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Chair: Mr. Ali Ehsassi



Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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• (1650)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 95 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders; therefore, members are attending in person in the room as well as remotely by using the Zoom application.

I'd like to make a few comments for the benefit of members and witnesses.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. You may speak in the official language of your choice.

Although this room is equipped with a powerful audio system, feedback events can occur. The most common cause of sound feedback is an earpiece worn too close to a microphone.

As a reminder, all comments should be addressed through the chair.

With regard to a speaking list, the committee clerk is attempting to make sure that we comply with the members' requests.

In accordance with the committee's routine motion concerning connection tests for witnesses, I am informing the committee that all witnesses appearing virtually have completed the required connection tests.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Wednesday, November 8, 2023, the committee will resume its study of Canada's diplomatic capacity.

Now I'd like to welcome our witnesses.

We have with us today, in person, Professor Carvin from the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs. We also have here in person Professor Juneau, who is in public and international affairs at the University of Ottawa.

Joining us virtually was to be Ambassador Bonnafont. Unfortunately, from what I've been informed, he does not have the proper headset, and so the interpreters are unable to provide interpretive services. From what I am told, the interpreters have informed me that Ambassador Bonnafont does not have the appropriate headset, but we will endeavour—and this is up to the members—to try to

schedule an alternative date on which we can benefit from the perspective of Ambassador Bonnafont.

We're also very pleased to have here with us today Ms. Farida Deif, Canada director of Human Rights Watch.

Each witness will be provided with five minutes.

Go ahead, MP Chatel.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.): May I comment on Mr. Bonnafont's testimony?

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, of course.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Great. First, I would like to know whether Mr. Bonnafont would be able to stay a little longer so that I can at least ask a few questions that I wanted to ask this excellent witness. I was very much looking forward to meeting him and asking him some very important questions for this study. If Mr. Bonnafont agrees, I would like to ask my questions so that he can answer them in writing, should he be unable to join us again.

Second, I would like us to ask the Board of Internal Economy to reassess the special situation of our committee, the Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, given that, by definition, we hear from witnesses from abroad. We don't always have the time to have the exact equipment that is required, according to the rules. The questions asked are very specific, after all.

Would it be possible to ask the board to submit a solution to situations like that? We are sometimes unable to put questions to witnesses in such circumstances. So I would ask the Board of Internal Economy to submit solutions to our committee.

• (1655)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, MP Chatel, for your intervention.

I completely agree with you, and I'm sure everyone else does as well. We were all looking very much forward to hearing from the ambassador, but unfortunately the interpreters have advised me that they are unable work; however, to work around that, we have sent messages to the ambassador. If he can confirm the make of his headphone and we receive that confirmation, then we will definitely have the benefit of hearing from him today.

As for the other question you've raised, perhaps we should talk about that during committee business, which is the last half hour of today's meeting.

Are you okay with that? Yes. That's excellent.

We will start off with our witnesses.

Please accept our apologies.

Professor Carvin, you have five minutes for your opening remarks. That is true for all three of the witnesses we are going to be hearing from today.

If I hold up this phone, that means you're very close to the time limit, and that applies not only to opening remarks but also to when members are asking you questions, because they're given specific time slots. If anyone does see this go up, please try to wrap it up in 10 to 20 seconds.

Professor Carvin, the floor is yours, and you have five minutes for your opening remarks.

Dr. Stephanie Carvin (Associate Professor, Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University, As an Individual): Thank you very much.

I will advise the committee that I have provided, in true professorial fashion, longer comments, but in the interest of five minutes, I will be much more brief.

I suspect it's fairly well known that Lester B. Pearson once described foreign policy as "domestic policy with its hat on", and Pierre Elliot Trudeau described it as "extension abroad of national policies", yet it is seldom that we see our policy-makers treat foreign policy in this way.

Foreign affairs are often treated as an afterthought—a luxury rather than an instrument of state power that can further both our domestic and international interests abroad. Diplomacy is seen as a reward for friendship rather than as a tool that will ensure our interests and also reach across divides when difficult conversations need to take place.

It's understandable why this is the state of affairs. We live in a very safe neighbourhood compared to a lot of our friends and allies. We've had the blessing of not having to worry about our security.

I don't think I need to emphasize the point that these circumstances are rapidly changing. Daily headlines about war, foreign interference, espionage, cyber-attacks and the suffering of refugees and internally displaced persons in the context of an international order under stress are reminder enough.

The point is that we were once insulated from many of the world's most difficult challenges, but this is no longer the case. We no longer have the freedom to ignore the world outside our window. To address these problems, we need a foreign affairs department that can navigate these uncertain waters.

To this end, I wish to raise several points for the committee's consideration.

First, and I think most importantly, human resources issues at Global Affairs Canada, by all accounts, are in somewhat dire

straits. The recruitment process is archaic, chaotic and not suited to the 21st century. To give just one example, it seems that a significant percentage of the workforce is made up of young master's students or young graduates on 90-day contracts. These temporary employees are constantly faced with the prospect of imminent unemployment and are constantly looking for the next opportunity.

To be frank, it is very odd when I attend a meeting at Global Affairs and I am confronted with students who are currently in my own class. This has happened multiple times.

This is not how you build a workforce, and therefore I'm strongly endorsing recommendations 9 through 13 on hiring and training of Global Affairs Canada's staff in the December 2023 Senate report, "More Than a Vocation", which I suspect you're already familiar with.

Second, Canada's lack of a foreign policy is, frankly, bizarre, especially for a G7 country. When you ask about it, the result is often disappointing as well. We're told that creating a foreign policy is too hard, too challenging, that circumstances change too fast and that it's not a priority to signal to our allies what our intentions are because they can just pick up a phone and talk to us.

We have had a much-delayed Indo-Pacific policy, a defence policy that is yet to re-emerge and the downgrading of a promised Africa strategy to a framework last year.

It's clear that we are struggling to write foreign policy documents. I wonder if this is partially because we're simply out of practice in doing so. Other countries release documents on a fairly regular basis. I think there are a lot of advantages to having a foreign policy. It forces choices and it forces priorities. Yes, prioritization is difficult and it requires difficult discussions, or positions can change in light of new events, but the answer is updating that policy, not eschewing the exercise altogether.

I think it's also an important communications tool. This is always downgraded, especially by people who worked at the Department of Foreign Affairs. They don't see this as a communication tool.

I just travelled to Japan a week and a half ago. In preparation, I looked at their Diplomatic Bluebook. It's 400 pages. Do we need a 400-page book on foreign affairs? Absolutely not, but I think a clear strategic document that conveys our interests to not only our allies but also to Canadians is definitely within our interest. The other points I'd like raise today will kind of reflect and reinforce this point.

The third issue is Global Affairs' ability to give timely and useful advice to policy-makers at the centre of government. My colleague Thomas Juneau is going to speak about intelligence in Global Affairs, and I think this plays a part.

It's hard to coordinate these things, but anecdotally you hear tales of challenges in providing this advice. It's not only a Global Affairs problem, but better training needs to be given to Global Affairs staff to provide that timely advice that can really help influence a situation when it comes to timely decision-making in an evolving situation.

A fourth issue is mission creep. The Senate report I mentioned earlier, "More Than a Vocation", suggests that GAC should be considered "a central agency with responsibility for coordinating Canada's approach to international policy files across the federal government." It's recommendation 28.

