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Chair

The Honourable Robert Nault

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● (1530)

[*English*]

The Chair (Hon. Robert Nault (Kenora, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), for a briefing on Canada's foreign policy priorities.

Appearing before us today is the Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Global Affairs. We want to thank her very much for taking this time to spend with is. As is our normal process here in committee, we will ask the minister to make her presentation, and then we'll go through a series of questions and answers.

As you know, the chair tends to be fairly lenient on how we do these things. Everybody can just relax and get their questions in, and it will all go well.

With that, I want to turn the floor over to Minister Freeland for her presentation.

Again, thank you for appearing.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs): I would like to thank our chair and the committee for the opportunity to join you all here today. I have some prepared remarks, a few things I'd like to say off the top.

Before I begin, I would like to introduce two outstanding Canadian public servants who are here with me. I think everyone in Canada now knows Steve Verheul. I was about to say that he is our chief negotiator of CETA, which he is, but right now, significantly, he is our chief negotiator of NAFTA. Thank you for being here with us, Steve.

With me also is David Morrison, who has recently been named our associate deputy minister of Global Affairs. David has been doing terrific work on a number of files, but most particularly he's a Latin America expert and has been leading our effort on Venezuela.

Muchas gracias, David.

For the Albertans here, he's from Lethbridge.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chair, honourable members, thank you for inviting me to speak to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development about how our government is delivering on its foreign policy priorities. Last June, in the House of Commons, I presented Canada's priorities in terms of foreign policy. The very essence of those priorities is the fact that they are founded on the importance of maintaining a stable and rule-based international order.

Our government is capitalizing on Canada's global presence, which is long-standing tradition, to speak with a strong voice in order to defend intolerance and nativism, while addressing the legitimate concerns of individuals who feel overwhelmed by globalization. This means that constructive leadership is needed in the established world order and with our partners to promote peace, security and prosperity around the world.

Mr. Chair, that is exactly what our government is doing.

[*English*]

At the United Nations, the G7, the G20, the OAS, the World Trade Organization, in the Commonwealth, la Francophonie, and NATO, to name just a few, Canada today is engaging creatively to navigate the complexities of today's world.

We are doing so, Mr. Chair, not only in word but also in deed. We have shown that Canada can lead and assemble partners to find solutions to the world's most pressing global challenges.

In October, in Toronto, I hosted the third ministerial meeting of the Lima Group on Venezuela. Foreign ministers from over a dozen countries convened to discuss steps needed for a peaceful return to democracy and to relieve the terrible suffering of the Venezuelan people. I repeated this message once again two weeks ago in Chile at the fourth Lima Group meeting, as well as the importance that Canada's sanctions against Venezuela have in our efforts to achieve these goals.

The issue of Venezuela was further extensively discussed at the North American foreign ministers meeting last Friday in Mexico City. We may be holding another meeting of the Lima Group in Lima next week. That's under discussion. Just a couple of hours ago I spoke with the Peruvian foreign minister about that possibility.

With the United States, Canada also recently hosted the Vancouver foreign ministers meeting on security and stability on the Korean peninsula. This was an essential opportunity for the international community to demonstrate unity against and opposition to North Korea's dangerous and illegal actions and to work together to strengthen diplomatic efforts towards a secure, prosperous, and denuclearized Korean peninsula.

Likewise, on Myanmar, I'm proud of Canada's leadership and cross-party support for that leadership. Too often in diplomacy, it is said that words do not matter, but they do. It is significant that Canada was one of the first countries to denounce the crimes against humanity and the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya.

Since the beginning of 2017, Canada has contributed $37.5 million to help address the needs of affected people in Myanmar and Bangladesh. This includes $12.5 million the government contributed to match the donations of generous and concerned Canadians. I would really like to thank and congratulate all the Canadians who took part in that. That is why we have appointed Bob Rae, a friend and an exemplary Canadian, as special envoy. As a non-Muslim-majority country, it's particularly important that Canada speak out in defence of this persecuted Muslim minority.

When it comes to Ukraine, I was delighted to travel to Kiev in December and to meet with President Poroshenko, Prime Minister Groysman, and Foreign Minister Klimkin.

● (1535)

I conveyed our unwavering support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty and spoke about our recent addition of Ukraine to the automatic firearms country control list, something that the Ukrainians thanked me for.

Last June I also said we would take strong steps to ensure that all human beings are treated with dignity and respect, based on our strong commitment to pluralism, human rights, and the rule of law. Since then, we adopted the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act—and thank you to everyone around this table for the support for that measure—to enable Canada to take action against individuals who commit serious violations of human rights and those who engage in significant acts of corruption anywhere in the world.

I want to thank all the members of this committee for your important work on this legislation. It truly would not have happened without this committee's leadership, a very important contribution.

[*Translation*]

We will continue to firmly denounce any kind of injustice and intolerance around the world, as we have done in places such as Yemen, Chechnya and Iran in recent months.

You also heard me talk about women and girls. As I said in June, it is important for a prime minister and a government to proudly self-identify as feminists.That actually marked an historic milestone.

Women's rights are human rights, and they are at the heart of our foreign policy. That is why we are determined to promote a feminist and ambitious foreign policy. That commitment is at the heart of Canada's feminist international aid policy, which was launched in June by my colleague Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, and at the heart of Canada's new national action plan dedicated to women, peace and security, which I announced last November.

I know that the contribution of several committee members here today was a great help in developing those policies. So I would like to thank them once again.

At the United Nations Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial conference held in November, in Vancouver, Canada launched the Elsie Initiative on women's participation in peace operations. The initiative's goal is not only to ensure that women can participate fully in peacekeeping operations around the world, but also to guarantee that good conditions are in place for their long-term participation. The Elsie Initiative is designed to improve the overall effectiveness of United Nations operations. We are hearing from experts from a number of countries this month to determine that the next steps will be.

[*English*]

Our reputation as a country with clear and cherished democratic values that stands for human rights is strong. We must continue to be a global leader and keep working hard to protect these values and rights.

On that point, I would like to directly address an issue that has received important scrutiny in Canada: arms exports. Last summer we became aware of media reports on the possible misuse of Canadian-made vehicles in security operations in Saudi Arabia's eastern province. At that time, I asked officials at Global Affairs Canada to conduct a full and thorough investigation of these reports. Today I can confirm that officials at Global Affairs found no conclusive evidence that Canadian-made vehicles were used in human rights violations. That was the independent, objective opinion of our public service and the advice given to me as minister.

That experience did, however, cause me to pause and re-examine Canada's export permit system. My conclusion is that Canada can and must do better. Canada is not alone in the world in taking stock of how we allow and monitor the export of arms and of the considerations that go into these decisions. I have spoken with my counterparts in Germany, Sweden, and the Netherlands, among others, whose countries have all recently, in one way or another, questioned how arms are exported.

I am proud of the important commitment that our government made with Bill C-47. This would amend the Export and Import Permits Act to allow Canada to accede to the Arms Trade Treaty. This is the first treaty to tackle the illicit trade in conventional weapons, and it sets an essential standard for the international community.

● (1540)

It is long overdue that Canada joins many of our NATO and G7 partners by acceding to the ATT. We have heard support for the arms trade treaty from civil society, NGOs, and Canadians. We also heard the clear desire to do better. We need to be ambitious and strengthen Bill C-47. We had originally planned to place the criteria by which exports are judged, including human rights, into regulation, but we heard from committee members and civil society that they would like to see the Arms Trade Treaty criteria placed directly into legislation. This would include the consideration of peace and security, human rights, and gender-based violence. I can say today that the government would welcome this.

Going further than that, our government is today announcing its support for the inclusion of a substantial risk clause in Canadian law. Such a clause would mean that our government and future governments would not allow the export of a controlled good if there were a substantial risk that it could be used to commit human rights violations. A substantial risk clause would mean that Global Affairs Canada would need to ensure, before the export of controlled goods, that we have a high level of confidence that controlled exports will not be used to commit human rights abuses.

[*Translation*]

That is an important decision because it will have an impact on the way Canada regulates arms sales, but it's the right thing to do. Canadians are deeply committed to human rights for everyone, and they rightly expect exported goods not to be used to violate human rights.

I want things to be very clear. I want us to hold ourselves to a higher standard when it comes to Canada's controlled goods exports.

[*English*]

This is a significant decision. It will mean changes in how Canada regulates the selling of weapons. This is the right thing to do. Canadians fundamentally care about human rights for all, and Canadians rightly expect that exports will not be used to violate human rights.

Let me be clear: from this day forward I want us to hold ourselves to a higher standard on the export of controlled goods from Canada.

I would also like to provide further clarity on one point. As a matter of broad principle, Canada will honour pre-existing contracts to the greatest extent possible. We can all understand and appreciate the fundamental importance of being able to trust Canada. We also understand the inherent importance of providing stability and certainty. Canada is a trusted partner around the world, and people must continue to be sure of the high worth of our word and our commitments. The world needs to know that an agreement with Canada endures beyond elections. This is important not only for international partners but also for Canadian companies and Canadian workers, who need to know they will be able to follow through on plans into which they invest their time and resources.

