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Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

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•(1110)

[Translation]

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

[English]

Welcome. This is meeting number 4 of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, on Tuesday, November 27, 2007.

Our orders of the day begin with the supplementary estimates. You will take note in your agenda of the votes and different areas that we're going to look at under Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

Our witnesses today are from the Canadian International Development Agency. We welcome the president, Robert Greenhill. As well, we have Gregory Graham with us today, who is the acting vice-president, human resources and corporate services branch. We also welcome, from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the deputy minister, Leonard Edwards; and Doreen Steidle, the assistant deputy minister of corporate services.

As you know, in our second hour we are going to move to Bill C-9, which I don't think is going to take a lot of time. Because of starting late, if it suits with our guests here today, we may go over the twelve o'clock cut-off, if that's all right. It's just depending on how many questions we have.

Again, we welcome you.

I'm not certain of the order in which you want to go on. I see on our agenda we have Mr. Greenhill first, and maybe we would ask him to begin.

Go ahead, Mr. Greenhill.

Mr. Robert Greenhill (President, Canadian International Development Agency): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am very pleased to be here on behalf of the minister, Beverly Oda, to discuss the supplementary estimates as they apply to CIDA for the fiscal year 2007-08. I am joined by CIDA's acting vice-president of human resources and corporate services, Gregory Graham.

We're here today as part of CIDA's participation in the supplementary estimates process. I'll begin by noting that the proposed \$15.5 million increase in CIDA's operating budget takes into account the additional resources required to cover the cost of two of CIDA's critical programs in Afghanistan and Sudan. Of this,

\$4.3 million is incremental funding for CIDA and \$11.2 million will be transferred from CIDA's grants and contributions budget.

As you are aware, Afghanistan is presently our largest program. It is currently forecast that the agency will spend more than \$250 million in grants and contributions to Afghanistan in the year 2007-08. To manage these disbursements the agency is increasing the number of staff in Kabul and Kandahar as well as at headquarters. Our field presence has more than doubled in the past two years. We are continuing to grow it. We will have 35 professional staff working in Afghanistan by April 2008 compared to just 10 in 2006. Overall, with the creation of the Afghanistan task force, we have grown from a program of just over 20 full-time employees to a staff of almost 80. Approximately \$12.7 million will cover these costs of the Afghan program, which have ramped up in line with the broad programming.

Similarly, our enhanced programming in Sudan is matched with an additional operating cost of \$2.8 million related to the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of projects. We are continuing to assist with a difficult humanitarian crisis in Darfur and at the same time we, along with other donors, are trying to reinforce the fragile north-south peace agreement through development support.

CIDA's program focuses on providing humanitarian assistance to people afflicted by the conflict; facilitating the reintegration of displaced persons; supporting basic education, health services, demining activities; and improving water and sanitation for those in need.

Since January 2006, CIDA has disbursed some \$120 million in Sudan, including \$72.7 million in crisis assistance and over \$47.5 million for reconstruction efforts. To enable us to deliver our program we've created a new division for the Sudan program headed by a director and we are establishing positions in the field so that we can deploy staff to Khartoum and Juba. In Juba this involved CIDA's participation with the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, United Kingdom, and Norway in a joint donor office in southern Sudan, the world's first experience in fully harmonizing efforts and co-location among donors.

The supplementary estimates also include additional funding for grants and contributions for CIDA's support of the Lebanon relief fund, some \$2.2 million, and humanitarian and reconstruction efforts in Sudan of \$16 million. In Lebanon, Canadian support is making improvements to water and sanitation, shelter, protection, medical facilities, and repairs to essential infrastructure.

[*Translation*]

At the same time, there are a number of reductions to our grants and contributions budget totalling \$30.3 million.

These reductions consist of a number of transfers to the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. The largest, involving \$11.9 million, reflects the transfer of responsibility to DFAIT for direct support to the African Union Peace Operations in Darfur. The remainder of the transfers will be used to provide administrative support for CIDA's increased presence abroad, \$4.5 million, and to finance scholarship programs announced by the Prime Minister in July in Latin America and the Caribbean, 0.7 million.

CIDA will also transfer \$2 million to the International Development Research Centre for a project involving the Institute for Connectivity in the Americas.

Supplementary Estimates also identify the need for CIDA to invest an additional \$26.6 million in the Canada Investment Fund for Africa, a fund that was set up to encourage investments in the securities of African companies.

The Fund has been quite successful in attracting private sector investments, and in order for CIDA to meet its obligations to match private sector investments, we require an additional \$26.6 million this year, over and above the \$19 million included in the Main Estimates.

This \$26.6 million represents CIDA's full and final participation in the Fund.

The additional investment funds will allow CIDA to meet its contractual obligations to match anticipated investments by the private sector over the balance of the year.

Supplementary Estimates are also being used to authorize a \$210.6 million increase in the Agency's grant authorities.

This increase will not result in a net increase in spending authority as the increase in grants will be offset by a corresponding decrease in contribution authorities.

The planned grant authorities will position the Agency to make grants to multilateral organizations for their programs in crisis states such as Afghanistan, Haiti, and Sudan; to maintain CIDA's level of core funding to certain multilateral institutions as well as to finance emergency food aid; to relieve chronic food shortages in Ethiopia; and to assist in the relief of HIV/AIDS and the strengthening of health systems in Africa.

• (1115)

[*English*]

Supplementary estimates are also being used to authorize a \$210-million increase in the agency's grant authorities.

Mr. Chair, in all these countries and across our entire aid budget, CIDA's approach is one of effectiveness, focus, and accountability. This approach is helping us achieve results in Afghanistan and Haiti, in Sudan, and in other failed and fragile states. In Afghanistan, thanks to funding from Canada and other donor countries, there are now over six million children in school, including two million girls,

which is unprecedented in that country's history. We provide funding to a global polio eradication program that is immunizing more than seven million children in Afghanistan, including some 350,000 in Kandahar.

A micro-credit loans and savings program is helping more than 400,000 adults start a business, rebuild their livelihoods, support their families, and raise healthy children. In Haiti, CIDA supports good governance, including the funding of democratic elections. We provide funding to Haiti to establish a more professional public service, improved infrastructure such as roads and electricity, and a better school system.

Yesterday in Tanzania, the Prime Minister, accompanied by Minister Oda, announced that Canada is mobilizing a broad coalition to strengthen health systems in sub-saharan Africa. This initiative will save a million lives. Canada's \$105-million share alone will save more than 200,000 lives. These are results at their most important and most tangible. This is part of a larger 10-year program, called the African health systems initiative announced at a 2006 G-8 summit in St. Petersburg, and reaffirms Canada's engagement in Africa.

Mr. Chair, these are just some of the concrete gains being made through the work of CIDA. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the committee today. I would of course be pleased to respond to any questions.

Merci beaucoup.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Greenhill.

We'll proceed to Mr. Edwards.

Mr. Leonard Edwards (Deputy Minister, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm very pleased to be here today to discuss the supplementary estimates of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

More and more, what happens abroad affects every dimension of Canadian life. It's therefore important to keep Parliament informed of what the department is doing on behalf of Canadians.

[*Translation*]

The Department leads and coordinates a government-wide approach to pursuing Canada's global agenda and promoting Canadian interests and values internationally. It provides passport, consular and business services to Canadians and Canadian companies, enabling their participation in the international community.

And it manages Canada's missions worldwide, providing the international platform of the entire Government of Canada—not just the Department.

[*English*]

That, in a nutshell, is what the department does. But what gives it distinctive character and quality?

Let me just say a few words about the government's foreign policy priorities, which are the setting for the supplementary estimates. I'll then briefly describe the context of those estimates.

Two of the government's key priorities are Afghanistan and the Americas, and Robert has referred to those priorities in the context of his presentation.

First, Afghanistan. Afghans have suffered through decades of war, as you know. When extremists took power there, the terrorists soon followed. When the Taliban government was defeated in 2001, they left a shattered country. Now Afghanistan is looking to the international community to help it get back on its feet.

It's in Canada's security interests to help Afghanistan become a stable, democratic, and self-sustaining state. Canada has joined with over 60 nations and international organizations to implement a plan for Afghanistan's recovery, called the Afghanistan Compact.

The compact sets out security, governance, and development as three essential and mutually supporting pillars. Our approach entirely reflects this interdependence. For example, our security efforts are also aimed at building capacity in government. Our development projects are also aimed at building a more secure environment for the Afghan people. The pillars reinforce one another, showing that Canadian interests and values come together in our mission in Afghanistan.

The Canadian presence is making a real difference to the Afghan people. At the same time, we're making a real contribution to international peace and security. This is important, honourable work. The courage of our soldiers and our civilians in Afghanistan is undeniable and all Canadians recognize that. The department leads the whole-of-government coordination of Canada's mission in Afghanistan, and we're proud of that role.

Another key priority of the government is the Americas. The Americas represent a unique opportunity for Canada to show leadership while also pursuing our interests. The government's approach is also based on three mutually reinforcing pillars. The aim is to increase prosperity, to enhance security, and to promote our fundamental values of freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

Regarding trade and investment, the Americas are a region of high potential for Canadian businesses. Indeed, we are currently the third-largest investor there, and growing.

● (1120)

[Translation]

The Prime Minister pointed out during his visit to the region last summer that open markets are the best means by which to build higher standards of living and to improve social conditions for all. We will work to secure open markets where possible.

The challenges to security and stability in the Americas stem primarily from weak democratic institutions and socio-economic inequities. Democratic accountability and clean government go hand in hand. That is why good governance matters.

