



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

FAAE • NUMBER 002 • 2nd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, February 10, 2009

—
Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

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

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

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

Tuesday, February 10, 2009

• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): *Bonjour, chers collègues.*

We will begin today by asking the committee if we can suspend consideration of the first report of our subcommittee on agenda and procedure until after we have heard from our witnesses. Today we are considering the supplementary estimates (B) and a number of votes under Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

Appearing today we have the Honourable Lawrence Cannon, Minister of Foreign Affairs. Welcome, Mr. Minister.

He is accompanied by officials from his department: Leonard Edwards, who is the deputy minister; and Bruce Hirst, who is the assistant deputy minister and chief financial officer. Welcome, gentlemen.

On behalf of the committee, I thank the minister and his officials for appearing today on such short notice.

I'm proud to report that in the last Parliament, the 39th Parliament, a fairly short Parliament, ministers of the crown appeared before our committee a total of 17 times. Our committee is grateful for the positive responses in the past and the input we have received from the ministers, including the Minister of National Defence, the Minister of International Cooperation, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and other ministers of state responsible for various geographic regions in the world.

As the committee knows, we will allow the minister the opening statement, and then we'll proceed into the first round.

Mr. Minister, we look forward to your comments.

• (1535)

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs): Thank you very much, chair.

Colleagues, thank you very much for having me. I hope that my appearances will be as numerous as in the previous Parliament.

[Translation]

In my first major foreign policy speech as foreign minister, I noted that the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade is embarking on its second century of existence at a time when the world around us is going through a period of profound and rapid change.

The global economy is still in crisis, as you know.

And the major issues facing us—peace and security, human rights, political freedom, economic development, climate change—cannot be tackled by countries on their own.

We must therefore set clear priorities. Priorities backed by focus, determination, perseverance.

The government's first concern is, naturally, to deal with the economic situation—both at home and abroad. Budget 2009 lays out a stimulus plan to get us on to the right path—creation of new jobs, restored investment and consumer confidence, targeted infrastructure projects.

The government's foreign policy is also focused on the international economic and financial problems we face as a country and as a member of the global community.

We are already deeply engaged in preparing the G8 Summit, which will be held in Huntsville, Ontario. This will be a key opportunity to exercise Canada's leadership in shaping the international response to the economic crisis.

We also will be hosting the North American Leaders' Summit in 2010.

We all know that Canada's prosperity and security are inseparable from that of the United States. I believe that the arrival of a new administration in Washington will be an opportunity to re-energize Canada's engagement and partnership with the U.S. on many issues of shared concern.

[English]

As Prime Minister Harper said, President Obama will find no better friend than Canada. Our countries have much in common and much to do together. I'll elaborate on this a bit later in my presentation.

As we look more broadly in the world, we see that violence in Afghanistan and the political and economic instability in Pakistan are undermining international efforts to restore peace and stability in that country and in the region. Iran, North Korea, and Pakistan pose serious and destabilizing threats from the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Bad governance and growing marginalization create fertile ground for instability, conflict, and terrorism.

[Translation]

In addition, geopolitical dynamics are changing, with increasing Russian assertiveness, and the growing demand from China, India and Brazil to be included at the tables of global power.

The global institutions created after the Second World War no longer reflect international power dynamics and we will continue to engage with our allies to re-evaluate these institutions.

Canada, as a middle power and a long-time supporter of effective multilateralism, has much at stake in a renewed global system—especially those institutions in which major threats to our security and economic interests are addressed.

Amidst the challenges, there will also be opportunities—areas where Canadian initiative, ideas, and, in particular, leadership can be addressed.

[*English*]

The principal goals of Canada's foreign policy are to advance and protect the security and prosperity of Canada and Canadians and to protect Canadian values. Our government is taking a more robust approach to the promotion of freedom, democracy, human rights, and rule-of-law values that Canadians hold dear.

In addition, our government is focusing Canada's foreign policy on several key priorities: the United States and the Americas; Afghanistan; emerging markets, particularly those in Asia; as well as the Arctic and the Middle East peace process.

Continued trade liberalization and increasing access to new and traditional markets will be fundamental to advancing and protecting Canada's prosperity. We are working towards a comprehensive economic partnership with the European Union. In addition, we are seeking to renew relations with India, China, Korea, and Japan to maximize economic opportunities.

As I said earlier, we will seek to renew our bilateral relationship with our most important partner, the United States. The management of our shared border is a key element of our close economic and security partnership with the United States. We are also committed to working with the Obama administration to enhance North American competitiveness as well as to open a dialogue on a North American-wide cap and trade system for greenhouse gases.

In addition, the government will seek to cooperate with the administration regarding shared peace and security concerns in Afghanistan and the Arctic, particularly competing views regarding the status of Canada's internal Arctic waterways and shared concerns over the Arctic environment.

We will also work to promote Canada as a clean energy superpower.

[*Translation*]

Canada is re-engaging in the Americas. Our strategy for the Americas is designed to promote economic prosperity, security and democratic governance through bilateral and multilateral engagement.

In addition to focusing on promoting social safety nets and a Canadian model of democracy, we are focusing on a robust trade liberalization agenda to ensure Canadian access to growing markets.

In Haiti, Canada will maintain its engagement and focus on high level political engagement, as well as stabilization, reconstruction

and long-term development. Canada is Haiti's second largest bilateral donor.

The fifth Summit of the Americas in Trinidad and Tobago in April of this year will provide the opportunity for Canada to reinforce our security and economic interests in the region.

Also this year, Canada hosts the Caribbean Development Bank's Board of Governors meeting in Halifax.

[*English*]

Let me turn now to Afghanistan.

In Afghanistan we will continue to support security, stability, and democratic governance so that the country no longer poses a threat to regional and global security. Canada's engagement is also focusing on reconstruction and development, as well as preparation for the end of our military mission there in 2011.

In this latter context we have set six clear objectives to guide our engagement for the next three years. Canada will help the Afghan government to train the Afghan National Army and police in Kandahar province. We will work to strengthen Afghan governance institutions and local democratic structure in order to deliver core services and promote economic growth. Canada will provide humanitarian assistance for vulnerable populations. We will work to enhance the Pakistan-Afghanistan bilateral dialogue and cross-border security. We will contribute to building the capacity of national democratic institutions and will support political reconciliation.

[*Translation*]

A word now about the Arctic.

The Arctic is not only an integral part of Canada as a territorial fact, but it is also central to our identity as a northern country. Canada is an Arctic power. We will continue to affirm Canadian sovereignty over our Arctic territory.

We will advance environmental stewardship with our Arctic neighbours who have a shared interest in the health of this precious region.

We will also participate actively in the Arctic Council, a multilateral forum that brings all of the relevant Arctic players together, including territorial governments and aboriginal communities.

In fact, I will be visiting the Arctic Council countries over the coming months to advance our Arctic agenda.

[*English*]

In addition to these priorities, Canada will do its share in responding to key global challenges. Now let me give you a few examples, colleagues.

In response to the global economic crisis, the government is working with the G20 for the reform of the global financial architecture. In response to the diminished effectiveness of global institutions, we are consulting broadly with the international community on the reform of the global governance architecture.

Consistent with Canada's affirmation of Israel's right to exist and to defend itself, and our support for a two-state solution, Canada is contributing \$300 million over five years to support Palestinian institutional reform and the peace process.

In Africa, Canada is meeting its commitments. We are doubling our annual aid to Africa to \$2.1 billion in this fiscal year from the 2003-04 levels. We are working with African and other countries to address key regional security and governance crises, for example, in the Congo and Zimbabwe. In Sudan, Canada is contributing \$191 million in funds this year for security, diplomacy and aid.

Canada continues to maintain the strongest sanctions in the world against the Burmese regime.

Canada continues to be engaged in addressing ongoing security threats from terrorism, international crime, nuclear proliferation and fragile states.

And finally, we are mounting a vigorous effort to gain international support for Canada's bid for a seat on the UN National Security Council for 2011 and 2012.

With that, Chairman, I will be happy to respond to any questions the committee members have. Thank you.

● (1540)

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

We'll proceed into the first round, a 10-minute round.

Mr. Rae.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Minister, and to many of your colleagues, let me just say a personal word of welcome. It's a great pleasure to see so many distinguished public servants here listening to what we have to say. I appreciate your statement, Minister.

I'm wondering if I could ask you about page 5 of your remarks. I'll just talk about Afghanistan for a minute. You'll appreciate that in 10 minutes it's pretty hard to have a consistent line of questioning, but I'm going to do my best. I'm going to start with Afghanistan. I'm then going to ask you some questions about your statements about focus and priorities, and then I want to turn to Sri Lanka, if I may, at the end.

