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Chair

Mr. Jason Kenney

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• (1110)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC)): Good morning, colleagues. I'd like to call to order this meeting of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. This morning we continue our ongoing review of the Canada-China bilateral human rights dialogue and related issues.

We have a panel before us this morning from a variety of groups concerned about this question, all of whom are signatories to a joint letter to the Prime Minister requesting a review of the Canada-China human rights dialogue. We're pleased to have them with us today.

I think we're missing one witness at this point, Sheng Xue, but presumably she's on her way. We do have with us right now Mr. Xun Li, president of the Falun Dafa Association of Canada; Mr. Cheuk Kwan, chair of the Toronto Association for Democracy in Canada; and Mr. David Cozac, program coordinator for PEN Canada.

Welcome to all the witnesses. Each of you has a limited period in which to make a presentation. It will be followed by questions, beginning with the official opposition. If you require translation, it's available on the translation devices attached to the desk.

I'll invite Mr. Xun Li to give the first presentation.

Mr. Xun (Shawn) Li (President, Falun Dafa Association of Canada): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to the committee for holding this hearing and for inviting the Falun Dafa Association of Canada.

Lawyer Gao Zhisheng has been called "the conscience of Chinese lawyers". China's Ministry of Justice hailed him as one of China's top ten lawyers in 2001. He's not a Falun Gong practitioner, yet he himself is currently under arrest for defending human rights in China—in particular, for his three open letters to Chinese government leaders calling for an end to the persecution of Falun Gong.

Mr. Gao wrote, in his letter dated late 2005:

Among the true accounts of unbelievable brutality among the records of the government's inhuman torture of its own people, the immoral acts that shocked my soul the most were the lewd yet routine practice of attacking women's genitals by 6-10 office staff and the police. Almost every woman's genitals and breasts or every man's genitals have been sexually assaulted during the persecution in a most vulgar fashion.

Below are two accounts of the cases he cited. In the first case:

Ms. Lijun Wang was tortured in a small metal cage three times. Inmates tied many knots on a thick rope and pulled it back and forth in a sawing motion across her vagina. Her entire lower body swelled up. The head police then ordered inmates to jab her swollen vagina with the thorny end of a broken mop stick. This torture caused Ms. Wang's vagina to bleed profusely. Her abdomen and vagina were so swollen that she could not pull up her pants, or sit, or urinate...

In the second case:

Mr. Liu Haibo was stripped of all his clothes and forced to kneel down. The police pushed in the longest electric baton they could find from the bottom and gave his organs electric shocks. Liu died immediately on the site.

These are only two accounts of the numerous atrocities suffered by Falun Gong practitioners daily in China over the past seven years. The majority of the brutal cases remain unreported. Revealing such information constitutes the severe crime of "leaking state secrets".

Yue Yao, wife of Canadian resident Wenyu Liu in Calgary, is one of 14 jailed practitioners with Canadian ties. In 2001, she was sentenced to 12 years in prison for downloading information from Falun Gong websites and printing materials for distribution.

Introduced in China in 1992, Falun Gong is a peaceful spiritual belief that cultivates the mind, body, and spirit through gentle exercises and by following the principles of truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance. Yet the nature of the Chinese Communist regime is quite the opposite. It advocates violence, deception, and the destruction of traditional moral values and beliefs.

By official government estimates, there were over 70 million people practising Falun Gong by 1999. The regime formulated the following policy against Falun Gong: "Defame their reputation, bankrupt them financially, eliminate them physically" and "Count the death of Falun Gong practitioners as suicide."

Communist China regards Falun Gong as its number one enemy and has utilized the cruelest means imaginable against its practitioners. Over 100 means of torture have been documented.

According to a 2001 Australian Broadcasting Corporation report, "Falun Gong practitioners make up close to half the number of Chinese people being held in labour camps, a process that requires no legal or judicial ruling."

In March 2006, Manfred Nowak, the UN's special rapporteur, reported that torture remains widespread in China and that Falun Gong practitioners represented 66% of all the alleged torture cases. The persecution spans all of China; nearly 3,000 verified death cases have been reported. The real number is unknown and is believed to be much higher.

Recently, David Kilgour and David Matas concluded in their independent investigation report that there has been and continues today to be large-scale organ seizures from unwilling Falun Gong practitioners by the Government of China and its agencies in numerous parts of the country.

The vast widespread killing of Falun Gong practitioners for profit to provide organs for transplants is “so shocking that it represents a new form of evil on this planet”.

Pursuant to these vital findings of organ harvesting of live Falun Gong practitioners, I strongly believe that it warrants a formal hearing by the committee.

I want to highlight two key findings from Professor Burton's report on the assessment of the bilateral dialogue:

The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs' mandate is to defend China's interests abroad. It has no institutional interest in promoting respect for China's human rights domestically.

The dialogues involve only a small number of Chinese people and have no mechanism to spread the information beyond this small group.

These findings underscore the futility of the dialogues. The persecution of Falun Gong was in fact launched and has continued to escalate after the bilateral human rights dialogue process began in 1997. The systematic eradication of Falun Gong through hate incitement, torture, and killing constitutes severe crimes against humanity.

We believe China does concern itself with world opinion, and more and more Chinese people are aware and want a society that provides for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The international community, including Canada, has a crucial role to play to help uphold these values and principles.

We also recommend that the Canadian government: one, call on China to stop the persecution of Falun Gong and release all practitioners being held in custody; two, suspend the bilateral dialogue until the critical concerns from Professor Burton's report are adequately addressed; three, put human rights at the forefront of Canada's China policy, using every opportunity to promote respect for human rights in China and to speak publicly against human rights abuses in China; and, four, include civil society such as Falun Gong representation in any future human rights engagement with China.

Democratic countries are ultimately held accountable to fulfill our responsibilities. Only by ending crimes against humanity and protecting the safety and well-being of our fellow world citizens can we truly protect the security and dignity of our own country. There is no other choice we can make as human beings.

Thank you.

• (1115)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Li.

We'll now pass to Mrs. Sheng Xue, from the Federation for a Democratic China.

Ms. Xue Sheng (Vice-President, Federation for a Democratic China): Ladies and gentlemen, honourable members of Parliament, first of all, I would like to thank the subcommittee for inviting me here.

My name is Sheng Xue, and I am vice-president of the Federation for a Democratic China, which was established by those who fled China after the Tiananmen Square massacre and other pro-democracy dissidents outside China. It is headquartered in Germany now, with more than 20 branches across the world, including Canada. Some of our members, including those from the Toronto area, are at the moment joining the rally on Parliament Hill to give our support to Prime Minister Harper for his courageous efforts regarding human rights in China.

The official bilateral Sino-Canada human rights dialogue has been going on for nearly ten years. Throughout this period the Chinese government has learned to be more cunning in its response to the international community's concerns and the criticism about its human rights record. They are at the moment hosting a large-scale Human Rights in China exhibition. This so-called “let the whole world witness the new development of China's human rights cause” is in fact a sham.

