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Chair

Mr. Dean Allison

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● (1535)

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.)): Good afternoon everyone, and welcome to this 33rd hearing of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are studying the effectiveness and viability of public service partnerships between nations.

Firstly, it is our pleasure this afternoon to welcome, from the Canadian Bureau for International Education, Ms. Larissa Bezo, Director of the Ukraine Civil Service Human Resources Management Reform Project.

[*English*]

Also as an individual, we have Mrs. Kristina Wittfooth, vice-president from the Canadian Bureau for International Education.

We'll start with Madame Bezo, *s'il vous plaît. Vous avez dix minutes.*

Ms. Larissa Bezo (Director, Ukraine Civil Service Human Resources Management Reform Project, Canadian Bureau for International Education): Ms. Wittfooth and I shall actually jointly make a statement, if that would please the committee.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): Madame Wittfooth will have the floor after, no problem.

Ms. Kristina Wittfooth (Vice-President (Retired), Canadian Bureau for International Education, As an Individual): I think seniority somehow plays in here.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): I don't see any seniority here.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): Go ahead, Mrs. Wittfooth.

Ms. Kristina Wittfooth: Thank you, Mr. Vice-Chair and honourable members, for providing us with the opportunity to contribute to your committee's deliberations on the viability and effectiveness of public service partnerships with other countries.

My name is Kristina Wittfooth, and I served 12 years as vice-president of international development programs with the Canadian Bureau for International Education. Prior to my work with CBIE, I spent some 40 years supporting international development efforts in a number of countries, including the former Soviet Union.

I am accompanied today by my colleague Larissa Bezo, who is presently serving as director of the Ukraine civil service human resources management reform project and who has been active in supporting public administration reform in Ukraine since the mid-1990s.

As it is always appropriate for governments to periodically assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the programs and services they deliver, we are pleased to be here today to share our experience.

The Canadian Bureau for International Education embraces that principle absolutely, and it is one that we actively promote in those countries with which we enter into partnerships. But at a time when budgets everywhere are tight—as much in the developed west as in most emerging economies—such assessments have a particular urgency. Indeed, against the backdrop of competing demands for resources, from other government programs as well as from within the overall foreign aid envelope itself, it is essential that the intrinsic and relative value of such partnerships also be considered in addition to their effectiveness and efficiency.

Accordingly, over the course of our presentation we will provide information to the committee's deliberations on two key questions. First, do public service partnerships between nations matter, and if so, why? Second, why are some partnerships more successful than others, and what are some of these lessons learned we can draw from our own CBIE's experience supporting and facilitating public service partnerships globally?

In the interests of brevity and clarity, we will address these questions primarily through the lens of our experience through CBIE's ongoing relationships in post-Soviet states, in particular Ukraine, where our relationship has endured uninterrupted since 1992 through 16 changes in government.

Before briefly summarizing for you the essential features of our current public service reform project in Ukraine, allow us to say a few words about the Canadian Bureau for International Education. CBIE's core mandate is to promote international understanding and development through the free movement of people and active exchange of ideas, information, advice, educational and training programs, and technologies across national borders. CBIE has worked in partnership with governments, educational institutions, and organizations in over 40 countries across central and eastern Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and the Americas. Since 1966, CBIE has managed over $2 billion worth of capacity-building and education programs throughout the world.

Ms. Larissa Bezo: While the Canadian Bureau for International Education has been active in Ukraine since 1992, the focus of today's presentation is really on the Ukraine civil service human resources management reform project, as we feel that it's especially germane to the focus of the committee's deliberations and the committee's work in the area of public service partnerships.

Our partner and the main beneficiary of this very unique four-year CIDA-funded project is the Main Department of Civil Service of Ukraine. The overarching goal of this project is to support Ukraine's efforts to modernize its public service in line with European public service norms—

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): Ms. Bezo, could you speak a little more slowly please?

[*English*]

Ms. Larissa Bezo: —an essential precondition to eventual European Union membership. This is being achieved through targeted reforms designed to make the central government human resources management system more accountable and transparent and ultimately more effective.

Therefore, our project focuses on leadership development and training, human resources management governance, and infrastructure to support the professionalization of the Ukrainian public service. Our project office in Kyiv serves as a focal point for the development of public service partnerships between the Main Department of Civil Service of Ukraine and Canadian public service institutions, such as the Public Service Commission of Canada and the Canada School of Public Service, to name but a few.

Now what we'd like to do is try to answer those questions Ms. Wittfooth put forward around public service partnerships and our perspectives. Do public service partnerships between nations matter, and if so, why? The short answer, of course, is yes, they do matter.

As your committee has already heard from other witnesses and as you will learn from your continued review of other jurisdictions' approaches, building public service capacity is crucial to a country's development and prosperity. Indeed, that is why in recent years we've witnessed a growing trend among multinational institutions to link loans to public service reform. In the case of many former east bloc countries, European Union membership has largely been contingent upon meeting European Union or Euro-Atlantic public service norms or baselines.

More to the point, public service partnerships have contributed enormously to the development of many emerging countries now being touted as success stories. Effective public service partnerships contribute to national self-sufficiency, not continued dependence.

Canada has a long tradition of supporting such activities and delivering results in a variety of countries, from the contribution of the RCMP to police training in Haiti, to Health Canada's contributions to better public health planning in Cambodia, to Finance Canada's contributions to modernizing the central banking system in China, to Elections Canada's support for electoral reform across the globe, to public service and public administration reform support in countries such as Ukraine and Georgia.

We would like to underscore that these projects typically provide opportunities for two-way learning, learning that benefits both the beneficiaries of the intended support and the Canadian partner.

● (1540)

Ms. Kristina Wittfooth: We now deal with the second question of why some public service partnerships are more successful than others and what we can learn from CBIE's experience with public service partnerships.

Based on our experience, let us briefly outline the four top factors that contribute to successful partnerships.

First is clarity of purpose and principles. The first success factor is to proceed with a partnership based on clarity of purpose and sound guiding principles. This requires the partners to work collaboratively to develop a project charter that gives expression to their overarching values that will guide the overall partnership. It includes setting clear project milestones and defining evaluation criteria upfront in the project design phase. Collaboration doesn't just happen; it requires planning if it is to work and be sustainable.

Indeed, we believe that part of our success in Ukraine is because we have not simply tried to superimpose our model of public administration on our partner. Rather, we have worked with them, first of all, to design an incremental series of projects tailored to local needs and capacities and focusing on knowledge and skills transfer to ensure long-term sustainability. Second, we have worked with them to identify and support reformers and change agents. And lastly, we have worked with them to strengthen their individual and institutional capacities.

The second key factor is the presence of concrete incentives for success. Having clear and tangible objectives in mind also matters. Public sector partnerships are likelier to be successful when progress in a certain area of public service activity, say for improving gender equality or better enforcing intellectual property laws, is a precondition for qualifying for a structural adjustment loan or membership in an international body like the European Union.