Minister, with respect to the statement, "We will help to enhance the Pakistan-Afghanistan bilateral dialogue", what form is that taking? Can you give us some greater detail on what that actually means?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: Fundamentally, Mr. Rae, what we are trying to do is to bring together both parties to discuss their common objectives in protecting the border. There were some efforts undertaken a couple of months ago. I must admit that the relations are a little difficult in that regard; it is a challenge, but we have been

making progress. We are looking at ways to find the correct forum, the correct venue, to be able to foster this discussion.

Quite candidly, and very openly, colleagues, this is a challenge, and we all appreciate that, but we do have good people on the ground who are working to be able to bring them together to set up that dialogue. That is basically what we want to be able to do.

● (1545)

Hon. Bob Rae: Minister, I don't mean to detract at all from the very great professionals who are on the ground—and I've had the opportunity to visit them, both in Kabul and Islamabad—but the President of the United States has appointed Mr. Holbrooke as a senior envoy to look at Pakistan-Afghanistan. I have long had the feeling that our military effort in Afghanistan has not been matched by our diplomatic and political efforts to find a long-term solution.

I wonder if the government would consider appointing somebody who would be able to match the efforts of Mr. Holbrooke—I'm not suggesting that they match the rhetoric of Mr. Holbrooke—so that we can be seen to be working very closely with the administration in an area that, I think, is going to require much greater coordination as we go forward.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: I'd respond, Mr. Rae, by saying that I—

Hon. Bob Rae: I'm not applying for the job. I want to make that quite clear.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: You've taken away my punchline.

On a more serious front, you know that our Afghanistan policy is driven on the one hand from the Manley report, which set out the general principles and guidelines for our engagement there. We then went to Parliament, as you know. You, as the foreign affairs critic, as well as my predecessor in this position, were directly involved. I think everybody worked hard to scope out the responsibility and role that Canada must play in that area.

You point out with *beaucoup de justesse*, I think, *le fait que Monsieur Holbrook est maintenant là*. I'm looking forward to being able to meet with him as well as Mrs. Clinton to continue the dialogue.

For the time being, we have our six priorities. That is where we're going.

If I understand you correctly, you're inviting us to be more open to a frank and honest discussion. I have no problem looking at that, but once again reminding you that the government's policy is determined essentially by a vote that the House of Commons has taken. Any change in our fundamental policy would require that this be looked at again.

Hon. Bob Rae: I'm interested in the question of coordination.

On page 3, your paragraph where you discuss your focuses, I'm concerned that you didn't refer to Africa. Minister, I'll tell you why I'm concerned. If you look at CIDA's budget, a vast percentage of its budget is dedicated to African aid. There are significant governance issues in Africa, which we're spending a lot of money on. We're spending money in Sudan and the Congo. We're spending a great deal of money in a number of countries that have extensive governance issues. I'm one of those who think that the work of the foreign affairs department and CIDA is inseparable and that we've been living in separate silos for too long.

[*Translation*]

We have to find better ways to coordinate the work of CIDA and that of the Department of Foreign Affairs.

You said that you would be focusing on certain priority areas: Afghanistan, the markets, the United States, the Americas, the Arctic, the Middle East, but you did not make any mention of Africa from the political viewpoint, from your department's viewpoint, despite the fact that nearly all of CIDA's international funding is spent there. In my opinion, when political direction does not follow the money, there is a problem.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: As we say, is it the dog wagging the tail or is it the tail wagging the dog?

• (1550)

[*English*]

Colleague, Canada is meeting its commitments in Africa. Once again, we doubled our annual aid to Africa to \$2.1 billion. We are working in partnership with reform-minded African governments. We're seeking results in terms of poverty reduction, improved education and health, and of course more democracy. We're also working with Africa and others to address key regional security and governance crises. I point out what we're doing in Sudan, the Congo, as well as Zimbabwe.

You're probably referring to your colleague's article this morning—and I see a smile on your face—who indicated that not only did this government but the previous government... I can say, though, that this government has doubled its aid to Africa.

I had the opportunity of meeting two weeks ago with the ambassadors from Africa to Canada. We had a very, very good exchange

[*Translation*]

I would even say that our relationship could be described as being fruitful.

In the coming years, I foresee us continuing these efforts, particularly with respect to aid. You talked about coordination. I can assure and re-assure you by saying that we have exceptional coordination, exemplary coordination even, between my department and that of my colleague, Ms. Oda.

[*English*]

Hon. Bob Rae: Minister, with respect to Sri Lanka, since last week's press release and House debate, have you had an opportunity to speak to the foreign minister about Canada's call for a ceasefire?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: I haven't spoken to the foreign minister of Sri Lanka, but this morning I had a long and extensive discussion with the foreign minister of India. We touched on several issues, particularly the relationship between India and Sri Lanka. We also discussed Sri Lanka's ongoing conflict, the humanitarian crisis, and some of the issues that were debated last week.

My colleague called for the lull in the conflict. There was a pause that allowed some humanitarian aid to get in. It enabled people caught in the conflict to exit the area of strife. He also said that he was supportive of Canada's position in respect of finding a long-term political solution. He referred to the 1987 agreement between the parties. Under article 13, if I'm not mistaken, they are looking to devolve more power into the region.

Canada and Commonwealth countries are bringing pressure to end the conflict, as are other like-minded countries. We want to make sure there is a stable government so that everybody can be happy and prosperous and have the quality of life that we all wish for them.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Crête, you have 10 minutes.

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Minister, in your presentation you concluded by saying that Canada would be intensifying its efforts in order to garner international support to obtain a seat on the United Nations Security Council.

Would you agree with me in saying that, in order to win this seat, it would be important to have a spotless human rights record? Accordingly, it would be wise for Canada to review its position on Omar Khadr.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: If I may, I would first of all like to answer your question regarding the role played by Canada, in the past and at present, in many countries.

Your colleague spoke about the role Canada is playing in Africa. Our country is held in high regard there because it does not have the reputation of being a colonizer like certain other countries. That helps a great deal. Our diplomatic services are working very hard to ensure that we are able to win a seat at the United Nations Security Council. We are competing with Portugal and Germany. We believe that one of these two countries should represent the European Union as a non-permanent member, and that the other seat should be given to Canada. We are therefore making every effort to do this.

Canada's reputation is exemplary. You would like me to talk about the case of Mr. Khadr, who is attracting a great deal of media attention. Over the past few weeks or months, we have made our position on this matter known. I will repeat it: this is an individual who's been accused of committing serious crimes. Significant charges have been laid against this individual. We know that the U.S. President has issued two directives. First of all, the Guantanamo base is to be shut down within a year. Secondly, the process is to be turned over to a panel of experts composed of representatives from various U.S. departments. The position of Canada is to wait until the process has been completed and conclusions drawn. We will then act accordingly.

• (1555)

Mr. Paul Crête: Don't you think that M. Khadr is a child soldier, and that under the international convention that governs such issues, we should have considered him as such, something that would have made it possible for him to be repatriated to Canada? I do not understand why the government did not take this approach, which is far more in line with Canada's customary approach to foreign affairs issues.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: In my humble opinion, Mr. Crête, that is not where the debate lies. Once again, I would repeat that Mr. Khadr has been charged with murder, aiding and abetting, and terrorism. You will agree those are very serious charges. There are not that many individuals charged with such offences, and such a number of offences.

Thus, I believe we need to leave it up to President Obama to take action on this matter. President Obama has indicated to his administration, and to those in charge of reviewing the case, that he plans to shut down the facilities. The other day, I heard comments on the issue. Your colleague, the member for Toronto-Centre, suggested a meeting here to review the issue. The leader of the Official Opposition, Mr. Ignatieff, said that Omar Khadr would have to be brought back here to be put on trial. Basically, our position is clear.

Mr. Paul Crête: Minister, the fundamental question is this: do you acknowledge that Omar Khadr is a child soldier?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: The question is not whether I acknowledge that or not, Mr. Crête. Omar Khadr has been detained in the United States. The President of the United States has indicated the process that is to be applied. As Minister of Foreign Affairs, I have told the President that Canada would respect this decision, and would abide by the process that has been set in motion.

Mr. Paul Crête: Canada could have shown the same kind of openness as Mr. Obama. Given that Mr. Obama has decided to shut down Guantanamo Bay and suspend military commissions, would it not have been appropriate for Canada to make an effort and agree to set out a plan to bring Mr. Khadr back to Canada? From a human rights standpoint, that would be a more in line with Canada's usual approach, far more than the somewhat vengeful approach Canada is taking now.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: I do not think that we can really talk about a spirit of vengefulness. Even before President Obama designated an approach, he determined that there were proceedings underway. Mr. Khadr had been charged with very serious offences.

