House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

FAAE • NUMBER 031 • 3rd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, October 28, 2010

Chair

Mr. Dean Allison

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

Thursday, October 28, 2010

● (1530)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC)): I want to welcome everyone to meeting number 31 of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

Today our orders of the day are the effectiveness and viability of public service partnerships between nations.

We will look at this over the next couple of meetings. We're going to start off with Madam Barrados today to talk a little bit about what I think is a unique opportunity for Canada: trying to help other countries build capacity around the world.

I'm not going to steal any of your presentation. I'm going to let you just go ahead and take your time. Then, as we do, we'll go around the room and ask some questions back and forth.

Welcome. Thank you for taking time out of your busy day to be here. I'll turn the floor over to you.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Barrados (President, Public Service Commission of Canada): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and honorable members.

I am delighted to be here today to talk about public service partnerships between nations, with a particular focus on the work of my organization, the Public Service Commission of Canada.

We are an independent agency reporting to Parliament, mandated to safeguard the integrity of the public service staffing system and non-partisanship of the public service. We have been in existence for over 100 years and are proud of our contribution to building a merit-based, non-partisan federal public service. The PSC reports annually to Parliament on its activities and results. Its 2009-2010 Annual Report was tabled in Parliament on October 5th.

While the PSC's mandate is mostly domestic, over the years, it has been approached by a number of countries to share its expertise and experience. As David Holdsworth wrote in his article entitled Sharing the Merit Principle: The Public Service Commission of Canada Abroad:

> One of the lesser known stories of Canadian public administration during the past two decades is the role the Canadian model has played in contributing to human resource management reforms in other parts of the world. While a professional, non-partisan and merit-based public service is often taken for granted within our own borders, other countries looking to reform their public service see ours as a reference point and Canada as a source of best practices.

In this age of an increasingly competitive global economy, evidence concerning the value of a competent public service is persuasive. Studies by the World Bank have found that there is a strong correlation between a country's competitiveness and prosperity, and the quality of its public sector. This correlation holds whether the country is developing or developed; whether it is located in Asia, or Europe, or elsewhere in the Western world.

● (1535)

[*English*]

Canada's public service is known around the world for its professionalism, competency, and honesty. This reputation has brought delegations from other nations seeking information and assistance from departments and agencies. Many have come to the PSC, and we have worked more closely with some in the area of human resource management.

Our experience in South Africa is an example of the wider network approach. The PSC was part of the South Africa-Canada program on governance. The Canadian model served as a significant reference point. In fact, the new 1996 South Africa constitution enshrined an independent public service commission accountable to the National Assembly and a set of values and principles that significantly echo those of the Canadian public service.

The collaborative approach also applies to our involvement in Ukraine. A longstanding CIDA-funded project for public sector reform in Ukraine exists, and it is managed by the Canadian Bureau for International Education. The PSC has provided expertise to the project within the limits of its resources and capacity.

We have also signed memoranda of understanding with the support of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. The first was signed in 1991 with China's Ministry of Personnel, and it dealt largely with exchanges of knowledge. It was designed as a loose framework agreement, with annual work plans within which China could draw upon Canadian expertise according to its needs. The PSC was the coordinating organization on the Canadian side. A number of delegations visited China to observe their system first-hand and make presentations on selected aspects of the Canadian system. The initial MOU was renewed on several occasions.

In November 2007, the PSC signed a new MOU with the Central Organization Department of the Communist Party, the goal of which is to pursue and enhance exchanges and cooperation in the fields of senior public service management, human resources management, and public administration. This MOU set the stage for the first Canada-China symposium on personnel appraisal and assessment in the public sector, which took place in Beijing in March 2009.

The symposium was very productive. The face-to-face dialogue allowed the experts to share their knowledge and experience, and they were able to establish a rapport that bodes well for the second symposium we will be organizing here in Canada next year. I believe that this success will certainly help us move forward with other initiatives under the MOU. Our work with China is based on increasing our understanding and exchanges for mutual benefit among senior officials.

This brings me to our recent involvement with Mongolia. On September 28, the PSC was pleased to sign a memorandum of understanding with the Civil Service Council of Mongolia to share information and expertise with them. They see Canada's human resource management practices as the model for their reforms. The MOU is supported by the prime ministers of both countries, and there is a great deal of interest in the steps taken by the Government of Mongolia to put in place a professional and non-partisan public service, which is considered to be an essential element in developing a stable regulatory environment and investment climate.

The PSC is looking forward to working with our partners in Mongolia, and we will be drawing on the expertise of our colleagues across the Government of Canada to implement the MOU. I should mention that two other MOUs were signed with Mongolia, involving Agriculture Canada and the Canadian Standards Council.

The PSC is also working on an MOU with the Union Public Service Commission of India.

The PSC is proud of the contribution it has made and is continuing to make in its partner countries. These partnerships have been beneficial to both sides, and we are seeing some concrete results on the longer-standing ones. A longer-term approach is critical.

Our work at the PSC has always been supported in some way by government, but our work has been largely ad hoc. As well, the amount of time and effort that can be directed to these projects, both at the PSC and across the public service, is limited since very few special resources are dedicated to these projects. The demand for our expertise and assistance is greater than the resources available.

I think we can do better. I believe that government officials abroad can identify where the Canadian contribution is most wanted and needed, and that would support other Canadian initiatives. For example, the strong interest in Mongolia for Canadian expertise in support of their administrative reforms would provide a more investment-supportive environment.

I also believe there may be an opportunity for recently retired individuals from the public sector, including parliamentarians and public servants, who want to be involved in these projects. A resource of seasoned practitioners would be a considerable asset. Their careers have encompassed periods of extensive change in many areas of the public sector, and their experience could be especially effective for countries seeking to professionalize their public service. Involving these individuals would help maintain continuity, which can be a vital aspect of building partnerships—for example, I do not think our success with the China MOU would have been possible without the continuing involvement of the former PSC executive director, who was instrumental in setting up the original MOU.

● (1540)

Mr. Chairman, we need to bring these significant resources together through some effective networks. With the use of volunteers and a small amount of seed or start-up money, much can be accomplished. Seed money would be used to initiate planning on projects or programs and to obtain further support. The work in Mongolia, for example, could proceed in this way.

Thank you for inviting me to speak to you today. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to start with Dr. Patry.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I will be sharing my time with Mr. Rae.

Ms. Barrados, please feel free to answer my questions in English.

I would like to know if the Parliamentary Officers' Study Program, that allows some individuals to visit Canada, comes under the PSC program or falls under some other program.

Mrs. Maria Barrados: I would like to know a little bit more about this visit program. What program is this exactly?

Mr. Bernard Patry: It is the Parliamentary Officers' Study Program. There are senior level officials who come here regularly. Recently, some three weeks to a month ago, there was a group of African officials, and I participated in the program for an hour. They spend around seven to ten days here and visit all the departments in order to see how things are done in Canada.

Is that part of your program, that of the PSC, or is it another government program that is involved?

Mrs. Maria Barrados: I believe there are a great many programs, and they are often ad hoc. We have a lot of people from different countries who come to visit. However, we have not hosted any visits recently.

Mr. Bernard Patry: We see that you have been involved with Mongolia and also with China. Is it you, the PSC, that offers your services, or do you wait for a country to ask you for assistance? How does this work?

Mrs. Maria Barrados: That is a very good question.

In the case of China, there was a request from that country dating back 20 years. The relationship continued over time. Obviously, in order for the relationship to continue, there must be a request on one side, but, on the other, there must also be government support, and there must be an agency that is prepared to respond.

In the case of Mongolia, it was the same situation. There was a request from Mongolia, followed by an agreement signed by the two organizations, with the support of the two prime ministers.

Mr. Bernard Patry: In what other countries have you become involved? You have had a presence for several years. I know that there is China and there is Mongolia. You also talked about the Ukraine in your introduction. However, what are the other countries?

Mrs. Maria Barrados: Those are the three countries we have been involved with most recently. However, we have also done work with South Africa. I must also say that we get a lot of visitors every year, somewhere between 20 and 25. They always visit the PSC with a view to having a general discussion on the public service and on human resources. They are mainly interested in our expertise with regard to our personnel appraisal and selection processes.

Mr. Bernard Patry: Thank you very much.

● (1545)

[*English*]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Thank you very much, Ms. Barrados.

Was Al Johnson responsible for part of the program in South Africa?