[English]

We will therefore be working to help countries in their efforts to strengthen their democratic institutions. To this end we can draw from the Canadian models of governance as an example. By helping them improve the delivery of education, security, and health

services, Canada brings not only our values to bear on the region, but we also bring greater security and stability to the region.

The department also focuses on other strategic objectives beyond these two key priorities. We're pursuing a safer, more secure, and prosperous Canada within the strengthened North American partnership. We seek accountable and consistent use of the multilateral system to deliver results on global issues of concern to Canadians. We seek to strengthen services to Canadians, including consular, passport, and global commercial activities. And we want greater effectiveness and efficiency from our departmental resources to support international policy objectives and program delivery at home and abroad.

These objectives are necessary for a number of reasons, starting with the world in which Canadians find themselves today.

[Translation]

Governments are facing growing demands on all fronts, as the distinction between what is purely domestic and what is international is increasingly blurred.

[English]

Increasingly we are encountering issues that touch on the responsibilities of other federal government departments, issues that have a domestic as well as an international dimension. This requires that we adopt a whole-of-government perspective and exercise our mandated role as the integrator and coordinator of Canadian foreign policy.

Let me give you an example. We're closely engaged with other government departments in developing an integrated northern strategy for Canada. Such a strategy aims at reinforcing the expression of our sovereignty in the Arctic and ensuring that our position is well understood by our neighbours and international partners. Climate change and environment are other issues where domestic interests blend with those of foreign policy.

At the same time, the world itself is changing: power is shifting to Asia, India and China are on the rise, global economic competition is fierce and unrelenting. Canada must adjust to these new realities. We have to identify global trends, focus on key priorities and strategic objectives, and realign resources to maximum effect. That's what we do in our department.

It's against that background that we present our supplementary estimates. The supplementary estimates show how we are working to fulfill our whole-of-government responsibilities while remaining prudent financially.

[Translation]

To illustrate: we run a global network of offices—embassies, consulates and trade offices. This network provides an international platform not just for us, but also for more than 20 other federal government departments and agencies. All of them with programs and responsibilities to deliver internationally.

Most of the missions in the network offer a full range of services to Canadians. And demand is growing across our global network.

• (1125)

[English]

Naturally enough, in this environment of increasing demand, different needs arise in the course of a year. They have to be met, whether it's for consular services or elsewhere in the department's work. In some cases, resources can be transferred within existing programs; in other cases, new moneys have to be found.

Let me cite just a few items in this regard that appear in the estimates.

We need to improve the security of our missions abroad. Personnel are serving in areas where there are increased terrorism risks. In some countries our missions must be upgraded to meet current standards for natural disasters. We're also seeking new funds for our humanitarian and peace operations in Sudan. A significant amount of money will provide air support for the African Union peacekeeping mission in Darfur.

[Translation]

Passport Canada needs major new funding to meet new demands. Since April 2007, 45% more passports have been issued than last year at the same time. This reflects changes in American border measures. We have to make sure Canadians get the service they need and deserve.

[English]

Items such as these and others are addressed in detail in the supplementary estimates that are before you. In closing, let me say as deputy minister of foreign affairs just how immensely proud I am of the women and men who work so tirelessly day after day in my department to defend and advance Canada's interests and values internationally. They're an extremely dedicated group of employees who provide critical support to Canadians in every walk of life, in some very challenging environments around the world, each and every day. They are truly remarkable, and they're making a difference.

Here on the home front, the department's employees once again this year demonstrated their generosity, if I may say so, to those less fortunate, donating over \$1 million to the charitable campaign here in the national capital region. We owe a lot to their dedicated service to Canada.

I'd be pleased now to join Robert in answering your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Edwards and Mr. Greenhill.

We will proceed to our first round of questioning. From the official opposition, we have Mr. Patry.

[Translation]

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

Thank you, Messrs. Greenhill, Graham and Edwards and Ms. Steidle.

In your statement, Mr. Greenhill, you say:

[...] we have created a new division for the Sudan program headed by a director and we are establishing two Canadian positions in the field to be able to deploy staff to Khartoum and Juba.

In Juba, this involves CIDA's participation with the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, United Kingdom, and Norway in a Joint Donor Office in South Sudan, the world's first experience in fully harmonizing efforts among donors.

I hail this initiative in a way, although it comes very late given the current genocide in Darfur.

I would like CIDA to be much more proactive and to try to intervene at the outset, not two years later, as is the case in Darfur. In West Darfur, we are currently witnessing an arabization of the entire region and the displacement of refugees who are currently in camps in order to move them closer to the Janjawid militias. However, we know that if the refugees are closer to the Janjawids, the genocide will be even greater than it currently is.

Chad and the Central African Republic are also on the verge of conflict. We know there are millions of refugees in Chad. Is CIDA or the Department of Foreign Affairs negotiating with the President of Chad, Mr. Deby, to see how Canada could intervene in the refugee camps? There will be increasing numbers of refugees in the regions, and the consequences will be even greater.

We have established two Canadian positions in the field. In view of CIDA's activities, what will the mandate of those two Canadians be in Khartoum and Juba? When do you think you will really be in a position to know what Canada will be doing? Given its current structure, which is very rigid, CIDA will need a mandate; it will come back to Canada and return over there, as a result of which, in six months, nothing will have been done. I'd like to know the exact mandate of these individuals and when they will be reporting.

The aid that CIDA and other donor countries are providing in Juba is an excellent thing. However, CIDA and the Department of Foreign Affairs should be working with the countries bordering on Darfur, particularly with Egypt and Libya, even though the conference in Libya did not work very well. In fact, it did not work at all. By having only donor countries, we are patching up the problem and not finding any solutions. In my mind, Egypt is part of the solution.

Thank you.

• (1130)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Patry.

Mr. Greenhill.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Greenhill: Thank you very much for your questions about the country that is our third concern after Afghanistan and Haiti. You asked a number of questions concerning not only CIDA, but also the government as a whole. I'm also going to ask my colleagues to answer a few questions.

Since January 2006, we've already allocated \$120 million to the Sudan and surrounding areas, as well as to the refugee camps. Canada, its major partners and the World Food Program are helping 5.7 million Sudanese find food. In cooperation with other agencies, Canada took part in the distribution of more than 4 million pounds and helped the financing of more than 14,000 teachers.

It is essential to work closely together in this part of the world. It is very difficult, indeed dangerous, but, by adopting an integrated approach involving not only the government, but also all donors, we're achieving good results. Dr. Patry, I will be delighted to provide more detailed examples of the results achieved to date and anticipated results.

Thank you for taking an interest in this question.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Greenhill.

Mr. Edwards, did you want to add to some of Mr. Patry's questions?

Mr. Leonard Edwards: I would just assure the member that in fact Canada is broadly supporting the UN, the African Union, and other international efforts to implement a four-pronged strategy. We are focusing on a reinvigorated ceasefire; a renewed political process, under UN and NATO leadership; and support for the implementation of the comprehensive peace agreement, including the renewed political process.

So the aspects Monsieur Patry has mentioned are very much a part of our foreign policy approach to this, and we're of course working very closely with CIDA to arrive at what we hope will be a successful outcome. But the situation, as outlined, is extremely difficult, and we all recognize that.

The Chair: Thank you.

We still have some time, because we started late. As I mentioned earlier, our intention is to go by the hour and we will have seven-minute rounds. Because there's no minister here, it's not a ten-minute round. You'll get a second round and you'll get the chance to ask the questions. We'll try to go as long as we can.

Mr. Wilfert, did you want to have a quick question now, or did you want to wait until the second round?

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Well, I actually would like both.

I have a quick question on one item. There's so much I could ask you, but the question I have is on the public diplomacy program, the PDP.

As you know, there was a significant cut, in spite of a briefing note to the minister of the day, Mr. MacKay, saying that as a legitimate international tool for the federal government, all our competitors use these diplomacy tools in the areas of the arts, particularly books, music, etc. And as you know, Mr. Edwards, I'm particularly familiar with Asia and Japan. Why has the department not pushed on this issue? This seems to me a legitimate and an extremely important vehicle for us to be using internationally. Certainly our competitors use it. What are we doing to address the issue of the \$228 million cut, the \$11.8 million particularly in 2006?

I'd like later to talk about consulates and other things, but I think that is an important one that captures what Canada is about abroad. We seem to be losing that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Wilfert.

You have ten seconds to answer, but we will stretch it out a bit longer and we'll give a little more time to those as well.

Mr. Edwards.

Mr. Leonard Edwards: I fully understand the concern of the member in asking the question. The decisions of the government with respect to cuts made over the past couple of years are tough decisions, every one of them. We don't always make them with a lot of pleasure, but we have to make cuts as managers anyway because of the funding issues that we face.

With respect to that particular program, we did in fact cut what we call the public diplomacy fund. But we have kept in place a number of other activities that have public diplomacy aspects. A number of funds still remain at missions, so-called Canada funds, which are used. What we call PF, post-initiative funds, are still available to do those kinds of resources.

We still have some cultural funding that we're using as well. We continue to work with the funding we have available to ensure that our missions, when the need arises, particularly our priority missions where the issues are of top priority for the government, do have the funds to do their jobs.

• (1135)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Edwards.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Barbot, you have seven minutes.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ): Thank you for being here, madam and gentlemen. You'll allow me to tell you I'm somewhat confused when we look at what Canada is doing in the various programs. No doubt you can help me understand.

