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Mr. Kevin Sorenson

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• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): *Bonjour, chers collègues.* Welcome. This is meeting number 32 of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, Tuesday, May 27, 2008. Today we are continuing our consideration of our subcommittee's draft report on the Canada–China bilateral human rights dialogue.

We're very pleased today to have a number of guests with us. In our first hour we will hear from Dr. Gregory Chin, a professor at York University, and Dr. Pitman Potter, a professor of law and director of Chinese legal studies and director of the Institute of Asian Research at the University of British Columbia.

Welcome by teleconference. I trust you can hear me.

Dr. Pitman Potter (Professor of Law and Director of the Institute of Asian Research, Director of Chinese Legal Studies, Centre for Asian Legal Studies, University of British Columbia): Yes, I can. Thank you very much.

The Chair: All right.

Also appearing as an individual is Dr. Jeremy Paltiel, a professor at Carleton University.

We welcome all our guests. Perhaps we'll give the courtesy of beginning to our friend in British Columbia, via video conference.

Dr. Potter, go ahead, please.

Generally, just as far as the procedure here goes, if you have opening remarks of fairly close to 10 minutes, then we'll go into a number of rounds of questions.

Dr. Potter.

Dr. Pitman Potter: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm honoured and pleased to be here.

I have not prepared a brief, but I do have some talking points, and I've brought copies that can be sent to you at some point. I thought someone would be here to collect them—but in any event, let me just begin with a few remarks.

Human rights are, of course, an important dimension in Canada's relationship with China. I agree that it's very important for this committee to hear from as wide a range of specialists as possible in order to make informed decisions on this important matter.

My expectation is to give a short presentation, limiting myself to the ten minutes you mentioned, and then to be available for questions and answers.

At the outset, I think we need to acknowledge that China's human rights record is somewhat problematic. The U.S. State Department has classified the record as poor, and there are many examples of this, most of which you have probably already heard about: imprisonment of dissidents; religious repression in Tibet, Xinjiang, and elsewhere in China; ethnic repression in Tibet, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, and other areas; media controls on domestic and foreign journalists; a crackdown on lawyers, both so-called rights defenders and defenders of Tibetan demonstrators.

Most of these abuses are justified by reference to Chinese law. However, that law is designed to support authoritarian rule rather than the rule by law, or the rule of law, as that term would be understood in Canada. So the record is problematic, but nonetheless there has been some progress: China's ratification of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, China's signing of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the very recent agreement to resume a bilateral human rights dialogue with the United States, and, more broadly, an effort to what we might call legalize government administration, including an open government information regulation that is going into effect this year, an increased reliance on public law, and an increased role for legal specialists and lawyers.

In a sense, the crackdown on lawyers that has recently been reported by Human Rights Watch, while regrettable, still indicates a change in condition of institutional capacity that was simply not even possible ten years ago. For lawyers to be important enough to be cracked down on is itself a sign of progress of a sort. It reflects that changes in the structure of law and the treatment of human rights are possible due to an increasing role of legal specialists, an emerging middle class, and emerging constituencies within Chinese society that are interested in improving the standard of their lives and the human rights treatment they receive.

It seems to me that understanding China's behaviour on human rights is conflicted. We have problematic examples, and many of them, but we do have progress, and the question is how to sort those out. I would suggest that this depends on an appreciation of the norms and values that inform the Chinese legal system, its human rights policies, and also the institutions and structures that are involved.

In my published work, a list of which I have submitted—and I'm happy to share copies of articles with you if you wish—I have referred to these two approaches as selective adaptation, with regard to the question of the norms and values, and institutional capacity, with respect to institutions and structures.

I think it's important to recognize that the norms and values that inform Chinese government decision-making and the operation of the legal system are quite different from those that are implied by the legal and political terminology. When the terms “judiciary”, “open government”, and “rule of law” are used, these mean very different things in China than they do here in Canada. Institutions as well behave very differently than might be predicted due to a combination of resource constraints, political mandates, and so on.

So it's important to understand the differences in norms and institutional structures when we form our expectations about the performance of the human rights system and the legal system, and again I'd be happy to send you copies of my published work on this.

The challenge is how to encourage continued expansion of positive human rights behaviour and discourage abuses. In my view, there are three main factors in this, and I would list these as engagement, style, and legitimacy. Each of these reflects an appreciation of the normative and institutional factors that I mentioned.

In my view, engagement with China is essential.

If we compare the changing conditions over the past 30 years on human rights issues in China and, say, Burma, China with all its problems is still considerably better from a human rights perspective than Burma.

The reason, primarily, is the degree of openness and engagement with the west, including Canada, through dialogue, joint research programs, educational exchanges, commercial relations, and NGO linkages. These are essential to a healthy relationship between Canada and China. They help modify normative positions, they help change values, and they help build institutional capacity. So engagement is critical.

But the style of engagement is also very important. I think it's important to recognize, and we've seen this just in the last month, that both the Chinese regime and many Chinese people are extremely sensitive to criticism from outside China. There is a very strong awareness and sensitivity about western domination of China in recent history, and by that I mean not only the imperial period of the 19th and early 20th centuries but even more recently.

The intellectual property rights conflicts with the United States, the issues over relations with Taiwan, human rights criticism, matters about Tibet, and so on have tapped into a very deep and vibrant reservoir of nationalism. That nationalism is very strong in China and is easily triggered. It is certainly encouraged by the government, but the government recognizes that it is a two-edged sword—and that's not surprising when we think that the Chinese Communist Party itself really grew out of the May 4th movement in 1919, which itself was a nationalist movement.

So nationalism is a critical feature in the sensitivities of both the government and people in China. One result of that is that hectoring

on human rights conduct is not productive. Regardless of whether it might be warranted or not, it is not productive.

Engagement, including criticism, needs to be contextualized to China's policy priorities: for example, development and stability. Engagement on human rights needs to acknowledge the complexity of China's conditions: the population situation, continued poverty issues, developmental challenges.

Some of these contexts and conditions are used as excuses for political repression, but many are real. Acknowledging China's contexts and conditions while not allowing these to be an excuse for repression depends on understanding the normative and institutional frameworks that I mentioned earlier.

In addition to engagement itself and the style of engagement, legitimacy is an important factor in a Canada-China relationship. Legitimacy is a major motivator. Canada's capacity to confer legitimacy on the Chinese regime is possibly the most important asset Canada has in managing its relationship with China.

Despite our long history of cooperation and friendship with China, Canada simply does not loom large in the consciousness of Chinese leaders and people as a source of power and influence. But we are important as a source of legitimacy, and that legitimacy should be conferred with care.

This can be very helpful in adjusting the terms and the style of engagement. For example, the consequences of engagement that are acceptable to Canada can and should be publicized, but we should avoid unconditional engagement and unconditional dialogue because this often works to confer legitimacy without requiring action. Attention to legitimacy as a motivator can support constructive, normative engagement and institutional capacity-building.

In summary, Canada should continue to recognize the importance of human rights in China. The Chinese government's record on human rights tends to fluctuate, and at present looks discouraging, but the question is what to do. In my view, the most effective response for a healthy Canada-China relationship is continued engagement, attention to local contexts and conditions for that engagement, and awareness of the power of legitimacy to adjust engagement so that it fits the interests of Canada in the relationship with China.

Thank you very much.

•(1540)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. Potter.

We'll go next to Dr. Chin, please.

Dr. Gregory T. Chin (Assistant Professor, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Department of Political Science, York University): Thank you for the opportunity to provide some brief remarks before you today.

I'm an assistant professor in the department of political science at York University. I've been researching and teaching China's politics and economy since the early 1990s, first as a student and now as a professor. One of my areas of specialty is political change in China and China's role in the international system.

Just by way of background, prior to joining York University in 2006, I was a Canadian diplomat in our embassy in Beijing, responsible for managing Canada's foreign aid to China and North Korea. From 2000 to 2003 I worked in the China and Northeast Asia division of CIDA and the China-Mongolia division of Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. I was a visiting fellow at Peking University from 1997 to 1998. I'm a Canadian of Chinese ancestry. My grandfather came to Canada in 1904. I speak Mandarin and Cantonese. In the past 10 years I've lived five years in China.

In the short time that I have here, I wish to address two issues related to Canada-China human rights dialogue: first, Beijing's willingness to accept, uphold, and enforce human rights standards from less acceptance to more; and second, the conditions under which Beijing is most likely to adhere to international standards of human rights.

One, to what extent is China willing to accept, uphold, and enforce human rights standards? I think it's fair to say that China's position on human rights has evolved significantly over the last 30 years. It has come to accept the basic idea that there are universally accepted human rights, a departure from the Maoist period, when it held that the west's notions of "human rights" embodied "capitalist" and "bourgeois" thinking that did not apply to China and other socialist states. It has begun to accept the idea that this universal definition of human rights includes political and civil rights as well as economic and social rights. It has yet, however, to ratify the international convention of civil and political rights.

Despite Beijing's gradual and growing acceptance of the concept of universal human rights, significant gaps remain between its position and that of Canada. China continues to insist that human rights are not absolute, that their promotion must be weighed, according to Beijing, against other considerations, particularly China's transitional stage of economic development and political stability.

It argues that political and civil rights can only be implemented gradually, at a higher level of economic and societal development, and with broader adherence to the rule of law and greater political stability.

