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Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

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• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): This is the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, meeting number 23. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we continue our study of democratic development.

We are pleased to have with us today in this first hour Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards, executive director of CANADEM, Canada's civilian reserve. Since 1997 CIDA has approved programming worth over \$13 million to CANADEM. CANADEM receives \$500,000 annually for its roster services from Foreign Affairs. We look forward to asking questions a little later on.

We welcome you to our committee today. As a committee we have met with your counterparts in Norway. This fall we've begun this study of democratic development; certainly we are very pleased to have you representing your agency here today.

As is the proper protocol for this committee, we will give you time for an opening statement—usually approximately ten minutes—and then we will go into the first round of questioning. Usually we learn not just from the testimonials but from the questions and answers.

We look forward to your presentation.

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards (Executive Director, CANADEM (Canada's Civilian Reserve)): Thank you very much.

Thanks for inviting me to be part of your process. I think democratic development, the issue you're looking at, is a critically important issue.

As you said, I head CANADEM, which is Canada's civilian reserve. I'll try to keep my comments brief, because I agree that we'll probably get more out of the questioning.

I think one of the strengths of this committee is that you're all inherently aware of the validity of Tip O'Neill's statement that "All politics is local", and so can take that into what I would rephrase for this endeavour as "All democratic development is local".

I've been working on international human rights for 25 years with a number of international organizations. I was on staff with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, with the Commonwealth Secretariat, with Amnesty International, and with a number of other organizations.

My CANADEM perspective on effective democratic development builds upon the fundamental truth that all democratic development is local and further personalizes, in a sense, that truth. I really believe

strongly that success comes from getting the right people out there and involved, people who can make things happen, and then providing them with some resources, and then largely getting out of their way. But let me expand on two observations that are germane to my role as head of CANADEM and also, in a sense, explain a little bit of CANADEM's value-added role in all of this.

The first observation would be that the genius of any economic or social development lies with innovative individuals who populate committees like this, departments, NGOs, intergovernmental organizations, businesses, and societies. The corollary is that even though Canada can and should assist, the future of any democratic development lies with the local civil societies and governments in question.

The second observation is that the success of Canada and Canadians as mentors and facilitators of local civil societies that are forming themselves also lies in the identification of those individual Canadians who know how to make a difference, how to make things happen on the ground. That's what CANADEM is all about: harnessing the best and most effective Canadian individuals that we can identify.

CANADEM is now in its tenth year. It was initiated after a recommendation in a report to Foreign Affairs was critical of UN field operations and recommended that Canada unilaterally create its own roster of human rights experts. It took off from there.

Part of the genesis of it was a relationship with NORDEM, the Norwegian Resource Bank for Democracy and Human Rights. For a long time we used the same terminology, so the "DEM" in CANADEM is democracy, but we've rapidly moved beyond that. We've gone a slightly different route from NORDEM.

At this point in time, we work with over 200 UN agencies, missions, or divisions on the ground, as well as an equally large raft of other international organizations and NGOs internationally. We've put out over 10,000 résumés of Canadians. Over 2,500 Canadians have been shortlisted through that process, and over 2,000 have actually been engaged.

CANADEM is divided into three major divisions. The first one is the roster, which includes the rapid recruitment assistance program for the UN, which was our initial raison d'être, and that funding comes from Foreign Affairs. The roster is now just under 8,000 Canadians, and it's expanding fast.

The second major division is CANDEP, our deployment arm. We're just closing the book on four successful major deployments. One was CANPOL-Haiti 1, in which 25 police experts went down to Haiti. There was the Elections Canada international monitoring mission for Haiti; running in parallel with that was the Canada Corps deployment of election observers to be attached to that particular mission. We also assisted Elections Canada with the international mission for Iraqi elections.

There are a number of other deployments coming down the pike very quickly. They include CANPOL-Haiti 2, which will see us sending thirty police experts down to Haiti for a year this time; assistance to the Haitian Conseil Electoral Provisoire; sending monitors to Haiti, Tajikistan, Nicaragua, Congo, and other spots; further assistance to Elections Canada for its new mission, the Canadian mission for accompanying Haitian elections; border security to the West Bank and Gaza; a number of activities in Afghanistan; and it goes on.

The third division of CANADEM, which in a sense comes before those first two, is CAN-Jeunesse, which is our youth division. We see ourselves as having a major role in mentoring and employing young Canadians into their international careers. That's rapidly expanding.

There are two characteristics that enable CANADEM to be a useful tool for the international community and for the Canadian government to put Canadian civilian boots on the ground. One characteristic is that we are an independent, not-for-profit organization, which gives us greater freedom of action and allows us to turn on a dime to undertake rapid recruitment and deployment.

The other characteristic speaks to risk and liability. There's an ability and a willingness on the part of our board and our senior staff to take serious risks in moving this forward. That's another one of our advantages. These two combined have allowed us to evolve into pretty much a full-spectrum civilian reserve, from the selection of candidates, to their training and equipment, and to deploying them on the ground.

In conclusion, you're looking at best practices and how Canada can best contribute to democratic development. I would repeat very strongly that every success will have smart, effective individuals at the core of that success. Even the best-designed initiative will fail if it's staffed with incompetent individuals. Equally, even badly designed initiatives will have positive impacts if they're populated by effective individuals who can make things happen on the ground.

My two concluding points are, one, again I feel very strongly that all democratic development is local; and two, getting the right individuals is critical to success. CANADEM is a primary source of Canadian experts.

Thank you very much.

• (1540)

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

We'll go into the first round.

Mr. Patry, for five minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

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

Thank you very much, Mr. LaRose-Edwards, for being here today. When I look at your background, I can see that you have a long list of skills and that you have taken part in missions in all kinds of areas.

In your introduction, you mentioned that you had just finished a mission in Haiti where 32 police officers had been deployed. You also mentioned Afghanistan. As we have a strong presence in those two countries, my two questions will be related to them.

Just five weeks ago, I was in Haiti where I led an OIF parliamentary mission aimed at helping the new parliamentarians from the two Houses of the Haitian Parliament. One of the problems on the ground was obviously a security issue, so don't you think that, even if you have organized a mission there, there is no continuity?

When we went to Haiti as parliamentarians the government of Mr. Préval and Prime Minister Alexis told us that people come to help but they leave too soon. I would like to hear your comments on that subject.

Also, what was your involvement in Afghanistan? Tomorrow, the Minister for National Defence and General Hillier will appear before our Committee. As you certainly know, we have a strong presence in Kandahar and there are problems in that region. I would like to know what kind of involvement you can have in the democratic development of a country like Afghanistan, particularly in the Kandahar area.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Patry.

Mr. LaRose-Edwards.

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: In response to your first question—continuity, and are we leaving too fast from mission areas?—obviously that's been a challenge from time immemorial. I suspect that's not going to disappear rapidly. There's a shortage of funds, and I think we'll constantly try to find ways around that.

My personal approach is I've always felt that internationals moving in should be rapidly training their replacements amongst the locals. In other words, assume that three or six months from now you'll be leaving and won't be coming back. If you want anything to be sustainable, you'd better be training the locals.

The international community falls into the trap of thinking they're going to go in with all the solutions and they'll direct things on the ground. Personally, I think that's the wrong way to look at it. I really do believe that the innate intelligence of the local host society is there. They can learn. They need a window of opportunity and some new ideas. In that lies a solution to the reality that we will never stay engaged in very many places for very long. It will be off and on, off and on.

A better solution is to make sure that from day one we're putting most of our resources into mentoring and bringing along the local host society, organizations, and government. In part, these are the kinds of individuals we like to roster and send out, who understand this, and they're not looking to make a career out of staying there for years on end; they're looking to develop local capacity.

I don't know if that gets to it, because I don't think there's an easy solution on the larger issue of funding.

In Afghanistan, we've been involved there and sending people over for almost five years now, quite apart from identifying experts for activities in Afghanistan. We deployed police experts and some judicial experts there. We're also a major route for DND to recruit what they call cultural interpreters. These are Afghan Canadians. We've got a roster of 200 Afghan Canadians registered with us and screened. So DND approaches us to pick up these individuals to deploy alongside Canadian troops as key force magnifiers out there.

This is actually a bit of a segue to something that we've been looking to do, where we can, with limited resources—tap into more of those new Canadians to draw on their skill sets for them to go back, not as returning Afghans or returning Congolese, but to go back as Canadians with a particular knowledge and awareness of local culture that those of us who are born and raised in Canada just couldn't possibly have. So our Afghan Canadians have been a huge success story. The Afghan government has picked them up directly from us, DND, Foreign Affairs, and a raft of international organizations.