Mr. Edwards, in your presentation, you say that security, governance and development are the three essential and mutually supporting pillars in Afghanistan. As regards the Americas, you say that the three mutually supporting pillars are prosperity, enhancing security and promoting our fundamental values. You mentioned freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

I'm trying to understand how these factors reinforce the 3Ds that are Canada's trademark: diplomacy, defence and development. How are these visions consistent with the understanding we have of Canada's anchor point, particularly since, in both cases, you talk about reinforcing our values?

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Barbot.

Mr. Edwards.

[*English*]

Mr. Leonard Edwards: Let me try to provide examples in both cases.

With respect to Afghanistan, of course, we all recognize that security has been the first requirement in that country, particularly in the south with the very unstable conditions that exist there.

Providing security to the region then facilitates the opportunity to bring our development aspect to the table and to provide for the kind of assistance that is needed to provide the citizens with basic services and so on.

We also want to ensure that the government in Kabul and in Kandahar have governance structures that are properly able to ensure that over the long term the Afghans themselves can take charge of their country, as they are doing, and begin to deliver those services themselves.

We want to ensure that we are handing over to Afghanistan and to the people of Afghanistan a secure situation, that we provide some assistance so that they can put their social services in order, and that they have the governance structures in place to do that.

All of these things interrelate, and we can't simply have a security line of approach without looking at the longer-term social and political stability in the region.

The same is true in the Americas. What we're talking about there is a little different. We do not have physical insecurity in the same sense that we have it in Afghanistan, but there are issues around drug trafficking crime. There are also physical security issues just as simple as the high incidence of natural disasters and the lack of security in a broad sense that this brings to a population always faced with the difficulties of a typhoon or an earthquake.

So there, our security approach is quite different from what it is in Afghanistan, but it serves the same purpose; that is, we try to help provide stable and secure lives for the people, to the extent that we can help with the development of crime control and policing services and so on. At the same time, we believe we have models of governance in Canada, institutions in Canada, systems in Canada that can be of value to governments in the region.

Finally, on the prosperity side again, we know that prosperity and the broad enjoyment of prosperity by a population helps put security in place and then will sustain the strong values that we believe need to underpin it.

So our prosperity agenda in the Americas is to engage Canadian businesspeople and Canadian institutions in economic and business relationships with firms in the Americas, to promote good two-way economic development that will set the stage for a stable, secure, and prosperous situation for citizens of the region.

• (1140)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Edwards.

Madame St-Hilaire.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

My questions are essentially for you, Mr. Greenhill. It's always a pleasure to see you again.

However, I see once again that you don't always tell us everything. In your presentation, you say that declining contributions will offset an increase in grants. What is the difference between a grant and a contribution? Compared to today, what do you think was the approximate ratio 10 years ago?

Mr. Robert Greenhill: I'm going to ask Greg Graham to provide a few technical details on that subject. I'll continue afterwards.

[*English*]

Mr. Gregory Graham (Acting Vice-President, Human Resources and Corporate Services Branch (HRCS), Canadian International Development Agency): Generally speaking, contributions are payments that involve conditions. So the majority of CIDA's programming is done through contribution agreements that require the recipients of the contributions to report on progress made in implementing a project and so on. They have to report on the nature and the types of expenditures they incur and obviously the level of expenditures before we then provide them with another advance against the overall contribution.

A grant, on the other hand, is generally unconditional in nature. Now, that's a basic definition that I think applies across the government. Our grants are unusual in that most of our grants, unlike other departments' grants, are not paid to individuals. Our grants are generally paid to international organizations, such as UN-affiliated organizations or the WHO and so on, organizations that have sterling reputations and have very strong systems of internal accountability and so on.

In this sense, even though we're paying a grant that is in principle unconditional, in reality our grants I think have quite a bit of accountability associated with them.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Graham. We'll get to you again on the second round.

We'll go to the government side. Mr. Obhrai and Mr. Pallister on a split.

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's nice to be back at the foreign affairs committee.

Thank you for appearing and for your presentations. I want to echo your positive comments about your staff. I must ask you to pass on my thanks and compliments to your staff on the briefings and the information. They seem to have been very helpful and very open. This department has taken a lot of criticism in recent months, and I'm sure you're thick-skinned enough to absorb more.

Rather than adding to the pile-on that you've experienced recently, I'd like to begin by saying that I'm very pleased, given this "out of Africa" thesis that we've been listening to for the last while from some in the opposition parties that we are apparently as a government withdrawing from Africa and not continuing the support that's been offered in the past, to see the Prime Minister's announcement yesterday on the \$105 million Canada-led initiative to save a million lives in Africa.

I think your department believes, your staff believes, and we believe as a government that there's a role for us to play there and that we should play it—in particular, on reducing child mortality and maternal mortality. I'm pleased to see the initiative announced, in particular the willingness to address the critical shortage of health care workers, and in particular expanding on our previous announcement of an African health systems initiative, something that has already seen some positive results, I believe, in terms of, for example, the vitamin A supplement program, the mosquito-netting program for malaria prevention, and so on. There is a number of initiatives there that are making a positive difference, I believe.

It's great to have these announcements; it's great to say we're going to save a million lives. It's wonderful, and I think everybody should be encouraged by the noble intent. But what plans do you have to track the results of this initiative? What specifically are you going to do as a department to make sure that our landing is as good as our take-off?

• (1145)

Mr. Robert Greenhill: Thank you very much.

It's an excellent question. It has been one of the real focal points for what we're doing, because the real hallmark of the agency is to actually show real results and actually be able to cost the results.

Over the last half-decade or more, Canada has been a real leader in some of the more innovative approaches, like the provision of insecticide-treated bed nets, which we've seen leads to huge reduction in mortality, particularly of young children and pregnant mothers. We've seen how the use of vitamin A and other key interventions can make a real difference.

What this catalytic initiative is doing, this initiative to save a million lives, is setting a goal that is actually very simple, quite fundamental. It's to say that over the next several years we will, in a demonstrable fashion, stop a million people from dying, primarily children and expectant mothers. We'll do it through using a series of proven interventions, such as insecticide-treated bed nets, ACT treatment, dealing with diarrhea through simple antibiotics. Through about eight to ten interventions, we believe we can reduce mortality rates in certain areas by 40% or more. We also believe, through the evidence, that we can do it at a cost per life saved of less than \$500.

What is somewhat unique about this approach—

Mr. Brian Pallister: I'm sorry, Mr. Greenhill; I have such a short amount of time. I appreciate your expanding on the intent of the program, but what I asked you was how you are going to track the results. I'd like you to specifically address that question, please.

Mr. Robert Greenhill: Unlike other approaches that wait until the end of the program, meaning it's three to five years before results are seen, our approach in this case is to actually determine the mortality and morbidity rates—the illness rates—in the regions before we go in, and then we're working with Johns Hopkins University and other world-class researchers to track, on an annual basis, the changes in mortality rates thanks to our interventions. We'll be able to come back to Canadians with very specific reductions in mortality, thanks to this package of interventions we were just talking about.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Greenhill.

Mr. Obhrai is next.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Thank you.

Thank you for coming. It's always good to see you here, talking about our foreign policy and CIDA policy.

The issue of concern lately is the passport issue, which keeps coming back in Parliament. Parliamentarians are extremely concerned on this passport issue, due to this U.S. requirement at the border.

I know you have taken some initiatives out there to expedite the issuing of passports. What I really want to know about is the

timeframe. With all these initiatives you have taken—the guarantees and all these things—have we actually managed to reduce the timeframe of issuing passports? We understand it is going up, but the key element that is really facing questioning is whether we have actually reduced the time.

Mr. Leonard Edwards: Thank you for that question.

Yes, indeed, we have reduced the time. I won't hide from you the fact that it has required an enormous effort.

The increase in the number of passports issued over the last year indicates the size of the increase in demand. We have actually issued 45% to 46% more passports this year, since April, than we did in a similar period last year. That means we are predicting somewhere around 4.7 million passports will be issued this year. Those are the bare numbers.

In terms of the service standards, I have here my head of passports, who can answer in a little more detail if you like, but basically at one point earlier this year we were dealing with a 60-day wait time for mail-in applications. I should explain that most passports in Canada are obtained through our offices, of which we have 33 in Canada; those passports are issued within the service standards of 10 business days, so in terms of wait times, we're really talking about the mail-in applications.

At one point earlier this summer the mail-in wait times were around 60 days before you would get a passport. Our service standards there are 20 working days. We're now down somewhere around 25 to 28 working days, so there have been significant improvements in our service standards for mail-ins.

• (1150)

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Obhrai.

We'll go to Mr. Dewar.

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

Thank you to our guests for their opening remarks.

I'm going to start with Darfur. We've been talking about that a little bit.

I just wanted to bring to your attention the fact that the UN, as recently as this week, said that the mission we're all hoping will go ahead will fail unless countries can provide helicopters and lorries—this is actually a BBC report, so they say “lorries”—and that the deployment is to begin in six weeks.

On August 2 we had Mr. MacKay, who was then Minister of Foreign Affairs, announce the \$48 million in aid for Darfur. He told us the money would go towards providing fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters, fuelling, and training. We keep hearing that the mission on the ground is without helicopters, so where is the money, or where are the helicopters? Can you help me with that? I'm looking at the appropriations here and I'm looking at the announcements of the government. I'm trying to put these two things together, and I'm hearing from the UN that this mission is not going to go ahead unless they have the supplies.

My understanding is that we have helicopters. I've seen it announced by the government. I've seen money announced there for it—so where are the helicopters?

Mr. Leonard Edwards: Let me try to answer that, and maybe I can ask an expert to come forward if you need more detail.

