welcome a group of visitors. I know they will be leaving soon, but a group from the École nationale d'administration publique in Montreal has attended our committee meeting today. I would like to thank them for their interest in our business.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Every once in a while we have a number of students who come to take in our committee.

We welcome you to Parliament Hill. As you visit here today, be assured that you have a very good colleague in Madame Deschamps. I'm glad she's been able to show you around a bit. Enjoy the rest of your day.

We'll move into the first round, and we'll begin with Mr. Robertson. If you keep it to approximately 10 minutes, then we'll get a little more questioning in. Again, we're running late, and we will have bells starting at 5:30.

Mr. Robertson, welcome back.

[*Translation*]

Dr. Colin Robertson (Distinguished Senior Fellow and Director, Canada-U.S. Project, Centre for Trade Policy and Law, Norman Paterson School of International Affairs): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Last year, the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs and its Centre for Trade Policy and Law formed an expert panel to consider how Canada could best defend its interests through more productive relations with the new Obama government and Congress in Washington. That blueprint reflects our discussions and offers suggestions to Canadians, governments, both national and provincial, for the development of a bilateral program for sustained engagement. Here are our conclusions.

The time for re-engagement is opportune. First, the international financial crisis requires rapid and sustained cooperation. The interconnections between the financial and manufacturing sectors of the two countries, the problems in the automotive sector, for example, would cause any effort directed at purely Canadian situations to fail.

It is particularly important for Canada to be bold and confident to make the best of its unique position next door to the United States. The solution lies in leadership and mutual respect. Personal relations between the heads of government are essential to any good relationship. This has been emphasized a number of times by our American counterparts. The Prime Minister will first of all have to propose to the President that we re-establish annual summits. The agenda is clear, but we must move beyond the incrementalism and irritants management that have characterized the recent past and focus on an integrated and mutually beneficial agenda of major unresolved issues. That means that the most pressing bilateral problem will be to rethink how we manage the North American economic area, energy security and sustainable development; to "rethink" the border; to adopt a single regulatory framework applicable to both sides of the border; and to increase joint regulatory capability.

We believe that Canadians are ready. According to the surveys—and I know that Frank Graves was here—Canadians are generally comfortable with a relationship that works to their benefit and are prepared to support government efforts to gain greater economic and security benefits. There is already a broad range of transborder institutional contact at the federal level. There are also hidden connections between the states and the provinces, particularly between premiers and governors, between businesses and between parliamentarians. That can reinforce national goals and objectives.

● (1640)

[*English*]

The founders constructed the American system on what James Madison called competing interests and public passions. Traditional diplomatic practice was its ritual and protocol.

Relying on the State Department, and occasionally the executive branch, to look out for interests is neither sufficient nor relevant to our circumstances. To advance and defend Canadian interests in a relationship that daily grows more "intermestic" requires a permanent campaign, with a role for all.

As parliamentarians, you have a place in standing with your fellow legislators, members of Congress in both the House and Senate. Congress is the source of most of our problems, sometimes by design, on issues like lumber, beef, and the requirement for passports, but just as often as collateral damage, on trade action directed at others but affecting Canada because the relationship is so close.

As head of the advocacy secretariat in Washington, I worked with the Canada-U.S. Inter-Parliamentary Group co-chairs, MPs Greg Thompson and then Rob Merrifield, and always, Senator Jerry Grafstein.

I was delighted to see the administrative change allowing parliamentarians to include Washington in their travel authority. If I haven't asked today, I would ask that you extend this to all the United States, so you can also visit members in their districts. At its heart, successful diplomacy is all about relationships. In the American context, elected officials share a special experience. Your role is vital and important, and I cannot emphasize enough the value of the work you can do legislator to legislator.

[*Translation*]

In conclusion, we think it is possible to make major progress with full confidence in our partnership on important issues for Canadians and Americans. The only question, we feel, is whether there is a will to take the initiative and stick with it.

[*English*]

Crisis creates opportunity. Changes are already in motion, be it in the financial sector or in the auto industry. The Obama administration has opened the door, which Canadians can turn into a smart partnership that will move our relationship with the United States to a new and rewarding level.

Once again, Canadians can work with Americans as architects and engineers for new or renovated bilateral and global institutions. Protectionist forces are on the rise in a Democratic House and Senate, and the severity of America's economic crisis can easily lead to flailing that hurts those closest to the flying elbows.

The new President's sense of nuance and his true international concern are still untested and, in large measure, unknown. He's declared himself to be a citizen of the world, but given the pressures on him, we do not know yet how much attention he will be able to devote to the neighbourhood.