• (1700)

I really disagree with this recommendation. I think this is a bad idea, and I'm concerned that in lieu of direction that would be provided by a foreign policy, GAC has a mission creep problem. It's true that every issue in government does have an international dimension and that GAC is the lead on foreign affairs, but it's impossible for GAC to have a lead in all of these areas.

I'm going to run out of time for my other points, so maybe you can ask me later, but you'll see them in my submission. I think we have to be aware that GAC needs to stick to its mandate.

One final thing would be Canada's ability to sustain its engagement. These are questions being asked by our allies. They see our Indo-Pacific policy and they're happy, but do we have what it takes to stay in that region and keep committing to those relationships that we're presently building?

Finally I will say that we need to improve our presence abroad. This matters to our allies. They care about us, and it's much easier to think about Canada if you can meet down the street and not three countries over. It's much easier that way.

Finally, I think that GAC has a communications problem. We need better transparency and better communications with Canadians, particularly if we're going to reinvest in this capacity. We have to explain to Canadians why it's in their interest to do so.

Thank you very much for this opportunity. I look forward to your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Professor Carvin.

We next go to Professor Juneau.

You have five minutes for your opening remarks.

Dr. Thomas Juneau (Associate Professor, Public and International Affairs, University of Ottawa, As an Individual): Thank you very much. Thank you for the offer to speak today.

I will focus on three things today. One is that the foreign ministry we need for tomorrow is one that should work seamlessly with intelligence. Two is that we do not have that at this point, and three is what we can do to get to that point.

First, very quickly, the foreign ministry for tomorrow is one that should be able to work seamlessly with the intelligence community. This is necessary to deal with a lot of the international threats that we face today. Think about foreign electoral interference, transnational repression, economic espionage, transnational terrorism, the

security implications of climate change and so on. Concretely, this means that Global Affairs Canada has to work closely with CSIS, CSE, DND, Canadian Forces intelligence command and others in the security and intelligence community and beyond Ottawa to deal with these and other threats.

The second point I'd make is that the foreign ministry we need for tomorrow, one that can work seamlessly with the intelligence community, is not what we have right now. To be more specific, I would emphasize that the situation today is much better than it was 10 or 15 years ago. Intelligence works with the policy community much better. This is something that Professor Carvin and I have argued in some of our research, but we still have a long way to go.

Too often, our diplomatic and intelligence worlds speak different languages and fail to work with each other in a coherent way. That means sharing information in a timely way. It means coordinating policies and operations. Some of the blame has to go to the intelligence community for this. It remains too insular and too disconnected from the needs of policy. Some of the blame also has to go to the diplomatic side, where culturally the bureaucracy remains too neglectful of all things intelligence, again despite recent progress.

One way to illustrate this is that our diplomatic service has low intelligence literacy. This means that even though some individual diplomats have a solid experience of how intelligence can help them in their work, collectively the overall understanding of intelligence and an understanding of how to integrate it into their work remains below the level of the capabilities of diplomatic services of some of our key allies.

I would note, by the way, that the reverse is true and also problematic. Our intelligence community has low policy literacy, but that's not our focus here today.

This has consequences. We saw the tip of the iceberg of these problems emerge in debates about foreign interference in recent months and information not flowing efficiently. Different parts of the government fail to understand each other, and so on. What this means concretely is that the ceiling for success in our ability to counter foreign interference or other threats that we face will remain lower than it could be as long as we don't improve the relationship between the diplomatic and intelligence arms of national power.

Three, what can we do to better integrate our diplomatic and intelligence functions?

One—and this is a bit in line with what Professor Carvin says—we need a comprehensive review of our national security architecture, which is outdated. This can include reforming our intelligence priorities process, which is sclerotic; improving information-sharing mechanisms and reviewing and adjusting governance structures, including those that should allow for better coordination and information sharing with other levels of government, with the private sector and with civil society; tackling a major human resource crisis, as Professor Carvin discussed; dealing with the epidemic of the over-classification that I've discussed in other committees recently, which remains a major obstacle to making better use of intelligence, including in Global Affairs; and reviewing training programs.

Point two is more transparency and engagement, as Professor Carvin mentioned, with the public, with civil society and with the private sector. This is essential to bring in new ideas to reinforce a stronger challenge function, which is lacking in the department, and reinforcing accountability mechanisms by better shining a light on weaknesses.

The third point concerns secondments and exchanges. We need our diplomats to spend more time working outside Global Affairs in the intelligence community—and elsewhere, for that matter. This is the best way to build a mutual understanding and to deepen institutional linkages.

Four, in an ideal world, we should have a foreign human intelligence agency, which we don't have. Realistically, that is unlikely to happen at least for the foreseeable future. Until we have one, we should use existing structures and existing authorities and improve them to collect and then use more and better foreign intelligence through CSIS, CSE, CFINTCOM and so on. This is something that both of us have written together about in recent times.

• (1705)

In a world of growing uncertainty in terms of our relations with the U.S., we should push to further Canadianize our collection and our analysis of foreign intelligence and work through a lens of more properly Canadian interests.

Five, building on this, we should continue our ongoing efforts to develop our intelligence diplomacy capacity—which GAC and CSIS should do in tandem, although it's not always easy—diversify our foreign intelligence relations, and better leverage these partnerships.

Last, and I'll finish on this, is that to do this, we need sustained leadership at the political level and at the bureaucratic level—which currently is lacking—to really invest the time necessary to push these administrative reforms.

Thank you.

• (1710)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Professor Juneau.

We next go to Ms. Farida Deif from Human Rights Watch.

Welcome back, Ms. Deif. You have five minutes.

Ms. Farida Deif (Canada Director, Human Rights Watch): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and honourable members, for inviting me to

discuss Canada's diplomatic capacity in these very turbulent and unpredictable times. This study could not be timelier.

It will not come as a surprise that I will focus on human rights, which I believe should constitute the moral backbone of Canadian diplomacy. As the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights has said, human rights are the antidote to the prevailing politics of distraction, deception, indifference and repression.

It's clear that the deeply troubling state of affairs we're witnessing globally is fuelled by impunity for human rights violations by the uneven application of international law and the perception that some governments can commit grave crimes and get away with it.

With that said, I will focus today on Canada's efforts to advance justice and accountability for serious international crimes and the increasingly glaring double standards that erode Canada's credibility and have profound repercussions for Canadians and people around the world.

As you know, Canada was instrumental in the creation of the current international framework for the prevention of mass atrocities. It has also been a leading voice for international accountability, playing a central role in establishing the ICC and more recently supporting efforts to address grave crimes in Syria, Myanmar and Ukraine.

The Canadian government's position vis-à-vis the current crisis in Gaza departs significantly from Canada's storied legacy of action. Since the beginning of this conflict, this government has avoided condemning any specific war crimes in Gaza. Instead it repeats broad and general guidance for all parties to abide by international law, while Russia's indiscriminate air strikes on hospitals and schools in Ukraine were rightly condemned. Israel has repeatedly carried out similar attacks without much in the way of condemnation from Ottawa.

The international community rightly condemned President Bashar al-Assad's denial of food and water to civilians in Aleppo, but Canada failed to condemn Israel's use of starvation as a method of warfare in Gaza.

Similarly, Canada has been a global leader in banning explosive weapons like land mines and cluster munitions and in endorsing a new political declaration on explosive weapons, but the government directly undermined these efforts by remaining silent on Israel's recent use of white phosphorus in populated areas in Gaza and in Lebanon.