There is also the possibility that China is trying to develop a new model of politics and governance that it will call "democratic", which may contain elements of pluralism but will not contain multi-

party contestation or direct popular elections to the highest offices in the country, elements that Canada regards as intrinsic parts of a democracy.

I would suggest that equally important for the committee's purposes is Beijing's ambivalence towards international enforcement of human rights standards in other countries where they are being violated. More recently, China has been increasingly willing, though, to subject some cases of human rights violations to international pressure and has gradually shifted position on North Korea, Darfur, and Burma.

However, China continues to regard economic sanctions and security-led humanitarian intervention as unacceptable violations of sovereignty of the country in question, except in cases of the most severe internal conflict or where there may be spillover effects that threaten international stability. However, Professor Allen Carlson, at Cornell University in the United States, has shown that China has shifted slowly on its position on international intervention over the past 15 years. So there appears to be possibility also for movement on this front.

Two, when does China appear most apt to adhere to international standards of human rights? China appears more likely to adhere to international standards of human rights:

1. When Beijing sees that the standards and norms in question are truly universal, when the standards are supported by the vast majority of states in both the developed and developing worlds. This explains China's growing acceptance of some of the international civil and political rights—for example, child rights and gender rights.

•(1545)

2. When China sees its behaviour in keeping with human rights standards and norms in keeping with its own interests, and behaviour that violates those standards could potentially threaten China's own objectives. But here we're really talking about "threats" of the highest order in terms of national survival. This is perhaps the main reason why China has come to support the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

3. When China sees that the international organization enforcing the norms is widely regarded as legitimate and effective. This is reflected in China's willingness to take security issues to the United Nations Security Council and its more cautious response toward the advances of the G-8. China tends also to react strongly against proactive and provocative rights advocacy at the bilateral level.

4. When Beijing knows it will be isolated in terms of world opinion if it obstructs the enforcement of the international human rights standards or norms. This lesson can be drawn from the embarrassment that China suffered recently when it tried to transport conventional arms to Zimbabwe.

5. When China sees that other major powers, especially the United States, abide by the international human rights norms that it expects China to honour.

Some generalizations: China has come to increasingly accept a wide range of international norms in contrast to the Maoist period, but it still defines some of those norms differently than does Canada, including those governing human rights. China continues to hold that the enforcement of norms should be constrained by commitment to the principle of national sovereignty. And China appears most likely to adhere to international human rights standards when it sees the norms or standards, or the enforcement agency, widely accepted as legitimate.

My personal view is that Canada has the most leverage in promoting Canadian and international values on human rights in China when it promotes international standards and norms at both the multilateral and bilateral levels through a strategy of constructive engagement in which, bilaterally, Canada focuses on building a sustained and comprehensive political policy dialogue with China and through sustained and systematic programs of constructive socialization at the bilateral level. This would mean, to some degree, pursuing more advocacy-oriented agendas at the collective multilateral level.

Thank you.

• (1550)

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

We'll go to Mr. Paltiel.

Dr. Jeremy Paltiel (Professor, Carleton University, As an Individual): Thank you very much.

It's a great privilege to be called before this House of Commons committee to testify on the need for a human rights dialogue with China. I have been involved with China since my undergraduate days, and I've worked on human rights in China for two decades.

First, it must be acknowledged that the human rights situation in China has improved immensely since I first set foot on the soil of the People's Republic of China in October 1974. Second, it is absolutely incontrovertible that much more needs to be done. Third, Canadians all share in the consensus that our foreign policy must be consistent with and adhere to Canadian values. There is no question that our policy toward China must include a human rights component. The only questions before us are: what are our goals with respect to human rights in our relations with China, what form should our expression of concern about human rights take, and what are the best means available for us to achieve our human rights goals?

I have read Professor Charles Burton's report on past human rights dialogue, and I concur with the main outlines of its conclusion and concerns. The main conclusion that I see flowing from this report is the need for us to reassess whether this format is the best conduit through which to convey our human rights concerns to the Chinese side and whether the dialogue format is the best means to engage with elements of Chinese society working to improve respect for human rights in China. I will address these questions later in my remarks.

I think we must prudently avoid two extremes: one would be to reduce our entire relationship with China to an expression of our dissent from the Chinese government's record of human rights. Not only would this do nothing to improve the human rights situation in China, it would run counter to our own vital interests. The other

extreme would be to simply subsume or sublimate our human rights concerns under our commercial relationship. That would disappoint the aspirations of millions of Chinese as well as interested Canadians who look to Canada to stand up for the values embodied in the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which the Canadian John Humphrey played a seminal role in drafting 60 years ago and the anniversary of which we will celebrate on December 13 this year; it would also run counter to our interests in seeing China evolve into a rule-of-law state that consistently conforms to a rules-based international order that not only do Canadians profoundly believe in but on which our prosperity as an open economy depends.

I have only just returned from China within the past month, where I participated in a high-profile human rights forum that was attended by ministers of the State Council of China, a vice-president of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, as well as senior officials of the UN and leading persons from human rights commissions of a number of nations. I was the only Canadian invited to attend.

This conference was held in the shadow of the riots in Lhasa and the widespread demonstrations that took place in March across Tibetan-inhabited zones in China, as well as the controversy that dogged the Olympic torch relay that followed. I was able to forthrightly press my viewpoint that the Chinese government's handling of protest in Tibet merited international scrutiny, that attacks on the integrity of the Dalai Lama damaged China's international image as well as the feelings of the mass of Tibetans, and that sincere dialogue with the Dalai Lama was the best and possibly only way to burnish China's image ahead of the Beijing Olympics.

Despite the fact that the Chinese organizers made every effort to convey the Chinese government's perspective to the participants, and the fact that I was pressed by representatives of China's official media to join in the official condemnation of the politicization of the Olympic torch relay, I simply persisted in upholding the right of free, peaceful political expression. Upon returning to Canada, I sent an evaluation of China's human rights media strategy to the organizers of the forum in Chinese and received a polite and respectful reply that acknowledged my points of concern. My experience, therefore, is that human rights dialogue is possible with China.

Furthermore, no one who has watched the heartbreaking efforts of the Chinese government, from top to bottom, in bringing relief to the victims of the unspeakable tragedy of the severe earthquake that struck Wenchuan, Sichuan, on May 12, 2008, can be in any doubt about the Chinese government's depth of concern and active commitment to its people. There is much common ground here.

The recent controversy over the Olympic torch relay also makes one thing clear with respect to Chinese reactions to criticism. Public condemnation of China, particularly in conjunction with a project of immense national pride such as the Beijing Olympics, only excites a nationalist reaction among Chinese that does more to harm domestic efforts at human rights improvement than any misguided effort to score points on China's human rights record.

● (1555)

While at the conference, the only media outlet that genuinely sought out my views on a subject related to human rights was the *Southern Metropolitan Daily*. What they asked me about was whether people who were condemned to death deserved conjugal visits, but I will leave that aside.

This newspaper, shortly before I left China, broke a story concerning trafficking in child labour spanning the western province of Sichuan and the southern manufacturing base of Dongguan County in the Pearl River Delta. The story was subsequently picked up by foreign correspondents and relayed around the world, but it began as a purely domestic effort in investigative journalism relating to human rights.

Unfortunately, the deputy editor of the paper was subsequently removed from his post over an article he posted regarding self-censorship in the reporting of news from Tibet. This illustrates much better than my own opinions that close association between nationalist sensitivities and human rights progress in China. Western efforts to talk down to China tend to set back the cause of human rights in China. We should avoid making public accusations that adopt a holier-than-thou attitude toward China.

Does this mean we should avoid making controversial statements, including statements about Tibet? Not at all. Shortly before I arrived in China, the incoming Prime Minister of Australia, Kevin Rudd, gave a speech in Chinese at my alma mater, Peking University, in which he argued for candour among friends as a Chinese tradition and where he also made a statement about Tibet.

I believe we can share our views with China on the impact of economic development and on ethnic tensions, and perhaps we should engage them on our experience and difficulties involving first nations groups as stakeholders in economic development projects.

Our past efforts in this regard have borne little fruit because the Chinese counterparts in these human rights dialogues are not the people on the ground facing human rights problems. They are, instead, human rights bureaucrats designated to deal with foreigners. We should insist on a human rights dialogue that is genuinely addressed at solving mutual concerns. Specific consular concerns are best addressed in private. They should be brought up with our Chinese counterparts as part of normal diplomatic dialogue.

We must make it clear that our interest in developing friendly relations with China goes well beyond specific consular cases, but at the same time we insist that the ways in which Chinese officials resolve issues of specific interest to Canadians go some considerable way toward establishing an atmosphere of mutual trust in which friendly relations develop.

We should make it abundantly clear to Canadians that our country has a considerable stake in developing friendly relations with China.

China isn't just the world's most dynamic economy that doubles in size every five or seven years; it is now our second-largest trade partner and has overtaken us as the largest trade partner of our largest market, the United States. It is also Japan's largest trade partner, as well as that of South Korea and every state in East Asia.

But our interest in China is far more than commercial. China is now Africa's largest aid donor. It is the largest investor in Latin America. And it is the largest contributor of UN peacekeeping forces among the permanent five of the UN Security Council. It is also the world's largest holder of foreign exchange reserves, at over \$1.7 trillion U.S.

