



House of Commons  
CANADA

# Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan

---

AFGH • NUMBER 009 • 2nd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

---

EVIDENCE

**Thursday, June 11, 2009**

—  
**Chair**

**Mr. Rick Casson**

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:

**<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

## Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan

Thursday, June 11, 2009

•(1110)

[*English*]

**The Chair (Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC)):** I call the meeting to order.

Today we're having the ninth meeting of the Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan. We have a two-part meeting this morning, from 11 until noon. The minister is available until 12 o'clock.

We have with us the Honourable Stockwell Day, Minister of International Trade. Minister Day is also the chair of the cabinet committee on Afghanistan, and he's appearing before us in that role. In order to get as much time with the minister as possible, I'll open it up to the minister for comments, and then we'll start our first round of questioning. That will be about all we'll have time to do.

Minister Day, we certainly want to welcome you. The committee, as you know, is responsible for making Canadians more aware of our mission in Afghanistan, and certainly your appearance today will help us do that.

Sir, the floor is yours.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and fellow members. It is an honour to appear before you today. I greatly appreciate your interest in this matter because it is very important to Canadians.

First, I will make a brief statement, and then I hope that you will share with me your suggestions and the areas that you would like me to address further. It is my hope that a meeting such as this one will foster a better understanding of the situation and perhaps give rise to ideas on the best way forward.

[*English*]

As you know, ladies and gentlemen, with regard to Canada's participation with the 42 nations related to Afghanistan, our reporting process is unique. We have scanned the other 41 nations that are participants in Afghanistan. We believe we are the only ones who produce a quarterly report as we do, and you have the copies here. We also have information packages for you at the end of the meeting, should you so desire. We're handing some of these out right now.

Taking guidance from the independent commission and independent report that was headed up by the Honourable John Manley some time ago, we have identified, as you are aware, benchmarks of progress, and we have also identified six priority areas along with

certain signature projects, infrastructure related, where we can measure what we are doing in Afghanistan. We can see whether we're making progress in each of the six areas or in fact if we're not making progress, and we do that on a quarterly basis. These reports are very transparent. They are tough. They are not embellished in any way. I'm sure as a committee you have gone through these quarterly reports. You'll see that we're clear where we did not hit a certain benchmark that we were hoping to hit. That's clearly identified. We try to identify the reasons for it and how we're going to move on.

This quarterly report covers the time from January 1, 2009, up to March 31, 2009. You may have some questions related to activities that have gone on since then, and I'll try to address those. With the quarterly report, there's obviously always some delay time because we go to that end point, accumulate all of the material, and publish the report. When we release the report, the report is released in Parliament. We also do a full news conference so that the media also has all the details, so they are able to ask questions.

Some of the overall highlights include the following. One of our main infrastructure signature projects is related to the Dahla Dam. When this dam is completely reconstructed and rebuilt—our goal is to have that done by the end of 2011—it will provide irrigation, it will provide power all through the valley, and literally hundreds of thousands of people will be the beneficiaries of that infrastructure. In this last quarter, a bridge that is necessary to transport heavy equipment onto the dam site was completed, so that work can begin. The contracts for this were all let in the previous quarter, so work can continue to progress. We also saw the completion of two more schools. We have a goal to build 50 schools. Twenty-five are under construction. With the completion this last quarter of two more schools, we're now up to five that have been completed.

In another area, a target area for us being the eradication of polio, close to 350,000 more children were vaccinated with the polio vaccine. We're pleased to see overall progress, as over five million children now have been vaccinated against polio.

These are very significant developments, along with the progress that we continue to make on the education side. We've seen reported since January, and this was included in the report in January, that some 11,000 more people—these are all within our area of jurisdiction in Kandahar—have taken the course of basic literacy, a majority of those being women. We have seen another 300,000 registered on the eligible voters list. The period of official registration is now over in terms of the work to be done, but the registration list itself is still open so that people can register for the August elections. That brought to a total of 4.4 million registered that we have been involved with, and that means some 12.6 million people are registered to vote in Afghanistan in the elections that are coming up.