Events only underline the need for national leadership, initiative, and a permanent campaign, with parliamentarians playing a key role. The stars are in alignment: Canadians have a comfort level with Obama, and there is consensus among the provinces and on the part of business for engagement with the United States.

Geographic propinquity and a global network reflecting our pluralism gives us a unique sensibility and perspective on international relations. This intelligence is valuable diplomatic currency, especially in Washington. Played adroitly, we can realize for Canada a unique place and standing in a world where the rest want to know what America is thinking and America really wants to know and cares about the rest of the world.

In doing so, we can realize a smart partnership with the United States that we can play to national advantage and benefit. In fact, we must. With over three-quarters of our trade going to the United States, and our prosperity dependent on trade, anything less than a successful partnership will quickly be felt across the country. That should provide us with a sense of focus and determination that easier times might not require.

Merci, monsieur le président.

● (1645)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Robertson.

We'll move to Mr. Staples, please.

Mr. Steven Staples (Chair, Rideau Institute on International Affairs): Members of the committee, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for inviting me here today on the topic of Canada-U.S. relations.

I'd like to focus today on two areas that are emerging as priorities for the Obama administration that offer Canada the opportunity to pursue our national interests through a more secure world. The first is enhancing space security; the second, supporting nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Let's begin with space.

Canadians were reminded about the value of the government's investments in space when we were faced with the prospect of the sale of MacDonald, Dettwiler and Associates' space division last year, including the remote sensing satellite RADARSAT-2 and all the intellectual property associated with it. It was a galvanizing moment when public opposition to the $1.3 billion sale to a U.S. defence firm arose quite unexpectedly. To great applause, then Minister Jim Prentice disallowed the sale under the Investment Canada Act, a historic first since the act was established back in 1985.

In the months that have followed, Canadian Space Agency president, Dr. Steven MacLean, has led the development of a new space strategy that will be released very soon. Underscoring how important space is to the delivery of effective services to Canadians, Dr. MacLean has consulted with nine different government departments, all of whom rely on space capabilities to meet their respective mandates.

The next step in terms of supporting our space capabilities and the government's benefit from them is on the international stage. Canada's national interests depend on international space security, which is defined by the space security index as the secure and sustainable access to and use of space and freedom from space-based threats. The index is supported by Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs.

The last two years have seen some hair-raising developments in space. China destroyed one of its defunct satellites using an anti-satellite missile, creating a huge debris cloud in space. The United States likewise shot down one of its own satellites with a missile designed for its controversial and destabilizing ballistic missile defence system, and only weeks ago, two satellites collided in space, a statistical near impossibility that shows how dangerous the space environment has become, and the resulting debris field poses a hazard for the international space station.

Debris, satellite weapons, and anti-satellite weapons all demand action from space-faring nations to preserve our space security.

The Obama administration is taking space security very seriously. President Obama has made a pledge on the White House website that says this:

> The Obama-Biden administration will restore American leadership on space issues, seeking a worldwide ban on weapons that interfere with military and commercial satellites.

Their plan, by the way, goes on and includes other space security initiatives too.

Tomorrow the Rideau Institute and the Secure World Foundation are holding our annual round table on space, which engages experts, government officials, and industry representatives, and which will be attended by a key adviser to President Obama on space issues, Dr. John Logsdon. Logsdon is coming to Canada because the Obama administration will be seeking partners in the international community for its space security objectives. Some officials in the Department of Foreign Affairs have been working away quietly at space security problems, winning respect from our allies. This work must be intensified and expanded so we can contribute in a significant way.

To achieve this, I would like to make the following suggestions: that this committee call upon the Minister of Foreign Affairs and department officials from the non-proliferation and disarmament division to share with the committee members how Canada can support international space security efforts; number two, that parliamentarians establish an all-party informal network on space to consider the challenges faced by Canada and hear solutions from experts and stakeholders and to foment parliamentary cooperation on these issues; third, that the government be encouraged to establish a national space policy that will guide a whole-of-government approach to space, putting principles of peaceful uses of space, international cooperation, and Canadian scientific and technical excellence at its core.

In the few minutes that I have remaining, let me address the second area where I think Canada and the U.S. share a joint interest, and that is nuclear disarmament.

● (1650)

What example could more clearly demonstrate the potential dangerous consequences of maintaining nuclear weapons than the collision of those British and French ballistic missile submarines at the bottom of the ocean a few weeks ago? It's one more reason why many security experts are calling for the scaling down of the more than 20,000 nuclear weapons that remain in global stockpiles. People such as Henry Kissinger, George Shultz, William Perry, and Sam Nunn were issuing joint statements calling for the reduction and eventual elimination of nuclear weapons.