For the future, there is discussion about sending police and other experts into the Kandahar area. It's good news, bad news. The bad news is that it's very dangerous in Kandahar and elsewhere. The good news is we have an incredible number of individuals, among our 8,000, who are prepared to go there, who understand the risks but also understand that somebody's got to step up, take those chances, and try to make a difference on the ground. So we've already been in contact with some of our police experts, and a surprising number have said, sure, I'll go to Kandahar, which was a bit of a shock for me, but that's great.

•(1545)

The Chair: Thank you.

You have another minute.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Patry: Mr. LaRose-Edwards, I believe that I mentioned Haiti and Afghanistan to you. Those are countries where there are real problems and a lot of violence.

Is CANADEM able to intervene in countries where there are such serious issues?

In Mauritania, for instance, there has been a coup without violence and in the Republic of Guinea-Bissau there are also problems but no violence. Can CANADEM intervene to try to prevent that violence or re-establish good governance in those countries?

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards.

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: I'll clarify what CANADEM is and is not. We don't in fact run anything on the ground, per se. First and foremost, we are this roster of 8,000 people. A modest add-on is that we can get people out onto the ground. So we can take an individual, give him equipment and a weapon, and we'll deploy him down to Haiti. Once he or she gets down there, he or she will be attached to an existing entity or mission. In the Haiti context, the attachment will be to MINUSTAH.

The roundabout response to your question is there are organizations out there trying to do preventive conflict management, and they come to us for experts as well. A lot of our experts go out with these organizations to do this preventive action. Like you, I'm sure, I think that's the better way to go. We respond rapidly to those organizations to help them find the Canadian experts who can do this kind of work.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Madame Barbot is next, for seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ): Mr. LaRose-Edwards, thank you for coming. I am trying to understand what you do exactly. You are hired by Foreign Affairs and you represent Canada abroad to a certain extent.

Do you contract out your services? Are you a personnel agency? Are you mandated by Foreign Affairs? What kind of control does the Department have, if any, on the work you are doing?

•(1550)

[*English*]

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: We're what I would call a "quango"; we're a quasi-non-governmental organization. We don't have a constituency as you would have in an Amnesty International. That said, we're not part of government either. The fact that we're not part of government makes us valuable to government. We're a tool they can use. We're a trusted partner with the Foreign Affairs START folks right now, and with CIDA and others, but they can use us in a way that means they do not have to take ownership for what we end up doing.

We're a service provider and an implementing agent. CIDA is quite used to using implementing agents. This is newer to Foreign Affairs, but that's coming along very well. This is valuable if something goes wrong out there. Although we can be given very clear parameters by the Canadian government and by Foreign Affairs as to what they want done, at the end of the day, if it goes wrong, it's our fault all the way. It is our fault if we lose one of our individuals on the ground, as we did last year; one of the individuals we deployed in Haiti was killed. It allows a certain arm's-length relationship for Foreign Affairs and CIDA.

Equally, and perhaps more importantly, it makes it easier for the international community to utilize us. They do not have to approach us through an official *démarche*; they can approach us directly. If they want an expert, we can find them an expert in 24 hours. They just send us an e-mail; we make a rapid dive into our database, pull out the right individual, see if he or she is free, and send the résumé off to that requesting organization. It really makes us far more useful to the international community than if we were inside government.

This whole debate took place very early on in the creation of CANADEM. It could have been set up in Foreign Affairs or set up outside. I argued there was a value in setting it up outside, Foreign Affairs agreed, and the rest is history. Part of my argument was we should be like NORDEM—outside of government.

I don't know if that quite gets to it, but we're a non-governmental organization. We're a not-for-profit organization.

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: I find it surprising. Isn't part of the government's prerogatives to offer those services and to be responsible to the people? When we talk about democratic development, since this is what you are doing, how can we give that responsibility to an outside organization...

From what you told me, I get the impression that you do the work that the government could not take the risk to do itself. As parliamentarians, we want the government to be responsible for what happens on the ground, particularly as concerns democratic development, something that is done with taxpayers' money.

I do not understand. I have difficulty understanding the role you are playing.

[English]

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: This is actually a fairly standard construct, not only in Canada but internationally. For example, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees will quite often engage NGOs to run refugee camps. Almost all of CIDA's activities are carried out by implementing partners that are outside of government, outside of CIDA.

The controlling link, of course, is that they ask for RFPs. We bid for projects in many instances. The government can tell you that this is how you have to spend your money, this is what we want you to do, and if you don't do it, we're not going to pay your second tranche; we're going to take you to court, and we're going to want that money back. There's always that way for government to control any of its implementing partners—as CIDA does.

Equally, it creates a certain amount of pressure upon us to remain a very lean and efficient organization. If we get too expensive, the government is going to step away from us. We're not government employees, and as a result the salary scale for CANADEM is extremely low—it's an NGO salary scale. If this had gone forward within the Canadian government, it probably would have cost about three to four times what it has cost. It's a very cost-effective, lean mechanism. There are a lot of examples of how it's used elsewhere, both internationally and in Canada.

•(1555)

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Are you the only organization in Canada that does that kind of work?

[English]

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: No, there are a lot of organizations similar to us.

There was a certain niche that was not being filled. We've got a lot of implementing agents for doing things in the field. What we did not have was a roster. There was no national roster, and that remains our biggest value-added.

Obviously at the beginning, there was an idea that this would be a human rights roster. That is why I proposed it, why Foreign Affairs started to fund it, and why we looked at Notre Dame as a good example—and that's what they remain. It is largely a human rights roster with a modest add-on on the democracy side.

But as we did this, it became more and more obvious that, wait a second, there's no roster for this, so maybe we should roster that as well, or oh, there's nobody rostering this, to the point where now—and in your kit, there's a study put out by DPKO, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations—there are rosters for the deployment of civilian experts and peace operations.

This is a real success story. Canada is head and shoulders above the world. The closest roster to us is the German ZIF, which was modelled on CANADEM. ZIF has a roster of 1,000 people. We are the only roster in the world that is specifically designed to assist the United Nations, and therein lies a fair amount of the reason for our success.

I am going off on a bit of a tangent here. I don't know how I got there, but—

The Chair: That's all right. That's the place to stop because you're out of time.

Mr. Goldring?

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. LaRose-Edwards, I'd like to talk a little bit about your recruitment. You say you have 7,500 members on your list of possible people to send on missions, and you send them on missions in a variety of areas around the world.

My question is, with a list such as this, I would think it would be advantageous for members of Parliament who wished to go on these missions to not only participate in the observation but also to get other value-added issues conducted at the same time by various meetings and so on, because obviously the election monitoring itself is a one- or two-day experience.

Also, as I am sure you are aware, I have been on a couple of other missions, and of course to the Ukraine. I even spent a week in the Ukraine on my own without an interpreter, and I did pretty well.

My question really concerns your response to my office, which I thought was rather caustic, with comments like, “Peter can probably have lots of fun anyway, but I can't believe you people are bothering me with this”—when I am making a serious application to go. Then there was another comment that it would be a major sign of disrespect to Haitians to send non-French speakers to observe their elections. Why is it that it's not an insult for other nations, such as Ukraine and maybe other countries too, to have English-speaking people who have the interest and take time out of their own lives to go to the countries? I would hardly think that it would be a sign of disrespect for those countries. Why would it be that way for Haiti?

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: I think you're absolutely right, it would be extremely valuable for MPs to be part of the CANADEM roster, because among other things, the CANADEM roster is a networking tool and will be increasingly used for that. So whenever someone is looking for a particular kind of Canadian expertise—and it may be for a one-day effort or for a longer period—CANADEM is one vehicle for them to drill down into Canadian expertise and find that expert. So on that I agree absolutely.

One of the valuable roles that CANADEM plays is being able to find the best and most appropriate Canadian expert to populate a mission or be put forward for a particular opening in the UN. We are very much merit-based.

Certainly when we're looking for experts to work in a local host society, we always attempt to find people who speak the local language, understand the local culture, which is particularly important for missions such as elections observation missions, when you're quickly in and out. You don't have time to slowly come up to speed over a couple of months to know the local language. For Haiti, what we were looking for was people who had Creole and French, amongst other skill sets. So quite consistently we will attempt to find the best match.

The criteria for this are not criteria that we set. CANADEM doesn't set the criteria. We respond to the international organizations telling us what they want. We have a situation where we probably have upwards of ten million Canadians who have sufficient French to speak French with Haitians. We thought it particularly appropriate then that the international community was French-speaking.

• (1600)

Mr. Peter Goldring: With a serious request from a member of Parliament, and knowing that we've worked on other election observations—and without belabouring the point—I would think it would behoove you to respond in a more gracious way and to perhaps give the invitation to maybe work on other select missions if we have time to do so. I think the interaction of members of Parliament with your organization could serve to better both.

I have a second point that I'd like to talk about, and it concerns your comments about working with the political entities at the community level. Maybe you can enlighten us, because part of this discussion is about democratic development and an interest or a beginning interest and realization that we should be working from the community basis with the political parties, with the policy and principles development, and with potential federal members of Parliament, as they may be, to promote the idea that they should be

promoting the community interests in bringing things forward to the federal system.