• (1115)

The elections, as you would expect from elections anywhere, appear to be advancing in a very robust manner, with candidates out there at a variety of levels talking about what they are going to do for the people. There is a familiar ring to that. The debate among candidates seems to be robust, with the usual supportive and questioning comments among candidates as far as their policies and what they think they're going to accomplish for the people.

We are being very careful not to be involved, other than supplying \$35 million for the election process, and that involves security. We are not in any way indicating preferences for candidates, whom we would like to see or not like to see. We're just very encouraged to see that the democratic process is emerging in Afghanistan and we have had a significant part to play in that.

I'm looking forward to your questions, advice, suggestions. The report, as you'll see, is fairly detailed, but it's designed to be a relatively easy read for anybody who is interested in progress in Afghanistan. You'll see it's laid out under each of our six areas of priority, what our target is, the benchmark we used to measure any progress or lack of progress, and the result. Those are read in a linear fashion, so it's relatively easy to follow.

I should also tell you that we can produce for you, if you haven't seen it—every month there is a series of public presentations by a wide variety of groups across the country in terms of what is going on in Afghanistan, and we need to make Canadians aware of this. A website is set up, of course, for people to gain this information.

I appreciate your involvement, your interest, your suggestions, and your questions. Mr. Chairman, I would turn it over to your honourable members at this time.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Minister Day.

We have exactly 40 minutes, and we have four time slots of 10 minutes each, so we'll keep to that.

We'll start with the official opposition. Mr. Wilfert.

• (1120)

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Minister, for coming.

Minister, this is something unusual. I will congratulate you and your colleagues on the fact that these reports are sent out on a quarterly basis. I think this is important that as a committee we very

much assess our six priority goals and ensure we are meeting those goals.

Minister, I have three areas of questioning, I hope fairly brief, and I'll share with my colleagues.

The first area is with regard to the Shia law that literally was brought before the president. We have a gender advisor in the interior ministry, and we're spending about \$680,000 on significant programs, too numerous to mention. How would something of that nature have caught us off guard, given the fact that we have someone embedded there and the fact that this would have occurred under present circumstances? What are we doing to ensure that this type of situation does not occur again, given the fact that this is one of our goals, and I think a very laudable goal, in fully integrating women into Afghan society?

**Hon. Stockwell Day:** It's certainly a question I was asking, and that others have asked. This is something that emerged from within their own process, the Afghanistan legislative process. I read with some interest that even the legislators said they had signed and passed this without seeing it or reading it. We know that would never, ever happen in a Canadian parliamentary situation where a law or a bill would come forward and we would not have read it from one end to the other, but it did happen in their situation. When issues like that come forward, I think we are able to do a bit of a reassessment.

We never want to be seen to be telling the people of Afghanistan what they can and can't do relative to determining their own destiny, especially as they move forward in the democratic and legislative process. However, when things like the Shia law element came forward, which is so opposed and antithetical to what we believe about human rights, rights of women and equality, then as much as we want to respect their own sovereignty, we have to raise those issues, because we are, as you know, investing heavily in Afghanistan, in fact investing with Canadian lives. So we were quick to raise the concerns on it.

The people of Afghanistan, their legislative process, have agreed to put alert systems in place so that in the future we—and the world was caught off guard by this. We have put that in place, and we have been assured that situations like this that could possibly cause consternation—rightly so—would be brought to our attention.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** As you know, Minister, there will be additional laws coming forward for the Sunni, etc., with regard to women...just to make sure those mechanisms are in place.

Minister, an area where we have not been doing very well, in my view, is capacity-building at the village level. One of the opportunities was through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, who were to go there towards the end of June to look at providing municipal expertise—an area in which we are, of course, very rich in this country—to assist the Afghan government.

Could you explain to me why that mission was cancelled? Does the government have any plans in the future to really use the expertise of municipal leaders, as has been done elsewhere, such as in South Africa, Chile, etc., to help develop capacity-building at the village level?