Like his administration's commitment to prevent the weaponization of space, President Obama is seeking a renewed commitment for the reduction of nuclear weapons. In his famous speech in Berlin during the election campaign, then Senator Obama actually expressed support for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Now President Obama is wasting no time. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited Moscow last week, and after her first face-to-face visit with her Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, both agreed to improve U.S.-Russia relations. Their starting point will be a new nuclear disarmament treaty to be completed by the end of the year.

Momentum is building, and Canadians should be part of it. In an important address to the upper chamber last month, Senator Hugh Segal reminded members of our traditional role in supporting nuclear disarmament. He said that avoiding nuclear war has been a pillar of Canadian foreign defence policies since the late 1950s, and he called on Canada to play a lead role in avoiding a nuclear catastrophe with Iran.

The Middle East presents us with one such opportunity, but so does Europe. This year marks the 60th anniversary of NATO. This alliance continues to adhere to a strategic concept that relies on nuclear weapons that has really not been updated for a decade.

Indeed, Canada sits on the Nuclear Planning Group, and the remarkable fact that Canada sits on any body with such an odious name as the Nuclear Planning Group would come as a surprise to many Canadians.

Many organizations, such as the Middle Powers Initiative, until this year led by a former Edmonton Conservative member of Parliament and independent Senator Douglas Roche, have been busy preparing the ground for nuclear policy reforms in NATO by working with many other non-nuclear states like Canada.

Other groups such as the Nobel Prize winning Pugwash Conference, named after that village in Nova Scotia where they first met, and Canadian Physicians for Global Survival, are calling on Canada to reaffirm Canadians' commitment to nuclear disarmament during this NATO anniversary year.

In addition to upcoming meetings at NATO, the United Nations will be preparing for the next scheduled review of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2010. This provides us with another opportunity.

In conclusion, I would like to make the final recommendations building on the first three. Number four would be that the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade use this coming year to explore how Canada can contribute to nuclear disarmament, and, as Senator Segal put it in the Senate, “bring fresh thinking, new ideas and Canadian engagement to geopolitical risks we share” with the United States.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Staples.

We will move to Monsieur Roussel. You have 10 minutes.

Professor Stéphane Roussel (Professor, Canada Research Chair in Canadian Foreign and Defence Policy, Canada-U.S. Relations in the Arctic, Université du Québec à Montréal): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I really appreciate the invitation, since I started my career here 19 years ago during the Gulf War. I was doing an internship at the foreign affairs committee.

● (1655)

[*Translation*]

My remarks will essentially focus on one aspect of Canada-U.S. relations, the issue of Arctic governance. This is an important issue. I believe that, at this moment, Minister Cannon is making a statement on the subject in Yellowknife.

I want to emphasize that the thoughts I will be sharing with you today stem in large part from research that I have conducted with my colleague Samantha Arnold of the University of Winnipeg. However, I accept full responsibility for making them.

By way of introduction, I would say that the problems facing the Canadian government in the Arctic are of three kinds. First, it must manage the immediate consequences of climate change on wildlife, plant life, human communities and the environment.

Second, Canada is facing four land challenges, and thus four instances where sovereignty is involved. Two of those conflicts are absolutely insignificant: they are the conflicts with Denmark, one over Hans Island and the other in the Lincoln Sea. However, the other two conflicts are more significant and involve the United States. One concerns the Beaufort sea, and the other, more important, is the quarrel over the status of the Northwest Passage.

The third type of problem facing Canada is the potential growth of human activities in the region, particularly increased navigation, the exploitation of natural resources and even the potential increase in criminal activities. Here I want to emphasize the word “potential”. We are dealing with scenarios here. We do not know what will happen in the next 15, 20 or 30 years. These are threats or problems that may eventually arise. I will mainly focus on these last two problems because they are related to the greatest degree to governance issues.

Since 2004, the Canadian government has taken a number of initiatives to reinforce its presence in the High North, particularly by building ice-breakers, buying helicopters, building port and training infrastructure, increasing the strength of the ranger corps and the conduct of regular military exercises in the High North. These are welcome initiatives. Canada has long been too absent from the High North. They will enable the government to ensure an effective presence in this region and to meet its responsibilities.

However, I will take the liberty here of making a comment. I am cautiously optimistic in this regard. Obviously, all the announcements that have been made are still announcements, not yet concrete measures deployed in the field. It takes 10 to 20 years to put an ice-breaker in service. The problem is that the financial crisis we are currently facing could well lead the government to reduce its efforts and make cuts to some of the programs announced, as was the case in 1989 in particular.

