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Chair

Mr. Dean Allison

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC)): Welcome to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, meeting number 44.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are studying the situation at Rights and Democracy, International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development.

I want to welcome our witness today, Mr. Latulippe. Welcome, sir. You have the floor. I think you know how things work. We're going to give you ten minutes, and then we're going to spend some time going around the room asking questions. I'll let you lead off. The floor is all yours.

Mr. Gérard Latulippe (President, Rights and Democracy): Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Mr. Chair and members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, let me start my presentation by thanking you for giving me the opportunity to testify before you today. I have with me my three directors, and I intend to paint a realistic picture of the situation at Rights and Democracy, an agency I am honoured to be president of.

[English]

On December 13, at the request of the standing committee, both the Deloitte report and the SIRCO report were sent to the clerk of the committee.

On December 16 I was ready to appear before the committee along with the chairman of the board of Rights and Democracy, Professor Aurel Braun. Unfortunately, the committee meeting was cancelled, and I did not have the opportunity to address you. On the same day, however, the chair of the committee wrote to each individual member of Rights and Democracy's board of directors requesting additional information concerning an alleged discrepancy between the mandate initially given to the SIRCO investigation firm and the SIRCO report.

As I explained in my letter addressed to the chair of the committee on January 4, there is no such discrepancy. The full SIRCO report in my possession was sent to the committee. I provided all relevant explanations in my letter addressed to the chair, and I am ready to answer any questions you may have in this regard.

That being said, I wish to recall that Mr. Jacques Gauthier, the then acting president, affirmed on various occasions that his aim in

involving the SIRCO firm was limited to obtaining information on the activities of the three former directors who were dismissed.

Our lawyers have provided me with an opinion to the effect that the dismissal of the three directors was indeed justified. It follows that the SIRCO report was indeed necessary.

[Translation]

Nonetheless, it is of the utmost importance to clarify that, despite everything, the SIRCO report, which you have, includes a volume entitled "Chronology", which contains everything that SIRCO considered relevant to the crisis at Rights and Democracy. Actually, it includes over 3,000 emails selected by SIRCO and filed chronologically.

This is why I am here to talk to you about due diligence, which I committed myself to after being appointed president. In fact, as I said in my letter of January 4, 2011, I met with the president of SIRCO to find out whether there were any organizational problems I should know about that might prevent me from getting Rights and Democracy on the right track. He brought to my attention some potential problems, which I outlined in my letter. For each of the issues raised, I did due diligence.

At the special board meeting on January 20, 2011, I presented to the directors the results of my due diligence. My report was well received by the board. A resolution was even adopted unanimously. The purpose of the resolution was to ask me to strengthen my report and present it to the committee as a final report on the matter. This is the report you received.

[English]

Moving to the Deloitte report, it was commissioned by my predecessor, Jacques Gauthier, to review certain governance issues at Rights and Democracy. It is important to understand that the Deloitte report was never intended to detect any fraud that may have been committed. The Deloitte report enabled me to identify structural issues going back a number of years. It is an important tool for us as we embark upon the process of rectifying and improving governance at Rights and Democracy.

[Translation]

I would briefly like to touch on certain governance problems raised in the Deloitte report. The Deloitte report stressed that the board of directors had not been given important information that would have allowed it to make informed decisions on some important projects. For example, the board of directors was not given a negative audit report on funding to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. This affected the directors' ability to make informed decisions on the matter. This discrepancy had not been indicated by previous boards of directors. But when new directors who were interested in playing their role more fully arrived, they came up against resistance from centre employees.

[English]

Despite the presence of some evaluation mechanisms at Rights and Democracy, the Deloitte report, as well as other evaluations conducted, highlighted insufficiencies in effective mechanisms for measuring the objectives and results of projects and programs by means of performance indicators.