Basically, what has happened is that the moneys that you are referring to have indeed been used—

Mr. Paul Dewar: So they've been spent.

Mr. Leonard Edwards: —to lease helicopters and they have been available. It was about \$40 million over the first six months and another \$40 million in the last six months of this year. Now that we're—

Mr. Paul Dewar: So we leased helicopters from another country?

Mr. Leonard Edwards: Yes, we did.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Okay, and they're in Darfur?

Mr. Leonard Edwards: They are.

Now, the question that has been facing the new UN mission, which is a much more—

Mr. Paul Dewar: No, that's the one I'm talking about, the one that hasn't got going yet.

Mr. Leonard Edwards: Well, we were supplying helicopters to the AMIS mission.

Mr. Paul Dewar: No, I'm talking about the one that's... Resolution 1769.

Mr. Leonard Edwards: Now the new mission will be a UN paid-for and organized joint program.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Right. So are we providing helicopters for that mission?

Mr. Leonard Edwards: We will not be.

Mr. Paul Dewar: We will not be. Okay, so when I read the minister saying that they provided...that was for the old mission. We're not providing for the new mission, notwithstanding that they need them.

Do we have helicopters available?

Mr. Leonard Edwards: Do we have helicopters available? No, we do not. That's why we have to lease them.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Okay. My understanding was we did, but that's defence, and I know that's another issue.

So presently we are not supplying helicopters or financing for the mission—

Mr. Leonard Edwards: For the new mission.

Mr. Paul Dewar: That's correct.

Mr. Leonard Edwards: Our helicopters are currently still in use.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Yes, well, I'm talking about the mission that we're trying to literally get off the ground. Okay, thank you very much for that.

A question I had as well is on the bilateral—I'm happy that we had an explanation of the difference between contributions and grants, because I'm seeing more grants. We're seeing an emphasis on more grant allocations than contributions. Am I correct? Particularly when

I look at page 166, under development partners, as an example, we have grants for bilateral programming. There's an item—well, it's not a lot in the context of a budget like this—of \$1.9 million for bilateral programming. That's at page 166.

Who's that for? It says “Grants for Bilateral Programming: Grants to all levels of other donor country governments”. Is this government-to-government we're speaking of? I believe it's under CIDA. Yes, it's under CIDA.

• (1155)

Mr. Robert Greenhill: Maybe what I can do is answer the general question while Greg will answer the specific one.

In terms of the use of grants or contributions, it depends very much on the country situation. If we work through UN agencies such as the World Food Program or the United Nations Development Program or UNICEF or UN-HABITAT, then we'll end up using a higher portion of grant.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I guess the general question is, while we're looking for the specific answers, are we spending or allocating, according to this document...? I understand the difference between grants and contributions; I appreciate that. Are we putting more money now towards grants than we were before? Yes or no?

Mr. Gregory Graham: We are.

Mr. Paul Dewar: We talked about trying to gauge results. When we have grants we've already established, my concern is that there's less oversight and one could say accountability.

Mr. Robert Greenhill: That's where I think Greg's point was a very important one. Looking at the way in which we do grants, for example, if I take a very concrete example in Afghanistan, the MISFA, the microfinance facility, that's grants but in fact there are regular evaluations done. We sit on the governance. We have a Canadian on the board of directors of MISFA. We actually have regular oversights. We reviewed the organization's audited financial statements. Each of the participants in that program has an audited financial statement. So we actually have an ability to look very closely into both fiduciary concreteness of what's going on but also the results.

Mr. Paul Dewar: But the way contributions are done gives you more reach, if you will, than grants would, notwithstanding your explanation. Is that correct?

Mr. Robert Greenhill: No. In terms of the traditional distinction between grants and contributions, some years ago that would absolutely have been the case. In the case of the UN organizations and a number of the other organizations, grant is the structure that is used.

What we have now done is we've introduced many of the elements of oversight that traditionally have been in a contribution element to the grant.

Mr. Paul Dewar: That's based on the participation of these organizations but not specific to the file and the actual project. For instance, if we're on the World Bank, you'd say we're giving a grant to the World Bank, therefore we have some oversight through being a participant in the World Bank.

Mr. Robert Greenhill: No. The important element, actually, is for the specific programs. Now, for example, if we worked with the World Bank on a program like the Afghanistan reconstruction trust fund—

Mr. Paul Dewar: Yes, I'm aware of that.

Mr. Robert Greenhill: —we would actually receive specific statements, as well as third party oversights by Deloitte Touche, in terms of how the funds are being used. So what we're able to do now, at the program level, is to have a clear understanding of how the moneys are actually being used.

Mr. Paul Dewar: One last question, Mr. Chair.

On November 16, General Ray Henault, chair of NATO, a Canadian, stated the following:

We see more emphasis on the military component because of the insurgency and the requirement to fight, especially in the southern region and the eastern region, and perhaps less on the civilian components, whether it's justice or political or economic. What has to happen is they have to rebalance, and ultimately the civilian component has to take precedence over the military component.

How are DFAIT and CIDA planning to rebalance the scenario envisioned by General Henault?

The Chair: Very quickly, please.

Mr. Robert Greenhill: Let me note very quickly that we're going to be spending over \$250 million this year. Last year we increased from \$100 million to \$139 million, and last year we increased from \$8 million to \$39 million, so a fourfold increase—or \$5 million to \$39 million—almost an eightfold increase in Kandahar in one year alone.

The Chair: No more questions, Mr. Dewar; you're done.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I wanted to ask how much we're spending on the military operation.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go to the government. Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Thank you for appearing here today and for your presentations, ladies and gentlemen.

My first comment is about the comment that my colleague touched on a little earlier, and that was about the one million lives being saved, the recent initiative. It brings to mind that if we totalled, if you like, the efforts in Afghanistan and in Haiti and other efforts around the world, although we don't like to think that our results are measured by the number of lives being saved, that is the reality. It must be a tremendous number, and I compliment you for your efforts.

My question is more to do with the experience of fully harmonizing efforts among donors in the Sudan. My question is relative to Haiti, and there seemed to be a recognition there that this type of harmonizing would be a better way to approach the situation in Haiti with aid. Have there been efforts taken toward that? Maybe you could describe what successes you've had.

• (1200)

Mr. Robert Greenhill: Thank you very much.

First of all, you're absolutely right about the lives being saved. One of the great things about Afghanistan is that we know that every year there are 80,000 more children who are living, including 40,000 babies because of improvements in mortality rates, since the fall of the Taliban. So it's a very concrete sense of accomplishment.

In terms of Haiti, where Canada is, of course, the number-two donor—only after the United States—we've been playing a critical role in both the humanitarian crisis after 2004 and now the rebuilding. We're working very closely with the government and other donors in terms of how we have a more coordinated approach.

For example, if we look at education or health, we're trying to develop a sectoral focus where different donors will decide what they are going to be doing or what they are not going to be doing. A key element in that is actually the governments taking ownership of their development agenda. So they're actually putting in what under development speak is called the poverty reduction strategy planner, PRSP, but it's essentially a framework, a strategic plan for where Haiti is going and what the requirements are in different sectors.

That's being put forward by the government. We're now working with different donors to determine who can be doing what in a way that's most complementary and that leverages our skills. That's a process that we think is going to accelerate over the next six to twelve months. It's clearly an area where we have a major role to play in terms of helping to coordinate the other donors.

Mr. Peter Goldring: You define it here as being harmonizing in the aid to Sudan. Would you characterize your collective efforts in Haiti in the same way, or is it working toward that same type of an expression?

Mr. Robert Greenhill: Yes, it is. The difference is, in areas of Sudan, like in the north-south, we're having to harmonize ourselves, because in that part there's almost no government whatsoever. We're helping to put in place the limits. Haiti has governance challenges but is actually in a much stronger position relative to the south Sudan, with the donors actually literally co-locating in Sudan.

In Haiti, our coordination is by closely working with the government, where they're taking ownership of, for example, their education development program and an education for all. We're working with them on what is the vision there, and then how we might participate with them.

Is that answering...?

Mr. Peter Goldring: Yes, I think that helps.

The Chair: Monsieur Lebel, did you have a question?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Lebel (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): I'd like to talk to you about Afghanistan.

Having recently come to this committee, I can see how sensitive the Afghanistan issue is. Our committee intends to table an interim report in December. There is also the work of an independent advisory panel chaired by Mr. Manley.

I'd like to know whether the department has appointed employees to work with Mr. Manley on that panel. If so, what is their mandate, and how will that work with regard to the department in this context?

Mr. Robert Greenhill: Yes, we have an employee working on the support team. His mandate is to provide all the research and logistical support necessary in those areas.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Monsieur Lebel.

Mr. Edwards to the same point.

[Translation]

Mr. Leonard Edwards: On the same subject, Mr. Mulroney is the head of the panel on Afghanistan and its secretary. He is working with Mr. Manley and his team. We also have other people helping with logistical support and so on.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Edwards.

We should maybe clarify. That would be Mr. David Mulroney.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Chair: We'll proceed now with the official opposition and Mr. Wilfert.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Edwards, I certainly agree with the comments you made about your department, the staff, and the great work they do both at home and abroad.

In your comments you talk about power shifting to Asia, China, India, and we know about Japan. You talk about the new realities. Where in this budget does it show that you in fact have the tools to address that? You spent a lot of time on the Americas, and we could debate whether that is in fact a good public policy decision, but in terms of Asia, in terms of the understaffing in Asia, and whether it's the consulate closings, which I am vehemently opposed to, in Osaka and Fukuoka, whether it is in fact providing the tools at the Pearson Building for resources needed, how do we address this? I don't know that you could ever get enough money—I shouldn't say that, I guess—to do the job that needs to be done if we are going to be continuing to punch higher than our weight in the international community. I don't think we have been recently, and that's more of a political comment, but perhaps you could address that, Mr. Edwards.