It isn't Canada that needs China, it is the world. But China also needs the world, and a patient, focused, and nuanced human rights dialogue with China will help narrow our differences and help relations.

We should implement a human rights dialogue that, one, makes clear our varying approaches to human rights at the official level but which engages those people and organizations that are actively involved in promoting human rights domestically; two, is aimed at identifying and disseminating best practices rather than empty principles; and three, is pursued in a spirit of common exploration in a field where every country falls short of its ideals.

● (1600)

I would urge resumption of a human rights dialogue, which would take place at two levels: one, an annual consultation of topics of mutual concern; and two, joint exploration of common areas of concern that would go forward on a multi-year basis involving official organizations and NGOs from both sides and that would aim at tackling issues of common concern in specialized working groups. The topics can be identified by the dialogue partners of the ministries of both sides but should be implemented by organizations with the capacity and interest to make a difference on the ground. We should commit the linguistic and logistical resources to make this possible.

Third, needless to say, our government and our civil society must unequivocally have the ability to make known to Chinese officials individual cases of concern. We can draw on civil society for information about cases of concern. These should be conveyed by officials at the highest level—that means we must have meetings at the highest level—but are best handled in ways that are not intended to cause the Chinese government public embarrassment. Once the cases are made known to the Chinese government, they should be followed up through normal diplomatic channels. Questions of principle can be addressed in public dialogue. Individual cases are best handled quietly, but with persistence and determination. Public shaming is a last option.

China's progress in the area of human rights is evident in the heartbreaking scenes that are unfolding on our TV screens since the May 12 earthquake. The Chinese people are not only demanding relief, they are demanding the right to participate in providing relief and are demanding information in support of their concerns for their fellow countrymen.

China's top leaders have also shown direct commitment to the needs of the people. Scenes of China's premier, Wen Jiabao, working day and night on the front lines of disaster relief have changed attitudes of Chinese about the role and personality of their leaders forever. Some of this comes out of awareness of relief efforts by other countries. Time is definitely right for engagement, and there is no room left for one-sided preaching from one country to another.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Paltiel.

And indeed, thank you to our other two guests as well for very in-depth and comprehensive testimony.

We're going to go to our first round. I'm going to welcome Mr. Chan to ask questions of our guests.

Hon. Raymond Chan (Richmond, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, gentlemen, for joining us, and particularly Mr. Pitman Potter, for meeting you again.

All three of you have to some degree been saying there is improvement in human rights in China. Jeremy, you talk about immense improvement. Could you be more specific on what kind of improvement has been achieved, both on individual freedom and also on religious freedom?

Dr. Jeremy Paltiel: Is this specifically addressed to me?

Hon. Raymond Chan: No. I would like to hear answers from all three of you.

Dr. Jeremy Paltiel: I'd like to start with the last part first, with the religious freedoms. There are problems with the religious freedom side. In terms of immense improvement, that has to do with the time when I was in China in the mid-1970s, when all places of worship were closed. Today, people openly worship in China in both recognized religious forms and also some unofficial ones, and the unofficial ones are the ones that are the most problematic these days.

There are temples open. People worship at them openly. I saw this on my most recent visit. But there is still a problem in terms of state

control and state supervision. The difference is that there is a recognized space for religious activity in China that was not present before.

Another example has to do with the media openness I saw, not only with respect to this story, again, about child labour, which was reported by the domestic press, but also with respect to the reporting from the earthquake zone, the use of the Internet and blogs, people actually talking about problems connected with...their active concern about problems that might have been corruption in the past and current concerns about possible corruption in relief. All of these things are relatively new.

Although there are problems—as I said, the editor gets dismissed—what you get in China today is that concerns are bubbling up from society. And those channels are opened up. What happens is there might be one person who's targeted, as perhaps the instigator, but then again the bar gets moved and people expect a higher level of involvement.

Of course, Professor Potter is much better equipped than I to talk about changes in the legal norms, but there have been immense changes in the role of lawyers. Most recently, there was the threat of sanction against lawyers who defended some of the demonstrators in Tibet, but the fact is that the lawyers came forward to provide a pro bono defence. Again, these are changes.

I can't go much further without taking up all our time. I'll let other witnesses speak.

● (1605)

The Chair: We'll move to Mr. Potter, and then to Mr. Chin if he wants.

Dr. Pitman Potter: I just have a few responses to that question.

First, as a matter of conceptualization, I really do think, with the greatest respect to all concerned, that comparing today to the days of Mao is not a very helpful comparison. Life today in China is so different from life under the Maoist regime that a comparison is just not very helpful.

A more useful way of comparing it is by looking at stages over the past three decades. If we look at human rights conditions, even in the mid- and late eighties, prior to the Tiananmen crisis, if we look at human rights conditions in the mid-nineties, for example, after Deng Xiaoping's visit to the south, and if we look at human rights conditions today, it is fair to say that there are many areas where human rights conditions have actually deteriorated. And I think religion is one of them.

It is true that many people are participating in religious faith in China, but China's policy, grounded in the constitution and in national regulations on control of religion, and so on, makes it very clear that although people are entitled to freedom of religious belief, they are not entitled to freedom of action to act on that belief.

There is a large question as to whether that's consistent with the international standards. But that also means the state is paying a lot of attention to the behaviour of religious adherence. I'm not only talking about the outlawing of so-called cults like the Falun Gong; I'm really talking about the underground Christian churches. I'm talking about Islam and the domination of the teaching of Islam in Xinjiang, and also the control over Tibetan Buddhism, not only in Tibet but also in Inner Mongolia.

It is important to recognize that there are some bumps in this road. It's important to recognize that the government is very apprehensive about and hostile to competing organizations, whether they be religious, economic, or civil. So I think the religious issue has to be looked at in more context.

In terms of media, I think it is absolutely the case that there is more media freedom in China now than has been the case in the past, and that's largely due to work by media participants to push the envelope, if you will.

Another area is the increase in pluralism in politics. If we look at debates within the National People's Congress, even debates within the party system, there is increased pluralism, and that is increasingly tolerated. Within the party, the effort to install institutions of inter-party democracy and to actually pass laws and regulations that govern the rights of party members to freedom in inter-party debates is another very important step.

Lastly, I would say there is the growth of legal institutions. I would underscore the point I made with regard to the recent Human Rights Watch report on China's repression of lawyers; that is the fact that lawyers are now as important as they are. They just passed a new lawyers' law, trying to increase state control on lawyers. That can be seen as an indication that the lawyer community in China is trying to be more and more assertive about rights, about the rule of law, and so on, and to a very large extent, that is permitted.

The last thing I would say is that there are the so-called areas where debate is not really permitted. Taiwan, Tibet, and Tiananmen are three that come to mind. But the scope for free debate and discussion and expression in China outside of those issues is increasingly broad. So I do think there have been major improvements over the last three decades, but there are also areas of concern, as there will be for the foreseeable future. The issue is, how do you balance the two?

•(1610)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Potter.

Unfortunately, we're out of time here, Mr. Chin. We're going to give you the first opportunity in the next question.

Dr. Pitman Potter: Greg, sorry about that.

The Chair: Madame Barbot.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Potter, you said that Canada does not loom large in Chinese consciousness, but that we are important as a source of international legitimacy. Could you expand on that and give us an idea of the extent to which we can use China's need for legitimacy in the defence of human rights? From what all three of you said, I gather

that positive changes have taken place in China. But I would like to know more specifically what has been done in terms of governance and accountability. Can specific evidence be seen in the street? For example, today, could Canada work to promote human rights with human rights groups, with organizations in Chinese society? Is that now possible?

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Barbot.

I'm going to go to Mr. Chin first, and we'll all have an opportunity. Questions and answers are seven minutes, so we have to be fairly concise.

Mr. Chin.

Dr. Gregory T. Chin: My apologies to Madame Barbot. I didn't have the earpiece in, so I couldn't hear your questions. I'll let Professor Potter and Professor Paltiel try to respond to your question.

I'll just try to respond to the first question.

Your question was very concrete—specific examples of individual and religious freedoms. My colleagues have already talked about the constraints.

On leisure time, I think we can say the party state has withdrawn more and more from leisure time, so it's individual leisure time.

There is also the right, for example, to choose your job and where you want to work, so market society, consumption rights, and economic rights. I think that's where we see the increase of individual freedoms and rights in China.

On the religious side, clearly there are serious constraints on religious freedom in China, but I think the biggest constraints are at the level of not permitting proselytization and ensuring that or wanting religious organizations to gain the approval and licensing from the state. Other than that, though, there have been increases in religious activity in China.

I'll stop there.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Paltiel.

Dr. Jeremy Paltiel: Actually, I will call on Greg Chin to respond, because he has been involved in this.

Yes, there are many human rights NGOs in China, active ones, legally allowed ones, that work. There are all kinds of problems with the NGO community in China, partly because the government has a strange way of...

Again, I would re-emphasize Professor Potter's view that the Chinese Communist Party's main concern is about competing organizations. The way they handle that in terms of NGOs is to have a regulation that allows only either local grassroots organizations that don't have a national network or national headquarters, or national umbrella groups that don't have local grassroots organizations.