The third key factor is a long-term commitment by both parties. From our perspective, a clear and tangible expression of commitment by both parties to the project and its results is essential. For donors, this can take the form of a public endorsement by senior political and bureaucratic leaders, a financial or in-kind contribution, or even something as simple as citing the project in official planning documents or reports to multilateral agencies.

In the case of our Ukrainian civil service reform project, we have the benefit of all of these expressions of support, but it is a two-way street. We would not have achieved the same degree of success without our Ukrainian partners knowing that we were there for the long term; that project staff and access to experts would remain stable, so that relationships and friendships, once begun, could be properly consummated; and that the project wasn't developed on a whim or in response to a fad, but because of an enduring commitment to progress in a specific country and a specific sector.

In the past, some well-intended programming was supply-driven and not based on or well enough informed about the needs and priorities of the beneficiary countries.

Our experiences show that demand-driven, responsive undertakings are a better foundation for forging and facilitating durable public service partnerships. The process of transformation is not, by nature, a static one: partners must be willing to be continually engaged in the process.

Now to relate the operational factors....

● (1545)

Ms. Larissa Bezo: Finally, the fourth critical factor for success, from our experience, really relates to the operational factors with respect to actual implementation of the public service partnerships or initiatives.

There are numerous smaller considerations that reflect the experience and professionalism of the domestic partner organization or interlocutors, which play a significant role in determining whether a partnership will in fact be successful. We'll take this opportunity to list just a few of these key operational factors to give you a rough sense of why experience on the ground is very significant as it relates to the success of these types of initiatives.

In the first place, the quality and rigour of orientation provided to volunteers or visiting experts can make or break a project, in that the quality of their input very much depends on the scope, breadth, and depth of their understanding of that particular context where interventions are being provided.

Second is the recruitment and deployment of the right people at the right time, whether those people be retired volunteers, active civil servants, specialized paid consultants, academics, or even sitting or former parliamentarians.

Third is the average length of each mission or tour of duty, as we often like to call it, and the frequency of follow-through in terms of the provision of advisory support.

Fourth is the flexibility and willingness of the funder to allow a project to adapt to changing circumstances. As we noted earlier in our presentation, our particular civil service reform project is situated in a context where we're working with the 16th Ukrainian government since independence, since the early 1990s, so it's clearly a very flexible and unpredictable environment.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you. We hope to have the opportunity to explore some of these themes further in the question and answer section.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): Thank you, Ms. Wittfooth and Ms. Bezo.

[*English*]

We will start questions with Mr. Pearson, for seven minutes.

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

Thank you very much for coming in today.

I believe you said that this was a unique four-year project that's being done for the Ukraine, but you also said in the presentation that it's going to have to be long term when you get into these relationships. It seems to me it's very much like foreign aid or foreign development. You can get into partnerships and then politics change and then all of a sudden people pull out.

I presume when you're looking at something like the Ukraine you're looking at something longer than four years, correct? When you have CIDA funding for four years, which is great, and that is only right, I'm sure your view of what you're needing to do is longer than four years. Is that not true? How do you bridge that gap? Where do you go after the four years is up?

Ms. Kristina Wittfooth: Let me start, and my colleague will support me as needed.

When you go in, as we have stated, you go long term. And the partners as well, more and more—particularly in the economies that have now moved from the command economy into market economy—are more sophisticated in knowing about their needs and where they want to go. In the beginning it was very much more ad hoc and they were not quite sure how their societies and their systems and institutions would evolve, but nowadays they are very much more confirmed in their understanding of where they want to go and how they want to achieve that. Therefore, their expectation is also much more long term, so during the course of the collaboration you would mature together to an understanding where life is going to be beyond these four years or whatever the duration of the project is.

As we said, it is never static. It is an evolving situation where you have to be very open and very adaptable in the framework, of course, that the program is giving you, the mandate you have to respond to, how society and in this case, of course, the government is moving, and how its demands are coming forward. Some of them you are able to meet as predicted and as the project design had foreseen, but some of them are emerging when you work with them, and that then leads to either that you go back to the funder and discuss the possibility of an extension or a new project, or it can also lead the beneficiary to go to another funder. It can lead, in the Ukrainian case, to seeking funding from other sources.

● (1550)

Ms. Larissa Bezo: If I might just add, in the case of our particular civil service reform project, one of the unique aspects of how this project was in fact jointly designed, both by the Canadian partner and the beneficiary, is we actually worked together to develop a road map for reform of the human resources management system in the civil service. What was unique to this is we had a much broader perspective than simply the four years where CIDA had committed the funding.

So the road map in fact developed a baseline to assess where the Ukrainian civil service was vis-à-vis the European Union and the baselines it needed to meet for eventual membership, but the road map actually articulated a vision for reform for the next 10 to 15 years. But what was unique in this is then, once the road map was developed, we as a CIDA-funded project were able to articulate and say in this first four years we need to help you move forward and establish a foundation for reform, so that this in fact gives you a solid base upon which to move forward and to continue to implement the road map.

So in the four years of project implementation, that implementation aspect was in fact developed to give them a foundation that would allow them to continue in that process.

Mr. Glen Pearson: Just quickly then, if the four years is up, is built into that process the idea that the host country, the Ukraine, begins to take over that responsibility?

Ms. Larissa Bezo: Precisely.

Mr. Glen Pearson: So hopefully it can.... In foreign aid that never works, right? It always is complicated. It's always changing on the ground. But what you're saying, then, is that you would come back to the donor to say here are some of the alterations, the challenges we face. Do I have that right?

Ms. Larissa Bezo: Correct. And because of the fact that the empowerment aspect was built into this, the expectation—and we are already seeing this on the ground—is that the beneficiary will take over and there's less and less need for advisory input.

Mr. Glen Pearson: That's helpful. Thank you.

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Welcome back. Good afternoon. Thank you for being here.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[*English*]

I'll just start with one question of clarification, if you don't mind. CIDA funded the Canadian Bureau of International Education. The Canadian Bureau of International Education is an independent organization, an NGO? Is that how you—

Ms. Larissa Bezo: It's an NGO, yes.

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes: Okay, it's an NGO. And you were funded by CIDA for this first project? Are you funded for other countries always through CIDA?

Ms. Kristina Wittfooth: We have had several projects funded by CIDA. So our first project that CIDA funded—or it was actually DFAIT that funded it in the beginning, in 1992 in Ukraine. After that, when the responsibility of the Ukraine task and desk moved over to CIDA, we have had, from 1992, a continuing presence in Ukraine through CIDA-funded projects.

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes: Through CIDA funding. So there are no other departments of the government that are collaborating on this?

Ms. Larissa Bezo: I was just going to add, Kristina, we also have worked with other multilateral institutions such as the World Bank, other development banks—

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes: No, I'm talking about in Canada. Is the Public Service Commission—

Ms. Larissa Bezo: That's right. On other types of projects CBIE has worked with DFAIT, international scholarships and the like, but on the development side CIDA is the primary, yes.

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes: CIDA is the one. Okay. And the Public Service Commission is not involved in any way.

Ms. Larissa Bezo: Not as a funder.

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes: Just as a provider of resources, I imagine, human resources.

Ms. Larissa Bezo: Correct.