• (1205)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Wilfert.

Mr. Edwards.

Mr. Leonard Edwards: Mr. Chairman, the question that has been raised is one, of course, that challenges management of any department when priorities are set and so on. As a senior manager of the department, I have to adjust the resources to the parts of the world to which the government gives priority. That is what we are doing.

Certainly in the case of the Americas, resources are being moved to the Americas in order to satisfy that particular priority.

With respect to Asia, here, in particular, the government put money into the global commerce strategy, and the global commerce strategy is focusing on India and China and to some extent Brazil, which is also an Americas priority.

So resources have been made available, particularly in the commercial area, to focus on Asia.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Is it fair to say you're being asked to do more with less?

Mr. Leonard Edwards: The amounts provided in the global commerce strategy are quite significant.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Of what I see in the cuts in here, are we looking at about an 8% overall reduction?

Mr. Leonard Edwards: In cuts in the estimates?

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Yes.

Mr. Leonard Edwards: I don't think I've done those calculations to determine whether or not that percentage exists. All I know is that we are having to deal with, over the last several years, going back to 2003, 2005-06, a series of cross-government program reviews and so forth that have continued to challenge management, as should be the case, to allocate resources to priorities. Whether it amounts to 8%, I'm not sure, but these are simply the realities that senior managers have to work with, and we do our best.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: For my own edification, can you get back to us on that?

Mr. Leonard Edwards: We'll provide it, yes.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Wilfert.

You have just a minute and a half, Mr. Martin, unless you want to wait for another round.

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): We won't get to another round.

The Chair: Yes, we will.

Hon. Keith Martin: Thank you.

Thank you all for being here today.

Zimbabwe has the lowest lifespan in the world, and could we please get some resources there? You can do it through Health Partners International of Canada, who you work with, and secondly, by increasing the Canada Fund. All of your high commissioners and ambassadors would be jumping for joy. It's the best bang for the buck in your projects, I believe, so if that could be doubled, it would be helpful.

The \$105 million that was just announced this week is really part of the \$450 million health systems initiative that was announced last year. The \$105 million, though, is going to UNICEF, as I understand it. UNICEF has a very high administrative overhead. Can you tell me what percentage UNICEF has? Because my fear is that a lot of money is going to go down and the trickle-down effect will mean only a small amount will get to where you want it to be able to save lives. So do you know what the overhead is of UNICEF?

Mr. Robert Greenhill: UNICEF is one of our key coordinating partners in doing this. In some cases they'll be involved in helping to do some of the analysis and oversight. In other cases, in fact it may be going into the country's systems directly. So in fact the way it's structured, it should have quite a low overhead. But I'll get the numbers and provide that back to the committee.

It is worth noting that it's not just UNICEF involved; Norway's involved, the Gates Foundation is involved, and it's actually a very innovative partnership in terms of how we're trying to get these facilities out to people.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Martin and Mr. Greenhill.

We'll go back to the government side, but I want to ask this question, and it's more to the Department of Foreign Affairs. In CIDA's statement that they gave here today, Mr. Greenhill said:

To manage these disbursements the agency is increasing the number of staff in Kabul and Kandahar as well as at headquarters. Our field presence has more than doubled in the past two years: we will have 35 professional staff working in Afghanistan by April 2008, compared to just 10 in 2006. (These figures refer to professionals only and do not include, for example, drivers, and so on).

He talks about 35 professional staff workers in Afghanistan compared to just 10 in 2006. I'm wondering if we could get the figures from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade on the same type of calculation. Are we seeing a major increase in Foreign Affairs' staff in Kabul or in Afghanistan? How many of them are at headquarters, if there is a headquarters, and how many are in the field? I don't know if you have those available, but if not, I think it would be of some value if we could get that information.

Mr. Edwards.

• (1210)

Mr. Leonard Edwards: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I can get that information. I don't have it broken down here for Foreign Affairs. What I have, in comparison terms anyway, is we now have five Foreign Affairs positions, plus six CIDA, ten RCMP, and two Correctional Services Canada positions in Kandahar in the provincial reconstruction team; and we also have two other Foreign Affairs officials at the Kandahar airfield. This is a significant increase. It's the same in Kabul, in terms of the numbers we have there at the embassy: we predict that including Foreign Affairs, CIDA, and so forth, the total civilian complement in Kabul will eventually exceed 50 people.

If we were to do a comparison with this time last year, I don't have the figures here, but it would show a significant increase.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go to Mr. Obhrai and Mr. Goldring very quickly. You only have seven minutes.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I have no questions.

Go ahead, Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Thank you very much.

To the comments of putting increased emphasis on the Americas, prioritizing, has there been a corresponding ramping up, if you like, of our presence in the high commissions, in the embassies, for looking at trade and economic opportunities? Is this part of the estimates increases to put more resources to it?

I'm thinking in key areas—for example, Barbados, which is key to South America, and possibly even looking at the upcoming opportunities that we would see in the eastern European areas, and knowing that the embassy there has been seeking more increased resources to be able to explore opportunities.

Mr. Leonard Edwards: The specific answer is there's nothing in the supplementary estimates that indicates we are getting new funds to put additional resources into the Americas, at least for this year. I can't speak for plans of the government going forward.

In terms of the global commerce strategy, however, there will be resources that will be available for Asia, as I pointed out in response to an earlier question, but also probably for the Americas. These decisions have not yet been taken.

Our missions in the Americas are already fairly well resourced. We do have good resources in the region. We will need to, and we are presently as we develop our strategy, conduct a mission-by-mission analysis to see how many additional resources are needed in trade or in political or in other areas.

Mr. Peter Goldring: So this will be a future plan to increase where it's felt to be necessary, but it's all part and parcel of this prioritizing of the Americas.

Mr. Leonard Edwards: That's correct, yes.

Mr. Peter Goldring: And the second—

The Chair: You have about 40 seconds.

Mr. Peter Goldring: In regard to the comments on working on the democracy in Haiti and what has been done, we just completed a major report recently here in the committee. Is any of that report being transferred into a different direction to improving democracy development in Haiti?

Mr. Robert Greenhill: Thank you.

First of all, there's an example of where our departments work very closely together on the whole aspect of democracy promotion. We're very involved in helping to continue to reinforce the electoral commission in Haiti, and on the voter registration cards, which were a key element of that last election, we're now working with the Haitian government to make it permanent so people have permanent identities. That's useful from a democratic point of view and it's also useful from a general rights point of view in terms of their identification and ability to obtain services.

We've also engaged the Parliamentary Centre for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, which is working with parliamentarians, 90% of whom had never been inside a parliamentary building before they were elected, to actually help them put in place committee systems such as yours, to actually make that concept of democracy real in a daily sense. So, yes, we're very engaged in helping to move Haiti along the element of democratic—

• (1215)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Greenhill.

Now to Madame St-Hilaire.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Greenhill, it would appear that CIDA's evaluation process is virtually paralyzed by the fact that the standing offers awarded to the five biggest companies have been exhausted.

What do you think of that?

Mr. Robert Greenhill: I didn't clearly understand the question.

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: I'd like to hear your comments on CIDA's program or project evaluation process. Is it still in operation?

Mr. Robert Greenhill: Yes, under the
[English]

management accountability framework
[Translation]

the Treasury Board has characterized CIDA's independent evaluation as strong.
[English]

We have an independent evaluation function that's been in place for some years. It's worked very effectively. For example, we just did a national program evaluation of the Afghanistan program. We also participate in very in-depth evaluations with other donors of key international programs. I mentioned the micro-finance facility. In fact our evaluation system is strong, and it's being strengthened by the addition of new independent members of the evaluation.

One interesting item is we also in this last year did a meta-evaluation of a series of evaluations over the last few years, to draw out general lessons learned. I'd be pleased to provide you with a list of the evaluations that we've put in place over the last 12 months.
[Translation]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: If I understand correctly, you systematically apply an evaluation process in all projects and programs that CIDA establishes, and a fixed amount is allocated for that purpose.
[English]

Mr. Robert Greenhill: We have an evaluation process to overlook our key programs. We don't actually at this point look at 100% of our programs. They're identified by size and by risk. But significant programs tend to be identified at least at two levels. You'll have key programs that are evaluated, and then the country as a whole will go through an evaluation.

So in the case of Afghanistan, that's exactly what we've done. We've had significant evaluations done of things at the Afghanistan reconstruction trust fund, of MISFA, so at the program level. We also engaged independent evaluators to give us a view of how the nation as a whole was performing. By the way, they said it was performing pretty well. Both those levels are publicly available, and we can also provide you with a more detailed examination of actually how we do our evaluation structures, using Afghanistan as an example, if you would find that helpful.

[Translation]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: I understood that things were going well in Afghanistan in terms of evaluation, but I want to know whether the standing offers have been exhausted.

Mr. Robert Greenhill: You're referring to the standing offers for evaluators?

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Yes.

Mr. Robert Greenhill: I believe we are still able to call in evaluators. Now I understand why you referred to those five companies. I'm going to come back to that question.

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: All right.

[English]

The Chair: Go ahead, Madame.

[Translation]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: We've heard the warmed-over version of the government's announcement, but, Mr. Greenhill, I would like to know whether CIDA has any cash flow problems as regards the implementation of programs in Africa.