Mrs. Maria Barrados: Absolutely.

Hon. Bob Rae: When I was in government, the current President of South Africa was our match. All the provinces were matched with various states in South Africa, and Mr. Zuma was a sort of intern with us for a period of time. It was an interesting connection. It was a very worthwhile project.

I'm very familiar with some of the work that's been done in Kenya as well. It's been quite outstanding.

What is the budget of your foreign policy, in a sense? Does it come from within, or is it simply done in response to CIDA projects. Do you coordinate with CIDA for the work that's being done? How does it work?

Mrs. Maria Barrados: First, I think the real value of connections is that you establish them where senior Canadian officials have ongoing connections with other senior officials, who can be presidents.

Now, with respect to the budget, my comment had been that it is rather ad hoc. So in my organization I have about 1.5 people committed to international work. The rest is a function of an event and funding for that particular event, and in our case, that would involve the travel. We had a symposium in China. I would have to find the money for the travel, usually within my own budgets.

More elaborate work, like South Africa, was funded through IDRC. Ukraine is funded through CIDA. Mongolia would be a modest effort, unless it were turned into something more collaborative, involving volunteers and finding some method of garnering more funding, either from CIDA or some other organization.

Hon. Bob Rae: Do you specifically work in collaboration with the provinces or is this exclusively a federal initiative?

Mrs. Maria Barrados: It depends. We involve provinces, depending on what the interests are. The Chinese, obviously, are very interested in what happens in provinces and the relationships between provinces and the federal government. So I do work with my colleagues in the provinces.

Hon. Bob Rae: But there's nothing formal in terms of how it's done?

Mrs. Maria Barrados: No, and that's really my wish. I think there is an opportunity without getting a big bureaucracy—because I don't think that really helps, as it takes up a lot of resources—to do something less ad hoc, because there is a lot demand and I think a lot can be accomplished.

Hon. Bob Rae: Good.

Those were my questions.

The Chair: Mr. Pearson.

Mr. Glen Pearson (London North Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Chair. I guess I have a question.

When we talk about trade and CIDA and Foreign Affairs, I'm wondering how that mechanism works. When you decide that you're going to go to a country, how is that coordinated? Who takes the lead in that? How are the needs determined?

Mrs. Maria Barrados: The way it has worked and the practice that we have developed is that I get lots of requests. I have many visitors who come here and there are lots of invitations. So I check with Foreign Affairs and ask, “Do you think this is a good idea?” When I had the request to sign an MOU with the Organization Department of the Communist Party of China, I went to Foreign Affairs and asked, “Is this a good idea?” They said, “Yes, absolutely, it's an excellent idea. We want to have that kind of connection.” Then we would go ahead and initiate the discussions on having a memorandum of understanding. I wouldn't sign anything until it went through Foreign Affairs.

In the case of other aid projects—and there were some others I didn't mention that were smaller, the ones that get funded by CIDA—they have gone through CIDA's whole screening process. In the case of Ukraine, for example, it's a CIDA-funded project, and our work and costs would be covered by that project—though not salaries, because once you're a public servant the salaries aren't covered.

Mr. Glen Pearson: Merci. Thank you.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: You were just about out of time there.

We're going to move over to Monsieur Dorion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Dorion (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Ms. Barrados, thank you for being here.

You talked about collaborative programs with China, in your field. How can one reconcile the mode of operation as it exists in Canada, which is, in principle, that of a public service that is impartial and independent from politics, and that of a country such as China?

How does one adjust to a country where, quite obviously, the public service is controlled politically, as is the case in China? How do you manage to be useful in this regard?

● (1550)

Mrs. Maria Barrados: With regard to relations with China, it is very important to define the areas in which we share mutual interests. The public service of China is obviously different from ours. In this system, the public service does not have the same relationship with the political apparatus. It is a completely different system.

Areas for which there truly is tremendous common interest between China and Canada are the appraisal and performance evaluation system for officials, the management system within the public service and the process for selecting individuals. We hold numerous discussions. The contexts are very different, but the questions are the same. However, in their case, their very large population is a challenge.

Mr. Jean Dorion: Thank you.

I will let my colleague, Ms. Deschamps, take over from me.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Welcome, Madam. In the information provided to us, you give as examples the partnership models you presently have in place with China, the Ukraine, Mongolia and India. Are there other models? I am thinking of Afghanistan. To you have a partnership project with Afghanistan?

Mrs. Maria Barrados: No, we do not have a project with Afghanistan at the present time. I had the visit of representatives from the Afghan government. They were asking me to help them. However, I do not have the necessary resources. In order to be able to do something in Afghanistan, the public service must have a broader strategy than the simple intervention of a single organization.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: Do you have projects with the Sudan? Were any approaches made?

Mrs. Maria Barrados: No.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: In fact, a delegation came last summer.

Mrs. Maria Barrados: No, I have never had discussions with anyone from the Sudan.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: Very well.

Are the majority of your projects still supported by CIDA?

Mrs. Maria Barrados: Only the project with Ukraine. That is the only one that benefits from support and funding from CIDA. In the case of the project with China, it is financed by the Public Service Commission. In the case of Mongolia, it is now the PSC that is in charge. It can therefore not be very broad. As for India, discussions are underway with Foreign Affairs in order to obtain funding.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: Very well.

In what year was the project in Ukraine developed?

Mrs. Maria Barrados: Ten years ago, I believe.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: It was in 2006 or... Every time you finish a project in the countries you have chosen, is some form of evaluation carried out? Do you have performance indicators? In some cases, have things been truly disastrous?

Mrs. Maria Barrados: CIDA is required to do an evaluation of its projects. In the case of Ukraine, it is a CIDA project. An evaluation must be done in order to obtain the renewal of the funding. I believe that the people responsible for the project in Ukraine are going to be coming next week. They will be able to provide you with more information regarding the project. A longer term perspective is probably required in order to measure the success of projects.

In the case of China, it is not really a project, but rather an exchange program. We carry out the evaluations once the visits are over. During the symposium we held, we did an evaluation and decided to hold a second one, this time in Canada.

● (1555)

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: Very well.

Perhaps the question has already been put to you and I missed it, but I would like to know who chooses the place, the country with which you establish these partnerships. Does the government tell you the direction to take? Do you choose at random? Have you been approached? Ukraine, Mongolia and China are not your ordinary regions. I have just come from the Subcommittee on International Human Rights where we discussed the situation in China. What is going on over there right now is not very pretty. The situation is even moving backwards in the area of human rights. I am therefore somewhat worried, given that in Canada we are always promoting the primacy of the law and of the respect of human rights.

Mrs. Maria Barrados: The choice of the projects is done somewhat randomly, but it is never done without the support of the government. We are very concerned by the situation in numerous countries. However, the work that we do is in the field of public administration. Consequently, we have a better understanding of the way in which governments operate. This helps us immensely. However, when we choose a country, it is based upon a decision by the government.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: This allows you to establish networking that can benefit both the people in the field in the foreign country you go to as well as ourselves, here in Canada. Certain resources and information provided through this networking can even benefit the government. Have you ever had a project refused?

Mrs. Maria Barrados: I have received many requests, but I always tell my staff, who obviously have a tremendous interest in these projects, that we must be careful. We also have budgetary constraints and other obligations. In my view, we can, through less formal means, for example by calling upon people who have retired and other types of resources as a country, accomplish a lot more, in a less formal way.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: The people who contribute are often public service retirees. Do they participate as volunteers or do they receive any remuneration in one form or another in exchange for their contribution to a project?

Mrs. Maria Barrados: In my view, that might come in the future. The projects I talked about are all led by public servants, assisted by former public servants.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much. That's all the time we have. We'll probably come back and see if we can get you at the end.

I'm going to move over to Mr. Abbott. You have 10 minutes, sir.

Hon. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Thank you very much, Madam Barrados, for being with us today.

I think, for clarity, I'd like to give you an opportunity to make a statement about whether this has anything to do with enlarging the Public Service Commission or with having extra functions within the public service. I'd like you to have the opportunity to express precisely what you have in mind for this function—the very, very low-cost function—of being able to share the great asset we have in Canada with the world. How would you see it structured? And would it require any movement, shifting, redeployment, or change in description within the Public Service Commission?

Mrs. Maria Barrados: I am not asking for more authority, a broader mandate, or more money for the Public Service Commission. Thank you for letting me clarify that.

