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Mr. Kevin Sorenson

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): Good afternoon, colleagues.

This is the tenth meeting of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, on Monday, March 23, 2009. We are continuing our committee's study of key elements of Canadian foreign policy.

Today we will turn our attention to Sri Lanka.

In our first hour, our witnesses are Susan Johnson, director general of international operations for the Canadian Red Cross, and, also from the Canadian Red Cross, Faisal Mahboob, program manager of the Pakistan and Sri Lanka international operation.

Welcome.

From the Association of Sri Lankan Graduates of Canada, we have Yoga Arulnamby, president, and Raj Thavaratnasingham, executive committee member.

Welcome.

I see by the nodding of your head that I didn't mess up the name too much. If I did, I apologize, sir.

Our committee provides time for each witness to make a short opening statement. Then we'll go into the first round of questioning. Each party will have seven minutes for questions and answers.

By way of information for our committee, if it would be all right, we would like to reserve about five or ten minutes for committee business. Our subcommittee has a budget that they've presented, just to bring witnesses to their committee, so we'll want to deal with that.

Welcome, everyone. I will begin by asking Ms. Johnson to make her presentation.

[Translation]

Ms. Susan Johnson (Director General, International Operations, Canadian Red Cross): Mr. Chair, members of the committee, on behalf of the Canadian Red Cross, I want to thank you for this opportunity to appear before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

My name is Susan Johnson and I am the Director General of International Operations. With me today is my colleague Faisal Mahboob Program Manager, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

The Canadian Red Cross has been actively working in Sri Lanka for nearly 20 years. Our long-standing experience in this country qualifies us to speak to this issue today. However, before we discuss our operations in Sri Lanka, I would first like to speak to you briefly about the Canadian Red Cross and the International Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement.

The Canadian Red Cross is a volunteer, humanitarian, non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of the most vulnerable people in Canada and throughout the world with the assistance and dedicated efforts of over 30,000 volunteers and members and 3,500 employees. The Canadian Red Cross has a unique mandate to play an auxiliary role to all levels of government in Canada. The Canadian Red Cross is part of the International Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement.

[English]

The international Red Cross and Red Crescent movement is an international humanitarian movement with approximately 100 million volunteers worldwide. The movement consists of several distinct organizations that are legally independent from each other but are united within the movement through common basic principles, objectives, emblems, statutes, and governing organizations.

The movement includes the International Committee of the Red Cross, the ICRC, which was founded in 1863. It is a private humanitarian institution with a unique authority under international humanitarian law to protect the life and dignity of the victims of international and internal armed conflicts.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the federation, was founded in 1919 and coordinates the activities of 186 national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies. On an international level, the federation leads and organizes, in close cooperation with its member national societies, relief and assistance operations responding to large-scale emergencies.

The national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies exist in nearly every country in the world. As I already said, there are 186 national societies, and each acts as an auxiliary to the public authorities of its own country.

I will now turn to talk specifically about Sri Lanka. The international Red Cross and Red Crescent movement has long been providing humanitarian assistance in Sri Lanka. The international Red Cross movement places Sri Lanka as one of its top 10 priorities in the world. Since January of this year, the Canadian government has responded to this by contributing \$1.75 million to the Red Cross movement for the humanitarian operations in that country.

Given the gravity of the situation, it would be appropriate for the federal government to consider doubling its contribution at this time. The Canadian Red Cross has been deploying Canadians to work with the International Committee of the Red Cross in Sri Lanka since the committee opened its operations there in 1989. As needs to assist the civilian population have become more and more apparent, the International Committee of the Red Cross has conducted its humanitarian activities with the agreement of both parties to the conflict. These humanitarian actions include providing humanitarian assistance to civilians, providing basic health attention in areas of the country outside of the reach of the government, and staffing crossing points to enable civilians to cross between the government-controlled areas and the LTTE-controlled areas, as well as visiting those detained in relation to the conflict.

In 1992 the Canadian Red Cross opened a direct relationship with our sister society, the Sri Lankan Red Cross Society. Our efforts there have been focused on building the capacity of the Sri Lankan Red Cross in responding to community needs and particularly in preparing and responding to disasters. However, nothing could have prepared the Sri Lankan Red Cross for the tsunami that struck the country in December 2004. The destruction was widespread and massive. Three-quarters of the island's coastlines felt the impact. More than 35,000 people lost their lives. Hundreds of thousands were left homeless and with no source of income.

Within days, the Canadian Red Cross, thanks to the generous outpouring of donations from the Canadian public and the Canadian government, was able to mobilize resources and join with national societies from many other countries—the international federation and the International Committee of the Red Cross—to respond to the tremendous needs. In Sri Lanka, the Canadian Red Cross response included the distribution of 300,000 kilograms of relief items. These included 17,000 kitchen sets, 430,000 personal hygiene kits, and water purification sachets that were capable of treating over 15 million litres of water. In the north of the country, the Canadian Red Cross responded to the damage and destruction of several hospitals with immediate medical assistance, training for local doctors and nurses, and equipment for local hospitals.

As the focus shifted from relief and recovery to long-term development, the Canadian Red Cross, working with the Sri Lankan Red Cross, expanded its program in support of vulnerable communities.

To date, 940 permanent houses have been constructed. But we are not only building homes, we are also rebuilding communities. To ensure future resilience, community-based organizations have been established and the members provided with leadership training. With grants administered by these organizations and after consultation with residents, community centres have been built and roads improved. The Canadian Red Cross is also contributing to improving health conditions by supporting the renovation and expansion of ten

hospitals across the country. To date, eight hospitals have been fully rehabilitated and two are still under rehabilitation. This includes construction of diagnostic and outpatient facilities, doctors' and nurses' quarters, and installation of vital medical equipment, such as bulk oxygen storage tanks and distribution lines.

● (1535)

The Canadian Red Cross is committed to sustaining a long-term relationship with the Sri Lankan Red Cross. Our current budget is \$74 million Canadian for the period of 2005 to 2015.

The Canadian Red Cross is also committed to helping the Sri Lankan Red Cross sustain knowledge and capacity gained from the massive tsunami operations. To date, significant accomplishments include renovating branch and divisional facilities of the national society, developing a strategic plan for 2005-15, and improving financial and information management systems in order to facilitate accountability and transparency of the national society.

Given our presence in the country, we have been very aware of the changing security environment. During the past two years, the Canadian Red Cross, alongside our movement partners, has been pre-positioning emergency stocks and preparing contingency plans for future humanitarian needs. This includes the provision of up to 100 tents and 1,000 tarpaulins. We are in a good position to be able to respond quickly to humanitarian needs.

However, it has become more and more difficult for the Red Cross to sustain the full range of humanitarian action as the conflict has worsened throughout the latter part of 2008 and the early months of 2009. Currently, as I'm sure the members of the committee are aware, approximately 250,000 people are caught up in an area 250 kilometres square that has come under intense fighting.

The International Committee of the Red Cross is the only international aid agency to have remained permanently in Nivani over the past four months and is operating in a highly insecure environment. Staff in the field report that the humanitarian situation is deteriorating by the day.

However, as access allows, the International Committee of the Red Cross continues to work with the Sri Lankan Red Cross to assist those affected by the fighting. This work includes: maintaining a continuous presence at all entry points; following up on detained internally displaced people, such as unaccompanied minors; provision of humanitarian assistance; provision of medical supplies and staffing medical teams; supporting the Ministry of Health team; and evacuation of war-wounded. To date, 2,400 war-wounded have been evacuated.

The sick and wounded continue to arrive at areas such as Puthumatalan, where local people have helped set up a makeshift medical facility in a community centre and school. Medical staff from the Ministry of Health are doing their best to cope with the constant influx of people injured by the fighting, but there are not enough medical supplies to meet the needs.

One of the key services of the international Red Cross movement is the family messaging service. As part of this global network, in Canada the Canadian Red Cross Restoring Family Links program helps people re-establish contact with immediate family members after separation due to war and other humanitarian crises.

In the case of Sri Lanka, we have been receiving requests from persons in Canada looking to locate their families in the Nivani area. Due to the severity of the current situation, the international committee cannot currently provide tracing services for families located in the Nivani area. However, we are providing support to tracing people who are originally from Nivani but who have left the area. To date, in Canada, we have received approximately 150 inquiries. Each person has been inquiring about family members, with 4 to 26 people per inquiry.

As the guardian of international humanitarian law, the International Committee of the Red Cross continues to remind both parties to the conflict of their obligations to comply with international humanitarian law, emphasizing that the law requires all parties to refrain from harming civilians, to allow them to receive aid, and to enable humanitarian organizations to work in safety. As such, recent Canadian government statements calling for the respect of international humanitarian law have been welcomed by the Canadian Red Cross. Also, we appreciate the financial support of the Canadian government for the humanitarian assistance programs of the Canadian Red Cross and the programs of the international Red Cross movement.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my statement, the humanitarian needs are high and continue to grow. Sri Lanka must remain a priority for Canadian humanitarian assistance. It would be appropriate for Canada to make further contributions to the humanitarian response of the international Red Cross movement, which is currently seeking an additional \$19 million to continue the operations there.

•(1540)

In addition, full compliance with the provisions of IHL is essential to allow humanitarian organizations the appropriate conditions to provide for basic needs in the face of the growing suffering. In this regard, it would be appropriate for the Government of Canada to reiterate its concern about this issue and to make clear its expectation that IHL will be fully respected.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chair, members of the committee, thank you for your attention. I would now be happy to take your questions.