These two amendments will also provide clarity to industry by laying out the government's and Canadians' expectations for our export control process. We will work with Canadian industry to continue to provide it with appropriate guidance.

Mr. Chair, let me now turn to trade for one moment.

When it comes to NAFTA, we continue to work hard on the bread-and-butter trade issues at the negotiating table. Our goal is greater competitiveness, investment certainty, and growth in North America.

At the most recent round of talks in Montreal, we put forward some creative ideas with the view to establishing a constructive dialogue on certain key issues, including the rules of origin, investment dispute settlement, and ongoing modernization of the agreement. Serious challenges do remain, particularly with regard to the United States' unconventional proposal. As the Prime Minister said yesterday in Chicago, our objective is a good deal, not just any deal.

At the negotiating table, Canada always takes a facts-based approach. We are always polite and we are adept at seeking creative solutions and win-win-win compromises, but we are also resolute. Canada will only accept an agreement if it is in our national interest and respects Canadian values.

● (1545)

Finally, Mr. Chair, let me conclude with a few words about one of Canada's signature priorities for this year, our G7 presidency. This is a great opportunity for us to speak with a strong voice on the international stage.

[*Translation*]

During its G7 presidency in 2018, Canada will mobilize its counterparts on global issues requiring immediate attention, including by investing in economic growth that benefits everyone, by preparing for the jobs of the future, by working together on climate, ocean and clean energy changes, and by building a more peaceful and safer world. More specifically, we will promote gender equality and women's empowerment, and we will ensure that a gender-based analysis is conducted for each aspect of our presidency.

Mr. Chair, I will conclude by saying that, within G7 and the international community as a whole, Canada is continuing to defend a rule-based national order and to look for ways to strengthen it. We do this at every opportunity, while explicitly taking into account the relationship between peace, common prosperity, open trade and human rights.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister Freeland.

Colleagues, as usual, let's go right into the rounds.

As you know, your chair doesn't get involved too often, but I might have a chance to ask a question today at some point.

I'm going to start with Mr. Genuis, please.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister Freeland, I think you know and I want to emphasize again that the official opposition is committed to working with the government in areas of national interest and in particular on NAFTA. We all want to see a good deal for Canada and we want to cooperate as much as possible to ensure the success of it.

I do want to share with you just a couple of points of frustration. This committee did pass a motion inviting you to come here a year ago to talk about your mandate. Our shadow minister had requested a briefing on NAFTA. It took four months for him to get a briefing on the government's strategy and approach with respect to NAFTA.

I know that your appearance here was only scheduled after our shadow minister had already notified the embassy in Washington that he had to be away. These are a few elements of honest frustration, because we are eager to work with the government on areas of national interest.

I do want to ask you something with respect to NAFTA. You didn't speak a lot about the progressive elements of it. I think Canadians are eager to understand what exactly the government is seeking in terms of these progressive elements.

I wonder if you could share with us whether the government is seeking binding provisions with respect to things like gender and indigenous rights or if the government is seeking symbolic language similar to what we have in, say, the Canada-Chile FTA?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Thank you very much for that question, Garnett, if I may, and you're welcome to call me Chrystia if you like. We can be a little more informal here than in the House.

Let me first clarify the matter of timing of my appearance today. I apologize for not having brought that up at the beginning. I'd like to thank everyone for being willing to meet today rather than last Thursday. I am aware that this appearance was scheduled for last Thursday. As I think people know, we had a last-minute decision to hold a meeting of the North American foreign ministers in Mexico City on the Friday.

This was a meeting that we had long sought to schedule. It seemed to me, given developments in the world and in North America, that there was great value in the three foreign ministers of the North American countries coming together, and when quite quickly it became apparent that the end of last week was a time that would accommodate Rex and Luis, the U.S Secretary of State and the Mexican secretary of state, it seemed to me that the right thing to do was to go ahead with that meeting. I apologize to everyone for everyone having to change their schedules. I'm sorry some people couldn't be here, but it was truly about my being able to get to Mexico City for that meeting.

On the NAFTA negotiations, I do also want, Garnett, to thank you and thank opposition parties, as I want to thank all Canadians, for the Team Canada approach we have brought to these negotiations. As you all know, we have both NDP and Conservative members, as well as business, labour, and indigenous representation on my NAFTA council. I think our Team Canada approach is serving us extremely well. I really want to thank everybody, especially opposition colleagues, for that approach.

When it comes to the progressive elements that we have put forward, in my view our core progressive ideas are in the labour, environmental, gender, and indigenous chapters. Each of those chapters is different and speaks to a different need in a different part of the agreement.

The indigenous chapter is certainly the first time Canada has put forward an indigenous chapter in a trade agreement—

● (1550)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Minister, with respect, in terms of time, because I have some other matters I want to get to—

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: You asked me a question about the progressive elements, and I'd like to answer that.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I just want to nail down whether they're symbolic or binding.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Garnett, I'm answering. I am.

The Chair: Please don't cut the minister off, Garnett. I told you I'll give you plenty of time, so relax; stay chilled. It will be all good.

Go ahead, Minister.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: It's certainly the first time Canada has put forward an indigenous chapter. We thought it was the first time an indigenous chapter was put forward in a trade agreement, but I was talking about this with New Zealand, and they think there appears to be one between New Zealand and Taiwan, because of some ethnic relations between their indigenous peoples. It is new ground for Canada, and I'm very proud that we're putting that forward.

When it comes to the labour and environmental chapters, it is our belief—and labour organizations agree with us—that the labour proposal we have put forward is the strongest and most progressive labour proposal Canada has ever advanced in a trade negotiation. This is a set of proposals that would bite, and that would do the important work.

I spoke in my comments about our support for globalization. At the same time, we appreciate that globalization has left some people behind. It's not fair for Canadian workers to be exposed to a race to the bottom, to be facing other countries where labour and environmental standards are lower. Our labour chapter and our environmental chapter are very much designed and have the intent of protecting our workers against that.

When it comes to the gender chapter, I'm glad that you referred to the chapter that we have in our agreement with Chile. That really is ground-breaking. This chapter very much builds on that work. Our proposals do, in any case. None of these are closed chapters, so it's important to talk about the Canadian proposals here.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Minister.

What I wanted to understand is whether or not you are seeking binding language on gender and indigenous rights. I guess those who are watching will judge whether or not you answered the question, but I do want to make sure we get some other elements in, in the time that we have.

Minister, on the issue of China, Canada's ambassador to China said recently that in some important areas such as the environment, global warming, free trade, and globalization, the policies of the Government of Canada are closer to the policies of the Government of China than they are to U.S. policies. You didn't address China in your opening remarks. I'd just be curious to know, and it can be a quick response if you're comfortable with that, if you agree with these remarks by the ambassador. Do they reflect the position of the Government of Canada?

● (1555)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Garnett, the reality is that China is today the world's second-largest economy. It's a country with which we already have a very significant trading relationship, and with which many countries in the world have a significant trading relationship. The existence and the importance of China is a fact, and certainly, as someone who cares very deeply about issues like our canola trade, I am very aware of the significance of China's relationship with Canada.

It is the duty of any Canadian government to have a strong and meaningful relationship with the world's second-largest economy. That is something our country is working hard to build.

That said, it is also the case—and this is something which we expressed very clearly in our meetings with Chinese officials—that in many ways and in many areas Canadian values and the Canadian political system differ very strongly from the political system of China. That is a reality as well, and that is something we all should be very clear about.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Minister, my question, though, was.... Well, I'll just say first off that my question was whether or not you agreed with the statements of Mr. McCallum. I certainly agree that we need to have a relationship with China.

Because this is my last question, I do want to table, for the benefit of the committee, this photograph of the Golden Lampstand church. It's a church in China that over 50,000 people attended. I'll table that with the committee. I also want to table a photograph of the church being blown up, and this was in the same month when Canada's ambassador to China, John McCallum, said that we have more in common in terms of our values with China than we do with the United States.

Minister, I agree that we need to trade with China. Certainly the previous government increased trade with China. On the particular case of the destruction of the church, if that happened anywhere else in the world, I don't doubt that members of the government, including the minister, would have had strong statements about that. I'd like to know if the minister has anything to say about the destruction of this church, if the government has anything to say about it. How does she feel about the comments of Canada's ambassador saying we have more in common with China than the United States in light of that terrible act of what some might call terrorism happening in the same month?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: I've been very clear on the question of the Canadian political system and Canadian political values vis-à-vis those of other countries. Let me say one thing very clearly for all Canadians: I really think, particularly at this moment in the history of the world, that something Canada is poised to do and that Canadians really believe in is to speak up for persecuted ethnic and religious minorities around the world. That's something I'm personally very committed to doing, and I believe we have strong cross-party support for doing that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Genuis.

We're going to go to Mr. Saini, please.

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Thank you very much for being here today, Minister.