• (1125)

**Hon. Stockwell Day:** Anything we're doing in Afghanistan, of course, is at the invitation and accommodation of the government and people of Afghanistan. So no country can just swoop in there and say the somewhat scary phrase, "We're from the government and we're here to help." We have to do this in conjunction with their timelines. That involves security issues, such as deciding which areas we feel and they feel a high level of security can be provided, so we don't put civilians at risk.

We have 2,800 troops right now in Afghanistan. At the federal level, we have 98 civilian officers. Out of respect for what's going on in their own jurisdictions, we don't just come crashing in.

Everywhere I travel in this country, I have people coming up and saying, "I'm a police officer and I'd love to go over there", or "I'm a health worker and I'd love to go over there." There are ways in which people can make themselves available, and we ask that they do that, and then we do it within the capacity and timeframe most applicable to the people of Afghanistan and their government.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** I don't disagree. This, though, was at the invitation of the Kandahar authorities, and it was being funded through the Afghan fund.

But if you could follow up on that, Minister, I would appreciate it, because again, if we really want to make a difference at the village level, it would be logical as one of our tools. And since CIDA does fund the FCM on a five-year basis, one would think that this bottom-up approach would be the most logical approach, rather than having a top-down driven process.

**Hon. Stockwell Day:** I'll get any more details that might be available on that, Mr. Chairman, and send them to you.

On my most recent visit to Afghanistan, I was actually pleased to see the amount of involvement, literally at the street level, of civilian development officers, working in conjunction with NGOs and the civil society groups that have developed within Afghanistan. For instance, in Kandahar City, there is emerging what we would call a chamber of commerce. It was very encouraging to see the number of people involved in small business working with development officers from Canada, and with loans officers in the area of micro-financing. All of the signs of some healthy developments at the grassroots level were there and emerging.

On this particular item, if more information is available on the municipalities' request, let me see if I can get that to you.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** Thank you.

I have one more quick question, through you, Mr. Chairman.

Minister, with regard to the ANP, we are lagging significantly behind the benchmarks that have been established. Given the fact that we are so far behind—and I realize the ANP started later than the ANA—can you outline to us what steps are going to be taken to try to meet our objective for 2011?

**Hon. Stockwell Day:** A couple of things come to bear when we're looking at the training of the Afghan National Police. First of all, there is progress. When you look at the capacity and at the numbers you'd like to have, there are a couple of things that work into it. There has been a pay discrepancy between police and army. Added

to that, for some period of time—and we'll report on this in the next quarter—literally the mortality rate of those in the Afghan National Police force was higher than those on the army side. So you can imagine that you're in a recruiting program and possible recruits are looking at the situation and saying they get less pay for being a police officer and a higher chance of being killed. They are literally, quite rightly, doing their evaluation on that score. We've been addressing that. When Minister Cannon and I were over there recently, we announced an extra \$21 million to go to salary and benefits to help deal with that discrepancy.

The other thing that kicks in is that when they hit a certain level of training, many of them literally get recruited to other areas, as would happen in any society, maybe to where there is a lower level of police being trained. Now you have trained people. The good ones stand out, and they're literally recruited away, so the numbers then show that. We have to be transparent and show how many we have in Kandahar who we say we're going to train. There's a number of factors there.

I can say that when I was in Afghanistan—this time as opposed to the last time—we went out through the city. We visited police substations that had been built, which weren't there before, and officers who had been trained. One of the positive developments is that they are reporting a much higher level of intelligence coming back from locals. When they see there's a police station built and that there are uniformed officers and there is some degree of stability being offered by those officers, we are now seeing people come forward with intelligence, as you would expect with a mature police force, let's say, in North America where people would come forward with information.

So progress is being made, but those are a couple of factors where the benchmarks have not been hit.

• (1130)

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, that's the first 10 minutes. Time flies.

Over to the Bloc, Ms. Lalonde.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Day, thank you for being here and for providing these reports.

I heard the presentation made by Dr. Soraya, the human rights commissioner, and I am going to refer to some of the things she said to ask you how you think we can change things.