The other problem is that the war in Afghanistan requires considerable financial, human and material resources. I do not believe in the current context that Canada can afford to intervene in both Afghanistan and the Arctic. Sooner or later, the government will have to make important choices.

However, even assuming that these initiatives will in fact be implemented, another question arises: are these essentially unilateral measures enough to achieve the objectives the Canadian government has set in the North? In my opinion, these unilateral initiatives will not be enough if they do not include a diplomatic offensive. They must be accompanied by the signing of agreements with other governments so that Canada's claims are recognized and government services are offered in the most efficient manner possible.

A number of my colleagues and I feel that there is a window of opportunity. Colin Robertson clearly expressed this. There is probably a possibility of improving relations with the U.S. government and, in particular, of establishing new institutions. The diplomatic initiatives I was referring to can be of two kinds: there are multilateral initiatives, which I won't discuss here for the moment, and bilateral initiatives.

Canada has excellent relations with the United States, which we tend to forget when small conflicts arise between the two countries. In the past, the two governments have shown considerable ability to resolve their conflicts in a satisfactory manner and to reach compromises that serve their mutual interests. There is thus reason for moderate optimism in this instance as well over the possibility of resolving conflict in the Arctic.

However, I want to emphasize one thing. The most important factor in Canada-U.S. relations is the bilateral institutions put in place by the two countries. In defence alone, there are more than 850 agreements between the two countries. In my view, those institutions have gone a long way to improving and maintaining good relations between the two countries.

● (1700)

In the past two years, many researchers have suggested establishing a new bilateral Canada-U.S. institution to manage problems and challenges in the High North.

Very briefly, those proposals are consistent with three existing models in Canada-U.S. relations. The first model is that of the organizations for managing and maintaining marine transportation corridors, such as the St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation, the U.S. counterpart of which is the St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation. This is a Crown corporation responsible for maintaining navigation infrastructure in the St. Lawrence and ensuring the safety of ships that use the seaway.

The second type of organization is NORAD, a joint defence organization of the two countries. Two years ago, NORAD was given a marine mandate. I am quite skeptical about the possibility of NORAD being able to provide adequate services in the High North, but this model is often referred to.

The third model—which is perhaps the most promising and useful for our purposes—is that of the conflict and cooperation management institutions. The two best known examples are the Permanent Joint Board on Defence, the PJBD, which was formed in 1940, and the International Joint Commission, founded in 1909. These two organizations work very well. They are responsible for making recommendations to both governments in their areas of jurisdiction. They conduct studies and can avoid overpoliticized issues.

If one model were to be adopted to manage Canada-U.S. relations, both conflicts and joint challenges in the High North, it should be the PJBD model.

In closing, we will have to meet a certain number of conditions if we want to establish this kind of bilateral institution in the High North.

First, we must set aside sovereignty issues, which poison Canada-U.S. relations and give rise to needless debates. There is no urgent need to resolve the sovereignty issues immediately. On the contrary, merely raising them can cause discussions between the two countries to break down.

Second, this institution must be functional and very technical in nature. It must focus on problems that are not political, but rather concrete, such as surveillance and aids to navigation, search and rescue and environmental protection.

Third, we must favour a gradual approach. We should introduce limited initiatives which could eventually serve as a basis for building a more ambitious organization.

Fourth, we absolutely must ensure that local governments, that is to say the government of Alaska, the representatives of the Canadian territories and those of aboriginal groups, are adequately represented in that institution. They are the parties most concerned by what goes on in the Arctic.

Lastly, we must ensure that the mandate of this future organization does not conflict with the multilateral commitments of Canada and the U.S. government in the High North. That mandate must be worded in such a way as to enable other players to be invited or to add other areas of cooperation. The organization must therefore be flexible in both its membership and scope.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Roussel.

Moving to the first round, we have Mr. Pearson and then Mr. Patry.

Mr. Glen Pearson (London North Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you for coming. We appreciate it very much.

Mr. Robertson, a couple of weeks ago we had Thomas d'Aquino here, who's the head of our consulate chief executives. He's been around for a long time. We talked about some of the dislocation that takes place between Canada and the U.S. as far as trade, business, and corporate things go. I asked him what main things could be done to help us round off the rough edges of that to facilitate things more quickly. I was surprised when his first answer was a strengthened public service in Canada. He also talked about a strengthened diplomatic service in Canada for Canada and U.S. relations.