I want to start off with your last comment. As you know, our government has been at the forefront of calling for the protection of the Rohingya and an end to their persecution, going as far as to appoint a special envoy—Bob Rae—to advise the government on this matter. You, on many occasions, have also said that this is a case of ethnic cleansing and that the perpetrators responsible must be brought to justice.

Can you update the committee and Canada on what Canada is doing to help the Rohingya people?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: As I mentioned in my opening remarks, the issue of the persecution of the Rohingya is one of particular concern for this government and for Canadians. I have been really proud of the cross-party support for the Government of Canada in focusing on that issue.

As I said in my remarks, in the world today there is a particular significance and importance for us as a non-majority Muslim country to be focused on the oppression of this Muslim minority, which is one of the most persecuted groups in the world. I said in my remarks that words matter, and I think it's important for us to be clear that what is happening to the Rohingya is ethnic cleansing. These are crimes against humanity.

It's also really important that the people committing these atrocities understand that personal accountability will happen. That is something the international community is pushing for, and it is something Canada stands behind very strongly.

You mentioned the Prime Minister's special envoy, Bob Rae. Bob's appointment to look into this issue—to travel to Myanmar, to travel to Rakhine State—is a very important part of our commitment to being engaged and to speaking up for the Rohingya.

I would like to say in conclusion that I have been really proud of the commitment of our Parliament broadly—of all the parties in Parliament—to these persecuted people, but even more proud of the commitment of Canadians. All of us knew there was a real desire among Canadians for the Government of Canada to match donations to support the Rohingya, and Canadians responded to that magnificently. We're a great country, and I think we're never greater than when we're speaking up for some of the world's most persecuted people.

● (1600)

Mr. Raj Saini: Thank you for that.

The other question I have is important to me because I've been in touch with people who have been involved in the land mine community even prior to entering politics. I was very happy to know that the government is now providing $12 million of new funding for the elimination of land mines around the world. Since we signed the Ottawa treaty 20 years ago, we've always been a leader in IED eradication.

Could you update us as to where the money is going to go and how it's going to be allocated?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: All of us can be proud of the Ottawa treaty. We celebrated together its 20th anniversary last year. That was a great Canadian international accomplishment and has made a significant difference in the world. Given the devastation caused by land mines, anything we can do to have fewer of them in use means that there are fewer mutilated people and fewer dead people in the world.

That is why we were really proud on December 4 to announce an additional $12 million to pursue our goal of ridding the world of anti-personnel land mines. Men and boys are disproportionately the group who are the direct victims of land mines, but it tends to fall to women and girls to care for them, so we are applying our gender-based analysis to dealing with the impact of land mines.

In terms of where the funding is going to go, we are focusing on Syria; Ukraine, because as members of the committee know, among its many afflictions, the Donbass region is afflicted with land mines; Colombia; Cambodia; and the Lao People's Democratic Republic. In this project, we're working with trusted international partners.

I see Anita nodding, because she has worked around the world so much.

The land mine issue is really something on which the international community recognizes Canadian leadership, and we should all be proud to build on that 20-year legacy. I certainly am.

Mr. Raj Saini: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we'll go to Madame Laverdière, *s'il vous plaît*.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Minister, thank you for joining us today. If that's okay with you, I will go pretty quickly because I would ideally like to ask a dozen questions. I know that I won't be able to ask all of them, but I will try. So my proceeding as quickly as possible is not impertinence.

Regarding the helicopters that were sold to the Philippines, you said today that you would not approve the export permit. I assume you know that this type of agreement does not require an export permit. Right?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Ms. Laverdière, I would like to begin by thanking you personally for your work on the export file. As I already said, we will listen to you, and we are prepared to use the amendments you talked about. Thank you for your contribution.

As for the Philippines, export permits come under my jurisdiction. As I said yesterday and today, we have not received an application for an export permit, and human rights are important to us. In the case of an application for an export permit, we are fully prepared to carry out a rigorous analysis. I will sign a permit only once a rigorous analysis has been conducted.

You also talked about an investigation by the International Criminal Court into the Philippines. I welcome that investigation, which is an important step.

● (1605)

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Thank you, Minister.

The problem is that you will not receive an application for an export permit because there are so many holes is our current system—these are agreements negotiated by the Canadian Commercial Corporation—that you will not receive one. This clearly shows that our system contains major gaps.

I will soon talk about the Arms Trade Treaty, but I would first like to know something about the agreement concluded with the Philippines.

I know that a memorandum of understanding was signed in 2012 and a first agreement in 2014. I would like to know who signed the agreement to export those helicopters and when.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: As I already said, I can only talk about my responsibilities.

As minister of foreign affairs, I am responsible for signing—or not—export permits. We have not received an export application. I want to be very clear, and it's important for people to understand that, if we receive an application for an export permit to the Philippines, we will take human rights into account, as they are a very important issue for Canada. The Prime Minister and I have discussed our concerns in that area regarding the Philippines.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Thank you.

Based on the expert opinions I have heard, you will not receive an application. So there is no mechanism in place. My understanding of your answer is that this kind of a thing will continue to happen.

You did not answer my question about the time of the transaction. Since the sale is current, I presume the agreement was signed under the Liberal government. Correct me if I am wrong.

You say that, regarding Saudi Arabia,

[*English*]

there is no conclusive evidence.

However, Minister, with all due respect, the standard in current Canadian regulations doesn't say that we will not export if there is conclusive evidence; it says that we shouldn't export if there is a reasonable risk. Given the fact that the ambassador for Saudi Arabia himself told *The Globe and Mail* that yes, Canadian LAVs were used in eastern Saudi Arabia,

[*Translation*]

and that civil society organizations, truly independent experts, confirmed that light armoured vehicles were used during attacks against civilians, I think there is a risk. What I find a bit strange is the lack of conclusive evidence. According to the current standards and regulations, Canada cannot export arms if there is reasonable risk.

[*English*]

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: I was very precise, and intentionally so, in my language. When the media reports appeared, what I said was that I instructed the department and our objective and independent public service—of which, Hélène, you were once a distinguished member—to do a thorough analysis. The report that I received from our public service was that there was no conclusive evidence of the use of Canadian weapons in the commission of human rights violations. That is the advice that I received, as minister.

We believe in a fact-based approach and we believe in relying on the counsel of our public service.

That said, as I said in my remarks, the issue raised some concerns for me. As I have announced today, that is why I think that now is the time for Canada to move to a more rigorous system of control over arms exports going forward.

● (1610)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Thank you, Minister.

Could we get a copy of that report?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: I will have to ask the department representatives for it.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: I would like to ask one last question about arms exports. Bill C-47, which concerns the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty, includes criteria, and I think that is an improvement.

As you know, all the experts we have heard from pointed out that the bill violates the spirit and the letter of the Arms Trade Treaty. The bill still has significant shortcomings; it does not at all address the role of the Canadian Commercial Corporation or the Department of National Defence. However, in the sale of helicopters to the Philippines, we are talking about two major players. The bill also does not cover our exports to the United States. Yet President Trump announced that he would loosen the rules on arms exports from the United States to some countries with a poor track record in human rights. We know that Canadian weapon parts got to Nigeria through the U.S.

Are you also planning to resolve those issues in the current bill? I'm talking about the role of the Canadian Commercial Corporation, the role of the Department of National Defence and exports to the U.S.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: I agree with you on many of the issues, but I don't fully share your opinion on what you just discussed. I think the additions and amendments I announced today are a major improvement. I think it is very important for Canada that our government decided to join that treaty and it's a major improvement in terms of our export regulations.

As for our ties with the United States in defence, as you are well aware, that country is one of Canada's important strategic allies. That relationship is important to us, as well as to our American counterparts. We are allied, we share a border and we are both members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Minister.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Ms. Laverdière.

[*English*]

We'll go to Mr. Sidhu, please.

Mr. Jati Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, thank you for taking time out to come in front of the committee. My question is going to be on Bill C-47.

During this committee's study of Bill C-47, we heard concerns raised by the Canadian Shooting Sports Association and the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters.

Coming from a rural riding in British Columbia, I get to hear those concerns at the same time. Would this bill have any impact on domestic firearms? It's a two-fold question. The next one is, does it impose any record-keeping requirements that don't already exist?

● (1615)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Thank you very much, Jati, for that question.

As you know, I currently represent a very urban riding, but I was born and raised in a very rural one, so I understand that question, and I think it is a very important one. I'm delighted to have this opportunity to offer some clarity on that issue.

Bill C-47 will make changes to the process for importing and exporting controlled goods to and from Canada. It does not affect domestic gun control regulation and it does not affect the domestic trade in arms. The Firearms Act falls under Public Safety, so admirably and effectively managed by our friend Minister Goodale. This is not the purview of Global Affairs Canada. We have quite enough on our plate without that.

Bill C-47 does not create any form of new registry for gun ownership. Let me be very clear on that. Record-keeping obligations in the Export and Import Permits Act have existed since 1947, and Bill C-47 does not change the system that Canadians already know.