What work have you done on that aspect, and what could you foresee that your organization could do?

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: We're truly responsive to what the request is. In other words, if we get a request and they're looking for someone who is a former—

Mr. Peter Goldring: What have you been doing?

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: What have we been doing? Probably the easier question is, what have we not been responding to?

We respond to or focus on about a thousand mission openings a year, and for some of those missions, it's for four, five, or ten. We counted the Ukraine mission as one, although we had almost 500 individuals deployed on that one.

In other words, I'm hard-pressed to think of what we have not responded to.

Mr. Peter Goldring: No, but you made the comment that you had been working with political entities on a local basis, and I'm wondering about the nature of the work you did. We're fully aware of the election monitoring, but what other work did you do with the political entities on a local and regional basis?

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: That tends to be through an international window, so IFIs, or NDI, or the Parliamentary Centre here in Canada, or any one of the multitude of UN agencies, or the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Those entities, working locally, would come to us and say they need a Canadian who is of Congolese descent and has recent knowledge of the Congo; that they're looking for someone who is a former MP; or that they're looking for this kind of an individual and there would be a real advantage if it was a woman because they have an underrepresentation of women; or whatever they want to set out as criteria.

Directly, with local organizations, is not our skill set, and we don't pretend to have that kind of connection. It's for other agencies out there to be making those connections, but then coming to us to find the right Canadians to plug into their endeavours.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madame McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I have four questions that I'm going to try to spit out as fast as I can.

Thank you for the presentation. Starting with Haiti, I would certainly congratulate you for your role there. I had the opportunity to be there during the second round of elections, when I think there was an absolute minimum incidence of irregularities. It was very impressive.

One of the things you said, which I very much applaud, is that it's extremely important to do the training of the local population. One of the things that surprised me a lot was that when we visited Elections Canada sites on the election day, there wasn't a single local anywhere to be seen. I'm not sure about where CANADEM leaves off and Elections Canada picks up in that regard. Could you comment on that briefly?

Secondly, you were speaking about the CAN-Jeunesse program, which aims to involve young Canadians. I very much applaud that. I'm wondering if you suffered any cuts in this recent round of cuts to the international internship program, or whether you're not directly affected by that.

Thirdly, with respect to the Ukrainian election observing, there was a fair amount of criticism about the recruitment and perhaps inadequate training of some of those who were sent. I'm wondering if you can comment on whether it just grew out of anything that had been anticipated. Is that the reason why? Could you shed some light?

Finally, speaking about involvement in Afghanistan, could you speak specifically about the nature of any involvement in Kandahar? Several of us have heard really shocking, worrisome testimony this morning from the Senlis Council about the unbalanced mission in Kandahar that is leaving people literally starving, including children. People aren't the least bit Taliban-sympathetic, but they are nevertheless accepting money to fight and kill for the Taliban because it's the only way they see themselves as being able to feed their children and save them from starvation.

In that context, my question is, what is the involvement in Kandahar, if any? What are the prospects for any kind of winning of their hearts and minds and winning them over to democracy, given the desperate humanitarian situation that prevails at this point?

• (1605)

The Chair: Thank you, Madam McDonough

You have four questions there.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: I've observed that he answers very quickly and precisely, so it's a compliment to him.

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: Where does CANADEM leave off and Elections Canada or MINUSTAH or whoever start? We basically leave off when the plane takes off. In other words, we get them onto the plane. We may get them onto the plane with weapons, we may get them on the plane with equipment, we may get them on the plane with training, but all that happens before they get onto the plane. Once they get onto the plane and then once they touch down, they'll be taken and they'll be under the command and control of that particular mission, which will explain some of my other answers here a little bit.

Very briefly on CAN-Jeunesse, yes, we were affected by that because we have interns from Foreign Affairs. That's a shame, but I must admit I anticipated it.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: How many interns have been cut?

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: It has been variable, but that will cut back twelve interns for us. However, we're looking at alternate ways of funding that. In fact, I will say without hesitation, to any individual who wants to start their international career, that if they're

trying to decide whether they should take a master's in something or whether they should pay for their own internship, they should self-fund their own internship. That's the way to start your career. God, I wish that had existed when I was trying to start my career, because it's a catch-22 if you don't have experience. Nobody wants to talk to you.

So I think there are a lot of different ways. We're going after corporate funding, but I think self-funding internships is the way to go on that one. So it's a shame, but I don't believe it's the role of the government to always pick up the tab on this one.

On the Ukrainian recruitment, was it a smart idea to suddenly decide to send 500 election observers to Ukraine? Was that the best expenditure of money? You know what? I don't want to go down that road. It wouldn't have been my first choice. Let me put it that way.

We were anticipating a deployment of maybe 75 individuals. That's what we were geared for. Suddenly, 15 minutes after it was announced in the House, we heard that 500 were being sent, CANADEM was it, register with CANADEM.

I'm impressed at how that turned out. The partnership between Foreign Affairs, CIDA, and us was impressive. A number of things could have gone wrong on that one, so I think it was in fact a very successful mission. Was it the best thing to do? I wouldn't recommend it. Let me put it that way.

On Afghanistan and Kandahar, I have my own personal thoughts on Kandahar and the motivation for some of the Canadian presence in Kandahar, which I think is perhaps misguided. On the other hand, other motivation to help the Afghans in Kandahar is good motivation.

Is it the best time to be going in there, following on from a fairly heavy-handed military presence by the States and others? Again, you could take it in various different ways. But those are my personal views.

Our job at CANADEM is not to get too much into the merit of what's being done on the ground. If it's outrageous, obviously we don't want to be part of it. But other than that, we assume that the Canadian military, NATO, the UN, and international organizations have thought about it and they think it's the right way to go.

They ask us for experts. We drill down into our database and we find the 300 people who fit the criteria. We send those people a message saying what the terms are; what it is; what it pays, that it's pro bono, or that it's a D1 post with the UN that is hugely paid; that it's for six days or six months or two years. We put it all in there and they make an informed decision. It's their call. We're like matchmakers. If we have a willing mission that wants people and we have willing individuals who want to go out there, if they want to go to Kandahar, great. We make the introduction and then we step out of it.

Most of the time, we're just matchmakers. Sometimes, though, we do go that added bit when the Canadian government or somebody else says they also want us to give them a contract and get them over there. We're then engaged until their flight takes off. But once they take off, command and control transfers over to that particular entity on the ground.

•(1610)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Edwards.

Mr. Van Loan.

Mr. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Welcome, Mr. LaRose-Edwards.

I want to follow on Madam McDonough's question. I know she asked you a lot of questions. You didn't have a lot of time to answer, and I didn't want you to leave the committee with a misleading impression.

Actually, after five years with no changes in your funding, the funding to your program actually went up 28% this year under the government. Is that right?

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: Is this the funding for the rapid recruitment assistance program?

Mr. Peter Van Loan: For CANADEM, it went from \$500,000 annually up to \$640,000 annually.

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: That's for the rapid recruitment assistance program, from Foreign Affairs, to assist the international community, both UN and others.

Mr. Peter Van Loan: That's CANADEM's funding.

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: Yes, it is.

Mr. Peter Van Loan: I just wanted to make that clear, since you hadn't told the committee that had gone up 28% this year. I wanted to get that from you, and I thank you for that. How is that money spent?

Also, what is the difference between CANADEM and Canada Corps? The programs you've talked about—the Ukrainian monitoring and Haiti monitoring—are things that, until now, I had always been told were Canada Corps. I'm hearing today that they're CANADEM. What's the difference?

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: First of all, on the funding, thank you for bringing that up. In your opening remarks you talked about that funding being \$500,000. That had been flatlined for four years, but this year Foreign Affairs fortunately agreed that we had just taken on so much more.

That money is used for the recruitment of people to the roster and the screening of individuals on the roster, which is a major challenge for us because we don't put anybody forward unless they have been screened. It then pays for a team of people who respond to international requests for individuals to go in and make that match-up. It's for going in, finding the experts, sending those experts a message, finding out who is free, and making sure that gets to the UN.

So that covers that component of what we call our rapid recruitment assistance program, where we're assisting the UN and others in the international community to identify experts. To do that, we have to create and maintain this roster, and then respond when they're looking for individuals. That's what the money pays for.

For anybody who has run an organization, you know \$650,000 doesn't go very far, so—

Mr. Peter Van Loan: Is that mostly salaries or contracts?

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: It's mostly salaries.

•(1615)

Mr. Peter Van Loan: How many staff do you have? Do you have an office and that sort of stuff?

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: Our staff right now is running in the range of 25 individuals, but that covers the whole of the spectrum. The roster team has five full-timers and about three or four part-timers, but we also use a lot of stringers, so to speak, for screening, for example.