There are some organizations that get around this by registering as businesses, and that's a grey zone. But the person who really knows more about this is Greg, who worked with China's NGO community. But there are many Chinese NGOs working on specific human rights areas, and with which our government does cooperate. It has cooperated in the past, and we would like to open more channels on this, because these grassroots groups do real work, and they improve the lives of women, the lives of prisoners, and the lives of migrant workers. These are some of the areas where we have shown particular concern.

Perhaps Greg can elaborate on this.

• (1615)

The Chair: We look forward to that, but right after Mr. Potter, please.

Dr. Pitman Potter: Thank you.

To respond to Madame Barbot's question regarding Canadian weight, I think the reality is that China looms very large in our consciousness of the world and of Asia, but when we go to China, Canada, given the size of our economy and the size of our population, doesn't loom as large to them as they do to us. I think that's just the reality of it. Of course, when we visit, they're very nice to us. And we have a long history of friendship and collaboration, and every time you get in a cab and say you're from Canada, they talk about Bai Qiu-en and Norman Bethune and so on. So there is that reservoir of goodwill. But largely speaking, I think we don't loom as large in their view as they do in ours.

The legitimacy question, I think, is critical because the entire "China rising" dimension is hinged on the importance of China resuming the important place that it deserves in the world and having legitimacy for its place in the world, and hence legitimacy of its government domestically. A big part of what we saw, in terms of the earthquake relief, was about building legitimacy domestically. That is an area that Canada can actually have some influence in, because when we participate in a human rights dialogue with China, multilaterally or bilaterally, that allows the Chinese government to say, in effect, that the Canadians are supporting what they're doing, and that gives them legitimacy in the face of the world and in terms of their domestic population.

So I think our capacity to confer legitimacy on the Chinese government is a very important asset that Canada has, because of our reputation in the world as essentially a source of good offices and what not, and I think that's something we should explore further.

I would second very strongly the comment on NGO collaboration. That is a critical element in emerging civil society in China. We could debate from now till doomsday whether civil society exists in China or not, but it certainly is emerging, and these NGOs, still somewhat dominated by party and government elements—but

nonetheless increasingly independent, increasingly effective, increasingly assertive—are a critical place for engagement by Canada.

In terms of specific achievements in the area of government accountability—to respond to another part of your question, Madame—I would just point to two processes in the legislative area. One is the process of legislative hearings. If we look at rule-making and legislation over the past three to four years—and the property law that was enacted last year is just one very good example—the increasing reliance on ever more public legislative hearings to get input from still elite groups, but nonetheless a great diversity of elite groups, shows a commitment to, again, building legitimacy for law making through participation.

Another example would be the open government regulations. The new open government decision-making regulation that goes into effect this year is a very important step toward government accountability, but it's very important as well to recognize that it's not motivated by notions of government accountability as we would see those here in Canada. It's motivated generally by an effort to control corruption at the local level. Nonetheless, it is a major achievement in terms of bringing some level of accountability to government decision-making.

I hope that answers your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Potter.

We're going to go to Mr. Goldring. He'll have a question, and then we will be going to Mr. Chin right off the bat.

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

Mr. Potter, you stated that most of the abuses were justifiable by the Chinese authorities. One of the concerning comments was that the lawyers being important enough to be cracked down on is an improvement; it's progress. I suggest that it is rather the opposite of that. It instead highlights the ongoing inadequacy of the Canada-China bilateral human rights dialogue if these things are progressing in that way.

There was a comment made, too, by Mr. Chin that China is more apt to view discussion on this under, I suppose, the lens and light of international human rights agreements, but your comment was that this was so when they were enforceable and legitimate and effective. Maybe you could expand on that, because certainly within that, my understanding is that there are many human rights provisos and acts that are internationally understood by most of the major communities.

What is the difficulty here, particularly with their concern about enforcement and legitimacy being effective? What can be done to change the discussion on that, to maybe go to the source of the problem, which is tightening up the legitimacy of some of these international regulations?

• (1620)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Goldring.

Although it was directed to Mr. Potter, I'm going to go to Mr. Chin. I think they'll all have an opportunity.

Mr. Chin, some comments.

Dr. Gregory T. Chin: If we look at the UN conventions on political and civil rights, I think you can see where China hasn't fully ratified all of the conditions. I think one area—for example, on the use of the death penalty and things like that—is where you can see China is gradually shifting to constraining its liberal use of the death penalty.

That's where, through constructive engagements, for example, on CIDA's programs in China, we've been able to bring over Canadian legal specialists, practitioners, who have been able to work with the Chinese side to both encourage them to limit the use of the death penalty, but also to work with them on other legal reforms that can be brought into the Chinese system. I think that's one type of method at the bilateral level. And then I guess at the international level, through the UN, is where there's a need for building up consensus and agreement on the actual conventions themselves. That's where I see the importance of diplomacy, at these two levels: bilateral, through foreign aid programming, and then diplomatic, at the multilateral.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chin.

Mr. Potter.

Dr. Pitman Potter: Thank you.

When I mentioned that abuses are often justified by reference to the Chinese legal system, that's true. When we look at the imprisonment of people like Hu Jia, for example, that is justified by reference to Chinese law. I think that should give us some pause when we assume that the text of Chinese laws, whether they be on open governance or human rights conditions.... They put human rights protection into the constitution, but they qualified it by reference to socialism, which then includes party power and so on. The legal system works differently there than we might expect a rule-of-law system to work; the abuses are often justified by reference to law. However, this itself is a major change from 20 or 30 years ago.

I would like to return to the role of lawyers, which is the other question you mentioned. Lawyers are less easily controlled. They're more assertive. Therefore, they're more of a challenge to the government now than they were 10 years ago.

I didn't go through my bio at the beginning of my discussion, but you have a copy of my c.v. I won't belabour the point, but I've been involved with Chinese courts and lawyers for quite a long time. I can assure you that 10 years ago Chinese lawyers were largely irrelevant to the issue of human rights in China, whereas today they are really in the forefront. That is why the regime has felt it necessary to try to put pressure on them to restrict their behaviour.

It is in one way regrettable that the regime is doing that—and I would agree with that, certainly—but at the same time we can see progress in the importance of law and legal institutions and lawyers. That shows a broader systemic evolution, which I think is driven by China's internal needs and by the internal social, economic, and political pressures.

That brings me to the last point. I would say that virtually all of the progressive changes we have seen on human rights in China have originated within China but have been supported by quiet help from abroad. When there is public pressure from abroad, the response of both the government and many people in China is essentially to close off discussion and say don't lecture us. But where there are needs that are identified domestically, and where Canada and other counterparts are assisting in a quiet and discreet way, that has been the source of virtually all of the human rights progress. So I think that contextualized engagement is still more effective than public criticism.

• (1625)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Potter.

Mr. Paltiel, in 30 seconds or less.

Dr. Jeremy Paltiel: There are two things.

One is that China's human rights infrastructure really grew out of its initial condemnation in the UN subcommittee on human rights in 1989. But once the infrastructure was built up—it was built up by the state to defend China against attacks—that then becomes a conduit for human rights norms and practices, and for human rights documents to be translated into Chinese usage.

Another example on this same score is that legislative hearings, public hearings, became part of China's practice after China joined the WTO. It was part of its WTO commitments to have public hearings on trade-related matters, but it then becomes a generalized matter in the legislative arena. That just shows you how international practice does influence China.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Paltiel.

Finally we welcome Mr. Marston to our committee. He serves on the human rights subcommittee of this standing committee. It is because of the draft report they brought forward that we are meeting here today.

Mr. Marston, welcome.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): I won't take all of the credit for that report, Mr. Chair, but I appreciate your welcome. Thank you.

About a year ago I was in Beijing, and while I was there I had a chance to visit a workers' group that was supplying information on the rights of farm workers to them. That struck me as something I didn't expect to see. One of the opinions that was offered to me was the fact that the demise of the iron rice bowl is creating a situation of pressure, particularly in central China.

I think Canadians need to understand the message we're getting today that we only have a certain amount of influence in this circumstance. One of the suggestions I've heard is if we invest heavily in bringing up language skills in DFAIT and CIDA, that will position us well to get the attention and deliver the messages in the subtle way you're talking about.

On another point, what do you think about adding the Berne group, along with NGOs, in some form in this dialogue, whether it is through the actual dialogue or in parallel to it?

The Chair: Is there anyone in particular you'd like to direct that to?

Mr. Wayne Marston: Mr. Chin was talking about Canada and international norms, and I was kind of leaning toward him.

The Chair: Mr. Chin.

Dr. Gregory T. Chin: In the beginning, to build up the greatest room for Canadian NGOs to operate in China, it would be important to set up ways in which those NGOs could interact with the Chinese side in a way that builds trust and confidence—to create the room for them to operate in. You'd want to think through very clearly who the partners would be on the Chinese side.

When they're receiving, the Chinese government will probably have some organizations, such as what they call CANGO, the China association for NGOs. Those are umbrella organizations that we historically haven't taken seriously, but they've actually morphed in some interesting ways over the last 15 years. They've taken on some new roles as they compete with more autonomous NGOs, if you want to call them that. So this is the Chinese-sanctioned umbrella entity.

So in the initial phase we'd want to think through how to create the right partnership arrangements so that those Canadian NGOs could operate where there's some confidence and trust on the Chinese side. But then we'd have a phase-in strategy to begin to create more room for independent or autonomous types of rights promotion.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chin.

