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# Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade

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**Thursday, April 7, 2005**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Bernard Patry**

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## Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade

Thursday, April 7, 2005

•(1010)

[Translation]

**The Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.)):** This is our 32nd sitting and it has to do with business of the committee. I shall report to the committee members.

[English]

This morning we had a steering committee meeting and we agreed on many of the issues. First of all, I'm going to let you know the motions we passed.

First, there were some requests to meet the committee members; we have seven requests. There's one motion to meet the chair of the foreign affairs committee from the Bundestag in Germany, who's coming to visit us in the month of May. He would like to have a session with us. The steering committee decided—if you agree—to have a working lunch on May 19. Are we all agreed on this?

**Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.):** It's Volker Rühle, the former defence minister, not to be confused with Paul Volcker.

**The Chair:** Do we agree on this? It's a working lunch.

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** After that, the second one was from Jordan. The Right Honourable Monsieur Zeid Al Rifai is the Speaker of the House over there and is a former prime minister; he's coming with three people. He would like to discuss Muslim relations, and we agreed to have, if possible, a working lunch on April 19.

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Now, Dr. Abdul Hamid Pawanteh, President of the Malaysian Senate, is here next week, and we agreed to have a working lunch on April 13.

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Now, the Minister of Defence of Albania is coming also, Mr. Pandeli Majko. Because he is the Minister of Defence, we said we could have a working lunch but not just with the members of the foreign affairs committee. There could be also some colleagues from the defence committee, the OSCE association, and the Canada-NATO association also. We'll try to find some four or five parliamentarians who will agree to attend the working lunch on April 14.

Among the next three there is Dr. Julian Lob-Levyt from the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations. We all agreed to refer this to our subcommittee on human rights.

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Next we have Bishop Daniel Bohan et al., from KAIROS. It's an association of churches in Mexico, and it's concerning international trade in Mexico with NAFTA and things like this, and we decided to transfer it to the Subcommittee on International Trade.

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** The last one is Mr. Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch, which is also to be referred to the subcommittee.

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Ms. Beth Phinney (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, are all these meetings extra meetings?

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, I didn't catch your question.

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** We have ten meetings left if we talk about April and May, so is this during our regular meetings?

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC):** No, those are all working lunches.

**The Chair:** These are working lunches or subcommittee meetings, because I didn't want to meet these people coming from another country in our slot on Tuesday or Thursday morning. We'll get the international policy review and at that time we're going to go. That's why we're going to discuss it after, but this is extra for lunch.

If you can come, you come; if you cannot come, you just don't come, that's it. But we'll get three or four members, because we cannot say no to these requests—

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** I just wanted to check. If we can't say no, we shouldn't be talking about it; we should just do it.

**The Chair:** I explained also, concerning the IPR, we need to prepare ourselves even if we don't know the date yet. It's not going to be next week but the following week.

I'll read you the motion. It was moved by Mr. Sorenson that the clerk and the researcher plan a trip and budget for travel to New York City and Washington to support committee studies on policy statements and bilateral relations. We need to prepare the trip. That trip will probably be scheduled for the last few days of May and the first few days of June.

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Vaughan, Lib.):** Those are two good places.

**The Chair:** That's a good place to start.

I explained that according to the liaison committee, there is no more money for travelling within the country. There is money for hearing witnesses in Ottawa and for travelling outside the country.

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua:** Isn't that something?

**The Chair:** We will get a budget just for next September.

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** We can't travel in Canada.

**The Chair:** We can travel outside the country, but not in Canada.

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua:** That makes sense.

**The Chair:** What can you do?

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** It costs more money.

**The Chair:** Mr. Schmitz just told me you have received from our researcher the planning draft concerning the travel to New York and Washington.

• (1015)

**Mr. Gerry Schmitz (Committee Researcher):** The whole rationale is laid out there.

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

**The Chair:** We have another motion concerning the e-consultations. It was adopted on division because Mr. Sorenson didn't agree with it. The motion is that the clerk and the researcher prepare a plan and budget for the approval of the committee for e-consultations in support of the committee's study of the international policy review and government statement.

Dan, you can speak to it.

**Hon. Dan McTeague:** I'd like to give it a try. I have some concerns that I and Mr. Sorenson raised last time.

I can't speak for the committee. I think other members will speak for themselves.

I'm concerned about the number of people who may be coming in to simply jam the committee. There's no opportunity for us to have the resources to review these things adequately. There are other means, obviously, such as writing to members of Parliament, the traditional means, and ways to check whether they're in fact Canadian citizens.

I'm still willing to give this thing a shot, but I do want a very tight review on this. If six months from now we realize it is a complete and utter disaster or basically a receptacle for those who are going to continue to blog their way through, then I think we have to be honest about how this is going to work.