She talked about a lot. She discussed the Sharia law, saying that it had been drafted solely by men, that women in Parliament were being pressured, that they were scared and that only one had voted against the law. She also said that further to UN Security Council Resolution 1325, the government had promised equality, but today, there are no women involved. She said that enemies had burned down schools and that girls were now afraid to go to school, that there were only elementary schools and that this is not what an education should be. Finally, she said that there was discrimination in the justice system. A woman cannot obtain a divorce on the grounds that her husband beats her. And there are no women in the Supreme Court.

In closing, I want to mention one thing that really struck me in her comments. She said that a lot of good had been accomplished and that she certainly did not want that to stop, but that more and more people were wondering whether they would live to see the next day.

**Hon. Stockwell Day:** I share your concerns, Ms. Lalonde. And it is important to keep this in mind. We are all in agreement. We have accomplished many good things, but there is still much work to be done.

In our opinion, society in western Afghanistan has not recognized the rights of women for hundreds of years. We have been in Afghanistan since 2001-2002, and we have seen progress. But there is still much work to be done.

Women who are members of Afghanistan's Parliament tell me that they are under a lot of pressure and that they are afraid. That is tragic and unfortunate. There is hope in the fact that they are members of Parliament, but they need support. So, when something like the Shia law situation occurs, it is important that we, in the west, make our views heard loud and clear and that we support these women.

All I can say is that I have the same concerns as you. The way I see it, those concerns justify our presence in Afghanistan, and we continue to provide our support.

The situation in schools is even more alarming in some cases. In Kandahar province alone, I believe there are 331 schools, but there are times when nearly half of those are forced to close because of threats from the Taliban. That is tragic. Here in Canada, when a school shuts down, it is because of a snow storm, but there, it is because young girls are being threatened. Sadly, we have seen and heard about young girls being attacked with acid. The Taliban are trying to kill them, and people are fleeing. It is unbelievable.

All I can say is that I share your concerns. They justify our presence in Afghanistan, and we continue to provide our support. We have a lot of work to do.

• (1135)

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** It is my turn to welcome you, Minister. In your opening remarks, you said that you were seeking advice from the people at this table. I am going to use this opportunity to give you two pieces of advice related to priorities 4 and 5.

Priority 4 has to do with border concerns. It seems to me that in the near future—and this is also the case for the Americans to some extent—we will not be able to separate the problems in Afghanistan from those in Pakistan. We know that Taliban forces often retreat to Pakistan. It is not mentioned in the report. I know that the report covers January, February and March. It seems to me that the will of the Pakistani government has shifted considerably in terms of addressing the Taliban issue.

In the information you provided, there was little mention of the Swat Valley offensive, which is winding down. The Pakistani army is launching another front in Bannu. The desire of Pakistan's government to deal with the Taliban once and for all is clear. I see that as a very important development. In the next report, you should focus on priority 4. I would also like to hear your thoughts on what happened.

As for priority 5, which has to do with governance, Hamid Karzai's selection of Mohamed Qasim Fahim as his lieutenant or running mate is a problem in my eyes. I am not sure whether you know that man, but I can tell you that he is a bloodthirsty killer. He is a Tajik warlord, who has yet to dismantle his army despite the government's numerous requests to that effect. He is even suspected of kidnapping foreigners for ransom.

I would like to know whether the Canadian government has discussed this huge problem with President Karzai and his government officials. This situation would lead Afghanistan into a very dark period. I want to hear your opinion of Mohamed Qasim Fahim. No doubt, you will say that they have to make these kinds of decisions for themselves, but this nomination has sparked major debate and strong reactions.

**Hon. Stockwell Day:** Those are very good questions. With respect to the border situation, I was in Spin Boldak about two years ago. I would say that there was no organization at that time. Crowds of people were gathered on both sides of the border. When I saw them, I thought how impossible it was to tell who was Pakistani, who was Afghan and who was Taliban. It was shocking.

Now, two years later, there is better organization at the border. Canada has begun implementing the Dubai process. We set up meetings with Pakistan and Afghanistan in Dubai solely to focus on the border situation. A task force was created, and it will hold regular meetings to assess what impact its efforts are having and to determine whether the border will ultimately be more secure as a result. With the arrival of the American soldiers, there are more troops along the border, near Spin Boldak and in Baluchistan province. So things are safer now.