Now, his trial has been suspended on President Obama's orders. As I have already said, we will wait until the proceedings are complete.

• (1600)

Mr. Paul Crête: Don't you feel that Canadians—and there is a very broad consensus now—feel that Mr. Obama's position should be followed up on by the Canadian government, and that the Canadian government should show some openness about rehabilitating Mr. Khadr, who is young. That would be more in the spirit of the young offenders' legislation that applies in Canada.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: Mr. Crête, we are, following the path laid out by the U.S. government. The administration has issued three orders, which we are following with a great deal of interest, as I said. We will let the U.S. administration do what it has to do, and then respond at the appropriate time.

Mr. Paul Crête: In a way, you have thus decided that Mr. Obama would be setting Canada's foreign affairs policy.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: But of course not, Mr. Crête. I am always interested in seeing members of the Bloc Québécois defending Canada's foreign affairs policy. Be that as it may, I would like to reassure you: Canada's foreign affairs policy will not be directed by the U.S. As you know, we work closely with the United States, which is our most important economic partner. The people of the United States and the people of Canada have too much respect and regard for one another to step on one another's toes.

Mr. Paul Crête: If I have some time left, I would like to ask a related question...

[English]

The Chair: You have two minutes.

Again, I would encourage questioners, members, and ministers to try to keep our questions coming through the chair. That would be good.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête: Pardon me, Mr. Chairman.

It relates to another area, although it is somewhat similar.

Canada signed a free trade agreement with Colombia. Now, the human rights record in that country is of some particular concern. As Minister of Foreign Affairs, do you intend to prohibit agreements that condone absolutely unacceptable behaviour? Just today we received more troubling news: 17 aboriginal people from Colombia were killed by parallel military factions. Would you be inclined to reconsider Canada's position before ratifying this agreement?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: As you know, the agreement has been signed. It is subject to a 21-day review period, after which, as a parliamentarian, you will have an opportunity to debate the issue if you feel that it is necessary to do so, Mr. Crête. You will also note that pursuant to this agreement, that country must abide by the provisions of the enabling legislation, provisions that are obviously recognized internationally, for example, matters relating to labour and existing benefits. My colleague, the Minister for International Trade, will be in charge of the file. He is the one who will be answering that question.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Crête.

We'll move to the government side, and we'll go to Ms. Brown.

Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will be sharing my time with the parliamentary secretary.

Minister, thank you very much for the brief you gave us. I found it very helpful in its broad brush strokes.

In here you say, "A word now about the Arctic". I wonder if you could take some time to perhaps clarify, and maybe enhance, the government's strategy for affirming Canadian sovereignty over our Arctic territory.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: Thank you for the question.

Of course, Canada's sovereignty over the lands, islands, and waters of the Canadian Arctic is long-standing, well established, and based on historic title. Canada is, of course, an Arctic power. We all know that. The Arctic and the north are, of course, part of our national identity.

As you know, and as I've alluded to, I'm making the Arctic a priority of ours, so I will be travelling to the Arctic states to strengthen our position and to reaffirm our engagement on those issues.

As you know, our government has announced, through its northern strategy, a series of initiatives, and these initiatives all rest on four pillars, fundamentally: to protect the environment and the environmental heritage that we all have a responsibility to protect; to promote the economic and social development of the territories; to improve and develop, again, the governance structures there; and once again, to reaffirm our sovereignty. Those basically are the four pillars we're working on.

My colleague the Minister of Indian Affairs, Chuck Strahl, is responsible, from a domestic perspective, for coordinating the whole-of-government approach. The Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities are involved. Several departments are involved in affirming our sovereignty and making sure there are projects up there that are going to enable Canada to, as a matter of fact, put its mark on that territory.

For far too long, since Captain Bernier went out a hundred years ago to establish.... I see that Mr. Crête is clapping, because he's a good guy from his riding, or at least he came initially from his riding. Captain Bernier went out there to establish Canadian Arctic sovereignty. So we're actually doing something that should have been done a long, long time ago.

● (1605)

The Chair: Madam Brown, did you have another question?

Ms. Lois Brown: I do, if I may, and it's just, again, a follow-up question.

I wonder if you could speak to the issue of the Northwest Passage, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: On the Northwest Passage, the disagreement with the U.S. over various waterways that, of course, are known as the Northwest Passage is a dispute over the legal status of the waters and not over the ownership of sovereignty. I think that is important to point out. The waters of the Canadian Arctic

archipelago include the waters of the Northwest Passage and internal waters of Canada and therefore fall under Canadian jurisdiction.

As a matter of policy, Canada permits shipping through Canadian Arctic waters so long as conditions related to security, the environment, and the Inuit interests are met. I can say that on January 28 of this year, the government introduced legislation expanding the area of application of the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act. Minister Prentice did this, as well as Minister Baird, and he is taking steps towards implementing a mandatory ship reporting system in all Canadian Arctic waters.

So here again, we are assuming our responsibilities and we will continue to assume them.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Ms. Brown.

Mr. Abbott.

Hon. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Minister, we really appreciate your time here, and probably one of the burning issues is Afghanistan. I wonder if you could describe our efforts to assist Afghans in enhancing their country's governance, security, and prosperity.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: I've mentioned this to Mr. Rae before. It is a key priority for the government. We're devoting considerable funds to that regard and efforts to be able to assist the Afghans in enhancing their country's governance, security, and prosperity.

I alluded to our priorities before in my speech. We placed, as you know, heavier emphasis on reconstruction, development, and training the Afghan security forces. We've also significantly increased our emphasis on Kandahar province over that period. We've reinforced our priorities over a 10-year period. Just to give you a ballpark figure, that commitment runs from \$1.3 billion to \$1.9 billion. But once again, Mr. Abbott, what's important here is to recognize that our ultimate goal in Afghanistan is to leave Afghanistan to the Afghans in a viable manner, with a better government, more peaceful, and of course more secure. And that's the objective we're pursuing with our policy.

Hon. Jim Abbott: On June 10, 2006, Canada announced six priorities on three signature projects. I wonder if you could name them or describe them to us.

● (1610)

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: They're projects. For instance, the Dahla Dam is an irrigation system project. It's extremely important because it will enable diversification in that area. You'll recall education, where we've committed to reconstruction of a number of schools. There's the whole issue of polio eradication, in terms of health. We are extremely active in doing that. Those are priorities, of course, that the government has put forward. We're increasing civilian engagement in Afghanistan. Before, I mentioned this whole issue of being able to build the security forces, but we're also doing the same thing in terms of civilian engagement. We're working, as well, to make sure there will be—and we know there will be—elections in August of this year. So we're making sure the democratic principles that need to be put in place are there.

So those are some of the issues we're working with and tackling.

Hon. Jim Abbott: About how many civilian personnel are involved right now?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: Our contingency, the last time we looked, is about 100 civilians, 100 personnel, who are now delivering some \$300 million in assistance annually. So close to half of this assistance is targeted directly at Kandahar province, where the need is the greatest.

Hon. Jim Abbott: That's interesting; it's a little-known fact in Canada. I was surprised that even in my office in Cranbrook I had a constituent come in, a former civil servant who had applied to join them, and she had such a positive attitude. It reminded me a lot of the positive attitude of our troops over there, in that they're actually achieving things and making a difference.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: You're absolutely right.

I'll let Len Edwards speak to that. He has some pretty smack-bang people who are working for us over there, and it's not an easy posting. Maybe you could take a second or two on that, Mr. Edwards.

The Chair: Mr. Edwards, we have about a minute, so it will have to be smack-bang.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: Well, give him a minute to talk about the people who are working over there for Canada.

Mr. Leonard Edwards (Deputy Minister, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (Foreign Affairs)): It's not just members of my department; they come from a number of departments, as you probably know: the RCMP, Corrections Canada, and a number of others from the public safety portfolio.

We've been able to put a lot of people into two areas. There are the people who are working at the Kandahar airfield alongside our military folks, making sure that the cooperative effort between our military and our civilian component, particularly on the development side, works really well. There are also people working at the provincial reconstruction team base inside Kandahar city itself.

If you visit, you can't help but be immensely impressed by the dedication and the work ethic of these—in many cases, very young—people who are dedicating an early part of their careers to this cause.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Edwards.

We'll move to the New Democratic Party.

Mr. Dewar.

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

I want to thank the minister and our guests, Mr. Edwards and Mr. Hirst, for being here today.

I too will go to a number of different files. As you can appreciate, there's a lot to talk about. I'll pick up where one of my colleagues left off, with regard to Mr. Khadr.