Let me quote from the the Arms Trade Treaty preamble, which acknowledges, and I quote:

> the legitimate trade and lawful ownership, and use of certain conventional arms for recreational, cultural, historical, and sporting activities, where such trade, ownership and use are permitted or protected by law

I know that there have been some concerns about that issue, and I am very pleased to have the opportunity to absolutely put those concerns to rest, so thank you for that question.

Mr. Jati Sidhu: Thank you very much.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: I'm glad to be on the record about that.

Mr. Jati Sidhu: Second, you played host to a very important meeting in Vancouver with the Secretary of State of the U.S.A. and other foreign ministers about the increasingly volatile behaviour of North Korea.

As Canada looks to commit to the Asia-Pacific region, could you please speak to the importance of Canada's diplomatic engagement in North Korea and Canada's role in creating a peaceful and secure Korean peninsula?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: We were very pleased just a few weeks ago to co-host with the United States the summit on peace and security on the Korean peninsula. This is one of the most pressing issues in the world today. North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile tests are a breach of international law and pose a dangerous security threat for the entire world. Our summit meeting in Vancouver was an opportunity to show international solidarity and international resolve around that important issue. It was a very important opportunity for us, the assembled foreign ministers, to assert together that a diplomatic solution is both possible and essential in this crisis.

We were very pleased to host the meeting in Vancouver for a number of reasons, not least among them that Canada is the proud home to one of the largest Korean diaspora communities anywhere in the world. As MP for University—Rosedale, Toronto's Koreatown is in my riding. We do have a special interest and responsibility. As our B.C. colleagues know, we are a Pacific nation, so we are particularly engaged in this issue.

One additional important purpose and value of that meeting was to show our support for our partner, South Korea. Minister Kang, South Korea's foreign minister, is an excellent, extremely effective foreign minister. While we in Canada certainly are concerned about what is happening in North Korea, we're concerned because of the threat to the world. Of all the countries in the world, South Korea is most directly exposed. It's very important for us to be showing solidarity and support for South Korea. This was a very good opportunity to do so.

We were very glad to host the meeting. I thank our colleagues from Global Affairs. They did a fantastic job pulling it together at what, by the standards of these sorts of summits, is very short notice. This is going to be an issue in which Canada will continue to be very urgently engaged.

Finally, the timing of the meeting turned out to be very fortuitous, because it happened just as North and South Korea were able to engage in talking about and working together on the Olympics. All the participants in the meeting were able to speak about the value of that engagement as admittedly a very small step, but a positive step.

● (1620)

The Chair: Thank you.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: And “Go, Canada, Go”, for our athletes at the Olympics.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sidhu.

We're going to go to Ms. Vandenbeld, please.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Thank you very much.

Before I begin, Minister, I want to thank you for the respect that you have shown this committee and the witnesses before this committee in your openness and willingness to see amendments that are going to improve Bill C-47 and strengthen our export control mechanisms. I appreciate that.

[*Translation*]

I would like to begin by thanking you for joining us today. I would also like to commend you on your commitment to promoting a feminist foreign affairs policy, especially on your commitment to the Global Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

As you know, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 1325 18 years ago. The resolution calls for women to be part of peace proceedings, in all respects. We know that peace treaties are more stable, inclusive and sustainable when women are involved.

Canada has a great deal of expertise and has much to offer in this area. We already have women participating, as civilians, in peacekeeping missions around the world. I noted that Canada's second action plan integrated principles relating to women, peace and security. That plan will lead to an increase in the number of women participating in all aspects of the promotion of peace, be it through peacekeepers, police officers, non-government organizations, NGOs, or through efforts to strengthen a state in the wake of a conflict.

In your opinion, how could that new policy have a greater impact worldwide?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Thank you for the question, Ms. Vandenbeld.

[*English*]

I'll start by responding to your preamble.

The work we have all been doing together on Bill C-47 is a real example—and Mr. Chair, let me address you also—of how a parliamentary committee can do really important work in improving legislation. As I said, this is not the first time this committee has had a real impact on the work of the government. The Magnitsky report is another example of the way this committee's work has shaped our government policy. That's the way parliamentary democracy is supposed to work, and I would like to thank the committee, and the witnesses who come before the committee, for being so effective. It's made a real difference to what we're doing as a country.

[*Translation*]

Regarding the theme you and I are flighting for—women, the country and security—I absolutely agree with you. I also want to congratulate you, Ms. Vandenbeld, on the work you are doing, not only in Canada, but also in Kosovo, Vietnam, Bangladesh and the Congo. I think that those life experiences enrich your life both as an MP and as a member of this committee; that's very clear to me. It is very useful for Canada to have a woman with those kinds of experiences.

For our government, including women in everything we do in terms of peace and security issues is a priority. We talked about that at the peacekeeping summit in Vancouver, and it was only the beginning. I am certain that our plan to include more women in peacekeeping operations will make a huge difference for Canada, for the world and for the United Nations.

There will be a lot of work, and it won't be easy. However, this is important work, and we now have a plan. We have the support of many countries around the world. I know that this work is necessary, and I am sure we will manage to do it

● (1625)

[*English*]

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Thank you very much.

Building on that, we know that when women are involved in decision-making processes and in institutions generally, whether it's national parliaments or being part of trade or peace negotiations, we see an improvement. We see the sustainable development goals being reached sooner. If women are part of the process and participants in the process, then we see that peace agreements last longer.

However, only 4% of the signatories on peace agreements today are women, so I'm very pleased to see that we have a new policy that's going to be encouraging more women to be involved in peace agreements around the world.

I would like to ask you to elaborate on the fact that when we talk about a feminist foreign policy or feminist international development policy, we're not just talking about things that put women into existing frameworks and existing processes, but in fact improving those processes, making them more inclusive, and including women in every single part of that process.

Please explain a bit how that would work in practice in terms of the plan Canada's putting forward and the leadership we're showing around the world, particularly on the women, peace, and security file.

The Chair: It will have to be short, because time's up for this member.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Let me, in that case, just say we need to do precisely what you suggest in your question.

I very much agree, and I think at this point we have a pretty broad national consensus around the fact—which is now proven by quite a rich historical experience and empirical studies—that when we include women in peace and security processes, when we have women engaged in peacekeeping, and when we have women engaged in policing, we have better outcomes. It's the right thing to do because it's fair and it's in line with our values, but it also leads to better results, and that is why Canada is so proud to be championing this.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

We're going to go to Mr. Barlow, please.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to be joining the committee today, and thank you to the minister for being here.

I was honoured to join our leader, Andrew Scheer, in Washington last month as part of the NAFTA team that went down there. Again, we had a very positive response. It was a Team Canada approach. We know how important NAFTA is to our economy, and certainly, as the shadow minister for agriculture, I know how important it is to our agriculture file.

In saying that, I wanted to talk briefly about the CPTPP. I know that's not in your file, Minister, but I know you worked very hard on that initially when thankfully we left it for you to carry on. I appreciate that you were able to get the CPTPP signed. Certainly I know we're in good hands with Mr. Verheul and Ms. Hillman with NAFTA.

However, although I don't want to say a “grave concern”, there is a lot of concern within our stakeholder group, especially in agriculture, that we will not sign the agreement in Chile in March, that we won't get the legislation done to be among those first six countries that are going to be there, and that we'll miss out on some real opportunities if New Zealand and Australia are able to access that market with Japan, for example, before we are.

For us, we want to see the CPTPP signed and be a signatory as quickly as possible.

What is your view in terms of being at the cabinet table? Will we be signing that agreement on March 8 in Chile? When can we expect implementing legislation to be tabled in the House to get that implemented as soon as possible?

We can do that simultaneously. There's precedence there. We did it with CETA. We did it with the Canada-Korea agreement. Can you give us some confirmation that we'll be signing that on March 8, and when will the implementation bill be put before the House?

● (1630)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: I worry, John, that you're trying to get me in trouble with François-Philippe, my friend who is my benchmate in the House of Commons. We all have to try to stay in our own lanes.

Let me say on behalf of the government that as the Prime Minister has announced, we were very pleased to be able to reach an agreement in principle on the CPTPP. Canada is absolutely committed to this deal, and we are very pleased particularly with the changes that we were able to achieve in the final months of negotiation.

I think the additional protections on the cultural exemption are very valuable for Canada. I'm very pleased with the changes on the IP front, and we have some additional opportunities for Canadian autos that I think make this a better deal. Our government is enthusiastic about it and committed to it. I'll leave the details to François-Philippe, but you have that assurance from me.

We are very mindful. Speaking on the agriculture file, no one, I think, knows it better than Steve Verheul. We're very mindful of the additional opportunities, particularly in the Japanese market. This is great news, in particular for Canadian ranchers.

I'll let you finish your....

The Chair: I'm sorry. Minister, go ahead.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: We're very mindful of the opportunities for Canadian agriculture, in particular, I would say, for Canadian ranchers. We're also mindful that this first mover advantage is very valuable.

I think we saw that with the Korea trade deal. The fact that Canada fell behind really meant that our ranchers and our pork producers were at a disadvantage, which they're still fighting to make up.

There are some great opportunities there, and I look forward to seeing Canadian farmers and ranchers take advantage of them.