[Translation]

In the past five years, \$1.5 million has been distributed in the form of small grants for stand-alone activities. These are discretionary funds, in this case the Urgent Action and Important Opportunities Fund and the Solidarity Fund. During that period, 184 agencies, individuals and activities were funded in 38 countries, and only 12 of those 38 fell under our target countries. The vast majority of these were small grants of less than \$10,000.

This type of operation leaves us open to arbitrary and discretionary situations, and is a considerable risk for Rights and Democracy. Why? Because it is impossible to carry out due diligence before granting this type of funding or evaluating the results because the cost of such an operation would be higher than the grant itself.

[English]

During the last few years, Rights and Democracy made grants totalling \$729,000 to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The letter of agreement allocating these funds did not define any specific activities, objectives, or results. It might well be called a donation.

In fact, the OHCHR classified Rights and Democracy as a private donor in its annual report. Rights and Democracy is not a donor. This is not our mandate. We are distinct from CIDA, which actually gave some \$745 million to various UN agencies in 2007-08.

• (1540)

[Translation]

Now, let's talk about the future. We have a number of challenges to face so that Rights and Democracy can continue to realize its mission as set out in its act of incorporation. Among other things, we will need to build an international development organization with larger financial means, to ensure a presence in the very countries we are working in and to implement programs producing measurable results, specifically in democratic development and human rights.

[English]

Here are some of these challenges.

Firstly, the board of directors has set new strategic orientations for the future that underscore the need to establish equilibrium between the two components of the Rights and Democracy mission: promotion of respect for human rights and democratic development. For example, Rights and Democracy presently does not work with members of Parliament or political parties, which are nonetheless key players in democratic development. Our partners are limited to members of civil society. There is a need to be more inclusive.

Secondly, we have the benefit of receiving core funding of \$9 million allocated by Parliament. This funding is used essentially to provide relatively small grants to civil society organizations in 12 countries and to pay for some activities in Canada, as well as to cover our overhead costs. We can and we must do more by developing and implementing important projects and by diversifying our funding sources in order to substantially augment our impact on the improvement of states' practices in the field of human rights and democratic development.

For instance, we recently won a European Union bidding process for a program on democratic response to social division in Afghanistan, and we are shortlisted for another on freedom of expression. This shows that we can advantageously use a substantial portion of our core funding as leverage to raise funds from international donors.

Finally, we are taking steps to improve our internal capacity to develop and manage projects. We are also recruiting competent staffers to support our program in the countries where we are working.

[Translation]

Are we ready to take on the challenges of tomorrow? I firmly believe that we are, Mr. Chair. Rights and Democracy is a well-established organization, and we can also build on its past accomplishments. Despite the crisis that shook Rights and Democracy, we have implemented a number of worthwhile projects in the past year, and we are back on the right track.

I have taken the initiative to make visits to see how the programs are doing. Among other places, I have been to Thailand, Myanmar and Zimbabwe, and I can confirm that everything is going well.

[English]

That being said, we need your support in order to reach our ambitious goal. For instance, I respectfully ask you to consider some amendments to our legal framework in order to clarify the central powers in the field of fund-raising.

It is also very important to have our funding consolidated. The present situation, whereby we are receiving our funding from DFAIT and CIDA, is a serious constraint to us.

We would also benefit from a closer relationship with parliamentary committees as well as parliamentarians, in order to share our expertise, provide input, and raise your awareness of our programs.

Dear members of the committee, the changes I wish to implement, turning Rights and Democracy into a more efficient organization, implementing major programs in the field of democratic development and human rights using additional sources of funding from donors, will not happen overnight. However, what is of paramount importance at this time is that the will is there to put an end to the unfortunate crisis which took place at Rights and Democracy.

My aim is to build an organization that will be a Canadian flagship in the world for our values, which are shared by all Canadians.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

• (1545)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Latulippe.

We're going to start with Mr. Rae. You have seven minutes, sir.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Latulippe, in much of his correspondence with us, has asked us to turn the page, but it simply isn't possible to turn the page, because there are too many questions and issues arising, even from the latest report that he's given us.