The government's problematic response to the ICJ's recent ruling on Israel further undermines its stated commitment to a global rules-based order, highlighting its double standards when it comes to Israel. This may also signal that Israel does not need to comply with the order and sends a dangerous message to other states that are before international bodies.

When Canadian diplomacy deviates from international law, it has harmful consequences for Canada far beyond Gaza. Statements by Canadian officials on atrocities anywhere in the world will ring hollow, making it harder to hold perpetrators accountable and deter future international crimes. Pressure by Canada on warring parties to abide by the laws of war and other conflicts will no doubt also carry less weight.

These dangerous double standards unfortunately extend to consular affairs. I have appeared before this committee to highlight the utterly dire situation facing Canadian men, women and children who have been arbitrarily detained in northeast Syria for suspected ISIS ties. We have, at Human Rights Watch, along with a range of UN experts, including the UN Secretary-General, repeatedly called on Canada to repatriate citizens for rehabilitation, reintegration and prosecution as warranted. While some of these Canadian women and children have been repatriated following a court case, many remain unlawfully detained, in addition to all Canadian men. To date, none of the Canadians who have been detained for close to seven years have received any consular assistance. In this way, Canada is flouting not only its international legal obligations but its own guidelines to intervene when citizens abroad face serious abuses, including risks to life, torture and inhumane and degrading treatment.

In January 2021, Global Affairs adopted a consular policy framework specific to this group of citizens that makes it near impossible for them to return home. Among the eligibility criteria for repatriation is a change in medical condition, but the government knows full well that there's little to no chance of these detainees accessing medical care without Canada's assistance.

I'd like to remind you, finally, that in June 2021, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development made concrete recommendations on the provision of consular assistance to this very group of Canadian detainees. This has unfortunately fallen on deaf ears. Global Affairs has provided no consular assistance to the detainees and has done little to nothing to support their relatives here in Canada, some of whom are just pleading for proof of life for their loved ones.

Thank you very much.

• (1715)

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

We will now turn to the members for questions.

As I understand it, MP Chong is up first. You have six minutes.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for appearing.

I noted that in the 2023 article that you both published in an international journal, you said that:

Countries are increasingly invited to international coalitions because they are willing and able to bring something to the table, not because of who they are or what they represent. In an era of resurgent great power competition, this material factor is likely to dominate the creation of international coalitions going forward.

You also added that, “the twenty-first century will be more like a potluck than a party: one must bring something to be invited.”

In that context and in the context of your opening remarks, perhaps you could tell us what capabilities Canada presently has to bring to the potluck and what capabilities Canada lacks.

Dr. Stephanie Carvin: Sir, nothing makes an academic happier than when you cite their article. I'm going to thank you from the bottom of my heart for doing this.

I think there are actually quite a few capabilities, and then there are ones we have to make decisions about.

Canada has very good capability in the Arctic, for example. We have good intelligence in the Arctic. This is increasingly being considered—it's not an endorsement of mine—a zone of potential conflict in the future. It's something that our European allies are particularly worried about and that will certainly be a focus of NATO going forward. This is an area where we definitely have a lot of capacity.

Similarly, I've been told that we have very good capacity on Russia. Obviously, this is very much in the news and very much at the presence of our allies as well.

These are niche capabilities.

We also have in our own community our tech sector, which is fantastic. We are absolutely leaders with AI. We have innovation in multiple areas that will be of interest. We've noticed this with a number of attempts to actually steal this information and get access to our intellectual property. I think these are areas we could leverage, but we have to make decisions.

Professor Juneau and I have engaged with our allies. They often say to us that when Canada goes to meetings, it doesn't say anything. It doesn't give its opinion. Sometimes it brings talking points. We have all of these things that we could bring to the potluck, but we're just not making our decisions.

Some of our closest allies have told us that they are waiting for us to tell them what we can bring. It's not that they're asking for things and we're saying no; it's that they're saying, “Okay, what are you going to bring?”, and we seem to be in a huddle formation without being able to provide an answer.

I'm waiting for Global Affairs and the Department of National Defence and all of these things to tell us and our allies what they can bring.

Dr. Thomas Juneau: Thank you.

I agree with this. I would just add a few points.

That article was written in reference to AUKUS specifically, but it's a point that we do think is applicable far beyond that. More and more ad hoc coalitions will be built on the basis of what we can bring to the table as opposed to others thinking we're nice. From a Canadian perspective, that's a problem.

I would also add to what Professor Carvin mentioned and say that the lack of a Canadian ability in many cases—not systematically—to bring something to the table and contribute concretely is causing growing frustration with our allies.

• (1720)

Hon. Michael Chong: When you say a lack of capability to bring something to the table, are you referencing our lack of defence and security capabilities, our intelligence capability...?

Dr. Thomas Juneau: It's all of them, yes.

That's a problem. Canada very rarely operates alone. We operate with allies. Our first and most important foreign policy interest is to be, and be perceived by our allies as, a reliable ally. When that frustration mounts, it's a vital national interest that is being threatened for us.

Hon. Michael Chong: I know that yesterday in the Financial Times, a NATO official said that two-thirds of NATO members are going to meet their 2% commitment this year. Canada is decidedly not in that two-thirds. That was in the context of increasing alarm about a potential outcome in the U.S. election later on this year.

These things are very timely right now. Would you not agree?

Dr. Thomas Juneau: To the list of niche capabilities that Professor Carvin mentioned, I would add CSE, our signals intelligence national cryptological agency, which is a very well-respected agency abroad. It is very good and it is respected by our allies.

Hon. Michael Chong: You didn't use the term “machinery of government”; you used the term “governance” in your opening remarks about rearranging things within the Government of Canada and how its central agencies and departments interact and how its intelligence community works. You mentioned the four parts of the intelligence community and the Canadian government.

What specific machinery of government changes would you recommend?

Dr. Thomas Juneau: That's a very good question.

First of all, I would mention that Professor Carvin and I wrote a book together on intelligence analysis and policy-making that focuses specifically on these angles, and we do have a full chapter that makes some recommendations.

I think the first recommendation has to be a comprehensive review. That's not a concrete recommendation, but we need to have a serious and systematic effort to look at everything we're doing.

In terms of foreign policy and national security policy generally, but including the machinery dimension, a lot of our structures are dated, and they reflect yesterday's—

Hon. Michael Chong: This defence review has been going on now for some time. Why does it always take so long in Canada, and it doesn't take nearly this long in other G7 countries?

The Chair: Answer very briefly, please, because we're out of time.

Dr. Thomas Juneau: I would say that it's political direction and the lack of a perceived pressing need to do it.

The Chair: Thank you.

We next go to MP Chatel. You have six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I know Mr. Bonnafont doesn't have the right headset. However, I will ask him a few questions; perhaps some of the witnesses will be able to answer my questions afterwards.

Mr. Bonnafont, I know that you won't be able to answer the committee verbally today, but I will read you my questions anyway because I would very much like to learn more about your experience. You can then send your answers in writing to the committee.

Mr. Bonnafont, you've been a career diplomat since 1986. You served in New Delhi, Kuwait, New York. You were the spokesperson for the presidency of the republic before becoming ambassador to India and Spain. You are the director for North Africa and the Middle East and an adviser to the Prime Minister.

However, you did something that piqued the interest of this committee. In March 2023, you led a foreign services review, which resulted in a 298-page report.

I would like to ask you the following questions.

First, can you give us an overview of this foreign services review and its objectives, especially when it comes to adapting and updating diplomatic work and capabilities?