Thank you very much.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Johnson.

We'll move to Mr. Arulnamby.

Mr. Yoga Arulnamby (President, Association of Sri Lankan Graduates of Canada (ASGC)): Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, it's an honour and privilege for the Association of Sri Lankan Graduates of Canada to be invited for this presentation. I wish to extend our deepest gratitude for this invitation.

The Association of Sri Lankan Graduates of Canada, ASGC, was formed in 1989 as a non-profit organization. It is run by university-educated volunteers of Sri Lankan heritage, and ASGC has no political affiliation. For the past twenty years, ASGC has continued to elevate the educational and professional profiles of our community and successfully help the community to integrate with the Canadian mainstream.

Having observed the recent developments in Sri Lanka, the association—for the first time—decided to get involved in the Sri Lankan crisis as the lives of the entire community here are being affected directly or indirectly by the unfolding human tragedy in Sri Lanka.

In an emergency session the committee passed three resolutions, a copy of which has been attached to this report as addendum A. The resolution, as it pertains to the two warring parties, has the following recommendations: lift the embargo on food, medicine, and other essential items flowing to the affected areas; stop indiscriminate bombing and shelling of civilian areas; cease fighting immediately and work towards a permanent and lasting solution; allow local and international NGOs and other humanitarian workers to provide much needed assistance to the trapped civilians; allow access to the independent media; and allow civilians to move freely to areas of their choice.

In the international arena, Canada has an excellent reputation as an impartial peacekeeper in conflict areas around the world. As the largest Tamil diaspora outside of Sri Lanka have chosen Canada to be their home, it is our sincere wish that our Canadian government will take an active role in resolving the Sri Lankan crisis. Therefore, in the resolution we have requested that Canada play a major leadership role in resolving this crisis.

To improve your understanding of this crisis, I must give you a glimpse of the history. It is documented that in Sri Lanka, in those days known as Ceylon, there were three separate kingdoms—two Sinhalese and one Tamil—before colonial Britain conquered all kingdoms and established one unified rule for administrative purposes. During British rule they brought Indian Tamils to work in the plantations. After giving independence in 1948, the British left the island as a secular state, with English as the administrative language. In 1956 the language of administration was changed to Sinhala only. Since then the various Sinhala majority governments have ruled with policies that discriminated against Tamils in employment, education, and political representation. Each time a Sinhalese party tried to correct some of the mistakes, they ended up unilaterally abrogating the pacts when there was a protest from the opposition Sinhalese party or the Buddhist priests.

The country was proclaimed as a free, sovereign, and independent Republic of Sri Lanka. The name was changed from Ceylon to Sri Lanka in 1972. Under this constitution Buddhism also became the official religion of the state, relegating Hindus, Christians, and Muslims to being second-class citizens. With the new republican constitution, the language is Sinhala only; the state religion is Buddhism; the new name is Sri Lanka; the flag is the lion with a sword, symbolizing the Sinhalese. The government sponsored the colonization of Sinhalese in traditional Tamil areas so that the country could now effectively be known as a Sinhalese land. Government-sponsored armed groups also burned down the largest Tamil library in the Tamil area that had all the priceless Tamil history.

In the 1977 election the Tamil parties fought on one issue—a call for a separate Tamil state in Sri Lanka—and won 95% of all seats in the traditional Tamil area. But nothing happened to resolve the issue. Therein lies the birth of Tamil armed struggle and the current situation. Tamil militancy started with many groups; now the only active group left is the LTTE.

● (1545)

Since 1956, thousands of Tamils have had to stand by and watch as their houses were set on fire, their businesses were looted, and their relatives were burned to death. There were three major riots—in 1958, 1977, and 1983—and many minor ones. The Tamils were forced to become refugees in their own land, all because they spoke a different language.

I have added more detail of the history in addendum B.

Since 1980, violence has taken over the island. As the Tamils felt their grievances were not addressed through peaceful means, various Tamil militant groups started guerilla warfare, in many instances with the support of a neighbouring regional power. This guerrilla warfare became armed resistance, funded and supported by this power. Unfortunately, this interference by this regional power continues in different ways even now.

Since 1983, though various governments were elected with a promise of solving the problems, none have come up with a realistic working solution. Both the LTTE and the various governments have to accept joint blame for this status quo. Violence has been committed by both parties, as documented by various organizations, and innocent Tamil people have been at the receiving end of all these brutalities.

While violent acts committed by LTTE often get reported in the post-9/11 era, the violence perpetrated by states is often ignored and justified as an act against terrorism. The Sri Lankan army, even before the LTTE was formed, has used the most violent measures to quell any type of even peaceful Tamil protest, as from 1958 they have considered themselves to be an army of occupation in Tamil areas. In the recent past, in their effort to gobble up territory held by the LTTE, the government forces have shelled populated areas indiscriminately.

To sum up, it is not one party or the other causing this violence, but both of them. The current Sinhala government, in addition to giving a free hand to the army for its ruthless action in the traditional Tamil areas, has also suppressed or manipulated Tamil politicians

and curtailed press freedom and freedom of expression and assembly, not to mention barring all types of third-party presence, whether it be non-partisan NGOs, humanitarian personnel, or media-related personnel in the affected Tamil areas. Recently a number of newspaper editors have been arrested or simply shot dead.

The current situation in Sri Lanka begs for the involvement of the international community. Whether the international community agrees or not, it is generally accepted among the majority of Tamils that the only group that is steadfast in defending Tamil rights, notwithstanding the violence, is the LTTE.

There have been other groups from time to time that have been eliminated by the LTTE or coerced or bribed over to the government side. Many Tamils consider the actions by LTTE are justified. They feel that had the LTTE not existed, the Tamil population would have been wiped out or it would have suffered more at the hands of the Sri Lankan armed forces.

I am sure you would agree that violence from all quarters must be condemned, especially if it is coming from an elected government. The Sri Lankan government has taken measures to silence the Tamil-elected politicians who were not toeing the government line—for example, within the past two years two of my former classmates, who were members of Parliament for two different parties, were assassinated for supporting the Tamil cause.

While we talk about the LTTE and the government, we are all ignoring the power and influence the Buddhist priests have exerted on various Sinhalese governments. If you study the history of the pacts that were signed before the violence broke out, you will see they were always abrogated when the Buddhist priests marched, stating the Sinhalese government was giving too much to the Tamils.

The Sri Lankan constitution says the Republic of Sri Lanka shall give to Buddhism the foremost place and accordingly it shall be the duty of the state to protect and foster Buddha Sasana. I quote from the recent article from the East-West Centre in the United States:

A fundamental tenet of that nationalist ideology is the belief that Sri Lanka is the island of the Sinhalese, who in turn are ennobled to preserve and propagate Buddhism. The ideology privileges Sinhalese Buddhist super ordination, justifies subjugation of minorities, and suggests that those 5 belonging to other ethno religious communities live in Sri Lanka only due to Sinhalese Buddhist sufferance.

● (1550)

As recently as February, there were four motions brought forward in our Canadian Parliament against a bill tabled in Sri Lanka called the anti-conversion bill.

In view of all of this, in our opinion, as suggested in the resolution, Canada should take a leadership role and use its good offices to pressure both parties to come to a peaceful solution soon. If necessary, we feel that Canada should work towards imposing sanctions and take the matter to the United Nations. Simply put, force them to sit down at the negotiation table and come out with a lasting solution. We don't think there is any better country in the world with the same credibility as Canada to better interfere in the Sri Lankan issue. Thousands of Tamils have braved the weather and have been protesting to gain the attention of Canadians to solve this problem as soon as possible. We think Canada is the only hope left to avoid a disastrous situation unfolding there.

History has shown there can be no long-term military solution to any ethnic conflict in any part of the world. LTTE is not the cause of the problem; LTTE is a by-product of the problem, and that's why the root cause of the problem must be solved. While we cannot say from here what type of solution is acceptable after nearly 61 years of suffering there, we can only voice what our association feels, that any solution arrived at must be acceptable to Tamils, and it should be modelled after what we have in Canada, with provinces adopting their own powers in an evolved form of federalism.

Presently, our main concern is that the fighting ceases and that NGOs, like the friends we have today, and other agencies, including all media, be given free access to all areas. I'm sure we will need the help of all NGOs, because without them, our people would not have survived for so long. When the conditions are favourable in Sri Lanka, NGOs and other international agencies can help in building a prosperous and peaceful Sri Lanka.

In conclusion, we would like to urge our government to do everything within its powers to bring peace to this island, known as the pearl of the Indian Ocean.

Thank you.

• (1555)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll move into the first round of questioning, and we'll go for seven minutes each.

Mr. Rae.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): I would like to thank the witnesses.

To get right down to it, I would like to know, Susan, how regularly do you receive the ICRC reports? Do you receive them on a daily basis?

Ms. Susan Johnson: Yes.

Hon. Bob Rae: Are these reports getting worse? What is happening right now? At this moment, what would you say is the situation?

Ms. Susan Johnson: The situation is absolutely continuing to deteriorate. There's concern about access to affected populations. There was the hopeful news today that the International Committee was allowed in to deliver medical assistance to the medical post, but the situation is generally deteriorating. It's very difficult for the civilians caught up in the area. For the one international

humanitarian organization that's trying to respond, the conditions are extremely difficult.

Hon. Bob Rae: Yoga, could you or Raj tell us what you hear on a daily basis about what's going on?