What is really going on? I am going to describe a few cases that are related to me directly. In the spring of 2004, in preparation for the memorial service for the 15th anniversary of the June 4 massacre, I e-mailed some pro-democracy friends around the world asking whether we should use the opportunity to try to visit China, since we had been barred from visiting China for 15 years. Soon after my e-mail, the newspaper office in Shanxi province, where the writer Shi Tao was working, issued a notice from China's central government that stated that pro-democracy elements of foreign countries should be strictly prevented from entering China during the 15th anniversary of the June 4 movement. After learning this, Shi Tao e-mailed the information to a friend in New York through Yahoo. Shi Tao was then arrested and sentenced to ten years in prison on charges of leaking state secrets. One e-mail message landed him ten years in prison. This case makes me very sad, because I was the one who initiated the discussion of entering China. This is a picture of Shi Tao. He married just one year before he was arrested. His wife was forced to divorce him.

Another case is about Zhang Lin. He graduated from Tsinghua University, China's most prestigious university in the field of science and technology. Because of his pro-democracy activities, Zhang Lin was given a prison sentence for three years followed by two years in a forced labour camp. He came to the United States in 1997, but in 1998 he decided to return to China to continue implementing his vision. Because of his dream for a better China, he was sentenced to three years again of re-education through labour right after he entered China.

Last February, I sent him an e-mail invitation to join the memorial service committee for Zhao Ziyang, the former general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party who was ousted and put in house arrest for fifteen years for sympathizing with the June 4 student movement. Zhang Lin readily accepted. He was then stopped by police on the way to the home of Zhao Ziyang in Beijing to offer condolences. He was arrested at the train station on his way home. He has totally lost his freedom. On July 28, 2005, last year, he was sentenced to five years' imprisonment, a jail term even longer than before, on charges of inciting subversion of state power.

• (1120)

This was Zhang Lin with his wife and two-year-old daughter.

Mr. Jason Kenney had an experience when he was in Beijing where he was stopped by plainclothes police.

Finally I'd like to mention Yang Tianshui. He was a freelance writer who had already served a ten-year prison sentence between 1990 and 2000 for counter-revolutionary crimes. As a dissident in cyber space, he was sentenced in May 2006 to twelve years in prison for subversion of state power. The trial was rushed through in three hours. So he got an even longer sentence for the same reason.

Among the thirteen items of the so-called proof of guilt, two of them are related to me. First, a 500-euro donation for his lawyer's fee that I collected for him was labelled by the court as a fund to subvert the government. Second, my invitation to him to join the memorial service for Zhao Ziyang was defined as an anti-government crime.

Reports by Reporters Without Borders have shown that each and every year the Chinese regime has arrested and jailed more journalists and writers than any other country in the world. Hardly anyone who dares to advocate democracy or establish an organization based on this work can escape the fate of persecution.

In conclusion, I believe that in the past ten years there has been no progress in the improvement of human rights in China. The official bilateral human rights dialogue between China and Canada has not been helpful. Therefore, we call upon the Canadian government to suspend the closed-door human rights dialogue with the Chinese government and replace it with a more effective approach.

Second, if talks must continue, the Canadian government should invite non-governmental organizations, such as the Federation for a Democratic China, Canada, to participate.

Third, we call upon the Canadian government to develop a structure that will help organize and finance the human rights dialogue between non-governmental organizations in Canada and China.

Thank you very much.

• (1125)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Xue, for your testimony.

Mr. Cozac from PEN Canada is next.

Mr. David Cozac (Programs Coordinator, PEN Canada): Honourable members of the Parliamentary Subcommittee on International Human Rights, I thank you for inviting PEN Canada to present its views on the Canada-China bilateral dialogue on human rights. I'm here today on behalf of the president of PEN Canada, Constance Rooke, and the chair of the writers in prison committee, Alan Cumyn, both of whom were unable to attend today.

As you are probably aware, PEN Canada is an autonomous and apolitical centre of the writers' association, International PEN, whose mandate is to defend freedom of expression around the world. Currently, International PEN monitors the cases of 33 imprisoned Chinese writers. PEN Canada has adopted seven of these cases for particular advocacy.

PEN Canada is a case-based human rights organization and works on behalf of individuals who have been persecuted for writing freely online or publishing news articles in Chinese media that were deemed to be too sensitive, or who have been sent to jail for speaking out in the autonomous regions of Tibet, Xinjiang, and Inner Mongolia.

In regard to the issue at hand, PEN Canada is of the opinion that the bilateral dialogue on human rights, in its current form, should not continue. We believe that the dialogue has consistently been hampered by a lack of clarity and well-defined objectives, inadequate transparency, and the absence of benchmarks. As such, the results obtained from the years of dialogue have not served to advance the cause of human rights in China.

PEN Canada welcomes this opportunity to put forward suggestions on a new dialogue process that would strengthen advocacy on the part of the Government of Canada vis-à-vis human rights in China.

First, there must be transparency in the process. Up until now, the dialogue has been conducted in secrecy, with little or no disclosure to civil society of the talking points or of the results achieved. This practice has to change. At the very least, interested stakeholders in the issue and Canadian civil society must be apprised of the discussions that take place and their outcomes. Civil society, both in Canada and in China, should also be allowed opportunities for intervention and participation in the dialogue process and should benefit from frank assessments on the part of the Government of Canada when it reports back.

Second, the dialogue must be viewed as merely one tool at the Government of Canada's disposal. Ten years ago, the government chose to stop co-sponsoring a resolution of the former Human Rights Commission at the United Nations in favour of quiet diplomacy. Given the failure to achieve positive results, it is imperative not only that the dialogue become effective; it must also be used in the context of other instruments, such as a return to Canada co-sponsoring the human rights in China resolution.

The government must take advantage of all its interactions with China to press for improvements in human rights. It should also work directly with other nations and groups of nations, like the European Union, to put forward a more united front.

Third, the dialogue must count on the presence, on both sides of the table, of high-level government representatives. It is our understanding that both the governments of China and Canada have sent only middle- or low-ranking foreign affairs officials to these meetings. However, for the dialogue to be fruitful, it is essential for officials with influence to be present.

China also needs to have on hand representatives of domestic ministries, not just foreign affairs, so they can act on recommendations to implement measures that will show a demonstrable, positive effect on the human rights situation within China's borders. For its part, Canada should consider involving new officials from CIDA and Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada to put in place the new dialogue policy.

Also, PEN Canada would encourage the Government of Canada to undertake an analysis of the effectiveness of prisoner lists in the bilateral dialogue process. We feel that little or nothing has been accomplished with these lists, and that, more importantly, the safety and well-being of certain prisoners may have been put at risk by highlighting their cases. The Government of Canada should therefore analyze the information given by their Chinese counterparts to see if anything new or useful has been provided.