There are some things we can't do. We can't travel. We can't possibly go out and get far-reaching opinions. So this may serve as a temporary stopgap measure. I'm willing to see how it works first and then see where it goes from there.

I'd like Marcus to come in on this.

**Mr. Marcus Pistor (Committee Researcher):** We prepared this document following the last meeting, where some of these concerns were raised.

One thing I want to point out is that a key decision you have to make is when this will be open and for how long. My sense is this should probably not be open for more than a couple of months.

You advertise ahead of time. You try to do it in a period when you would get the broadest possible cross-section of opinions. So, for example, if we're interested in getting university students and high school students in there, September and early October would be the core period to have it open, provided the statement comes out soon.

Following that, we would prepare a summary report in which we would look at what kinds of responses we got and whether there were problems with the responses and so forth. So there are some criteria we can use to evaluate the quality of the information received.

But you'll also notice that we've proposed a structure for a very basic model that does not allow long, open-ended commentary. There are no attachments and no e-mails.

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** How do you stop it?

Go on with what you were going to say, and I'll wait until you finish.

**Mr. Marcus Pistor:** The experience we have had with e-consultation here in the House of Commons and the Senate suggests that for this kind of e-consultation, depending on how widely it is advertised, how it is structured, and how many required questions there are for respondents to answer, for a two-month run you're looking at between 500 and several thousand responses. If it's widely advertised and a lot of people are very keen, you may get a few thousand responses.

By requiring people to enter information about where they're from, how old they are, etc., and by requiring them to answer a certain number of questions, you weed out a lot of bogus responses. You will not be able to determine for certain where these responses come from. It's always possible that people will abuse the system. But our experience is that it doesn't really happen that often.

This is not a scientific survey, so it doesn't have the same weight. It's an opportunity for Canadians to participate in a structured forum, answering specific questions on the aspects of international policy review.

**Mr. Gerry Schmitz:** I just want to add, and again underline, that it does not replace anything else. In fact, certainly the committee's public hearings and the formal submissions to the committee will clearly have more weight. Those are still the main elements of any study.

**The Chair:** I'll finish with Ms. Phinney and Madam McDonough and Mr. Sorenson.

Ms. Phinney.

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** You might get more questions than that. You said "I'll finish with..."

**The Chair:** Finish your questions, not finish the....

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** Okay.

**The Chair:** You started. That's why I want you to keep going.

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** I have a couple of questions. You say "our experiences". Who's doing it already?

•(1020)

**Mr. Marcus Pistor:** The Senate Subcommittee on Persons With Disabilities did the first pilot project a couple of years ago. The Senate committee that's currently studying mental health care in Canada has done two phases. They've completed one and they're doing the second phase of e-consultation that has opened already, I think. That's the Hill experience. Then on the government side, the Department of Foreign Affairs is doing an ongoing series of e-consultations on various aspects of Canadian foreign policy and trade right now.

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** If you get 400 letters this week, are you two doing the answering?

**Mr. Marcus Pistor:** It's not letters.

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** Comments on the e-mail—are you not going to respond?

**Mr. Marcus Pistor:** The way it is structured, and it is made clear to respondents—

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** You said letters, but you're just having comments coming in.

**Mr. Marcus Pistor:** If you look at the appendix—

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** We didn't get a chance to see this until we came in today, did we? Has it been mailed?

**Mr. Marcus Pistor:** It was circulated.

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** Okay, never mind, go ahead.

**Mr. Marcus Pistor:** There are two types of questions. There are questions that are like a standard survey, where you check a box. So that's very easy to analyze. We do not post these on the website. The responses are not posted. There's one summary report. That's the basic model. That's the simplest that one can do. There's a summary of the information, the input received from respondents. Then there are questions to which people can write down something, but we limit the amount of space.

There's software. We've just this week had a training session in the library that allows us to categorize and analyze the qualitative, the written parts. Then obviously it's very easy to do the quantitative side, the statistics. So it's not that hard to put together a good summary report that also gives you an idea of where people say they're coming from in the country and so forth.

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** We'll know where they're coming from, but will we know their age, will we know what their occupation is? Do we know the political affiliations?

**Mr. Marcus Pistor:** We can ask them that. If you look at the beginning of the survey—

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** If you want to say something, okay, but don't sit there and make faces and comment on everything we're saying, unless you're going to make a comment about it.

**Mr. Marcus Pistor:** On page ii, under "General Information", these are just some sample questions that people have to complete. This is one way of discouraging people from abusing the system, but it also allows us.... If we get 3,000 responses that are identical across the board, say the Grassroots Party of Canada decides to ask all its members to write in the same response, it's very easy to determine, as they're all identical.