Mr. Yoga Arulnamby: Because reporters and journalists are not allowed in, we are getting information from many who are living in Canada. So many people have died and the list is so long, but it's never reported. You see the Sri Lankan one they sell—only 100. But we get the information about our relatives who have died there, and there are thousands.

Hon. Bob Rae: Are these people dying as a result of bombing, disease, or both?

Mr. Yoga Arulnamby: It's mainly from bombing. That's what we've heard about people in Mullaitivu, Putukkudiyirippu, and other areas. I work in a fabrication company and we have around 35 people—a lot of Sri Lankans. Every day two or three people go. My cousins died. It's very hard. Mostly the shelling is the main one, and the disease is on the other side. They don't have good facilities in the camps. My relatives are still in Vavuniya. You can go to see it. They don't have good sanitation facilities, and they are dying from disease because they never allow the people to leave the camp. They are very sick. Even pregnant women have died in those camps, according to reports from the NGOs.

Hon. Bob Rae: Susan or Faisal, could you give us a bit of a sense of the conditions in the camps? These are camps to which people have either come or been transported that are supposed to be in safe areas, outside the control of the LTTE. Is that correct?

Ms. Susan Johnson: That is correct.

In terms of the conditions in the camps, do you want to make a few remarks?

Mr. Faisal Mahboob (Program Manager, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, International Operations, Canadian Red Cross): On the camps that are being managed and to which ICRC has been given access, all the internally displaced people come to them on their own. Nobody is transporting them. Whoever can make it comes on their own. For the time being, ICRC, with the support of the rest of the movement partners and SLRCS, is providing basic services there. However, we don't know how many more people will arrive and what the situation will be in a few months. For the time being, I think we are pretty well positioned to support needs within the camps only. We have no access inside the conflict zone.

Hon. Bob Rae: I'm sorry for being a little out of date, but there was a report two weeks ago on the ICRC website suggesting there was bombing on the beach where they were trying to get people into boats to be transported to Trincomalee. Is that still happening?

•(1600)

Ms. Susan Johnson: I think it would be useful to characterize three different terrains of action, if you like. First, we were able to provide some medical assistance to the health post that is trying to treat war-wounded and others in the area. Second is the evacuation of the wounded from the area, which is what you're speaking about, due to the attack two weeks ago. Third is assisting people who have managed to leave the area—the provision of humanitarian assistance to people outside the area.

I would characterize those as three areas of action.

The Chair: You still have two minutes left.

Hon. Bob Rae: I want to clarify how much money you're asking for. There has been some debate. There was some suggestion that the ICRC was asking for \$19 million, in addition to the money that has been given. We've been told by the minister that money has gone to World Vision—Jim, you'd remember—Red Cross....

Deepak, do you remember what else?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): There was World Vision, Red Cross, Oxfam, and CARE.

Hon. Bob Rae: Is it getting in? Are those other people able to get the material in, or not?

Ms. Susan Johnson: I'm not in a position to speak for other humanitarian organizations. What I can speak to is the work of the International Red Cross. Just to clarify, the Government of Canada has made a contribution to the appeal of the International Committee for its humanitarian action in Sri Lanka. The total budget for 2009 planned for the International Committee is in the range of \$27 million Swiss francs, which is close to the Canadian dollar. The Canadian government has made a contribution of \$1.75 million against that appeal so far. Today, the International Committee is still seeking contributions of a further \$19 million for that original appeal. They are also considering increasing their appeal, depending on what access there is and what kinds of needs there are and what room there is for them to operate. That's the International Committee.

What I was saying in my remarks was that given the gravity of the situation, and given that the International Committee is the only international humanitarian organization with access to the conflict area, it would be appropriate for the Canadian government to consider doubling its contribution to the International Red Cross at this time. I am sure that other humanitarian organizations are responding as best they can in the areas they're able to reach.

I should say that the World Food Programme assistance to the north, for instance, is delivered by the International Committee. So it's important to support the World Food Programme and to understand the limits in terms of the actual access they have in the country. Actual access to the area, and humanitarian assistance being delivered in the area, is through the International Red Cross.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go to Mr. Dorion.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Dorion (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Thank you.

Does your organization, the Association of Sri Lankan Graduates of Canada, include Sri Lankans of all ethnic origins, including, for example, the Singhalese, or is it comprised primarily of Tamils?

[English]

Mr. Yoga Arulnamby: Our association is not limited to any race. It is open to all. Mostly Tamils are there. In our programs, they both attend career counselling. We invite both communities, whether it's for counselling or for programs. All the communities come, even Muslims. Our association is a majority of Tamils, and we don't have any limitations on Sinhalese.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Dorion: I see. So then, the vast majority of your members are Tamils.

[English]

Mr. Yoga Arulnamby: It's around 90 persons.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Dorion: You stated that Buddhism was proclaimed the country's official religion in 1972. Is that still the case today under Sri Lanka's Constitution?

[English]

Mr. Raj Thavaratnasingham (Executive Committee Member, Association of Sri Lankan Graduates of Canada (ASGC)): Yes, it is. Section 9 of the constitution of Sri Lanka explicitly states exactly what the president just read. It's the state's responsibility to protect Buddha Sasana. That's very clearly defined, even now, in the constitution.

I think that's been one of the problems that's not been highlighted. In 1957, 1965, and 1972, when the peace process was going through, every time the politicians realized they had made a mistake and tried to come to a negotiated settlement with the Tamil parties, the opposition party, together with the Buddhist priests, immediately went on a protest, and they had to abrogate the pact. The Prime Minister, Mr. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, who brought the Sinhala only act in 1956, actually signed the pact with the Tamil leader at that time, Chelvanayakam. However, when the Buddhist priests came marching up to his house, he actually brought the pact outside and tore it up in front of them. And that was the very first time, in 1957, that the peace process broke down immediately. Certainly, even now, the state actually has to protect the Buddha Sasana first. Of course, there are equal rights given to everybody else, but once you put the onus on the state to protect Buddhism, everybody else takes second place.

In this process, even during this difficult time in February, there was a bill that came to Parliament called the anti-conversion bill. Knowingly or unknowingly, if you try to convert somebody else to another religion—it's mainly against the missionaries who are working in the south—you're going to be fined seven years or \$50,000 Sri Lankan rupees. I think it was raised in the Canadian Parliament. I think the high commissioner in Sri Lanka heard that, and somehow it's now been shelved in Sri Lanka. It's gone through three readings already.

Yes, that's one of the problems.

•(1605)

Mr. Yoga Arulnamby: In addition to what Raj said, recent reports tell us how they're spreading Buddhism. They're breaking Hindu temples and putting up Buddhist statues. Even the young Shins in the captured area are breaking Hindu statues and installing their Buddhist statues. It's like all the violence. These are recent reports. Even temples are being broken, and they are putting up Buddhist statues.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Dorion: Ms. Johnson, how do the Tamil Tigers feel about the Red Cross? Do they cooperate with your organization or are you having problems getting much-needed aid to the civilian population?

We know more or less what the government's position is, but where does the other side stand?

[English]

Ms. Susan Johnson: I think the International Red Cross and the Sri Lanka Red Cross and all the movement partners are in a unique position in Sri Lanka to access the civilian population affected by this conflict. The International Committee has been working in the area of the northern part of Sri Lanka since 1989. The Sri Lanka Red Cross has a national presence in the country, and there have been tremendous efforts by the movement to reach all the civilian populations and all the vulnerable people.

It's certainly one of the tenets of the International Red Cross movement that we attend to people's needs, regardless of any affiliation or identification whatsoever. It's certainly a tenet of the Red Cross that if people present themselves with needs, those needs should be met by the humanitarian actors.

Our experience in Sri Lanka is like that elsewhere. We have good acceptance by the population. The International Committee maintains dialogue with, obviously, the Sri Lankan government as well as with the LTTE. The International Committee is able to visit people held by both parties in the conflict. There's strong confidence and trust, I would say, that is important in terms of access both to detainees and to the civilian population, under normal circumstances. Recently, of course, this has become more difficult because of the nature of the conflict.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Johnson.

Thank you, Monsieur Dorion.

We'll go to Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Thank you very much.

And thank you to both of you for coming.

The way we see it, there are two immediate crises taking place right now. One is the humanitarian crisis that is due to the civilian war, which Canada is very much concerned about, and the question is—through the Red Cross or whatever—how quickly aid is getting through there. Canada has called for a ceasefire to allow humanitarian access. So this is very important at the current time with the conflict going on. That is the immediate concern.

I am going to say to the Red Cross that they are doing a good job. To the Tamil community out here, their concern should not be the

political solution at this time, but to make sure that medicine and everything is quickly getting to the people who are suffering from this. That's the key element right now.

I don't have a question. I know the Red Cross is saying they need more money—of course, we always need more money—but I think in cooperation with our allies, we will ensure that you have access, that the World Food Programme has access, and you are cooperating with that. So I want to take this opportunity to congratulate your organization and everybody in it for doing such a marvellous job in this thing.

The second issue—and I want to ask you folks here about it—is that there is no question there needs to be a political solution. Let's forget the past; you've indicated the history. The history there is littered with errors on the part of many, by everybody. Speak about now, at this time here. There is no question that the LTTE has a history as a terrorist organization because of the manner in which it tried to bring about a new state and a voice of the Tamils. We disagree on that because of the methods they used—suicide bombings, killing civilians, and this kind of thing.