What we do at the Public Service Commission is really on a very small scale. What I'm faced with, given the interest and demand—and this came really to the forefront with Mongolia—is how we do this as a country and as a public service. How can we do these things without actually growing any of the other government departments? I certainly don't want to grow the Public Service Commission in this area. I had the same discussion with respect to India: how do we do this?

Certainly, domestically, within the Public Service Commission, there has to be a reliance on other experts and other departments in other parts of government. And I think there is a tremendous opportunity to take advantage of the large group of people who are retiring out of the public service.

We have a retirement rate of executives of about 9%, which we've had for the last few years. That rate is going to continue until about 2013. They're retiring out very young in the public service—that's another debate altogether. The average age is around 58. They still have a lot to contribute. They have a lot of experience. They have a lot to contribute, and they're actually keen to volunteer. Some of them want to make money, but many of them are keen to volunteer. I see a tremendous opportunity, actually, to take advantage of this pool of people who are in good health, are keen to volunteer, and are keen to do things, by connecting it with this demand.

There is a strong demand, and when there's strong demand and mutual interest on the part of the country, and you have a pool of volunteers, there must be some way to put them together. I think there's an opportunity here through things like networks and collaboration. Those are concepts, but you develop the inventories, and people can search the inventories. And probably a small amount of seed money from a place like CIDA or External Affairs would allow the development of plans. There has to be a bit of seed money so that you can travel to these countries and spend time sitting down with them and asking what exactly they think would be helpful and what exactly we can contribute.

I think the discussions you'll have with Ukraine will show how extremely beneficial this is to making progress. So a small amount of seed money is what I would be....

If there really is a mutual interest in pursuing this further, then there are other funding agencies. CIDA is one. The Royal Bank and some development funds and foundations are others. And some of these countries actually have some money they could put toward this. For instance, if you have a lot of natural resources, and you have revenue from natural resources, and this is important to you, you should be making some contribution to this too. It could be in kind, such as by putting staff toward it.

● (1600)

Hon. Jim Abbott: Your testimony makes me think of a great speech I heard last night by John Furlong about just who we are as Canadians and what the Olympics did for us by helping us to realize that.

Taking a look at your opening comments, it seems to me that we as Canadians sometimes really seriously undersell ourselves and what we have to offer the world. I'll take a look at one sentence and then ask you a question. In your opening testimony you said, “Studies by the World Bank have found that there is a strong correlation between a country's competitiveness and prosperity and the quality of its public sector.” We can offer exactly that because of the strength of the Public Service Commission if we can develop this idea.

I wonder if you could give us a practical idea of exactly how we have been involved in Ukraine. I understand there is somebody coming from Ukraine to be a witness at this committee, so you won't necessarily want to be duplicating her words, but just give us a broad-brush picture so that we as committee members can understand what Canadians have been doing in Ukraine.

Mrs. Maria Barrados: There's been long-term CIDA funding and public service reform and renewal in Ukraine. There are going to be two people coming to your committee to speak about that project. In fact one of the people working on that project will be flying from Kiev to meet with the committee because she wants to have that conversation.

I think it's a very effective project because there are committed Ukrainians there who are supported by their government. They are working with Canadian experts. So there are on-the-ground Canadian experts working with these Ukrainians, who are then implementing.... So some of it becomes fairly mechanical, but if you think of implementing a classification system so you know what everybody in your organization is doing and what level they should be paid at—and they should be paid on the basis of the work they do rather than on the basis of whom they know or what political connection they have—that's a huge task. To do that in the public service we have young Ukrainians who want to reform and speak both languages. Canadians go there and work with them, and the changes are occurring.

It takes time. We have ups and downs. Sometimes when it looks as though something is really going well, something will come up and it will slow down. But significant progress is being made, and I think you'll have an interesting discussion with the people who are working on that project. It's a very interesting model.

The Chair: Thank you.

We're going to move to the last individual for this round, Mr. Dewar.

● (1605)

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

Thank you, Ms. Barrados, for being here. We were just chatting before your presentation, and you said this is the first time you have been at the foreign affairs committee, so welcome.

I also think it's important that we understand the opportunities here. Just after being elected, I actually had the opportunity to go to Iraq. An initiative sponsored by Forum of Federations led me to it. The conference was actually sponsored by an Italian group, but they had seen some of the work that Forum of Federations had done. For obvious reasons they were interested in governance issues and were extremely interested in how a post-Saddam Baath government could work. Frankly, one of the dilemmas in Iraq is that they haven't had the opportunity to have that conversation in time to look at what can be done.

They were enormously interested in Canada. You talk about resource allocation. At the time, I said if you looked at the front page of our paper you'd see one of the premiers of our provinces and the Prime Minister having it out over resource allocation. I said they weren't at war with each other, which of course meant physically. I said that's important, because we have a framework; we have responsibilities. Some are constitutional and known and others are agreed to over time. They also have linguistic differences. They have a majority-minority situation within regions. They desperately wanted to have help in terms of set-up for governance.

I guess you could go around the world and talk about different regions and similar opportunities for Canada to support governance in either post-conflict or developing nations.

I don't think anyone around this table would disagree that we should be doing this. I think it's a matter of how we do it, and your points are well taken that there's a massive opportunity when you consider the people who are retiring from the public service. We have management colleges like Rigaud, in Gatineau, which I know well because my father helped set up one of them, for things like customs.

Do you know what the government's strategy is with regard to taking the opportunity for Canada to be involved, or, as you indicated in your comments, at this point is it nascent and ad hoc? Maybe I'll just stop there, and then we can go from there.

Mrs. Maria Barrados: I think it's a very good question. From my point of view, there isn't a strategic plan to do this, but that doesn't mean somebody at Foreign Affairs doesn't have one. It would be a very good question for them, and it's very important to do.

On this idea of mutual interest, it should be something that's in the interest of Canada, as well as something the country wants. So you need both sides. Foreign Affairs has contacts around the globe, and they're in the best position to make that judgment and say, “We should give some priority here and not there, put an emphasis here and not there, or a small one here.” I think that would be very helpful.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Maybe our parliamentary secretary on the committee could help us with that, if there is a strategic plan on this. If not, we might recommend that if there is a strategic plan on this file, that it be illuminated. If not, perhaps it's a recommendation we could put forward.

You intimated—and I think there's something to be said here—that costs could be shared. We know where China is at economically these days. There are other jurisdictions where they are able to.... I'm not talking about a money-making venture here, but at least look at sharing the burden of cost.

Has that ever happened, or at this point are we just paying from your budget and through projects? Are there any costs shared in any of the projects you've been involved in?

Mrs. Maria Barrados: China is a good example. When the work started with China in the 1990s we were paying for the Chinese to come to us. We were paying their expenses when they came and spent time here for training. When we do work with China, they pay their own way and we pay our own way.

The last couple of times I've gone to China to do lectures at their schools, they've wanted to pay me for doing that. I have enormous trouble accepting money as a public servant, so I don't accept any of that money. But there is a willingness to pay for things to be done if they really need it, and they certainly pay their own expenses.

● (1610)

Mr. Paul Dewar: Finally, in the area of the projects you've done, it isn't just about us going there, as you mentioned, in the capacity we have here. It's about bringing people here. It's hard to generalize, but do you have a preference as to how it works? Is it 50-50? Should we be staying in situ and bringing people here? In your work is there a method or mix that seems to work well, or do you evaluate each case as it comes to you?

Mrs. Maria Barrados: I think it has to be done on a case-by-case basis, depending upon the level of people you're dealing with and the kinds of issues they're confronted with.

Mr. Rae used the example of South Africa, where it was a two-way effort, and there was quite a bit of travel of South Africans to Canada. The results of that were profound, because we have senior people throughout the South African government who have that connection and experience with Canada. It allowed them to have mentors they could contact. But I think it depends on the individual circumstances and the types of things you're trying to do.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Good. Thank you.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dewar.

We'll now move to our second round. I think we have time for at least a couple of rounds.

Mr. Lunney, you have five minutes.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Thank you very much, Madame Barrados, for being here. It's a fascinating discussion. You talked about the rich resource in the retirement community, especially with so many of our senior public servants retiring. I think you mentioned 9% average—

Mrs. Maria Barrados: —of executives.