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes: Thank you very much. I'll come back.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): Thank you, Ms. Mendes.

Ms. Deschamps, you have the floor.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ladies, you have your earphones. You are going to need the interpretation service.

Thank you very much for your testimony and for sharing your experience with us. I have a few brief questions for you. I will give you time to answer and then we can broach other topics.

Last week, the committee heard the President of the Public Service Commission of Canada. Have you had any dealings with the commission?

[*English*]

Ms. Kristina Wittfooth: Yes. I was actually here last week also and listened to Madame Barrados' testimony. The Public Service Commission has provided their expert services to this Ukraine program that we have mentioned today, the civil service reform project. So both Madame Barrados herself and her staff have helped to share their experience in what the Public Service Commission is doing in Canada and have triggered a lot of interest from a Ukrainian party to follow and to look at the models and the systems and the institution, actually, that is in place in Canada.

Larissa, would you like to add to that?

● (1555)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: I'm going to give you another bit of information. You stated, Ms. Wittfooth, that you had been working on projects in Ukraine since 1992. I don't know if all of these projects were funded by CIDA, but Ms. Barrados, last week, was telling us about one of the projects led by the Public Service Commission of Canada and funded by CIDA that worked less well. It was a project in the Ukraine.

It was mentioned in a summary of the 2006 study prepared by the Public Service Commission of Canada for CIDA. That summary contained the following conclusion:

> Perhaps the key lesson from this project is the following: if a clear commitment to human resources management reform is not in place and a country does not have sufficient stability in its political, institutional and public service environment, the chances of achieving sustainable impact through the transfer of individual tools or institutional models are significantly reduced.

And so, I am a little concerned by what has come out of this study by the Public Service Commission of Canada and what you told us about your experiences, Ms. Wittfooth. Have you had problems of that kind? Were corrective measures taken? In light of the fact that your organization is also funded by CIDA, you probably had to produce reports and assessments of your projects. I suppose you must have encountered similar problems.

[*English*]

Ms. Kristina Wittfooth: That of course is a very relevant question. In every project—and lessons learned, of course—in recent times, when we have adopted the lessons learned and our experience has told us, we are incorporating in each project design a monitoring and evaluation mechanism. So that means the projects are monitored and every need for a corrective measure is taken during the course of the project. And of course there are three levels where you try to measure the project impact, whether the project has the intended impact on the reforms. You have the immediate level, which is very easy to measure; that is outputs. You have an input and then an output, and the output usually is the trained people. And you have a number of advisers. You have a number you can quantify.

But then you measure it on the outcome level—that is when you have to see and look into, through the monitoring mechanism, if those skills and the knowledge that the participants and the partner have acquired translate into new legislation, new systems, new processes, new, improved ways of doing business.

Then the long-term impact the project can have is something that usually is beyond the lifetime of the project. You cannot see immediately if that has really profoundly changed how the government works, for instance.

So over this, we have been able to observe, because of our pure presence in Ukraine for so long, that there has been clearly a huge improvement on so many levels in Ukraine. But regularly their projects are of a shorter period, so that the last level—the long-term impact—is usually something that there is no mechanism available to measure, unless one then goes back and asks later.

● (1600)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: You talked about evolution. The bureau has been in existence for 40 or 60 years, has it not?

Ms. Larissa Bezo: It has been in existence since 1966.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: I suppose that your philosophy must evolve, and that you must also rely heavily on the values to be found in the foreign affairs policies of successive governments. You must be quite sensitive to those policies.

In your presentation, you say that for a long time, CIDA subsidized partnership projects which proved to be ephemeral. You stated that CIDA had put an end to those programs.

Could you tell me in what year CIDA put an end to those projects?

[*English*]

Ms. Kristina Wittfooth: I would not have the exact date, but I have observed a trend.

In the very beginning, CIDA's capacity to program was perhaps not, therefore, in every country. And certainly we saw in the Ukraine that in the beginning the Ukrainian diaspora was very much involved in the programming of different initiatives in Ukraine. Different NGOs wanted to be involved and had their own contacts and then did come up with their own project ideas, which then were approved by CIDA because they made sense and they were good ideas and good project design. But that was coming from outside.

Over time, CIDA's own capacity to develop its own Canadian government programming in the Ukraine improved, improved significantly, and that then led to CIDA's own programming efforts in Ukraine.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): Thank you, Ms. Wittfooth.

[*English*]

Now we're going to pass to Mr. Abbott.

Hon. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And thank you to the witnesses.

Ms. Bezo, you have been back in Canada how long?

Ms. Larissa Bezo: About 12 hours.

Hon. Jim Abbott: About 12 hours. Okay. You came to us from the Ukraine.

For clarity, I'm going to say something here, and I need your confirmation. This is my understanding, and I want the whole committee to understand this. My understanding is that, Ms. Bezo, you're—I don't know what the correct word is—engaged with the Canadian Bureau for International Education in the delivery of this service in the Ukraine. So the testimony here today is of highest value in your ability to help us understand the ways in which Canadians can interface with people in Mongolia, people in the Ukraine, people where they desire to have this service. So that is the value of your testimony.

I think what we're looking at with the committee is, in addition to this model, which is funded by CIDA—in addition to, not in competition with—I believe it is the desire of the committee to take a look at other ways where we may be able to engage retired civil servants on a voluntary basis. I would really encourage you to help us with this. And for the benefit of the committee members, CESO, the Canadian executive services overseas, which has a model not at all related to what we're talking about here but one of retired people being able to deliver their services, are going to be witnesses at our meeting next Tuesday. So you represent to us the ideas or the best practices, our experience of the delivery of the service, and what we're going to get from CESO on Tuesday is an additional vehicle by which those services could be delivered.

Within that context, then, I wonder if you could help us understand, for example, how an organization would, whatever this new organization is that will be created under the memorandum of understanding that our Prime Minister and the Mongolian Prime Minister signed.... What can you take from what you're presently doing? What would it look like? What do we need to take from that to this new model, a CESO kind of a model?

● (1605)

Ms. Larissa Bezo: Let's take the Ukraine civil service project as an example. From our experience, CBIE's role has been to serve as a facilitator of these types of public service partnerships. We are there to identify needs, to understand the local context, to bring those needs together, and to connect them to potential Canadian partners. In this context, those would be public sector institutions such as the Public Service Commission of Canada or the Canada School of Public Service, given the subject matter of the project.

What's very important in this context is that we serve as the interlocutor. We've managed to bring the value-added aspect through our very long-term relationship in the country and our very in-depth understanding of the context, which allow us to work with the Ukrainian beneficiary, or the partner, to articulate needs in a way that allows us to identify Canadian partners—Canadian institutions or individuals—with the required expertise and connect the two.

Although we've noticed a significant improvement in the Ukrainian context, from our experience that's probably the biggest challenge, in that often the beneficiary has a general sense of the need or particular issue they're grappling with, but it's often very difficult for them to articulate what that need means in a Canadian context and for us to identify that the Public Service Commission, for instance, could provide assistance in this area. I think that's a very important element to consider in any future modality in which you would want to engage recently retired public servants or parliamentarians and the like.