While this study is being done, the creation of a prisoner list with information provided by such civil society organizations as PEN Canada should be suspended. For its part, PEN Canada will withhold prisoner lists while we clarify reports that these approaches may have made situations worse for some prisoners. We will proceed on a case-by-case basis and assess which approach works best.

In conclusion, PEN Canada would like to strongly emphasize two points. One is that by adopting a consistently forceful attitude on the deplorable human rights situation in China, the Government of Canada need not fear any adverse outcomes for trade relationships. There is no substance to the claim that a decline in trade will result if one country takes a critical stance toward the other nation's human rights record. This is the case with Canada and China, and our government must address human rights at every opportunity, either through bilateral dialogue or through other channels.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, PEN Canada believes that the universal right to freedom of expression is fundamental.

• (1130)

Were China to permit its citizens to practise the right to freedom of opinion and of expression without fear of persecution, as guaranteed by article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and by article 35 of China's own constitution, the foundation would be laid for the respect of all other key rights.

Chinese human rights defenders must also enjoy this right and the related right to association, in order to promote respect for human rights and enable this respect to evolve from within Chinese society.

The Government of Canada can contribute significantly to the promotion of international standards of human rights in China by developing an effective new bilateral dialogue process, in consultation with Canadian and Chinese civil society, that can yield concrete results.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cozac.

We'll now move to Mr. Cheuk Kwan of the Toronto Association for Democracy in China.

Mr. Cheuk Kwan (Chair, Toronto Association for Democracy in China): Thank you, Mr. Kenney.

Thank you, members of the subcommittee, for inviting the Toronto Association for Democracy in China, TADC, to present our views on the Canada-China bilateral dialogue on human rights.

Our association is a member of the Canadian Coalition on Human Rights in China, which wrote the October 6 letter to Prime Minister Harper.

TADC was founded a few weeks before June 4, 1989, to support the aspirations of millions of Chinese students and citizens gathering around Beijing's Tiananmen Square and in campuses around the country, demanding immediate political reform and an end to corruption.

The movement came to a brutal and crushing end when, on the morning of June 4, Chinese tanks literally crushed the protesters, killing, in the estimates of the international Red Cross, thousands of innocent people.

The Tiananmen Square massacre was not the first time that China had suppressed its own people. As early as 1978, during what is now called the "Beijing spring", an unexpected blossoming of freedom of expression led to a demand for political freedom. The government quickly put an end to that and arrested and imprisoned Mr. Wei Jingsheng, perhaps one of China's best-known dissidents. But it was Tiananmen Square, a media-saturated, made-for-TV event, that galvanized the world and led to international interest in the Chinese people's yearning for political freedom, democracy, and human rights.

As the world began to take note of human rights violations in China in the aftermath of Tiananmen Square, western countries began offering public criticism of China by sponsoring resolutions condemning China's human rights record at the annual United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva.

Since 1990, every attempt by countries to table a resolution before the committee was skilfully deflected by China and her allies via a procedural motion known as the "no-action motion". As a result, China's human rights record was never properly discussed, much less debated, in a multilateral forum.

That, however, was not good enough for China, as China had to undergo an embarrassing situation every spring in Geneva, when the commission sits, to make countermeasures to deflect public criticism. In 1997, China used its market of 1.3 billion citizens as a bargaining tool and devised a very effective divide and conquer strategy to break down western resolve.

That year, China offered that Australia and Canada carry out bilateral dialogues in each other's capitals on condition that they forgo co-sponsoring any resolution condemning China at the commission. In the same year, China applied the Airbus-Boeing carrot and stick to the European Union, forcing our European allies to abandon their resolution.

The sole exception was Denmark, which was brave enough to break ranks to co-sponsor the China resolution with the United States. I was in Geneva at that time, as I have been every year since 1991, and watched first-hand the breakdown of the western coalition.

To this day, many within the international NGO community believe that if all members had joined forces to sponsor the resolution or defeat the no-action motion, the danger of China playing one off against another would have been eliminated.

Worse still was the timing of this breakdown. It was only months before the 1997 Hong Kong handover, and the signal that the world sent to Hong Kong was devastating. The message was that large and powerful countries such as China can intimidate members of the commission into ignoring serious abuses, leaving the impression that human rights in China were no longer an international concern. In other words, the world doesn't care.

• (1135)

To quote a Human Rights Watch report in 1999, two years after that breakdown:

Countries offered various excuses for not backing the resolution. The European Union, Australia, and Canada all said that their ongoing human rights dialogues with China were more productive than public criticism. ...Some countries remembered the treatment Denmark received when it co-sponsored a China resolution in 1997 — China threatened to cancel all business deals with [Denmark and] Danish companies, a threat that was never carried out.

We believe that bilateral dialogue on human rights, in its current form, should not continue. For any real dialogue to happen, there needs to be a fair and equitable participation among interested stakeholders in the issue. We would like to see, for example, a real dialogue amongst genuine NGOs from both countries so that they can have open and frank discussions, and not just hand-picked, pro-government Chinese NGOs or Canadian NGOs deemed acceptable to China, all going through a charade shepherded by ministry officials and diplomats.

For too long, we have let China dictate how we should act towards them, threatening us that they would leave the negotiating table if we do not do the right thing. Worse, some of us have even used a pretext of “oriental culture” to justify our less-than-forthright position at the bargaining table.

Canada needs to adopt a consistent and principled stance when dealing with China. Only then will we earn their respect and not wrath. Canada need not fear any adverse outcomes for trade relations. There is no substance to the claim that a decline in trade will result if one country takes a critical stance towards the other nation's human rights record.

I'd like to remind the subcommittee that Denmark is a good case in point.

In summary, our government can contribute significantly to the promotion of international standards of human rights in China by using all the tools available to us: effective bilateral dialogues; public criticisms in multilateral forums; high-level exchanges at diplomatic meetings; and on-the-ground CIDA-funded projects that will benefit a maturing civil society.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Kwan, and thanks to all of our witnesses.

We'll turn now to the question period, beginning with the official opposition and Mr. Irwin Cotler.

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have to apologize, in that I must leave after my question, inasmuch as I have to chair a session at Carleton University that is almost about to begin on preventing genocide.

Let me just make full disclosure at the outset, Mr. Chairman. I've acted as counsel for political prisoners—Falun Gong political prisoners and members of the democracy movement. I've been able, through that prism, to be witness to a pattern of arbitrary arrest, of incommunicado detentions, of coercive interrogations, of denial of the right to counsel, torture, and then the laying of trumped-up charges, false witness testimony, and the denial of a fair hearing, all leading to ultimate conviction and sentencing.

This is apart from the singling out of the Falun Gong, for example, for state-sanctioned persecution and prosecution, in denial, as I've said elsewhere, of their fundamental rights to freedom of assembly, association, and expression—for no other reason than for their advocacy of what are in effect ancient Chinese values of compassion and tolerance and forbearance. I've witnessed equally the singling out of political and cultural and religious dissidents, journalists, and the like.