We know that at some point our government has to do something. To date, we've had our government simply say.... Well, we know the line; my friend the parliamentary secretary has read the line well. But at some point Canadians want to know when the time is going to come—because it's coming, Minister—that you'll have to do something other than say we're waiting for the exercise to finish in the United States.

I want to start off by asking whether any departmental officials have explored the options for repatriating Mr. Khadr. Maybe we can start there.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: No.

Mr. Paul Dewar: You haven't. So you expect no money, for instance, from legal fees to examine the case?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: Do you want to be a little more specific?

Mr. Paul Dewar: Have you spent any money on the legal case of Mr. Khadr? Have you had anyone look at it?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: No.

Mr. Paul Dewar: So no one's looked at the case, and no one has given you a legal opinion on it.

Maybe Mr. Edwards could help us here. Has no one looked at the legal case of...? I can't put it any plainer. Has anyone in the department looked at the legal case of Mr. Khadr, yes or no?

• (1615)

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: Well, let's be specific here. If you're asking whether we looked at the legal case to have a general idea of what the American policy is, the answer is yes, we looked at the American policy. Yes, we are cognizant of the fact that the trial of all cases in front of the military commission has been halted at Guantanamo since January 20 of this year. We're aware, of course, that the U.S. administration has ordered the closure of Guantanamo Bay. So if you're asking me whether we looked at that, the answer is yes, we have.

Mr. Paul Dewar: But beyond that, there is nothing in terms of what might happen or of scenarios about the future? That's interesting.

I say "interesting" because I think something I would do is ask, "What happens if...?" But that's just me.

When I look at this, I see that we have a case in which the Americans are very clearly sending a message to us that they're closing the shop. We actually have a legal representative in the room—Mr. Kuebler—who has suggested that....

Well, let me try this one with you, Minister. We often talk about Canada's believing in the rule of law—isn't that right?—and about our exporting that principle, that value. In your opinion and that of the officials, when we talk about the rule of law, would you suggest that it includes having fair representation?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: If we're going to discuss the issue of Guantanamo, that's a complete—

Mr. Paul Dewar: Well, actually, no, I'm talking about a case of the rule of law—

The Chair: Let's keep this back and forth through the chair, please.

Mr. Paul Dewar: It's through you, Chair, to them.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: Okay, it's through the chair.

Chair, what we won't speculate on is hypothetical scenarios. Yes, Canada does promote the rule of law; with like-minded countries, we do that. But Mr. Dewar, I have to point out that there is a process in place. We're following that process; we're following it with interest. Once the outcome has been determined, we will develop a position and will make that position known.

Mr. Paul Dewar: It's clear we're not going far with this, unfortunately. As I said through you, Chair, to the minister, we're going to have to do something. I guess the sad part is that we see more leadership on this issue from south of the border than we do in our country.

I will turn my attention to Afghanistan.

It's interesting when we look through the estimates, Minister, and I see that in the case of National Defence there's approximately \$330 million in additional funding for the mission this year. How much more is the department receiving this year in the estimates for the mission in Afghanistan? That's for DFAIT and CIDA.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: I'll let Mr. Hirst answer that question.

Mr. Paul Dewar: And I have a question about how we're coordinating the mission.

I talked to Mr. Edwards about this before and I recall that we used to call it the "3D" and now we call it "whole of government". That seems to go back and forth in terms of nomenclature. I recall very well the debates in the House when we were trying, with the motion that the opposition agreed to with you, to recalibrate the mission so we would have more development and more diplomacy. I want to get a sense of that from the numbers, because money talks.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: We'll let Mr. Hirst answer the first question and then maybe we can get back to that.

Mr. Paul Dewar: While they're doing that, maybe they could get back to us on something related to that in Afghanistan. I noted carefully and I saw Mr. Day's presentation in the fall about a progress report, and one of the things that aren't in here specifically is corruption and drugs. We know that's the big challenge right now. As recently as yesterday, this issue was brought up with your colleague Mr. MacKay. We are turning our attention now to our military being involved with hunting down drug traffickers who are "associated with the Taliban". In your planning and the resources on the ground, is there a line item for drug eradication and dealing with the drug trade in your government's plan for Afghanistan that you could show us?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: We'll let Mr. Hirst answer the first question, if you don't mind.

Mr. Bruce Hirst (Assistant Deputy Minister and Chief Financial Officer, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade): The first part is fairly easy to answer. We spent \$102 million this fiscal year in Afghanistan. That brings our total from 2001-02 up to \$130 million to this present year. Those are the figures.

•(1620)

Mr. Paul Dewar: Through you, Chair, to the ADM, how much more are we going to see from Foreign Affairs vis-à-vis Afghanistan this year?

Mr. Bruce Hirst: It is \$102 million this year.

Mr. Paul Dewar: That's in addition to what had been base funding last year?

Mr. Bruce Hirst: Yes.

Mr. Paul Dewar: In total, how much is Foreign Affairs getting for Afghanistan this year?

Mr. Bruce Hirst: This year it's \$102 million.

Mr. Paul Dewar: What did it receive last year?

Mr. Bruce Hirst: I don't have that figure on hand. It was \$130 million from 2001-02 until the present.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Is the budget this year less than it was in previous years?

Mr. Bruce Hirst: It's more than it was.

Mr. Paul Dewar: But it's not comparative to what we've seen in Defence, is my point.

My point is a simple one. Through you, Chair, to the minister, we see a very large increase in Defence, but we're not seeing similar increases in Foreign Affairs. I would submit to you that's not quite where we thought we were going in the mission in terms of putting more emphasis on diplomacy and development, but that's simply my opinion.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: If you don't mind, I'll have the deputy minister answer that question. There is some concern from Mr. Dewar that we're not spending enough money.

Mr. Paul Dewar: That's on development and diplomacy.

Mr. Leonard Edwards: Mr. Chairman, I can help elaborate a bit.

The amounts that Mr. Hirst has been providing, of course, are not moneys that are coming to the department as part of the budget process; they are in fact departmental funds that are being allocated. To be absolutely sure on the language, Mr. Dewar, \$102 million of departmental funds is being spent this year.

With respect to funding outside the military costs, you have to remember, of course, that includes development costs. You may also remember that the amounts this government has put into Afghanistan increased very substantially as a result of decisions last year to move up to almost \$1.9 billion from previous costs of, I think, around \$0.2 billion. When you look at that measure, you can see a fairly substantial increase of almost 50%.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I was just comparing it to Defence. There's more being put into Defence in this year's allocation in the estimates than there is into your department.

Am I out of time?

The Chair: You have very little time.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: I was just going to answer the counter-narcotics question, unless my colleague wants to continue.

Mr. Paul Dewar: No, my point was simple on the counter-narcotics. I didn't see it in here and I'm not seeing it in the line items. I guess what we're seeing is that it seems the military is now going to be given this role. That concerns me. I just want to know if this concerns you as well.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: No, I don't want to say to you that it doesn't concern me. It does fall, of course, with Peter MacKay. Therefore, there has been a decision taken. International security forces, in concert with the Afghans, can carry out direct operations against narcotic facilities as well as facilitators.

From 2007 to 2011, if I'm not mistaken, Canada has allocated \$55 million towards counter-narcotics projects through Canadian priorities, including, of course, building national institutions, law enforcement capacity-building, and enhancing Pakistan-Afghanistan border cooperation. Those are things we're doing that we believe will help eradicate narcotics in that country.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Hirst, and Mr. Edwards, for appearing here today.

Canada's re-engagement in the Americas certainly is a positive step. It's being very well received by almost all countries of the region. It certainly is a direct contrast to years past, where Canada has been seen as though it has been disengaging from the region.

Particularly now, with the evolving geopolitical landscape of the region, it even becomes a strategic imperative. Economically, the area is being viewed by other world powers too, whether it's the European Union or the two Chinas or other Asian countries, so there's a reason to participate. China has a tax-free port on St. Lucia, which is indicative of their interests throughout the area.

One of the countries in the region, though, where certainly Canada makes one of its preeminent efforts to help, is Haiti. Haiti is a very big priority in the region, of course, not just for humanitarian reasons but also as a necessity, and politically and economically as an imperative, as a sign of Canada's whole-of-government engagement throughout the region, to participate not just politically and economically in the region but also in a humanitarian way. It's a kind of symbol for that.

Mr. Minister, I'm wondering if you could tell us what steps are being taken with the efforts to help Haiti evolve politically and stability-wise.

• (1625)

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: Thank you.

Of course, I think Canada is quite clear that we've made a long-term commitment to Haiti, which is at the heart of Canada's vocation in the Americas, so to speak. We're directing unprecedented financial and political resources towards ensuring the success of international efforts in Haiti, with \$555 million between 2006 and 2011 going to the poorest country in the Americas.