Mr. Robert Greenhill: The short answer is no. As Len mentioned, that means that choices have to be made. The government's choice was to double up in Africa by 2008-2009. Our game plan is ready.

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you. You actually have another 30 seconds, if you want them.

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: I'll continue.

How much of the \$126 million requested is going to Afghanistan, Haiti and Darfur? Do you have those figures on hand?

Mr. Robert Greenhill: What amounts are those, madam?

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: What percentage of the supplementary funding requested will go to Afghanistan, Haiti and Darfur?

Mr. Robert Greenhill: I'll answer in part, then I'll hand the question off to Greg. A sum of \$15 million earmarked for operations is going to Sudan and Afghanistan. In addition, \$16 million included in the grants and contributions is earmarked for Sudan. Of the \$210 million in contributions and grants, \$40 million is intended for the Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund.

• (1220)

[English]

The Chair: All right, thank you, Mr. Greenhill.

Mr. Goldring, did you have a quick one? Then we'll go to Mr. Dewar.

I'm sorry, Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Thank you. I couldn't let them get away that easy.

We have you both, the deputy foreign minister and the CIDA president, and I think it would be great for us to know the coordination efforts that the departments, both of you, do to provide a comprehensive overall objective of the government in foreign policy.

There are two areas I would focus on. One is the realignment of all these things to the new priorities of the Americas as well as the foreign affairs committee's democratic development report that we issued, and how that would be done. I'd be interested in knowing how you two work together to reach that coordination.

The Chair: Yes, that's a good question, Mr. Obhrai. In many different studies that we've done on this, how we coordinate among the departments has always been an issue.

Mr. Edwards.

Mr. Leonard Edwards: Why don't I start off, and then Robert can follow?

The fact is that we coordinated our presentations today. Maybe that is the first thing to say. But it's an example of the fairly close coordination we personally have. We speak to each other pretty regularly, two or three times a week, and talk about what the agency and the department are doing. We meet regularly, and so do our officials. So in terms of mechanisms, there are plenty of informal mechanisms. I know our ministers and their offices also stay in close touch.

I like to think that we have quite a close, informal way of working together. There are a number of interdepartmental structures that exist or that we're thinking of creating that will help to deal with coordination. I have recently established a group of deputy ministers on representation abroad. All of those departments that I mentioned in my statement as having interests in our representation abroad meet every couple of months and talk about some of the very practical issues of managing our international network, the numbers of people who are moving every year, the new resources we're putting in, where we're bringing people back home, and so on. It's a highly complex management issue, and of course CIDA and Immigration are the two key partners that my department has in our international platform.

We also work very closely together on the international assistance envelope and its management, informally and formally. We very closely coordinate the work that the government does in terms of determining where assistance money should be spent. For example, in the work we've done on Afghanistan there is assistance money that has come that is part of my department's spending structures as well as, of course, CIDA's, which has the largest portion. The Afghanistan task force is another excellent example of where coordination takes place, not only on a daily basis, but sometimes also on an hourly basis.

I'd like to think that we are doing quite well in terms of the overall coordination. Could we do better? I'm sure we could. We always could do better, but I think the record right now is pretty good.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Edwards.

We're going to go to Mr. Greenhill.

Mr. Robert Greenhill: I'd echo all that Len said. I'd also note that there's a bit of a myth that in fact the two departments don't coordinate well. My experience over the last two and a half years is actually a model internationally. The work we do is truly whole-of-government in Haiti, truly whole-of-government in Sudan, and truly whole-of-government in Afghanistan, together with broader regional strategies.

It's interesting; it was most recently recognized by the development advisory committee of the OECD. When they did our five-year peer review, they actually commended Canada on its whole-of-government approach and said we had a very promising approach to fragile states and this coordination, which they encouraged us to share with other donors.

So, to Len's point, obviously we can always do better, but actually, both formally and informally, we've put in place some really good mechanisms to ensure we're joined up where it counts.

●(1225)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Greenhill.

Just before we go to Mr. Dewar, earlier when we were speaking in regard to the evaluations, both the in-house and the independent evaluations, you made mention that they are public but that you would also make them available to our committee. If we could ask for all those evaluations, I'm certain that would be something that our committee could use. We've just finished an evaluation of the Afghan national program. I think if we could understand even the methodology of how you evaluated, it might be a bonus for us. So thank you.

Mr. Dewar.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to follow up on my question in the last round. I'm going to give you another quote, and this time it's not from a military perspective but a diplomatic perspective. It's a quote attributed to Afghanistan's ambassador to Canada, Mr. Samad, who was quoted in November as saying:

Canadian aid isn't going far enough... A foundation has been laid, but we have to build on that foundation to make something of it. Whether in Kandahar or in the rest of Afghanistan, we have to find ways of putting Afghans to work. We need public works projects that can employ young people, instead of letting the Taliban or the drug traffickers employ them... The people in Kandahar want to see projects that are much more visible. They need hospitals that function, they need an honest and effective police force... We have to go beyond wells and irrigation ditches. There have to be bigger infrastructure projects.

I provide that quote to you because the previous quote was from General Henault, and he's saying that the mission isn't balanced. Those are his words, not mine, from his quote.

When I hear from CIDA's perspective, am I right that we have six people on the ground in Mission Afghanistan, six new CIDA people in Kandahar...?

Mr. Robert Greenhill: I think what's important to note is that across Afghanistan we have about 22. We have nine in Kandahar overseeing projects. But there are some 300 aid workers through the agencies.

Mr. Paul Dewar: No, I was just curious about CIDA. In Foreign Affairs, how many people do we have on the ground in Kandahar?

Mr. Leonard Edwards: In Kandahar, my count was somewhere around six, which includes the senior adviser, who—

Mr. Paul Dewar: And we have about 2,500 military, more or less.

Mr. Leonard Edwards: That's correct.

Mr. Paul Dewar: My point is, you get the money and do what you can with it, but when I see roughly nine CIDA people, notwithstanding the people they work with, and six Foreign Affairs people, and we have 2,500 troops, I didn't see it in the comments, but are the three Ds dead? Are we using that language any more? I was looking carefully for the three-D approach. Is that something we don't use any more in terms of terminology from either department?

Mr. Leonard Edwards: Are three Ds dead? We don't use the terminology all that much, I have to say, because to us that sounds like three different pillars. What we believe in is that we all have to work together.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I have a short amount of time. I try not to interrupt, but I am doing so, and I apologize.

It used to be that the government would talk about the three-D approach. We don't hear that any more, so I see a shift.

I'm going to go on to another question, because I'm not sure I have much time.

On page 165, there's an item for over \$11 million, "To ensure a secured presence in Afghanistan and Sudan, and to provide necessary headquarters support for the delivery of aid". Is the money in that vote item to hire security personnel? It looks like a vote for human resources. Is that the case?

Mr. Robert Greenhill: No. It's to provide the operating staff—moving to 35 people in the field—and our 80 staff here in Ottawa.

Mr. Paul Dewar: So it's not to hire security; it's to hire more people to work in the field. It's a human resource vote, from my understanding of how the votes work.

Mr. Robert Greenhill: Yes.

• (1230)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dewar.

I'd like to go back to Mr. Dewar's question, because he was trying to relate the 2,500 troops to the number of foreign affairs workers we had.

The troops are there helping to deliver foreign policy, not only in the capacity of soldiers in a war. They are there to provide security so much of this work can go forward. So you have a working relationship with them. They are carrying out a lot of the dictates that come right from the Department of Foreign Affairs through the defence channels. Is that correct?

Mr. Leonard Edwards: That's right. The government has a strategy in Afghanistan, and we have a task force that coordinates that strategy. Each of us plays our role and we work together. We don't have a three-D strategy; we have a one-D strategy—we're all working together.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

Mr. Martin, do you have one quick question?

Hon. Keith Martin: Yes.

Mirwais Hospital is in Kandahar. I understand that CIDA is giving the ICRC responsibility for it, and that's a great idea. Can you tell us how much money is going to be spent in Mirwais and what it will be used for?

The African education fund will go from \$100 million to \$150 million in 2010-11. What have we done with that money on the ground in Africa?

Thank you.

Mr. Robert Greenhill: First of all, the Red Cross-run Mirwais Hospital is a key partner in the south, as is the international community of the Red Cross across Afghanistan. We have already provided a \$3-million grant to them.

Dr. Geoffrey Hodgetts, one of Canada's most experienced doctors in post-conflict situations, did a detailed review of Mirwais Hospital

with the ICRC to help us understand the progress made, which he sees as being quite significant. Johns Hopkins did an analysis of the hospitals, and it showed that Mirwais Hospital was actually third out of 30 in Afghanistan. It's nothing to be proud of, given where the other 27 are, but it is an indication of progress. We'll be looking very closely at ways in which we can work with them while respecting the arm's-length humanitarian role that the ICRC so appropriately maintains. But we will be moving forward on that.

On your second question, about education in Africa, as we ramp up from \$100 million to the \$150 million, as outlined by Prime Minister Harper, we've been doing significant programming in Mali, Senegal, Tanzania, and Mozambique. In Mozambique we provide virtually all the textbooks for all the school children there. Some 10 million textbooks per year are provided through international competitive bids to ensure that children have access to texts as part of their learning experience.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Greenhill.

I want to thank the departments for coming here and answering the questions on the estimates—for the thorough report. We look forward to some of the additions you will send to our committee.

Just before we suspend, can I get consensus to report these estimates back to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: We will suspend for a few minutes and come back on Bill C-9.