You have made, each of you, a number of recommendations today—important ones—with respect to calling on China to release political prisoners, suspending the Canada human rights dialogue, making human rights a priority in our relationships with China, ending the state-sanctioned persecution of dissidents, and the involvement of NGOs, particularly Canadian NGOs and Chinese NGOs, in a dialogue.

My question to you would be this. Do you have any specific recommendations concerning the role Canadian parliamentarians can play with respect to the whole question of advancing the case and cause of human rights in China?

• (1140)

Mr. Cheuk Kwan: I will take the question first.

I would encourage even stronger participation from Parliament and parliamentarians in our government's dealing with China. As examples, in the past there were parliamentary delegations to China as part of an investigative trip to prisons to view first-hand the signs and symptoms of human rights abuses. I would like to encourage our government to do the same thing.

I know that sometimes it might be very difficult to approach the Chinese on this. But if we can be persistent enough and perhaps a bit more forceful when we're dealing with China, certainly we can witness those kinds of human rights abuses, which are everyday events.

As my colleague, Sheng Xue mentioned, Mr. Kenney had his first-hand experience the last time he was in Beijing.

Mr. David Cozac: Let me add that I think there is a role for parliamentarians on this issue. However, I'd underscore the point I made in my presentation, that the most effective way Canadian government officials can exert influence on China and its human rights record is at a high level. This is at the ministerial level, perhaps even at the level of the Prime Minister or at the very least of the Deputy Prime Minister. The effort should be focused on those levels rather than on lower government levels.

Also in terms of parliamentary visits to China for prison visits and so forth, I would reiterate what I mentioned in my presentation, that you have to go very cautiously on this, because there are concerns about the welfare or the well-being of the prisoners themselves, should anyone attempt to contact them. There have been documented cases where diplomats from other countries attempted to visit prisoners, and this resulted in worsening conditions for those prisoners—just as a caveat.

Mr. Xun (Shawn) Li: The issue of Falun Gong was ranked among the top three issues in 2005. In the election campaign, it was reported that the Prime Minister's office received a volume of concerns about the Falun Gong issue.

I'm not speaking only on behalf of my organization; it is the aspiration of Canadians. Canadians wish to end the persecution, to uphold Canadian values.

So at any level—as a member of Parliament, as the government, and as an individual—we can make a significant difference in this issue, because what is happening in China towards the Falun Gong and other groups is not the normal human rights issue. It is an issue of crimes against humanity in legal terms for their systematic as well as widespread nature.

In the past, we collected and presented a petition to the Prime Minister with over 100,000 signatures, so it is the will of Canadians.

Secondly, Falun Gong was singled out not because of any crimes its members committed. It was not for political aspirations; we don't have a political aspiration.

But as Irwin mentioned, I do agree that the Chinese Communist regime has treated Falun Gong as the political enemy. We don't have political aspirations; we only want to end the persecution.

• (1145)

The Chair: Sheng, do you have a brief comment? You don't have to.

Irwin, do you? We have one minute left.

Hon. Irwin Cotler: No, that's fine, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Actually we have fifteen seconds left, so we'll pass to the next round.

Madame St-Hilaire, *c'est à vous*.

[Translation]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Gentlemen, Madam, I thank you for appearing before us this morning.

Mr. Cozac or Mr. Kwan, I would like some clarification on what you said earlier, about the fact that we should put an end to the bilateral dialogue because it doesn't work.

In the past, some people have told our Committee that there were serious shortcomings in that dialogue, but that it should be continued. If we stop dialoguing, how can we communicate with the Chinese government or its representatives? This is my first question.

Secondly, I was very surprised to hear you say that if we stopped the dialogue and put more pressure on the Chinese government,

there will be no trade retaliation. Then, you mentioned the case of Denmark and other countries. This is an example, but we can also see others.

Can you assure us or demonstrate to us that there couldn't be any trade retaliation? I personally believe that trade retaliation is the trump card in the Chinese government's hand. This is why we are walking on eggshells each time we talk about China. It is an important economic player. At the same time, we all agree on the fact that human rights are probably more important.

I would like to hear your answers to these two questions. Thank you.

Mr. Cheuk Kwan: Thank you, Madam.

[English]

To answer your first question, we do not advise that the government discontinue its bilateral dialogue process. However, we do want the government to discontinue this current form. As I suggested and as one of my colleagues also mentioned, bilateral dialogue should involve better participation from non-governmental organizations, what we call people-to-people participation. Let us have communication and discussion with our counterparts in China, not with what I would call pro-government counterparts from China but genuine non-governmental organizations from the civil society. The civil society is growing right now in China. At last count, there were 30,000 non-governmental organizations growing in China. We certainly would like to have the opportunity to talk to them as well.

On the second question, the China threat, I've been to a lot of media interviews in the last few days on the subject of our Prime Minister's trip to APEC. Unfortunately, the media has tended to associate the so-called China snub, or the Canadian snub, as a backlash to our stance on human rights. I want to assure the committee members that this is far from true. In fact, even domestically we have a lot of support from our business people. They may have been upset with the China snub, but not because of our human rights stance. It was purely from the point of view of perhaps their criticism of the current government's other dealings with China.

Now, as far as the trade sanctions are concerned, I can assure you, Madam, that the Chinese are just like any other merchants in the world. They pick the best price and the best quality of goods whenever they can. Certainly they would not ignore, because of political considerations, a good bargain.

We certainly have a lot of good bargains for China. We have a big trade deficit with China. We import much more than we export. However, we do have resources that we can export that China has been eyeing as it progresses to the 21st century. So even in the trade consideration, in the trade equation, I think we have certainly an advantage. I don't think we need to fear the so-called backlash.

I want to point to the example of Bombardier. They have been very successful in China. They've been selling many rail cars in China, not because we do or do not mention human rights, but because of their persistence, their patience, and of course their far-sighted approach to a big market.

As for any local governments, or any medium- to low-level contacts in terms of business contracts, we are no longer dealing with national institutions or national state enterprises. We are dealing more with local officials. A lot of experts from inside China will tell you that there is a growing dissatisfaction among local provincial governments with the central government. Even if the central government was displeased, I think the local governments would go their own way.

• (1150)

The Chair: Do any other panellists have a brief interjection?

Go ahead.

Mr. David Cozac: I have a couple of words to reiterate in terms of ending the dialogue. Again, PEN Canada is not calling for an end to the dialogue but rather a suspension until it's improved. As I mentioned, those improvements involve incorporating high-level officials on both sides of the table into the dialogue and bringing in civil society players from Canada and China so they can be more active players in the dialogue.

In terms of the issue on trade and human rights, China's successful survival as a country and as a nation depends on its economic prosperity. I think there's no way its going to jeopardize that just because of some human rights spat.