As a matter of fact, and I've mentioned this before, it's our single largest investment in the Americas and our second worldwide in

terms of our contribution. After the United States, we're the second-largest donor in Haiti.

Our involvement is based on strong national interests, security, and values, and basically reflects the close cultural and demographic links between Canada and that country.

We've participated and are participating, of course, in the UN stabilization mission in Haiti, with a current contribution of four Canadian Forces personnel, 96 civilian police officers, and eight corrections experts. We're a leader in security system reform in Haiti.

As you know, I think, probably going back to the larger picture, the Prime Minister did name a Minister of State for the Americas. There's a renewed engagement on the part of the government to do work with the Americas. Minister Kent has been extremely active.

In our earlier discussions, we alluded to the free trade agreements with both Colombia and Peru. Minister Day is very active there as well.

We expect that all of the efforts Canada is putting into the Americas are certainly going to help us in the short, the medium, and the long terms.

The Chair: You have a few more minutes.

Mr. Peter Goldring: As part of this re-engagement in the region, what type of interaction are we taking with associations like the Organization of American States, and CARICOM? I believe there's an east Caribbean association too.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: I mentioned before that we're looking at democracy and securing the hemisphere security. We want to make this more prosperous, so we are working very seriously with the organizations that are in place. We are looking forward to the April summit that is to take place and making sure that Canadian interests in this area are advancing not only our interests but, of course, the hemispheric interests.

We are reinforcing partnerships with countries in the area, not necessarily limited to Brazil, Chile, Peru, or Columbia. Minister Kent is working extremely hard with these countries to develop good relationships. This is something that is a requirement, but it's long overdue.

The Prime Minister's visit about two years ago sort of set the trend for what we want to be able to do. Here's part of Canada's foreign policy, such as the Arctic was, that has been neglected for a number of years and needs to be shored up and looked at seriously. This is exactly the commitment the Prime Minister and this government are making.

• (1630)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

For a very quick question we have Mr. Patry.

[*Translation*]

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

I have two questions.

[English]

Mr. Minister, in last November's Speech from the Throne, the government committed to creating a new democracy, a promotion agency, as below:

Canada's international assistance will continue to increase and will be spent more effectively in the promotion of development goals. A new, non-partisan democracy promotion agency will also be established to support the peaceful transition to democracy in repressive countries and help emerging democracies build strong institutions.

I am wondering what the status of this is now. Is it on hold, and what are you budgeting for it?

The Secretary of State, Mrs. Clinton, in her opening statements to the U.S. Senate foreign relations committee, referred to a smart power approach in which diplomacy will be the vanguard of foreign policy. Professor Haslam, from the Ottawa University school of international affairs here in Ottawa, defines smart power as the idea that military power is not sufficient to address the world's most pressing global threats. He deploys a full range of economic, cultural, political, and intelligence assets in the foreign policy tool box, with diplomacy taking the lead.

As head of Canadian diplomacy, you know very well that there is no military solution in Afghanistan. President Obama recently requested the help of Iran in the search for a solution in Afghanistan, and Canada is seeking international support in its bid for a seat on the UN Security Council for 2011 and 2012. Mr. Minister, do you not think it is time for Canada to improve its international image by calling for and hosting an international diplomatic conference on the Afghan issue, including the participation of Russia, China and Iran?

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Patry.

[Translation]

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: Thank you, Mr. Patry.

I would like to answer the question on the organization that promotes democracy.

[English]

I'll just tell you that Minister Fletcher is the one who has the lead on that file. He is working quite actively on that file. So that is something we'll probably have the opportunity of discussing at a later date here around the table. It is just to reassure you that there is work being done on that. Hopefully it is done in much the same way as at the IDRC, which is I think not only world renowned but certainly something of whose work Canada can be extremely proud. We have been doing this for close to 40 years now, 38 years.

So that is something we can look forward to. Hopefully the establishment of this agency—in terms of democracy, freedom, empowering, along of course with human rights and being able to empower citizens—is something that is so very Canadian that we would certainly want to make that promotion. That is something we are very keen on doing, and so I invite you to follow us on that one.

For the smart power definition, like you I was intrigued by Senator—at the time and now Foreign Secretary—Clinton's take on smart power. It is an interesting notion. I would believe that that is starting from the principle that the United States of America can't be everything for everybody at the same time.

In that purview we'll be looking to more bilateral, in some cases, more multilateral opportunities to work with like-minded countries in pursuing policy objectives that are common to all countries. In that view, I'm looking forward to working with Mrs. Clinton, as well as the new administration in that regard.

You ended your question by talking about Afghanistan. We are deeply involved, as you know. We are in constant contact with our partners and allies on that. Whether contacts be through my colleague the Minister of National Defence and his colleagues at NATO or whether they be through diplomatic channels, I think Canada can be looked at as being a solid ally, somebody who is delivering exactly what it has mentioned it would do.

We are quite happy with the pursuit of the policy as it is. If there need to be any corrections or changes in the course of action, of course Parliament will be consulted on that.

• (1635)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister, and again thank you for coming today.

Although this committee changes every Parliament, in the last Parliament we did a number of reports that I would encourage you to resource when you have the opportunity to do that. We did extensive work on democratic development, which I know Minister Fletcher is using as a resource, but also there was our Afghanistan report at the close of Parliament last year, tabled this summer. So much of your testimony today related to some of those reports that we have already been involved in drafting.

I thank you for being here, for your willingness, and also for your willingness to come back.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: Thank you, Chair and colleagues, for having me. It's been a very good afternoon. Thank you.

The Chair: We will suspend and then we will move into committee business. We will allow the guests to exit the room.

•

•

•

_____ (Pause) _____

• (1640)

The Chair: All right, committee, we'll call this meeting back to order.

You'll notice on the agenda that in the second hour we have committee business. It is the intent to disclose—you have it in front of you—the steering committee report that we brought forward. That's one of the items.

I think before we even get into that, although it's not next on the agenda, we had, in the subcommittee, recommended that we go into a bit of a briefing on Canadian foreign policy with regard to the United States and the new administration there. There were a number of witnesses whose names were submitted and who were contacted. We have not been able to secure all of them for certain. There is one who may be able to come tomorrow afternoon—one of the local ones, and three or four are out of town this week.

So maybe the first item is just to let you know that so far tomorrow, we have basically an open meeting here.

Hon. Bob Rae: Who can come tomorrow?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Angela Crandall): Frank Graves.

Hon. Bob Rae: That's worthwhile, if he can come. Frank Graves is very knowledgeable on public opinion. He's a well-known pollster. He'd be interesting to talk with, and he has extensive reviews of opinion in Canada and the U.S. He's just done a major study.

The Chair: So that might be good for one hour tomorrow.

There's no one else you're waiting for, is there?

The Clerk: No.

Hon. Bob Rae: Is either of the people who wrote that report, Derek Burney or...?

The Clerk: No.

The Chair: Monsieur Crête.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête: If only one witness has confirmed that he will be appearing, could we ask some officials from the department to appear before us to explain the issues that are related to this matter or is it too late to call them to appear?

[English]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): We'll welcome that, to see if he can get—

•(1645)

Mr. Bernard Patry: But not at the same time, not together.

The Chair: So you would want Mr. Graves by himself, and then the department in the second hour.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête: Yes, and if others confirm that they will be here, for example, Mr. Graves, we could have two or three experts. As to the second part, that would be the government.

[English]

The Chair: It's my understanding that departments never appear with anyone.

Hon. Bob Rae: I wouldn't want them to.

The Chair: Yes. So that would be in the second hour. And that's something, then, Mr. Obhrai, that you can do?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I want to qualify that. We'll make a request. If they need time to prepare, that's another issue.

The Chair: Mr. Dewar.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I didn't submit any names, so I'm just wondering who we were looking for. Was Mr. Harder one of them?

The Clerk: No, he wasn't. His name wasn't submitted.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I don't know if anyone has any objections. He might be worthy of—

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Harder is deputy foreign minister, so I can't speak for him.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Right. I just thought he might be worthy of—

The Chair: I hope we're not going to have just one meeting and then forget the issue. We definitely want some of those. I know the Liberals submitted three or four names. Certainly some of those we

want to get. And the government submitted some who were unavailable.

So we're still open to names. We're just trying to plan for tomorrow at the present time.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: In the larger context of this study we want to do of foreign policy, which would include regions, I have a question for Mr. Patry, who brought that motion up in the steering committee. Do you want a quick job done on this, or do you want to go back deeper into the study that Mr. Crête proposed?

What I'm gathering here now is that in your motion, the first one, on the U.S., you said "one day". Do we really want to do a one-day study—and you would decide—or do we want to put it in a larger context when we're studying the regions? Then we would have more people coming in, the ones Paul is suggesting—Mr. Harder and all the others.