Second, in what ways did the report seek to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of France's diplomatic efforts in addressing complex global issues and crises? One of the factors I'm particularly interested in is how the climate crisis we're experiencing is going to affect geopolitics and the refugees commonly referred to as “climate refugees”. So climate change has many impacts in that area.

I see that you are taking notes, but we will send you all these questions in writing.

Third, given your participation in the foreign services review in France, what lessons do you think Canada could learn from this experience as it considers the future of its own diplomatic capabilities and services?

Fourth, as part of that review, can you point to any key lessons learned or best practices identified that could be useful for other countries, including Canada, of course, in shaping the future of diplomacy?

Finally, fifth, given the dynamic nature of international relations, how do you see the role of diplomatic services evolving in response to emerging global challenges and opportunities?

Those are my questions for you, Mr. Bonnafont.

Again, welcome to the committee, although we're unfortunately having technical issues with the headset standards.

I will now turn to Ms. Carvin and Mr. Juneau.

You have seen my interest in climate change and geopolitical change.

I invite you to answer my questions, as well.

• (1725)

[*English*]

Dr. Stephanie Carvin: Thank you.

I'm very sorry.

[*Translation*]

I speak Oshawa French, which isn't proper French.

[*English*]

Given my strong accent, I will reply in English.

With regard to these issues, I do think that we cannot function without improving the core capacities of the organization. It doesn't matter what the issue is.

Professor Juneau and I both study national security. It's where our interests lie. Fundamentally, obviously climate is going to greatly impact national security and it's going to have a huge impact in geopolitical shifts, but we can't address any of this unless we address the core competencies of the organization. This is what I worry about.

In relating to what Mr. Chong said earlier, I do worry that we are attending these international forums and not bringing our best ideas to the table. Where is our voice? We have shown leadership in some areas, but again, I worry that this leadership is not being sustained. I worry that it tends to be what's in the headlines and where we can go from that. I do believe that there's a lot of work behind the headlines, but that's not useful if it's always just constantly behind the headlines. This kind of speaks, then, to the transparency and communications aspect to foreign affairs that I think is also lacking.

I would suggest that we need to provide better direction, better training and capacity. It's hard to disagree with any of your questions. I'm not sure I have any great insight.

Again, I think I'm slightly biased from my recent travel to Japan, but I note that their diplomats, once hired, immediately spend two years abroad as part of their training. I don't think that's going to be something Canadian diplomats do soon, but it gives them incredible exposure. Not only was that really inspiring to me, but I was sad because I found that, out of all the individuals I spoke with in their Ministry of Foreign Affairs, only one had chosen to come to Canada—

The Chair: Professor Carvin, I'm sorry. Could you wrap it up?

Dr. Stephanie Carvin: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'm terribly sorry for the interruption.

Next we go to Monsieur Bergeron.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bergeron, you have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's really unfortunate that we can't hear from Ambassador Bonnafont. Like my colleague, I had a number of questions for him.

Your Excellency, I'm happy to see you. I am very sorry that you cannot participate in this meeting because of technical problems. Thank you for your patience. I would like to ask you a number of questions, and I invite you to answer us in writing.

First, France has had its share of diplomatic ups and downs recently, especially in Africa. The last French military members who had been sent to Niger left that country on the morning of December 22. That day ended more than 10 years of fighting jihadism in the Sahel. We also saw what happened in Mali and Burkina Faso. What happened to make France, which was a power with a positive impact in Africa, end up in this situation? What was it that was lacking, in terms of French diplomacy, that led to such a situation?

Second, in 2023, the foreign service review, an open consultation on the evolution of French diplomacy that you led, produced a 298-page report. In the report's cover letter, you indicate that the report proposes two sets of measures, one to drive the modernization of your tools and methods, and the other to modernize your human resources policy. One recommendation calls for greater cooperation with the elected members of Parliament, particularly with respect to parliamentary diplomacy. How does France promote parliamentary diplomacy to increase its influence?

Third, I believe that most of the states that are friends of Ukraine have already sent a parliamentary delegation there, which Canada has not yet done. In your opinion, what contribution can parliamentary missions in countries at war, such as Ukraine, make?

My last question is about another recommendation on the need to invest in cultural, scientific and economic diplomacy. How is cultural diplomacy also an adjunct to France's influence in the world?

I'm very much looking forward to your comments on that, Your Excellency. Again, I'm very sorry about your situation today. Thank you for being with us and for your patience.

Mr. Chair, I would now like to ask Mr. Juneau a question that I asked Senator Boehm this week.

As you may know, Mr. Juneau, Senator Boehm is the chair of the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, which produced a report on diplomacy. We invited the senator here to talk to us about this report, and one of the recommendations is that:

Global Affairs Canada should promote the equal use of French and English within the department, ensure that *tab initio* official language training is maintained, and expand official language training opportunities to all other employees, including both Canada-based and locally engaged staff.

I have two questions for you about that.

First, we learned about the existence of a free pass that apparently exempts senior officials from the bilingualism requirement. Have you heard of that? Is it something that is likely to undermine the status of French within Global Affairs Canada?

Then, most of the time, in Ottawa, when the Prime Minister, ministers and senior officials speak or participate in conferences or in the work of this committee, they do so almost exclusively in English. What message does that send to the diplomatic community in Ottawa?

• (1730)

Dr. Thomas Juneau: Thank you very much for your questions.

I read the Senate committee's report. In general, it's a very good report. This committee has looked at issues that are not necessarily sensational or don't get a lot of attention, but they are critical. For example, it looked at issues related to "machinery"—I'm using the word that was used here—and administrative capacity. It's a great effort. I hope the committee will continue in that direction.

As I said in my testimony, it's all well and good to implement strategic objectives in foreign policy, defence or national security, but without the machinery in place, their implementation will be impossible. So it was a good contribution to the debate.

You asked me whether officials at the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development had a free pass. I have to say that I don't know. I do not study language issues in the public service, so I am not in a position to answer that question.

I worked at the Department of National Defence for 10 years, and I have been a professor for almost 10 years. In my experience, Global Affairs Canada is one of the most bilingual departments. It's far from perfect, but it's better than many places.

That said, I cannot answer the question you asked me.

• (1735)

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: What you're telling us is absolutely terrifying—

[English]

The Chair: I'm afraid you're considerably over your time, Mr. Bergeron. It's at six minutes and 37 seconds.

We now go to MP McPherson. You have six minutes.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Thank you very much.

Thank you to all of the witnesses.

I am sorry as well that we're not able to hear from His Excellency.

I was very interested, Professor Carvin, in some of the things that you were saying around our failure to have policies in place—I've been calling for the feminist foreign policy to come forward for a very long time—and the implications for our self-interest and our relationships and what we're trying to build.

There's one thing I'm curious about. I was listening to someone tell me a story about a three-star general who had talked about the need for development and diplomacy as key frameworks for defence and was saying that they were actually cornerstones. If we did that, then.... I think this committee heard from David Beasley from the World Food Programme about paying for what needs to be done now or paying a thousand times more at a later date, with the cost of conflict and whatnot.

With regard to our diplomatic corps and the machinery and all of those pieces that are part of it, what are the implications for Canada of the failure to invest in development and in human rights, in addition to perhaps the failure in defence?

Dr. Stephanie Carvin: I think it's significant.