Mr. Potter.

Dr. Pitman Potter: Thank you.

Mr. Marston's question leads me to say something I hope we all can appreciate, but it might bear repeating. It is that the Government of China is not a monolithic organization that operates under one set of norms and one set of policy priorities. It is an extremely diverse set of policy competitors, and that's necessitated by the fact that the Chinese Communist Party is the only game in town. You have quite a lot of diversity in policy objectives, and there are many elements within the Chinese government that support broader attempts to expand what we would call human rights and good governance. They're doing that through a whole variety of mechanisms, including the NGO and civil society sphere.

Our task is to be as encouraging of that as we can, while at the same time not exposing the folks within the system to criticism that they are too beholden to foreign influence and foreign power. That's a very difficult balancing act, and that's why I believe more effort to cultivate links between Canadian and Chinese NGOs can be very helpful.

It needs to be structured and handled carefully, for the whole reason that we don't want to be seen as the orange revolution sort of problem in China, to which the government is extremely sensitive. Nonetheless, creating space for those civil society organizations through liaison with Canadian counterparts can be helpful, and it can

actually assist those in China who are working for the kinds of governance and human rights principles and practices we all support.

• (1630)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Potter.

Mr. Paltiel.

Dr. Jeremy Paltiel: I want to point out the main reason why the Chinese government is tolerating and perhaps encouraging NGO activities. It has to do with the decline of the iron rice bowl and the lack of a social safety net in market conditions. They have called upon NGOs to fill the gaps left by a market society, and they're actively encouraging them to do the jobs the government can't do itself.

The Chair: Do you mean as far as the social safety net—asking the NGOs to produce some type of a fallback system?

Dr. Jeremy Paltiel: Yes.

The Chair: That's interesting.

Thank you to our guests. Unfortunately, our hour has come to a conclusion. We have two other guests who we're going to hear in the next hour: Mr. Préfontaine, and Mr. Frolic.

We want to thank you very much for your comments. I sense they have helped our committee immensely. Whether you're in British Columbia or here with us today in Ottawa through this remarkable technology, we thank you. I know we've been enriched because of your testimony.

We will suspend for a few minutes to allow our guests to make their exit and the other guests to take their place.

• _____ (Pause) _____
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The Chair: Committee, welcome back. In our second hour today we will hear from Mr. Daniel Préfontaine, president of the International Centre for Criminal Law Reform and Criminal Justice Policy, University of British Columbia. We are also pleased to have with us here today Bernie Michael Frolic, professor emeritus at York University.

We want to leave a few moments for committee business. Your steering committee has met, and the minutes should have been circulated. We would like to adopt that report for sure.

Welcome to both our guests today. I know you were here for our first hour, so you've seen how we operate. We'll begin with Mr. Préfontaine.

• (1635)

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel C. Préfontaine (President, International Centre for Criminal Law Reform and Criminal Justice Policy): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, members of the committee.

As President of the International Centre for Criminal Law Reform, I thank you for inviting the international centre today to share with you our experience in China and to comment on human rights and their evolution in China in the 20th century.

I will give my presentation in English. Afterwards, I will be pleased to answer your questions.

[*English*]

Mr. Chairman, the international centre has tabled a brief for your information and your consideration. It attempts to summarize our activities in and with China over the last 13 years, with a particular focus on human rights, rule of law, and criminal justice issues.

I have been personally involved in the centre's work during those years, and I have to tell you it's been a tremendous experience and learning curve that I've gone through.

Like many Canadians, I thought—way back in 1985, when I first went there—how could you ever possibly bring the kinds of values and things we believed in into this kind of an environment? At the outset, though, let me acknowledge that our involvement in engaging with our Chinese interlocutors, although it's been fruitful and quite an experience, has been complex and at times frustrating because of the difference in language—not being able to speak Mandarin on our part and not being able to speak French or English on their part—although as time has gone on we have been able to try to remedy some of those difficulties on both sides. So dialogue requires communication to be possible—at least in the form of good interpretation or speaking the same language—especially when it comes to human rights.

We all recognize, including our Chinese counterparts that we've met, that there are real human rights issues in China that still need to be addressed, despite all the progress that's been talked about. At the same time, what we see is a sincere and motivated interest by the Chinese we have worked with—as has been mentioned by previous speakers—who want to work in this field and want to see these changes brought about because they do not want a repetition of what their parents or their grandparents went through. They thereby want to see efforts to bring about greater respect for the rule of law and human rights.

Obviously, not everyone will agree about what these terms mean, even in our country sometimes, and, as Professor Potter has noted in his comments, even more so in the Chinese context. Based on our experiences, we believe that engagement with our Chinese counterparts in fact works reasonably well, but it needs to be enhanced and continued.

Engagement—since this word is being tossed around—means many things to different people. It's better than ignoring; it's better than repressing; and it's a form of accommodation. But engagement—and the kind of engagement such as the law reform projects we have been working on—can be viewed and should be viewed as an important element within the broader framework of Canada's foreign policy and development aid cooperation efforts.

It's my view, for what it's worth, that the Canadian objective, in terms of what we do in China, is to support legal and judicial reform as a step towards improving human rights on the basis that it's better to be in the tent and supporting than outside and objecting. Legitimate criticism, however, must be made.

First, let me say a word about the centre to give you some context. The centre was created in 1991 as an independent, not-for-profit institutional organization in Vancouver. It's officially affiliated with

the United Nations under a formal agreement between the Government of Canada and the United Nations. Our mandate is quite broad-based, including the promotion of human rights, the rule of law, democracy, and good governance, and particularly to make every effort to assist those who are interested in implementing international standards, and not just international human rights standards.

We've had 17 years of experience in criminal justice reform, and we've worked in many countries, but our most significant contribution, I think, in my own mind, because I've been so closely associated with it, is the long-standing program of engagement and support to the legal judicial justice reform process in China, particularly in terms of institutional and capacity building.

● (1640)

When did that start? We began our pioneering and groundbreaking work in 1995, with the launch of the China-Canada criminal justice cooperation project. We started working with academic institutions, as others were doing, but in fact in the criminal justice area we were the first ones.

We were funded by the Ford Foundation, and part of the funds came from the Canadian International Development Agency, in order to provide expert input to assist the Chinese in taking a look at what it meant to apply human rights standards to their country situation, in terms of trying to amend their criminal procedures, their criminal laws, and the way they provided and wanted to provide international covenant standards.

In 1997 our program was renewed for another three years. We had a new partner besides the two academic institutions, which included the China Prison Society. They were to look at the issues that were going on in human rights in prisons, and in particular how to keep the level of incarceration down by looking at how Canadians did community corrections, if I can put it that way.

Then we moved on and had another life, if you will, in 2000, in ratification and implementation of human rights covenants. And then finally, from 2003 until last summer, we had a four-year program of implementing international standards in criminal justice.

Separate and apart from that particular program, we worked on legal aid. We were the ones who were asked by the Chinese if we would help them look at the legal aid systems of other countries and help them develop a national legal aid program. We did that, and as a result of that work, the Canadian Bar Association and IBM Canada, with CIDA as the executing agency, are implementing a legal aid system in China that has a huge number of legal aid clinics throughout the country—in the hundreds of thousands of cases that are now being dealt with. Numbers are staggering when you're dealing with the Chinese situation compared to our modest Canadian way of doing business.

Finally, we did a large program, and we are continuing that program right now, working with the Chinese prosecutors. As one of the key agencies in China, we are helping them with professionalization, capacity building, and developing new ways of having the Supreme People's Procuratorate respect international covenants and combat crime.

As has been alluded to by some of the previous speakers, we know the history of legal and judicial development in China. We have seen the amendments from the mid-1990s and since the March 2004 constitutional amendments, which enshrined—be careful with “enshrined”—the human rights as a constitutional principle. It's not the same kind of enshrinement as we have in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms or in our Constitution, but it does at least go a long way, in comparative terms, towards recognizing that it's something that should be done and respected.

In fact, from what we can see from the people we're working with, the Chinese government is making international human rights standards a priority as one way to help China assume its place in the community of nations in the 21st century. However, they have lots of problems, and with the free market economy, public corruption, economic crime, computer crime, narcotics trafficking, all of these things are becoming more prevalent than they were 20 or 30 years ago, or even 10 years ago. It's a big obstacle in some respects to implementing the recently enacted legal and judicial reforms, which they are working on.

Corruption has now become the number one priority for the Supreme People's Procuratorate. In our project, in supporting their work, we have been doing all kinds of information exchange, study tours, and providing them with different approaches on how to deal with the two aspects of corruption—the prevention side as well as the enforcement side. Much needs to be done on the prevention side. The prevention side needs a lot more work.

● (1645)

I think it would be important for me to mention some of the significant reforms that we have seen take place, which we feel we have been able to influence in some way. The improvements to the death penalty review system, which have caused a significant reduction in the number of capital punishment cases, have been quite extraordinary. As far as the numbers go, they count one way, Amnesty International counts another way, and we can count other ways as well. The death penalty still exists, but the numbers and the kinds of cases for which it's being used have been reduced.