Mr. James Lunney: Yes. On Vancouver Island we have a huge human resource in our retirement community, because we've had people from across Canada retire to that beautiful part of Canada—to duck the snow that's coming this way, I guess.

So I get the concept, and I particularly appreciate the way you framed it. I think I heard you say you have a big need in international demand, which we certainly recognize in this committee. We're very interested in creating governance capacity in many of the nations we're trying to help, to make sure the aid we're delivering has a hope of being delivered effectively.

You mentioned strong demand and mutual interest, and you see that creates tremendous opportunity. I like the way you framed that. Are other nations partnering this way? Can we point to other successful models? Are other nations, like some of our partners around the world—Australia, New Zealand, the EU, the U.K.—doing this type of thing with their established civil services? Are we aware of any models we might look to?

Mrs. Maria Barrados: They vary. The Australians have been much more aggressive and have invested a lot more into having their schools and their public servants actually doing work in China than we have. There is a lot of variance, and I don't really have the expertise to say exactly how the models are different. But certainly, UNDP is very active and they draw on all the expertise they can get.

Mr. James Lunney: What was that last one you said?

Mrs. Maria Barrados: The United Nations Development Programme.

Mr. James Lunney: Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Maria Barrados: The thing that is always a surprise to me.... I will be in one of these countries and the United Nations Development Programme people, or another developing agency, will be there and Canadians are working for them.

Mr. James Lunney: Great.

I'm picking up where Mr. Dewar was a moment ago with my next question. I would like to flesh this out a little bit. How do you actually envisage this happening?

I can see the need to send people over to these countries to sit down and examine what's going on there. The way I would see this is that you'd need to have visits both ways, really. You'd need to take them out of their context to come over here to see how our public service operates. And then you'd need to actually see the context there, too, because everything has to be in context in order to be appreciated. Sometimes we come with rose-coloured glasses and we assume we can just transplant very extensively developed services here to another nation that has very limited capacity.

Another question coming out of it is, what's your vision as to how you get started on this program? And I suppose it's going to vary according to the needs of the nation you're dealing with, isn't it, and the current capacity that exists?

● (1615)

Mrs. Maria Barrados: Yes.

How you get started is on two levels. There have been various efforts to develop inventories of public servants who are interested in doing the work. A lot of people ask me because I've been around for a long time and I know a lot of people. I know the people who are leaving and I know what their interests are. But that will get stale-dated fairly quickly.

An association like APEX has done some of the work. People like Jocelyne Bourgon, a previous Clerk of the Privy Council, and David Holdsworth, the person I quoted, have at various times done something like this. You have those organizations that could do that inventory of your retirees and what their interests are.

I see that it's the government side that has to—either through a plan or a strategy—and again, not very big, but sort of say, “Where are the places where we, as a government, think we should be doing this?” It's that kind of matching that has to occur.

To actually then take it to the next step, there has to be an agreement on both sides in terms of, yes, what I would like and what we think we can productively offer.

Some of the discussions that we have had with the Mongolian prime minister.... He's keen on having a public service that operates like the Canadian public service. Well, it took us a hundred years and it's not going to happen overnight.

What is it we can do to begin to operationalize some of the grand ideas? Canadians are very pragmatic. They're good at taking a whole bunch of different ideas and things that look like there might be disconnects and making them work and making them move forward.

That's the real value in having those discussions and saying, "To solve these problems, these are some of the things you need and we can help you get there. Now you give us some people to work with." I think the real models are where you have the collaborative work, working together, so it's not a matter of writing a report, dropping the report, and walking out.

Mr. James Lunney: I can see there'd be short-term objectives and long-term strategies, obviously, that would need to be implemented.

Mrs. Maria Barrados: Absolutely. Everything I've seen here has to have that longer-term connection. Just an in and out is really just a drop in the bucket. You have to be working with people, so there's a continuity and a willingness to continue keeping in touch. If somebody has a question about how something works, well, send me an e-mail. It's a wonderfully connected world.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm also wondering, would it be possible to maybe send a letter to some of the people you have mentioned to maybe get some more input, as opposed to just having them here as witnesses? Maybe they could offer up some suggestions as well. That might be an idea. Maybe we'll just make sure we get the names so we can send something out.

We're going to finish off with Mr. Pearson for the last round.

Mr. Glen Pearson: Fascinating testimony here. I really like the idea about the retired pool of resources that's there.

Can I bring out a theoretical situation? We've been studying Sudan here as a committee. Many of us have been to Sudan many times, and what they've called for, even during the time of their civil war, was a better understanding of federalism, how you keep all of these various factions together that are quite divided. Part of the problem is that they're looking at political solutions, so when you try to talk to them about a civil service and building that up, it's a rare thing for them to understand. They continue to look at it politically.

Because the referendum is coming up, and let's say it goes as people presume and South Sudan becomes the world's newest country and it wishes support on this...do you have a capacity for a country that large? Let's say in South Sudan you have eight or nine million people. I'm wondering what your capacity would be if all of a sudden a request came from the Government of South Sudan to help them build a civil service. That's a pretty onerous charge, and I would just be interested to know what kind of capacity you have, if you have that, or if you could fulfill it.

● (1620)

Mrs. Maria Barrados: It's not the Public Service Commission of Canada that would be doing this. But the kind of model where we have an excellent example of how it worked very well was the work that Al Johnson did in South Africa. Mr. Rae mentioned Al Johnson.

Al Johnson was one individual who was supported by the Government of Canada, who spent a lot of time in South Africa, and he was working with the ANC before they were in power. So this situation was very unusual, and it made people just a little bit uneasy, because usually we do government to government and here we were working with the ANC. Al Johnson, being the kind of individual he is, had connections with everybody. He had matches...with premiers; the Public Service Commission was involved, the Auditor General was involved. I was with the Office of the Auditor General, and he had me going to South Africa to help them build audit capacity in South Africa.

As a model, you have one individual who is a champion, who is on a mission, who then uses the resource that is there. So he established the connections, he got the money to do the travel, he got the money to have them come here, and he developed a relationship that developed operational capacity with the ANC people, who were very well educated, but they had never really run anything and they'd never run government.

So you have to look at each situation and ask how would be the best way to accomplish that. But we have some extraordinary experience and some very good experience that I think we should build on in doing those things.

I don't know very much about Sudan, but I would take a close look at that South Africa model as a model for how I think Canada made a great contribution.

Mr. Glen Pearson: That's great.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Does the Bloc have another quick question before we're done?

Mr. Dorion, you can go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Dorion: Ms. Barrados, when we look at the list of countries you gave as examples, we see that those which have involved cooperation with the Public Service of Canada are those where there has been activity on the part of major Canadian business players, or where there have been major projects in this area. We also note the absence of countries where business prospects for Canada are much weaker, for example African countries, Haiti, etc.

Is this a pure coincidence, or is there a link between this cooperation and trade or investment projects on the part of Canadian business?

Mrs. Maria Barrados: In my presentation, I gave the example of countries where the Public Service Commission has done work. It is really a matter of chance.

This ad hoc approach is not the best. I believe it would be far better to adopt a strategy to determine to which countries the government of Canada wishes to provide support and funding. It would be entirely possible to invite other countries. However, I believe that there must be mutual interest, a request from the country and a Canadian interest. It could also be a matter of the desire to help. However, I believe that these two things must be in place.

It is not realistic to think that we, as a country, can impose our model on other countries. It should rather be an approach that consists in basing the partnership and cooperation on common interests relating to given areas.

Mr. Jean Dorion: Are there links between the intervention you pursue in these countries and the activities of Canadian business?

Mrs. Maria Barrados: That depends. Each situation is unique. The work in China is truly being carried out between public services. The Department of Foreign Affairs is on board with us and there may be other relations down the road, but they will not be with us, the civil servants.

● (1625)

Mr. Jean Dorion: What about the situation of India, for example?

Mrs. Maria Barrados: We are just at the very start with regard to India. We have had a discussion with the people. The government has a broader strategy. Relations with the officials are an element of the strategy, but we are just at the very beginning.

Mr. Jean Dorion: Thank you, Madam Barrados.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: How do you go about adapting and implementing this cooperation between your public service and that which you are attempting to put in place in those countries with which you have chosen to establish partnerships? One must also take into account the culture, would you not agree? I am thinking, for example, of China. Based on what I heard earlier, there is still corruption within the system. How do you manage to bring things to fruition in that context, given that, here, we have a public service that is somewhat cleaner? The situation must be all the more difficult for you when you go into countries such as that, where you are confronted, both culturally and sociologically, with situations for which you are not prepared.