I'd like to know if you agree with that assessment. Because of your own rich experience in this area, how would you suggest we do that?

● (1705)

Dr. Colin Robertson: Mr. Chairman, I'm still a serving member of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. I'm on loan to Carleton University. I think we have a strong public service, but I think the steps to increase our capacity are always welcome.

Mr. Glen Pearson: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Staples, I know you were on the CBC recently, and I'm sorry this isn't in the field you were talking about here, but you were speaking about Afghanistan. You had pretty strong views on Afghanistan, as I remember. You don't believe we should be in there much longer; we should be pulling out, if I have you correctly.

I would like to know if you agree with a negotiated settlement about how to do that. Obviously, in your head you have some ideas about how we would go about doing it, if we have to extricate ourselves. Could you give us some enlightenment there?

Mr. Steven Staples: Sure, I'm happy to. Thank you for the question.

I think you had former Prime Minister Joe Clark appear before the committee as well. We had him at our annual dinner, and he gave an absolutely gripping presentation outlining the spending reductions that have been incurred by the Department of Foreign Affairs. So if it's any wonder how we are punching far below our weight instead of above it, follow the money, as they say in the movies.

In terms of a negotiated settlement, it was actually back in 2006 that I participated in the first press conference here in 130-S, calling for a negotiated settlement. It was clear what was happening in Afghanistan was in fact a civil war that was going on that had never been resolved properly. On September 11, the war on terrorism was laid over the top of it. Really, what we needed to do was to address the local grievances of many of the aspects of the insurgency.

The strategy had to be one of peeling off those elements within the insurgency that we could bring under the government, by trying to redress some of the complaints and issues they had, which are mostly local. There would probably be some spoilers, as they say, and maybe by training the Afghan national forces—the police and army—they would be able to deal with that and provide enough security for the country that then we could get the development and aid going.

I'm still firmly a believer in that, that a negotiated settlement is the way to go, and I think it has been remarkable that the discourse around this issue has slowly come around to that over the last few years, to the point now where we even had President Obama taking a fresh look at the situation and identifying this.

So I think a negotiated settlement is definitely the way to go.

The Chair: I just want to interrupt here. Our terms of our discussion today are more specific to Canada-U.S. relationships. Although negotiations with whoever it might be on the other end in Afghanistan may be of interest, perhaps the comments could be more directed to what the American response might be if we did leave Afghanistan right now.

I'm not certain if that's exactly what Mr. Pearson was after, but—

Mr. Glen Pearson: Mr. Robertson threw me off, and I didn't answer—

The Chair: I'm not certain, Mr. Staples, if any of us knows exactly who the negotiators on the other side in Afghanistan are, but let's try to keep it specific to the United States' response to that type of discussion.

Mr. Steven Staples: Yes.

Just very briefly then, I think it's clear that the U.S. is going to be moving down this road. At the same time, there's going to be a buildup of troops there. They are going to open up a diplomatic front. That is the tone that's being put forward.

Canada should actively participate in the review of strategy that's going on right now in the United States, and I think we need to show quite clearly that this is not going to be a military solution, and help find ways—give them the benefit of our experience and our diplomatic know-how—that we can move to that reconciliation, as some people have called it, or negotiation, however you want to describe it there.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Staples.

Mr. Patry.

[*Translation*]

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

Mr. Roussel, you talked about the Arctic, and that was very interesting. Canada ratified the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea in 2003. In 2013, we will have to submit the matter to the commission. We are working very hard to prepare the file. Moreover, the committee has begun to examine it. This preparation includes establishing cartography and alpha and beta lines, etc. I can't talk to you about that because it's all Greek to me.

When Canada submits its file in 2013, how will that commission operate? How much time can it take?

As you are a specialist in this field, I want to ask you for advice. The committee wants to examine the issue of the Arctic in the fairly near future, probably in early June. In your presentation, you said that the Arctic is a very broad issue. You talked about the environment, defence and so on. What should the committee focus on in order to conduct a useful study and not to stray into fields beyond its jurisdiction?

● (1710)

Prof. Stéphane Roussel: Thank you, Mr. Patry.

What will happen after the Canadian file is submitted to the commission? It will be reviewed by experts, as was the case for the Russians' file. We will probably have to wait a year or two. I believe it should go quite quickly, but the real test will be when the Americans are going to decide. They'll do it eventually, they'll join the convention, but, until we have all the documents in hand, that is to say until all the national files have been submitted, validated and compared, it will all remain a theoretical exercise.