As for Ms. Lalonde's question, we have to remember what things were like in 2001. Has there been progress? Yes. Is there still a lot of work to do? Yes. The situation is still not very safe.

• (1140)

[English]

**The Chair:** Ten minutes is up and that's the time slot. We'll have to move on.

Go ahead.

[Translation]

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** Point of order, Mr. Chair. Could the minister send a written response to my second question, which is also very important? If he could send his answer to the clerk, the clerk could share it with us. I would appreciate that.

[English]

**The Chair:** Minister.

[Translation]

**Hon. Stockwell Day:** Yes, I will do that. When I answer the next question, I will also comment on your question.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Minister.

We're over to the government side for ten minutes.

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will be sharing my time with Mr. Obhrai.

Thank you, Minister, for being here. It's always interesting to look at our advancements in Afghanistan since our deployment there. I think as Canadians we sometimes almost expect miracles to happen. When we look at where Afghanistan was and how long it took it to get to this stage, it is remarkable, the progress we've made.

I'd like it if you could expand a little on our issues with the border, not only on the fact that our military are there, but also on the civil training from our police and our border people that is happening with the Afghans so that ultimately they'll be responsible for the border. Could you expand on that as to where we're going, looking more to the future than the past in that whole area?

**Hon. Stockwell Day:** It's been very encouraging for me when I've gone to Afghanistan, or in meeting people here in Canada, to see the number of people within our own agencies—police officers who are involved in the ANP, the Afghan National Police—training, from the RCMP but also from municipal forces across the country, corrections officers in the prisons, and now border officers. These are our border officers who have come from Canada, which is a relatively safe place to work, and have put themselves in a very high-risk environment to train border officers. We're now seeing the development of fingerprint technology at the borders and proper training of border officers.

So we are seeing growth. I simply say there is more to do. That's the importance of these quarterly reports. We want to measure. We don't want to just say, "Well, you know, it's changed a lot since 500 years ago." Yes, it has, but that's not good enough. We have to see if our input of resources, and literally of lives, is having a measurable effect. We believe it is, not just at the borders but in other areas too.

Again, we are working with the government and the people of Afghanistan. I know that governments will change there, but the overall view, even of candidates who are running in elections, most of whom we hear from, is to see progress.

I know that from time to time there are concerns about who might be running in a particular election. I don't want to mention any names. You're free to do that. But as Monsieur Bachand has mentioned, there are times when we will look at certain candidates who are running and we will say, "If I was involved in that election, if I was running against that candidate, I'd be making his or her past history very clear." But we have made a commitment that we're not going to interject ourselves into the election process. We are committed to the infrastructure, to the borders, and to helping them become a country that can provide for their own security and take care of their own needs. That includes what's going on at the borders. That's also why we have reluctance to share anything about a particular candidate. The positive thing about even the development of freedom of the media within Afghanistan is that without mentioning names of candidates, their histories do become known and they are circulated, and then people have to make their own judgments.

• (1145)

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie:** Although it's not in the report, it seems that when we've heard from other witnesses, one of the issues, particularly with the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police and other civil bodies, is literacy. It's at a very difficult stage at this point, starting from zero and moving ahead,

because of the literacy. I'm wondering, in your visits to Afghanistan, if you've seen improvement within those organizations because of the assistance Canada is providing on the literacy side.

**Hon. Stockwell Day:** The increase in adults taking literacy courses has been very significant. These are 10-month courses, and 11,000 have just completed another session. That's in our quarterly report. Where I see it clearly manifested, we've had some comments. Byron mentioned some situations related to the Afghan National Police.

Just to give you a snapshot, two years ago when I was there we had the RCMP doing some police training. They were literally training these officers how to stop a vehicle without blowing it apart; how to get people out of a vehicle without blasting them with a bazooka. These are fairly basic things for our police forces.