Mrs. Maria Barrados: To my mind, that is one of the greatest advantages in having a relationship with a country the culture of which is different. We, as public servants, gain a lot from this relationship. It is an opportunity to learn about other cultures, especially since Canada is now a much more diverse country. When I have discussions with the Chinese, they want to know our opinion, in order to better control their way of doing things. They are very much aware of the problems that exist within their public service. They want more accountability, more measurement supervision, improved productivity and a better evaluation of this productivity, given that it is in their interest to have an honest public service reporting to the leaders. There are discussions that are different, but also similar, with regard to these matters.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: May I continue?

[*English*]

The Chair: That's all the time you have.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: That is quite a gift you are giving me, Mr. Chairman.

[*English*]

The Chair: Once again, Madam Barrados, we thank you very much for taking the time to be here. Certainly your knowledge and expertise have been very enlightening for the committee. We wish you all the best.

We will suspend for a couple of minutes and move on from there.

Thanks.

● (Pause) ●

● (1635)

The Chair: Would all the members and witnesses come back to the table? We'll get started momentarily.

Once again, I want to take the time to welcome Mr. Williams. I don't think anyone needs any introduction because he's been around for a while. He looks after an organization called GOPAC.

I'd also like to welcome Steve Saunders, who's president of the North America-Mongolia Business Council. Mr. Saunders, welcome as well.

I know both of you probably understand the way things work, but just in case you don't, we start with opening statements, and we'll have a chance to go around the room with some questions. If you need any translation, you can probably get set up before the questions get started.

Mr. Williams, why don't you start, since you know your way around the committee table a little better than most of us? We'll hear your opening statement.

Mr. John G. Williams (As an Individual): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's certainly a pleasure to be here in room 209 of the West Block with the foreign affairs committee.

I seem to have a different perspective today. As you know, I spent many years sitting in your chair. I'm certainly glad to be back among friends and colleagues in the Parliament of Canada to talk about the issue of good governance, here and elsewhere. Good governance is the issue people are looking for to improve the quality of their lives around the world.

We talk about Canadian values, and the Prime Minister talks about Canadian values, which include democracy, the rule of law, free speech, cities that work, and societies that work. These things are important. In Canada, of course, we enjoy a whole spectrum of social services, including health care and so on, which makes our society a wonderful place to live. We tend to take it for granted.

Mr. Chairman, much of the credit belongs to a professional public service. Governments come and go and the public service stays. They are the ones who implement government decisions. When the government changes, they take the new direction and they implement the new direction that the people have chosen.

When we look at our country and our Constitution, it starts with peace, order, and good governance. Of course, what many other countries have is no peace, no order, and no good governance. That sometimes differentiates our prosperity and their poverty.

There are three things that all people are looking for in this world, and those are peace and prosperity and that tomorrow is going to be better than today. We enjoy that here in Canada, but elsewhere that does not happen. We have to ask ourselves why.

When we look at the public service, as I said, it is the glue that holds a country together. It is the professional civil service that responds professionally to a government. While it responds to the public policy of the government, it owes an allegiance to the society. That's an important thing to differentiate. A public service owes its allegiance to society, not to the government of the day. In a democratic country the government of the day can change and the public service still has an allegiance to the society it serves. These are the kinds of values we hope we can instill in other countries around the world.

You've just heard from Ms. Barrados, the president of the Public Service Commission. The Public Service Commission is not a department of the federal government, as you all know, and there's a reason for that. It is a separate, stand-alone commission, with its own board of directors and a president who is charged with the mandate of ensuring an apolitical, professional public service. It's not one that jumps to the command of the government if the government wants to do something illegal, improper, and untoward. They are professional, and Ms. Barrados is charged with that responsibility of ensuring that Canadians are served by people of that calibre.

Unfortunately, in other countries that is not the case. We have civil servants who jump to the demand of the government, whatever the government says. Here, they are the people who apply the rule of law. In other places, they don't.

Mr. Chairman, I was reading in the paper quite recently about Afghanistan. Afghanistan is very much in the minds of the Parliament of Canada, the Government of Canada, and the people of Canada at this time. Our military resources are expending such a great effort over there, and our soldiers, too, who are giving their lives for the development of Afghanistan.

I read in the paper about how bags of something were going through the airport. The customs officer said he had to inspect these bags. Somebody said no, no, they're from the big guy; his bags go through for free—uninspected, untouched. Now, you can expect there was a good chance these bags may have been full of cash or drugs or something else that was illegal. But because he was the big guy, there was no inspection. For everybody else, there may have been an inspection, but not for him. He gets to write his own rules.

Here we have a public service that says you can't do it that way. It doesn't matter if you're the Prime Minister, a member of Parliament, whomever it may be, the rule applies to you.

● (1640)

You go to some countries, you go through the customs, and you have to hit the button. Mexico is a good example. It doesn't matter who you are: if it's green, you're fine; if it's red, you will be searched. That is a random concept.

But in some countries that does not apply. I think of Zimbabwe. We all know about Zimbabwe. They've just found a whole bunch of diamonds down in Zimbabwe. Who is going to benefit from that? It's not going to be the people, because the public service are going to take their orders from the government and say, “That money belongs to us, not them.” That is the great shame that goes on and the atrocity that goes on in some of these countries.

Bangladesh again.... The Bay of Bengal is supposed to be floating on gas. I told the auditor general a number of years ago, “You have a responsibility to ensure that the rule of law and the rules for managing that gas are in place before the gas comes ashore.” If it's not there, the gas will belong to the rich and is of no benefit to the poor. This is how a public service manages a government and manages and applies the rule of law, society's rules, to ensure fairness and that society is served.

They need to have the capacity to collect taxes. They need to have the capacity to deliver programs. In many countries, they can't do that. We take it for granted here that when a government passes a piece of legislation, saying there's a new program for Canadians, the public service delivers.

A good example, Mr. Chair, is in the last year or so where there has been a great emphasis on spending money on infrastructure. Because of the economic condition, this was deemed to be good, not only here but all around the world. Governments were spending heavily on infrastructure. Many billions were spent by the Government of Canada, and the Auditor General said the other day that it has been put in place and is well managed because we have a public service that understands that their responsibility is to serve the government and serve the people.

You can imagine some other countries where the government decides to spend $25 billion or $50 billion on an infrastructure program. How much of it would leak out and never be spent on society? That's the type of thing that we should be thinking about when we are helping to export our knowledge and our expertise and to train other civil servants.

The University of Alberta has an ongoing program with senior civil servants from China. They come over to Alberta, they work, and they spend some time doing courses at the university. They sometimes come here; I have spoken to them here. These are the professional leaders of the public service of tomorrow who are already benefiting from Canadian expertise, so that the values we hold dear can be instilled in the public service over there.

It's an interesting thing, Mr. Chair. You know, I've travelled the world, and I say nobody votes for poverty. I haven't found anybody who ever voted for poverty. Yet half the world is poor. The World Bank tells us that 1.5 billion people in this world are destitute on less than a dollar a day.

If there was a public service in each and every country that knew how to deliver programs, who were educated, who were in a position to stand up to the government and say, "We deliver the public policy that you decide"—provided it is fair and reasonable and ethical and so on—these countries would all be much better off.

Now, for Mongolia, as we know, there is the potential for a huge amount of resource wealth to come out of there. A lot of that is being developed by Canadians. I think we have a responsibility, Mr. Chair, to take our expertise—not just our mining expertise but our intellectual expertise and our capacity for good governance expertise—to Mongolia too. The resource wealth of Mongolia belongs to the people of Mongolia, not the government and not the people in power.

Through an active, well-educated, well-trained public service that can deliver the programs to the people of Mongolia, they will be much better served than just allowing mining companies to go in, take the wealth, leave some royalties behind for a few, and leave the country.

● (1645)

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I would like to compliment you and the committee for driving this agenda. We can be citizens of the world. The discussion here today says that Canada would like to be part of the citizens of the world, and I would like to compliment you on that.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Williams.

We'll now move to Mr. Saunders, who, as I mentioned before, is with the North America-Mongolia Business Council.