I've spoken about our national security and defence because it's more my area of expertise, but I would agree with the general, with the one proviso that I do worry that we don't want to securitize development. We want to make sure that it is at arm's length and this isn't seen as a military tool or a national security tool. I think that's the one thing we do have to be careful of.

Yes, we often talk about the 2% budget, but we don't often talk about the foreign aid budget, which is, I don't even think—

Ms. Heather McPherson: It's 0.7%. At least, that's what we're hoping for, but we've never gotten close.

Dr. Stephanie Carvin: Exactly.

I think this does hurt us. Where do we see this? We see it at the United Nations. We could have a whole discussion about where we are in the United Nations and things like that, but if this is an area where we want to show leadership or we want to bring in states that are questioning our commitment to international organizations or norms or things like that, and when they're not seeing us pay for these things, it ultimately affects our capacity to build conversations, relationships and things like this.

I was particularly disappointed when we downgraded our Africa strategy to a framework. I think that's bad.

It was interesting.... Again, I'm sorry to keep referencing my trip to Japan. It was excellent; I highly recommend it.

One thing that someone said was that this is an area where Canada could potentially even show leadership. Someone suggested there could be a quad in Africa in terms of development, human rights and things like that. Australia, Japan, Canada and Korea could work together to provide an alternative to perhaps China or other authoritarian states that are gaining ground.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Yes, absolutely. We heard news reports that the Senate committee actually heard that Canada is becoming almost irrelevant in Africa, which is of course not where we would like to see Canada positioned.

I'm going to quickly ask a question of Ms. Deif, who's online.

You had also spoken a lot about what the implications are when Canada applies international law and international standards differently in different contexts. I'd like to put that same question to you.

From what we're seeing in Israel and Palestine, with the horrific situation happening right now in Rafah and Gaza, what are the implications when the rest of the world sees Canada acting differently in different circumstances?

Ms. Farida Deif: We simply do not appear to be a principled and impartial actor, so we lose our credibility to engage. We lose our ability to highlight laws of war violations in other conflicts. We lose our leverage with states, and we also, most importantly, let down victims.

We will see this, for example, when the Human Rights Council session happens in a couple of weeks. Canada will be in a very difficult position, as will as other western states, in pushing for the renewal of a very important commission of inquiry on Ukraine, because many states will see a very clear western double standard in terms of the response to Ukraine in the use of every tool in the diplomatic tool box from supporting ICC investigations to targeted sanctions, and then a very flagrantly different response with respect to serious laws of war violations in Gaza.

• (1740)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much.

Professor Juneau, is there anything that you could add to this conversation?

Dr. Thomas Juneau: Very briefly, I would say that irrespective of our individual views on the war in Gaza, whether we want a ceasefire or not and whether we're more pro one side or the other,

one of the consequences of this war will be major damage to western credibility, to our soft power, or however you want to call it.

Even if you are very much pro-Israel and you very much support Israeli operations, that's subjective. Objectively—and I travel to the Middle East a lot—the damage to that credibility is significant. The more the war continues, the more that damage will accumulate, and we will have to live with this in many ways in terms of our credibility and our ability to build coalitions to promote objectives and to deal with radicalization in many ways. That, I think, is objectively true irrespective of where we stand on the war itself.

Ms. Heather McPherson: From my perspective, I think that when we don't support the ICJ, we weaken the work that the ICJ is trying to do in this circumstance and then in other circumstances as well.

Thank you.

The Chair: That was perfect timing. Thank you, MP McPherson.

We now go to MP Hoback. You have four minutes.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): I'll be quick, then.

We'll start with you, Ms. Carvin.

You talked about students and bringing students into Global Affairs. Does Global Affairs give the universities an update on what they want to see as requirements for students when they graduate from university or do their master's program?

Dr. Stephanie Carvin: Yes, they do. It's not a specific list of requirements, I should be clear, but we constantly engage with government.

Obviously, I teach at the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, vastly superior compared to the graduate school of the University of Ottawa, but both of our schools will engage with government regularly to figure out what skills they want in our students.

As an example, I don't have my students write 40-page essays. I have them write a one-page brief on an issue. They think that's great, because it's just one page, and then they see what they have to fit into one page. This is the kind of training that we try to provide at our schools.

Mr. Randy Hoback: I've spoken to Canadian students at other universities around the world. One of the complaints they have is that they feel that it's an Ottawa-centric recruiting system and that they don't get credit for the education they get, for example, in Washington, London or other parts of the world.

Would you agree with those types of sentiments?

Dr. Stephanie Carvin: As someone who did all of her graduate education in the U.K., yes. It's hard.

A while back—I'm going to say in 2005 or 2006—was the start of the program to recruit policy leaders, which did have outreach to international capitals abroad, and for students who were studying in Washington, London, France and places like that, there was that opportunity.

I think we could do better. I would agree that encouraging that kind of outreach even to Calgary or B.C. is important.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Their logic was that they thought that Global Affairs didn't want people who thought outside of the box. They wanted the same type of person cut and pasted and put in there.

Thomas, I think you want to jump in on that one.

Dr. Thomas Juneau: If I can just jump in, I think that touches on the point that Professor Carvin mentioned, which is the fact that so many entry-level positions are short-term contracts of various types. That makes it simply logistically easier to hire from across the street in Ottawa, whether from the University of Ottawa or Carleton University. If we had a more sustained, structured system to hire on an indeterminate basis through an appropriate process, it would become easier to tell somebody in Calgary they can come for a full-time job as opposed to telling somebody in Victoria to come for 90 days and then we'll see.

• (1745)

Mr. Randy Hoback: We see different people being posted abroad. What type of preparation do you think they require before they actually go abroad?

Besides having the security training and the basics of the job training, what kind of background training are they doing with regard to the country they're going into, the region they're representing or working in, with different diasporas and things like that? Do you work with them? Do you know of any think tanks they're working with in this type of area?

Dr. Thomas Juneau: I have not studied their training program extensively, so I can't speak to it in a systematic way, but I've worked with them quite a lot. I provide training on the Middle East, on international security issues and on other issues on a regular basis.

It's quite an elaborate system, but there's always the issue of whether they have enough resources to really provide the diplomats with the training they need, linguistic or otherwise. Any time there is an era of budget austerity, training is always the low-hanging fruit.

The other issue for me with training—and this is something I have thought a bit about on the intelligence side too—is the lack of accountability on training and the lack of performance measurement. We send people on training and then we tick the box. There is extremely limited effort to measure the outcome of training. I recognize that it's very difficult, but it's not being done.

Mr. Randy Hoback: In South Korea, they write an exam and an essay before they take any job, just to apply. There is an outcome-based system there.

Thank you.

The Chair: We next go to MP Zuberi. You have four minutes.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to start with Ms. Deif.

You raised consular issues in a region of the world that we don't often talk about in this committee and in the public space.

It brings me back to the cases of a number of Canadians years ago. These are cases like Maher Arar, Abdullah Almalki, Ahmad Abou-Elmaati, Muayyed Nureddin and Omar Khadr. All of these individuals were dealing with extremely heavy labels. There was a cloud over them.

At the same time, I think about human rights instruments, the charter values and the rule of law for all, even when it's challenging and difficult.

You raised the issue of those in northeast Syria. I'd like to have your opinion. You contrasted that with consular services in general, but I'd like to contrast that with those who have found themselves in analogous situations—people with heavy labels, as in northeast Syria.

Do you see a distinction between consular services for these individuals and others with heavy labels of the kind that those in northeast Syria are facing today?