We use a former police officer to screen the police officers registering with us. We have over 700 police. We use ex-military to screen ex-military. We use human rights experts.... You see what I'm driving at. We use a lot of people out there to do our screening.

We also employ search personnel. On the Ukraine deployment, because it was so much so fast, during that period of time we engaged 25 search personnel to make that happen. So that was on the roster or on the deployment side.

The Chair: What about Canada Corps and CANADEM?

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: Quite honestly, I'm not too sure what Canada Corps is. It has been morphing over the years. I don't think anybody was too sure right at the beginning, and I don't think anybody is too sure now exactly what it is.

What's in Canada Corps? On the Ukraine deployment, all of us were three days into the deployment—me, Foreign Affairs, CIDA—and we would meet every day. On day three, we were sitting down and doing our daily debriefing. We had a dynamic team that really clicked along. We were about fifteen minutes into that debriefing and in walked someone to tell us that, by the way, this was a Canada Corps deployment.

One person from CIDA said, "Oh great. Does this mean I don't have to fund it?" "No, it's still coming out of your budget." Someone from Foreign Affairs said, "Does that mean we don't have to do this?" "No, you're still doing it." We said, "Is our involvement going to stay the same?" "Oh yeah." Nothing changed. We didn't see Canada Corps until the day of the deployment. So was that a Canada Corps deployment? Yes, sure. I'm easy. I don't really care.

So what's Canada Corps? I'm not too sure. But don't get me wrong. The concept of Canada Corps is a great idea. We worked very hard with the two co-chairs on that one on what it could have become. It didn't go that route, and Gordon Smith and Julie Payette finally sort of...they got partly pushed out and they partly walked away.

Let me not go too deeply into this, because the concept was a right concept. It was a concept that really laid the foundation for CANADEM. That's why we have CANADEM.

I suspect that the people who were thinking about Canada Corps were not fully aware of CANADEM. They weren't fully aware of a whole raft of other Canadian organizations that do similar things. There are a ton of people out there doing this. We're not the only ones. Let me emphasize that we're just one of a number of Canadian tools, both governmental and non-governmental, that is doing this stuff.

So I think Canada Corps was thought up with a great motivation, but without a full understanding of how much existed already.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. LaRose-Edwards.

Mr. Martin.

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Paul, it's great to see you here. Thank you very much.

I just want to say on the record what an admirer I am of the work that CANADEM does. You're a lean, mean organization that fulfils a major deficit in international development. The fact that you well articulated Canada's excellence in this area is all the more reason why I hope the funding continues, and continues to grow. All of us who have been in the environments that you work in know full well that capacity-building is a major obstacle to development. It's a major area where Canada can make an effective contribution, and your CANADEM does that.

I want to just follow along some of the questions that Mr. Van Loan asked. I might be a little less charitable about Canada Corps than you are. I think it's a great idea, but it's a runt of an organization that is utterly dysfunctional. It has been a great disappointment personally in trying to get that thing moving forward.

What is the relationship, if you could, between CANADEM, CESO, CUSO, and other organizations that were alluded to before?

And my second question is, how can we move forward to make your organization and what you do more effective, and to be able to broaden those opportunities? Given that the effective demand on the ground is so large and what we're doing is great but modest, we are part of an untapped potential of what you're dealing with. How can we expand the capabilities of CANADEM, then? What can we do to assist you to be able to be bigger and have a larger reach, if you will?

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: I'd like to think we are lean and mean, and I'd like to stay lean and mean. Staying lean and mean means you're not getting too much funding, and do you know what? I'm largely happy with the funding we're getting. Will we get better? Yes, we will, because there will be more and more Canadians who register with us. I predict that there will be anywhere from 25,000 to 35,000 people on that roster ten years from now, so we will continue to struggle to figure out how to do that with not too much money.

I would suggest that the better way to proceed starts to feed in with what your mandate is on this study, democratic development. The reason we're here is not to help Canadians get jobs. I love my fellow Canadians and that's what the end result is, but that's not what drives me.

What drives me and what drives my colleagues is assisting the international community—the UN and others—and, at one step removed, assisting local societies as they move forward. That's what drives me. That's why I recommended that we have this and why I think it has been very successful.

What I'm leading to is the fact that CANADEM has its own roster. The Norwegians have theirs; they have a Norwegian Refugee Council and they have NORDEM. The Germans have ZIF. Everybody's moving along just fine. They're still a long way behind us, but they're coming. They have their own money.

It's the developed countries that don't have this. That's the real gap. Not only do they need to know who their experts are. When we have a UN mission out there, we want the best Canadians that we have going out there. We want them working alongside the best Congolese, the best Haitians, the best Somalis, or the best whatever.

The real gap is them having their rosters, and that's where I'd like to move forward. That's where I think there's a real potential. If Canada is really sincere about strengthening the international community, this is a huge gap.

Right now, you probably have a good idea of how staffing is carried out in the UN. They don't have easy mechanisms, so you find that a particular permanent mission is putting forward the best friend of the president. That's how it occurs right now. We all know that's how it goes—not that there are not great third world individuals in the UN, but it's more luck than anything else.

That's where the real gap is, and it doesn't—

• (1620)

Hon. Keith Martin: It's in identifying the needs and the areas of excellence within the developing countries. Is that what you mean?

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: Exactly. It's having rosters of Congolese, rosters of Nigerians, helping them to create their own rosters that are merit-based, lean, and mean, and having those feeding into the UN.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Edwards.

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Thank you for coming in.

As you can see from many of the questions you are hearing from us, we are wondering what it is that you're doing. You, yourself, alluded to the fact that not many are aware of what each organization is doing. There's a lot of duplication happening. We just came from a tour of Scandinavia, and there is a lot of duplication taking place there. So we don't know what your organization is actually doing.

Quickly, can we have a list of your board of directors sent to us? Who is on your board of directors? You do have a board of directors, right?

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: Right.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Could we have a list of who they are?

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: Will I send them to you, or just give them to you right now?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I want to know, because I've been in Parliament for eight years and I don't even know what you do. This is the first time you've been here, and back out in the west nobody knows what you're doing. There's a total disconnect in the west.

So I would like to know what you're doing with your roster and everything. What are you doing in the west? A lot of people are out there. How are you approaching advertising yourself as an agency funded by the government? How are you reaching to Canadians out in the west? I'm really interested in knowing, because in going around the international development community out in the west, nobody's heard about you guys.

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: I'm not too sure who you're talking about, because we have a lot of westerners registered with us.

The Chair: Maybe you can just give us a little bit of an indication as to how you recruit.

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: Recruiting has been a real challenge. Although, again, \$650,000 may sound like a lot of money, one of the real challenges for us is to function with that. As many requests as we get, there's not a lot of money left. There are two sides: the need for extra money for advertising, and if you advertise in a certain way, getting a whole raft of people registering. Then you have to screen them, and that's really expensive.

So what we've tended to do is count on word of mouth within particular communities, or we'll do targeted recruitment. We did targeted recruitment with the Afghan Canadians. And we have regularly, over the past five years, gone back to the federal government saying that this was a huge success, this was awesome, that these Afghan Canadians are getting picked up all over the place and we want to go to other groups of new Canadians and recruit them.

•(1625)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Well, what I want to know is, in the west, there are Afghans in the west—

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: We'd love to go to the west and do targeted recruitment, but it's about getting the funding to do that. So we are very careful about trying to recruit more than we can handle. In other words, if we trigger 500 people from Calgary registering tomorrow, we have to screen them all. So we rely on word of mouth, experts in crisis response activity talking to other experts, by and large.

We might not be as well known to long-term development workers. But among those who are doing crisis response in crisis situations out there, everybody in Canada in that field knows of us. I'll guarantee you that.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: We'll talk more on that.

The Chair: I may just also mention that if you go to the CANADEM website, you just click on one of the links and it'll show you who their board members are. They're listed right on their website.

In conclusion, I have just one very quick little question. Do you get requests from groups like the United Nations and such for people for an exercise somewhere that isn't sanctioned by Canada? I'm thinking that you have this great roster of people who are ready, willing, and able. Has it ever happened that organizations have made requests when it's really something that Canada...? It's not a sanctioned exercise.

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: No, that's never happened. I've been doing international human rights for 25 years, and if I figure that it's not a credible mission out there, we're not going to act on it.

The Chair: You just nix it.

Mr. Paul LaRose-Edwards: I've got a whole bunch of board members behind me. Warren Allmand, for example, would jump all over me if I stepped outside the bounds of what was appropriate. No, we have never been in that situation.

The Chair: All right. We want to thank you for coming.

That concludes our time here today. We're going to suspend and give you the opportunity to exit the chair, and we'll bring another colleague in here.

Thank you.

•(1627)

_____ (Pause) _____

•(1633)

The Chair: All right, committee. We'll call this meeting of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade back to order.