The Chair: I think what we really need to do is nail down who we can get tomorrow on this short timeline.

Undoubtedly, I think it's going to be part of the larger study, but we haven't really gotten to that larger study yet. If the committee believes that we should continue with this tomorrow, then the clerk can get hold of Mr. Graves tonight, and Mr. Obhrai, perhaps you can help facilitate that.

I'm going to draw your attention back to the report. Number one, your subcommittee met on Wednesday, February 4. The first item was that the committee considered issues raised in the tenth report of the standing committee dealing with the Canada in Afghanistan mission: "...adopt the report and its recommendations as a report of this Committee in this Parliament and report it to the House requesting a government response." As you remember, we submitted that report last Parliament, in the summer. The steering committee moved—and it's open for debate here today—that we resubmit the same report.

Mr. Rae.

Hon. Bob Rae: I would be strongly in favour of doing that. I don't think the report got much attention because it was released in the middle of the summer, and I think we should continue to be engaged in that subject. I think it would be important to get it out into the open again. We won't add to it or take away from it; we don't need to go back over it again, but just get it out there, that's all.

The Chair: Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Item number one, of course, conflicts with the next resolution that is coming out, Mr. Dewar's resolution. This item is already part of that resolution as well, so what we are doing here is picking up one portion of the resolution that Mr. Dewar put forward. He is saying the tenth report of the committee on Canada in Afghanistan, which is in the next...

Are we going to discuss this separately from the other ones or are we going to put it together with the motion that Mr.—

•(1650)

The Clerk: This is the motion that we have.

The Chair: This is the motion that came out of steering committee. Mr. Dewar's motion is a separate motion.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: But they are both the same, though.

An hon. member: No.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Yes, they are.

The Chair: They're not exactly the same, but there may be parts of it that would be redundant with this.

Mr.—

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: No, no, I'm just bringing this as a clarification. Then I want to continue my arguments.

Do you want to continue the argument?

The Chair: Continue.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Chair, I know that a tremendous amount of study was done by the last committee. Various members did a huge amount of study of this, and a lot of witnesses came, a report was written, and a report was submitted to the House of Commons, although it was done only when it was closed. But it was the wish of the last committee that a report be tabled. And so, despite the fact that it wasn't finished, there was an interim report tabled, if I'm not mistaken, which they wanted, as put forward by the NDP at that time.

So we had one interim report already submitted, and then we had the final report that was submitted by you in July of last year. What you have is two similar reports on the same issue with the same idea, already submitted to the House of Commons. Not only that, but the fact remains that it's one year old, and all the transcripts and other materials are publicly available on that report.

I tend to respectfully disagree with the former critic of the Liberal Party that it has not garnered any publicity. The reason it did not garner any more publicity was the Manley report. The Manley report and the subsequent motion that came before Parliament, which was put forward by the Liberal Party and which was approved—and of course, on the record, the NDP opposed it.... All that was part of the debate that came forward. As part of that motion and the debate surrounding it, there came the special committee on Afghanistan, of which Mr. Dewar is not a member. That is part of the decision.

But the fact still remains that there is a committee ongoing. So now we have...and I'm having extreme difficulty buying the argument that this report is current, which it's not. This report was not put into Parliament. Everybody has seen this report; it's just a matter of putting it back in.

In the meantime, we seem to forget the events that are taking place, and of course the most significant event of everything here is the surge by President Obama, which changes everything that is happening in this matter and makes this report redundant.

The committee, as the master of its own destiny, is very agreeable to saying we will continue to study, to look at it and bring it up to date from what it is. They can continue doing that, to bring it up to the current date. But I am of the strong opinion that we are flogging a dead horse; that there is no value in this thing we are hearing; that we are putting things back, on and on, and rehashing some argument that was made by others at a given time, when the whole current scenario has completely changed.

Following upon this also, you have a report that is continually coming out from the special committee on Afghanistan. As I am on that committee, let me talk about it for a minute. Of course, I can see my colleagues over on the other side saying....

No, I have my time. You cannot tell me to hurry up; it's my time. I'm going to put forward my argument here.

The Chair: Continue, Mr. Obhrai.

Yes, there is relevance here. He's still relevant to the report.

Continue, Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Thank you. I'm talking to the issue, Mr. Chair.

As I said, he is not part of the committee, so he may feel left out, but his colleague Dawn was on that committee. This is the NDP situation, which of course opposes the whole Afghanistan mission. It was quite interesting today during....

Why are you pushing me, Mr. Chair? It's my right to speak.

• (1655)

The Chair: Continue, Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Do I have a time limit?

The Chair: No, but—

An hon. member: I do.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Well, no, you don't.

When the member was asking questions to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, it was quite amazing that his party said they don't want anything to do with the Afghanistan mission. They don't approve of the Afghanistan mission; they voted against it. And yet they want to keep a complete eye on it to see how it goes.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Dewar, on a point of order.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Just for the record, we have never said that. We might disagree with what the government is doing in Afghanistan in certain areas. We have never said that we would not be involved.

The Chair: All right.

Continue, Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: We'll have a look at *Hansard*, but that's not according to the debates that we sat through in the House of Commons.

The point remains that after Parliament has made a decision.... And one of the strongest decisions was to set up this committee on Afghanistan, which is televised, so that the Canadian public can understand what is happening. That was the key element of that recommendation that was passed, and that is the key element of this thing.

The foreign affairs critic of the Liberal Party said that the public does not have it. They have it; he is wrong. He is on that committee, and it is a televised committee giving an up-to-date account of what is happening in the cabinet committee, because that was what was requested, that the cabinet committee report to that committee.

So Mr. Chair, things have moved forward already, and as things move forward this whole report is, in my view, totally redundant and a waste of time. Even if they say they want to have a government response out of this, the government has already responded to the issue. You may want to go back and flog a dead horse, as I said. What will the government say? The government will say that Parliament passed this.

Mr. Chair, what we are saying is that this report has already been tabled twice—and I will repeat that word, twice—in the House. It's available. Therefore, this a totally irrelevant report, and I want to make that clear, while we continue with the major work that has been done by this special committee on Afghanistan.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Obhrai.

All right, we have the speaking order here.

There are a number of arguments for tabling and not for tabling the report. One of the arguments is that we have a number of new members on the committee who would sign on to a report without being part of the drafting of that report. The other is that it's still an ongoing issue.

Looking at both sides, it might be something that our committee can take a great deal of pride in, that the first issue we dealt with on coming back was the filing of this Afghanistan report, recognizing the importance of the mission there.

Mr. Patry.

Mr. Bernard Patry: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

First of all, this report was adopted unanimously by the standing committee. I just want to warn my colleagues and Mr. Obhrai that they had voted in favour of tabling it.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I didn't know about the motion.

M. Bernard Patry: You didn't know about it, but you should have known. After 15 or 16 years, you should know what you're doing—

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: On a point of order, I made the same arguments in that report as well, but you didn't listen, as you will not listen now.

Mr. Bernard Patry: But I just want to make the point that there is no redundant report at all. Some reports are used by people. Yes, we did a report years back after 9/11, and you were on the committee that I was chairing at that time concerning Canadian relations with the Muslim world...and it is still up to date with some of its motions.

The other day you were chairing a farewell lunch for the ambassador from Morocco, and he talked to me about this. This was tabled in July. We didn't have the election before the fall. That means the department had all that time it needed to come back with some of the answers or responses from the government. The only thing we want is a response. If the response is no longer up to date, we're just going to respond that it's not up to date, and it's up to them to respond to that.

To me, a report needs to get an answer from the government. It's as simple as that. Now, if some of the members aren't sure they can agree with it because they were not here in the last Parliament, they just need to abstain. But for me, we're not going to discuss.... The

report was already done. We took so many months just to come out with a report. At that time...just go through it and that's it, and we'll ask for a vote on it. We are ready to ask for the vote on the report.

• (1700)

The Chair: Okay, we have Mr. Dewar, please.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Thank you, Chair.

This is simple. We're just talking about the work that had been done by this committee. Bring it forward so that it can be tabled.

Sadly, by the time we finished and wrapped up our report, Parliament was not sitting. I know the parliamentary secretary knows that. And so it is just a matter of due process; it's very simple. I have no idea what he's talking about in reference to having submitted it twice. This report was only done once, and then we tried to submit it, but the House was not sitting.

So this is not complicated; it's very simple. It just honours the work that this committee has done.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I have a point of order.

The Chair: You've already made the point, Mr. Obhrai. In the filing of it twice you make reference to the interim report and the final report.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: He said he did not understand why it was filed when Parliament wasn't sitting. I want to correct him to say this committee passed the resolution to have you table it, and you tabled it. Therefore this issue that it was not tabled in Parliament is wrong.