In our project we too have many senior-level, fairly recently retired public servants, and the important thing to highlight is that their experience is invaluable and has proven very impactful in the Ukrainian context. This is not solely as individuals who have a breadth of professional experience, but as individuals who come from particular institutions that represent particular values and represent a certain level of expertise and acknowledged professionalism. Those are very important elements. Even if those individuals have departed from a given institution, from the beneficiary side there's a remaining association.

Hon. Jim Abbott: Help me understand this. If we have to have somebody take a look at this in an expert capacity and then say that this is what we need to do, in your judgment—and perhaps, Ms. Wittfooth, this would be directed more to you as being retired—is it responsible and reasonable to expect that retired civil servants would have the time and interest to devote themselves to doing something in the depth that I'm taking from what Ms. Bezo is talking about, or in fact would it not work? Would we actually have to have somebody employed on salary in order to do that?

Ms. Kristina Wittfooth: At the end of the day, of course, it might be a combination of both. The volunteer retired person's enthusiasm and interest might be there initially; however, there might be other conflicting situations for a retired volunteer—family reasons, age, health, or other issues—that put that person's long-term commitment in jeopardy.

What one should foremost think about is the extent to which we are talking about long-term commitment. Nothing happens in development in a week. It usually takes several years to work. You have to start with building relationships. You have to start with building trust. You have to form that kind of rapport. If a person comes from an institution that already has that—let's say the Public Service Commission has already established a rapport with a partner institution—the individual attached to that of course already comes endorsed to some extent, but then you need the context and the parameters within which this individual works. You would have to have some kind of long-term commitment built into that, and it needs to be built into the design of this partnership.

● (1610)

Hon. Jim Abbott: You cut the cloth very small. Let me paint a word picture.

In this word picture, Mongolia has a deficiency in mine permitting. In Natural Resources Canada there are a dozen people in the mine permitting office. Mongolia has a deficiency that is identified. To maintain the short-term enthusiasm of the retired volunteer, would tasking that person with resolving that specific problem be an answer to the concern that you've raised?

Ms. Kristina Wittfooth: Yes, if the institutional.... It depends also on whether you are talking more of technical issues and sharing knowledge and expertise on a technical level. That would require a long-term commitment to perhaps developing a classification system, which is a multi-year undertaking. It always depends a little on factors such as institutional partnership and the kind of work it involves. When two colleagues—two technical professionals—speak, you don't need that kind of....

Canada as a country already speaks for itself. They have formed a partnership because we have a reputation, so you don't need the buildup of a long-term relationship, but in a situation in which you have several donors and several competing interests with one beneficiary, it is quite necessary to make a case for Canada.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): Thank you very much.

[*English*]

That's fine. That's all of your time, Mr. Abbott.

Go ahead, Mr. Dewar, please. You have seven minutes.

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

I apologize for my tardiness. I was with colleagues from all parties with regard to the situation in Burma. We had a long press conference. My colleague from the Bloc and Mr. Rae and the Conservative Party member were in attendance.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

I should mention my connection to Ukraine. It goes back to the elections. I have an item I will save forever, an orange scarf that was given to me by my mother, who was there as an election observer. It was also a lucky charm for me during the 2006 election, and I will keep it forever.

After the euphoria of the elections in Ukraine, what followed was the process of liberalization after the collapse of the previous regime. One of the things that I think many people are seized with is that a lot of corruption has been reported. I don't think that's news, but what has been Ukraine's experience with it? Have any of your activities worked on stemming corruption? If so, could you elaborate?

Ms. Larissa Bezo: Thank you.

The focus of our project is really on supporting civil service reform, so this is very much to your point with regard to corruption or anti-corruption.

The bottom line for Ukraine is they need a professional public service that works, that is not corrupt, and that can accomplish the things the government needs to do. Our focus has in fact been on helping them at a policy level to articulate both a policy and a legal framework for the professionalization of the public service, because as I'm sure you're more than well aware from your time spent in Ukraine, at the moment Ukraine does not have a professional public service. There is no formal separation between political and administrative. So our partner, the beneficiary of this particular project, the main department of the civil service, has spent the last five years undertaking a country-wide campaign to shore up support for that professionalization of the civil service. So Canada is making a very important contribution in helping them to articulate that vision and to already think at a very operational level about how the Ukrainian public service will eventually become professional and become a public service that would operate free of political influence.

One of the very significant contributions worth noting in that vein is the role the Public Service Commission of Canada has played. I know we had mentioned it previously, and there were questions from other members with respect to the Public Service Commission. They in many respects have had a very interesting role, in that they have helped our Ukrainian partner to think about how in the future, when there is a law adopted on the civil service to formally separate administrative and political, they're in fact going to monitor that the public service remains politically neutral and free of any kind of political influence. And the Public Service Commission model is one that is being explored in the Ukrainian context.

Most likely there will be a hybrid at some point, but the Public Service Commission, through the president and her staff, has been very instrumental in facilitating a public policy dialogue around what that in fact could look like in the future. And that's a very important contribution that Canada is making in this area.

● (1615)

Mr. Paul Dewar: Just to be clear, I wasn't the one who was a monitor. It was my mother, and she brought back the scarf for me. I hope to go one day.

I think everyone can agree to the notion of Canada supporting capacity and professionalism and oversight and accountability, and certainly there is concern that, after the liberalization and the previous attempts in Ukraine to continue what was a positive trend, key commitments from others to ensure that it's sustainable are needed.

I do have a question, though, and I've brought this up to other witnesses, and generally for the committee. How does this fit in with Canada's foreign policy? My concern is that while this is a terrific initiative, we need to actually have a foreign policy strategy that encompasses this valid and important contribution. In other words, if we are just doing this piecemeal, ad hoc, it won't be as coherent and sustainable as it should be.

I guess it's a cart-and-horse equation. How do you see this working if we're going to do it well; that is, to provide public service training both here and in situ? And do you see the need for us to have a strategy for where Canada wants to be, as opposed to just waiting for people to come to us or responding in an ad hoc fashion?

Ms. Kristina Wittfooth: If I may, I will try to answer a very comprehensive and large question—I'm trying to be focused here.

Overall in Canada's foreign policy interest, I think it's self-evident that there's an intrinsic importance to having a professional, competent, and transparent public service in any country Canada is working with.

In the Ukraine case, you have trade issues, European Union issues—in the sense of the location of Ukraine—and you have the geopolitical importance of Ukraine, in very many ways. You have the context of global importance for Canada to have its network and work, for instance, with Ukraine, in different fora, so when Ukraine has a stable civil service you can have a common understanding in security issues, energy issues, and value issues.

Good governance is a foundational piece; you cannot be without that. Any sector—health or education, or energy, whatever—stands on good governance. Good governance only happens if you have a good, competent, and professional civil service.

For foreign policy purposes, I think that Canada, in so many ways, considers Ukraine to be a very strong and important partner. So there is leverage in diplomatic presence; there is the Canadian profile when it has bilateral relationships with Ukraine.