Second, if I had any advice to give you committee members as to what should be studied in the Arctic, I would suggest that you really focus on concrete problems. Perhaps you should set aside the sovereignty issue, even though it is very "sexy" for journalists. That's what appeals to them the most. Instead you should focus your efforts on how the government can provide services to the communities there and occupy the land. I'm talking about environmental threats, search and rescue operations, scientific operations. Really you should look at how the government can show its presence in the field, and thus focus on problems that are of a more technical nature.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Roussel.

We'll move to Monsieur Crête and Madame Deschamps, who are going to split the time. *Oui?*

[*Translation*]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: I'm going to let my colleague speak because I know he's very interested in this issue.

Mr. Paul Crête: Thank you.

Mr. Robertson, you witnessed my first steps as a parliamentarian when you were head of the office at the U.S. embassy. You talked a little about that today. Could you tell us more about the action plan we should have for Canadian action on American soil, from parliamentarians here, from the provinces and all that. What would be the extent of the additional effort that would have to be made so that we could really respond to what Mr. Douglas said earlier, that the second issue in the United States is always the fact that a lot of people, including U.S. parliamentarians, don't know much about Canada? You talked about letting parliamentarians travel more, getting out of Washington. At least that's what I thought you said. Can you tell us more on that subject?

Dr. Colin Robertson: That's definitely why we have to conduct visits, especially to Washington, to engage congressmen, because relations among elected representatives are frankly odd, particularly with the U.S. Congress.

[*English*]

I might just say, the American system, as we know, is constructed...there's the executive with whom we have well-established relationships, but the Congress, where most of our problems come from...these are elected representatives like yourselves, and my experience is that this is one area where we really can make a difference with you taking the lead.

I observed firsthand in my over 300 calls on Parliament Hill, the times I went up with parliamentarians, it just lifted our game significantly because you understand one another, you have so much in common, you're both elected. That does more to help us, particularly in Washington, but then taking the relationships, because it's all personal, and going to their districts and inviting them up here. I heard many times from senior congressmen who are now well placed, the chairs of the committees who take the actions that are aimed...because they had relationships with Canadian parliamentarians. In my view, the two most effective Canadian parliamentarians are Jerry Grafstein and Colin Kenny, partly because of longevity—they've worked on a sustained basis with members of Congress, and that's where you can make a difference because that's where the problems start.

In my view, diplomacy in the United States has to be waged differently than the way we do it in the rest of the world. Again, I come back; a critical ingredient is parliamentarians like yourselves. I was very pleased when you were allowed to visit Washington, but I would strongly encourage you to widen the travel privileges so you can go into the districts. I also encourage provincial parliamentarians.

● (1715)

[*Translation*]

For example, I've seen the members of Quebec's National Assembly all across the country.

[*English*]

I've seen them also in the western state legislatures, because this works at every level.

You have Darrell Dexter, from Nova Scotia, the leader of the opposition, coming down and meeting with counterparts in Maryland and New York and heading off potential problems with "buy America" by pointing out the relationship with the Atlantic, in this case, particularly Nova Scotia. There was then-leader of the opposition in Ontario, John Tory, coming down and calling on members. They understood him, because he was the minority leader from the provincial legislature. This made a big difference. We can't do it enough.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Robertson.

We'll go to Monsieur Crête.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: With respect to the Arctic, you talked a lot about the importance—at least that's what I understood—of going beyond what you call the sovereignty approach, but what we also call the militaristic approach. I understood from your message that, when we denounce the fact that a Russian bomber approached the border but did not enter Canadian air space, we're going downstairs rather than up. I won't ask you to comment on the situation in political terms, but that's what I understand.

I would like you to speak more in detail about the kind of bilateral organization you prefer. You talked about the seaway and NORAD as being two somewhat different aspects, one concerning defence, the other day-to-day management. It is the day-to-day management aspect that interests me the most. What concrete form could that take? Would the two countries come together around a table like at the joint commission, or would it be different?

Prof. Stéphane Roussel: I mentioned those three models. If we talk about day-to-day management models, such as the St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation, those are two state organizations, one American the other Canadian, that have the mandate to manage the St. Lawrence Seaway, particularly the locks. There aren't any of those in the High North, but there are similar problems. We could have a two-headed or even binational organization that would be responsible for monitoring ice and providing assistance to navigation in the Northwest Passage. A number of authors are suggesting this approach. I find it riskier because the issue of where the border lies will inevitably come up again. In the St. Lawrence or Great Lakes, the Canada-U.S. border is clearly delineated. In the High North, however, it's not clear. So I'm cautious about that model.