Just to be clear, Mr. Latulippe, in the report you have given us, which I take it is a sort of response or commentary to the so-called SIRCO report, which is attached to the letter you sent to Mr. Allison dated February 8, 2011, you make a number of conclusions and allegations, for example about one of the former board members, Mr. Akhavan.

Did you give Mr. Akhavan a chance to respond to these accusations before you wrote this report to the board?

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: Mr. Rae, if you read the report, there is no accusation against Mr. Akhavan.

Hon. Bob Rae: Oh, yes, there is. There's a conclusion of law that you make with respect to a conflict of interest.

Did you discuss this with Mr. Akhavan before you presented it to the board?

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: If you read the document effectively, what I'm saying is that Mr. Akhavan was at the same time on the board of Rights and Democracy and the board of another organization. There is no conclusion that he was in a situation of—

Hon. Bob Rae: With great respect, Mr. Latulippe, at the bottom of the first page of your comments about Mr. Akhavan, you say:

This is a case which at least constitutes an apparent violation of the measures of the Code of Ethics to avoid conflicts of interest and of the Conflict of Interest Act.

So I'm asking you a very simple question, which really has a yes or no answer. Before you attacked Mr. Akhavan's reputation in this report, did you discuss it with him and give him a chance to respond to what you were going to tell this committee today with respect to his conduct?

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: Mr. Rae, I disagree. There is no—

Hon. Bob Rae: No, you haven't answered my question. That's the first question and you haven't answered.

I'd like to ask you again, did you discuss this report with Mr. Akhavan, yes or no?

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: Mr. Rae, this is why I did my due diligence. I don't have to discuss that with other—

Hon. Bob Rae: With great respect, sir, you talk about rights and democracy. A fundamental principle of rights and democracy is that when you're making an accusation or allegation with respect to someone of the international reputation of Mr. Akhavan, you don't drag his reputation through the mud, you don't make allegations without having substantive response from Mr. Akhavan, and you give Mr. Akhavan a chance to respond. That's what you do.

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: I disagree with you, Mr. Rae—

Hon. Bob Rae: Well, I'm sure you do.

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: I disagree with you, Mr. Rae. There is no accusation against Mr. Akhavan.

Hon. Bob Rae: There certainly is. You even make a conclusion of law as well as a conclusion of fact. You conclude what the law is and you conclude what the facts are, and you don't give Mr. Akhavan a chance to respond to it before you tell this committee what your conclusions are. I think that's disgraceful.

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: Mr. Rae, if you read—

Hon. Bob Rae: I've read it carefully.

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: —you can see—

Hon. Bob Rae: I can see. I certainly can see. Do you want me to read out more for you of what you say about him?

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: Let me speak.

You can see that I clearly mention that Mr. Akhavan report, and you have the e-mails that he sent to Mr. Beauregard. I am saying in this report that Mr. Akhavan sent to Mr. Beauregard an e-mail to declare that he was on the board of both organizations. What I have said is that he didn't send that to the board of directors; he sent it to Mr. Akhavan. The due diligence is a report on the facts that I found —

Hon. Bob Rae: No, it's not. You have to give someone a chance to respond. It's just a basic courtesy to individuals that if you're going to draw that kind of conclusion about somebody of his reputation, or in fact anybody's reputation, you just don't do it that way.

That's the trouble I have. I have a real problem with it. You keep saying that you want to turn the page, but you keep repeating the problems and the allegations, and that's the problem I have.

With respect to the president of SIRCO, Mr. Sarrazin.... —

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: Yes?

Hon. Bob Rae: What was the total value of the contract you provided to him?

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: This contract was provided by my predecessor before I arrived. The total amount is \$170,000, more or less. The reason for the contract was to gather facts related to the activities of the three directors who were dismissed. It is also those facts that serve as a proof in court related to the action of those three directors against Rights and Democracy.