The Chair: I don't think anyone has said it wasn't tabled. It has been tabled.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: It has been tabled.

The Chair: Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring: I certainly would agree that...I have difficulty understanding why people who have not had input into the crafting of this report want to have it reissued.

I also have a concern here about how many times you can keep reissuing or sending in the same report. Is it not like repeating a three-month-old press release? Do you not lose some of your impact by doing it this way? Do you not water down the importance of it? If you're looking for media attention, would the media itself not question this and have to turn back the clock to see if they had received this report at some time in the past and that it's really a duplicate of their efforts? In other words, does that not water down the impact of it, by reissuing and repeating exactly the same report? I suppose the media, if that's the intention of it, are more geared up to having something that's factual, that's up to date.

Also, has there not been a response to this report?

The Chair: There hasn't. I think that's the issue here. Just the way it was done, you remember we went so late—

Mr. Peter Goldring: If it was sent in once, I certainly think that is enough. Otherwise, you're watering down the whole process.

The Chair: The clerk tells me the only way to get that government response to that report is to resubmit the report.

Mr. Abbott.

Hon. Jim Abbott: I suppose there are a couple of things. I would presume Mr. Rae is looking for this to be tabled to create some public awareness of the report, some publicity.

Mr. Patry, you're indicating that is not the case?

Mr. Bernard Patry: It is to get an answer from the government.

Hon. Jim Abbott: I have two difficulties. Being one of the newbies on this committee, I'm taking a looking at the contingent of members on the government side. It's difficult for me, and I would expect for my colleagues, to be signing off on something we were not involved in, in any way.

I think if there is honest reflection—and I'm not suggesting there would be anything but honest reflection by my colleagues on the other side—I think there would have to be agreement that there certainly has been an awful lot of additional water under the bridge since this report was constructed.

In terms of adequate use or proper use of the resources that are available, because committees by definition are masters of their destiny, we could tie up the Department of Foreign Affairs with any number of things, should we choose to. I can't imagine that any of the responsible members of this committee would want to do that.

First, I can't imagine myself being part of the submitting, because I don't know anything about it. I can't say, yes, I think we should be going ahead with this report.

Second, in submitting the report, which is fundamentally based on yesterday's news—they've even taken it out of the bottom of the birdcage by now—the difficulty is that we then are going to be tasking the minister's office and the department with a response to a report that is probably outdated, in my best guess, because I don't know what's in the report. We'd end up tying up the bureaucrats, along with the people in the minister's office. I'm not really sure there's any real value to that.

I'm not really clear—I'm looking for one of my colleagues who are pushing for the tabling of this report to give me a solid, rational reason for doing so. What value will be achieved by tabling the report?

If, as Mr. Patry says, retabling the report is not for the purpose of seeing something on page A-10 of *The Globe and Mail*, is not for publicity, then I need to try to understand what the value is in the minds of the members of this committee who were part of that process.

This is old news, and I don't understand why we're regurgitating it.

•(1705)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Abbott.

Mr. Pearson.

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

I just don't quite understand what the issue is. It seems to me that when any committee has done good work, which I think this

committee obviously has, and it submitted a report that happened to go out at a time of the year where it didn't get a lot of attention, not just from media but by groups like NGOs and others who I deal with, we would want to give the work that's been done another chance.

Also, I think it's very important that the whole issue of Afghanistan is ready to go through a whole new phase as a result of the American initiative. We know that. We heard it from the foreign affairs minister. I presume we would want to, as a committee and for the sake of the people who would be looking at our deliberations, have a base of where to start.

We ended up with this report—not me, I'm sorry, but for those who did, you did a lot of work—and for people to say this is what we did and now this is the next stage we're going to go to from that, this would seem to me, as an outside observer, to be the common sense approach. I realize I'm new to this committee. There's nothing to be ashamed of in this report. I've read the whole report. I think it's a very good report, but I think for people out there who don't really know and haven't really had a chance to understand it yet, it should be resubmitted so we give them a baseline to see where we are going to go next.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

That's the end of the speakers list, so we'll just call the....

Mr. Obhrai, very quickly.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I want to ask this question, Mr. Chair. At the time when the recommendations of this report were made, from the last committee...I want to say that at this stage, if you're asking me to table this thing, I am not in agreement with many of the recommendations because it has changed.

Let me just get this clarification out. I'm talking about the period now. This was in the last committee. Just because Parliament was prorogued and it went to this thing, it does not mean that those recommendations are valid now. Now you're asking me to put a stamp on that thing over there; therefore, I would say we would have the right to put a minority report to say some of the recommendations that we have made are no longer valid for me at this time in terms of accepting that report. This is the point I made last time, to say that maybe we should revisit that report to find new recommendations, new things, to bring it up to date. Otherwise I'm not willing to put this thing, and we should have the right to put a minority report forward for this thing here.

The Chair: Yes, okay, and I—

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I am saying we should be allowed to put in a minority report if it carries on the way it is, because I believe some of the recommendations may be outdated as of today.

The Chair: I think you have a valid point, Mr. Obhrai, and I don't know if I've heard anyone say we wouldn't want you to put in a little dissenting report or paper saying that you feel this is redundant, this is the second time. But again, do I hear anyone on the committee saying no, he shouldn't be allowed to put that opinion on? And it's the same with some who may not have served on the committee. They may say that if they choose, or they can just sign on to it as well.

Mr. Patry.

• (1710)

Mr. Bernard Patry: I must say that in every report everyone is entitled, every member and every party, to make a dissenting report or add an addendum, if you want to put an addendum—call it what you want to call it, I have no idea. But we can vote now and say they need to get 72 hours, one week, it doesn't matter to me. They need that time, but not two months. They could have 48 hours to put an addendum about this, but we are voting today on the report, including the addendum if they want to put an addendum. I agree that we can vote with an addendum, if any party would like to put an addendum about this, or a dissenting report. But we're not going to give you a month to put a dissenting report, because we might be in an election situation again in three months.

The Chair: Mr. Obhrai, do you think you would be happy with 48 hours if you decide to do an addendum or a dissenting report? Will that suffice?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: That's a short period of time. We will require a little bit more time, so I will say—

The Chair: Translation, 72 hours?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I would say a week is fine with us.

The Chair: After the break week. Is that fair?

Mr. Bernard Patry: You put a date that you're going to table the report for such a date. You could put the date; let's say we're back on February 23, and say you're going to table the report for the 24th. That's fine. They've got until the 24th to table it, the week we come back. For me, that's the time. But I don't want to see that in three months or four months you're coming back about this. We should decide today that you have 10 days, let's say until February 24, to table; you have until that date to table it.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I am making it very clear that I have the right to put a dissenting report on that.

An hon. member: That's the thing. We're going to reprint it, without—

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Yes, I want it very clear here, because then you're going to change around with this thing.

The Chair: I am just told that as far as the ability to attach a dissenting opinion, report, or addendum, or whatever you may choose to call it, is concerned, they would need time in order to translate. It would just have to be attached to it. You'd have to work the timelines. My intent then, if this motion was to carry—and maybe we can make an amendment to the motion—would be that it be tabled in that first week back after our break, on Tuesday, February 24.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: With the amendment in there to reflect whether other parties would like to put a dissenting report, an addendum, or whatever you want to call it....

The Chair: The clerk tells me that we just need to pass this, have a motion for dissenting, which I think Mr. Patry has already made, and then—

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: So vote on that motion.

The Chair: All right. So all in favour?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: No, vote on Patry's motion.

The Clerk: We have to adopt the report and then we vote on a dissenting opinion to the report.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: No, no.

The Chair: Mr. Obhrai, this is the process that we have to do. We have the word that they are going to allow us the opportunity to do that.

All in favour, then, of a retabling of the report that this committee drafted in the last Parliament?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: There were a number of abstentions.

Mr. Patry, would you move that, then?

Mr. Bernard Patry: We agreed to have a dissenting report or addendum. A dissenting report could be tabled, and at the same time, in the next two weeks.... Put a date on it. Make it February 24, 25, or 26. It doesn't matter to me.

The Chair: Okay, before February 26.

Mr. Bernard Patry: Put it at February 26. That's fine.

The Chair: Perfect.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: All right, so number one is effectively carried.

On the second point, that the committee consider the supplementary estimates, okay, we did that, so that's done.

The third item is:

That the Committee commence a review of Canadian foreign policy by studying different regions of the world and Canada's relations with them beginning with the Canada /US relationship, then looking at Canada's policy respecting the Arctic, Africa and other regions of the world. That in relation to this proposed study the Committee hear from witnesses on Wednesday, February 11, 2009.