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** Almost identical, and you're not going to recognize it. It could be the Liberal Party of Canada saying it would like all the members to reply, but to reply separately.

**Mr. Marcus Pistor:** But that's the same thing—

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** Why not?

**Mr. Marcus Pistor:** —if you get written letters or cards or...

**The Chair:** It could be done, I agree, it could be done, but by experience it was never done. It's not a foreign affairs issue. It's not an issue like same-sex marriage or abortion or any other matter. If people want to put an answer, they're going to put the answer, but experience just shows that they don't do this. We did a consultation last year when Mr. Graham was the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and there were none at all coming from outside the country, and it was open. We want to reach people—students, university amanuenses, people in political science—to try to get their input. We need to realize, we're not going to travel in Canada. If this is coming out by next week, ten days from now, we're not going to—

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** If the party decided we're going to do it, why are we discussing it? You're making it sound like my questions are not legitimate.

**The Chair:** No, no.

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** I have legitimate concerns about this.

**The Chair:** I'm trying to give you—

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** Alexa is very concerned about certain things that we don't seem to pay much attention to on the committee, as you well know.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, but we all pay attention to every member.

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** Let me say what I want to say, Bernard.

**The Chair:** But you said we don't pay attention.

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** Don't be on the defensive.

**The Chair:** You said we don't pay attention to Alexa.

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** No, that's not what I'm saying. It's that we don't have the same opinions as she does. She has a lot of amendments. We defeat them all. I'm just saying this, and so with the Bloc. You don't tell me that Alexa is not going to go back and suggest that her party support this and this and this on here, or that I go back because I have opinions.

**The Chair:** No, no.

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** You make it loaded on one side. You make it sound like that can't happen. Sure it can happen. The Conservatives can decide, look, this is an important issue to us; we're going to tell every single association in Canada to get all their members to answer it. It can happen. I don't see why—

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson:** It does happen.

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** Yes. I don't see why this is such a weird thing I'm bringing up.

**Mr. Marcus Pistor:** No, it's just that you can receive—

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** The chair and the researchers are sitting there making faces at me.

**Mr. Marcus Pistor:** You can receive thousands of e-mails on an issue, and you do. We've had that experience.

The idea of what I just tried to do is that when you structure a survey—and this is the general experience that we have in doing public opinion surveys as well—the more structured it is, the more required questions there are.... If you just put a question there, tell us what you think about the review, and you open a window or you can attach something, you're going to get a lot of abuse. But the more structure there is, the more required questions there are, the less that happens.

•(1025)

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** So will we see this structure paper before you—

**Mr. Marcus Pistor:** Absolutely. You approved that. The chair had asked me after the last meeting, when you raised concerns and Mr. Sorensen and others raised concerns, to write up something that addresses these concerns. That's all this is.

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** And we'll see what you're going to put on the computer, on the Internet?

**Mr. Marcus Pistor:** Absolutely. Nothing goes on there without approval—

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** You didn't tell us that before, Bernard, so don't say yes, like it's a stupid question.

**Mr. Marcus Pistor:** This is what it says—

**The Chair:** Sorry, I said prepare a plan and a budget for the approval of the committee. I didn't say we're going to go through. In the beginning, when I read this, I picked a plan for an approval.

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** I'm not necessarily against it, Bernard. I have some questions, so why can't I ask them, that's the—

**The Chair:** But it's not—

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** I'm not stupid. I've been here 17 years.

**The Chair:** I would like him to prepare something and get back to the committee, get all the questions we just received—

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** And where did we have written here, until he said it just now, that we would get approval in the committee of what is going to go on the Internet?

**The Chair:** It's in the introduction.

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** All right, but I didn't see the introduction before today.

**Mr. Marcus Pistor:** A complete draft questionnaire will be submitted to the committee for consideration. And it should say if it decides to proceed—

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** In the format of the page that's going on the Internet?

**Mr. Marcus Pistor:** Everything. You decide what you want on there. You decide how long it runs.

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** I'm sorry I used up the committee's time. If I'm not allowed to speak, I'll just transfer to another committee if that's the way you feel.

**The Chair:** You don't need to be sorry.

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** I have two people up here making a fuss every time I open my mouth.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mrs. McDonough.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** I think this is an important discussion and one that is absolutely in order. I think it's a discussion that's very much in order and utterly appropriate in terms of how we decide to proceed. I think there are a couple of points that are important for us to keep in mind. As a committee, our role is to hear the views of Canadians, bring our own judgment to bear, and make recommendations to the government. That's our main role here. So what we're doing is exploring what are the various research methodologies, the various research means or instruments whereby we elicit information.

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** And they argue against it.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** I think the case could be made that the most selective form of input is what we generally do, which is that we invite high-placed officials, politicians, CEOs, academics, to make input, which is a fairly selective process.