The perception in Ukraine about Canada delivering good governance is very important. And that is the perception. That is the understanding that has been built in Ukraine, that Canada stands for good governance—civil service reform being one pillar of that.

● (1620)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): Okay, that's it. We have to go now to Mr. Goldring.

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

Thank you very much for appearing here today. This is an extremely important discussion. With Ukraine, I believe we have the ability to really explore these types of issues that are common in many other parts of the world. We could not have a better, more compatible platform of engagement. We truly are two countries of great friendship. We are the first to recognize, from the western world of independence, the 1.2-million-person diaspora here in this country. So certainly there is the basis for the greatest of friendship and the greatest of openness and reception to build on that.

But I'm sensing here, and particularly even in the comments from the public service report specifically on Ukraine, concerns that a clear commitment to the human resources management reform is not in place. Then it goes on to say that the likelihood of success is significantly reduced.

In light of some of the other comments, I'm sensing that perhaps the good work that you are doing may be, unfortunately, in isolation from other work and efforts that could be brought to bear to perhaps help. One of the elements here, which seems to be of particular concern and is noted in that paragraph too, is that a changing political scenery has an impact. As well, perhaps there's a difficulty with the politicals who in the past have been engaged in public service direction. Maybe, for one thing, there should be some engagement with the politicals to develop a system of policy and principles to embrace the work you're doing, to get beyond this impasse, and to concentrate more on other issues that would benefit the country.

The other point is with regard to education. I understand there were efforts to bring about information development at the university level in Ukraine, but I'm not so sure about the grade-school level. I do see other countries in which there has been a program. This is from 1990, so there has been a program for 20 years—that's a generation. Perhaps if there had been development work at the education level or the primary-school level, as we have had in Canada, that would have brought through a whole new generation of better understanding of governance, and they could look forward to what their government could do.

So is what we need kind of an umbrella organization that encompasses your specific efforts as well as other specific efforts? Because I would say that Ukraine, certainly of all the countries of the world, is one in the development of which we should be able to make a long-term impression and improvement.

We have the will of the government to help do so as well. We have all of these assets at our fingertips, and yet we still have difficulty. So is it much more from other areas? Are you being constricted because you're looking at one aspect and maybe political or other areas are impeding those aspects? Could you do more in concert and with the collective effort of more groups of people?

● (1625)

Ms. Kristina Wittfooth: I'll start and then I will hand it over to Larissa, who has the freshest news from the ground.

I will say that you're absolutely right. This is a constant balance in navigating the political scene, if you will, in Ukraine. Sometimes there has been a sort of openness. The Canadian government and CIDA have been very flexible, in some instances, to help us grasp the opportunity when a new government has come into power, like when Yushchenko became Prime Minister. We were able to reposition ourselves to provide some very, very important new technical assistance from Canada.

Then there are other instances when we have to adjust because there have been major changes or an overhaul. As Larissa was saying, politics and the bureaucracy are not separated. When the government changes, all oblasts—meaning provinces—have a new governor and so on, so commitments that were there have to be renegotiated with new people. You are living in a country in constant flux, in a constantly changing scene. That is one of the things we have learned, that by being present in the country, having a presence there, having our ear on the ground, we are able then to position ourselves when changes are happening.

I would also like to say that we have always tried to find the level in the bureaucracy to work with that is at less risk of being affected, so when there is turmoil on the top, the small wheels continue to move.

There is no turning back the clock. The post-Soviet countries have crossed the Rubicon. It's only a question of how they are now with political and geopolitical realities, how they are trying to then manoeuvre. Then sometimes you feel that it's two steps forward, one step or more back.

Mr. Peter Goldring: This type of improvement and this type of engagement you're doing, does it go forward into legislation through the Rada?

Ms. Kristina Wittfooth: Yes.

Mr. Peter Goldring: So it really would be a change of regime that would impact it, but you do take it through the Rada.

Ms. Kristina Wittfooth: Yes, and now I would like Larissa to give you examples.

The Chair (Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC)): That's the last question. We'll get you to wrap up, and we'll come back over there.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Who is this man?

The Chair: Yes, that's right, I'm back. You're done.

No more Mr. Nice Guy. He's gone now.

Ms. Larissa Bezo: Just very briefly to add to what Ms. Wittfooth has said, in this particular project and in previous initiatives that CBIE has been involved in, we do take it to the point of bringing laws forward or bringing forward other legal normative acts. The work begins at the stage of policy development, but ultimately you want to see tangible products.

One of the interesting things—and you raised it initially in your question—is whether it makes sense to engage politicians or others beyond just the governance piece, in terms of the public sector institutions. Are there needs? Does it make sense? I think we would both say yes, very much so.

If you were to take the civil service project as an example, one of the challenges our Ukrainian partner has faced, as I mentioned, is five years of lobbying and facilitating public dialogue around the need for a new legal framework for the civil service.

As regards the public service, there isn't a public servant or a Ukrainian citizen who hasn't heard about the draft law on the civil service. The challenge has been more on the parliamentary side in terms of building understanding among parliamentary deputies about why this is important. I think there Canada certainly could contribute.

I think through more regular contact—things like the Canada-Ukraine parliamentary association, etc.—dialogue could be facilitated around these issues to really reinforce the importance of governance and of those very significant institutional aspects. This is one area where our project could benefit immensely from that kind of input.

● (1630)

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Goldring.

We're going to move back over for five minutes to Ms. Mendes.

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to continue a bit on what Mr. Goldring was suggesting about the educational aspect of your mission. I totally understand that what I think Mr. Goldring meant was how you sensitize, if you wish, children at school about governance and so on and so forth.

I would like to draw on the example of at least what I know in Quebec at the National School of Public Administration, which is the university-level professionalization of our civil servants. Is it something you would envisage to be a better way of making sure your project remains a definite factor in Ukraine to form the next generation of public servants and to be a very accepted and recognized diploma for somebody to have?

Ms. Kristina Wittfooth: I will start, and then go to Larissa, because we are both anxious to speak.

I will quickly say that this is what we have actually done in the past. For six years CIDA funded, through us, CBIE, the so-called academy of public administration. We were there to help them create a very solid supply site, meaning educating future civil servants. They had a masters program, and we helped to contribute to—

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes: Curricula. Okay.

Ms. Kristina Wittfooth: Yes, exactly.

As a matter of fact, the vice-president of this academy was a Canadian, from Alberta. When he moved to Ukraine, he was instrumental in creating, first, the Institute of Public Administration and Local Government. Under the president's decree, this then became the National Academy of Public Administration. So CIDA and Canada have a long relationship with key public administration civil servant education—a higher-level education training institute.

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes: This is for future civil servants, from what I understand.

Ms. Larissa Bezo: Both for future and existing civil servants.

Ms. Kristina Wittfooth: Yes, both.

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes: For example, unions have been cooperative in ensuring that for the next 10 or 20 years.... With your civil service being professionalized, those jobs have to be protected for people who are trained to do the job, not only for those who curry political favour or who get a little gift from someone in government, but to make sure it is a separate and distinct service. Is that something the unions have collaborated on and participated in?