The question I have to the Tamil community here, which you rightly pointed out, is how are you going to put pressure for a political solution on the Government of Sri Lanka and the Tamils to come to the table and talk? I think by now the LTTE itself may not have enough capital left to represent the Tamil community. There is an opportunity here for a new breed of leaders coming from the Tamil community to say to the Sri Lankan government, now is the time to come to a peaceful settlement. They would not carry the baggage of the past that the LTTE and others have carried. You are the student association in this thing, the future. I want to see if the Tamil community here are debating among themselves to seize this opportunity and say, we are coming up with a new solution here in this thing. Forget the baggage you pointed out. I want to hear from you whether the Tamil community here has put forward how they would resolve this thing.

You have just stated here that it must be acceptable to Tamils. Look, there are two parties here, the Sri Lankan government and the Sinhalese, along with the Muslims and everybody else. An opportunity has presented itself, and I want to know whether you guys have actually grabbed that opportunity and are thinking along those lines.

•(1610)

The Chair: Mr. Arulnamby.

Mr. Yoga Arulnamby: Thank you, Mr. Obhrai.

You see, at present even Tamils cannot talk to the Sri Lankan government. Even the international community cannot talk to the Sri Lankan government, because they stopped everything. There is no negotiation so far for any community, even the international community. That's why we have come to Canada to appeal to you to ask the government to first stop the fighting, and then we'll go for the negotiation. That's what we want to ask. The Tamil community... whatever they say, they are not going to ask us.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: No, you lost the argument of what I'm trying to say. What I'm trying to ask you, as young Tamils who have come forward on this thing, is this. Is there a debate among your own community on how to resolve this issue politically? At this time, yes, the Sri Lankan government may not be coming to the table, but that's fine, we will apply pressure.

I'm not interested in the LTTE or what it stood for in the past, or what it is and what it will bring in terms of its baggage out there. I am interested in the Tamil community here. Bob previously went out there and presented what Canada wanted. But is there a debate among yourselves that now, at this given time, there is an opportunity for us, considering that the past baggage is gone, which is the LTTE, and has your organization within your community come up with something? What have they come up with?

I know you have written here, the addendum and all these things, that is to currently stop—

•(1615)

Mr. Yoga Arulnamby: That's very true. We were debating among ourselves very recently. There is a professor called Professor Somarajah who is voting for the ISGA, the full package they actually worked out with the Tamil's support. It's called confederation standards. It's a small package for the Tamil. LTTE first asked for a separate country, then they went to a separate state, and so on. Personally, among ourselves, a big debate is going on. We wanted to go further. They don't want the provincial standard or the federal system. They wanted to go for the ISGA, that is, the present interim self-governing authority.

Mr. Raj Thavaratnasingham: Perhaps I may add a little more to that. There are two parties to the conflict. Whether we like it or not, we always have the side that is the LTTE and we have the Sri Lankan government. If you look at the peace process, every time the process happens, it's the Government of Sri Lanka that has abrogated the pact. Since 1983, every other day both parties have blamed each other for abrogating the pact or not sticking to whatever they came up with.

This is the time. Right now, it looks as if Sri Lanka is sitting right here and it's crushing the LTTE—at least, that's what we see. So this is the time for Sri Lanka to come and say, "Here is what we are going to offer. We're going to offer something like Canada has." Then it's easy for us to take that matter and start a discussion, rather than our just discussing an incident that happened in the past. We all agree on that, but nothing is going to be resolved as long as the Buddhist priests are opposed to it; we all agree on something, but the Sri Lankan government doesn't take it too. The policy document that's quoted there—*Policy Studies* number 40, done by the East-West Center, which was already mentioned in Yoga's talk—is an interesting one. I can say this is good, this is good, this is good, but nothing is going to happen unless and until the Sri Lankan government comes forward and says, "Here is a proposal that we are willing to give to the Tamils." It's easy for us to go back to the community and say, "That looks great. It looks something like Canada has or like some other country has. That's a beautiful one. Let's take it forward. It will be easy."

We can come up with a solution, no problem, but at the end of the day, unless and until the Sri Lankan government agrees on that, it's not going to resolve the problem.

The Chair: Thank you. Maybe we'll be able to touch on that with another question.

Mr. Dewar.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Thank you to our guests, and thank you, Chair.

I want to go to you, Ms. Johnson, on the Red Cross. Just to be clear, the ask at this point...\$19 million is outstanding. Is that what you're saying? Is that accurate? How much would you think Canada should contribute?

Ms. Susan Johnson: Canada, traditionally, is one of the top supporters of the international Red Cross movement, certainly in the top 10 globally. Given the size of the overall appeal, which at this point, before we even scale up, is \$27 million, I think it would be appropriate for Canada to be thinking of making a contribution of something like 10% to 15% of that total. That would be within the norm of Canada's behaviour internationally.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Do you mean 10% to 15% of that \$27 million outstanding or of the \$19 million outstanding?

Ms. Susan Johnson: For instance, it would be welcomed if at this point Canada would be in a position to double its assistance to the international committee for Sri Lanka.

Mr. Paul Dewar: In terms of getting the aid there, which is obviously difficult, on the humanitarian corridors that you were referencing, are they in place now? I guess day by day this changes, but particularly in the northeast, are those corridors holding? Are you able to get the aid to the people who need it?

Ms. Susan Johnson: In terms of the work of the Red Cross, I think it's important to signal or perhaps re-characterize what I was trying to describe earlier. The International Committee and the international movement have pre-positioned in the country considerable relief supplies and have a capacity to deliver medical assistance, medical supplies, to the makeshift clinic that is in this community. As well, we are involved in evacuating people out of that area and supporting the internally displaced peoples camps, as well as the civilian populations that are not in any camps whatsoever.

Yes, we have access to the populations in much of the country. No, we don't have enough access into the area affected by the conflict. No, we are not able to deliver enough assistance because of the constraints of the situation. So when you ask us to be clear, we're looking for more funds for humanitarian action.

We're also looking for the Government of Canada to make it clear to the Sri Lankan government that there is an expectation that the basic tenets of international humanitarian law will be respected, which is to say, civilians should have access to humanitarian assistance. Those in a position to deliver humanitarian assistance should have safe access to those civilians. That is not, in fact, the situation we face today.

•(1620)

Mr. Paul Dewar: Thank you. That is very clear. The committee is welcome to advance that to the government.

I turn to my other guests. We were hearing—and I think Mr. Rae touched on this—that the government approach seemed to be to isolate it further and further. In fact the northeast area—and the little strip of land—they believed they were going to be able to completely crush. This has been clear in what I've been hearing and reading. They are trying to wipe out the rebels entirely.

Senator Kerry came out today and said that if the Sri Lankan government doesn't change, then its reputation in the global community will be tarnished. These are very serious points. I would like to know if it is the belief of the witnesses that we're seeing here an attempt to completely wipe out any resistance at all to the government.

Mr. Yoga Arulnamby: Most certainly, that's what they think they're doing. It's like having a big festering wound on your leg and you're running a very high temperature, and they're trying to pump in medicine to get the fever down. So they may be able to crush that section, the area the LTTE is in right now, but I think until you treat the wound on the leg, it's not going to go away. In fact, it may come up with a different name. Right now LTTE is banned, so let's say it comes up as ABCD. Then ABCD is going to start, because this is a problem that started due to violence on the Sri Lankan government's side, and of course nowadays violence is met by violence. That's how LTTE came into being.

I am somebody who has lived in this beautiful country for the last 21 years. When I was in the refugee camp in 1983, I was working for an American oil company, and after 14 days they airlifted me, they flew me to Singapore to work for one month. When I was in that camp, from July 25, 1983, to about August 6 or 7, there was not a single day when I thought that maybe I should become an LTTE myself, that maybe I should become a Tiger. At that time it was not very violent; they were just fighting—of course, with guns.

This is what's been difficult for us, the fact that there have been so many instances of violence against us, and it was to resist this that the LTTE started. Sometimes I have said to myself that maybe there is a small Tiger in my heart—I'm talking as a person here.

So that's the problem there. They may be able to eliminate that particular section, but the problem is still going to be there in a different form.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I'd like to ask a yes or no question, because I think my time is almost over.

Mr. Yoga Arulnamby: In addition to that, definitely, yes, because they don't want to kill Tigers here; they want to eliminate entire Tamil communities. That is what they've decided.

Mr. Paul Dewar: This was my question. If Senator Kerry has travelled there, would it be helpful if we had one of our ministers travel there to send a message to the government directly?

Mr. Yoga Arulnamby: Yes, that would be very nice.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Brown.

Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is directed to Ms. Johnson.

I do have a growing Sri Lankan community in my riding, so I have met with people from both sides, obviously, to hear the concerns. My concern right now is more about the humanitarian aid that's getting in there. You talked about the number of hospitals that are being reconstructed and the number of clinics.

What's the availability of medical staff? I have no idea what kind of people movement is going on there. I'm wondering if you can just apprise us of what the medical needs are in terms of personnel and tell us specifically what kinds of medical supplies you're short of in the area.

•(1625)

Ms. Susan Johnson: I actually don't have the details of the state of the medical professional capacity in Sri Lanka. I know that the international Red Cross have medical staff as part of our international team in the country, and I know we are providing medical supplies to the clinics and so on.

We're not appealing for medical assistance from Canada or for medical personnel from Canada. We actually have a reasonably robust system for sourcing both materials and people. What we need now is in fact greater access. Our greatest concern is that we're not able to regularly deliver the medical supplies we have to the clinic that is attending to the war-wounded on the front line, so we're appealing for more access. We have the supplies in Sri Lanka, and we have a supply chain that provides the appropriate medical supplies.