I think what we're seeing is the potential in using the new modern communications technology to have a much more broad-based, scatergun approach, which invites this input more broadly from.... Think of all the people who can't appear before this committee or who we don't ever talk to because we're restricted in time, in terms of how much travel we do. We're restricted in cost in terms of how much travel we do. We now are in this new electoral situation where because of the minority government, we're not as free to travel.

I think what we're trying to do is get the best possible advice on how to use this research instrument to get a broad-based input—

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** And go ahead without thinking.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** So of course the actual questionnaire will come back before the committee before we proceed.

However, there is one other thing I want to bring back from our earlier brief discussion. One of the things I think we need to keep in mind is that there are incredible amounts of experience and expertise across the country. It is hard to get at it, but we need to find the ways as much as possible. I agree with Ms. Phinney that we have to recognize that this can be a highly selective means as well.

I would like to propose specifically that we invite representatives from the Canadian Association for Studies in International Development to meet with us in a brief discussion around how to get at some of that expertise that may go far beyond just an e-research effort.

I would like to make that proposal, because I think there is an incredible expertise out there across the country, in the fastest-growing area of post-secondary education study in the country, that we should avail ourselves of by having a brief meeting. Maybe not everybody is interested in this question, but we should at least have a meeting with our research staff and those on the committee who are interested, to try to come up with some ways to round out the input so that it is not just, as Ms. Phinney suggests, maybe on such a random basis that you don't know what you're getting.

There is one other very specific minor thing I want to raise, and I know we haven't refined yet this instrument. I'm a bit concerned—I understand, I think, where the question is coming from—that page 2 of the appendix states, under general information, that these questions would be required for people to complete, and one of the lines of questioning is: what is your nationality? Are you a Canadian, a landed immigrant, or “Other (specify)”?

I think if we are going to ask that question, there are two things needed. One is that it needs to be optional whether people answer it or not, because one shouldn't have their views screened out or assessed only on the basis of their nationality or whether they're a landed immigrant or not. Secondly, if we are going to ask that question—I think it is perfectly in order, but it needs to be optional—it needs to be explained why that's of interest to the committee in terms of what we're trying to find. Otherwise I think there can be both a human rights consideration and just an offensiveness about it that might be resented by some.

• (1030)

**The Chair:** That is a good point. I will ask Marcus to deal with that.

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** I don't agree with that, because I think we need to know whether some American group has decided they're going to fill our group up. We're not going to know it, unless we.... Maybe it should not include “landed immigrant”, but “other”, I think, has to be on there.

**Mr. Marcus Pistor:** People can of course put in their answer whichever way they want, regardless of who they actually are, but generally with these kinds of surveys you discourage abuse by asking people this information. You reduce the number of bogus replies; that is what you do.

The other way this is important is that it allows the researchers to assess the representativeness of the sample. If we get 5,000 responses, and 4,000 of them are from northern British Columbia—all male, all between 20 and 25 years old—then obviously this is not going to give us the cross-cutting sample.

Again, we can't be 100% sure. As with any phone survey—people can lie on the phone—it doesn't give us a scientific sample, but it gives us the ability to assess it, whatever the questions and however they're phrased. This is just a suggestion. So we'll go through this.

What I also wanted to point out is that once we've prepared a model website and the specific questionnaire, it will go to committee for approval. Then you'll have to decide when it should open, how long it should run for, how it should be communicated to the public, and the specific parts of the public this is available to.

The next step is—we will monitor the system on an ongoing basis—once it is done we'll prepare a summary report that again is approved by the committee before it is released to the public. So at every step it is up to the committee to decide what it wants to do with this and what kind of message it wants to send out.

**The Chair:** Mr. Sorenson.

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson:** What do you do with the database of names of people who have called?

**Mr. Marcus Pistor:** There are no names. This would be anonymous. The proposal is not to require registration. You can

require registration, with name and whatever, but once you ask for names you get into issues of confidentiality and privacy. This is an anonymous survey that asks certain demographic information in order for us to be able to assess the representativeness of the group of people who have responded for the whole of the country. This is something the committee may want to put in there or not, but it is anonymous. This is one of the big differences from getting a letter from your constituents that has a return address.

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson:** That's exactly my point.

**Mr. Marcus Pistor:** It's up to you to decide whether you want them on there.

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson:** That's exactly my point. If you don't have their name, you don't know who's writing. It's not just which country are you in, but it's an anonymous letter. Papers don't even take letters to the editor that are anonymous. Now we're going to take consultations from around the world without names on them.