This time when I went I was looking at some of those same police officers, and they get diplomas as they hit the different levels. They had reconstituted a crime scene where a vehicle had been attacked. They had—if I can use a sort of Hollywood reference—a CSI-type of scene set up. They had little markers all over on the ground around the vehicle where there were shell fragments. They had their tape measures out. They were walking around with their notebooks taking note of what they had seen. So here you had officers who were previously almost illiterate, for whom basically stopping a car in the correct way was a major accomplishment, now reproducing a crime scene in a fairly sophisticated fashion, gathering evidence and taking notes.

So the literacy is having its effect with the police officers, but also in the general population. The majority of the people in this last tranche of 11,000 who took the course were women. That's manifesting itself. They are more capable when we provide micro-financing for small business loans to them. It all kind of works together. So progress is being seen. We want to see more, but it is measurable and taking place.

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

There are two questions I want to quickly draw upon. One deals with our signature project, and you rightly told Madam Lalonde that you are concerned about the educational aspect of it. The signature project we have here is for education. I see from your report that we co-chair the development board to build up the educational system over there, which is the key element in winning the hearts and minds of the people of Afghanistan and Kabul. Perhaps you can elaborate on that one.

The second question I have is our priority number six, which is seeking political reconciliation. I know our government's position is that it's up to the Afghan people to carry out. But could you perhaps give us some indication of efforts made by the Government of Afghanistan to reach out to the moderate Taliban? We know there are hard-core Taliban whom we will never be able to talk to, but there are some elements in there where there is a reconciliation process going on.

**Hon. Stockwell Day:** Education is key in any society. We know that. We're very pleased to be co-chairing some of the oversight there. We are putting significant numbers of dollars into that. As I was saying, again with regard to Madame Lalonde's remarks, we're seeing progress, but there is a long way to go. And that really comes down to not a lack of desire for education on the part of the people in Afghanistan, but the threat they are exposed to for wanting to be educated. This is where we have to work closely with the Afghan authorities, of course respecting how they would like to see things progress, but on the security side. It is discouraging to see the number of schools that have to close and then reopen all based on threat. I'll tell you, we're going to see an increase in the number of people being educated, and the levels are going to be rising with the influx now of American troops. There are some 17,000 more as of today, and that will increase, we're told. The ability to provide security has jumped up exponentially. With that, our thought is—and we'll record it in the next quarterly report—that you're going to see a significant bump forward in the number of people being educated. If anything has held us back in terms of numbers, it's largely been on the security side. It's not the lack of will.

Regarding the truth and reconciliation process, again we are doing what we can, respecting the people of Afghanistan and their governments, to assist them in this process. If they make a decision that they're going to have discussions with Taliban at a certain level, it's really tricky trying to define a moderate Taliban and an extreme Taliban. We would hope that the people of Afghanistan are going to be engaging with those who are going to want to set aside violence as a means of advancing their political gains—that's a definition of terrorism—and with people who are going to respect the basic rights of human beings, men and women. People are going to see that attacking innocent civilians, killing children, and killing the elderly is not part of a civilized society and should have no part in that. In that process, our CIDA funding goes to a number of areas. In the areas of their justice department, there is both the administration and the understanding of justice. In different rural areas especially, in different villages, they have their own system of administration and their own system of governance, and we help them to understand how that can be tied into a broader consensus, a broader acceptance of certain basic values. So we want to respect the *shuras*, but we also give funding to help the people of Afghanistan raise these basic levels of appreciation for human rights.

• (1150)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Dewar, you have ten minutes.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Minister, for being here today.

I just want to start off with a couple of concerns I have regarding reporting. You know that recently it was noted in the press that there was a human rights overview report done by DFAIT. Included in that report were things that aren't in this report. This committee has looked at what could be shared with the committee. We had a whole committee meeting about the sharing of information, confidentiality, sensitive documents, etc., but it seems to me that a DFAIT human rights report would be something that should be reflected here. It's important information, and I just want to cite a couple of things.

First of all, there is the fact—if you've read it, and I'm wondering why perhaps it isn't in here—that according to the report there's a major problem in trafficking of children, and particularly of boys, for purposes of sexual exploitation or forced labour. Fifty-seven percent of Afghan marriages involve girls under the legal age of 16. My take on it is—and you can see here—that women are being used as a form of currency to pay off debts. I know this isn't new in terms of cultural facets here, but it is happening.