For instance, I heard the news that today we were able to provide the first consignment of medicines to the hospital in the conflict area for the first time in two weeks. More than 50 essential medical items, including vaccines for children, were delivered to the hospital. The senior health official in the region said they were very happy to receive the supplies, which would help them run the hospital for a couple of more weeks, but despite their repeated requests, we have not been able to deliver the anesthetic equipment or the blood bags required for surgery. This is not because we did not want to deliver them. This is because they would not have been allowed through.

So our concern is the access for humanitarian organizations to deliver humanitarian assistance to the people affected by this conflict, as per international humanitarian laws.

Ms. Lois Brown: Do we know if these hospitals are fully staffed? Do we have that information? What I'm asking is whether they can make use of the supplies. Do they have the medical personnel there to deliver the service?

Ms. Susan Johnson: My understanding is that this very rudimentary makeshift clinic—it's not a full hospital we're speaking about—is the only place that is actually in the area, trying to provide medical assistance to people affected by the conflict. There is a medical team there able to function, and they would appreciate having more supplies with which they could actually do their job.

Ms. Lois Brown: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Brown.

I'm just going to take one very quick question from Mr. Patry. He tried to get in earlier.

Go ahead, Mr. Patry.

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

My question is for Mr. Arulnamby.

Recently the Government of Sri Lanka requested a loan from the IMF. It's quite an important loan. Do you think that all these loans from an international institution like the International Monetary Fund should be conditional on, at a minimum, the lifting of the embargo on medicine, food, and essential items?

Mr. Yoga Arulnamby: No, I don't think so. It's very good and advisable at this time for any government to help Sri Lanka. If there are preconditions, such as lifting the embargo and accepting a ceasefire, then you can decide, but if you give assistance now, it's not going to reach the people. It's going to reach in different ways.

Mr. Raj Thavaratnasingham: I think it's important. They have applied for \$1.9 billion of IMF loans. So we, as Canada, can immediately go to the IMF and say, "Okay, even if we are passing that loan, here are the preconditions that the Sri Lankan government must meet." Hand in hand with that, if someone goes—such as the Hon. Paul Dewar, who suggested that somebody from here go—and if some of those actions are taken, maybe they'll start listening then. If there are these conditions, they'll start listening. Of course that's what we would love to have the Canadian government do for us.

Thank you.

• (1630)

Mr. Yoga Arulnamby: That is a good one. If they did that, at least, we would approve.

The Chair: Thank you very much to our guests. The hour went far too quickly, but we appreciate you coming in and briefing us on the situation there, and also the Red Cross and the good work they do.

We will suspend for one minute, and then we will invite our next guests on the same topic to take their seats.

Mr. Yoga Arulnamby: Thank you.

• _____ (Pause) _____
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The Chair: Committee, in our second hour we're going to continue on the same subject, examining some of the recent events that have taken place in Sri Lanka.

Testifying before us we have, from Saint Paul University, Kenneth Bush, assistant professor of the conflict studies program; and from Carleton University, Elliot Tepper, distinguished senior fellow and senior research fellow from the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs Centre for Security and Defence Studies.

Gentlemen, you were here, and I noted you watched the previous witnesses. We provide time for witnesses to give a short opening statement, and then we move quickly into the different rounds of questioning.

Mr. Tepper, I will begin with you. Welcome to the foreign affairs committee.

Dr. Elliot Tepper (Distinguished Senior Fellow and Senior Research Fellow, Norman Paterson School of International Affairs and Centre for Security and Defence Studies, Carleton University): Thank you.

I wish to acknowledge that it's a great honour to be invited to address this committee. At the outset I have to make it clear I'm speaking today in my personal capacity as a professor. My comments should in no way be seen as reflecting the policy or views of the various organizations with which I'm affiliated—it's the usual disclaimer—especially as I'm a member of the board of directors of Rights and Democracy and president of the Canadian Friends of Sri Lanka. So I'm just me today.

It may be useful to spend a few moments providing a broad perspective on how we arrived at the current situation. Then I'd like to spend the remainder of the time speculating on constructive ways to address the situation we're in.

I will provide some information on the political and historical context—one of the previous witnesses gave you some background on this, but I have my own take on it. Two specific points from the long history of Sri Lanka might help clarify how we got to be where we are today.

I know there are members present with great knowledge of Sri Lanka. I'd like to provide an interpretation of the political and historical context from a very broad sweep of South Asia's political experience. It may be helpful to summarize two important dimensions in the struggle in Sri Lanka today.

The first is what I call a double minority complex. The small, beautiful island—and some of you have had the pleasure of being there—has only 20 million inhabitants but is divided into numerous communities. As you know, the majority Sinhalese population forms about 74%. It is predominantly, but not exclusively, Buddhist, while the Sri Lankan Tamil population is approximately 12% and predominantly Hindu. There are another 7% who are called Indian Tamils and who were brought in later just to work on the tea plantations.

This division between Buddhist and Hindu, Tamil and Sinhalese, is central to what we understand about the conflict. Both populations have been on the island since antiquity. The Sinhalese population, a majority on the island, strongly centre their identity as a Sinhalese people on Buddhism, and you just heard some of that a moment ago. They perceive themselves as a minority in the broader South Asian region. They are Sinhalese in a Tamil sea, because just across the Palk Strait, the very narrow strait separating Sri Lanka from India, lies the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu. It's now approaching 70 million Tamils. So the Sinhalese population sees that and feels it. On the other hand, the Tamil population of Sri Lanka rightly sees itself as a small minority within the island; therefore, both of these communities can be described as having something of a minority complex. They see the need to defend themselves as communities, and they behave accordingly. I think a lot of that perception of threat can explain the underlying causes of the current situation.

The second dimension of history, which I will draw your attention to briefly, is what I call the delayed anti-colonial struggle. Sri Lanka sailed very calmly to its independence in 1948 without any of the mass anti-colonial movements and the nationalism that we saw associated with, for example, India or other colonial situations around the world.

However, there was turbulence simmering below that calm surface. During the prolonged British era the two major communities, either by British colonial intent of divide and rule or perhaps for convenience, reacted quite differently to British rule. The talented minority community took very quickly to English education and to all the avenues opened up within the colonial apparatus by the presence of the British. This was, of course, resented by the Sinhalese majority.

Years after independence, in 1956, a politician broke away from the ruling party, from the long-governing, what could be called a “gentlemen’s” party. That was S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, whose name you heard a few moments ago. He formed his own party and stormed to power under the banner of Buddhist nationalism and Sinhala language superiority.

• (1635)

After that came all of those measures that you’ve heard a little about. The government imposed numerous measures to favour the majority at the expense of what it saw as an overpowered minority. So it thought it was taking actions redressing a colonial experience.

In keeping with the double minority complex, each of the communities has produced leaders to defend its interests. Today we see the long-term results of this political history—a defensive movement by the Tamil population to overcome discrimination, a movement that has shifted from being a moderate and constitutional one to a violent separatist and terrorist one under the leadership of the LTTE.

On the other side, the Government of Sri Lanka has responded in the name of all communities to preserve the unity of the island. It has responded in ways that have led to criticism, criticism that one finds throughout the world when a government is engaged in asymmetrical warfare.

You are all familiar with the results of the long civil war, the failed peace talks, the numerous deaths leading up to the present military endgame, and the humanitarian catastrophe, which you’ve already heard about today, particularly from the Red Cross.

The issue before us is what can be done? What role can Canada play, if any, in the current political and humanitarian situation?

Everyone agrees there should be a ceasefire, immediate humanitarian relief for the affected civilian population, and a return by the belligerents to the bargaining table. The goal is to hammer out an equitable, binding political solution based on some sort of power-sharing formula. However, there are severe obstacles to achieving this global consensus. They centre broadly around that double minority complex I’ve referred to—that mutual sense of discrimination of the major communities—and they centre more narrowly and specifically around personalities, tactics, and interests within Sri Lanka and abroad.

Because our time is short, I would like to move directly to some assumptions, and then to some suggestions for the near-term and the long-term future of Sri Lanka.

The short-term assumptions are these.

First, a military solution, with a territorial dimension attached, may soon succeed. This is just a fancy way of saying that the endgame may be approaching in regard to the territorial holding of power by the Tigers. If the Tigers are removed from their last enclave, there will likely be some repercussions and opportunities.

We know that the humanitarian situation may become worse in the immediate future, but then again, after that, it may improve. Members are familiar with the stories of Tamil Tigers forcing civilian populations to retreat with them, as they yield territory, and then constraining them from fleeing to safety. The government forces are accused of shelling civilians, even in the safe zones provided for them.

In the near term, a humanitarian ceasefire or military victory will offer opportunities for immediate short-term humanitarian relief. Canada and other states have already pledged to be in position to assist when this happens. This will be gratifying if it happens, but it should not be seen as the end of the story.

The second assumption is this. Seizing the final LTTE territorial enclave will not end violence in Sri Lanka. The Tamil Tigers are among the most resilient and resourceful terrorist organizations on earth. Among other things, they invented suicide bombings—and IEDs have become an export product, unfortunately; they badly bloodied a substantial Indian military force; and they fought the Government of Sri Lanka to a standstill repeatedly, at least up until the LTTE split in 2004. Reportedly they are much better organized among diaspora populations abroad than any other similar organization. The likelihood is that Sri Lanka will see a return to asymmetrical warfare, with deadly results.