We're pleased to have with us the Honourable John McKay, member of Parliament from Scarborough—Guildwood. Mr. McKay is the drafter of a private member's bill, Bill C-293. He is with us today to talk about his bill and perhaps some potential changes. I see he has brought some changes that he may want to table later on.

Mr. McKay, you are well aware of how this committee works. We welcome you, and we'll let you speak for as long as you want—ten minutes usually—and then we'll go into the first round of questioning.

The first round will be a seven-minute round, followed by a five-minute round.

Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

You and all other members will be relieved to know that I'm not proposing a long, inspiring speech.

Already I see that Ms. McDonough is disappointed by that.

The Chair: Mr. McKay, we've heard you in the past and that wouldn't be what we expect.

Hon. John McKay: It might be long or it might be inspiring, but it probably won't be both.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. John McKay: I'm actually going to put myself in the hands of the committee in kind of a reverse order. Usually, a committee becomes convinced of a principle and then works toward drafting a bill. I don't think I need to convince the committee of the principles of this bill. One thing I know has been very true is that this committee enjoys a lot of support on all sides of the House and that it enjoys a lot of public support.

The second thing is that the bill requires royal recommendation. The government has made it explicitly clear that it will not be forthcoming in granting a royal recommendation, the consequence of which is that the bill requires some modifications, while keeping the bill in its essence and with its core purpose. I hope the clerk has circulated a proposed set of amendments to the bill, which I'm advised releases the bill from its obligation for royal recommendation. So in my view, I think we've dealt with that issue.

The issue then becomes letting members look at the new approach to the principles of the bill to see whether this in fact reflects what the committee opined on back in June of last year in the previous Parliament, which was adopted by the House unanimously.

The big scheme, if you will, is to eliminate the need for the petitioning process and to eliminate the committee—those were the two objections that caught the Speaker's attention. That part has now been eliminated.

We then shifted our emphasis away from NGOs to a larger concept of civil society, if you will, and we have required that the minister “shall” consult with civil society, not “may”, in order to fulfill the obligations of the bill. I hope this meets with committee approval.

We also took note of some of the speeches that were made during the two hours of debate, one of which was the promotion of human rights, which I think Madam McDonough and Madam St-Hilaire spoke to. We've explicitly put that in, and we tried to make it a more robust role, where the minister in effect will be obligated to take into consideration civil society's views.

That's the big picture. I'm in your hands, Chair, as to how you want to proceed from here.

I actually thought one of the ways to proceed, rather than going back and forth with questions and things of that nature, was to go at it like the clause-by-clause stage. I'd be very keen on hearing from members as to whether they think we capture the intention of the bill, and that the methodology we've chosen captures the essence of the bill as well.

I'm going to stop there, and I'm going to ask you, Chair, for some guidance with respect to how to proceed at this point.

• (1635)

The Chair: My feeling is that we will probably not proceed that way. We've just been handed this today. I know this takes a fair bit of study. You start deleting lines and adding this and adding that. I know we've all gone through clause-by-clause, and most times when you've gone through clause-by-clause, you want to do a little bit of a study before you get to it.

You've already given us a little bit of an idea of the principle on which you built this private member's bill. Let's just proceed with the questions, and if any member wants to go into a clause or ask what you mean by deleting this clause and adding that, then I guess they would have the opportunity to do that. Let's not just throw it open, but continue with the seven-minute rounds and give people the opportunity to speak.

Before we go into that, is that satisfactory?

Mr. Ted Menzies (Macleod, CPC): Could I just comment on that?

• (1640)

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Menzies.

Mr. Ted Menzies: I appreciate Mr. McKay's help on this, but I go back to your first comment. We haven't seen any of these. What we were expecting here today, what we've prepared ourselves for, was the bill that was presented in the House. I think we need to deal with

that. And to stop that dialogue, to interject proposed amendments that have to be, with all due respect, presented by one of the members of this committee....

The Chair: I do appreciate Mr. McKay bringing this, because what this has allowed us to do is not wait until we see what amendments they bring forward. This has given us the opportunity to do it. So in due time, after hearing other witnesses, we will have the opportunity to go clause by clause. If somebody wants to deal with a certain clause in their seven-minute time period, that would be acceptable. They can do what they want with the seven minutes.

Mr. Patry.

Mr. Bernard Patry: I disagree with Mr. Menzies. In fact, Mr. Menzies, if Mr. McKay is coming before us today, it's not to talk about the bill that was presented in the House, because we already have that bill. It is really to discuss the changes and how the changes will affect his bill. That was the reason for having him today. That was the discussion we had in this committee previously.

The Chair: Yes, and that's basically what I've said. He has made some changes. He has given us the changes. He hasn't dealt specifically with every change he's made in his ten-minute preamble, but you will still have an opportunity to. He has told us that in order to get rid of the royal recommendation, or requirement, he has gotten rid of the petition process, as well as the committee process. So those are things that we may want to question him about.

We're going to go to the first round.

Mr. Patry, you have seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

Mr. McKay, I just have one very quick question, and after that, I'll ask my colleagues if they have any questions. They can ask you about the changes.

I just want to know, in changing the modification as requested by the Speaker's ruling in the House of Commons, did you work with the Speaker's lawyer? How did it occur that you made these changes and will not be faced in the future with it coming back in the House of Commons with some other ruling by the Speaker?

Hon. John McKay: We met with the legislative drafter. He had the ruling in hand. We went through the objectionable parts of the bill. What you see is the result of those objectionable parts. The legislative drafter then took it to the Speaker's office and asked, in an informal way, if this would comply with the ruling of the Speaker, and we were assured that it would.

Mr. Bernard Patry: Do you have any other questions, colleagues?

If you don't have any questions, I'll use my seven minutes, Mr. Chair, just to try to ask him to go clause by clause.

How does it change the first clause?

Hon. John McKay: If you have the bill and the proposed first amendment in front of you, you'll see that in subclause 2.(1), lines 9 and 10, of the current bill, it says:

poverty reduction and in a manner consistent with Canadian values, Canadian foreign policy and international human rights standards.

Now it will read:

poverty reduction and in a manner consistent with Canadian values and Canadian foreign policy and that promotes international human rights standards.

That was a direct response to what we heard on the floor of the House. I understand this has been under discussion at this committee in the past. That was the first amendment.

The second amendment is on clause 3, adding after line 19, “civil society organization”. This definition means—and this is new—a not-for-profit or a charitable organization whose governing structure is independent. This expands the whole basis for consultation among those with whom the minister would consult. That would be the second point, the definition of civil society.

The next amendment would be to delete lines 20 and 22, because there is no longer a requirement for the committee.

Moving through the bill, we've expanded the notion of development assistance. We lifted this from what the minister has said in public pronouncements in the last little while. As you can see, we have been a little more precise in our definition of development assistance. It means:

funding that's transferred to developing countries and multilateral institutions by government agencies, and that is administered with the principal objective of promoting the economic development and welfare of developing countries that is concessional in character and that conveys a grant element of at least 25%.

This is right out of what the minister has been speaking about.

The next amendment would be adding after line 11 on page 2, “international human rights standards”. We would say:

“international human rights standards” means standards that are based on international human rights conventions to which Canada is a signatory.

I believe this was raised by Mr. Menzies in debate. I think it is a response to a concern that he raised.

We also expanded the definition of “minister” to read:

the Minister for Cooperation or any other minister designated by the governor in council as the minister for the purposes of this Act.

That is just a broader definition.

Then “non-governmental organization” is deleted, because we replaced it with “civil society organization”.

That takes us to clause 4. Then you get to, if you will, the guts of the change. In lines 29 to 31 on page 2 we replaced “the competent minister may consult with international agencies and Canadian non-governmental organizations” with:

the competent minister shall consult with international agencies and Canadian civil society organizations

Civil society is a larger concept than non-government organizations. This way we tie the minister into this bill and require her or him to show that they have consulted with civil society organizations.

The next change is to delete clauses 6, 7, and 8.

●(1645)

You also delete lines 17 and 18 on clause 9 because there's no longer a summary of an annual report submitted by the committee under section 8—

The Chair: Could you just go back there, Mr. McKay? You delete which clauses?

Hon. John McKay: We delete clauses 6, 7, and 8.

The Chair: Committees, petitions?

Hon. John McKay: No, my apologies for that. I actually asked about that and they said you don't actually have to do this, but then they did it for others, so I apologize for any confusion.

The Chair: Thank you. We're going to go to the next round.

Madame St-Hilaire.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. McKay. I shall try to be brief. I only have four questions.

One of your amendments modifies clause 2 and I quote:

[...] reduction and in a manner that is consistent with Canadian values and Canadian foreign policy and that promotes human rights standards.

I do want a point of clarification. When you say « promote » because this is what you have changed, don't you think that you diminish the weight of that clause? To promote is not the same thing as to implement.