Increased protection of the rights of the accused in pre-trial investigations with the new supervisory powers of the procurators, the prosecutors over the police, are quite significant. The introduction of anti-torture rules, exclusionary rules of evidence, and the videotaping of interrogations—I've witnessed them myself—are quite impressive. Perhaps some of our police could go as far. You can't do everything, but you do most of them.

The Chair: Mr. Préfontaine, can I just interrupt for a moment? We're two minutes over the ten-minute timeframe. If you could summarize and conclude, we'll go to the next...

Mr. Daniel C. Préfontaine: Sure. I figured that was probably going to happen because there's too much stuff. That's why I gave you the brief.

The Chair: It's a huge briefing, and we certainly will leave it with each member, and they'll be able to go through it as well, but could you summarize and conclude, please?

Mr. Daniel C. Préfontaine: Let me conclude then with the issue of engagement. Based on the years of programming experience in China, there are five reasons we believe engagement with China on

human rights issues works and should be continued. First, China is committed to transforming its legal-judicial system as part of its efforts to join the world community. They're motivated. Second, the Chinese change process balances learning from endogenous experiences—that is learning from within by themselves—with learning from the experience of others, which provides a host of entry points for engagement. Third, although the legal and human rights traditions of China and Canada are historically different, there are sufficient areas of shared interest to make for a productive rights dialogue based on mutual interest and learning. Fourth, we both possess the capacity to craft, manage, and sustain a cooperative relationship based on mutual respect. Fifth, the imperative for engagement between our two countries grows as the process of globalization accelerates.

A final word. We share a common goal. After 25 years of Canada working over there and being involved, it would be rather a loss of a big investment to just abandon it or to ignore it. We can't repress it, so we should engage.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Préfontaine.

We'll now go to our next guest, Mr. Frolic.

Mr. Bernie Michael Frolic (Professor Emeritus, Political Science Department, York University): My thanks to the committee for this invitation to appear before you today. I'm the last person standing in a long parade of witnesses you've had today, and most of the things probably have been said already. But I hope in my brief remarks I can raise a few other points.

My remarks are based on encounters with China that I've had over 40-plus years. I've been identified by many, rightly or wrongly, as the principal chronicler of the Canada-China bilateral relationship. I first visited China in 1965 and served in the Canadian embassy in Beijing in the 1970s. I've continued to visit and work in the PRC regularly since then.

In my experience, the contrast with China's past is truly remarkable. I'm not sure I can even express the significance of this. The economic developments are spectacular, the social changes are profound, and, yes, even the political changes are noteworthy. To be clear, however, today's China is an authoritarian society and political system, and the prospects for western-style democracy, in my lifetime if not yours, are slim. So in these remarks I want to address several issues concerning political change in China and our policy toward China. At the end I'll offer some recommendations for policy, for what they are worth.

First, our bilateral relationship has served us well, but it needs urgent adjustment in several areas, not just in human rights and democracy promotion. Aside from democracy and human rights, we need to re-think our long-term trade and investment strategy because we have problems there; make some hard decisions about continuing our development assistance funding, in what form and by whom; come to terms with the fundamental disconnect we have in consular matters—that's the Celil case; and tighten up our immigration procedures.

Second, the Chinese political system is changing, and it's changing incrementally if not dramatically. The party is more transparent, educated, professional, attuned to the outside world, and more democratic internally. This is based on my experience training 2,500 party officials in western management and other areas these past eight years in Toronto. There has also been progress in the development of state institutions and law. For example, the National People's Congress, formerly a moribund legislature, is now holding public hearings based on proposed legislation. It has acquired a larger role in the political system, and its work has become more transparent.

A decade ago I wrote that civil society in China was emerging, but was "state led". Now we see budding grassroots civil society in the big city neighbourhoods, as property owners unite to use new-found laws against developers, against housing management officers, and corrupt local officials.

Of recent interest is something called strolling—like walking—in Shanghai. Thousands of residents recently took to the streets and silently walked about for hours in a successful protest of government policy. There are 75 million blogs today in China, and you cannot shut down all of them all the time. China now has 100 million religious observers, which is a significant religious revolution even if there are some limitations.

Is the glass half full or half empty? Those who see ongoing entrenched despotism, that is human rights abuses—Tibetans, Uighurs, etc.—opt for the empty glass. Those who recognize that it took us hundreds of years to attain democracy are somewhat more optimistic. For me, the glass is half full.

Third, the party is in control. The majority of Chinese citizens accept its leadership. Don't expect a Soviet-type collapse of the Communist Party. I lived in the Soviet Union in the 1980s when the Soviet party collapsed, so I have some sense of the differences here. Today's 73-million-member party is stronger than ever. Its legitimacy is secured by a big trade-off it has made with the citizens. Keep delivering the economic goods and we'll leave governance to you. Chinese public opinion polls confirm this support. The 200-million new middle class likes it. The mantra is stability, and the reminder is what happened to the Soviet Union in 1990. The party, yes, has its weaknesses, especially at the local level, in the rural areas where official corruption is substantial.

Fourth, hard diplomacy by other countries—linkage, sanctions, blockades, megaphone politics—has been ineffectual in changing China's human rights agenda.

● (1650)

In 1989, China did not budge after we condemned them and asked Beijing to apologize. Not for us or for any of the other countries that sanctioned them did they do this. The Americans, more aggressive than Canada on human rights, have strongly and repeatedly condemned China's record for years. However, in truth, we cannot document any lasting concrete changes resulting from that American policy. Confrontation has not produced discernible positive change. In my view, dialogue is the better option. It trumps isolation and confrontation every time.

Fifth, China's huge population, long history, isolation, and authoritarian political culture make it unlikely that China's political values, institutions, and practices can quickly change. For us, democracy and human rights are universal values. Our focus on the individual, the basis of our democracy, on his or her rights, ownership of property, protection by rule of law, representative institutions, and accountability of officials are the logical outcome of our history. That is what we celebrate. China needs a lot of catching up before it is ready to celebrate western values and develop the democratic institutions to sustain them. In the short term, we may have to live with an authoritarian global economic power that is moving vaguely in the direction of political pluralism, if not democracy.

I have some policy recommendations to suggest here.

First, re-establish the bilateral rights dialogue, but in a different format. Open up the process to provide broader participation by Canadian stakeholders. The process has been narrowly confined to a few bureaucrats and a few organizations at the upper levels of government. Find Chinese interlocutors who have a more direct stake in the democratization process when you do this. Learn from the Americans, who are about to resume their human rights dialogue in Beijing; I think they actually resumed it yesterday. Find out what they're doing. Why are they doing it again, and what are they doing?

Second, support the creation of a democracy foundation—which is something that came out of this committee or subcommittee last year—but with several caveats. I note the high cost, the danger of centralizing and bureaucratizing this enterprise, the long lead-in time before this foundation can be effective, the ambitious scale, and the substantial use of public funds. These are all serious concerns. What leading role can a latecomer like Canada play here? Isn't this a bit of hubris on our part? The National Endowment for Democracy, which is an American democracy foundation, was created 25 years ago. Realistically, what can we do that all the others, with budgets currently in the billions, haven't been doing for 20 or more years?

Third, organize, consolidate, and expand our human rights, rule of law, and governance projects currently carried out in China by CIDA, IDRC, DFAIT, etc. These are low-cost programs focused on human resource training and institutional development. Here are some examples of projects: working with the Central Party School to improve environmental management; working on the five-year program to develop China's legislative capacity at the national and provincial levels; providing legal training for judges; establishing legal aid clinics—we've heard about those—and exposing senior Chinese public servants to Canadian management experience.

Fourth, expand participation from the Canadian civil society sector and be more inclusive. That was one of the main recommendations of the report of July 2007 to this committee. Some suggestions: organize an annual series of two to three one-week cross-Canada leadership seminars with young Chinese leaders and their Canadian counterparts to expose them to Canadian life and values. The Draeger-Stiftung has done this for eastern Europe for the last 20 years.

Now that religious practice is becoming more acceptable in China, we should promote more active interchange between Chinese and Canadian counterparts. One promising area is in charity work. Taiwanese religious organizations have established a good cooperative relationship in this area.

Develop cooperation between Canadian and Chinese media. In our programs at York University we have worked with CCTV, Beijing TV, Chongqing television and newspapers, and the Chengdu media. They in turn have established links with Canadian media organizations.

One delicate area is the inclusion of advocacy groups that violently oppose the Chinese government. The challenge will be how to incorporate their activities within a framework that seeks positive engagement rather than confrontation.

Fifth, develop links in the ethnic-multicultural area. Given Canada's experience with its own ethnic minorities and our ongoing multicultural policies, why not encourage the exchange of Canadian and Chinese views on cultural autonomy? We have had a program of this type between our first nations and Taiwan aboriginals for several years. I floated this today—just before I came here—to the Chinese embassy. I mentioned Tibet, and they were not too supportive of this idea, but at least they listened to me.

• (1655)

Sixth, focus on democracy building first. First focus on democracy, then on human rights. Democracy provides the context—rule of law, institution building, and good governance practices—for the subsequent attainment of human rights. You can't have human rights if you don't have a functioning rule of law system.

Developing democracy and human rights is a holistic experience. Make the creation of a democracy infrastructure the primary goal, with human rights the beneficiary. And remember, there are no miracles to be found here.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Frolic and Mr. Préfontaine. I mean it. I really want to thank you for your testimony, specifically for being so clear on the recommendations. It was not just testimony, but some conclusive remarks were made.