Ms. Farida Deif: Thank you for the question.

I think what's clear is that there is very little political will on certain consular files. The government essentially wants to simply manage the file and not actually solve it. Where there is no political will on the part of this government to repatriate Canadians with suspected ISIS ties, especially the men, that message has trickled down to every layer of Global Affairs.

To Ms. Carvin's point, you have a very junior consular officer who was tasked with this very complex counterterrorism file, which involves Canadians who are in conditions that the UN has said amount to torture and inhumane and degrading treatment. It would of course require a much more complex set of skills.

Essentially, for a file that is tricky, you see a very slow response by Global Affairs, very little in the way of consular support and very little in the way of support to family members.

I spoke to a family member yesterday who lives in Ottawa and who has been desperate to even meet with her consular caseworker for years now. It's simply because the message given to Global Affairs and to the consular team is clearly that this is not a high-priority issue and that the Prime Minister is not keen to repatriate these Canadian nationals.

They're treated very differently from other cases, such as cases of evacuations. These same family members who have loved ones who have been detained in northeast Syria for seven years have seen this government put forward a global declaration on arbitrary detention. They have seen this government evacuate hundreds of nationals from many war zones around the world, yet their families are left behind. Their loved ones are left behind very intentionally.

• (1750)

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Thank you.

Mr. Juneau, I'd like to ask you what we have learned about dealing with people who have a cloud over them, such as these individuals in northeast Syria. What have we learned in the last 20 years about how to deal with these individuals?

I think, for example, of what some countries in the Middle East have done to de-radicalize people. Do you have any commentary?

Dr. Thomas Juneau: I don't. I don't know if you do, but that's beyond my expertise. I'm sorry.

The Chair: Be very brief if you do have a response, Ms. Carvin.

Dr. Stephanie Carvin: I would be happy to discuss that with you off-line. I think that Canada has been a fairly big pioneer in the space of countering radicalization. I do have concerns about some of the programs in Saudi Arabia and things like that. I'm not sure that they're the models we'd want to go for, but we should definitely be talking with those countries, and I would reiterate the call to repatriate these individuals and, if necessary, prosecute them through criminal law and not leave them in a black hole.

The Chair: Thank you.

Next we go to Mr. Bergeron.

You have two minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you.

I was saying, Mr. Juneau, that I find this situation absolutely terrifying. The fact that the Senate committee decided to put forward this recommendation on French means that all is not well at Global Affairs Canada. If that department is one of the best examples out there, I dare not even imagine what is going on in other departments.

My next question is for Ms. Deif.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs has stated that Canada's foreign policy will be guided by two principles: sovereignty and pragmatic diplomacy. In her view, that means working with countries with “different perspectives” without ever compromising Canadian values or national interests.

My question is very simple. Isn't working with countries with “different perspectives”, including countries that blatantly violate

human rights, without compromising Canadian values of respect for those rights, sort of like trying to square the circle?

What's your response to that?

[*English*]

Ms. Farida Deif: Yes, undoubtedly there are a certain number of countries that are grave violators of international human rights that continue to be very strong allies of Canada. It's interesting that prior to the case of the alleged extrajudicial execution on Canadian soil involving a Canadian Sikh man, we had been pleading with this government for years to scrutinize India's human rights record and to engage at the UN Human Rights Council around attacks against religious minorities in India, intimidation, harassment, extrajudicial killings, etc., but unfortunately that didn't come to fruition until this issue landed on our soil, which will often happen if we don't take preventive steps to address human rights violations—even those that are committed by our allies.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

We next go to MP McPherson. You have two minutes, please.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Two minutes is very short, so I'm going to ask two really hard questions and then wish you luck.

The first question is about our arms sales and what it says about our diplomatic relationships with other countries when we prioritize arms to Turkey, Israel, India and Saudi Arabia versus looking at our responsibilities under the ATT, the Arms Trade Treaty, and human rights requirements.

I would also love some insight from you as experts on where Canada is diplomatically with regard to other challenges we see in the Middle East, such as the Houthis in Iran.

Ms. Deif, I'll start with you.

Ms. Farida Deif: It was very welcome that you pushed forward a motion that got accepted around arms sales to Israel, and I think it's incredibly important to constantly assess risks to have an arms control regime that's rooted in human rights and in risks.

Essentially the ICJ decision on plausible genocide underscores the need for Canada to review arms sales to Israel to ensure that they're suspended—since there's impunity for grave crimes that are being committed—and that should be the case across the board.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Go ahead, Professor Juneau.

Dr. Thomas Juneau: The case of Canada's resumption of weapons sales to Turkey, for me, is a good example of how foreign policy is about balancing competing priorities. Human rights are one of them and should be one of them, but they are not the only consideration. One of Canada's most important foreign policy interests is our standing within a functioning NATO, and NATO enlargement to me is consistent with that. As long as Turkey was withholding approval of Sweden's entry into NATO, I was completely in favour of suspending these sales as part of these negotiations. My understanding is that for a number of allies, including the U.S. and us and perhaps others, resuming these weapons sales was a condition after—

● (1755)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Is that even if it breaks our international or Canadian law around the ATT?

Dr. Thomas Juneau: I'm not an expert on the ATT, so I'm not in a position to make that specific judgment.

From a foreign policy perspective, for me it made sense. It's unpalatable and it's not fun, but in the world we're in today, a functioning NATO—which is under threat, including from within—is an overriding interest for us.

It's not nice, but to me that was ultimately the right call.

The Chair: Thank you.

We next go to Mr. Aboultaif. You have four minutes.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Thanks, Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses.

Dr. Jennifer Welsh, who is the director of the Centre for International Peace and Security at McGill, said to this committee that “Canadians are living in an international system that is less hospitable to our interests and values”.

The question is, have we left the camp, were we left behind or have we done something wrong to be living in an international system that is less hospitable to our values and our interests?

Dr. Stephanie Carvin: To be honest, I think we have gotten a bit lazy. It's not so much that we don't care, but....

It's like a house. You move into your house and you enjoy the house, but you have to occasionally replace the windows, redo the roof and things like this. I think we have become lazy, assuming that this infrastructure would always be there and that we could always be a part of it. We need to have capacity in our Global Affairs department to ensure that renewal can consistently take place.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Dr. Juneau, would you care to comment on this, please?

Dr. Thomas Juneau: I would agree with how Professor Carvin just phrased it. I think that living under the U.S. defence and security umbrella for decades has made us dilettantes in foreign policy. It has been easy. We have neglected foreign policy. We have made bad decisions on foreign policy and have not paid a price for decades. That's over.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Thank you.

There are different types of diplomacy. The Minister of Foreign Affairs talked about “pragmatic diplomacy”. There's also another type, called “dollar diplomacy”.

What are we doing? Are we really doing enough with pragmatic diplomacy that we can reserve our space or spot in the world among our allies and among the international community? Are we doing enough dollar diplomacy, yes or no?

That's for Dr. Juneau and then Dr. Carvin.

Dr. Thomas Juneau: Just to be clear, what do you mean, exactly, by “dollar diplomacy”?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Dollar diplomacy is one way that countries use to get some influence on the international stage. If we are falling behind and we don't put forward enough resources, that could be one reason why we are not doing so well.

Dr. Thomas Juneau: Very briefly, whatever reforms we implement on machinery issues and whatever we do in terms of what Professor Carvin was mentioning in terms of better defining our foreign policy interests, objectives and so on, without money and resources for diplomacy, defence and, I would add, foreign intelligence and national security, we are only going to be able to partially defend our interests. There is very simply a need to invest more.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Dr. Carvin, would you comment, please?