A case in point is when Parliament recently bestowed honorary citizenship on His Holiness The Dalai Lama. Chinese officials responded shortly thereafter warning of serious consequences. To my knowledge, those consequences haven't happened, nor do I expect they will.

China may talk in a threatening manner, but we suspect they won't carry it out because they really depend on these economic relationships.

The Chair: Mr. Li, you had a brief interjection.

Mr. Xun (Shawn) Li: I think we should understand the nature of this dialogue. As Professor Burton mentioned, and I'll reiterate:

The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs' mandate is to defend China's interests abroad. It has no institutional interest in promoting respect for China's human rights domestically.

Their mandate is not for the protection of human rights through this dialogue. Their mandate is to show we care about human rights, but no one will speak publicly.

The end result is that this becomes a reward to the country, the dictatorship, and the committee of human rights, for crimes against humanity. They use this as a licence to kill, and they continue to escalate.

We have to seriously consider that it's not one-sided. I know Canadians have compassion and kindness, but it's not a one-sided wish. It depends on the bilateral wish. If the other side has no wish to promote human rights, what's the point of continuing these human rights?

The Chair: We have to wrap it up.

Mr. Xun (Shawn) Li: Yes. Number two is about the consequences.

Not only in Denmark, but in the Netherlands in February 2001, the Minister of Foreign Affairs from the Netherlands cancelled a trip to China or postponed indefinitely a trip to China. He had arranged a meeting with Falun Gong representatives in Hong Kong and with other groups, but China protested and he cancelled the trip.

In the second half of the year, Denmark signed the largest trade mission to China.

• (1155)

The Chair: Do you mean the Netherlands?

Mr. Xun (Shawn) Li: Yes, the Netherlands.

We are talking about nothing but an illusion, a morality play. It's nothing more than the old saying of the emperor's new clothes. It is only whether or not we point it out.

Lastly, I want to highlight an article from *The Globe and Mail*, called *Punish Us - Please*. It was written to say that when China sanctions and punishes us, Canadians take advantage of the punishment. It is China that wants the trade more than we do. The truth is, when they do, they have the loss not only financially but morally.

The last point I want to make is this. We have a large trade deficit, but I'm more concerned about another deficit, which is morality, the principle deficit, since the bilateral dialogue. How can we afford this principle and morality deficit?

The trade deficit you can make up and amend in future years in trade, but with a morality deficit, you are risking people's lives. They put their lives on the line, and such loss is irreversible. In that regard, we encourage Canada to speak courageously, and we support you in doing that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Li.

We'll now go to Mr. Sorenson.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Thank you.

I apologize. I have to give a speech at 12 o'clock, so I'm going to have to hit and run here and get to the next event.

I want to thank you for coming here today. Certainly, as we sit and listen to the examples of offences in China—all sides, as a committee—we are definitely moved. The question then is, how can we respond, and what is required of us? That's why I appreciated Mr. Cotler's question: what can parliamentarians do?

We have two different sides, and in some ways two different sides butting up, and you've already addressed this—the side of trade and the side of human rights; the side of prosperity of China and alleged human rights offences, and the prosperity of Canada and how to stand up for our values and our principles and the things we've done.

We also have to be quite honest, as a new government. All parties recognize the importance of playing a role in helping to alleviate the human rights violations around the world. I can tell you for myself that I don't want it to become political, whereby we say "the way the former government used to do it" compared with the way we do it. In any of my comments, I'm not saying that in a political way.

But since 1997, Canada has pursued—initiated by the former government—bilateral talks with China. As reported in most papers, the perception is that as we meet behind closed doors, China has been sending lower levels of officials all the time. It's not the high-ranking officials who are there and are going to talk about issues both governments have wanted to talk about; it's more lower-level officials who are coming to meet.

What would you recommend?

This past week, we saw the Prime Minister stand up and take some heat, frankly. I guess I'd like comments on that.

But more specifically, what other measures can we undertake to put teeth into the dialogue between Canada and China? We've talked about parliamentary committees travelling and doing this and doing that. We send high-level officials; sometimes they send low-level officials. What else can we do to put teeth into it?

And maybe we could have your comments about our Prime Minister and the controversy that was perceived by some when he made it very clear that we wanted to talk about a balanced range of subjects—trade and human rights.

• (1200)

The Chair: Go ahead, David, if you'd like.

Mr. David Cozac: Just in terms of improving measures in a dialogue, in future what could be done is that when this dialogue resumes, if indeed it does, Canada should have clear objectives, activities, and expected results. Also, there should be an activity plan incorporated with it that has an identifiable timeframe and benchmarks: what the expected outcomes are; how you will monitor the impact of the conversation, of the initiatives.

All these documents and plans should be made public as well, in both Canada and China. Some of those things can be useful in improving the dialogue and the parameters and actual structure of it.

Mr. Cheuk Kwan: Mr. Sorenson, I want to use the word “linking”, in terms of linking human rights and trade, because I think there's a positive link. In every case that we have known, a good human rights record will always contribute to a better civil society. A society that respects the rule of law contributes to better trade relationships with other nations, and obviously to better domestic prosperity in that country.

I want to use a football analogy, if I may. Abandoning, for example, public criticism of China in the multilateral forum in favour of solely carrying on a bilateral dialogue is almost like telling your opponent that you're just going to run the ball and not pass it. In any dealings we have with China, especially in human rights, we need to make sure we have a balanced attack, if I may use that word. We need a balanced approach when dealing with China.

Bilateral dialogues are not entirely useless, but as I said before, I think it needs to involve better participation by civil society. As my colleagues have mentioned, obviously the bilateral relationship should be coming forth from the top level—between, for example, the prime ministerial level and the ministerial level—but to make it really work, it needs to have the participation of people on the ground, people from the civil society, people from both sides of the fence. I believe this is key to making it effective and useful.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Thank you.

Ms. Xue Sheng: Of course, dialogue is very important, but dialogue is not just talking to each other; there are lots of other ways to have dialogue.

As I mentioned in my presentation, the Chinese government is holding a big human rights exhibition that the Chinese media are calling the biggest human rights exhibition in the world. It is the first one held by the state. Of course, the Chinese government has learned to be smarter on human rights issues. The Chinese government knows how to educate its own people to be proud of the human rights situation in China. But Chinese citizens don't have much information about the real human rights situation in the world. I think we need to do this, and in three parts: Canadian society, the Chinese Canadian society here, and the Chinese society in China.

We have a million Chinese people here in Canada. When Prime Minister Harper raised the human rights situation in China, I don't think every Chinese person here was happy about that. To me that's very funny, because why are we here? Why did we come to Canada?

We had a rally in Toronto yesterday, and I spoke to the crowd in the street. A lot of people were yelling at us, “Hey, you are here. Why are you saying something good about Harper? Aren't you Chinese?” I said, “Ask yourself why you are here, why you are in Canada.” It was pretty strange.