Mr. John Barlow: Thank you, Minister.

On the supply management side, we have 3.25% access as part of the CPTPP, but there are some concerns as to what that's going to mean to NAFTA, because when the CPTPP was originally negotiated, the Americans were part of that agreement. The Americans are no longer part of that agreement.

Can you give us some assurance on NAFTA that there won't be additional access to supply? We want CPTPP to be signed as quickly as possible and we know how important NAFTA is, but are there some assurances that there won't be additional access to supply management in Canada as part of the NAFTA deal?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: You are rightly familiar with the dairy access that is granted under CPTPP, because that, of course, was negotiated by the previous Conservative government. Steve and I and our negotiating team work very closely with our stakeholders, very much including the supply-managed sector, when it comes to the NAFTA negotiation. We are very aware of the concerns and the very legitimate needs of our supply-managed sector.

When it comes to the NAFTA negotiation, as I said in my opening remarks, we are making good progress on what I would describe as the modernization chapters, areas such as cutting red tape, such as electronic forms at the border, such as our small and medium-sized business chapter, which we have closed. We've closed that chapter, the competition chapter, and the anti-corruption chapter, so we're making really good progress there. As you will know from working with business people, those are really important chapters. We actually found in our—

Mr. John Barlow: I'm asking about supply management.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Hang on; I'm going to get there, okay? I want to give you the context.

In our consultations ahead of the NAFTA negotiation, at the beginning of the negotiation we found that 40% of Canadian exporters do not use their NAFTA preferences. That's a really big number, and what that tells us is both that the red tape involved in claiming those preferences is very high and probably that the delta between the NAFTA preferences and the WTO rate is smaller than it was when NAFTA was first negotiated. As a result, we're focusing a lot on those modernization areas and we're making meaningful progress there.

That said, there are other areas where significant differences remain. The sector you've alluded to is one of them.

● (1635)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barlow. That uses up all our time and then some.

On behalf of the committee, thank you, Minister Freeland, for coming. We very much appreciate it. We're looking forward to seeing you again very soon.

Colleagues, we'll take a five-minute break and then we'll get into our second hour of witnesses here at the foreign affairs committee.

Thank you very much.

● (1635)

_____(Pause)_____

● (1640)

The Chair: Colleagues, I want to bring this meeting back to order.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we have the study of the provision of assistance to Canadians in difficulty abroad, better known as consular affairs. Before us today is Mr. Gar Pardy, who's a former Canadian diplomat and a well-known writer on this particular subject.

Mr. Pardy, thank you very much, and our apologies for starting a little late. It generally happens when we have ministers at the committee. However, I want to assure you that if we don't get through your presentation and questions by members today, with your permission we'll invite you back and finish off the job that we may not be able to do today.

With that, I want to turn the floor over to Mr. Pardy for his opening comments, and then colleagues will get right into questions relating to the role of consular affairs and the importance of it. This is, of course, as you know, our second hour of this analysis, so it's a very important part of our work.

The floor is yours, Mr. Pardy, and thank you again for coming.

Mr. Gar Pardy (Former Canadian Diplomat, As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I commend the committee for undertaking this examination of the provisions of assistance by the government to Canadians. It is the first time, certainly in my memory that such an examination has taken place, and I think my memory is probably longer than most. A comprehensive examination of consular affairs is also a matter of added importance in light of the changes in the composition of Canadian society, which increasingly includes persons who were born outside of Canada; every few years, we get another indication of that from Statistics Canada. Equally, an increasing number of Canadians include foreign travel as an important element in their daily lives.

I've been retired long enough now that I don't know many members here, but certainly before retirement it was a rare day that I did not receive an inquiry from members or their staff about constituents who had run into trouble when they were outside of Canada. Most of the problems were easily resolved, fortunately, but there were always a small number of such matters that were deeply tragic in their outcomes or went on for months and years.

Many of these cases, if one were to list a group of names, would bring back memories to just about all of you. Some of the persons that have been in such difficulty are such persons as Alison Azer; Christine Lamont and David Spencer; Nguyen Thi Hiep, who died tragically, executed by the Government of Vietnam a number of years ago; Zahra Kazemi, a case that still lingers on in our court system; Bill Sampson; Maher Arar; Omar Khadr; Ahmad Abou El-Maati; Abdullah Almalki; Muayyed Nureddin; James Loney; Harmeet Sooden; Suaad Mohamud; Mellissa Fung; Mr. Abdelrazik; Amanda Lindhout; Robert Fowler; Louis Guay; John Ridsdel; Robert Hall; and, most recently, Joshua Boyle.

Beyond the individuals who linger on in our memories about these things, every year we see large events take place around the world that directly affect the Canadians who are in those countries. These have almost become annual events, I think, in our documentation. Of course, it's always important that we remember what happened in late June in 1985 when hundreds of Canadians were killed at the hands of other Canadians when Air India was bombed off of the coast of Ireland.

As you go about your work in this area, I would leave you with three factors firmly in mind, which I think will help guide your work.

The first of these is that there cannot be any expectation that the international environment will become more benign or peaceful in the coming years. Without being overly pessimistic, I think it's fair to say that it will become less so.

Second, and almost counterintuitive in all of this, there can be no expectation that Canadians will travel less as a result of this increasingly inhospitable international environment.

The third thing to keep in mind is that there are no initiatives under way—or interest in creating new ones—that will increase international co-operation on consular matters, and this despite the fact that nearly two billion people travel internationally each year and the travel industry internationally is valued in the trillions of dollars.

I would suggest to you that there are a number of initiatives that the Government of Canada could and should undertake in order to improve the lot of Canadians who encounter difficulty while outside Canada.

The first such initiative is to create a legal basis establishing the responsibility of the Government of Canada to provide consular services to all Canadians. I would emphasize the word “all”. Since the creation of the consular services in the aftermath of the Second World War, the provision of such services is discretionary on the part of the government and is considered part of the crown prerogative. Simply put, since it's not established in Canadian law, the government of the day can decide who is to be helped or not helped. Needless to say, such discretion on the part of governments has occasionally led to discrimination, with serious consequences for the Canadians involved.

● (1645)

Some of you may be familiar with an issue in the last Parliament, when a number of private members' bills were advanced in order to change that particular aspect of consular services, but they never reached the level of law. Most recently, in 2010, the Supreme Court of Canada reaffirmed that crown prerogative was still a factor in the work in this area.

When you look at this particular aspect of consular services, I think you should bear in mind that Canadians pay directly for consular services through a consular service fee that was enacted in 1996. I had a hand in its enactment back then. Well over a billion dollars has been collected through that fee, which has gone into the general revenues of the government. An examination—and there have been examinations over the years on the use of those monies paid—suggests that there is a significant discrepancy between the fees collected and the expenditures associated with consular services. This is a direct contravention of the law establishing the fee.

The second area needing urgent attention is the policy associated with negotiating the release of Canadians kidnapped overseas. As matters now stand, there is an absolute prohibition, both in law and in policy, on the payment of ransom in such situations. Last year, this policy probably contributed to the deaths of John Ridsdel and Robert Hall following their kidnapping in the southern Philippines in 2016.

There is much ambiguity on the value of this approach in such kidnappings. These are discussed in a paper that the Rideau Institute will release next week. It's a paper that I wrote in the last few weeks. It's called “Political Violence and Kidnapped Canadians”. That paper gives considerable detail on the issues involved here. I would hope that the committee will find the time to look at it as you discuss this subject.

Associated with the issue of Canadian policy on the payment of ransom in kidnapping cases is the role of the RCMP. It is evident that in some of the recent kidnapping cases the RCMP has played a large role. There has been no public examination of this role, and its value to the successful conclusion of such cases is ambiguous at best. It would be appropriate for the committee to examine this role and establish its value and/or its dangers.

Finally, I would emphasize a need for the establishment of an independent mechanism that would adjudicate disputes on consular services between Canadians and the government. There are a number of mechanisms active in mediating disputes between Canadians and the government, and they have been successful in dealing with a variety of disputes. There is no mechanism available to mediate or adjudicate disputes concerning consular services. At this time, consular disputes are without mediation or adjudication, except for action within the judicial system.

You are all familiar with the decisions of the courts in the last few years in terms of their granting of monies to people who have taken the government to court. We're talking of tens of millions of dollars, and there is still a case before one court right now where the award in effect will probably outdistance some of the previous ones we've heard about. Putting in place a mechanism that will help deal with these sorts of problems before they end up in the courts would be useful for everyone.

Two years ago, I wrote a paper called, “Canadians Abroad: A Policy and Legislative Agenda”. Again, it was released by the Rideau Institute. That paper details a number of consular issues that require attention. I draw it to your attention. I would hope that it would help inform you in your discussions on this subject.

Equally, as the chairman mentioned in his introduction, I've written extensively in the media on these matters. Committee members may find the articles useful in your discussions. These articles were published in my book *Afterwords: From a Foreign Service Odyssey*. I'll leave a copy of it with your clerk. You can distribute it and see for yourself.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

● (1650)

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

I want to go straight to questions. I'll start with Mr. Genuis, please.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Pardy, for your presence here and your testimony.