Then finally there is the question of schools. Respectfully, Minister, we've heard the government say at different times that we're there, we're building schools, and kids are going to school, and girls are going to school when they haven't before, and we all want that, certainly. The report from DFAIT says that half of school-aged children don't attend, that we've had schools that were built but in fact no one's in them. Five hundred and thirty-eight schools have closed as of June 2008, and 58% of the schools that were closed, out of the number I just cited, were in Kandahar, where we are. As well, 147 students and children were killed.

First of all, have you read the report I'm referring to?

• (1155)

**Hon. Stockwell Day:** I'm aware of that report, yes.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** I don't want to ask you about things you aren't aware of, but I'm wondering why this wasn't reflected in your report.

**Hon. Stockwell Day:** We report progress in line with our six priority areas and the signature projects we've identified. At any given time, I would say there are dozens of reports out there dealing with progress or the lack of it. We try to take them into account. I think the main concerns you talked about are reflected in our report. There's the question of the number of schools that can be closed at any one time. It could be up to half the schools in Kandahar. It's a matter of the glass being half full or half empty. If you're talking about half the schools being closed, I share that concern. I'm also pleased to say that half those schools are open. I am pleased to say that there is an increase in the number of people going to school, especially girls. Is it anywhere near where we'd like it to be? No, but we've put in benchmarks for attendance rates. Some of those benchmarks have been achieved and some haven't, and that's the reason for our transparent reporting process.

You raised a number of important issues that point out the challenges remaining in Afghanistan. But we also need to show that gains are being made. There are a lot of things happening in Afghanistan that aren't germane to the mandate in our report. Monsieur Bachand talked about what's going on in Swat Valley, for instance, with the increase in activity and determination in Pakistan. A lot of that happened on or after March 31, so we wouldn't be commenting on it.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Fair enough, but I'm not referring to that.

**Hon. Stockwell Day:** What I'm hearing from you is concern about other reports out there. This is something we'll try to address.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** I want to see these things in the reporting here. You said it was a question of half empty or half full. I'm hearing from the government that the glass is full, but I think it's leaking.



There's another report by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission about how police and law enforcement officials are training and behaving. We are training them, but the behaviour of the law enforcement officials on the ground would be shocking to most people. We fund the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. We found in the report that torture was being used by law enforcement officials throughout Afghanistan. The report written by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission shows that 20% of law enforcement officials aren't aware that it's against the law to torture prisoners.

I was shocked that members of the task force hadn't read the report. It seems to me that if we're going to be training police, we should be training them to use methods we support, methods that are not going to cause a further chasm between the people and the law enforcement officials. I'd like to know if you've been briefed on that report. It was available on the web. It's not just another report. It's a very important one. It's about how we train police and what they're doing. Do you believe it's important for our task force membership to read reports like this and embed them in the training we're providing for law enforcement officials?

**Hon. Stockwell Day:** You said we were reporting that the glass was full. We're not reporting that anywhere. As a matter of fact, the transparency of these reports has been noted at NATO and the United Nations. They say it's a very transparent report. We haven't yet fulfilled a single one of those categories. We are using all the data we have in the most accurate and transparent way possible to show where we are relative to hitting those benchmarks. We are very concerned about the distance the people of Afghanistan still have to go. I want to clarify that nowhere do we say we've achieved 100%. We are simply reporting what we actually have achieved.

• (1200)

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Nowhere in the report do we see the numbers I've mentioned.

**Hon. Stockwell Day:** You have one report there, and I think—

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** It's your report, not mine; it's DFAIT's. The other one is the human rights tribunal—

**Hon. Stockwell Day:** Paul, I was very considerate when you were talking—

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Fair enough.

**Hon. Stockwell Day:** —so I would like to make these comments here.

There are large numbers of reports that are out there. We're trying to reflect, within the confines of our own reporting, as accurately as possible, what we've achieved.