Mr. Saunders, the floor is yours.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Steve Saunders (President, Headquarters Office, North America-Mongolia Business Council): Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen,

[*English*]

thank you for this opportunity to speak in support of the initiative on cooperation between the Public Service Commission and the Civil Service Council of Mongolia.

The North America-Mongolia Business Council, NAMBC, is the oldest and largest international trade association linking Mongolia to the west. We were founded 20 years ago, within months after the fall of the politburo. We represent Canadian and American investors in Mongolia and Canadian and American organizations and companies that are active in that country. We've had the opportunity for 20 years to observe the path of Mongolian development.

As Mr. Williams has very eloquently pointed out, Mongolia, like every other country on earth, never voted to be poor. They never voted to be picturesque. Although Mongolia was in the worst shape of any of the former Soviet satellites and former Soviet states in 1990 when the Russian Soviet occupation and subsidy ended, Mongolia has responded to the challenge better than any other former Soviet satellite or state. More so than any of what used to be called its socialist brothers, Mongolia has simultaneously and relentlessly pursued democratization and liberal economic reform.

It has not been easy. The condition of Mongolia in 1990, as revealed by a study at Harvard University, which nobody really read, was more analogous to the Italian economy in 1943 or the Japanese economy in the six months before the surrender in 1945. They were devastated.

They have rebuilt their country, brick by brick, step by step, with several commitments that I think reflect the confidence of Mr. Williams and others among the distinguished and learned members around this table that Mongolia would be a suitable beneficiary of this kind of assistance from Canada.

Number one, they are self-aware. This is a government and a political system that is self-aware. They know what their problems are. They don't try to cover them up. They don't shoot the messenger. There is free speech. There is an awareness of what they need to do and a sensitivity to their responsibility to the people.

Number two, they have always, for 20 years, been interested in best practices. They don't want to just get it done. They want to get it done the right way—not the right way that's convenient, but the right way that's the best in the world.

When it comes to an honest, functioning civil service, arguably Canada is very close to if not the best in the world. I point, with some humiliation, given my passport, to the fact that Canada, in the latest Transparency International survey, rose from number eight to number six. The United States fell from number 20 to number 22. It is the first time the United States has been outside of the top 20.

Mongolia is interested in the best way the world has discovered to fix problems.

Number three, they correct their mistakes. In 1998 they imposed a gold export tax, which effectively killed mining in the country. Two years later they repealed it. It took them only one year to repeal the 68% windfall profits tax on gold and copper mining. It took them only two years to correct the impression created by the 2006 mining law that the government would confiscate a government share of mining licences.

● (1650)

Instead, they demonstrated by action, in the case of the Oyu Tolgoi mine, that the government would pay for it. So this is a government that I think is sincerely eager to regard Canada—as Prime Minister Sükhbaatar Batbold said during his historic visit to Ottawa in September—as a model country for Mongolia to imitate.

This proposed activity and relationship between the Public Service Commission and the Mongolian government service council offers a valuable opportunity for Canada, and not only on a commercial basis. Let me say for the record that one of the biggest impediments to the success of Canadian and other companies in Mongolia is lack of efficiency and transparency in the government service, in the bureaucracy. The better the bureaucracy functions, the more level the playing field. This is a goal that is shared, not just by the foreign investors in Mongolia, but by the Mongolian business community.

The Canadian role in Mongolia in an official way has evolved more slowly than that of other international partners of Mongolia. We've only had a resident ambassador for two years. Canada has never been a member of the international donor committee, which, for the last 20 years, has averaged about $350 million a year in aid to Mongolia. However, today Canada is the largest single western investor in Mongolia. After China, it is the largest investor in the country. As Mr. Williams has said—and as my friend, Mr. Abbott, knows very well and has been sharing with the committee—the level of Canadian investment in Mongolia is already starting to have an impact on the Canadian current account, as Centerra and other countries repatriate profits.

This PSC initiative offers Canada the opportunity to have a high-impact, high-visibility, and highly important effect on a key player in the future of the investment and business climate in Mongolia. There is a desperate need for structural change. We look at this and compare Mongolia to 150 other countries today. But if you look back and compare Mongolia 20 years ago to Mongolia today, it is a vastly different place, not only in the landscape and the prosperity of the people, but in improvements in government structure. They've done it in bits and pieces, and what they've done is remarkable and astonishing. It is a better place administratively than Kazakhstan, other “stans”, and even several other Soviet satellites in eastern Europe. But it still needs work.

There are important structural reforms on which they need advice. The character of an independent civil service commission is a key factor, as Mr. Williams emphasized. It does not now exist. So here's an opportunity for Canada to do something very visible without spending the amount of money that Japan, the U.S., China, and other donor countries invest.

● (1655)

Corruption is a problem in Mongolia. It ranks 116 out of 178 in the world. It's the 22nd worst in the region. But things are getting better. The Mongolian government and Parliament enacted and created an independent anti-corruption office that is just getting off the ground. They have brought indictments, and it enjoys broad public support.

In response to a question one of the members raised earlier, other efforts have been funded by donors in the past to improve the civil service and governance. There was training provided by the Government of Sweden aid program, and domestically most of the training is provided in-house by the Mongolian Academy of Management. It provides short courses to about 1,500 civil servants a year. Keep in mind, this is a country where the top civil service pay is about $2,300 U.S. a year.

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the opportunity to share these views with you. I'll be delighted to answer any questions if there are any.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Saunders.

We'll now move to our first round.

Dr. Patry.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Patry: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

Thank you very much, Mr. Saunders.

Thank you, John. It's always a pleasure to see you back. You say that practically everything needs to be done. My first question is to you.

You could have the best civil servants, as we have here in Canada. When I came here as a parliamentarian years and years ago, I found out that they're very important. They run the country. They could take orders from any government, but they run the country, in a sense, and they do it very well. I appreciate their work a lot, and the work of the Library of Parliament. We have experts over there, and they're dedicated to our country and to Parliament.

But my question, John, is about parliamentarians. You talk about corruption. You created GOPAC. You have been the president of GOPAC and have travelled the world with GOPAC. It has helped you see. How do you see the parliamentarians in those countries? How can we help the parliamentarians?

I remember years and years ago when I went to a francophone country that had just had an election. I met the day after with the chair of the health committee—a doctor. He came to see me and asked what he was supposed to do as the chair of the committee, and what the committee should do. Sometimes we start from scratch and it is very difficult.

Can tell us how it's going in Mongolia, and some other countries, maybe in Asia? If you have a good public service but you don't have a good understanding of parliamentarians, you don't go anywhere.

My other question is for Mr. Saunders. We have Canadian mining companies over there. How do you rate their work over there with the population—not with the government, but with the population?

● (1700)

Mr. John G. Williams: Thank you very much, Dr. Patry. I appreciate the question, because GOPAC is working with parliamentarians around the world.

The role of a parliament is to hold the government accountable on behalf of its citizens. That is fundamental. Usually we find that the first thing corrupt governments do when they get into power is to change the rules to preserve their power. In order to do that, they co-opt the parliament. Therefore, Canadians and parliamentarians need to work with those parliamentarians who believe in honesty and integrity.

I'll be honest, Mr. Chairman, not every parliamentarian really believes and is committed to that philosophy when he becomes a parliamentarian. They can be bought and co-opted for whatever reason, by whatever method, by the government, and therefore the public are left out of it. The public no longer have the capacity to hold the parliament accountable and the government accountable, and that's why they're poor, remember? Nobody votes for poverty. It's because a vote doesn't count that they're left poor and they're left on the outside.

So what can we do? Go back to three simple concepts.

Peer support. Peer support in politics is fundamental because the guy who builds the biggest coalition wins. You do that every day. You vote in the House of Commons. The party that gets more than half the vote wins. You've all run for elections. If you got more votes than anybody else, you won. When you sought the nomination and you got more votes than anybody else, you won. You have to build a coalition. We have to build a coalition of ethical parliamentarians who believe in honesty and integrity, not on party lines but across party lines in the parliament. If we can find that cadre of parliamentarians who are committed to honesty and integrity and can build that coalition big and large enough to dominate the parliament, you are going to see a government that is accountable.