Thank you as well for your concluding summary, Mr. Préfontaine.

We're going to go to Mr. Patry and Mr. Chan. Maybe we'll take the two questions, and then we'll go to our guests.

• (1700)

[*Translation*]

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

Thank you very much, gentlemen.

[*English*]

Mr. Frolic and Mr. Préfontaine, I must say I read both of your presentations and they are both great. I will go right away to the question.

In your presentation, Mr. Frolic, there are six recommendations, but number four was about expanding participation from the Canadian civil society sector. In the first paragraph you wrote that the lack of transparency in the past is viewed as a weakness. I would like you to elaborate on this.

My second question is this. We know there is a major political change in China—there is no doubt about it. Even the witness just mentioned that there will not be an election at the higher level for a long time. But capitalism is there, and there is a little inclusion of some democracy, if we can say so.

What about human rights? At the end, I would like you to elaborate a bit on human rights. Which one comes first, human rights or democracy?

The Chair: Mr. Chan.

Hon. Raymond Chan: Thank you.

Once again, it's nice to see both of you again in this context.

When you answer my colleague's question, perhaps you can be a bit more specific, Mr. Préfontaine, by detailing how the legal system reform has implicated the livelihood of the general citizens in China. How has the average citizen benefited from the legal reform that we have helped them proceed to?

Also, Professor Frolic, you talk about the democratic reform, the change that is happening there. Can you be a bit more specific on what kinds of changes have happened and how you see that development in the near or mid-term future if they continue with that kind of change?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chan and Mr. Patry.

We'll go to Mr. Frolic.

Mr. Bernie Michael Frolic: Thank you very much, Mr. Patry.

I referred to the lack of transparency in the past as a weakness. I was referring to the report, which, in a sense, talked about a wide range of things. In this case I believe we need to open up the system more. The question is, I'm not sure which report. I think I'm talking about the Burton report here.

I felt in that report, which I only had a chance to see just recently because it wasn't easily available, that people like me never knew anything about these human rights dialogues—and I've only been in the field for 40 years. Not that I necessarily had something that profound to say, but at least I felt that the circle of people who were involved was a little too narrow, and we needed to broaden the base.

There is always a risk. I know why they did it. They were afraid of bringing in advocacy groups that might disrupt the process. But I think this is a real challenge. How do you include and what do you exclude? We were excluded, I think. I'm not saying I should be included, but there should be a broader base for this.

On the subject of what comes first, I thought I made it fairly clear. I think you can't really move to deal with human rights until you have an effectively functioning political system, one where the political culture is already changing—that's not the case in China, as it's still an authoritarian political culture—where people begin to respect the rights of the individual, and that's not been the case in China.

The focus of politics, of law, is the individual's right to property and to defend his or her right to property—his or her own person and property in general—and to be protected by the rule of law. You need an infrastructure to get to that before we run around talking about giving this person more political rights. You can't enforce those rights without these kinds of values and institutions. That's what I meant.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Frolic.

Mr. Préfontaine.

Mr. Daniel C. Préfontaine: As it affects the individual citizen, you have to look at how the different organs of justice, as they're called in China, have been changing the way they do their jobs, as well as the form of professionalization that is taking place in the Supreme People's Court. Where 20 years ago, 10 years ago, very few people were legally trained, now almost all...not all, because there's grandfathering and grandmothering that has taken place in terms of the quality of the judges and prosecutors. When you see that you have 120,000 judges who are now all very close to being legally trained, or will be in the next five years under their plan, and you see some 140,000 prosecutors who will be in the same category of being legally trained, with law degrees, in other words, and when you see that there are 160,000 lawyers—whatever the comments were about lawyers—who are doing their jobs in terms of making sure that when you make laws, the laws will be respected and implemented, then you can see that evolution of professionalization. It makes the institutions respond.

So what we have been trying to do on behalf of Canada is indicate to them what other countries do, what the basics are that need to be taken into account, provide them with the information, and show them how we do it, what our value system is, what our ethical codes are. And that includes the work the Canadian Bar does with the legal

profession, the work that the National Institute of Justice is doing with the judges, what we're doing with the prosecutors, and what parliamentarians are doing, as was mentioned, with the legal and justice committee of China on how to legislate and draft laws so that you can properly interpret them.

An example is the story I mentioned in the brief. It shows you today as compared to 1999. In 1999 there were 600 legal aid centres operating throughout China, handling about 60,000 cases a year, providing advice to about 800,000 people on both the criminal procedures law and the lawyers law. In 2006, the last count, they handled 318,514 cases and 3,193,801 persons. These are the Chinese statistics.

So legal aid, in and of itself, with the help of Canada—because we were the first ones in there to set up a national legal aid system—hits the individual citizen, hits the vulnerable groups, hits the women who are facing violence. There is a lot of work being done on violence against women, protection of children, and so on.

• (1705)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Préfontaine.

We'll go to Madame Barbot.

[*Translation*]

You have seven minutes.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Thank you.

Professor Frolic, you mentioned dialogue and you quoted the Burton report. More specifically, you asked for a transparent process, and, at the same time, said that the Canadian government is not being transparent. You made it very clear that some groups should have been involved, but were not.

I would like to know what is happening on the Chinese side. How have the efforts at dialogue been received, and what influence does Canada really have to change things? I asked the previous guests the question too. I understand that it is being done in legal matters, but once laws are written and people are trained, we need one more step. We must be sure that people going through the justice system are treated in a way that we would call democratic, or more or less democratic. I understand the constraints in China, but I would like to hear about concrete results and to know how real Chinese people are reacting to them. I would also like to know exactly how Canada could change its approach, if it had to.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Barbot.

Mr. Préfontaine, we have seven minutes for the question and the answer.

Mr. Daniel C. Préfontaine: I thought it was addressed to you.

The Chair: Well, whoever. I think she wants both.

Sorry, I apologize.

Mr. Daniel C. Préfontaine: I think it's a democracy, so the legal side precedes it.

Mr. Bernie Michael Frolic: First I want to say a bit about the Burton report. I finally read the Burton report, after not seeing it for a long time and hearing all kinds of things about it, and actually first reading the transcript of your committee hearings. What's interesting is that the Burton report is a lot less critical and milder than were the comments made in the hearings by Burton.

When you read the Burton report, actually it makes a lot of sense. There are a lot of good things happening, but there are certain problems, and we have to deal with those problems. The problems are partly that we want to widen the participation base on both sides, focus discussion more, get clearer topics where we're not talking at each other but connecting to each other, perhaps find out whether DFAIT needs to be supplemented by some other organization as well, and on both sides get the ministries of foreign affairs out of it and so forth.

As I said, I came from a meeting of a couple of hours with the chargé d'affaires of the Chinese embassy, and I asked him about the human rights dialogue. I said "I'm going to testify about this soon. What's your view on this dialogue? Is it worthless? Do you want to continue it?" They were quite open and said, "We think this is a good thing. We learned a lot from Canada." That's their view.

We can take that for what it's worth. This is an official talking, obviously, so other officials can hear. But basically they learned a lot from Canada. There are a number of areas where they profited by the Canadian experience. They think that if it is to resume again, there needs to be proper preparation here to define the topics more clearly. This was something that was useful for China, and they've had these dialogues with other countries; they're not useless to them. They have made a difference. That's their view. They didn't give me too many specific details.

From my point of view, I can't speak to the tangible results of this dialogue in China, since I wasn't a participant in it, but I can speak to what Raymond Chan said earlier, which is that there are tremendous changes that have taken place in a number of areas, whether it's opening up the capacity of China's parliament or whether it's opening up the party to be more transparent. In that case, we can talk to these people, we can actually talk to the top leaders of China on a fairly regular basis. We never could do that before.

Whether we can influence them so that they will do what we want them to do, that's another question. As the people in the embassy said today, "We don't want you to tell us what you want. We're not interested in you telling us what we should do in our country—that's our business—but we're willing to listen to you. And if you can help us to develop in certain areas, that's fine."

The one point that really always strikes me is civil society. There's been tremendous opening up of civil society in China in different areas. The recent earthquake was an excellent example. You have people getting in their cars in Shanghai, driving 2,000 kilometres, and then using their precious cars that they don't let anybody ever get into because they're brand new, to chauffeur people back and forth to the earthquake sites. You have people donating huge sums of money to this. You have so many people going there, the blogs, the e-mails and everything; I get so much stuff from my Chinese students and everyone on this. This has been an extraordinary experience.

The media got opened up. It will shrink again. The regime is not going to allow the media to stay open like this for very long, but media openness, as somebody mentioned earlier, is a big change in China. It is more open. But it's certainly not like our media, although sometimes we have some problems with our media too. I get misquoted all the time in *The Globe and Mail*, but that's a whole other story.

• (1710)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Préfontaine.

Mr. Daniel C. Préfontaine: From the perspective of a political reflection of what a state is all about and what kind of constitutional framework or legal type of system it has, you then can begin to figure out how it's used. In using it, perhaps democratic principles will be reflected and perhaps they will not, because the legal system, the rule of law, can be as oppressive as it can be reflective and forgiving. I mean in the sense that you pay attention to what the law says, you practise what it says, and you're guided by the way the courts interpret it. In that sense, what comes first, a democratic form of government or a system of laws that will lead to more democratic forms of government? What we have is an international set of standards, and that's the door we all seem to be going through. Even in Canada we have problems sometimes with some of the international standards and norms. How do we implement them in a day-to-day practice?