I prefer the Permanent Joint Board on Defence, or PJBD, model where there are three Canadians and three Americans, who are selected based on their qualifications and expertise in the field. They conduct studies on very specific, concrete problems, and each one returns to his government to say what he suggests, working with the others, to solve the problems. In doing that, we advance, we move forward, we get to know each other and trust each other more. What was put in place with the PJBD, or the Permanent Joint Board, could be put in place in the High North relatively easily. That's the model that I would favour.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Roussel.

We'll go to the government side. We have Mr. Abbott and Madam Brown.

Hon. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Staples, I made notes about the MDA space-based strategy, the non-proliferation use of space and space-based threats, disarmament, and the NATO Nuclear Planning Group round table on space. Then I see that you're suggesting that we request that the Minister of National Defence appear before the committee to explain Canada's position on NATO's Nuclear Planning Group.

I suppose I was rather expecting that you might have been talking about maybe a joint focus for our two countries, Canada and the U.S., on climate change, or territorial challenge, or the Northwest Passage, or NAFTA, or the thickening of the border, or border security, or perimeter issues, or management of joint issues, maybe with NORAD or IJC. I wasn't really expecting your dissertation on space. Considering the topic of the day, which I believe you were advised of, I was curious about why you chose something that, to my simple mind, appears to be a little obscure.

● (1720)

Mr. Steven Staples: I think it's a welcome opportunity to discuss this. Thank you for your question.

I think these are issues of mutual interest with the U.S., and I think these are emerging as two important priorities for the Obama administration, both in terms of space security and in terms of nuclear disarmament. I think in this regard we want to look at areas in which we have strengths and where we can contribute to U.S. priorities.

In terms of our relationship with the United States, I took an interest in, and many of the speakers have pointed out, the need to find places where we can make contributions to their priorities. We need to seek areas of cooperation. I think, in particular, that these are areas in which we have a great deal to contribute. I would agree with Senator Segal, who pointed out that we have a long history in this area. He was specifically focusing on Iran, for instance. This is also an issue of concern to the Obama administration. I think these are areas on which we can work with this new administration, which wasn't as easy to do before, under the last administration.

That was my intention here today.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Staples.

Ms. Brown.

Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank all of you for your presentations today. I found them most fascinating. All six of them have been great.

What I hear about over and over is this integration of what's going on in North America. We talk about the integration of our security, so we talk about the border issues, and we talk about the integration of our economy.

I represent the riding of Newmarket—Aurora, which has a tremendous number of auto supply parts manufacturers. I recognize fully that those parts are often travelling back and forth across the border to create one motor vehicle.

How do we as Canadians establish ourselves firmly, given the size of the American population and their influence globally? How do we retain our influence globally? How do we retain our influence and a strong voice in the North American market? What do we do to make sure that happens, given that all of these integrations are going on?

Mr. Robertson, you spoke about “relationship”, and I would like you to expand on that, if you would. I am a person who firmly believes that relationship is how we are going to maintain strong voices. I love the fact that you've talked about us as parliamentarians extending a hand in friendship to our counterparts in the States. I would love it if you could provide me with a list of people to whom I could start making phone calls, writing letters, and introducing myself. I'm a new parliamentarian, so this is contingent on my doing that.

Perhaps each of you could comment briefly on how you see us retaining our own strong voice within this context.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Brown.

Maybe Mr. Robertson could start.

Dr. Colin Robertson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's the power of ideas. I've spent all of my career in the service of Canada, but I've spent half my career outside of Canada. We're actually much better than we think we are.

Perhaps it's a good thing, but there's a certain deference about Canadians. The rest of the world looks to us with envy and great interest, particularly because of our position on the upper half of North America vis-à-vis the United States. They often look to us to interpret that giant south of the border. There is no better people to be able to understand the United States than Canadians, because we have a certain sensibility and sensitivity. We understand, for example, what a tailgate party is. It's the little nuances that make the difference.

When we bring the power of ideas, and because we play multilateralism—we have to because of our relative size—again, the rest of the world is interested in this. The Americans, for their part, are also increasingly a bit befuddled by what's going on in the rest of the world. Now we have an opportunity with Mr. Obama, who has said he wants to reopen America.

Now, America never shut down, but there's an opportunity for us to play in this. When we do play, and I think we should play, we usually play very well. It's not a party thing; it's just something that we Canadians have and that we don't always appreciate. Again, I will say that we're really good at this.

● (1725)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Robertson.

I would also just make mention of this, because in your comments you did talk about the importance of organizations such as the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group. These are committees and groups that do have an impact, and all parties work together, if you're looking for ideas on how you can build those types of relationships.