On the officers we have trained, are they all 100% perfectly acting within what we would expect from police officers? I would say no. I don't know of a jurisdiction in the world where that would be the case. Is there a distance to go? Yes, there is. Do we condone, support, or sweep under the carpet any possible instances of torture? Absolutely not—

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** But what I'm saying is that—

**Hon. Stockwell Day:** Just let me finish, Paul.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** If you haven't read the reports, Minister, how would you know if you—

**The Chair:** Mr. Dewar, the minister is speaking.

Go ahead, Mr. Minister.

**Hon. Stockwell Day:** I visited the prison itself in Kandahar. I visited Sarposa Prison, talked with prisoners, saw what was set up there, and listened to police officers. We talked with our own training officers, who get to work with these people every day, and with our military, who get to see what is going on.

You will remember that about two years ago a number of reports were issued that suggested that the Canadian military might be, if not involved, at least implicated in areas of possible torture, or turning an eye to that. I know you didn't endorse that, but reports came out to that effect, and the Minister of National Defence, just two days ago, showed the extensiveness of investigations that we do when we hear these allegations—

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Yes, but I'm talking about something different—

**Hon. Stockwell Day:** —and completely exonerating the Canadian military. I'm just letting you know, Paul, that we use that same investigative process if we even hear of an incident of possible torture. We want to know if it's happening, we want to investigate, and we're very strong on this.

Could some ANPs still be involved in torture? It's possible, and I'll tell you what, if we hear about it, we go after it very aggressively.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** But I'm talking about how they're trained, Minister.

I have two questions. First, have you read the report of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission on what is happening on the ground with law enforcement officials and on the use of torture? That was my first question—if you've read that. Second, what are we doing about that in training officials?

It's really important. If less than 20% know that it's against the law to use torture, I think that's an issue in their training. We need to make sure they're being trained. So have you read the report and are we changing the way we're training to be reflecting that?

**Hon. Stockwell Day:** I have—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. We're right smack on time, and I understand you have to leave immediately. If you want a few minutes to wrap up—

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.):** A point of order, Chair.

**Hon. Stockwell Day:** Let me just say—

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj:** A point of order, Chair.

**Hon. Stockwell Day:** —there are a number of questions, including what Paul has raised, that I'm more than happy to get back to you in writing.

**The Chair:** Good.

**Hon. Stockwell Day:** I can tell you this: any police officers we have trained fully understand that torture is absolutely unacceptable. I can say that.

And on the rest of the questions, I'll be happy to reply in writing. Hopefully, I'll maybe report again to this committee. Thank you for your good work.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Minister.

A point of order?

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj:** Yes, Chair.

Considering the importance of the Afghanistan mission and of this particular report, and the fact that because of circumstances beyond your control we started this session 10 minutes late, would it be possible to submit questions that would be responded to in writing by the minister? The minister had to leave right on time, and there are some questions that would have been helpful with this report.

**The Chair:** He seemed willing to submit in writing answers to questions he wasn't able to get to. I would suggest that if you have

such questions, you get them into the clerk and we'll proceed. We weren't able to ask him that before he left, so I would accept questions, and we'll move them forward.

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj:** Should I provide those questions verbally at this time?

**The Chair:** No. If you could do them in writing, I think that would be fine. We have to move on.

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj:** Thank you, Chair.

**The Chair:** You bet. Thank you.

We'll suspend for a few minutes while we move in camera.

*[Proceedings continue in camera]*

---







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

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

**Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:  
Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante :  
<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

---

**The Speaker of the House hereby grants permission to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, for use in schools and for other purposes such as private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary. Any commercial or other use or reproduction of this publication requires the express prior written authorization of the Speaker of the House of Commons.**

**Le Président de la Chambre des communes accorde, par la présente, l'autorisation de reproduire la totalité ou une partie de ce document à des fins éducatives et à des fins d'étude privée, de recherche, de critique, de compte rendu ou en vue d'en préparer un résumé de journal. Toute reproduction de ce document à des fins commerciales ou autres nécessite l'obtention au préalable d'une autorisation écrite du Président.**