The third assumption is this. A political solution is unlikely under the charismatic LTTE leadership of Velupillai Prabhakaran. The highly respected International Crisis Group recently noted that, “The Tiger leadership, which has become as much a cult as a rational guerrilla force, will be highly averse to surrender.” Regrettably there’s never been any tangible evidence that the leadership will accept anything short of total independence. It appears that only the departure of the charismatic Mr. Prabhakaran from operational control of the Tigers would change that situation.

• (1640)

Finally, the fourth assumption is that it is essential for policy purposes to make a clear demarcation between support for the Tamil people and support for the organization that purports to speak for them. The tendency to blur that distinction, perhaps deliberately encouraged, is a hindrance to effective policy clarity.

Moving from these assumptions, the following recommendations seem worth tabling for the members' consideration. They range from the most immediate to longer-term considerations. They deal with humanitarian, political, and developmental approaches. As well, these suggestions are offered keeping in mind that today's focus on Sri Lanka is part of a broader review by this committee of the conduct of Canadian foreign relations.

• (1645)

The Chair: Can I just interrupt?

Dr. Elliot Tepper: Surely.

The Chair: About how much longer will you be?

Dr. Elliot Tepper: I just have three quick suggestions. Am I running over time? I'm sorry.

The Chair: Very quickly, please. We're over eleven minutes.

Dr. Elliot Tepper: I'm sorry. I thought I had it timed better, but again, I was cautioned to speak slowly for the translators. I was doing so. I'll speed up.

My apologies to the translators and to the members.

The first suggestion is humanitarian. This has already been touched on by the member. It is support for the Government of Sri Lanka at the IMF, but conditionally, in that I have a different set of conditions than those just mentioned. Canada does have the means now to apply leverage from the government on Sri Lanka for the humanitarian ceasefire. This aid to the government is needed imminently. This can be both the carrot and the stick.

As I've suggested, support could be accompanied by efforts to support the Tamil people, demarcating it from the support for the Tamil Tigers. I think this is an opportunity for Canada. Much of the package that's been requested is for reconstruction assistance in the north. We can do so demonstrably on the grounds that funds are for neither party in the dispute, but for the Tamil population. It would complement the special \$3 million aid package and the earlier tsunami package already committed to by Canada.

At this point, I would conclude on this. Sri Lanka can be a case study of the healing role of humanitarian support in transitional or post-conflict situations.

The second recommendation is on the political side. Canadian regional and multilateral support is needed for transitional politics. Do we have plans for long-term political transformation in Sri Lanka after the humanitarian crisis? Clearly, the longer-term solution resonates from our prior engagement, with which one member has been very prominently engaged, for power-sharing and accommodation. But we can't achieve those conditions for implementation alone. It's going to take the global community working together on various aspects to create the conditions by which an international effort can lead to a role for accommodation and power sharing. I think Canada perhaps can play a leadership role in an international effort.

Finally, on the development side, I'm suggesting that equitable redevelopment may be possible here. That would conceive of this as an all-of-government program approach, an alternative approach to what we're currently undertaking. Generally speaking, we can use Sri Lanka as an example of an alternative approach, a program

approach, because there are unresolved conflicts and questions of equality and dignity in Sri Lanka.

If we wish to become a significant force in situations of post-conflict transitions, we have an opportunity before us. We need an integrated package in order to respond appropriately. There's a saying right now that we should not "waste a crisis". States such as Sri Lanka and Pakistan offer Canada opportunities to evolve effective packages as a player in the evolving global environment. This crisis is an opportunity to conceive and implement a Sri Lankan program.

The Chair: I think we have to leave it at that, Mr. Tepper.

Dr. Elliot Tepper: That was indeed my last point.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Bush, please.

Dr. Kenneth Bush (Assistant Professor, Conflict Studies Program, Saint Paul University): Thank you very much, Chair.

I'll keep my comments brief. I see my role here as one of responding to questions and queries from the committee.

My relationship with Sri Lanka is now, I'm embarrassed to say, almost 29 years long. I first went to Sri Lanka in 1980. Much has happened since then.

Currently, I'm a professor of peace and conflict studies at Saint Paul's University. Over the last 15 years I've gone back and forth to Sri Lanka, and in the last five years, probably three or four times a year. I go back to undertake a variety of different types of policy-focused research. I work with different international development organizations, as well as bilateral organizations.

I will keep it short.

It is not worth our while for me to repeat some of the excellent reporting that has been done on Sri Lanka. So I will refer you to a number of reports that I've been reading over the last six months. The first is the Human Rights Watch report, *War on the Displaced*, which is very detailed and empirical, and generates, I think, a very useful set of recommendations worth our attention.

The second two documents that I think are worth reading, if you haven't already done so, are from the Human Rights Council, first, the report of the special rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment and punishment. That was published in February 2008. The Human Rights Watch report was published very recently, in February 2009. And the second, and the last, official document I'll refer you to is the report of the representative of the secretary-general on the human rights of internally displaced persons.

I think empirically, and having sat through the presentations by the Red Cross, you should have a fairly clear idea of where the situation is right now on the ground. It's very fluid.

My starting point is to sketch out a little bit of the context, as I see it right now, in terms of Canada and other international actors trying to effect positive change on the ground for the protections of civilians and the protection and promotion of human rights.

First of all, I have to say that over the span of the last 29 years, I haven't seen the situation in Sri Lanka quite as dismal as it is today, in terms of the levels of disappearances, systematic human rights abuses, and a regime that has rabid antipathies towards the international community. We're seeing international organizations' development workers thrown out of the country, we're seeing international NGOs accused unfairly of having LTTE sympathies, we're seeing the killing of NGO workers on the ground, and certainly we're seeing the blocking of access by the media and humanitarian assistance to areas in the north and the east.

One of the very important contextual factors we have to keep in mind as we think through what the various roles Canada might play in Sri Lanka is something that I started seeing develop in Sri Lanka over the last two years, which is that ODA does not have the political leverage it used to have. It used to be that overseas development assistance could be used conditionally to effect the incentives and disincentives of decision-makers in Sri Lanka, and we saw that in their change of Sri Lankan policy in 1990.

Here, however, what we see is a regime that doesn't care about overseas development assistance, or puts a lower priority on it because it sees the much larger quantity of resources coming into the country through remittances. It also sees investments coming from East Asia, to the point where overseas development assistance no longer has the leverage it once had.

• (1650)

I think the suggestion by Professor Tepper that there is a need to demarcate development aid to ensure it goes directly to the Tamil people is a very good one. In fact, all development assistance that goes to Sri Lanka should be assessed on whether or not it contributes to bringing communities together or pushing them apart.

We all had stories 25 years ago about the way a project might affect the environment or gender relations. Today, we have various stories of the way overseas development assistance, tsunami assistance, contributed directly to the war-fighting capacities on either side, but we don't have the means, or we're just developing the means, to evaluate our development assistance through a peace- and conflict-sensitive lens. So one of the most important possibilities that opens itself up is to look not just at the overtly political role Canada might play in Sri Lanka, but to look at the ways in which our humanitarian and development assistance could help to bring communities together. I have many examples from Sri Lanka, on the ground, that might illustrate that point, but I do want to stop there and open the floor to questions.

• (1655)

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

We'll move into the first round. We'll go to Monsieur Patry.

Mr. Bernard Patry: I just have one question. I'll share with Mr. Pearson and Mr. Rae.

My question is for Mr. Tepper.

At the beginning of your presentation you mentioned that the Sinhalese population, the Buddhists, see themselves as a minority, mainly because of India and all these factors. Knowing that the religion of the state is Buddhism, and that all the bills passed by the government need to be, in a sense, rubber-stamped by the religious authority, do you think it's a religious war? Do you think all the religions should get together to try to find a solution?

Dr. Elliot Tepper: That's an excellent question. The member has touched on a central point. Religion, in this case, seems to be closely related to identity. The religious wars of Europe are not an example for the religious wars of Sri Lanka. I would put it that way. The identity of the individual populations seems to be caught up with their religion, but it's as much culture as it is religion. Keep in mind, there's a significant Muslim minority to complicate things, that speaks Tamil. So when you're counting who's a Tamil in the country, it gets a little more complicated.

The Catholic Church has been there a very long time, and it has members and devotees on both sides of this communal divide. When I was in Jaffna, I was successful in gaining an interview with the archbishop. He was known to have access to the thinking of the Tigers, and he of course was a Tamil himself. We met in his cloister, and we went on for quite some time before I reminded him that I was waiting to hear from a Catholic archbishop and not a Tamil spokesman. That is, I asked him if his religion could crosscut the conflict, and it was clear it could not. So I think even though there are Catholics on both sides, ethnicity and culture seem to be the bigger divide.

Mr. Glen Pearson (London North Centre, Lib.): Professor Tepper, just to follow up quickly, you mentioned an evocative word about equitable redevelopment. Could you expand on that a bit?

Dr. Elliot Tepper: This was part of my final approach, saying that if Canada had a program approach to certain key states, such as Pakistan or Sri Lanka, the program might be more effective than the individual sectoral approaches through CIDA, through Foreign Affairs, and other sources.

Equitable redevelopment means that both the key parties to this dispute have to have a stake in it and have to be rewarded by it. It has to be seen to provide dignity and fairness on all sides. It also has to have—if I can put it this way—a clear Canadian content so that our approach is recognized as one of accommodation, inclusion, and power-sharing. I think there's great scope here for evolving out of this particular crisis an approach to doing Canadian foreign policy that would be distinctive and dynamic and effective. But it will take some work to put that package together.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Tepper.