So that's tomorrow. Are there any comments on this? This was Mr. Crête's suggestion, and I think it's a good one.

Paul.

• (1715)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: That is a very accurate summary of the steering committee discussion. It is very well drafted. We would like a comprehensive study that would highlight the priorities, something that will allow us to move quickly.

If at some point we feel that it would be appropriate to report back to the House, then we could do so. I remind you that the steering committee was in agreement on that point.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you. I think we mentioned initially prioritizing, but it's fairly broad. That's my opinion in looking at the table here.

We were wondering about adding this, Mr. Crête: "That the committee commence a review of key elements of Canadian foreign policy." Your motion also lays out very succinctly some of the areas that you want to visit. Foreign policy could take a two-year study, but "key elements" would keep us focused.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête: Are we keeping the rest of the motion?

[English]

The Chair: Yes. So he is willing to have that as a friendly amendment....

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: The motion captures our debate and what we want to do in general. But my idea was to give input into the regions of interest to us. My problem is that we are putting down the names of areas. That wasn't the intent.

This is a very strong, long, and broad-based study. My thinking was that we would give input to the clerk to say, I would like to focus my study, as Paul was talking about, in the DRC and the other areas—the Sudan issue. I want to focus on this or that. The idea was not what is written here, but to give input to the clerk.

The only area that I understand is agreed to, if I am not mistaken, is the Canada-U.S. relationship. That's so we can have witnesses on Wednesday prior to the Obama visit. It is my understanding that we give...and then the next time we come back with a broader motion capturing what Paul had to say and agree on which areas we want to study.

The Chair: When you look at the motion, Mr. Obhrai, I think it does lay out what we spoke of at the steering committee.

Your concern may be addressed with that phrase after “Africa”. It says, “respecting the Arctic, Africa and other regions of the world”. If all of a sudden we want to look at Canada's policy—and I don't want to throw out any suggestions—for example, on the Middle East, the words “other regions of the world” gives us that ability to do that.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Where is the road map? There's no road map. The talk we had was that we would give our input to the clerk.

There's no road map here. Anybody can stand up and say they want to study this or that region and then we'll do it. I am suggesting that we create a road map in advance. I have no problem with whichever region you want to study, but let's prepare a road map to say that first we'll do this region and then we'll do this region. Otherwise we will have motions every time somebody wants to bring anything forward and the study will continue and continue.

The Chair: Mr. Crête.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête: I believe that the text, with the amendment relating to the key points, is an accurate reflection of that to which we all agreed. I don't know what was so hard for the parliamentary secretary to understand. It was repeated more than once at the steering committee.

I remember coming back to the issue, at the end, to confirm that everyone was in agreement. You have to wonder about this. If every decision by a steering committee can be challenged later by one of its members, it will make things quite difficult. Steering committees would no longer be relevant.

It is important that the wording of the text be an accurate reflection of the compromise to which all members agree. I started by

suggesting a comprehensive study, then some people felt that we should proceed in stages, and priorities were then listed. That was all done by consensus.

That is all I have to say. We will decide how to proceed as we go along. We already have determined the starting point, and we will see what happens later. Suggestions can be made to the committee. Our researchers must have an idea of what is required of them at least a few weeks, if not a few months in advance. We already have guidelines for the next few months. If we feel that other work has to be done later, committee members will have the opportunity to provide constructive suggestions and decide which parts are the most important.

That is essential. It's the first time that we will be following the lead of the steering committee. We cannot have a steering committee member challenge everything that the committee will be doing when it meets. I am not saying that we will always be in agreement, but when there is a consensus, that should be respected by the members of the steering committee.

• (1720)

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Patry.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Patry: I agree with Mr. Crête. This was discussed, and what you said is what we understood the situation to be.

[English]

I really feel that we should start with the United States. I think it is very important. We don't need—

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Don't we go by order?

Mr. Bernard Patry: No, I really feel this is important. We have to have some witnesses from Canada. We could also have some witnesses from New York or Washington come here. We have the budget for it. We could request to have one or two to see the other side of the coin, to see what they think about this. I think this is important.

Now, on the road map, what do you mean by the road map? For us the motion is wide enough that they talk about Africa. Now, we might one day want to discuss RDC, but we need to get something from the analysts on who we can see. We need to be prepared. If one is talking about the RDC, we need to talk about what is going on in Darfur, and maybe in Zimbabwe.

Now, we would like to have maybe one or two sessions to discuss Sri Lanka, to see what Canada can do there. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs have said they wanted to be more involved with Sri Lanka.

The only thing is that we don't want to be stuck with one study, as we did on Afghanistan. We're studying Afghanistan every Tuesday, every Thursday, and we're unable to do other work. We could one day have Haiti and see what's going on there. We just don't know. Last time we made a request for the Arctic, just to come up with a plan, just to get a brief look at what we can do for the Arctic—it's so wide, the Arctic.

But we're going to start with the Canada-United States relationship, in a sense, with the new presidency. This is quite important. It's going to change the way we do things in the world, because right now our government is following the United States.

The Chair: My fear is that we could generalize this thing so much that we'll just water it down. The tighter you keep it, the more effective report it's going to be.

That's why I really believe in the addition that Mr. Crête allowed to his motion: "the key elements of". That's going to prevent us from going all over, with a full policy review on the Congo or a full policy on everything. "Key elements" will try to keep it tight.

I think Mr. Obhrai has a point. It's still very broad, but I still think it's workable, and I do agree that this was the feeling of the steering committee.

Mr. Obhrai, and then Mr. Rae.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Chair, I just want to go back to the attack that came on me.

It is my understanding; that is what I thought. That's the way I thought and I'm putting it down here. I thought the only unanimous consent we had there was that we were going to do a study...the issue of the road map. So for the member to start saying that we agreed on this thing....

But that's not the point here. I just want it laid down on the table that if we don't have a road map on this, it will disintegrate—as I know from the past—into partisan politics with partisan issues getting into it. At the end of the day, I have no idea what this report is going to be or when it is going to be.

When I was over there, I thought a road map was a good thing. Now I'm not very sure whether it really is. But I'm sure the coalition on the other side is going to warp anything I say anyway, so there's no point in—

•(1725)

The Chair: Mr. Obhrai, you can't be sure of anything.

Mr. Rae.

Hon. Bob Rae: Mr. Chairman, I just want to say that I think, on the review that we've been asked to do, the warnings are out there that we have to have a sense of direction. Again, I think our subcommittee has to continue to look at particular subjects in the context of the review. That's what we do.

As members will know, I'm very interested in the Sri Lanka issue. I know Mr. Obhrai put forward a motion that we should do that. That would give us a chance to review our peace and our conflict work. It would give us a chance to review and have a particular couple of days to focus on that, get some witnesses in, take that as an example, a case study. We can agree on what the case studies might be. Zimbabwe might be another one. I know that your colleague Hugh Segal from the Senate has raised issues about Zimbabwe, and it's important to have that discussion.

I think the report, to be successful, needs to be about something. It can move around a little bit, but the topics have to be agreed upon

and allow us to focus. So I would hope that the subcommittee could agree effectively to bring together the views as to what particular area we need to focus on.

If there's concern about the fact that there are a lot of different areas, just read the minister's statement. Quite frankly, it was a pretty broad description of a whole number of subject areas, some of which we've already covered and discussed and will be covered in other committees. But we have to have the flexibility to respond to particular events in this committee, and I think that as we get to work together, we'll become familiar with how we can do that.

So I'm not uncomfortable with the direction.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rae.

Mr. Dewar.

Mr. Paul Dewar: My final point on this is that we agree to this, and to have some planning on it, I think, is what Mr. Obhrai is asking for. I agree. We just came up with this a couple of days ago, but I think it captures the direction in which most of us want it to go.

So I would say, at this point, let's pass this, and then let's get down to....

Bob, when you said "subcommittee", you were talking about the steering committee?

Hon. Bob Rae: Yes, the steering committee.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Okay, thanks.

There we can actually rough out the details of where we go from here. I think this did capture it. As was stated, we all have different interests, but the addition of "key elements" is helpful. As the analysts had mentioned, it was very wide, and I think this narrows it down. We will have to narrow it down even more, but I think this captures it.

If we can pass this, then at the steering committee we can kind of look at, as you called it, a road map, an agenda of where to go from there.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: That's fine.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Obhrai, for that vote of confidence.

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

The Chair: That carried unanimously.

Now I would entertain a motion to pass the first report.

Ms. Brown is moving the motion.

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

The Chair: Seeing the clock at 5:30 p.m., if we're unable to secure the department for tomorrow, would it be our intent to come back to committee business?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: All right. We'll have a number of motions then.

We're adjourned.

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.