Ms. Larissa Bezo: There are unions that exist in Ukraine, and there is a civil service union that represents public employees. However, the current legal framework does not provide guarantees for public servants in terms of their job status, their tenure. That's something they're moving toward.

In fact, our project has provided advisory input to the main department of civil service for the new draft law in the civil service, to articulate protection for employees and create room for unions to come in and provide that kind of support and stability.

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Mr. Pearson, you have a couple of minutes left.

Mr. Glen Pearson: Certainly.

You talked about how it used to be supply-driven. Once again, I'll go back to the international development model. I very much understand that, and the complications. Now you say it's more demand-driven. I would like to know how you do these assessments, both in the beginning, when you first get involved, and also as you go through it and you near the end of the time.

What I have discovered is that on the supply side it was always the people who were the donors who were manipulating the information. On the demand side, it's often the people who are receiving information who manipulate it in order to make it look like it's working.

Could I ask you how you do that assessment? Also, near the end, do you have a third-party group that does the assessment, or is it basically the main two groups together doing that?

I'm not trying to make it complicated; it's just that I know that in the field of international development it can get very tricky.

Ms. Kristina Wittfooth: On how we do it—and of course it's more or less the same, I would say, for CIDA, although CIDA uses a third party—we rely on our presence in the field. We engage with partners who are appropriate for us. Together with them we analyze the needs, the scope of the needs, and the modalities of any kind of engagement. We do some sort of feasibility analysis before we engage in any kind of programming ourselves. As far as I understand it, CIDA sometimes sends out experts, consultants, to do feasibility studies before the programming shapes up and takes project form.

In the beginning in any country you need to have consultations with the government, depending sometimes on the centralized nature of the government. Then as a donor country—not only in terms of money but in terms of the expertise you provide—your expertise must make sense for the country and not overlap. It must be in harmony with the other initiatives. That has been one of the problems in the past, before donor communities made it clear that they either collaborate and coordinate their efforts on the ground, or there are donor meetings that do it. So when we cooperate with other donors, like in Ukraine, we go to these meetings and try to make sure that any initiatives are in harmony with or in collaboration with other initiatives.

I would like to emphasize one thing here that's very important. The beneficiary country's people—human resources—are usually very much in short supply. Those people who can engage with you and with whom you can work are in high demand from other donor communities. So you really have to make sure you don't waste that very valuable human resource by pulling them in different directions.

● (1635)

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Pearson.

Mr. Lunney.

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

Thank you both for a very informative presentation. I think it was very well organized, and you've contributed greatly to our understanding of the matter we're discussing.

My first question is on the new draft law you mentioned on the civil service in Ukraine. Has it just been introduced? Where is it in the legislative process, and how likely is it to become a reality in the near future?

Ms. Larissa Bezo: Thank you for the question.

The draft law itself has been a work in progress for the last four to five years. It has been approved by four separate cabinets and been submitted to Parliament three times. Given those 16 changes in government that we mentioned in our initial presentation, unfortunately it has always made it into Parliament just as it has been dissolved and an election is called.

The main department has continued in its efforts to campaign within the public service for that civil service law. It is expected to be re-submitted to the new cabinet, and we're hopeful that it will appear in the Verkhovna Rada in its upcoming session. But it's work that will continue.

It's interesting to note that regardless of the fact that the legal framework has yet to be adopted, a lot of the foundational elements from a policy perspective that need to be in place to support future implementation of the law are already being put in as building blocks.

Mr. James Lunney: Thank you. That's very helpful.

We know that with democracy we have our own challenges with minority Parliaments and too many elections recently. I think most of us would probably agree, but that's the nature of democracy; it's very inconvenient at times, especially for the politicians. I think most of my colleagues would agree with that. Nevertheless, we recognize the practical realities, and thank you so much for helping us with that comment.

I appreciate the way you've framed some of these discussions about the importance of continuity. This is not a short-term project; it's a long-term project. I don't know how this can effectively be done without a relationship and people on the ground who have some understanding and relationships between the people staying and those coming and going. You made a remark here about the quality and rigour of the orientation provided to volunteers and visiting experts. I would think volunteers coming in would have to be prepared about the context they're coming into. Every nation is different.

Can you flesh out or describe what you mean by this quality and rigour of orientation and what that looks like on the ground?

● (1640)

Ms. Larissa Bezo: Sure.

I'll speak from a very practical standpoint in terms of our current project. When we have individual experts or institutional experts such as experts from the Public Service Commission what we as an organization and as a project implementer do is basically prepare an extensive briefing for those individuals before they are deployed into the beneficiary country. Elements of that briefing touch on working in that specific culture so that they're informed in terms of protocol, etiquette, and all the rules of engagement. More specifically, they get a very comprehensive briefing in terms of the content of what's happening, politically what's happening from a policy perspective, and how to position adviser support that's been provided in a way that it can be digested by the Ukrainian beneficiary so that it's received in a way that is as relevant to the Ukrainian needs as possible. That happens before they've been deployed. We have a very broad project team in the field that also does an up-to-the-minute briefing once they've arrived in the field, and then they're plugged into the institutional partner.

What's very interesting in terms of the briefing aspect for our project, and even in terms of the relationship-building that's so important to the success of these kinds of partnerships—and it speaks to the other member's question with respect to engagement—is that we have a very unique model in our particular project where our beneficiary, our partner in Ukraine, as a sign of commitment and engagement in terms of the priority and need of this partnership with Canada in fact committed some of their best human resources to work with the project. What this has meant is that they actually seconded some of their senior staff to work in the project implementation team. It's beautiful from a relationship and an institution-building standpoint in the sense that these individuals are extracted from the workplace, but they have that wealth of knowledge that no other local individual could possess in the way that they do. They work on the project team and then are reintegrated at the end of project implementation. Briefing also takes on a very unique flavour by virtue of their participation in these kinds of processes.

The Chair: Just finish up the comment there.

Mr. James Lunney: I think what I hear you saying, though, is that not only do we have to prepare people on the ground here so they know what they're going to get, but prepare people on the other end to understand who's coming in and what their role will be. Not only do people have to be sent, they have to be received if it's going to be an effective team.

Ms. Larissa Bezo: That's exactly it, connecting.

Mr. James Lunney: It's really an important role.

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Lunney.

We'll go now to Madame Deschamps.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We have talked at some length about your project and your partnership with the Ukraine. I imagine there must also be other projects conducted by the Canadian Bureau for International Education. Where are these projects being conducted? I would like you to answer me a little more substantively, because you speak rather vaguely of the links, and the way in which you work with the beneficiaries and the partners.

You have been present in the Ukraine since 1992. Concretely, who decides that you will still be there for the next century? Is it the beneficiary? Do you maintain a partnership as long as you have a request from a given country?

You mentioned in your presentation that for more than 40 years, you have been working in various parts of the world, among others in the Americas. Have you received any partnership requests from Haiti, for instance, at this time? If I understood your objectives and the mission correctly, I would like to gain a more concrete understanding of the relationship you have with an applicant country.

● (1645)

[*English*]

Ms. Kristina Wittfooth: This is an important question.