The Chinese community here is frightened by the Chinese government, even though they are in Canada. I think the Canadian government should invest in the Chinese community here in Canada, to educate them and let them know, to protect them and make them safe. A lot of Chinese organizations or social groups are very close to the consulate and to the embassy. Why is that? It's not because they don't understand the values, or they don't trust or agree with the values; it's just because they are so frightened. They know that the Chinese government is so brutal they could do anything.

Take me. I am a very good example. Because I speak up here in Canada, I have been barred from visiting my family in China for 18 years. This is the kind of challenge that not everyone can take.

So I do think the Canadian government should invest more in Chinese society in Canada as well.

• (1205)

The Chair: The time is up. We'll have to pass to Mr. Marston.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to begin by going back to Mr. Sorenson's comments about not blaming previous governments and not getting into pointing fingers. One of the things I find hard to balance with that, though, is the fact that Canada itself has not signed on to the optional protocol on torture. But that's kind of an aside.

The balance between trade and human rights is a very terrible place to find ourselves. I want to thank you for coming here today and expressing your strong concerns on the issues.

I want to ask two things. First of all, we have Mr. Celil, who is a Canadian citizen being held in China. We have our Prime Minister, who made his remarks the other day, and we're still not clear about what took place when they actually met. And I'm not going to critique that one way or another. But I am concerned when you raise the 30,000 NGOs. Would they not, number one, be seen as subversive by the government the moment they start to become active? That's difficult.

I'll go beyond that, though, because we're really talking about the dialogue here today. What would you think of a proposal that said the dialogue is suspended, that we bring together union groups, that we bring together civil society, NGOs, and members of this committee to consider the dialogue's future? That's number one.

Number two, when the dialogue resumes, it would become accountable to this committee, as opposed to the direction now, because there are more political teeth in what we do.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Li.

Mr. Xun (Shawn) Li: I want to make a few comments. One is that we cannot utilize the bilateral dialogue as the sole means or the central channel for the promotion of human rights, because we have to use every means possible to promote human rights, and this is a concern.

Second, regarding the Prime Minister's actions in the past week, as the Falun Dafa Association we do not have any inclination toward either party. We don't have those kinds of political aspirations. What we do support is a principled approach, regardless of whether you are Liberal or NDP or Conservative. We support that principled approach, as we mentioned before. As one of the MPs told us, it is very hard for different parties to get together, but on the Falun Gong issue, on the human rights issue, it is easier, because these are universal values and are not owned by any party.

Third, I want to highlight the individuals. A number of people mentioned that it does make a difference. David Kilgour and David Matas are regarded as heroes of human rights defenders for what they have done on the organ harvesting investigation. They are testifying in many countries—in the U.S. and in other countries.

On the NGOs, the people have the wish in China, in Canada, that they should be part of this dialogue, because they truly care about human rights.

Another thing is that when China protests, we should read it differently. It's a command for what they are doing.

• (1210)

The Chair: We'll go to Mr. Kwan.

Mr. Cheuk Kwan: I welcome Mr. Martin's suggestion for the bilateral dialogue process to report directly to this subcommittee. Accountability is one of the key issues that we have been very frustrated about over the last ten years, in the sense that we've been briefed and debriefed by Foreign Affairs every time, before and after a bilateral dialogue. But every time we do that, there are always parts of these documents that are blackened because they are confidential or because the Chinese asked to keep them confidential.

I certainly do not understand. Certainly there is respect in that. However, I think if we have nothing to hide, if the Chinese have

nothing to hide, there shouldn't be anything that cannot be disclosed, at least not to your partners in this dialogue process.

I would welcome that kind of accountability, because symbolically, then, it represents a reporting to the people instead of to the government, which is a good example that we can set for China.

The Chair: You don't have to answer, but....

Mr. David Cozac: No, I have just a brief comment to that.

I echo the point about greater accountability and reporting to this committee results from the dialogue.

I think another way to strengthen the dialogue process is for the Canadian government to consult also with other nations, specifically European nations that carry out their own bilateral dialogues with the Government of China. I think there is a lot of room for Canada to collaborate with those countries in streamlining the dialogues they have, perhaps by selecting focus issues, or perhaps even by Canada's taking on a special expertise on a certain aspect of human rights while other countries focus on other aspects.

For example, I think it's the Government of Denmark that focuses on the Tibet issue in its dialogue with the Chinese government. Perhaps Canada could do something similar—or in collaboration with the other European nations, anyway.

The Chair: We'll pass now to Mr. Fitzpatrick.

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, CPC): Thank you very much.

I find this quite interesting. It's not a committee that I'm normally on, but it's a very fascinating topic.

I'd like to pursue the issue of trade, economic development, and human rights.

Last week the world lost one of—in my mind—the great economic thinkers of all time and a valued fighter for freedom, Milton Friedman, a Nobel prize winner.

The puzzle I have with the trends in China today, quite literally, is that, if I understand Professor Friedman correctly, free market economy and economic development go hand in hand with a high level of personal freedom, the freedom of people to express their points of view and make their decisions in a free society. You could make a very compelling case for these things being intertwined and joined at the hip.

It seems to me the authorities in China have embarked on half the puzzle at this stage, moving toward a market economy and a capitalistic enterprise society without understanding, perhaps, the other half of the equation. I don't see them as being separate entities; I see them, like Professor Friedman, as being very much a part of the same equation.

My question is, do the people in power in China not understand the connection between these fundamental human rights—freedom of choice, freedom of expression, and freedom of religion—and the sustainability of a market economy? And if they don't, is it not important that other countries try to educate them on the importance of this connection?

Mr. Cheuk Kwan: Could I answer that?

The Chair: Please go ahead.

Mr. Cheuk Kwan: That's the \$64,000 question.

The Chair: Isn't it more like a \$64 billion question?

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Cheuk Kwan: I'm sure they understand it. I'm sure they all understand that there's a link between human rights and freedom with a market economy, which obviously China is going towards.

One of the problems we're facing is the so-called transition in China. The current government obviously wants to hold on to power. They know that once political freedom has been given to the people, you would have in essence a democracy, perhaps, starting in China. This is something that any authoritarian government would be very frightened of. I believe that's, in a sense, the kind of fear the Communist Party has right now about their stranglehold in China.

I recently listened to a talk given by a fellow from the Carnegie Institute in Washington, D.C. He is a Chinese from the mainland, and his analysis of the whole situation, as I've pointed out, is that there will be an implosion within China—perhaps in decades, in less than ten or twenty years. There will be an implosion because the central control power from Beijing no longer stretches as far down as to the city level.

That's the point I made to Madame St-Hilaire before. When we're dealing with trade contracts or business contacts, more often than not we're dealing with a lot of local authorities. These local authorities are more and more distancing themselves from any national policy or from any nationalistic attitudes towards human rights such as those the current government has.

•(1215)

The Chair: Sheng Xue.

Ms. Xue Sheng: I believe the Chinese government understands as much as we do about democracy and human rights, but when one party is in power, they think it's forever. They don't think they need democracy and human rights. That's why I don't think the human rights dialogue between the Canadian and Chinese governments will work.