Dr. Stephanie Carvin: I would agree with that. I would refer to the comments and discussion I had with Ms. McPherson; development matters in these conversations, particularly with our non-western allies. We don't seem to pay attention to that.

I don't know if I like calling it “dollar diplomacy”. Definitely we refer to that in.... Some people talk about the debt trap in Africa, with regard to China and how they are providing money that will never be repaid, but there are definitely steps there that we could be taking, especially with our allies, in terms of outreach to those countries.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: If I ask you as academics to explain or to define pragmatic diplomacy in short words, would you be able to do so?

Dr. Thomas Juneau: First of all, pragmatic diplomacy can mean whatever you want it to mean. I think that's the key point. When a politician defines something like that, to me it means that we will dismiss principles, objectives and strategies and play it as it goes. In theory, pragmatic diplomacy would mean that ideology and values take the back seat.

● (1800)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: If you don't mind—

Dr. Stephanie Carvin: Thomas is the expert, as you know. I would leave it to him.

I agree. The only thing I would caution is that when we say “pragmatic”, it could be anything. It's a shape-shifting form.

There is a role for values and human rights in our foreign policy. It has to be there, otherwise I think we're.... We have talked about being hypocritical; we also don't want to be seen as being cynical.

The Chair: We now go to MP Oliphant for four minutes, please.

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): I'm going to give my time to Mr. Alghabra.

Hon. Omar Alghabra (Mississauga Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I don't know if you still want to split your time, because we need to leave half an hour for committee business as well.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: On a point of order, I want to check on our process, because it's six o'clock. I thought we had half an hour of committee business—

The Chair: We started at ten to five.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: What time are you assuming we will end the meeting?

The Chair: We will wrap this up in approximately 20 minutes.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I'm asking when we will begin committee business time, because I thought we could end this part of the meeting early. We haven't had a discussion about that.

The Chair: I said it. We have another 20 minutes left for this. That means we will start the committee business in approximately 20 minutes.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Could you canvass the committee as to whether or not that is the will of the committee? I'm just wondering whether we want another two rounds.

Ms. Heather McPherson: My understanding was we were done now.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Maybe we could finish one round.

The Chair: Is everyone in favour of finishing after...?

Mr. Randy Hoback: Are we getting rid of committee business?

The Chair: No, we're not. We were just going to do two hours, but we started at ten minutes to five.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Our perspective is that this is our last round.

The Chair: Do you guys want to eliminate the last round, then?

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Can we finish this round, and that would be the last round?

The Chair: Are you talking about one more additional round?

Hon. Robert Oliphant: No, I'm saying that we started this round with the Conservatives. We'll have Liberals, and then we're done.

The Chair: This is the second round, right? You are the concluding member for the second round.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I think we're in the third round.

The Chair: No, we're not. We're in the second round right now.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I'm not so good at rounds. What I was—

The Chair: You are the concluding questioner for round two.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): This is the third round.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Luckily, it was a point of order.

If this is our last round, I just want to check if this is the last questioner right now.

The Chair: Does everyone agree that this should be the last question?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Alghabra.

Hon. Omar Alghabra: As much as I wanted to ask questions, I'll cede my time to my colleague Hedy Fry.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Thank you very much.

Thank you very much, Omar. Thank you, Rob, for ceding the round to me.

I'm going to take this opportunity to move a motion that you all have, which is pertinent to what we're studying right now. I move:

That, as part of its study on Canada's diplomatic capacity, the foreign affairs and international development committee recognize international development to be an inherent part of Canada's diplomatic strategy and affirm its support for reproductive and sexual health rights around the world; recognize that the right to safe and legal reproductive care is the right to health care; condemn any effort to limit or remove sexual and reproductive rights; and emphasize the importance of maintaining access to reproductive and sexual health care, including safe abortions and contraceptives, as a main component of Canada's international feminist assistance policy.

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

First of all, would everyone like me to thank our witnesses at this point, because there are no more questions for them?

At this juncture, Professor Carvin, Professor Juneau and Ms. De-iff, thank you very, very much for having appeared before us. You have given us much to think about.

Also, Mr. Ambassador, thank you ever so much for having joined us. Please accept our sincerest apologies for the technical problems.

We're grateful to each and every one of you. Thank you.

Dr. Fry, you obviously have not provided 48 hours' notice for this motion; however, I would like to hear from you how you believe that this specific motion falls within the scope of Canada's diplomatic capacity, please.

• (1805)

Hon. Hedy Fry: If you listened to our witnesses today and the witnesses in the last meeting, you know they were discussing that, in fact, our diplomatic capacity is about our providing foreign aid, and this is part of our foreign aid package.

This is clearly a part of our diplomatic efforts abroad. We even had a question from Mr. Aboultaif about dollar diplomacy. This is about providing foreign aid, so this is very core and pertinent to this particular study we're doing right now, so I don't need to provide 48 hours' notice. This is in order.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Fry.

Go ahead, MP Chong.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, on a point of order, I don't think this is in order. I think it would be in order at the next meeting of the committee, because the 48 hours' notice would have been given. This motion was put on notice today. I don't believe it fits the rubric of the business at hand, which is Canada's diplomatic capacity. I don't think that abortion and reproductive rights fit into that study that we're on right now.

My view is that this motion should be considered at the next meeting of this committee rather than now. Just because the preamble makes reference to the study in front of us doesn't mean that the motion is in order.

I think it's out of order. I think it will be in order at our next meeting, seeing that 48 hours' notice would have been given at that point, but I don't think it's in order now.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Chong.

Does anyone else want to speak to this issue?

Go ahead, Mr. Bergeron.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: First of all, I agree with Mr. Chong. I believe the rule for substantive motions applies here.

Second, although I am very receptive to the content of the motion, I have two questions.

First, aren't we putting the cart before the horse, if we ultimately prepare a report?

In a few moments, we will be looking at instructions for the report. There will be recommendations. That could be the subject of recommendations adopted by the committee as a whole, or, at the very least, a dissenting or supplementary opinion to the committee's report.

Second, we just did an extensive study on the issue of women's reproductive and sexual rights. I wonder what the added value of the motion before us is. However, since it is not in order, I will not debate it any further, but I am putting my questions on notice, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

Hon. Hedy Fry: May I be permitted to answer the question?

The Chair: We will have to go to MP McPherson first.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Okay, go ahead.

Sorry about that, Heather.

The Chair: I must say that what Mr. Bergeron has said makes eminent sense. However, the question before us is whether this motion falls within the scope of what we have been discussing.

From a practical standpoint, it's a very good point, Mr. Bergeron.

Ms. Heather McPherson: From my perspective, I think that it fits in, as we are actually trying to give the drafting instructions to the analysts today. That's why I think that it does make sense.

We certainly heard, or I tried to tease out, the importance throughout this study of development as part of our diplomacy. Obviously, the cornerstone of Canada's development work is the FIAP, the feminist international assistance policy. That is the policy under which all of our development is happening, so I do think it does make sense for us to bring this forward as we are providing drafting instructions to the analysts for their preparation.

• (1810)

The Chair: Go ahead, MP Chong.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, I don't believe we're in the "drafting instructions" part of the meeting. We are in "Canada's diplomatic capacity" public part of the meeting.