• _____ (Pause) _____

•

• (1245)

The Chair: We'll call this meeting back to order.

In our second hour here, we'll be a little pressed for time, but I don't anticipate taking a long time considering Bill C-9, an act to implement the Convention on the Settlement of Investment Disputes between States and Nationals of Other States.

We're going to commence our clause-by-clause consideration of the bill. Pursuant to Standing Order 75(1), our consideration of clause 1 is postponed. So the chair will call clause 2. Because there have been no amendments brought forward, we'll just go through this quickly.

Madame Barbot, did you have a question?

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: In fact, it's still the same question, that is that we must reserve 15 minutes to deal with motions at the end of every meeting. This is the second time this situation has arisen. We'll never have any time to devote to them. We really should find a way to set aside some time because we won't make any progress if we set the motions aside.

[English]

The Chair: To discuss Bill C-9?

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: We had agreed that a period of 15 minutes would be set aside at every meeting for motions. Once again today, we won't have the time to deal with them.

The Chair: No.

[English]

We've already gone over this a number of times. The way I understand what we've done here is that we allow 15 minutes at the end of every meeting, if we know there's a request to deal with a motion. So we've asked people that if they want to deal with a motion on Tuesday, they should get hold of our clerk and she will then have that....

We have how many motions on the books?

The Clerk of the Committee (Mrs. Angela Crandall): At the moment there are seven or eight.

The Chair: There are seven or eight motions. We can't deal with all of those motions, but if somebody wants a motion dealt with on a Tuesday, it doesn't mean we're going to close down at 12:45 and say goodbye to our guests and then have people say no, we don't want to deal with the motion.

So you have to talk to our clerk when you want to bring forward a motion under committee business.

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: From what I understand, if there are any motions on the table, we take 15 minutes to deal with them. They're already there: it's not as though there weren't any. We have to make sure that the motions at least have a chance to be considered.

[English]

The Chair: This goes right back to our first meeting: individuals can submit motions. They can submit three or four motions. Mr. Dewar, the very first day, had two or three motions that he presented. In the past I've seen some people present five motions, and say that when they want to bring them up they'll bring them up. What they do then is just let the clerk know they want to deal with their motion on Tuesday. That's the way we've always done it.

Once it has 48-hours' notice, the clerk will then say we need the time for committee business. Then we can go to it. Now, if the motions that are in are ones you want dealt with ASAP, then we will start every meeting saying that at 12:45 we're shutting down the committee and going to committee business.

If the motions are there and there's no rush to deal with them.... From a political perspective, I may think, you know what, they have their motions in here in a timely fashion, and they're in order. Maybe they're doing other work and want to have the proper ability to communicate the motions out in the news or media, and then they will let our clerk know and we will see that they're on the agenda.

But I'm not going to have.... If you want to have committee business every committee meeting, then just get hold of Angela and say yes, we want to deal with our motion, and then we'll do these every meeting for 15 minutes. But if no one brings them forward....

Mr. Wilfert's motion is actually on today's agenda. Is that the only one?

• (1250)

The Clerk: No, they're all there.

The Chair: But I asked if anyone had called in about—

The Clerk: No, but the way the committee instructed me to deal with the business was to put them on until they were dealt with.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Chairman, that was my understanding: that they were on here, that we were going to deal with them, that we would reserve presumably 15 minutes or so until they're dealt with. I can't speak for my colleagues here, but I would assume we all thought they were priorities, regardless of what side we're on, because we brought them forward.

Because we're probably going to wind up with more motions down the road, I think it would be helpful to deal with these, get them off the table, and then move on. I certainly would support Madame Barbot with regard to time allocation for that.

The Chair: If it's all right with the committee, we may....

What's that?

Mr. Deepak Ohhrai: Mr. Chair, we have government legislation. Can we move that forward?

The Chair: We are on clause 2.

What I suggest is this. If that's the way we want to do this—and this is why I asked Angela if anyone had come forward asking for these—then we will allocate lots of time on Thursday for the motions.

If you have something that you absolutely want today, I'll apologize, then; I stand corrected on this. I will put it down every 15 minutes, then.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Chairman, I don't know whether this is helpful, but we certainly don't have any difficulty with the bill. Can we move the bill? Do we have to go clause by clause, or can we not move sections of the bill and then just move it forward?

The Chair: We should be able to move all—

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: We have in the past. I'm just wondering. If there are no amendments and if I can get unanimous consent, then I would move it, and then we could move to the committee business.

The Chair: All right.

If we have consent, then, we can adopt Bill C-9 clause by clause, in a block of clauses 2 to 12.

Do we have a motion?

I recognize Mr. Goldring on that motion.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Well, I have a comment to make on the bill. My comment is on the summary. It indicates that this was first initiated in 1965. From the last meeting we had, and the testimony of witnesses who were here, I want to express my sincere concern that this has been so delayed for so long that it has cost not only the softwood lumber industry a lack of method to resolve, and not only Research In Motion in Kitchener a tool they could have used for their disputes, and not only the cattle industry for years and years another tool they could have used—

Mr. Paul Dewar: On a point of order, Chair, this is a point of debate. I don't agree with the comments made, and I'm not sure what it has to do with the bill.

The Chair: We asked for a comment on the bill.

Mr. Peter Goldring: I'll wrap it up soon.

I think the serious concern for the lack of attention to a very useful tool for so many years should be on the record.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

We still have Mr. Wilfert's motion here.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Chairman, in the spirit of Mr. Goldring, I'm about to withdraw the motion, because I thought we were trying to move this along, and I don't really want to get into the....

But I'll leave it, because I want to get to the committee business.

The Chair: Can we have, then, the motion for adoption of clauses 2 through 12?

Do we have unanimous consent, by the way, to do this?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: All right; we do.

That's carried.

• (1255)

Mr. Paul Dewar: I'm sorry; I was giving you unanimous consent to go ahead in this fashion. Now we're voting on all of those clauses as one package, and I would—

The Chair: Okay.

All in favour?

Carried.

Mr. Paul Dewar: No, against. We have two sides to the equation.

The Chair: One? One is opposing it?

Mr. Paul Dewar: Yes, that's why I'm doing this. I'm opposed.

The Chair: All right. So you say we can go in this fashion, but you're opposed to those clauses.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Absolutely; that's what I'm doing.

The Chair: It's carried.

(Clauses 2 to 12 inclusive agreed to on division)

The Chair: Shall the schedule carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

The Chair: All right, the schedule carries on division.

Shall clause 1, the short title, carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Shall the title carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Shall the bill carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

The Chair: It is carried on division.

Shall I report the bill to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Well, in the spirit of working together... It's a wonderful thing, Mr. Wilfert.

Mr. Wilfert has asked us to look at his motion quickly. I know others have meetings at one o'clock.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Right.

The first one, Mr. Chairman, we can deal with pretty expeditiously:

That pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) the committee invites the responsible minister and appropriate senior officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Canadian International Development Agency, and other relevant departments to discuss the current crisis in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Could you repeat that, Mr. Wilfert?

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: You should have it in front of you.

The Chair: What do you need translation for?

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I would move that.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Where is it?

The Chair: That pursuant to Standing Order 108(2)—

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I have to get my propaganda ready.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Are we in camera?

An hon. member: No, we aren't.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Hang in tough there.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: It's the first motion under committee business.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I told you, I have to get my guns ready.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: In the spirit of consensus—

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: What consensus? How would I consent with the Liberals? What are you talking about?

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: It's not a study; it's simply an update on the current crisis.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Thank you very much.

The government's response to this is that we do not have much difficulty in light of the situation of what is happening in Pakistan. I think it's good to look at this and see what we can do regarding the current crisis in Pakistan. However, we have some small difficulties here with reference to the ministers appearing.

What we would ask Mr. Wilfert is if he is willing to have a friendly amendment, meaning that instead of the minister we would ask the appropriate senior officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade to come and do the same thing. Ultimately, the response would be the same. There would be no difference from what he is doing. All we are saying is that due to the unavailability and scheduling of the ministers and considering the fact that the situation in Pakistan is so fluid and happening so fast, we can't wait too long for the minister to come.

If he's agreeable to the friendly amendment, we could just say "senior officials".

The Chair: Mr. Obhrai, thank you.

Just looking at it from the perspective of a committee, we're looking at timelines. If this motion is to do it before Christmas—

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Chairman, I want to extend an invitation to the minister.

Obviously, if the minister can't come, then we'll have the appropriate senior officials. But at some point I would like to see the minister here, on an array of issues. On this one, it's a courtesy to invite the minister, and if he can't come then I want the relevant officials who can deal with it.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I understand that, but why doesn't the amendment say "the minister, or in his absence..."—

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: We'll put the "or" in there.

The Chair: Can we have a friendly amendment to include "invite the responsible ministers and/or appropriate senior officials"?

Just as an aside—not to the specifics of this, just your intention—are you intending this to be very quick, then?

• (1300)

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Yes. I just want an update. If we take one session, we'll have that update. We can ask the relevant questions, and that will be it.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Wilfert.

Madame Barbot.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: I have two things to say, Mr. Chairman. First, as regards the amendment, I think the word "and" should be used. If the minister doesn't come, he will have to accept responsibility for the matter.

Furthermore, I get somewhat annoyed every time the Conservatives take the floor to tell us what the government wants. We are here in a committee, and we are here as members of Parliament. The Conservatives can give us their own comments or ask their own questions. We don't speak to the government when we work here; we work as members of Parliament and we put ideas on the table. So when I'm told that I can't present something in a particular way because the government doesn't want it, I think it's very irrelevant. I would invite you to watch that behaviour somewhat because I increasingly find it irritating.