It is common, among NGOs in the NGO community, for every NGO to sort of specialize. There might be some particular opportunity that then leads that NGO to become more engaged in a particular sector or a particular country.

Ukraine became a significant part of CBIE's involvement in international development simply because when the country became independent, the Canadian government was looking for Canadian partners that could help the Canadian government forge new relationships at different levels—academic levels, government levels—and in different networks. It wanted to work with them to help the newly independent countries, Ukraine among them, to be part of the western community.

Before that, CBIE, our organization, had, a little bit here and there, educational programs. When the Soviet Union fell apart, it was simply a matter of pragmatism that we then became heavily involved. We were heavily involved in two streams, public administration reform and civil society development, which CIDA wanted to fund. So we were driven by CIDA's funding priorities, but we also had our own values and our own expertise, which were growing.

I have to mention one critical thing here, if I may. We are talking about Ukraine, but CBIE has had a very successful program in Georgia in the south Caucasus, which was an offspring of our success in Ukraine. That success told us that you can transport, in very many ways, what we are now experiencing in Ukraine to any post-Soviet country, because there are so many lingering legacies, structures, attitudes, and practices that are still common. Every country has been on its own path since independence, but there are so many similarities that there are very low thresholds to work with the same experience and at least understand the problems in these countries from the long experience with the evolution in Ukraine.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: I would like you to answer the other question, Ms. Bezo.

Where are you conducting other partnerships at this time? Must a country submit a request... Who chooses? This is not done at random, I expect.

[*English*]

Ms. Larissa Bezo: To answer your question, we have been active on different continents in different countries, depending on a particular mandate. As Ms. Wittfooth has mentioned, some of it has been driven by technical assistance initiatives, funded by CIDA. Public sector reform is an example. We have been active in the former Soviet Union states, such as Ukraine, and also in parts of central and eastern Europe and in some of the new EU member states. We've also been active in the south Caucasus—Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan. We've had projects in....

[*Translation*]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: And are you still there?

[*English*]

Ms. Larissa Bezo: Yes, there we've maintained relationships. We've also had projects in Africa: Mali, Senegal, and so on.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: Do you have one in Africa, currently? A little earlier, I referred to Haiti. Is that a possibility?

[*English*]

Ms. Larissa Bezo: The projects in Africa have recently been completed, so there's nothing we're presently implementing in Africa. But we're also quite active in terms of partnerships in the Middle East through various aspects of our organization.

We're not presently involved in Haiti, but we certainly expressed interest in becoming involved, because we feel that our organization could bring value-added. I think the one important element to highlight is that as a non-governmental organization, we're a membership organization. Our members comprise 200 plus universities, colleges, and schools across Canada. Beyond implementing technical assistance projects, beyond implementing projects for DFAIT that relate to international scholarships, we basically promote relationships between our member associations and our partners in other countries.

● (1650)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: I have one last question.

I would like to know if CIDA has ever refused to fund one of your projects, or a partnership with any given country.

[*English*]

Ms. Larissa Bezo: I think I'll defer to you, Kristina.

Ms. Kristina Wittfooth: We have had both rejected and approved projects, so it depends. Some were not so much rejected, but we have had a recent one rejected, and that was perhaps mainly because of shifting priorities within CIDA. So we try to, of course, follow CIDA's priorities, so we can then—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: Where was that project supposed to take place, Ms. Wittfooth?

[*English*]

Ms. Kristina Wittfooth: Yes, we presented to the partnership branch at CIDA, a project that involved three countries: Ghana, Ethiopia, and Mali. That was to be a five-year project, where we would help these countries with a millennium development goal and localization of the millennium development goals. We worked for 18 months with CIDA to develop the project proposal, and it was rejected.

The Chair: That's all the time. We're going to have to move it over here.

We have the combination of Mr. Abbott, Mr. Van Kesteren, and Mr. Goldring, for five minutes—and Mr. Lunney.

Hon. Jim Abbott: In response to the good question of Mr. Dewar —and I mean a good question—I just wanted to read into the record DFAIT's policy found on its website, which may be an answer:

> Canada has been a consistently strong voice for the protection of human rights and the advancement of democratic values, from our central role in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1947/1948 to our work at the United Nations today. Canada is a party to seven major international human rights conventions, as well as many others, and encourages all countries which have not made these commitments to do so.
>
> Canadians recognise that their interests are best served by a stable, rules-based international system. Countries which respect the rule of law tend to respect the rights of their citizens, are more likely to benefit from development, and are much less likely to experience crises requiring peacekeeping, emergency assistance or refugee resettlement missions.

This fundamentally works to the issue of building capacity of the nations of the world to respond in a civilized way between governments and citizens.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

That was exactly one minute and 15 seconds.

Mr. Lunney, just take note of how long that is and we'll keep passing along.

Mr. James Lunney: Thank you very much.

I have been very impressed by the Canadian model of public service international engagement that you very capably described. Is this model that you've described for us today unique, or are other nations doing the same thing? Are there other models, and how does our model compare with what other nations are doing?

Ms. Kristina Wittfooth: I think Ms. Bezo is the right person here, because a significant comparative analysis has been done under this project.

Ms. Larissa Bezo: Absolutely.

Here I think there are both unique and common elements. If one were to do a comparative analysis of different governments' and different donors' approaches to providing this kind of input and partnership, I think one could categorize them into two groups, one being those who have clear programming priorities and their own programming framework, who tend to come into countries, albeit attempting to be responsive, but with their own ideas and their own supply-side organizations who are willing to come in and provide input. In the Ukrainian case, our observation experience has been that they tend to be less effective, in that they're simply not connected to the demands or the needs that exist in a given jurisdiction.

The reverse side, which we highlighted in our presentation, is really the demand side of the equation, where there is an articulated need. I think what's most significant about those donors, about the governments that are providing those kinds of inputs, is in fact how they go about assessing that demand or that need. Is it a genuine need? It's certainly not sufficient to simply have a government official tell you, “Well, this is a priority. We'd like you to come.” So common among those kinds of donors is a fairly rigorous process for assessing the need that exists in a jurisdiction, which I think is very important.

It is worth highlighting that when we look at what the beneficiary partner brings to a potential future relationship, it's interesting to see not only the kinds of verbal or perhaps initial written signals they send, but the kind of commitment they bring to the partnership they're seeking. You have cases, for instance, in which beneficiaries will come forward and insist on providing either financial or in-kind contributions to the partnership, and this is very significant. In the case of our particular project, our Ukrainian beneficiary insisted, in an MOU that was signed with our government, that they provide, albeit unsolicited, a minimum of 20 percent in-kind or financial contribution to the initiative. Twenty percent of a $5-million project is a very significant commitment on the part of a beneficiary. The secondment of staff, as I mentioned, in our particular model is very significant.

So there are elements such as those that point to the kind of commitment you would see, and the effectiveness of the kinds of partnerships that can be generated.

● (1655)

The Chair: Just before Mr. Goldring has a very short question, you mentioned there's been some work done, research. Are there any reports or things you could provide the committee that might be helpful?