• (1550)

Hon. Bob Rae: We'll see whether they do or not.

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: We have a legal opinion from our lawyer, which I asked for myself. The lawyer says that we have a good case for those dismissals. My opinion is that for that reason and for that reason only, Mr. Rae, the SIRCO report was important.

Hon. Bob Rae: The president of SIRCO as well as certain members of the board alleged—in fact, we were here at the committee when they did so—that the collective agreement that was signed was improperly signed and that there was substantial evidence of collusion between the members of the union and the people who signed the agreement on behalf of Rights and Democracy.

I see from the document with which you've provided us that there is “no proof of collusion between the union and the management of Rights and Democracy”, and you conclude that “the collective agreement was signed legally and that the three members of the executive committee who signed it had the authority to do so”.

In effect, what you're saying is that those members of the board who testified before the committee that what took place was improper were wrong, and you're also telling us that the president of SIRCO—who told you that it was wrong—was also wrong. Is that not the conclusion?

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: What I said is that I asked for a legal opinion from our lawyer, based not only on what SIRCO told me but based on the collective agreement, based of all the facts that are in my due diligence. The conclusion of and the legal opinion of our lawyers is that the collective agreement is valid, and that the fact that the agreement was signed after the death of Mr. Beauregard without one of the clauses, which was no longer in the collective agreement, is not a proof of collusion.

I did my job, because I did the due diligence.

Hon. Bob Rae: Mr. Sarrazin is apparently, according to testimony given in front of another committee, a leading Conservative. Do you have any reason to know why his company was chosen in particular to do this \$170,000 worth of private investigative work? Do you have any idea why he was chosen and not someone else?

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: I don't.

Hon. Bob Rae: Do you know why the contract was given for \$170,000 without any tendering or without any form of competition whatsoever?

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: Look, Mr. Rae, I wasn't there.

Hon. Bob Rae: No, I know, but I'm asking you.

But the person who was there has just been reappointed to the board by Mr. Cannon.

With respect to those two appointments, were you consulted on the two reappointments, of Mr. Tepper and Mr. Gauthier?

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: Look, I am not....

Hon. Bob Rae: No, I asked you a question again....

I don't know what the problem is, Mr. Latulippe: I ask questions; you try to give answers.

Were you consulted by Mr. Cannon with respect to the reappointment of Mr. Gauthier and Mr. Tepper?

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: Look, I am not responsible for the appointment—

Hon. Bob Rae: He's not answering my questions, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: Yes, I'm answering your question.

Hon. Bob Rae: You're not answering.

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: It's not my role to give any—

Hon. Bob Rae: I asked you a question. Were you asked by Mr. Cannon your opinion with respect to the reappointment of Mr. Gauthier or Mr. Tepper, or did anyone from Mr. Cannon's staff contact you and ask you with respect to the view of the organization with respect to the possible reappointments?

Before you get your answers given to you by your assistant....

This is ridiculous.

The Chair: Okay, just give a quick response. That's all the time we have. Then we're going to move on to Mr. Dorion.

Hon. Bob Rae: It's a very simple question.

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: I was asked and I said that this is not my role. I am not the one; it is the cabinet. I am responsible to and accountable to the board; they are my boss. I have to work with them; I don't select them. That's not my role.

That's a clear answer.

The Chair: Thank you.

We're going to move on to Mr. Dorion. Sir, you have seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Dorion (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Good afternoon, Mr. Latulippe. Thank you for joining us today. We've been wanting to meet with you for a long time.

In your report, you say that the meeting on December 17 was cancelled. In a letter that you sent in early January to the chair of our committee, you said that it had been cancelled under nebulous circumstances, which were the words you used. Today, you have taken back those words. How do you think the circumstances were nebulous?

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: I arrived an hour before the committee meeting. I was prepared to testify and, suddenly, the meeting was cancelled. I tried to find out why, and I was never given a clear answer.