If we ask for names, then all of a sudden this information, exactly as you suggest, becomes open to privacy questions, perhaps. It becomes open to disclosure questions, such as who will have access to the database? Will the Conservative Party and the NDP party be able to somehow get it? Who knows? Will the government get access to the—

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua:** Who cares?

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson:** Who knows? Who cares?

**Mr. Marcus Pistor:** Again, like with any other survey, what normally happens is that the survey itself gets a number, and that information is separated in terms of access to information. The name of the person isn't actually entered in the database; it's a number—it's first respondent, second respondent, up to 3,596. That is never entered in the actual database from which we do our analysis. That's the standard practice. At that point, you do not at any point have the opportunity to find out what John Doe from Vancouver said.

• (1035)

**Ms. Belinda Stronach (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC):** But if the committee determines in our collective wisdom that we want names, you'll have a sign-off process in place to allow you to make it happen.

**Mr. Marcus Pistor:** If that's what you want, yes.

**Ms. Belinda Stronach:** Maybe that's something that—

**The Chair:** It would require registration, yes.

**Mr. Marcus Pistor:** That would reduce again the number of respondents, yes.

**Ms. Belinda Stronach:** My concerns would be, first of all—and you have indicated that this would be the case—that we would have sign-off on the site and on the questionnaire. What you're seeking today are our concerns so you can incorporate those into the questionnaire—

**Mr. Marcus Pistor:** Yes.

**Ms. Belinda Stronach:** —and also—I'm not a computer techie, so pardon my language on this—that the structure, the architecture is right, so you can also—what is it—place cookies into the site so you can limit one response every 24 hours from one Internet site to another Internet site. Structurally you can put barriers in there as well.

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson:** Blockers or whatever.

**Ms. Belinda Stronach:** Perhaps that's something you can identify to address our concerns. And the survey would be non-binding on the committee as well. It would be used as a piece of information, as guidance, when we're making our overall decision at the end of the day.

In principle, I'm for openness, transparency, and soliciting a wide range of opinions, provided that it can be structured correctly, those structural issues can be dealt with, and we have sign-off.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Bevilacqua.

[*English*]

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua:** First of all, I think that as parliamentarians we have to be very open to the new worlds. We have to use technology. Perhaps, yes, we can review your proposal, but I think the fact that we have to start using the Internet as a way to reach out shouldn't be a point of debate. That's just the way life is lived today. I think that governments and institutions need to catch up in many ways. I just think you need to work on a structure.

I don't understand this privacy concern, and I'll tell you why. If somebody appears in front of this committee, places a brief, attends, and speaks on that issue, that's all public. Right? So I'm not following the privacy concern when it's over the Internet. You have to look at the Internet as the way you would view any other presentation.

Why wouldn't people want to put their names on it?

**The Chair:** That's why we have committees. Mr. Sorenson pinpointed this. He would like to have the names on them. This way one person—

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua:** If you don't want to put your name on it, I mean, if you can't stand behind what you say, then who cares?

**Mr. Marcus Pistor:** The concern comes in when you ask people to enter personal information, not just their opinion.

**Ms. Belinda Stronach:** They have a choice to do that, and you can offer them the clearance—

**Mr. Marcus Pistor:** If you ask them to register—yes.

**Ms. Belinda Stronach:** You can decide whether you want to proceed or not based on—you can sign a waiver and sign-off.

**Mr. Marcus Pistor:** As long as we provide a mechanism whereby the name is public, but not the information that states, say, "My first language is x", or whatever. That is personal information. That's where the privacy concern is, not their opinions on the IPR. That's so widely used.

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua:** I figure if I give my name, you'll find out who I am pretty quickly. Right?

**Mr. Marcus Pistor:** In your case, probably. You're an MP, so yes.

**Ms. Belinda Stronach:** If it's something on the Internet, you have to check that box—

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** But most of us throw out the letters that come into our office unsigned. We throw them out, because if they're not going to sign them—

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua:** Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** Yes, go ahead, you have the floor.

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua:** Just on a couple of other things, we know the review of this paper is going to come out eventually. I know we've been waiting for a while. But I think, if I may suggest this, a letter from you should go out to all the people we more or less know are going to participate in this review as a proactive measure to say we're awaiting the review and we would really like to hear from them. You probably could send out thousands of letters.

I bring to you from past experience I've had with the finance committee that to broaden the consultation we actually asked members of Parliament—because this is a very important issue, this is about Canada's place in the world—to have town hall meetings and round tables and to have those things fed into it.

So I don't know if those....

**The Chair:** That's going to be done.

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua:** Is it going to be done?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua:** Good.