Mr. Rae.

Hon. Bob Rae: Thanks.

I just have to say to members of the committee that I want to congratulate the presenters today. I think it's been very stimulating.

Dr. Tepper, there is one thing I want to not challenge you on but just sort of engage with you a little bit.

• (1700)

Dr. Elliot Tepper: Of course.

Hon. Bob Rae: I certainly agree that the Prabhakaran thing has become a cult. I don't think there's any question about that. But when you stress that we're not going to find a solution as long as he is seen as the leader or as long as he's given that position of authority—and maybe Mr. Bush could come in on this, too, because of his experience—my perception is that in the last two or three years there really has been a reversion in the Sinhala community, whereas we had a period of time, for about 10 years, when there was a great deal of openness to various possibilities.

I'm not saying anything happened, but I'm just saying there was a lot of openness. You know, you could talk the F-word—that's federalism—you could do a lot of things, and you could get to some interesting dialogue. The Rajapaksa brothers are not interested in this stuff, you know, and I wonder whether there isn't at least a case to be made that there has been a dramatic hardening on both sides, and that's really the challenge that we've faced over the last little while.

Dr. Elliot Tepper: As you know, I have great respect for your views on this matter. I think we have “on the one hand/on the other hand”. On the one hand, it is a judgment call as to the role of Mr. Prabhakaran. My judgment, based on long observation, is that he remains committed to his goals and his people remain loyal to him. So as long as he has operational control...if he can be elevated to a figurehead or be sent abroad to write some brilliant books on tactics or in other ways be removed from the scene, it would change the equation, because no other leader in his movement, I believe, has the glue that he can provide.

On the other side of it, though, I think one of the concerns that we perhaps have a role in addressing is—how can I put this gently in open forum?—Sinhalese triumphalism. There has been an educational process in the Sinhalese community over the years. I, too, have used this joke about the F-word. In 1983, I was being vetted—this is absurd—as one of three wise men who was supposed to go to Sri Lanka and tell them about Canada. I was told never to use the word “federalism”, just tell them all about it. It was very tricky.

The current mood—and Ken Bush can indeed jump in on this—on the Sinhalese side may be in the triumphalist mode, but my feeling is this: everybody is sick and tired on all sides of this war. There's a demand and a desire for peace. If proposals can be put forward that have, as I said earlier, equitable components, all the leaders will be forced to come to some terms on this.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Tepper.

Mr. Bush.

Dr. Kenneth Bush: It's even more complex than Elliot presented it. We're not just talking about a double minority complex; we're talking about a triple minority complex, if we include the Muslims in the east. We have to look at the heterogeneity within the Tamil and the Sinhalese communities.

If we talk about Prabhakaran as the great leader of the Eelam movement, after 2004, that was challenged with the splintering of what subsequently became the pro-government Tamil paramilitaries in the east. There are social caste reasons for the grievances among eastern Tamils. But when we talk about Tamils in Sri Lanka, we need to talk about Jaffna Tamils, east coast Tamils, Plantation Tamils, and Tamils in Colombo that have lived there for generations. So it's very complex.

When we're thinking through the various possibilities and modalities for a post-conflict scenario, we should be talking about questions of governance and leadership. We do ourselves a disservice to hang it all on this one figure.

On the question of investment and equitable development, we have to start from where we are right now. Governance structures, economic and political, have been decimated. But on the economic front, we have to realize the dependency of the economy of Sri Lanka on this conflict. Economic figures that I have seen in Sri Lanka from early 2000-01 indicated that 31% of the economy in the southern part of the country was dependent upon military remittances. Soldiers—men, women, and children—send remittances back to those villages. That's three times larger than the largest poverty alleviation program in Sri Lankan history. War has become a business that perpetuates itself. If we could snap our fingers and declare peace, we'd still have a massive economic problem to deal with. That's something we have to bear in mind at the outset.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bush.

Mr. Dorion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Dorion: My question is for both of the witnesses.

Thus far, we have not said much about India's role in this conflict. India has a very large Tamil population. In fact, it is home to a Tamil state. Is India interested in continuing its efforts to try and bring the parties in Sri Lanka closer together or, on the contrary, is it thoroughly disheartened with the outcome of its previous efforts to intervene? Can you comment briefly on India's role?

• (1705)

[*English*]

Dr. Kenneth Bush: There's no question that the whole area is Indo-centric. India has had its hands burnt in its dealings in Sri Lanka. In 1987, an agreement was signed that sent almost 100,000 Indian peacekeeping troops onto the island. Within weeks of arriving to implement the ceasefire peace agreement, the Indian troops found themselves fighting directly against the LTTE.

It's important to point out something that hasn't been said. It was between 1987 and 1990 that the most violent period of Sri Lanka erupted. I would estimate that between 60,000 and 80,000 people were slaughtered. You found them on the street corners or running down the rivers. This was not a Tamil-Sinhalese conflict; this was a Sinhalese civil war.

This was precipitated by the arrival of India onto the island. So within Sri Lankan politics, there is a great sensitivity towards anything resembling Indian influence. The Rajapaksa regime and previous governments have played this card very well, and have mobilized political support by raising the Indian bogey-man.

That being said, nothing will be done internationally unless India is on board. They are a player in all kinds of ways. In the early 1980s, they were arming and training the various Tamil factions, the five or six major ones. They are there; they are present. Having lost a prime minister to the LTTE, and having lost a significant number of men during the peacekeeping phase, they're very tentative about stepping in again. But they are definitely there, and for any type of concerted effort they have to be brought on board.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Dorion: However, if one day a Tamil state in northern Sri Lanka is created, might this not spur the movement for the independence of Tamil Nadu State in India?

[English]

Dr. Kenneth Bush: Most definitely. We've seen that historically. We've seen flows across the Palk Strait dividing Sri Lanka from south India.

We saw the influence, in the early eighties and the mid-eighties, of some of the blowback, if you like, of the training and the explosives training from Sri Lanka going back into south India, where they have their own nationalist Tamil movements. As a federal state, you have the tensions between Tamil Nadu, way down here in the south, and Delhi, way up there.

So there is that sensitivity, most definitely. We've seen that.

Dr. Elliot Tepper: That covers much of it. After the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, his widow, of course, has become the most important politician in India now. There's an outstanding death warrant, as they call it, against Mr. Prabhakaran, if he could ever be caught.

But Indians have shifted. Right now the party....

This is very complicated, as I alluded to earlier. When you get into particulars, you get into personalities and interest groups. Inside India, within Tamil Nadu, there are two political parties. There used to be one, and they split. The one that used to support the Tigers is now part of the federal cabinet. An offshoot is now opposing them, and they are more pro-LTTE.

There's a huge dynamic inside India. The member is absolutely right that India is not an uninterested player here. It's not a bystander.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Patry: Are there any further questions?

Mr. Obhrai.

[English]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Thank you very much for your analysis. For all practical purposes, the background I have fits in with what you've been saying.

In terms of what you've been saying, then, what you've said, all these things fit. The challenges are great, are too much, are very strong. But I'll allude to one point: the international community, everybody, is tired of this constant warring. I would not hesitate to say that even India is tired of the constant eruption of humanitarian crises and so on.

We in Canada have a strong Tamil community or diaspora. I think it's the largest outside of Sri Lanka and India. With regard to the role of the diaspora, going back to my last question, there are new people, new players. I think the LTTE is probably on its way. It carries too much baggage or something like that. I do not dispute what the last speaker said, that he felt it is gone, and if the political situation is not resolved, somebody will replace it.

It is critically important that we resolve the political issue. If it's left festering, somebody else will come in and replace this, and it'll carry on and on. This young, dynamic community outside of Sri Lanka has a very strong, key role to play. Many of them have alluded to putting in the Canadian federation system there, or whatever; you alluded to it.

I agree that the current Sri Lankan government is a hard-stand government, no question, as compared with the previous one. Whatever reasons they have for being that way, it doesn't change the fact that it's time now for the international community to put pressure, whether through ODA or not. But collectively speaking, we have to use the diaspora. We have to use it but we have to come up with a solution, a new kind of solution. The time is right now. I believe the time is right; you alluded to that a bit.

This is the question I have for your academic circle, and it's the same thing I asked the Tamil community: has debate started within the community around the goalposts now, around the LTTE almost being gone, around the hard-line government, around where we go from here?

• (1710)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): Mr. Bush.

Dr. Kenneth Bush: Over the last two and a half years, a number of research projects have been undertaken in Britain, in Sweden, and in Australia looking at the role of diaspora in the peace-building process.

I mean, everybody knows that diaspora plays a negative role. That is...and I'm talking diaspora writ large. I'm not just talking about Tamil diaspora, or Eritrean. It's right across the board. Increasingly, though, attention is being paid toward the peace-building roles they can play.

Now, within the Canadian context, specifically within the Canadian Tamil context, it is important that we look at first-, second-, and third-generation Tamil youth here in Canada. But we're in a very weird space here. The control that the LTTE exercises in Toronto is powerful. It's very weird. And I can tell you how weird it can be. I can tell you stories of meeting people who have fled Sri Lanka because of the intimidation and murders by the LTTE and who've come here to escape that, and then of hearing the daughter in the university talk about the sympathies she has with the LTTE, who killed her uncle.

There is a role for the diaspora in peace-building here in Canada, but we have to be very careful about who we deal with and how we deal with it. It's very opaque, it's very difficult, and it's very political. I think it's an opportunity, a big opportunity, that we can take advantage of very sensitively.