We can imagine that if we had one party in Canada and they looked at it as forever, this party wouldn't need democracy and human rights. The only thing they need is to control society, control people, and control everything, so they can make sure they are in power forever.

The Chair: We've run out of time.

We'll pass now to Mr. Wrzesnewskyj for a five-minute round.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Chair, and I'd like to thank the panel of witnesses.

Because of the time limitations, I'll go through my three questions immediately, and then perhaps one person could answer each of them. I envision that some of the answers will be quite brief. Then if there is time, I'd like to get back to this whole question of linkages between economic ties and human rights.

We've heard reference to the report by Mr. Matas and Mr. Kilgour. It's an excellent report. Most MPs received copies, but they did have limited access. I believe that most people see this for what it is—in

fact, an admission of guilt. If there's nothing to hide, then why not provide access?

In your statements, it would be helpful, if you can't provide it at this time, to table some documentation that would give a numeric value to the trade in harvested organs: the numbers and types of organs, a dollar value, and how this ties into the penitentiary system in China. It will be very helpful to have this on the record with the committee.

If someone knows this offhand, please give us a glimpse into that particular trade.

Also there was reference to a fear within the Chinese Canadian community of repercussions from the Chinese government. I have also heard reports of direct intimidation of Canadians of Chinese background involved in media. Perhaps someone could provide concrete examples of direct intimidation by the Chinese government here in Canada. That would be quite helpful.

The third question concerns China preparing for the Olympics. Millions of visitors will be traveling to China. What opportunities do you envision that this particular event will provide? Has China changed some of its internal behaviour when it comes to human rights in preparation for the Olympics?

After addressing those questions, I'd like to address the issue of linkages between economic trade and human rights, if there is some time.

•(1220)

The Chair: I'll remind each of you to be brief, because time is limited.

Mr. Xun (Shawn) Li: I will make it very brief.

I would recommend that the committee have a separate hearing for David Matas and David Kilgour, so that it can address this matter extensively.

Secondly, I want to highlight that there is ample evidence, about 80 pages, collected by the world organization in investigating the prosecution of Falun Gong. It's not only Chinese Canadian citizens. Even members of Parliament are physically assaulted and also have received hate.... They have asked them to withdraw their support of Falun Gong.

One example is former MP Gordon Earle. He received a letter and spoke on behalf of the multicultural spokesperson for the NDP, asking that we restore support for the Falun Dafa. He signed another letter saying that he congratulated them again.

Another example is Andy Wells, the mayor of St. John's, Newfoundland, who received a letter asking him to withdraw his support. He wrote that "this exemplifies your moral and ethical corruption by persecuting this innocent group".

I will provide the information to you after.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Can you table some of those documents for the committee?

Mr. Xun (Shawn) Li: Yes.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Thank you.

The Chair: Ms. Xue, you had some experience with this sort of issue, didn't you?

Ms. Xue Sheng: Yes. I want to comment on the Olympics matter. When Beijing won the Olympics, the CBC interviewed me. They said, "It's so hard to find someone who has an opposite opinion against Beijing holding the Olympics." They couldn't find anyone. I said I understood why that is. They asked, "Why are you against Beijing holding the Olympics?" I gave seven reasons for it.

First of all, I know the Chinese regime will kill more citizens, because they want the society to be more stable and they don't have any other way to keep it stable. The only way is that more Chinese will lose their lives. The second is that the Olympics will have more corruption for the government level. We already see some examples. For those two reasons, I think the Canadian government can do a lot.

For example, we have a family member who is serving a life sentence in a Chinese prison, Wang Bingzhang. His parents and actual wife, brothers, sisters, and children all are Canadian citizens. We should ask the Chinese government to release him in exchange for our supporting the Olympics in Beijing.

The Chair: We're at six minutes. We'll come back to a second round; we'll have time for that, Borys. Is that okay?

Ted, you have five minutes.

Mr. Ted Menzies (Macleod, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our witnesses today. I'm sure I echo the comments of all the committee members: this is very troubling, and we appreciate your sharing it with us. I think it's a message that needs to get out. In the interests of time, I'll keep my comments very brief and give you lots of opportunity to answer.

I'll go a little farther than Mr. Sorenson did. I was a little surprised at some of the reactions to our Prime Minister's standing up last week for human rights, and being very forceful about it. Frankly, I'm very proud of what he did, the position he took. We are a trading nation—we all realize that—but we can't forsake the rights of individuals just because of the almighty dollar, and I think I'm quoting the Prime Minister on that.

I think that is very important, and I would like your comments. We've heard some negative press about the position he took. I'm sure you have contacted or been contacted by many of your friends and associates. I'd like some of those comments, if you would present them.

At the end of this, the committee will be drafting a report, so most importantly, I would like some specific observations or recommendations that you might give us that we can put in that report and that will be helpful in submitting back to Parliament recommendations that will be the foundation of where Canada might go in the future, specifically on what you're telling us about today.

• (1225)

The Chair: Cheuk, go ahead.

Mr. Cheuk Kwan: I'd like to use a case from a few days ago when I was on CBC being interviewed, first on my reaction to the Prime Minister's trip. I gave my two cents' worth of opinion. The second caller was a business person from, I believe, Winnipeg. I was expecting contradiction from him and I was urging CBC to give me

some rebuttal time, but they didn't give it to me. However, what I found out—I was very pleasantly surprised—was that he agreed with everything I said. He was upset about the China snub, obviously, but not for reasons of human rights.

I think that in our media sometimes we, perhaps unnecessarily, link the so-called China snub with our human rights stands. I believe the two can be very separate. I believe that, as Mr. Li said, sometimes it's a morality play in which China wants to carry a big stick and wave its big stick; however, I think at the end you will find it never was a threat. I believe this is something we have to consider.

If we are doing the right thing, we will earn their respect, threats notwithstanding.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Li.

Mr. Xun (Shawn) Li: I think the judgment should not be which media said what about the Prime Minister; it is whether the Prime Minister stands up for Canadian values. If it is yes, regardless of what the media is saying, and the Prime Minister stands up for Canadian values, that is what is most important.

The judgment that is really important is the judgment from the court of morality. We have the legal court and we have the court of morality. This court is very significant. If we speak from our conscience, from morality, and you earn it, regardless of what the media are saying to you, history will be the judge of what we have done.

History will also be the judge of what we should have done but did not do. We shouldn't leave what we should have done for the future to amend; we should do whatever we should have done.

I think the Prime Minister did what he should have done.

The Chair: If I could use the chair's discretion to make an intervention, when I was in China, in Beijing, as has been mentioned, I was with Zhao Ziyang's family shortly following his death to bring condolences on behalf of Canadians and others who regarded him as an important figure for reform and democratization in China. Canadian officials tried to direct me not to go to his family house. They said to do so would cause great damage to the bilateral relationship; it would set things back enormously, and there would be consequences. Of course, there were no visible consequences of any kind. The only thing that continued was the growth of the Chinese trade surplus with Canada, so I don't imagine they'd want to jeopardize that.