• (1040)

**The Chair:** Monsieur Paquette.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** I should like to repeat before the main committee that in our opinion this is an essential tool. There might be some technical details. Consultation on-line has been one of our major debates since last September. I think that we could allow unanimity even though in my opinion only a very slim minority would like to remain anonymous. Most people will want to be identified with their ideas. There might be a few persons, for example refugees, who, for various reasons would like to remain anonymous. But it would only be a minority. I find we emphasize a lot an issue which will affect a very small number of people. The same thing happens with questionnaires which will provide either a spurious answer or one given by organized lobbies. The research team will sort it out. These are not electronic messages; it is simply a matter to answer a questionnaire on a website. The research team will be able to get rid of non-constructive information or not leading to our thoughtful consideration.

If someone sends me a questionnaire without any identification, it carries much less credibility for me than if the person is able to identify herself. I think that our research team is able to make the necessary distinctions.

We have spent a lot of time discussing this matter and, unless there are very particular aspects, for example if Mr. Sorenson is absolutely determined that the people identify themselves... I'm not opposed to that, but we should not lose the opportunity of on-line consultation even if it is not to replace our more traditional forms of consultation. We have agreed on that.

**The Chair:** Mr. Boudria.



**Hon. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.):** Mr. Chairman, I think that regarding this issue, the committee should take a look at procedure. If it is a poll you're taking, it is anonymous of course. However, we are not asking people to give testimony on-line without identifying themselves. As far as I'm concerned, it would be ludicrous. When someone appears before a committee, he identifies himself. Our sittings are televised so everyone can be identified. All of a sudden, we want to receive electronic presentations while protecting to anonymity of the witnesses. This process seems to me to be totally against good parliamentary procedure.

That is the comment I wanted to make. I have been here for a long time, and I think that this is the way things should be done.

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** If that is the case, I see no problem.

[English]

**The Chair:** Okay. Can we agree that if we're going to have people, they should put their names on?

**Ms. Belinda Stronach:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Fine, I agree.

Can I ask the question?

What I was asking is that we prepare a plan, and the plan will have the names. Then we're going to review the plan and the budget for approval. That's all I was asking this morning.

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson:** What's the budget?

**The Chair:** We're going to prepare a budget. It will probably be under \$40,000.

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson:** It was \$35,000 a month ago.

**Mr. Marcus Pistor:** All of you will have to see the plan, and then you can make your final decision once we've presented you with a budget and more concrete models.

**The Chair:** Okay, now I'll read it back. The motion is that the clerk and researcher prepare a plan and budget for the approval of the committee for e-consultation in support of the committee's studies of the government's international policies. That's the question.

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Okay, fine.

I have two more motions.

It was agreed by the standing committee that pursuant to Standing Order 81(7) the committee hear the minister responsible for foreign affairs and international trade and the Canadian International Development Agency on the main estimates for the fiscal year 2005-06.

Madame McDonough.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** From our earlier in camera meeting, I think there was consensus that this was an absolute priority.

But in addition to the reference to the budget estimates, I had also urged—and I think it's only fair to the minister—that we give notice that we also want to hear from him on the Kazemi case. People are

really very concerned about the current status of this, given the revelations about details surrounding her murder. It's very much in order that we assign it the urgent priority it deserves and extend to the minister the courtesy of indicating it is also on the agenda.

In that regard, I think there was agreement that we use the whole two hours, that we allocate a significant time to the estimates but also sufficient time to really raise questions about the government's actions on the Kazemi case since the November reports from Dr. Azam were placed in the government's hands.

**The Chair:** Mrs. McDonough, with respect to when the Minister of Foreign Affairs will appear, I think he's available next week. It's not in cement because we haven't asked him yet, but I think he was ready to come next week.

Within this you could have questions on the Kazemi case, because it's within the budget. You could ask him, like Mr. Paquette said this morning, what his plan is for this sort of thing and about any other issue. I will accept questions concerning the Kazemi case on the main estimates. That's what I really feel. I could accept a question on this, yes.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** If I can, I'll just say I don't think it's just procedurally whether questions are allowed. I would again state the case that what we would like to do is give the minister a heads-up that—

• (1045)

**The Chair:** Yes, his PS is here.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** —we want him to come to the meeting prepared to explain to us both what has been done since November, when this shocking information came forward from Dr. Azam, and what the plan is now for follow-up.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Mr. Paquette.

**Mr. Pierre Paquette:** If I understood correctly, when we consider the estimates, we could deal with other questions. We will certainly want to question the minister on the follow-up of the motion passed by the House expressing its refusal to split Foreign Affairs and International Trade into two separate departments.

**The Chair:** That's all right, we will raise this question at the same time we review the policy.

**Hon. Dan McTeague:** This is why we suggested we spent two hours on that. This way we will have plenty of time to deal with these matters. I hope that these discussions will be not only significant but very relevant.