The second thing we have to do is education for parliamentarians. We were all something before we came here: lawyers, doctors, farmers, fishermen. It doesn't matter what we were, we were all something, but we weren't parliamentarians and we weren't politicians. One day we arrive here and we're deemed to be fully trained and we know everything there is to know. Well, the answer is, we didn't. Therefore, we have to educate parliamentarians, because their role is the counterweight to the executive, to pass judgment on the legislation, to pass through the public accounts committees and other committees, to hold the government accountable and bring in the witnesses and the bureaucracy to say what's going on over there. Access to information for the preservation of the freedom of the media is a fundamental responsibility of the parliament to ensure that parliament is the counterweight to the executive in an open and public way so that people can see what's going on.

The third objective is what I call leadership for results: we have to do something. It's fine to know what we're supposed to do, but if we don't do anything, that doesn't mean anything either. We have to know what we're doing. GOPAC promotes, for example, the UN Convention against Corruption. Most governments, and I presume even the Government of Mongolia, have signed onto the UN Convention against Corruption. But has it implemented the UN Convention against Corruption, or do they just sign and send out the press release and say, count us in? We have to do these things. Anti-money laundering legislation is vitally required in many countries around the world. A code of conduct for parliamentarians so we can stand up and demonstrate our own ethics and probity is desperately required. We have a number of these agendas.

So peer support to build a coalition, education so we know how to do the job properly, and figuring out agendas where we can make the government accountable to the parliament and to the people will build an ethical society where the people are in charge and they will vote the crooks out and vote the good guys in. I'll never say which ones are which, but we'll leave that to the voter. That's how you build an ethical society.

The Chair: Mr. Saunders, you're dealing with a professional politician here, so you have to wiggle in your time. We don't have much time left. He's chewed much of it up. We want a response, but you are almost out of time.

● (1705)

Mr. Steve Saunders: I know when I'm outclassed.

To respond to your question, in our observation, Canadian companies that do business in Mongolia have been scrupulous from the beginning in pursuing community relations practices and corporate social responsibility standards of the highest nature.

If it were not in their nature to do so anyway, which in fact it is, they would do it simply because mining has been such a political football that it required the support from the grassroots. It required the support of the village or *soum* mayors and the *aimag* or provincial governors.

In fact, in the Oyu Tolgoi project, one of the largest factors that helped sway Mongolian public opinion and then parliament was the fact that the entire political leadership of the province in which the project was located was unanimously in support of it.

There have been reports from about a year ago about a job action against a Canadian company that operates the largest gold mine in the country. We looked into this, and even government authorities found that, to a very large degree, it was engineered from the outside, that it had little or nothing to do with substantive corporate practices.

The Chair: Mr. Dorion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Dorion: My question is for Mr. Saunders.

Mr. Williams, Mr. Saunders, I thank you for being with us today.

You both dwelled on the importance of an honest public service, independent from government, for a healthy society. However, in a democratic society, the government governs.

How does the Mongolian government operate? Is there an opposition in Mongolia? Are there several political parties? I know that there is a coalition in power at the present time. In any event, that was the case not long ago. How did the government organize itself after the collapse of the communist party in Mongolia?

[*English*]

Mr. Steve Saunders: I'm going to give you the light answer, because time and the chairman are staring me in the face.

The dominant political party in Mongolia is the Mongolian people's revolutionary party, which is the former Communist Party. Fifteen years ago, they renounced their communist heritage. They apologized for 70 years of communist rule. In fact, the top item on the agenda at the MPRP congress next month is to change the name, to make it into the Mongolian people's party and drop "revolutionary".

Mongolia has had free and open presidential elections and parliamentary elections since 1992. The presidency of Mongolia has switched back and forth between the democratic party and then to the MPRP, and then back to the democratic party, peacefully and without very much rancour. In terms of parliament, in the election of 1996, the democrats won. In the election of 2000, the MPRP won. In 2004, MPRP won, but it was so tight that they made a coalition government, and that was the first coalition government that you're referring to. In 2008, the MPRP won a solid majority.

However, there was a very uncharacteristic seven-hour civil disturbance in Ulan Bator. The then MPRP prime minister made what most observers thought was a sensitive and good, intuitive judgment. There was a lot of unhappiness in the country about the way things were going, about lack of transparency, and other things. He voluntarily, even though he had a solid majority and did not need the support of any other party to govern, invited the next largest party, the democratic party, into a coalition. MPRP has 60% of the cabinet seats and the independent agencies; the democratic party has 40%.

Now, some Mongolian critics have said that the problem of the two largest parties, which together have 74 out of 76 seats in parliament, essentially means there's no opposition. The next parliamentary elections are in 2012, and the expectation is that the coalition will get a divorce sometime in 2011.

● (1710)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Dorion: I now give the floor to my colleague.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: Thank you. I do not know if I have very much time left, but I would like to make a comment.

Mr. Williams, I certainly do not purport that I have your vast experience. For the information of the people who are listening, I would note that you were formerly a conservative member of this government, but I did not have the opportunity to work alongside you.

I would like to come back to one of the last statements you made. As you have noted, there are very few women around this table. I find it odd that there are not more women. Ms. Brown, a colleague from the Conservative Party, comes here once in a while. In my opinion, if there were more women in the Department of Foreign Affairs, there would perhaps be a different sensitivity with regard to the heaviness that characterizes the department.

In all parties, men and women have been elected. I imagine that some members are convinced that they will be able to make changes and move our society forward, whereas others have different convictions. They are probably here in the pursuit of their own interests. Whether it be in advanced nations such as ours or in developing countries, I believe that this is part of human nature. Even if we would like our public service to be without reproach, it is a fact that it is impossible to control that which motivates human nature.

We obviously are confronted with exceptions. Even here, we are in the pay of the governments that succeed each other. The public service remains, but it is under the yoke of the government in place. It must agree to change its orientation, to new policies or to programs that will be adjusted. We can hardly pretend that this public service will rise up and denounce the government. I believe that you do not bite the hand that feeds you.

[*English*]

Mr. John G. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you, Madame Deschamps, for the question regarding women in politics. I will not comment on women on either side of the House, but in general, it's great to see women participating in politics.

In a democratic society there is a loop between the governed and the governors. Those who are governed have to be happy with the governors or else they're going to find a way to change the government. Since 50% of our population is made up of women, and they have a voice, I would like that voice heard loudly and clearly in the political sphere. That is how you're going to find more women in the political process, where they exert the influence and the opinions they have.

Within the public service, I'm glad to see, for example, Madam Barrados, president of the Public Service Commission. I've known her for many years, since I came here, first as Assistant Auditor General. And of course we have Ms. Fraser, the Auditor General, and others in senior ranks. This is good. We recognize the role women can, should, and must play in the governance of our society. These are the issues I'm glad to see we are addressing as a mature and developed nation.

On your last point, about whether the public service can exert their opinion on the government on public policy, no, they cannot come out publicly and criticize the government. That is not their role. As I said, they have an allegiance to the population and to the citizens at large, not an allegiance to the government of the day. They have an obligation to implement the policies of the government of the day, but they do not owe their allegiance to the government, because the governments change. Society doesn't. And that is where we find a public service that is professional, efficient, competent, trained, with both genders delivering services and feeding information into the government as to what public policy should be.Then we're going to enhance the values provided to our government and enhance our society.

● (1715)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to move back over here to Mr. Van Kesteren, for seven minutes, sir.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Williams and Mr. Saunders, for showing up.

John, I suppose I'm still somewhat of a rookie, but five years ago when I came here, I was one of those new MPs. If I were to think back to those who I've learned most from and sat at their feet, I would have to say that you, sir, are right up at the top. It's great to see you back. It's great to hear you talk about those things that we had so many discussions about.

I've got two questions. I want to say too at this point that we're really fortunate to have both of these gentlemen here. Again, I don't think anybody has to speak about John. We all know your background, your credentials, and what you've contributed to this Parliament.

Mr. Saunders, sir, I read your resumé, and it's profound, quite frankly. So I'm going to ask you two questions; actually one to you, John, and then one to you, Mr. Saunders.

The first one is to you, John.

I firmly believe, and I know around this table many of us—or hopefully all of us—share this belief, that when we go out we are ambassadors; we're not simply members of Parliament. Again, you and I have talked about this a number of times. When we get the opportunity to travel to different countries, we have the profound privilege to go out and represent, as both of you have stated, probably if not the best, then one of the best systems in the world. The message we bring has to be one that points citizens from around the world to a system that, as Reagan used to say, is a light on the hill, a beacon.