This is my first question.

●(1650)

[*English*]

Hon. John McKay: Let me see if I can deal with it. I thought by putting the word “promotion” in there that this in fact reflected the wishes of the committee and, if I recollect correctly, your speech in the House. Rather than weaken the clause, I thought it was actually strengthening the clause. I'm not clear how “promotion”—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Initially, in your Bill, it was stated:

The purpose of this Act is to ensure that all Canadian development assistance abroad is provided with central focus on poverty reduction and in a manner consistent with Canadian values, Canadian foreign policy and international human rights standards.

[*English*]

Hon. John McKay: Yes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: You are now saying that the focus will be on the promotion rather than on the implementation of international standards. In our interpretation, it seems to somewhat diminish the strength of that clause.

[*English*]

Hon. John McKay: That's good advice, because we put it in to actually strengthen it. I'd be interested in hearing other members' views, but that was our intention.

[Translation]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: It was my first question.

My second question — and it might again be a problem with the translation or the french — relates to your second amendment to clause 3. In English you say “conveys” while in French you say “libéralité”. I know that you probably cannot explain to me what it means in French, but what do you mean exactly by “libéralité”?

Mr. Bernard Patry: What lines are you referring to?

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: I refer to lines 1 to 4 of clause 3.

[English]

Hon. John McKay: Line 4 in which clause?

The Chair: Line 4? On page 2 or on page—

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Page 2.

[Translation]

Clause 3.

[English]

Hon. John McKay: We're deleting “development assistance”. We're replacing it, if you will, with a more robust definition of development assistance. The clause that's there currently reads:

“development assistance” means official development assistance as defined by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

We're saying here, that it means funding that's transferred to developing and multilateral institutions. This was a clause that was taken directly from some comments the minister made.

[Translation]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Mr. McKay, I have no problem with the first part of your amendment. However, at the end, you talk about “libéralité”. I am only telling you that it requires some explanation even though it might not be what you are expected to do today. However, we have some reservations that I wanted to draw to your attention.

Do I still have some time left? Yes.

Your amendment to clause 3, line 9, page 2, is a good amendment. I only need some clarification. Would that include other ministers like the Minister of Finance or the Minister of Foreign Affairs?

This is what it implies, isn't it?

[English]

Hon. John McKay: Yes, it's the “competent minister”. We actually talked about whether it would always be the CIDA minister. The CIDA minister's name is simply CIDA by convention rather than by any other form. It could be any competent minister.

[Translation]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Great. I have a last question.

In another amendment to clause 4, lines 29 to 31, you reinforce a point. I applaud you for this! It was stated that the minister may consult and now it is said that “the competent minister shall consult”.

We wonder if this is not giving too much leeway to the minister. Wouldn't it be a good idea to set a timeframe, for instance “shall

consult civil society organizations on an annual basis”? You are saying “shall consult” which is stronger but the minister is free to consult when and who he is willing to consult. Couldn't we impose a certain timeframe?

• (1655)

[English]

Hon. John McKay: Well, I'm ultimately in the committee's hands on that.

The product of the consultation, if you will, comes out of clause 9. If there is other language that you think might tighten it up even further, I'm more than happy to hear it. This is a pivotal clause.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam St-Hilaire.

Mr. Menzies, for seven minutes.

Mr. Ted Menzies: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. McKay, for your presentation.

I want to discuss the bill. I am still having difficulty, as I expressed to the chair.

I had expected you to suggest some amendments, and I'm not surprised. But I guess I am surprised that we are now dealing with amendments that we shouldn't be dealing with. We don't have them and no one has moved the amendments.

The Chair: Mr. Menzies, we're not dealing with amendments today. We're not doing clause-by-clause today.

There are going to be witnesses. Mr. McKay has given us some ideas that we can work on.

We've already heard there will be other amendments brought forward, maybe even by Mr. McKay, who may make some suggestions saying he went to committee and that came back.

We aren't in clause-by-clause. I'll make that abundantly clear.

Hon. John McKay: I'm keen to listen to every word you say, Mr. Menzies.

Mr. Ted Menzies: Well, I guess what we've done so far is basically clause-by-clause. That's why I wondered.

But I do want to raise this as a point. It's something that... In your speech, you were critical of the bureaucracy, and I tend to defend the bureaucracy, because they're usually working under the direction of a minister. Your comment was that the bureaucracy will want to get this right and will want to do it carefully. My concern is whether this bill was hastily put together, and now we hastily have some amendments to add to it.

I think everyone here recognizes that this new government is all about accountability and transparency, and we do want to get this right. We do want to make sure that we are using aid dollars in the most effective way, and we need to make sure this is transparent. We also want to make sure that the delivery mechanism of this is transparent to taxpayers.

I'm concerned that we're trying to rush this through. The bill that was tabled doesn't appear to be what we're discussing here today.

We have a number of concerns. The one I would like you to address, if I could.... Even though we're not going clause by clause, in your changes to the minister accountable.... We have three ministers who are actually accountable, no matter how we add this up. There is the CIDA minister, who basically reports to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. We now have the finance minister involved in this. I'm very concerned that this bill doesn't address that accountability, who is responsible, and how that is dealt with.

Perhaps you could address that, if you would.

Hon. John McKay: There's no question about the finance minister. He has a huge responsibility in terms of our external relations with other countries, and he takes the lead responsibility. By phrasing it as "the competent minister", that would allow Parliament to direct its attention to how this report was formulated and whether the finance minister has signed off or provided his own report, or it would allow Parliament to actually require the minister to account for how he or she discharged his or her responsibilities under the bill.

You're absolutely right to say that this bill is about accountability and transparency. It was part of your party's election platform. It was your leader, in his incarnation as opposition leader, who actually was, in part, the genesis and mover of this bill.

I would quibble with you with respect to the haste in getting it right. Certainly, you've had quite a while to do it yourselves, and thus far, as far as I know, there is no bill on the order paper that would get it right. So here we are, we're all parliamentarians, and that's what the Canadian public expects us to do—provide accountability and transparency and get it right, hence, if you will, my unusual procedure of presenting suggested changes to the bill well in advance so that members can comment on it.

My final point is that I think the minister should be endorsing this bill, because it gives him or her a complete answer to other ministers who may want to do project X or project Y out of the CIDA minister's funds. So I think your minister should be dancing in the streets.

• (1700)

Mr. Ted Menzies: And indeed she may, but it would be in a city other than Ottawa. But I would doubt that she would be dancing because of that.

To your comment about the fact that we've had lots of time to get it right, I must comment. We've had less than ten months. In the thirteen years the Liberal government had, they didn't quite take this as seriously as they are now. So I applaud your reawakening to this cause.

Going back to what we were dealing with in Bill C-293, which indeed is what we're discussing here, I'm very concerned—and I think I raised this in my speech—about the obligation of the minister to report back, to answer back to petitioners about why they haven't received aid, why they haven't received enough, why they've received the wrong thing, and that sort of thing. That's not the minister's job. I still fear that whoever the minister may be, it's not a good use of his or her time to be responding to every potential recipient of Canadian aid.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Menzies.

Unless it's a ten-second response, we're out of time.

Hon. John McKay: On the petitioning, that's no longer in the discussion. There is actually a precedent in the environmental legislation on petitioning. I regret actually having to give up on the committee function and the petitioning function, but there's a minority government, it will ultimately have a short life, and we would like to get it done. I know it's a bit of an insight—the members know that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McKay.

Madam McDonough, please.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: I hope we're all approaching this as a work in progress. Let's remind ourselves that it's work that began on April 1, 2003, when we began to really hear about ODA, where we and other countries stand, and what it all means.

For the public who wonder if we ever manage to collaborate and do some things cooperatively, maybe it would be a good demonstration by us for ourselves and Canadians that we can actually come together and get this done. As John McKay has said, and I appreciate, your opening comment was that you've tried to reflect the spirit of the debate in second reading of Bill C-293, and I would add, hopefully respect the record on where we've collaborated to try to move forward on this. So let's try to keep it in that spirit.

This isn't clause-by-clause, but I think it was very helpful for you to respond in a very direct way to the very clear and pointed criticisms that the parliamentary secretary has put forward. Surely the point is not to start way back where we left off in debate, but to move it forward.

With all due respect to the parliamentary secretary, if you think we're rushing through this, maybe you needed to be with us in five cities in five days in the Nordic countries and the U.K. a couple of weeks ago as a committee. Most of us had a sense of how humiliating it was that we were so far back in the pack in really addressing our commitments to an appropriate level of ODA, and our need to be very explicit about our commitments to engage in civil society and make sure that a human rights focus is also reflected.

I appreciate that my party was the original drafter of this bill. Some very legitimate criticisms were put forward by the parliamentary secretary, and there's been an earnest effort here to respond to those concerns. We're not going through clause by clause, but having gone through the proposed amendments, I think they respond in a genuine way to the concerns that were raised. I don't think there's one of the proposals for change that I would not agree with.