• (1555)

Mr. Jean Dorion: Thank you. That information is very helpful.

You stress that we need to move on to something else, that the deplorable events that you experienced are behind you and so on. But I think that most of the committee members feel, like I do, that we cannot move on to something else because of certain changes.

In a report submitted last June, I believe, our ninth recommendation asked that the Privy Council Office remove all documents related to the evaluation of Rémy Beaugard. Has the board of directors done its part?

We also recommended that the current board of directors of Rights and Democracy, of which you are president, issue an apology to Mr. Beaugard's family for any statements that might have damaged his reputation. Have you issued this apology? Yesterday, Mr. Beaugard's widow wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs to ask about this. She also asked that some members of the board of directors not be reappointed. This doesn't pertain to you, but it would still be very helpful to find out your opinion about these appointments that the government intends to make. Also, since you are still the president, you are going to chair meetings with these people.

Lastly, do you intend to issue these apologies that our committee requested in its report?

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: I am the president of the centre. As for Mr. Beaugard, I think that you would be better off posing the question, among others, to the president who is going to come and testify and who was at the centre of the crisis with the others.

My position on Mr. Beaugard is very clear. As president of the centre, it is not my place to judge my predecessor. I refuse to make any kind of judgment about his past actions. I think that he deserves respect, and I have always opposed using information from emails or elsewhere to attack Mr. Beaugard. Mr. Beaugard is dead. He isn't going to help me. This situation is only going to perpetuate the past. The future of Rights and Democracy isn't going to involve airing its dirty laundry. This is my position on Mr. Beaugard. I respect him, and I do not intend to stir up anything against him.

Mr. Jean Dorion: Mr. Latulippe, you are the president of Rights and Democracy. You cannot dissociate yourself from what the organization's management did. Investigations have been conducted to find out whether the charges against Mr. Beaugard were founded. Those investigations showed that they were not. How can you say that you will not pass judgment? I think that your duty is to pass a positive judgment and rectify the injustice committed against him. If we, the committee members, are aware that injustices were committed against Mr. Beaugard, how can you, the president of the agency that committed these injustices, wash your hands of it?

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: I sent you a letter on January 14 last. In it, I indicated my interest in being heard by the board. At that time, a debate arose because of two letters, the letter from your chair and the letter that I sent. My position was always to decline. That was debated at the special meeting of the board of directors. Do we have to end the investigations, the SIRCO reports, or do we have to continue them? I spoke about trust in that context. I told the people on the board that it was a matter of trust and that I wanted to put a stop to reports and anything of the kind, with the exception of my due diligence. I placed all the weight I had as president on that. So the board of directors voted unanimously to put a stop to all the

reports and investigations into the past. That is why I am here before you today with that resolution that the board of directors passed.

● (1600)

Mr. Jean Dorion: Mr. Latulippe, as I understand it, the first point is that a majority of the board of directors were involved in the injustices directed against Mr. Beaugard.

The second point is that you direct an organization called Rights and Democracy. In a democracy, one basic right is the right to one's reputation. Mr. Beaugard's reputation was sullied by the organization that you now direct. Accepting that you were not there at that time, I feel that it is your duty to play a part in correcting the injustice. If you do not, what credibility can you have as the defender of rights and democracy?

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: I repeat that in no way do I want to attack anyone. I have even insisted that, for exactly the reasons you describe, for human rights reasons, it was essential for me to put an end to a crisis that has harmed a lot of people, both on the board and in the staff. It is a huge crisis. For human rights reasons, we must not be bringing those matters up now. That is the issue I went to battle over last January 20.

Mr. Jean Dorion: Mr. Latulippe, I am very concerned when I hear your reasoning. In my opinion, the organization is presided over by someone whose concepts of democracy are not those that prevail in our society and in our time. An injustice was done to the former president of Rights and Democracy. As you are explaining it to me now, we have to forget that. Go and explain it to Mr. Beaugard's widow. I will not lie to you, I am shocked to hear you make those statements.