If we want to go to drafting instructions, that's very well and fine, but we are in the public part of the meeting.

The Chair: I would have to say that I do agree with you, Mr. Chong. I also agree with Mr. Bergeron.

Right now, all that is before this committee is to determine whether the motion that has been brought before us falls within the scope of the issue of Canada's diplomatic capacity.

Go ahead, Dr. Fry.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Thank you.

I wish to say that regardless of whether or not we are drafting, this is fully within the scope of what we are talking about. We heard witnesses speak to the issue of Canada having to defend human rights as part of our diplomatic capacity.

It was decided way back in 1995 that women's rights were human rights and that sexual and reproductive rights were an important part of human rights. If we are going to talk about a diplomatic capacity that entertains human rights, then this has to be on the table.

Around the world right now, we see that the human rights of women are being denied. We are going to travel to Africa. Look at what's happening in Africa. We know that 78,000 women a year in that part of the world and in the developing world die from unsafe abortions. They also die because they're having their 20th child and their uterus is like a piece of paper, so they bleed from postpartum hemorrhages. They die and their children suffer as a result.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Hedy Fry: It's an important part of our diplomatic capacity. Human rights are part of diplomatic capacity.

Thank you.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I hate to interrupt my colleague, but I have a point order, which takes precedence.

I will just preface the point of order by saying I will be fully supportive of this motion when it comes.

I believe that right now our order of business is on a point of order on whether or not the motion is within the scope of the study. I think that is not a debatable piece. If there's a contestation to that, we can have the debate on the point of order, but not on the subject of the matter.

I would think it would be important for the chair to rule on whether it's in order. Then we could maybe have a quick discussion about whether we need to vote on this today or whether or not we need to get to our business meeting.

I think there is a question about validity and that is yours to rule on.

The Chair: I appreciate that.

We can listen to what members have to say as to whether it does fall within the scope of Canada's diplomatic capacity.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: That's on points of order, yes.

I would just challenge that we should not debate the motion at this point. It's only on whether or not it falls into the scope of the study.

The Chair: That's what I keep reminding everyone. The only question before us is whether it falls within the scope of Canada's diplomatic capacity.

Hon. Hedy Fry: I think I just spoke to that. Thank you.

The Chair: Yes, I think Dr. Fry actually spoke to that very issue.

Does anyone else want to say...?

I would have to say, having heard everyone, and in particular Dr. Fry—and it's not just a question of wording, but everything that has been highlighted—that yes, it does fall within the scope of Canada's diplomatic capacity.

Is everyone okay with that? Did anyone want to challenge it?

Okay. Did we want to suspend for a few minutes before coming back to committee business?

We'll take three or four minutes and then we'll come back in camera.

What's that?

• (1815)

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Is the motion now on the floor or not on the floor?

The Chair: Yes, the motion has been adopted.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I just want to be clear. You've ruled it's in order. That was not challenged. We have to go back to the mo-

tion. The motion needs to be dealt with before we can move to committee business.

The Chair: Yes, that's correct.

Hon. Michael Chong: No, I think the chair has ruled that it's within the scope of the study. Since the next item on the agenda is to review the drafting instructions for the analysts, we're now going to move in camera, where I assume we will continue debate on the motion.

The Chair: Do members want to debate the motion now?

Hon. Michael Chong: We would like to debate the motion.

Are we going in camera or are we staying in public? Either way is fine by me.

The Chair: If we're debating it, then we remain in public.

Hon. Hedy Fry: It has to be in public. I moved it in public.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I just want some clarity from the chair.

I believe we are still in a public meeting. We have not moved in camera. We have a motion on the floor, which you have ruled is eligible to be debated. I think we are now in debate.

The Chair: Yes, that's correct.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: That debate will continue as long as a member has something they want to say about it, unless something else happens.

The Chair: Absolutely.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I'm sorry; that was my point. I think that we are into this. If the committee wanted to vote on it quickly to get us to business, I would love that. I think the business is really important, because we have a break week coming up. If we could give the analysts instructions today, I think it would be helpful in getting this report done.

There are a few other things in the business meeting we need to get done. Right now, I will simply say I'm supportive of this motion. I don't need to say more than that.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Chong, did you want to speak to this as well?

Hon. Michael Chong: I don't think that this motion was introduced in a constructive manner. I think it was dropped at the last minute.

It is part of a pattern of division on part of this—

Hon. Hedy Fry: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead, Madam Fry.

Hon. Hedy Fry: You ruled that this motion is in order.

I think Mr. Chong is debating the problem of whether it's in order or not, and he should be debating the substance of the motion.

Hon. Michael Chong: I am not, Mr. Chair. I am debating the substance of the motion.

I think the substance of this motion is very divisive, and I think it's part of a broader pattern on the part of this government to defend itself by introducing divisive measures in the House and in committees in order to distract from its failings.

I don't think that this motion is a constructive motion in the context of the diplomatic capacity study. I would note that a different form of the motion was introduced previously at this committee, and the committee descended into chaos.

We are, once again, taking the committee off track, because this motion clearly doesn't have a consensus around this table. I would note that it is unfortunate, because I think that in regard to Canada's foreign aid, it is possible to develop a consensus across party lines and among Canadians more broadly.

The approach I would highlight, which I think the committee should have taken when it comes to these sorts of issues, is the approach that the previous government took with its G8 Muskoka initiative on maternal and children's health, an initiative that was widely seen as being successful, precisely because both NGOs and the government set aside their partisan considerations and worked across divides to find a consensus on issues of commonality.

I was just recently reviewing an article that was written by Elly Vandenberg in Policy Options in 2017. Elly Vandenberg is a professor at the Munk School of Global Affairs at the University of Toronto. She has 25 years of experience at World Vision Canada and she wrote something that I think is particularly apt in this context of the motion in front of us today. She highlighted 10 practical lessons learned from the success of the Muskoka initiative. One of the 10 lessons learned was to collaborate across different divides and to focus on areas of common support.

That's not what this motion does; it does quite the opposite. It's a divisive motion that we have dealt with in another form at this committee, and I think that it doesn't build on the lessons learned from the successful Muskoka initiative, which was something that really galvanized not just NGOs across Canada and not just the international development community here in Canada but also the community outside of Canada. It played a big role in helping us move towards the millennium development goals that we had been struggling to meet, as we were at the two-thirds point around 2010.

We know that in the aftermath of the pandemic, the world's poorest have suffered disproportionately. The World Bank, I believe, last year highlighted that tens of millions of people slid back below the extreme poverty line as a result of the pandemic, so there is a need for a doubling down on the effort to meet the sustainable development goals and the previous millennium development goals that were set.

• (1820)

Ms. Heather McPherson: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Go ahead, Madam McPherson.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I'm sorry to interrupt my colleague.

I would just like to ask that we adjourn, knowing that it is Valentine's Day and that we all have loved ones I'm sure we'd like to spend time with. I'd like to put forward a motion to adjourn.

The Chair: I think that's out of order at this point, when Mr. Chong is....

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, I'm finished speaking.

Thank you.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I'm sorry. What did I have...?

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, I'm done my intervention. You may recognize the next person.

The Chair: Go ahead, MP McPherson.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I would like to call to adjourn the meeting.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: I still have a point.

A voice: No, it's over. It's adjourned.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Not on that, but on....

The Chair: Well, it's done.

A voice: The majority of the committee wants to adjourn.

The Chair: Is everyone in favour of adjourning?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Excellent. The meeting is adjourned.

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