[English]

**The Chair:** Do you agree?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Now, another motion I forgot is the operational budget request. As I mentioned, there's no money for travelling, but I need to request some money to have witnesses to appear in front of the committee when we start the IPR. I will request to have, according to the budget prepared by our clerk, \$39,758; that's for witnesses and miscellaneous. There are roughly 29 witnesses, and we always use an average of \$1,200 when we go to the liaison committee, because if they're coming from Toronto it could cost \$1,000, from Vancouver \$4,000, and from Montreal \$200. It all depends, but it's an average of \$1,200.

I would like to get approval so I can go in front of the liaison committee to request that budget for the clerk.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Does that budget projection include the e-consultations, or is that a separate item?

**The Chair:** It's separate.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** And we'll deal with that budget when you come back with the more detailed accounting.

**The Chair:** There's no budget for e-consultation for the moment. This budget is just for the witnesses in Ottawa.

Agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Now, Ms. McDonough, you have a motion on Ethiopia. We could discuss it. We still have another ten minutes, no problem.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** I'm just trying to think of the most constructive, best-informed way to deal with this. I haven't really had a chance to consult with people because both of the foreign affairs critics for the other two opposition parties who were here for the presentation of Lloyd Axworthy are not here today. I think the point of this exercise, absolutely, is for us to take under serious advisement the kind of information he shared with us and some of the suggestions he had to make. I have worked on drafting some suggested amendments to this motion that would faithfully attempt to take under advisement his recommendations.

The point of having him appear was for us to be better informed and suggest even more specifically and concretely what kinds of actions we would want to recommend, so I'm wondering if we might delay that until—

**The Chair:** I just want to point out something. I know you hate technical...but we need to be technical according to the rules.

You have a motion in front of us. This motion cannot be amended by you.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Right. I understand that.

**The Chair:** It just cannot be amended. That's the rule.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Right.

**The Chair:** This means there are two things you can do. You could say "On unanimous consent I withdraw this motion" and you would draft another one. And with the 24-hour notice, at that time it will be discussed.

If you ask, let's say, your colleague, Mr. Paquette, to change this word, it's going to take hours and hours to try to discuss this or that.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Right.

**The Chair:** My suggestion.... After you met with Mr. Axworthy, we all agreed in a certain sense that this should be modified. If you withdraw it on the consent of all the members here, you could withdraw it and after that you come back with another motion. That's what I would suggest to you.

It's up to you, because you yourself cannot amend the motion, you understand.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Right.

**The Chair:** Yes?

• (1050)

**Hon. Dan McTeague:** Mr. Chair, there a number of very good things that Ms. McDonough has put in this motion. There are some things that I think the committee has to hear that might help buttress what the special envoy, Mr. Axworthy, had said.

There are two key points here, if you will bear with me for just a minute or so. I want to throw a couple of things forward in the spirit of helping this resolution, not that it is decidedly against one party or another. Certainly the most difficult part.... I can explain this in terms of what Dr. Axworthy suggested in his briefing to the Security Council just a few months ago, as well as the key points of the resolution of the Security Council. I think that will help round off or balance her motion, whether it's treated today or down the road. I am not proposing amendments, but perhaps an opportunity to come back at this at the next meeting, because I do want to see this proceed. I think Dr. Axworthy has done some excellent work here.

In terms of Axworthy's report, Ethiopia has been amassing troops along the border region, a move which they characterize as defensive but which Eritrea sees as provocative. This is obviously exacerbating the instability caused by the political stalemate.

Point number two is that both parties committed to the binding arbitration of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission in the Algiers agreement of 2000, and she talks about that here. They must therefore accept the commission's decision tabled in April 2002. That's in this motion.

The witnesses to the Algiers agreement should play a more concerted role in breaking the stalemate. That's a recommendation again by Axworthy.

That the Security Council should consider travelling to the region before summer to demonstrate its commitment to finding a solution to the conflict....

Finally—this is really significant, and we have to be fair on this—Eritrea must engage the special envoy and cooperate with him. Right now Eritrea is not doing that. Therefore, Mr. Axworthy can't even get there, and I think he made those points.

In relation to this, the Security Council resolutions suggested the following:

Further extension of the United Nations mission on Eritrea and Ethiopia mandate to September 15, 2005.

It calls on both parties to consider seriously returning troops to the levels of deployment that existed at mid-December 2004.

It calls on both parties to cooperate with the EEBC and create the conditions for demarcation, expression of concern at the worsening humanitarian situation in both countries, and calls on Eritrea to meet Dr. Axworthy.

Finally, it calls on witnesses of the Algiers agreement to play a more concerted and active role.

If some of these elements can find themselves into this resolution—Ms. McDonough has already made several important steps at recognizing this—I see no reason why we can't work with what Dr. Axworthy has suggested to us and some of his key points here to balance off the Eritrean side to accept him and of course that there be a mission there to September 15. I can't see why we couldn't pass this, certainly from our side.