I'm just going to ask one question, and then we'll come back to your round.

The narrative Mr. Menzies referred to in the past week in response to the initial cancellation of the bilateral heads of government meeting was that this was precipitated by a series of actions taken by the government and Parliament, including our granting refugee status to Lu Decheng, an important Chinese dissident; our parliament's unanimous consent for honorary citizenship to the Dalai Lama; my own greeting him in Canada on behalf of the government; and gestures such as these.

Would you care to comment on that? My understanding is that the United States Congress has granted the Dalai Lama the congressional medal of honour. They've received hundreds of political dissidents as refugees to the United States. The President has met with the Dalai Lama at the White House. Why do you think some people in Canada believe that we have less moral authority than our neighbours to the south when it comes to operating on the international stage and speaking for Canadian values? I don't understand why we Canadians are always so proud about ourselves vis-à-vis the United States, yet too many people in this country seem willing to set a lower standard for ourselves when it comes to engaging.

• (1230)

Mr. Cheuk Kwan: The excuse I've always heard, both in Ottawa and in Geneva, is that Canada is a small country and cannot afford to offend China—unlike the U.S., which can carry clout that is perhaps ten times bigger than ours.

However, I go back to my story about Denmark. Little Denmark stood up to the so-called giants at that time and suffered no consequences. I think that's a message we want to get out to our politicians as well as our people: Canada can say no to China without an adverse effect on our relationship.

I think too often our officials perhaps have been a little bit too intimidated in dealing with China. Perhaps, as I mentioned before, they put this pretext of oriental culture around it. They almost treat China as a country differently from the way we normally treat other countries. I think that's perhaps the mindset we need to reverse and get clear about.

Mr. David Cozac: To be sure, Canada is a middle power on the world stage. But in the end, it's better to speak out than to be silent. I think it's good for the Canadian government to do so. I would also say that with Canada speaking out, it's joining other governmental voices around the world. It's the cumulative effect of these governments in the west speaking out against human rights abuses in China that does have an impact. By all means, Canada should be vocal in this regard.

Ms. Xue Sheng: The Canadian government is democratic. It needs support from its own people. When it's dealing with Chinese human rights issues, it needs support from the Chinese community in Canada. It is a big community. I think I mentioned before that the Chinese community in Canada is pretty weak. It is not strong enough, not independent enough, and not brave enough. The Chinese consulate and the embassy control Chinese society pretty tightly.

I called a friend here in Ottawa yesterday and said we were going to have a rally on Parliament Hill and to please call friends in Ottawa to join us. He said he could only get two or three, and they wouldn't dare come out. I said, that's pretty strange. We are in Canada, we are supporting the Canadian government, we are happy with what Harper did, and they're not brave enough to come out. It's something that really shouldn't be.

The Canadian government needs to be aware that the Chinese community is getting bigger and bigger. But when it's not independent, when it's controlled by a foreign government, and

when people are afraid to support the Canadian government, it's a dangerous thing for the whole society.

The Chair: Good point.

I promised Borys another round.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij: Thank you, Chair.

I will continue with this \$64 billion question on real or hypothetical linkages between human rights and trade with China.

Once again, unfortunately, we don't have the stats in front of us. Perhaps, Mr. Kwan, you'll be able to provide some additional information.

From my understanding, there is an imbalance of trade between our two countries. Those who are concerned with Canada's macroeconomics would smile if they thought there would be an effect on that trade relationship, because China quite clearly is the beneficiary.

You can't envelope all relationships in generalizations, but my understanding is that most of our trade with China involves raw resources. China has tremendous interest, for instance, in our oil, whereas most of the trade in this direction is in finished goods. They're a very low-cost producer.

There are a number of countries, even from the same region, that don't abuse rights in the same way that China does. They would be happy to fill that void pretty quickly, and they would be quite capable of doing so. In fact, if China is not a market for our raw goods, our oil, there is a world market. I don't think we would have any difficulty finding other markets.

It seems to be a false debate and a false argument on a number of levels. It was helpful that you used the examples of Holland and Denmark. Perhaps you can provide more detail and substance to the actual trade relationship, so we could dispel some of those false arguments in the media.

• (1235)

Mr. Cheuk Kwan: I'm not an economist, but I can certainly say that macroeconomics plays a big role. If you want to blame anybody, you can blame Wal-Mart, or people like that who are bringing in cheaper China goods. Unfortunately, that's a consumer decision. That's something I don't think any government can control.

To try and adjust the balance, the only thing we can urge Canadians to do is perhaps to develop a hard technology, as in the case of Bombardier and Spar Aerospace and so forth, that can export value-added goods and technology to China. In reality, we are perhaps at the expense of the international economy.

That further sustains my point that it doesn't really matter what you do on the human rights front. China will do what it wants to do. China will buy the resources, if they're at the right price, and we will buy their goods, if they're at the right price. In that sense, I don't see any adverse reaction in terms of human rights and our stance.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Li.

Mr. Xun (Shawn) Li: Regarding the details of the data, the trade volume between China and Denmark in 2003 was \$2.4 billion U.S., an increase of 58.2% from the previous year. This is one of the numbers.

Also, about six months after the postponement of the minister's trip to China from the Netherlands, a large economic mission of Dutch led by the vice-Prime Minister and minister of economic affairs went to China. This is the reality.

I also want to highlight very briefly that regardless of whether your country is big or small, or what your population is, as long as you are righteous, you have moral power. This is what every Falun Gong practitioner is doing in China. When they unfolded the banner in Tiananmen Square, they had moral authority there, and their power was very strong. Regarding fear and the loss of fear, it is unjustified either from inside or from outside. When they break out in fear, the person holding those values should not be afraid; rather those who destroy those values should be afraid.

The Chair: All right.

I think we'll have to close the session there. I would just add as a note to the last question that perhaps we should invite, as part of the study, some of those from the business community who made this

argument. Perhaps we could challenge them, because I would certainly like to see them questioned.

Mr. d'Aquino of the Canadian Council of Chief Executives is in the newspapers today being critical of Canada's raising, in a principled fashion, human rights questions in its bilateral relationship. I would like to know how it is that we have had a shrinking export market share to China over the past decade and a growing trade deficit and no preferred designation status. In other words, we played China policy according to his textbook for the past ten years and we didn't get the commercial results. I think it's reasonable to ask these people who claim to speak for the Canadian business community how more of the same will deliver different results. But we'll leave that perhaps to our planning session.

I'd like to thank all of the witnesses for their appearance before us, particularly those who have actually faced persecution for their courage. We look forward to continued deliberations.

Thank you for your advice and counsel.

We will now adjourn this meeting as we move into an in camera planning session.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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