First of all, could I ask you to dig a little deeper on this issue of the paying of ransoms? There's a certain utilitarian logic, I guess, to the “don't pay ransoms” position, but I think some Canadians would be uncomfortable with the potential coldness of that logic. Could you maybe just share with us what the alternative looks like in more robust terms? If we were to have an openness to that, what are the pros and cons and what are the implications?

Mr. Gar Pardy: The full answer is in that paper next week. I'll make sure the committee gets a copy. Essentially, it's an issue in terms of the non-payment of ransoms. When I was working in the foreign service, I think I dealt with well over a hundred such cases, and we never lost a Canadian during that whole period. The question here is that it's not so much that the cases are resolved on whether a ransom is paid or not paid, but the process by which in effect you enter into a set of negotiations through intermediaries in order to obtain the release of the people.

Now, there is no doubt whatsoever that ransoms get paid and that ransoms are paid by governments. People who have studied this issue have come to the conclusion that ransom is not the most important factor in whether somebody lives or dies in these situations. The University of Maryland maintains one of the great databases in terms of this kind of thing around the world. People have looked at it, and there are many books on this subject. I think the general conclusion out there is that ransom is not the issue at all in these sorts of things; it is the process by which a government organizes itself and goes about it with the objective of saving the life of one of its citizens.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I want to make sure that I understand you correctly.

If I understood it, what you were saying is that the possibility of a ransom really is part of a conversation, a negotiation, that may in many cases not actually involve the payment of a ransom, but the opening associated with that conversation increases the likelihood that we can save somebody's life, whereas a complete out-of-the-gate refusal to even talk about it, on the other hand, takes away options, reduces the likelihood of a successful negotiation, and increases the risk to the person who is a captive.

Did I understand that?

Mr. Gar Pardy: That's it exactly. You've summed it up quite well.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: You spoke about these cases in, I believe, the Philippines, on which the Prime Minister took a very clear public line in saying that we will not pay ransoms, and lives were obviously lost in that context. You think that had we gone about it differently, had the Prime Minister not drawn that clear public line, the outcome could have been potentially very different.

Mr. Gar Pardy: Well, any number of people have been released from the same situations. Two of the people who were kidnapped at the same time as Mr. Hall and Mr. Ridsdel were released subsequent to the murder of the two Canadians.

What I'm talking about is the process that one goes through here, and most governments, I think, have followed this particular rule—not only previous Canadian governments, but governments around the world. The key element in the process is that basically you do not talk publicly about what's going on. That's the last thing you can do, and it creates more danger than anything else does. The idea that you're going to say something in Ottawa, say, and that it's not heard instantaneously by the kidnappers is something that in effect we should never assume.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Presumably, the advice you would have given to the Prime Minister, were you still there, would have been not to speak publicly about this situation. Would you presume that the existing public servants would have given the same advice to not speak publicly about this?

● (1655)

Mr. Gar Pardy: I would hope so, yes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay. Thank you very much. I think that's important.

On the issue of the consular services fee, I think Canadians would find it interesting that they pay a fee for a service, yet that fee exceeds the cost of providing that service. The logical conclusion would be either to address the gaps in the service, if there are any, or, if not, to reduce the fee. Could you clarify?

I got the impression from what you said that there is a basic legal issue with a government that's supposed to collect this fee for a particular purpose and is not doing that. Has there been any legal action? Do you know of any groups that have contemplated legal action over the collecting of this fee, which I think you said was outside the legal parameters for it?

Mr. Gar Pardy: The Auditor General did look at this issue in 2008, made some comments in the report, and suggested that Foreign Affairs should be more assiduous in terms of its accounting in this particular area. My own view, without saying anything about accountants generally, is that accountants in government can spend money and give a reason for it that's in accordance with the law, but in effect, when you look at it very closely, it's not.

It's an area where there is a real problem looming. About three years ago, the government decided to increase the period for a passport—a 10-year passport is now available—but they did not increase the consular service fee. A Canadian buying a 10-year passport pays half the consular fee paid by somebody who buys a five-year passport. There's a need here to increase the fee so that it matches up to the years of service that you get out of the passport.

In terms of the numbers that I have seen, I must say that I'm an outsider in all of this and all I can do is look at the documents that appear in public, but I think in excess of $1.4 billion has been collected in this area. My own conclusion—and other people have said the same thing—is that only about $800 million of that can be accounted for by consular services.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: It's almost double what it should be—

Mr. Gar Pardy: What it should be, yes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: —in terms of the taxes, the fees we're collecting from Canadians, that aren't actually at all going to what they're supposed to be going towards.

Mr. Gar Pardy: Yes, because the fee is mandatory. You have to pay the consular service fee at the same time that you make your application for a passport.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Saini is next, please.

Mr. Raj Saini: Mr. Pardy, first of all, thank you very much for being here.

I want to follow up on the issue of crown prerogative, which you also highlight in the paper that you referred to.

In your conclusion in that report, you disavow the idea of crown prerogative. Usually, as you know, the government uses crown prerogative to give itself some flexibility in certain types of cases. If you were going to replace the concept of the crown prerogative, let's say maybe in legislation, how would you draft it? As you know, no two cases are the same, so how would you give the government flexibility to be able to deal with certain cases? What kind of framework would you see?

Mr. Gar Pardy: I would see the need for it not so much in how individual cases are dealt with, but to guarantee that all Canadians receive consular services. That's the important element, because I think what has occurred in recent years is that decisions were made as to whether some Canadians would get the level of consular services that were required by their condition. It's up at that level that we're talking about here.

I can see why the government wants to retain crown prerogative in the area of foreign policy and foreign affairs generally, but consular affairs is a slightly different animal in this area. I think you can remove the element of crown prerogative from consular services but still see it retained in foreign policy generally. I think that's the trouble here: that consular services are confused with foreign policy. They're not necessarily foreign policy. There's a separate international treaty, as you know. The Vienna Convention on Consular Relations is separate from the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, so even in the international community there is a distinction made between the two types of foreign activities.

● (1700)

Mr. Raj Saini: The other thing you mention is the necessity to update article 5 of the Vienna convention. You highlight that since 1954, Canada, the United States, New Zealand, and England meet annually. You talk about a global consular forum that has met twice. What I read from the paper was that you feel that it should now become internationalized, maybe through the UN, to update that kind of need because of changes in technology and in other ways that states may interact with each other. Can you give some highlights of where you think the changes may...?

Mr. Gar Pardy: I think the key one is the obligation of another state to provide support to the country's nationals in difficulty in that country. The most serious part of all of this, of course, is the people who are arrested and in jail, and some sort of a judicial process is under way for them. It is in that area where I think there is the biggest need for change.

Right now one of the few elements in the Vienna convention that I think is good is limited. The person detained has to be told by the arresting state that they can contact their consular authorities, but too much flexibility is left to the arresting state as to whether or not, in effect, a Canadian who is arrested—even in Texas or Arizona, for that matter—is informed of his or her right. Back a few years ago, we went to the Supreme Court of the United States with an amicus brief because a Canadian was executed in Texas, and that Canadian was not advised of the fact that he could contact the Canadian authorities.

It's in that area that I see most of the changes that I think would be important to most Canadians.

Mr. Raj Saini: How much time do I have?

The Chair: You have time for another question.

Mr. Raj Saini: Just to talk about the situation in Texas, if we give it a broad overview, when you talk about clemency or the death penalty, would it be ideal to suggest that if a citizen of any country is in another country where there is the death penalty, maybe that citizen should be recused if he or she is not a citizen of that state?

Mr. Gar Pardy: Could you just...? I missed a couple of words.

Mr. Raj Saini: You talked about clemency for the death penalty, no matter where any Canadian is. Just to take that to an international level, would you suggest that maybe one of the things that should be looked at internationally is that if a citizen is caught in another state where there is the death penalty, then maybe that citizen or that person should be recused from the death penalty of that state?

Mr. Gar Pardy: I think that would be asking the international system for a large give.

Going back 10 or 15 years, there was an international movement to basically do away with the death penalty in any number of countries, but in the last 10 to 15 years, more countries have added the death penalty as an element in their judicial system.

This was the issue that came up during the previous government. It set out a series of conditions under which it would seek clemency for Canadians in certain situations, and it came up with regard to a case down in Montana. The new government, I think, has changed that now and has reverted to the previous policy, which is that the Canadian government will support any Canadian who is sentenced to death in a foreign jurisdiction.

Most countries, basically, are receptive to those kinds of bilateral approaches. I'm a little skeptical about whether you could get something at the larger level in this area. Given the role of Canada, as far as the death penalty is concerned, I think we made it almost an article of faith that we would try to protect Canadians from the death penalty regardless of what country the death penalty was imposed in.

Mr. Raj Saini: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Saini.

Madam Laverdière, *s'il vous plait.*

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I would first like to apologise for missing the presentation, but following the Minister's presentation, a number of reporters wanted to talk to us outside. So, all my apologies.