I would suggest we work with the practitioners more and more. Practitioners are like us; they're people, and they're not all wanting to beat the other person down. I believe if you get people to see what is right, in terms of their situation, you will get some results that we're seeing now, in my view, in China and more respect for the accused person when he's arrested, less oppression on the part of the police. But you're going to have the usual exceptions. You're going to have crackdowns, because we have them, and we have them in different ways. I'm not equating us with China now in terms of what we do with religious groups or anything like that; that's not what I'm talking about. I'm saying sometimes your laws have to go a lot further than you want them to and what your constitutional restraints are. But you have your court to limit you, and that's where ours works, I say, perhaps better for us than for anybody else.

• (1715)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Préfontaine.

We'll go to the government side, to Mr. Khan and then Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Khan.

Mr. Wajid Khan (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll ask a couple of very quick questions and give you all the time to answer them.

Mr. Préfontaine, in your years of work in China, could you tell us the most and least human rights progress you have seen? And is any progress you have witnessed related to any Canadian effort?

Mr. Frolic, acknowledging that Canada does not loom large in China, as some of the witnesses have said, in your view, what is the most effective way of engaging China on human rights, which would deliver progress? I'd also like, sir, your comment on how the rapid increase of the middle class in China, as it integrates into the global economy, will influence the human rights issues? Is it realistic to expect a single country to be able to effect a change in a country as powerful as China? Anybody can answer.

The Chair: Those are three fairly simple, concise questions that I'm sure shouldn't take too long to answer.

We'll begin with Mr. Préfontaine, quickly.

Mr. Daniel C. Préfontaine: Well, as Canadians, we have been there with other countries—the U.S, Australia, Germany, and the U. K., to name a few. Strangely enough, we have been very active. Maybe it's because of the kind of relationship we've had with the Chinese over 25 years, and more that we've been invited to come and tell them how we do business and how we do things, and they're paying attention. You don't find out about it right away. You might find out about it two years or so later.

As a quick example, we brought a group of senior prosecutors over there for work in their anti-corruption group in the Supreme People's Procuratorate. They looked at our integrated enforcement model, how the RCMP works with the border agencies and other government departments and so on. I found out two years later, in an off-the-cuff conversation, that they had gone ahead and recommended it and that they'd adopted the form, but adjusted to their needs. That's not bad. So a little country like....

In Canada, we've been there. We were the first foreign organization—foreign for them—working in this area of justice reform, particularly in the area of implementing human rights standards. We've published books. In 1998 we published a compendium of human rights standards. We have volumes we've produced that now are being spread. This one has gone to about 220,000 prosecutors and judges and academics across China. So we are making a difference in that respect.

How do you measure it? That's a tough question. In our results-based management world, it's not as easy to have predictable results and always have indicators that match this and that in that context. What you do see, though, if you happen to go and visit, is that there is change taking place. You see in the newspapers things we have never seen before about the prosecutors and the judges throwing out cases. Wrongful conviction cases are now being paid attention to. Who would have thought five years ago that this would have been possible?

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Frolic.

• (1720)

Mr. Bernie Michael Frolic: There are a whole bunch of questions here. Let me see if I can get at some of them.

On the most and least progress in human rights, I think in some ways, law has been the area where we've done a lot, with law and legal aid and so forth. That's very impressive, and we've been doing that for 20 years. Whether you can measure the effect remains to be seen, but from my point of view, it's significant.

Another area is civil society. We've had a small program run by CIDA for maybe up to 10 years through the Canada Fund. We give \$25,000 or \$30,000 a year to Chinese civil society organizations, and they go out and work on AIDS and they work on the environment, on improving the situation for women, on unemployment, and on age. This is all done in spite of the fact that the Chinese government hasn't really liked it, because we are giving this aid directly to civil society organizations, and despite the fact that our own Canadian government hasn't liked it, because we aren't sure we have control over what we are doing exactly. In general, in anything we do in the socio-economic area, which is part of human rights, you can see that there's progress.

In the political and civil rights area, that remains somewhat more difficult.

On the subject of Canada not looming large in China, I agree with my colleague. We once loomed large in China. We could have been a contender, as Marlon Brando said. But look where we are now. Part of it is not any fault of any government policy. China has just grown so big and so powerful, and we have not. Slowly, in the last 20 years, and this has nothing to do with human rights, our role in the world has shifted. We are no longer quite up there. We can't play with the big boys and girls, so to speak.

So can we affect what goes on in China? Well, certainly, under the current conditions, we cannot. Right now we are not a player in China. The top levels in the government and our level right now have an awkward relationship. Hopefully that will change. Whether we can do it at the mid levels and at the lower levels—picking up on what Pitman Potter talked about earlier about there being many Chinas and that it's not just at the official level—we could do that. How much of an impact that will have when we work with our counterparts at mid and lower levels, I don't know. But we can do that.

How do we engage on human rights? Well, I think we should restore the dialogue at the top level. I think we should get our NGOs and civil society groups more involved in the process with their counterparts. That's going to be tough. I think we should develop those soft programs that we already have that CIDA and IDRC run, and so forth. These are programs that really do have an impact. Some have funded your centre.

I guess those are my answers to those questions.

The Chair: Thank you for those answers.

I'm going to Mr. Marston again, but I'm going to remind the committee that we do have a very short item—adopting the report from the steering committee—that we want to accomplish at roughly 5:30.

Mr. Marston.

Mr. Wayne Marston: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Two names come to mind: Dr. Bethune, and Dr. MacKay in Taiwan. Those names have carried a lot of weight in, I guess some would argue, one country.

You mentioned CIDA funding some of the organizations over there. One of the ones I referred to with our last guests who were here was a workers' group that was offering rights advice to farm workers. I walked through there, saw a poster, and said it looked like my friend...I won't name the individual, but it looked like his work. He had gone into China to assist in this program totally on his own hook.

There are a lot of people engaged in China who we don't even know about.

The dialogue is a tool. Looking at that, in my mind, we're in for an extremely long process. I do think Canada has a significant role to play because of the respect that's there. Sometimes it doesn't show itself, but it's still there. I mentioned before my belief that we should be investing in both CIDA and DFAIT and adding language skills.

The other thing that concerns me is long-term institutional memory. I notice your hair is the same colour as mine. We've got a lot of expertise and a lot of people who have invested a lot of time there. I'm concerned about how we capture and retain that and move it forward within our departments as well.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Marston.

Mr. Frolic.

Mr. Bernie Michael Frolic: I guess I get to reply first because I'm the white-haired guy.

First of all, some people would say that white hair doesn't mean expertise; it means you should be retired and doing something else. Besides, we're trying to develop a new policy here and we don't have time for you people from the past, which indeed may have been the case until today. That's just from own point of view.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Bernie Michael Frolic: Dr. Bethune and Dr. MacKay and those role models are important. Whenever I go some place in China—because I sort of have a beard and he had a beard and he's bald—they say I look like Norman Bethune. That always immediately provides some kind of an entrée. Even if many Canadians may not agree with his political thinking, he is seen as the Canadian of great significance in China. Today, Dashan, another Canadian and a former student of U of T, is a great comedian on Chinese television. He is now equal to Bethune as a great Canadian hero.

The problem is that there aren't that many Canadian heroes right now in China for the Chinese to look upon. As somebody just told me today, even the taxi drivers in Beijing ask, "What's happened to Canada here? How come you are no longer friendly to China?"—Bethune notwithstanding. This is a problem.

On the subject of workers' rights, they've just passed a labour law in China which is going to significantly improve the rights of workers and increase their working conditions and salaries. As a result, the low-cost, low-end factories in southern China are shutting down and are either going to be moved into the centre of China, where wages are still lower, or they're moving to Vietnam.

In effect, there is change taking place here in the labour area with this new legislation, as China is beginning to move up the value chain. This is a very interesting development, and we'll see where it takes China and whether it can continue to send this shirt that I'm wearing to this meeting today for me to buy in the stores, or whether those shirts will be made in Bangladesh or Vietnam.

● (1725)

The Chair: Mr. Préfontaine.

Mr. Daniel C. Préfontaine: Very quickly, the policy has to be one of targeting, in the sense of what you have been doing, and if you feel you've had a good success in doing this or that, we should continue and see if we can increase it if they're willing. We find that in many respects they're willing in many fields, but not in everything. So it's a question of targeting, adjusting to that target, and benefiting from it mutually.

There are a lot of things we can benefit from and learn, even in our so-called legal system, which we think is so wonderful. Well, there are things that they're doing that could save us a lot of money, a lot of time, and keep some of our people out of jail by using community service. I just use that as an example. I'm not saying our system is not doing its best, but there are things we can learn as Canadians. It's not a one-way street where it's only them learning. Targeting is the way I would put it.

The Chair: Thank you very much to both of you. We appreciate your comments.

We're going to suspend for one minute. We're going to move into committee business. In fact, maybe we won't even suspend. This will be very quick, if someone would offer a motion that we adopt the steering committee report.

I'll take it from Mr. Lebel, seconded by Mr. Patry.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you. I will now adjourn today's meeting.

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