So I'm not just clinging to the original version of this. I think we have to exchange ideas and agree to improve it as needed. The only criticism I have is that clauses 6, 7, and 8 need to be deleted, as you now have indicated, to fully respond to the criticisms that have been made.

I want to say a further word or two about what we heard while we were waiting for the original international policy review from the minister, which morphed into a statement. We went ahead and tried to grapple with this issue and heard from a lot of witnesses as to what kinds of things were needed to get us on track. We had further reinforcement of that from all of the opportunities we had on our recent European trip.

I hope we can move fairly quickly to have some witnesses come before the committee. Perhaps we need to turn our attention a little to whom that should be. Certainly CCIC, which represents over 100 NGO organizations and civil society groups that are very much engaged in the work that is the main focus of this bill, would be a crucially important witness to hear from. I hope we don't have to go back through the whole process we engaged in here for almost three years that brought us to the point today where we're looking at what the legislation might be.

The only other thing I would raise a question about is the term "the competent minister". It may be typical language that I'm not familiar with in such a bill, but I don't know whether that's a judgment.

• (1705)

The Chair: Now, now, Alexa, it was going so well there for a moment.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Now what did you think I was going to say?

The Chair: I don't know.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: All I'm saying is that if that's a term that is used to mean the minister who is at the time dealing specifically with these matters, then that's fine. If not, it may need a bit of a different word—the "relevant" minister, or the "most directly affected" minister, or something like that.

That said, I think this has been a genuine attempt to respond to the many points raised. Hopefully we can move forward with this by scheduling some further witnesses. I know the parliamentary secretary has had a chance to raise concerns. If these are concerns shared by the minister, I guess we'd want to hear from the minister as well and move forward from there.

Hon. John McKay: Thank you for those supportive comments.

The word "competent" with regard to the minister is not to be contrasted with "incompetent". The legislative drafters chose that particular language. As I recollect, it sees light in other bills.

• (1710)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McKay.

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Thank you.

Mr. McKay, your name has "honourable" in front of it. You guys were in government for all these years, and that's why you got the word "honourable". Now all of a sudden there's a minority Parliament. As Mr. Patry said to us, we can't do anything in a minority Parliament to get this thing going here.

Our concern over here is whether this is an attempt, because there's a minority government, for you to rush through this bill that you could not do when you were in the government. Nothing came forward from the government, and suddenly, within ten months of a minority government, we have all these things.

At any rate, that is my accusation to you.

I want to ask you a question, now that you've brought this amendment. In your amendment, replacing lines 4 to 7—

Hon. John McKay: Which one are you referring to?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: It's on clause 3. I'm not going clause by clause. I just want to know what you guys....

We know what your trick is anyway. We know what you're all up to.

You say in the last sentence here that this is "concessional", and that it conveys "a grant element of at least 25%".

Hon. John McKay: Yes.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Can you elaborate on what you're talking about there, about what this means?

Hon. John McKay: From what I understand, this has precision in language that the minister uses as her own guidelines. I understand it to mean that it's at least 25% forgivable, and it may well be more.

But probably that question is best directed to the minister herself.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: But you are the one who has brought the bill. You are the one who has brought this here. That is why we are here. But let's not rush this thing. Let's look at it.

Remember one thing: you were a parliamentary secretary, and at the end of the day, we need to get it right for Canada. Last time, you said we'll push whatever we want to do. That is why we have this concern.

Let's look at this thing now, and then maybe you can go back and really look at it. Are we for some reason saying that in any funding that is transferred to a developing country, 25% is a forgivable element? Is that what you're trying to say here, or is that what your understanding is?

Hon. John McKay: At least 25%.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: But you see, that creates a situation where many of us who are critical of saying, hey, by giving 25%....

You just came out here and said that you want to bring accountability to this, that this is the purpose. But by putting in 25%, which is a substantial sum of money that you're literally saying we should forgive, where is the accountable portion that you are trying to get in there to do that?

Hon. John McKay: Because it's forgiven doesn't mean it's not accountable.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Why not? You are putting it in the legislation. You could put it in a regulation, but you're putting this in the legislation, right?

Hon. John McKay: In the definition, yes.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: So in the legislation what you're saying is that we've got to do it.

What I'm asking you is, where is the control? Where is the control to say what's going to happen with the 25%?

Hon. John McKay: I don't understand why you think that putting that in the bill loses control, accountability, or transparency. Surely to goodness, it's far more transparent and accountable if in fact you define what development assistance is in the first place.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Yes, but what you've said here is the problem. What I'm saying is that if you are giving development assistance that includes 25% being forgiven, then anybody at the other end will say, oh well, we're going to get the 25%. How are you going to stop it? Are you going to have another regulation to say that should not be there?

What I'm trying to get at is that by putting it into an act, you're forcing it. If you remove it from the act and say this is our intended goal, then that is a different issue.

• (1715)

Hon. John McKay: I'm actually being very precise about what—

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Yes, that's what I'm trying to tell you.

Hon. John McKay: You don't want precision?

The Chair: Mr. Obhrai.

Hon. John McKay: Okay, he doesn't want precision.

I just don't understand the thrust of the honourable member's question. I've precisely defined what development assistance is, which to my mind means accountability and transparency. Therefore, he should be far happier than leaving it as a vague, touchy-feely, "oh well, development assistance is whatever we mean it to be" statement.

That's the point of the bill. The point of the bill is to not go to the flavour of the month.

The Chair: Okay. Thanks Mr. Obhrai.

I think maybe it's just confusing and that once we get into seeing witnesses and hearing what exactly it means....

I think since 1986 we've stopped making ODA loans. It's 100% at the present time, from what I understand, isn't it? And this now takes it to 25%.

Mr. Ted Menzies: Micro-finance would be outside that.

The Chair: All right, so I maybe stand corrected on some of this.

Back to Mr. Martin.

Hon. Keith Martin: Thank you.

Mr. McKay, thank you very much for your superb bill and your amendments. They really will make a difference in terms of ensuring that government moneys are spent for what they are intended.

We're all perhaps guilty of this over time, that not enough of the moneys that have gone into aid actually get to the people on the ground who need it the most for those basic needs.

I just want your opinion. With the amendments, your bill is almost identical to a bill put forth by Madame Desjarlais, who used to sit in the NDP caucus but now is the chief of staff to the Minister of Veterans Affairs. Mr. McKay, if your bill with the amendments you're proposing is identical to the bill proposed by the current chief

of staff to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, shouldn't the government really speak to the chief of staff to ask whether she supports your bill and to get her ideas as to the veracity of your bill, which I'm sure she will wholeheartedly support?

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Martin.

You know, we may end up doing that, but I just want to say one thing—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Be careful what we ask for, right?

You mentioned that she used to be in the NDP and that now she's a chief of staff. I don't know what that really brings to it, other than it's a real step up, in my opinion.

Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: I think that's a wonderful idea, but I'd actually propose that you call the Prime Minister who signed the letter that says:

We are writing to urge you to introduce legislation which establishes poverty reduction as the aim for Canada's Official Development Assistance (ODA). A legislated mandate for Canada's ODA would ensure that aid is provided in a manner both consistent with Canada's human rights obligations and respectful of the perspectives of those living in poverty.

If you go to clause 2 of the bill, what does it say but that it's a "manner consistent with Canadian values, Canadian foreign policy". It promotes human rights. You know, I don't know what else you would say.

In clause 4, it states:

- (a) contributes to poverty reduction;
- (b) takes into account the perspectives of the poor; and
- (c) is consistent with Canada's international human rights obligations.

Presumably the Prime Minister could have written this bill himself.

Hon. Keith Martin: Well, didn't the current Prime Minister—and there are many quotes, I think, to support this—very publicly support the essence of your bill, in meaning and intent, repeatedly, when he was in the opposition?

Hon. John McKay: And in their platform.

Hon. Keith Martin: That's right.

Hon. John McKay: So I'm not quite sure whether the objections are substantive.

Hon. Keith Martin: Actually, that's my question. What possibly could consume the Conservative Party to want to oppose your bill, since it appears that from the very heart and guts of their current party, they have the origins of your bill and support from the Prime Minister all the way through to members of Parliament and chiefs of staff.

Hon. John McKay: Mysterious are the ways of the Conservative Party, and I could not comment on that.

The Chair: I'm certain that if the Conservative Party brings forward amendments, it will only be to better this bill, and we can be assured of that.

You have another minute actually, but I hate to give it to you.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Chair: Go ahead, Keith.

• (1720)

Hon. Keith Martin: I think I'd simply like to say that it's been a wonderful, constructive discourse, Mr. Chairman, and I really appreciate the opportunity to have spoken.

The Chair: All right. Well, we give the fair amount of time.