I would like to know a bit more about the cooperation among departments, be it Global Affairs Canada, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, or the RCMP, Canadian Security Intelligence Service, the Department of Justice, the Canada Border Services Agency, and so on. I would like to know how cooperation usually takes place and more specifically in difficult situations, such as hostage takings. How has that changed? I feel that, especially in hostage takings, the role played by Global Affairs Canada is different from the one played by the RCMP when it comes to negotiating with actors on the ground.

Can you tell us more about that and about whether improvements are desirable?

● (1705)

[*English*]

Mr. Gar Pardy: I guess the starting point here should always be that the consular service represents the Canadian in difficulty overseas. That's our function. That's our responsibility in government, and no one else in government has that responsibility.

The RCMP or CSIS or the Canada Border Services Agency all have their own mandates, and those mandates drive them in certain directions, which could be very inimicable to the kinds of things we try to achieve. Sometimes within government that coordination doesn't take place, and there is a need for that coordination to take place.

Some of the cases we've recently gone through were resolved through civil cases in which the courts agreed that the RCMP or CSIS were contributors to the detention and the imprisonment of Canadians abroad without any sort of due process. It's in those kinds of cases that I think the great difficulty occurs. I think both the O'Connor inquiry and the Iacobucci inquiry had a lot to say in this area. I'm not sure whether or not their reports have necessarily found acceptance throughout the government, so I think the possibility of those kinds of cases still arriving is still there.

In the area of kidnapping, which I think you alluded to as well, it is your ability to reach into another country, and more often than not you're limited in dealing with the other government. What you're looking for is an intermediary who's going to add some validity as far as the kidnappers are concerned.

Before I retired, the vast majority of kidnappings that I dealt with were in Colombia. In Colombia there is even a law that prevented us from doing any sort of direct negotiations. However, the Catholic Church in Colombia was exceptional and willing to accept the mandate. Their mandate in such cases was the same as ours, and that was to try to save the life of the individual involved. The Catholic Church was exceptional.

Also, in some of these countries the International Committee of the Red Cross has a bit of a mandate in this area, and it's been willing in some cases to act. It's been quite active, I think, as far as Syria and Iraq are concerned. The point is that you've got to go out and find an intermediary.

In the case of Mr. Fowler and Mr. Guay, who were kidnapped in West Africa, I suppose it's fair to say the local government took a very active interest in this area, and there have even been suggestions that it was the local government that actually paid the ransom ultimately for their release.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Thank you very much.

We talked about another problem, which I witnessed during the hurricane season last fall. Many people complained about services, and we are still hearing about complaints in kidnapping cases or other situations. A good number of complaints is received because communications with families that are here, in Canada, are both insufficient and inadequate. Is there a way to change that?

[*English*]

Mr. Gar Pardy: You touched on what I consider to be one of the great weaknesses in our consular services. I don't think it's by design or anything like that. It's, first of all, the size of the country. Sometimes a telephone call just will not do it the way sitting down and talking face to face will with somebody who's going through a traumatic event involving members of their family.

As with all things in government, of course, it's a question of money, and this is why I tend to emphasize how the money is spent, money that is already paid by Canadians to get this service. This is very important. There is no career consular service as such. In effect, we all come out of essentially other parts of the department.

You're smiling at all of this. I'm sure that in your past you've done the same kind of work.

The ability to have people who are willing to take on this kind of work is not something that comes readily to political officers, nor do they have the training or background or even, in some cases, the inclination to do so. I'm sure you've run across these, as far as the department is concerned, in many of these cases.

I don't have an easy answer. Every government I've ever spoken to around the world says the same thing. There used to be something called the “consular service”, but over time they all disappeared. The service itself is rolled into all of the other services. In Canada we've had any number of structural changes with regard to who is responsible for consular services. It's been stable, I think it's fair to say, for well over 10 years now.

I follow the press reporting in this area. I talk to reporters assiduously. One thing I've noticed is that I have heard as many compliments about the work of consular affairs in this area as I've heard complaints. I can't say, during the time I was working there, that this balance ever crossed my desk.

Obviously, people are working on this, but it is always a struggle to get the right people doing the work. We always used to say, “Oh, God, it's Monday morning”, because on Monday morning, when you're doing this work, right off the top at least 10 people have died overseas. One of your first jobs is to contact the families. For anybody who does that kind of work, it is a difficult job. That's why a lot of people don't stay there for very long. They find the work very difficult.

● (1710)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Pardy and Madame Laverdière.

We'll go to Madam Vandenbeld, please.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Pardy, for sharing your vast expertise and experience with us. I'd like to pick up on a question that Mr. Saini posed about the crown prerogative.

You mentioned that right now the crown prerogative gives the right for discrimination, in that the government can essentially pick and choose which citizens to help and which ones not to help. Can you give examples of what that would look like, the kinds of things that have happened?

Mr. Gar Pardy: Three or four of the cases I mentioned there.... A still current case involves a man by the name of Abdelrazik, who went out to Sudan to visit family there. From what I've seen reported and detailed as far as the court case is concerned, in effect he was detained by the Sudanese authorities at the request of the Government of Canada. That's what the case before the court hinges upon.

It got to the point where the Sudanese said they didn't know why they'd arrested this guy, and we wouldn't do anything about getting the man repatriated back to Canada. The result was that he ended up staying well over a year in the Canadian embassy in Khartoum. The embassy looked after him, yet the policy that came out of Ottawa was that they were not going to give him a passport to get him back to Canada. They used what I think most people would regard as a specious argument, because he was on one of the lists, but this was a UN list, and the UN has made it very clear that if somebody on the list wants to get back to their own country, then they're allowed to travel. There was a great deal of difficulty in getting a ticket for this man and getting him on an aircraft so he could come back to Canada. I think it took almost five years for this to happen.

This is at the centre of a court case right now. I think it's before one of the Ontario courts. I don't think it's the Federal Court necessarily, but we'll see.

● (1715)

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: This is not a case outstanding right now; this was from previous years.

Mr. Gar Pardy: This started back in 2010, I think. This case has been around for a long time.

The case before the courts is at least three, if not four years.... I'm on the list of being an expert witness for this particular case, if it ends up in the court.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Have there been any new ones in the past couple of years?

Mr. Gar Pardy: That's the only one I know is current right now, but, as you know, I'm not on the inside of any of these sorts of things. There could be other cases there. I follow the press pretty assiduously in these areas, but....

Well, there is one going on that involves a man by the name of Jack Letts, who is in jail in northern Syria. He is being held by one of the Kurdish groups, and there are discussions going on to get him repatriated to Canada. He also has British citizenship in addition to Canadian citizenship. The CBC is going to do an article tonight on this case, but there are elements of this particular case....

The Prime Minister has spoken about the case, and I think the government has been active in getting that person returned to Canada as quickly as possible. There is no government involved on the other side. It's one of the revolutionary groups, and I think they just want to say *hasta la vista*.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Yes, and I think we've heard our Prime Minister say that a Canadian is a Canadian, so if you are a Canadian citizen you deserve to be treated equally when it comes to consular services.

Mr. Gar Pardy: That's under law. There is no ambiguity about this whatsoever, and that's what's ironic about some of these things. That's why they end up being in the courts. The courts basically agree to the large settlements that have been made in these cases because it is contrary to the charter.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: What about permanent residents? I know there is no obligation, but are there services we can provide in terms of permanent residents?

Mr. Gar Pardy: Yes, but it depends on the issue.

Permanent residents would not have Canadian citizenship and the consular services are essentially predicated on citizenship, but there have been any number of situations around the world involving permanent residents in which we have reached in. If the local government is willing to co-operate with us, then we try to provide whatever assistance they would find acceptable.

Back in 1994 in Rwanda, we had one situation in which we had nuns who were running an orphanage in Kigali, and we got them all the way out, with the kids, to Nairobi. We then got them on a plane, and they all ended up in Quebec City. None of them were Canadian citizens, but we do this sort of thing for humanitarian reasons in these situations.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Picking up on the humanitarian reasons, in our constituencies we all have the heartbreaking cases that involve family members. In my case, I know Bashir Makhtal's family is here, and there are others. We want to be able to do everything we can.

There was, in one of your papers, I believe, talk of having an ombudsperson for consular services.

Mr. Gar Pardy: Yes.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: You didn't mention that in your opening remarks.

Mr. Gar Pardy: Yes, I did, at the very end.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: What would that look like? Would that help?

Mr. Gar Pardy: Yes, there are any number of examples throughout the government. This kind of person acts as an intermediary between a Canadian who feels they have been badly treated by actions of the government and on the part of government. I think you need somebody in that sort of role.

As far as I know, no one has ever created this anywhere around the world, so it's a unique thing in this area. I think it's worth looking at in detail here, because I've seen....

The other day somebody told me that the justice department has detailed upwards of several hundred million dollars of cases for which there is the possibility of the government being sued for wrongful actions in the eyes of the person affected. It's an area where I think an ombudsman, an intermediary, could in effect intervene easily early on and mediate and adjudicate in some of these cases and could start removing some of these, because the judicial system is not a good place to deal with these cases.