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

Mr. Tepper, please.

Dr. Elliot Tepper: The member knows that I've done some studies—it's some years ago now—on the role of diaspora in Canada. The question of how to transform all of our peoples of the world into an asset for Canada is a broader question. When it comes to conflict, however, Ken Bush has alluded to the fact that diasporas often play a negative role. They tend to be, as I think the phrase goes, more royal than the Queen. They tend to have outdated images of the homeland. Youths abroad looking for a focus are endlessly recruitable, as they come of age, to causes of their people, even though they're now third generation away. So I believe there may be a role, but "sensitive" is only the beginning of how you would approach that role.

I will give you some anecdotes, because that's all we have. When I was in Jaffna, I made a point of interviewing. This was during the time when the government had an interregnum. They had a hold on it, with known Tigers roaming the streets. I was told there, as well as by people here very recently, when we had an Amnesty International meeting on Sri Lanka, by Tamils, and I was told the same story almost a decade apart, there and here, "You give us a package. You give us what we're asking for. You give us the powers we need. We will get rid of the Tigers." I heard that where, as I say, it was dangerous to be hearing it, and from a newspaper editor in Jaffna, and recently here in the streets, and in a boardroom in Ottawa.

Again, I'll just emphasize that whatever the diaspora here may be feeling, I think the peoples of Sri Lanka are thoroughly sick and tired of this war, just as you've alluded. The rest of us would like it behind us.

In terms of this equitable redevelopment program, if Canada can play a role, saying to the parties involved...and there are multiple parties involved; we didn't even talk about the Moors and the Burghers. If we can say to them, "Canada does have a way, and we are willing to help", and then we find a way to do that helping, maybe among this diaspora we'll have an equivalent of a Peace Corps, a development corps. Who knows what the future could bring if we could go from a negative cycle to a positive cycle?

That's where we are right now, and that's the opportunity and challenge.

• (1715)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll move to the next question.

Mr. Dewar, please.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I want to build on that and insert what was mentioned before by Mr. Bush—I think you both agreed on this point—and that's the structure of the economy presently. I hadn't known about that. How do you move to that positive energy when you have an economy structured on remittances from a military? I just don't see it. Perhaps I'm....

On the initial point here, that we provide humanitarian assistance and quarters, fine. The ceasefire absolutely would be helpful. But what you're explaining here and laying out is that until you deal with that wider piece, it's very difficult to get to anything beyond that.

So what do we do?

Dr. Elliot Tepper: This is what I was alluding to earlier as a package. I think we need to change the equation. People who are young need a career path that has an alternative to being recruited as soldiers, sometimes forcibly.

Is Canada going to act unilaterally and not multilaterally to see to it that the economy of Sri Lanka offers opportunities? What are we doing on tariffs? What are we doing to promote a diaspora relationship that's a positive one? It's called changing the subject. We talk about war, war, war. Let's talk about building an economy. Let's talk about ways youth can spend their time other than in training for and practising war.

The Chair: Mr. Bush.

Dr. Kenneth Bush: One of the Canadian NGOs that has been involved in Sri Lanka for almost 20 years now is WUSC, World University Service of Canada. They have very technical training programs right in the east. They have been through thick and thin. One of the really noteworthy things about those types of from-the-ground-up projects is that they offer vocational training that gives alternatives to young people there.

I talked earlier about the need to look at our development programming through a peace and conflict lens. If you teach someone how to use concrete cinder blocks because there is a need to build latrines, that's a very useful thing to do. However, that same skill can also build bunkers.

I can tell you, because I've done evaluations in the east and specifically with WUSC on that project, they know exactly who comes into the program and where they go. They are very careful about losing who they're training, so that training doesn't go to the other side. Electronics skills are similarly very portable skills on one side or the other of that barrier. So at a local level, it is possible to create alternatives, but I think you put your finger right on the dilemma, which is how we deal with the broad macro-level structural issues as well as the micro ones. At the moment, we have a completely militarized approach to conflict resolution. Social, political, and economic problems are all defined through the military lens. If you define a problem as a military problem, then the solution is military. How do you break that? I don't know.

• (1720)

Dr. Elliot Tepper: If I could make one addendum to that, Ken Bush alluded earlier to the complexities, and we are still only scratching the surface. There was once an uprising by Sinhalese youth. We called that the JVP. They were a Marxist organization of younger siblings when their older siblings couldn't find a job. They were brilliantly organized. They had a revolution-in-one-night philosophy, and they almost took over the government in one night. They are now part of the reactionary forces within the government, siding with the government against any concessions whatsoever to the Tamil minority. So they've evolved considerably.

There were no job opportunities and no alternative career ladders. There was nothing for them. So they stole their daddy's shotguns and almost took over the government one night.

The Chair: Mr. Bush.

Dr. Kenneth Bush: Can I follow up on that very quickly? It seems to me, to bring the diaspora into the conversation, that is one place that we might also put our attention. When you look at various conflict zones around the world—and I'm thinking of the Balkans and what happened—once the agreement is signed, you see the return of those who had fled. I think developing those entrepreneurial capacities of the Sinhalese and the Tamils outside is a real resource that we might develop.

Mr. Paul Dewar: That's what you need to do.

Dr. Kenneth Bush: Let me give you a very concrete example. I work with them in terms of bringing students over from Sri Lanka to study in our program. One of the things we might think through in a very concrete way is developing the same types of programs that we use for Canada World Youth, and focusing them on the second- and third-generation diaspora from all different conflict zones who go back to their home country or to other post-conflict settings. After the signing of the 2002 ceasefire agreement, there was a spontaneous return of young Tamil youth and Sinhalese youth.

The political conditions aren't there yet for that, but it's something we can prepare for in concrete terms. It is an area in which Canada has expertise through Canada World Youth and WUSC and so on.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bush.

The last question will be for Mr. Goldring.

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

Thinking on from that discussion on the diaspora, it would seem that the group presenting before the Sri Lankan graduates was more of a Tamil diaspora. By extension, it would sound as though many different factions and groups are the diaspora of Sri Lanka. The difficulty there would be to bring all those diasporas together as one, if that's even possible or feasible to do.

I would like to go back through history a bit to get a little understanding on it. When the British were in charge and were governing the country, what was the percentage breakdown at that time? Has it shifted any? It was mentioned that roughly 12% are Tamil now. What were the percentages back then? What difficulties did the British have? What made their system of governing, for all intents and purposes, not have these extensive difficulties? How inclusive were they of the various subfaction groups? They must have been inclusive in order to have had relative peace, or did they have relative peace?

Perhaps you could comment, Mr. Bush, on what happened previously under the British and what lessons we could learn that perhaps should be reviewed and looked at once again.

Dr. Kenneth Bush: It's an excellent question, and it's not as academic as it initially sounds. It's political sociology. What we're talking about there is the way in which certain identity traits, religion versus language versus ethnicity, become politicized over time.

What's interesting is that the tensions in the British colonial period at the turn of the last century were Muslim riots. There were tensions between Christians and Muslims, and less so the Buddhists. It was more of a religiously flavoured tension.

After independence in 1948, as Professor Tepper alluded to, we saw the politicization of ethnicity, because it was useful politically for a party to begin to mobilize votes on the basis of identity, something that is of course completely foreign to Canada. What lessons we should draw from the comparison between the British colonial period and the independence period relate to the role of state policy in politicizing certain identity traits. When public resources come to be allocated on the basis of one's religion, language, colour, or something else, then we see that groups begin to divide themselves along those lines.

What does that mean in terms of conflict resolution, conflict management, and transformation? It means that to call Sri Lanka an "identity conflict" is a bit of a misnomer. There's nothing in particular about Buddhism, and we can discuss this, that makes it inherently conflictual. What's important is that the political lines have been drawn. There are many examples in which we can see that building incentives—economic incentives, common incentives, incentives over the health of their children—in different competing communities can help to bring them together. If we can think about ways of increasing the incentives for cooperation and communication and increasing the disincentives for conflict, then we're thinking the right way, whether it's economic investment or social investment.

● (1725)

Mr. Peter Goldring: In many other countries with difficulties and social unrest, one common denominator seems to be that a lot of the politics have become ethnically divided. That creates a tremendous number of difficulties in trying to have a reasonable outcome. Looking down the road in the long term, perhaps an influence Canada could have on the situation would be through working on democracy development in regions such as this to help to heal the past and start a new direction.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Bush, did you want to answer that in 30 seconds?

Dr. Kenneth Bush: I'll just say that at independence the political parties were not divided along ethnic lines. Political parties formed along ethnic lines once there were political incentives to do so. It is not what happened in Malaysia, if we want to have a comparison. It's the way in which political parties become ethnicized, and it has to do with the political benefits that come from that.

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

As well, thank you again, Mr. Tepper, for the information you bring forward. We appreciate not only the history of the conflict, but the suggestions on where Canada can be involved and how Canada might be able to play a role.

We're going to suspend for about 30 seconds to allow our guests to leave their seats and then we're going to move to committee business.

You have in front of you a budget that has been proposed and brought forward by our subcommittee on human rights. The subcommittee is asking for this budget in order to bring witnesses here. They are continuing their study on human rights in Iran. The full amount is \$34,550.

Do we have a motion to accept the budget as brought forward? Ms. Brown moves the motion and Mr. Patry seconds it.

(Motion agreed to)

We are adjourned.

The Chair: Thank you very much, committee.

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