Ms. Larissa Bezo: Certainly we could provide some of the international assessments that have been done. We would be more than happy to do so.

The Chair: That would be great. Thank you very much.

I just want to get a feel here. Dr. Patry, you're going to have a final question?

Mr. Dewar, did you have any other comments?

Mr. Paul Dewar: No.

The Chair: Okay, so we'll just finish with Mr. Goldring, go to Dr. Patry, and then we'll wrap up.

Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring: With regard to these reports—which was the question I was going to ask, Mr. Chairman—

The Chair: Okay, you're done.

Mr. Peter Goldring: No, I'm not quite finished yet. I'd like to have an understanding of the methodology. How is this report from the Public Service Commission done? Understandably, there would be sensitivities regarding the reporting and your contract and the expectations and whether you were seen to be responsible for convincing the politicals to follow along with the course of action you're suggesting. The reporting I'm seeing here in my mind is not very clear, and it certainly isn't specific. I would think the political would be very specific.

In your report, do you have a chance to be very critical, very directive on what assistance you need, very plain on what you feel you need to help you with the programs you're doing now? It certainly would be beneficial for us to understand, if it were very clearly laid out, what would help. And who is the reporting to?

Ms. Kristina Wittfooth: I will answer the first part of the question, the Canadian part, as to our responsibility and accountability to the donor, in our case to CIDA. I will let Mrs. Bezo answer on what is reported and how the Ukrainian partner needs to respond to the findings.

We have regular reporting requirements in our contract with CIDA. We report annually through an annual report and we have a biannual report. So there two big narrative reports per year, and then we have quarterly financial reports to CIDA. That is the rigour of our own reporting to the donor.

In these reports, we clearly indicate if there are variances or changes, and why. So we analyze changes to the project implementation plan, if changes have happened. But as that reporting is sometimes too slow, we also keep in very close communication with our donor partner, in our case CIDA, to keep them informed and to seek their advice—and even changes from them, if we see a problem and something that needs to be addressed.

In terms of the project's responsiveness, we have found very good cooperation with CIDA that way. If there are changes that need to be made, we have been able to work them out with CIDA.

And then when it comes to the Ukrainian part, Larissa....

● (1700)

Ms. Larissa Bezo: Of course there is also the accountability on the Ukrainian side, given the government's commitment to these kinds of partnerships. Typically, in most jurisdictions you would have a government department or minister responsible for coordinating these kinds of input. In the Ukrainian context, we have a quarterly report that we jointly produce with the beneficiary for the responsible ministry.

The other aspect of the monitoring and reporting worth highlighting is the third-party evaluations that tend to happen under these kinds of projects. These are either at the mid-term point of project implementation, or at the close of a project the funder, typically CIDA, would engage a third-party evaluator to assess the achieved versus expected results. And typically in the CIDA context you would also see evaluations being done of the entire country programming framework to see how results are being rolled out.

One of the points worth highlighting here is that in an ideal scenario, what you'd really love to see is a repository where you could bring together all of the lessons learned and all of the recommendations, either in a particular country of focus or in a sector, and roll them up so they can be shared, because these lessons tend to be quite siloed within an organization and the funder. I think we would all benefit from this broader dialogue.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

You guys are pretty good, so we get to the last guy.

Dr. Patry, we're going to finish off with you, sir.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Patry: Very good, thank you very much.

[*English*]

I'll try to be as good.

Madame Bezo, you said that you're working in Ukraine with some partners and the World Bank. Are all of those partners just financial partners, or do you have some other NGO partners working with you in Ukraine?

Ms. Larissa Bezo: Given that this particular project is focused on civil service reform, we collaborate with other donors. So we have the Danish government working there and the Irish government, the European Union, and Canada, all covering aspects of and collaborating around civil service reform. The World Bank is also involved, but more in terms of providing institutional funding to our beneficiary. So those would be the key players.

Mr. Bernard Patry: But my question is are the key players just financial ones, or do you have people working for you on the ground? Do you have people there, let's say, from the Danish government? Do you have NGOs from the Danish government working with you?

Ms. Larissa Bezo: In those particular cases working with the others, say the Danish government or the Irish government, it tends to be public servants who come, but not NGOs explicitly.

Mr. Bernard Patry: It's public servants who come to work with you.

Ms. Larissa Bezo: Correct.

Mr. Bernard Patry: Okay.

In response to a previous question from one of my colleagues, you said you're involved in the Middle East. Which country are you involved in there, and what's your mandate in the Middle East?

Ms. Kristina Wittfooth: We have had scholarship and exchange programs with Kuwait and Oman, and have a big scholarship program with Libya currently. In the past we also had a CIDA-funded project with Lebanon. So there has been a long history of involvement with different countries there.

But the biggest so far has been a long-running Libyan scholarship program, particularly with medical students to Canada. And now CBIE is managing a U.S.-Canada scholarship program for the Libyan government. It's the biggest program in the Middle East that CBIE now has.

Mr. Bernard Patry: Has that program finished in Libya?

Ms. Kristina Wittfooth: No, it actually started a year ago and is ongoing. It has just now been completely put in place. So no, it's a new program.

Mr. Bernard Patry: Who supervises your work when you're funded by CIDA? Is it CIDA itself that supervises your work?

● (1705)

Ms. Kristina Wittfooth: Yes, we report to CIDA, which supervises the work. So we report to and are accountable to CIDA, both for finances and actual activities. We also have a steering committee where both partners are in place, with Ukrainian government representing Ukraine. So we have a steering committee for the projects, where both the beneficiary partner and the Canadian government are represented.

The Chair: Thank you very much to our witnesses for taking the time to be here today. I apologize for being late, but it was great to hear some of the feedback.

Mr. Dewar.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I do have a quick agenda item, but before our guests go, I just want to mention how impressed I was with some of the young people I met today at lunch. I was invited to speak to some of the students who are here from other countries and from the program you're helping to run. It was absolutely fantastic and very impressive. I understand that the competition is extreme and that the candidates we have here in Canada are the best of the best. The diversity of candidates, in terms of their discipline and also where they come from, is exceptional. So it's work well done.

Ms. Larissa Bezo: Thank you.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Now for the agenda item: the estimates are here. It's exciting, isn't it? I'm excited.

On that note, it's a tradition or practice that we have the ministers here to go over the estimates. So I thought we could bring that up with our clerk to see if we could invite Ministers Oda and Cannon to committee with regard to the estimates.

The Chair: We'll have the clerk call their offices and get some dates and times for us. How's that sound?

Mr. Paul Dewar: Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Madame Deschamps.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: I simply have a comment, Mr. Chairman. Who decided that today, the work of the committee would end at 5 o'clock, as it says on our notice of meeting? I would have liked us to set aside a half hour to discuss future business or motions because there is a backlog. That would have been useful. There are topics that greatly merit our attention.

[*English*]

The Chair: We're going to have a subcommittee meeting in the first week back.

We have a vote, and the bells are in five minutes anyway. So it was a short meeting today. We'll have that subcommittee meeting as soon as we get back.

The meeting is adjourned.

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