I thank Mr. Robertson for bringing that forward and noting the good work done by those members of that committee.

Mr. Dewar, please.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our guests for their presentations.

I want to start with the whole issue of the Arctic, around what models would work. When you consider all the views and the blown-up rhetoric that we've seen in the last while, with the talk about the Russian bear as opposed to protecting the polar bears' habitat, we can see that we need to have some clear direction as to where we should go.

I say this as someone who sees that some of the strategy of the government is to create this kind of phony war, in my opinion, be it with the Russians or with the Americans. In fact, when you see the joint work that's going on between scientists, what we need to do is get behind what they're doing.

Where would you see the role of scientists in joint management? Would you see them as being on the board? Would you see them feeding into the data and the joint projects? I'm sensing that there's a lot more cooperation going on between Canada and the U.S. than we are actually aware of. On the models you talked about, where would you put scientists and researchers?

Prof. Stéphane Roussel: That model will involve people from the government—from Foreign Affairs, National Defence, Indian Affairs, and Environment Canada—and their counterparts in the U.S. Basically, these committees, like the PJBD, are made up of official people, not of those from outside.

Scientists can always act as counsellors. Obviously we could create some committees to study a question in particular.

Another problem we have with Arctic issues is that we are oversensitive about this, and people react too strongly regarding the conflict there. We are forgetting—what you said is really important—that there's a lot of cooperation at the ground level. Canadian officials and the Canadian military are constantly working with their counterparts in the U.S. We're not talking about this because it is informal or because there is a memorandum of understanding. This is important. I think we should build on this and give them a more elaborate structure.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Staples, you mentioned—and we've heard it at least three times now—the reference to disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation as a way to engage the United States in a common cause.

When you look at Washington and the direction they're going on this file, what can Canada do?

Mr. Steven Staples: I think Canada can do a lot of things on this.

As a traditional middle power, we've been able to work with other countries that seem a little bit like us in dealing with countries in a broad engagement. I think we have a number of very talented people in the Department of Foreign Affairs who have been working on this, in terms of verification and looking at ways of preventing these kinds of threats.

So I think we have a long tradition of this that maybe we have forgotten a little bit. But we can engage in this.

I like this idea, and I also think we should not forget about engaging the United States on multiple levels. Non-governmental organizations provide an extra level of engagement with the U.S. We're working with the Secure World Foundation and other U.S. organizations. I really do hope that the Department of Foreign Affairs, when it goes to New York in May, includes a non-governmental organizational representative in its delegation, as it previously has. My understanding is that they have not yet made certain whether they're going to do that or not, and I certainly hope they do, because I think that's an important tool in our diplomatic tool box.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I just want to finish with Mr. Robertson.

When you talk about this approach and this engagement, I think a lot of us would agree. I don't think we've seen a lot of that MP-to-congressman engagement.

I agree with the chair that we have these associations that have worked well in the past, but expanding on that, have we in the past actually either buddied or twinned through any other structures or approaches that you're aware of, or at least contemplated how we will further engage with legislators in the States?

● (1730)

Dr. Colin Robertson: Mr. Chair, I realize a minority situation makes it more difficult to travel, but at the subnational level, in the Pacific Northwest economic region, the buddy relationship that was spoken of does exist among British Columbia, Yukon, Alberta, and now Saskatchewan, and, on the American side, Alaska, Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. It's very effective.

You will remember in the American system there is a progression from city to county to Congress to Senate, then often back to the state house as governor, and then back to the U.S. Senate. And never forget, four of the last six presidents were governors. The current president was both a state senator and then a U.S. senator. These relationships are critically important. In my many calls on Congress—now on both sides, because again it doesn't matter whether they're Republican or Democrat—they would speak of their relationships with Canadian legislators, both at the provincial level and with members like you. It just makes such a difference.

So I think there are many ways to do it. But the idea of the personal relationships that you make.... I was talking recently with Rob Merrifield, who was co-chair of the committee until he moved. He'd established a very good relationship with, for example, Louise Slaughter, who is now chair of the critical rules committee and was co-chair of the Canada-U.S. interparliamentary group. This goes across the way.

Jerry Grafstein will go on at some length about his superb relationships, and he's telling the truth. I used to sort of attach myself to Jerry when he would go around and work the Hill, because, again, there are doors you can open that benefit all. That's something that you have that really no one else has, and it's an asset that we have, because we understand one another, particularly that the significance of being elected members makes a difference.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I want to thank all of you for being here again today. You brought forward different ideas, good ideas, and we appreciate your input to our committee.

We are adjourned.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

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