**The Chair:** Okay. That's fine.

Yes, Ms. McDonough.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** That's very helpful. Let me just say I'm absolutely aware, but thank you for pointing out, that procedurally I can't amend my own motion. That's why I had begun to collaborate with the foreign affairs critics on the opposition side.

What I would suggest.... I don't want to withdraw this until we have something that we can agree upon to bring forward instead, so in the best—

**The Chair:** I just want to pinpoint, if you don't withdraw it, you cannot come back with another motion to...

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** No. We can today delay this and agree that we deal with it when we've come to an agreement.

**The Chair:** Okay. That's fine.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Because actually, without being able to respond point by point, just about everything that you've mentioned I've incorporated into some suggested amendments.

Can we agree to defer it?

**The Chair:** Sure.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** We'll collaborate and try to come to an all-party agreement.

**The Chair:** Sure.

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson:** I want to ask the parliamentary secretary this. At one point you said that we're going to sign some kind of a motion that would prompt or almost demand Eritrea to meet with Mr. Axworthy.

**Hon. Dan McTeague:** What happened is that when Lloyd Axworthy went as special envoy to the region in February, Eritrea refused to receive him on the grounds that his position constitutes an alternative peace process. What Eritrea was concerned about was that what was agreed to in 2002 would now suddenly be subject to review. The Eritreans are saying they like what happened, certainly with respect to the controversial town of Badme. They didn't want to accept him, because that would be recognition that the peace process agreed to, hammered out in 2002, would now be open to changes. For them, not to accept him was a face-saving move. Yet that the

United Nations has sent Mr. Axworthy there is, I think, certainly not to try to compromise the 2002 agreement.

Mr. Axworthy talked about this problem when he was here two weeks ago; that in terms of getting Eritrea to understand that we need to maintain the momentum that was built in 2002, we also get them to make this one very critical, important concession. If they don't, then what's happening now is that they're building up troops again and Eritrea is falling below its ability to provide food for its own.

There is, as we know, with Ethiopia another element that may have not had the benefit of discussion here. We provided sovereign debt relief to Ethiopia very recently as well. Some of the levers we can traditionally use are quickly slipping away. If we're faithful to the UN resolution in terms of asking Eritrea to at least accept Mr. Axworthy, I think this could be a very strong motion.

• (1055)

**The Chair:** Do all agree with Madam McDonough to delay?

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** In a way I'm worried about the notion of delay, because I feel an incredible sense of emergency with the amassing of those troops on both sides. So can we agree to deal with it urgently, as soon as there's an opportunity?

**The Chair:** It's still on the radar.

Is there anything else?

There was a motion, but Mr. Day is not here today, so we can't deal with that one for the moment.

Yes?

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Mr. Chairman, I have one other motion on the order paper that I'd like us to deal with briefly if we could.

**The Chair:** Go ahead. I didn't adjourn; I just hammered the gavel. There's quorum.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** The next motion up is the one set out with regard to the committee's study of Bill C-25. We've not yet voted on Bill C-25. There was a genuine concern raised about whether there are other annexes that pertain to Bill C-25. It was quite helpful that our witnesses were very direct in saying that if we wanted to pursue questions about any other annexes, then it would be necessary to invite the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada to come before the committee to address those. This is simply a motion to act on that information offered by our expert witnesses.

I would so move.

**The Chair:** I have a problem understanding this motion, in the sense that the committee, even if we ask.... The bill is no longer before the committee; it's before the House right now. You agreed with this. We passed the bill here with four amendments, and I reported to the House yesterday, according to the request of the members here.

Now you're asking to request the appearance of the Minister of Justice and the Attorney General. I don't see the purpose, after the bill is over. Is he going to come to talk to us about—what? I don't see the meaning of this.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Mr. Chairman, the bill isn't over. The bill has yet to be voted upon in the House. We are less than fully informed on this issue, because when we raised questions about other annexes, the legal counsel advised that not only was he not in a position to discuss it, but he, before the committee, recommended the other departmental officials not address this matter; that if we wanted to pursue it further we should invite the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada to come before the committee.

**The Chair:** You've moved your motion. I'm going to call a vote on the motion of Ms. McDonough:

That with regard to Committee study of Bill C-25, an Act governing the operation of remote sensing space systems, further to the motion of February 22, 2005 relating to Annex II of the June 2000 Canada-United States Agreement on the Operation of Commercial Remote Sensing Satellite Systems, the committee invite the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada to appear to address Committee concerns relating to annexes to the agreement.

(Motion negated)

**The Chair:** The meeting is adjourned.

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