Hon. John McKay: You seem to have a lot more fun than the finance committee.

The Chair: Mr. Menzies.

Mr. Ted Menzies: Seeing that it appears we have moved to clause-by-clause, and please take this constructively—

The Chair: We haven't gone to clause-by-clause. We can go through—

Mr. Ted Menzies: It appears we have, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Well, we haven't.

Mr. Ted Menzies: I do want a point of clarification, and this is one of the things I had raised an alarm bell about. This is the advisory committee.

Correct me if I'm wrong. I believe it's on page 1 of your suggested changes. You're changing the advisory committee to read "civil society". Am I reading this right? That's where you want to insert that?

Hon. John McKay: Where it says "Committee" in clause 3, under "Interpretation"—"means the Advisory Committee", that's deleted.

Mr. Ted Menzies: That's deleted to become "civil society organization".

Hon. John McKay: Yes, because the committee no longer exists.

Mr. Ted Menzies: Right, okay. I think I understand your intention, and thank you for that suggestion.

How would that be structured? Who would have a say? To be very frank, we may end up having some non-governmental organizations that this government may not want to be taking advice from, that may have different motives from what we would like to see as official development assistance.

Am I being concerned for no reason, or is that a potential...? Please give me your definition of how we would stop, say, a terrorist group that decided they wanted to become an NGO, and then all of a sudden they're making direction to us.

Hon. John McKay: Every government has organizations with whom they would like to consult and some with whom they don't. At this point, the committee is gone, the petitioning process is gone. The key obligation the minister has is in subclause 4(2), which says, "the competent minister may consult with international agencies and Canadian non-governmental organizations". How she does that is largely her business, but she has to be accountable to Parliament, and she has to demonstrate in some manner that she fulfilled the obligations of subclause 4(2). How she does that, I guess, will be ultimately determined by her, but if in fact members of the opposition say, "Well, did you consult with NGO X?", and she says no, then they may well want to know why she didn't consult with

NGO X, or maybe she has a very good reason for not consulting with NGO X. Under this scheme, she has no obligation to consult with NGO X, but she could be exposed to answering a question as to why she didn't consult with NGO X.

Mr. Ted Menzies: So this clause that starts with "civil society organization" doesn't take the specific place of the advisory committee, then?

Hon. John McKay: No. The committee is gone, the petitioning is gone—

Mr. Ted Menzies: The actual concept of the committee is gone, in your mind.

Hon. John McKay: The concept of the committee is gone, and what the minister is left with is an obligation to Parliament to consult. And she has to then be able to demonstrate that she consulted, that her assistance contributes to poverty reduction, that it takes into account the perspectives of the poor, and that it is consistent with Canada's international human rights obligations. I would think that if she can't demonstrate that, parliamentarians would be a little upset.

Mr. Ted Menzies: I think that probably this is redundant, because I'm sure the minister already does that. In fact, I know for a fact that she does.

Hon. John McKay: Well, the bill, presumably, would be redundant and unnecessary, except that this committee has received ample testimony that it's not being done. As Madam McDonough said, this has been going on since 2003, so this is the fruition at the end of three years.

• (1725)

The Chair: Thank you.

On that point, and maybe I read this wrong, but when you talk about "civil society organization", is that specifically in the singular, or should that be plural? Are you saying that the civil society organization she consults with must be made up of all these parts, or does she have the ability to consult with civil society organizations?

Hon. John McKay: It's in the definition section, and usually you phrase a definition in the singular. I think that's the answer to your question. You'll see that in the original bill: "committee" is singular, "competent minister" is singular, and so on. So I think that's the answer to your question.

You make a good point. Why is it not "civil society organizations"? Well, certainly in the product, in the demonstration to Parliament, she can't simply say, "Well, I consulted with a civil society organization."

The Chair: What you do say is that she or he must consult with the organization, and it is made up of, but is not limited to, registered charities.... So it sounds like this organization is made up of the faith-based organizations, the professional associations, and the trade unions, but not necessarily. Do you follow me? It would be some organization—i.e., a committee—that is made up of the parts you list.

Hon. John McKay: No, that's not the way I read it.

The Chair: All right.

Yes, Madam McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Well, in the operative clauses, if you go to clause 4, the language used is “civil society organizations”—plural. I guess you could change that to plural, but it's pretty clear that it's attempting to define what a civil society organization is. Then it talks in the bill before us about consultation with such “civil society organizations”—plural.

The Chair: Yes, the—

Hon. John McKay: You need to read the two together, because in the definition section it is singular, and then in the amendment to subclause 4(2) it says, “civil society organizations”—plural.

The Chair: I've just been given some counsel here that it's something we may look at. “Civil society organization” may stay singular if we then put “means any not-for-profit or charitable organization”. Otherwise, it's.... Do you see what I'm saying?

Hon. John McKay: That's fair. I understand.

The Chair: If it's an organization made up of all these parts, well, then you're back to your committee.

Hon. John McKay: I will entertain an amendment from the chair on that.

The Chair: All right. We can deal with that later, because, as I say, we are not doing clause-by-clause today.

Madam McDonough, was there anything else here?

Ms. Alexa McDonough: No, that's it.

The Chair: Mr. Menzies, did you want to...?

Mr. Ted Menzies: I am satisfied that Mr. McKay has shared his wealth of knowledge with us this afternoon. Thank you very much.

Hon. John McKay: I've exhausted it.

The Chair: We do want to thank you, Mr. McKay, for coming and for coming prepared. Our intentions are that this report will be brought back to the House by the due date, and we'll have the opportunity to hear, as has been mentioned today, other people who will come forward to talk about the importance of changes and reform to the way we hand out our humanitarian aid.

I think, then, we have committee business on the agenda. But I tell you, we're going to close at 5:30.

Madam McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: I know we don't have time today to deal with my motion that is next up, but what I wanted to do was make the suggestion, for the consideration of the committee, that we invite Senator Doug Roche before the committee to address the subject matter of that motion that is before the committee.

I think people are all familiar with Doug Roche. He was formerly a Progressive Conservative member of Parliament; he was Canada's ambassador to the UN for disarmament; and he was then a senator. More recently, many committee members have met with him in the context of his position as chair of the Middle Powers Initiative, which has been very much seized with the issues of nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, and nuclear abolition. I also think we all feel very sobered by the increased threat that people feel with what is happening today in North Korea.

Some have had the opportunity to meet with Doug Roche as recently as when he was here during the first week of Parliament

being in session, when he chaired the Middle Powers Initiative meetings. I think every member of Parliament received his letter that was sent to us from his perspective as chair of the world council of the Parliamentary Network for Nuclear Disarmament. It's really in his capacity as the Canadian chair of the PNND that I brought this forward, very much in the cross-partisan, multi-partisan spirit that was really being encouraged by Doug Roche as chair of the world council.

I'm wondering whether we might invite him to address us on this issue, given the severity and its obvious currency at the moment, and for obvious reasons given what's happening in North Korea.

• (1730)

The Chair: Again, we talked about this before. One of the concerns I have is that we keep focus. We have our steering committee meetings and we decide where we're going. The motion is absolutely in order, but if we're going to now start allocating regular committee time to bring in Mr. Roche—he's a great spokesman, and everyone here knows his involvement on nuclear disarmament—then we're talking about diverting from what we've laid out as the direction in which the committee is going.

In good faith, I think we want to continue with the democratic development. We have a busy fall. We want to finish Bill C-293 whenever it gets done. So if you're suggesting this for a committee day, then I would say to our committee that we should stay focused on the direction that we've laid out in the steering committee and in this committee.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: I appreciate what you're saying. Believe me, I'm not trying in any way to derail the committee decisions that have already been made about work we're going to do.

Look, if committee members are prepared, in the spirit of parliamentarians around the world who are endorsing this statement in droves, to go ahead and deal with it without hearing from Doug Roche, then so much the better. I think it would reflect our own multi-party concern with this growing crisis, and I think that's terrific. I'm just saying that if members aren't prepared to deal with it in—

The Chair: Maybe we can talk about this at another committee business session, when we have some time. We're aware of the motion, and I think we're certainly going to accept that, but when we start looking at extra meetings....

Madame Barbot.

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: As concerns Ms. McDonough's notice of motion, I would like to draw to your attention to some serious mistakes in the French translation. We don't mind correcting a few occasional mistakes, but we should not have to do so constantly.

In particular, in the sixth paragraph, where the English version says that it was “ratified”, the French version says that it was “signed” which is not the same thing at all. Furthermore, it is mentioned that Israel and the United States did not sign when, in fact, they did. These are really serious mistakes.

[*English*]

The Chair: Because we aren't going to be voting on this today anyway, maybe what we'll do is send that to the clerk. We can then make sure the translation is a little more in line with the intent.

Thank you for bringing that up, Madame Barbot.

We are adjourned.

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