Can I add one other thing about the difficult ones you listed?

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Thank you.

Mr. Gar Pardy: The most difficult ones to deal with, of course—and we've had a case in the last few days—are parental child abductions. Those are the most difficult ones. There is a bit of international law in this area, but the international law is based on the European-North American model of the family. Many parts of the world have other laws in this area, and it makes it very difficult in those cases.

● (1720)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Pardy.

Now we're going to Mr. Sidhu.

Mr. Jati Sidhu: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Pardy, for your service to our country.

Consular Services is doing a good job. I want your expertise on how to make it a great job, or make it easier for Canadians to have access to Consular Services in cases of disaster such as we saw last year. With climate change, it's getting harder and harder.

I had a personal case, actually. A mother phoned me in the middle of the night. Her daughter was going to medical school. She wouldn't take no for an answer. She said, “I'm not getting anywhere with getting in touch with consular affairs. Americans are picking up people left, right, and centre.” Sure enough, she was so panicked that she showed up at my doorstep. It was two o'clock in the morning.

There is a lot of schooling going on in the Caribbean. Can we make this a mandatory registration? Can the airlines get somebody to fill out a form before they go, saying how long they are going for? What is your suggestion on that?

Mr. Gar Pardy: With regard to the mechanics of registering, we've been doing it for years and it's probably about as easy as it can be, but most Canadians, when they head off for the southern sun and things like that, don't think a disaster is just around the corner, and more often than not they're not prepared to register.

I think the other element in all of this, though, is that governments are not being proactive enough in talking to the media when these times of crisis occur. Quite often they will use the Privacy Act and say that we can't say things about an individual and things like that. If you go to the site of the Privacy Commissioner, he has a section on that that says things in this area are not what the Privacy Act is meant to protect.

It's not only Foreign Affairs; all parts of government will use the Privacy Act to not talk to Canadians about things they are doing. You're not out to expose an individual Canadian, but there is no reason you can't provide more of an explanation to Canadians about what's going on.

On your reference to the events in the Caribbean last fall, what surprised me as an outsider looking at all of this was how many got back home in a relatively short period of time. I don't know how many of those we've done over the years. The worst one, of course, was out of Lebanon in...I forget what year it was. It was 2006 or something. On the registration side of it, I think they looked at that and said that there were 3,000 Canadians in Lebanon that we had to help. By the time it was all over, there were 40,000 Canadians in Lebanon who had to be evacuated, and every other country that had populations out of the Middle East ran into exactly the same problem.

I think somebody told me that everybody arrived on the spot marked for charter boats, because it was very difficult to get in there by air. You had to use a boat to get from Lebanon up to Cyprus or somewhere else in the Middle East, and even the boats were just not available to do it, and the Israelis were maintaining a blockade on the Lebanese coast. There are problems you run into in these areas in terms of time.

That was a special case. There was an act of war under way. More often than not, and in the Caribbean in particular, as I understand it.... I have a friend who went down to the British Virgin Islands right afterward, who is quite familiar with the place, and he said he did not even recognize it. Everything had been wiped out on the island, and when I say “wiped out”, I'm not talking about just the vegetation; I'm talking about every service that you would hope would be available for you.

There is no easy answer, other than that I think you have to talk to Canadians as much as you possibly can while the crisis is going on, not after the fact, when you measure and say, “Yes, we did pretty well on that one.” Canadians want the information on that just as quickly as CNN or CBC gives it to them, because they are saying things that may be different from what the government is saying indirectly.

● (1725)

Mr. Jati Sidhu: Thank you.

The Chair: We have a short question from Mr. Sikand, then we'll go to Mr. Kmiec.

Mr. Gagan Sikand (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

How much time do I have?

The Chair: You don't have much, so go ahead and ask your question.

Mr. Gagan Sikand: Like Mr. Sidhu, I had an incident. A father called, and his daughter had been sexually assaulted. She had just landed in Italy. Fortunately, the situation ended quite well. We were able to get in touch with Global Affairs Canada, and he was quite pleased with the result.

Now I can certainly appreciate.... I would want every single Canadian to have that level of care in whatever country they go to. However, I can also appreciate that there are a lot of countries where we may not be able to provide that level of care to all Canadians when they travel, but I certainly would want all Canadian to get the same care if they were within that country.

I'm having difficulty understanding the gap. I understand that there is discretion under the crown prerogative, but why does this have to be enshrined in law?

Mr. Gar Pardy: It is not enshrined. That's the problem. The crown prerogative is not enshrined in law. It is a convention of our constitution.

What I found surprising.... I think it's worthwhile, if you want more detail here, to go back and read the 2010 Supreme Court decision. This involved Omar Khadr, by the way. The Khadr family, I think, has provided more progress in terms of the use of our laws than almost any other family in the history of this country. In that particular decision, the Supreme Court said that his rights had been abused by CSIS's going down to interview him. At the same time, the Supreme Court said that it could not instruct the government as to what it should do in order to assist Mr. Khadr and get him out.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Sikand. We're going to go a little over time here.

Mr. Gagan Sikand: I'll ask just a quick question, then.

In your opinion, is it a privilege to travel on a Canadian passport?

Mr. Gar Pardy: It's a necessity. It doesn't carry any special protection because it's a Canadian passport. It is an international document. If you leave Canada.... It used to be that you could use a Canadian Tire credit card to go into the States, but that isn't going to work anymore, so it's there as an absolute need. It's imposed by other countries. There's no other way to do it. The passport is the international document that has to be used.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Pardy and Mr. Sikand.

Go ahead, Mr. Kmiec, please.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to split my time because Garnett has one little question, so I'm going to go really quickly in mine.

You mentioned the case of Alison Azer and her four kids, Sharvahn, Rojevahn, Dersim, and Meitan. That case has been ongoing. It still hasn't been resolved. My question is specifically on dual citizenship.

I'm a dual citizen. I've had a lot of these consular cases—not specifically to people in my riding, like Davud Hanci, who's still in Turkey. A Canadian citizen, naturalized in Canada, still holds citizenship in another country and travels overseas for a vacation or for business reasons, whatever it is, but the other country doesn't recognize our citizenship, our claim over that person. How do you fix that? There's no easy fix.

I just going to make a half-proposition here. Would a potential solution be that when we naturalize a citizen, we inform the other country of the case?

Some countries don't recognize dual citizenship. For instance, in the case of my wife, who is from Singapore, three years ago the Singaporean government sent her a letter and told her that she was no longer a citizen, but that she needed to send back to the letter to confirm it. In those dual citizenship situations, what more should or could Canada do to fix them?

Mr. Gar Pardy: You can't demand that they give up another citizenship unless they want to do so. By the way, the other country that is quite rigid in this area is India. If you're somebody who suggests that you might have lived in India and you apply, say, for an Indian passport, the High Commission of India here will demand that you get a certificate from the Canadian government that you're not a Canadian citizen. Other governments are doing things like this.

The problem we do have in this area—and I'm not kidding you—is that in 1930 the League of Nations passed an international treaty that Canada signed on to back then. It basically says that when a citizen with dual nationality is in their country of second citizenship, then the other country has no right to intervene for consular services. That treaty is still out there. We were successful in 1996 in having Canada renounce its signature on that particular treaty, and it took a real fight in the Canadian government. It's the only time in our history that we have renounced a UN treaty. That was an effort to make sure that under Canadian law we would, in effect, then have a right to go and intervene and try to help a Canadian, regardless of how many citizenships that Canadian might have.

There's no easy answer. I agree with you, and it's becoming more so.

I should mention one other fact here—

● (1730)

Mr. Tom Kmiec: I have to interrupt you, sir, because I don't have enough time. I want to make sure my colleague gets a chance to ask....

Mr. Gar Pardy: Okay. That's fine.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to provide a verbal notice of motion for the committee on a different matter that I'll be moving at a subsequent meeting, which is that the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development invite the Canadian ambassador to China to appear before the committee to explain his recent comments that Canada has more in common with China than with the U.S.

A second verbal notice of motion I want to provide is that pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development undertake a study on the situation in and status of Tibet, and in particular on whether or not the Government of Canada should actively promote the “middle way approach”, which calls for a genuinely autonomous Tibet within the framework of the Chinese constitution.

I wanted to give verbal notice of those two motions.

Do I still have time to ask a question, Mr. Chair? No?

Okay. I'm sorry about that. Thanks.

The Chair: Okay, we've heard those notices of motion, and they'll be sent to our committee to review once the timeline is done. That'll be next week.

Mr. Pardy, this has been a very good session. We could sit here all night and have this discussion. There are many questions to ask, and we hope to ask them of many other witnesses.

On behalf of the committee, I want to thank you very much for your participation. If there's any information you think we should see, please feel free to send it to the clerk, and we'll distribute it to colleagues here around the table.

Again, thank you very much.

Mr. Gar Pardy: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for your interest and your attention.

The Chair: Colleagues, this will take our meeting to an end. We'll see you next week.

The meeting is adjourned.