[*English*]

The Chair: All right. Different members of Parliament are here in different capacities. Mr. Obhrai is the parliamentary secretary to

the Minister of Foreign Affairs, so he sits on this committee in that capacity. Certainly I know Mr. Obhrai represents his constituents well and serves as a member of Parliament, but he is also here in a different capacity and sometimes he brings forward information in that capacity that is very useful to us.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Name one.

The Chair: Mr. Chan, and then Mr. Obhrai.

Hon. Raymond Chan (Richmond, Lib.): I would say that if you put "and" in the amendment, if the minister is not able to make it as soon as he can, then we will go ahead with the senior officials. There is no contradiction in that one. I don't see why the "or" is necessary in the amendment.

The Chair: The motion would read "that the invitation be given to the responsible minister and his appropriate..."

Hon. Raymond Chan: Right. That's it, without the "or".

The Chair: So you would vote against the friendly amendment. Is that correct?

We have a friendly amendment that's been brought forward by Mr. Obhrai, which Mr. Wilfert has accepted.

Hon. Raymond Chan: Yes, if there is "or" in there.

The Chair: We have to deal with that friendly amendment first. The friendly amendment reads....

Pardon me?

The Clerk: It's going to be an amendment that we're going to vote on.

The Chair: All right. Well, it's amended, then: "...and/or appropriate senior officials from the department."

Is anyone speaking to that?

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I want to tell the Bloc member that she may, as a member of Parliament, have a right to be on this committee, and so do I. I have every right to talk. And for her to say that, it's totally.... When it's my turn to talk, it's my turn. As she has the right to talk, so do I.

This whole idea of talking about whatever capacity I am or not makes no difference. I am a member of Parliament, and I am entitled, within this committee, to speak what I want to speak, as she is.

An hon. member: Hear, hear.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Thank you.

Now, while on that factor, I want to know whether you are saying "and/or" or just "and"? And if it is "and", that means you are actually saying to the minister to come, which in this case here would make it difficult, considering the scheduling and the time and the crisis that is taking place.

I think it's more appropriate to say "or", and if the minister can come, he will. I think the words "and/or" or just "and"....

The Chair: Well, here's my point just from this side of the table. This is to send out an invitation. The invitation is to the minister and to the.... It says "and the appropriate senior official".

The senior official may not come without the minister. If you include the “or”, he can appear without the minister.

Hon. Raymond Chan: That's not true.

The Chair: Yes, go ahead.

Hon. Raymond Chan: Mr. Chair, we had experienced in other committees that when an invitation is sent to us, that is how it is stated, “the minister and the official”, and if the minister couldn't come, they would send the senior official. And if they refuse to do that, then they have to take the political responsibility of refusing to come to the committee.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Who takes the political responsibility?

Hon. Raymond Chan: The minister.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: The question here is that if you're going to put “and the minister”, depending on the minister's schedule, he will come within what...? We have two more sitting weeks here, and he may not be able to come until February or March, depending on his schedule.

The crisis that is taking place in Pakistan is now. We would like to hear what is happening now. Therefore I would say let's make it very clear. The invitation can go to the minister and to the department officials allowing that.

On this business of taking political heat, what is it? I thought this was a very clear amendment that we needed to talk about Pakistan, not taking political heat here.

●(1305)

The Chair: In all honesty, I think the reason we tried to include “or” is so they can get here soon. If the minister says “Yes, I want to come, but I can't before Christmas and I'll come in January or February”....

Hon. Raymond Chan: Mr. Chair, with all respect, it is the desire of this committee, if we pass a resolution, to request the minister to come. And if the minister couldn't come, we would accept that the senior minister would come, the senior officials would come.

If the minister takes a few months to come to this committee, it shows his disregard for the interests of the committee and the authority of this committee. It doesn't mean that we would prefer the senior officials. It is the minister we want to come to the committee.

The Chair: But we also want, by a motion that's already passed, to have a preliminary report tabled in the House of Commons by December 14, and all our dates are basically filled. If the minister can't come, I simply want.... If we want to have him for one hour, I hope he's not going to say, “That one day, I can't come”.

Mr. Wilfert is next, and then Mr. Obhrai.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Chairman—

The Chair: No, sorry, it's Mr. Goldring, then Ms. Barbot and then Mr. Wilfert.

Mr. Peter Goldring: I would pose the question then: Is it being realistic to have the minister appear on a number of motions that we have, for the minister to be appearing on each and every one? The motion is written with “and” on its own, that's inclusive; that includes both. There's no doubt about that. The only way to have any type of an option to it for appearance, so that other than the minister

could appear to give us the information earlier, would be by including that word “or”.

The Chair: Madame Barbot.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Mr. Chairman, I don't understand why we're having this entire discussion. We want to ask the minister and senior officials to come. So let's adopt the motion and we'll see what happens, instead of talking about “if”, “when” and “or”. If they can come, they'll come. If not, we'll see. There's no notion of urgency in the motion as introduced. So there is not really any reason to have a whole debate on it.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Barbot.

Point of order.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I would like to tell Madame Barbot that as a member of Parliament and of this committee, you have every right to have a discussion of this motion.

The Chair: When we're discussing a motion and we're discussing an amendment to a motion, we have debate on that motion. We don't cut down the debate on the motion.

Mr. Wilfert.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Chairman, my intent in the motion is to get an update on the current crisis in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. If we invite the minister, which is what I want to do, and the minister says “Sorry, I can't come this day because...”, that's fine. I'm not going to have a cardiac over it. Then we bring somebody else in. But at some point, I want the minister here. There are certainly more contentious issues I'd like to see him on. Obviously, we haven't had him. So I think it's respectful to the committee to invite the minister, first of all, since he is the minister. If he can't come, I'm not going to jump up and down and say “Well gee, we picked that one time when he couldn't show up”. Move the motion as is. If he can't come, I understand. Fine, there'll be other times when I expect he would be here. Fine. But let's not lose sight of what we want. We want to discuss the issue.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Could I—

The Chair: No, Mr. Obhrai.

Madame St-Hilaire, and then Mr. Obhrai.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: I would like to thank the parliamentary secretary for allowing us to speak as well. In fact we are discussing an amendment moved by the government; let's get that clear. However, I'm not even sure that Mr. Wilfert agrees on the amendment. So, Mr. Chairman, I believe with all due respect that there should be an agreement by the mover of the motion and I—

●(1310)

[*English*]

The Chair: Anyone can bring forward an amendment, and then we vote.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Yes, he can bring forward the amendment—

[English]

The Chair: It won't be a friendly amendment, because Mr. Wilfert will not agree to it, but we still debate the amendment.

[Translation]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Fine, we expect it not to be—

[English]

The Chair: At first we thought he was going to agree. Now he's changed his mind.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I haven't changed anything. I simply want to get the thing dealt with.

[Translation]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Do I still have the floor, Mr. Chairman?

[English]

The Chair: Order, please.

Madame St-Hilaire has the floor.

[Translation]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Since I clearly understood that Mr. Wilfert did not agree to this nice amendment, I move that we vote on the motion as it currently stands.

[English]

The Chair: We've been debating the amendment, right?

We're going to have two votes. We're going to have a vote on the amendment that he brought forward, and Mr. Obhrai wanted to speak before we do that.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I don't understand why she keeps trying to shut me up by saying I can't do this thing. It's my right to speak.

Let me just make it very clear here. The minister is eager, let me tell you. This will be the first time the minister is going to come in front of the committee to discuss a range of issues that need to be discussed. The difficulty we are having is that every motion keeps saying we want the minister. Let's get the minister at the appropriate time to discuss. And he has indicated his desire as a new foreign minister to appear in front of the committee to do that. Therefore, that is not the issue about this thing.

I am saying on the wording here that in light of the fact—let me talk, hold your horses—that this situation is critically important and needs to be done as quickly as possible here, the matter is the language. I am understanding and what I heard from the other Liberal members talking about political heat—We are not talking about political heat here. What we are talking about here is, as the mover of the motion said, he wants to get an update on the Islamic

situation in Pakistan. It's not about playing politics and saying the minister is not coming.

Let me just say this; don't shut me up.

So I am saying my amendment that says “all” just perfectly well fits in with the intent of this thing here and that we would say that when it is appropriate, the minister, during his scheduled time, will come in front of the committee.

The Chair: All right, thank you. That's good.

Remember that this committee has only been going since after November...whatever day we got reconstituted here. So we've only met for two weeks. This is our fourth meeting—

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Why don't we call the question?

The Chair: And in that period of time the minister has been in Laos, and we do have him invited to come and speak on Afghanistan. So he is coming on Afghanistan.

He probably knows that every motion we have here calls for the Minister of Foreign Affairs to appear on this vitally important issue, and they all are.

Hon. Raymond Chan: They all are important.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Why don't we call the question?

The Chair: The question is on the amendment to the motion.

(Amendment negated)

The Chair: All right. The amendment fails, so we'll have the question on the motion, Mr. Wilfert's motion.

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

The Chair: So that is carried.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: You want to hear about Pakistan.

The Chair: Order. I'm going to adjourn this meeting.

Madame Barbot...?

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Yes.

The Chair: On Thursday we have what? All right, we have Afghanistan coming. We will cut short. We will leave the last 15 minutes for motions.

Again, if you have a motion—I'm not going to leave 15 minutes every meeting—you have to let us know that you want to deal with committee business. You have to let us know.

We're adjourned.

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