My question to you—and before you answer it, I'm going to give the question to Mr. Saunders too so you both have your questions—is on training. Again, I was privileged to sit and talk with you, and I've had many discussions, but there's very little training in the way of that mandate for our members of Parliament. I want to just have you comment on possibly that type of a program.

Then, Mr. Saunders, the question I wanted to lay at your feet is this. I appreciate American diplomacy and I appreciate the way the Americans...they've done an outstanding job through the years. We may not be parallel, but I guess when we go out and administer our foreign policy, we understand that to do so there has to be some type of benefit. The Americans have always done that in the past when they laid out their foreign policy.

What is the benefit to Canada? The obvious benefit is that we have some mining interests in Mongolia and others, but what can be some of the other benefits we see? I really firmly believe that. Sometimes I wonder—I look about at what's taking place in China—if we are getting those benefits. I wonder if, when we give them great advice, when we give them great knowledge—such as what we've just heard from the last witness, that type of sharing in information—we shouldn't be more demanding and expectant on the end results.

If that makes sense to both of you, then maybe, Mr. Williams, you could start.

● (1720)

Mr. John G. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Van Kesteren. Again, thank you very much for the compliments you expressed. I appreciate them very much.

On the question of training for parliamentarians, I think of the illustration I have sometimes used. Imagine you are on the operating table and the anesthetist is about to put you out. The surgeon shows up and he's got a big scalpel in his hand. He leans over and says “I haven't done this before. How do you feel?” Nervous, of course.

Think of us, as parliamentarians. When I was a parliamentarian and we first showed up here, we were untrained. We were not familiar with the rules. We didn't understand this institution of parliament and how it works as an institution to hold a check and balance on the government. We ran on public policy and the party policy. We said vote for me and I will implement whatever is in the party policy.

Then after the votes are counted, you find yourself on the opposition side. Whatever you said about implementing party policy is largely irrelevant because it's not going to happen. It's the governing party that says their agenda won and their agenda is to be implemented, subject of course to convincing the other parties it's a reasonably good idea.

The concept of the check and balance of a parliament is never discussed in the elections. Nobody has ever said during an election, “Send me down to Ottawa to be a parliamentarian and I will hold the government accountable.” Nobody has ever said that, but that is the role of parliament. Therefore, we need to have a methodology where we elevate the competence and understanding of parliamentarians as to their real role. Primarily and fundamentally, the parliament, on behalf of the people, is a check and balance on the executive. When parliament is accountable to the people through open and fair elections, with an independent media that keeps them informed, so that they can decide whom they want to represent themselves, then we have a functioning democracy. When ballot boxes are stuffed, when the media is controlled, when parliamentarians are blindly following the leader because he buys their vote with a bucketful of cash, you will not have a democracy. It's game over.

Unfortunately, in far too many countries in the world, that, or something similar, is how democracy is run. It is no democracy. That's why people are poor. They do not have the capacity to pull the chain of the people and say they didn't vote for poverty and government has an obligation to deliver prosperity to them. They can't do it. They can't pull the chain.

I've been to far too many countries and seen far too many rules that prevent the people from holding the parliamentarians and government accountable. That is the problem.

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Saunders, he's on to you again. You've got a little bit of time. If you could keep your comments quick, then we're going to move on.

Paul, do you have to go?

Mr. Paul Dewar: Yes. I'm sorry, I have to go.

Thank you for the presentations.

The Chair: Thanks, Paul.

Mr. Saunders, you just bought yourself a bit more time—a little more.

Mr. Steve Saunders: I think what Mr. Williams has said is a lot more interesting than what I have to say, and I'm delighted and honoured to be on this panel.

You ask a perfectly legitimate question: what's in it for Canada? In the short term, the mining investment obviously repatriates income, and those economic benefits don't need discussion here.

This is why Canada is so well positioned now to take advantage of an opportunity that is created as a result of Prime Minister Batbold's visit to Canada. Prime Minister Stephen Harper made it very clear that the incentive for Mongolia to move ahead more expeditiously than they have over the last six years with a FIPA in order to provide some guarantees of asset protection for Canadian investors is that at the end of that rainbow, we start negotiations on a free trade agreement.

Canada will, as it has for the last 10 years, once again be ahead of the United States on the FTA. The American Congress has refused for several years to renew the trade negotiating authority of the President. This applied to President Bush; it applies to President Obama. He does not have trade negotiating authority, and Congress has an uncertain appetite for future FTAs. My impression is that the Government of Canada has no such reluctance and is in very many ways eating the lunch of the United States on moving ahead on its FTA program. It is likely that Canada can have an FTA with Mongolia much faster and much sooner than any other country, with the benefits that would produce.

Education exports: if a Mongolian is educated at one of Canada's fine colleges and universities, for the rest of his life, when he thinks of needing a major construction company, he's going to think of Lavalin, not necessarily Bechtel. If he needs to buy a plane, he's going to think of Bombardier and not of an American producer or Embraer or Fokker. If they get to the point of mass transit, he's going to think again of Bombardier and not an Italian manufacturer.

There is an awareness among very senior private sector Mongolians that an education in Canada is qualitatively different, and to many of them better, than in the United States simply because of the social environment. The president of MCS Holding Company, which recently had an IPO in the Hong Kong stock market, which established the capitalization of their company, which owns a piece of the Tavan Tolgoi coal project at over $5 billion, asked me for advice on where to send his sons. He wanted a small college in a safe environment where they were going to get a good education and where he didn't have to worry about them every day. I said Simon Fraser. I'm sure I've offended everybody else at this table who has a pet college or university, but he had two of his sons go there. The NAMBC has organized a Canadian Alumni of Mongolia organization, and we are about to hand it over to a self-governing board of landed Mongolian immigrants in Canada.

Finally, on the Toronto Stock Exchange, this mining company went to Hong Kong, and if there is a greater visibility for Canada, then more of them are going to come to Toronto. This is globally competitive now, and it's important to persuade foreign mining companies to list in Toronto and not in Hong Kong, Shanghai, London, New York, Chicago, or wherever. It is important to preserve the status of the Toronto Stock Exchange.

● (1725)

That's just a quick answer to a very good and very deep question, and those are some of the advantages I see.

The Chair: You can have one very quick question, Mr. Lunney, and then we're going to wrap up.

Mr. James Lunney: Thanks for the opportunity.

I thank Mr. Dewar for sharing his time that way with us.

I just wanted to pick up on one thing you guys mentioned, and thank you so much for your very helpful comments.

We're talking about how you train public servants in Mongolia, and I think you mentioned a public service institute. I just wanted to pick up on how we're seeing this Canadian participation with their public service over there. Is that the institution we would engage with? Is that one way you might see our Canadian expertise impacting things over there? Also, you mentioned that the pay over there was something like $2,300 a month, if I heard you correctly.

Mr. Steve Saunders: That's per year.

Mr. James Lunney: Excuse me. I meant to say “per year”.

Now of course in some of the countries, even that would seem high compared to what it would be in some of the nations we deal with, but things must always be looked at in context. Is that a living wage over there? One of the problems we see in many parts of the world is that when you give people authority and they don't have a living wage, you're giving them a formula to extort money.

The Chair: Do you have a quick question?

Mr. James Lunney: How do you deal with that?

Mr. John G. Williams: You deal with corruption. You can't guarantee you'll catch everybody, but you need to have two things in place to stop corruption. You have to think you're going to get caught, and if you are caught, you're not going to like the price. It's just that simple. That is how you stop corruption.

So you need a professional civil service. You need audit functions. You need police. You need the courts. You need the entire structure of it with a professional civil service in place so that you're going to get caught, and you're not going to like it. You'd rather stay honest. That's how you stop corruption.

● (1730)

The Chair: Thank you.

Gentlemen, thank you very much for taking the time to be here. With that, I'm going to adjourn the meeting.

Thanks again. The meeting is adjourned.

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

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

Additional copies may be obtained from: Publishing and Depository Services
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5
Telephone: 613-941-5995 or 1-800-635-7943
Fax: 613-954-5779 or 1-800-565-7757
publications@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca
http://publications.gc.ca

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address: http://www.parl.gc.ca

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

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

On peut obtenir des copies supplémentaires en écrivant à : Les Éditions et Services de dépôt
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5
Téléphone : 613-941-5995 ou 1-800-635-7943
Télécopieur : 613-954-5779 ou 1-800-565-7757
publications@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca
http://publications.gc.ca

Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante : http://www.parl.gc.ca