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: I would just like to say that...

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dorion. That's all the time we have.

We're going to move to over to the other side of the table.

Mr. Lunney, take seven minutes, please.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Monsieur Latulippe, thank you very much for appearing here with your colleagues today. We appreciate your being here.

First, I'd just like to comment. A question has already been raised about the reputation of a member of the board, and comments have been made about that. I think it behoves all members of this committee to be sensitive to the reputations of persons who have tried to serve Rights and Democracy on the board and in other capacities. I also appreciate the tenor of your comment in regard to respecting the name and the reputation of your predecessor, Mr. Beaugard.

That said, we recognize also that there are some constraints on what you can say before the committee because of ongoing legal matters related to the dismissal of some former employees.

Now, let me just take up my first question from this footing.

Rights and Democracy seems to have a bit of an identity issue, and I think you partially addressed it in your remarks. Rights and Democracy is not operating under a normal framework as a government agency. Certainly it's not CIDA, it's not DFAIT; it's an arm's-length organization from the government.

On the other hand, it's not a private donor, as you mentioned in your remarks. I think you report having contributed some 729...is it million dollars to the UN?

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: It's thousands of dollars. It's \$729,000.

Mr. James Lunney: Thank you. That's a nice correction.

You gave \$729,000 to the Office of the UN High Commissioner, apparently reported as from a private donor.

So it's not an NGO, it's not a private donor, it's not a direct arm of the government. It has a bit of an identity issue.

But in relation to the United Nations, there was a question about an office that was opened by Rights and Democracy in Geneva. I think it was referred to in the Deloitte report.

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: Yes.

Mr. James Lunney: Rights and Democracy had opened this office and registered the office, under Swiss law, as an NGO. I think it speaks to this confusion about the identity of the organization.

Is there anything you can comment on about the purpose of the office? Was it necessary to have an office at the United Nations, and in what role did it actually serve the organization?

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: There are two things there. The Deloitte report... The board, as a matter of fact, has closed the office in Geneva. And I agree with that, because I want to do programs in the field. We just hired our first expatriate ever in Afghanistan. That's where I think we have to improve human rights. I just hired the first program officer in Pretoria for a program in Zimbabwe when we helped journalism to work in a very difficult situation in that country. That's where we have to be. That's where the law tells us to be. That's why I think that was a good decision.

Regarding the grant, it's not a grant to the High Commissioner for Human Rights; it was a donation without any term of reference, without any activities, without any evaluation of results. When you do that you need to have a process to evaluate the results. This was an issue, not only for the High Commissioner for Human Rights, but also in many of our programs. That's part of the improvement. That's part of the future. That's part of the thing we're working on in the future. That's also why you have to help us to put an end to the past and to build into the future.

Look, somebody has to put this to an end. This is my job. You know, 2011 is not 2010. The crisis was in 2010. You have a role to help me to make this organization again a flagship for Canada abroad, for its values. I need you for that. Let's go into building this new organization, and we are in the process of doing it.

• (1605)

Mr. James Lunney: Okay, I thank you for that remark. I appreciate that.

Frankly, hardly anything stays the same. The world itself is changing very quickly on us. Businesses in Canada have had to go

through some major restructuring in many cases to stay competitive in a worldwide economic crisis. The world in terms of democratic needs and opportunities has changed dramatically. The situation in the Middle East with the realignment and the protests in the street all bear witness to the need for some assistance in developing democratic institutions.

Along that line, one of the remarks you made here was you receive a core funding of about \$9 million from the Parliament of Canada, and essentially that is your core mandate. You're providing services, according to your testimony here, in about 12 countries, and it also pays for your activities here and abroad. I'm interested in your remarks here about diversifying your source of funding to be able to fulfill your mandate. I wonder if you could help us by looking to the future. How do you see that? And how do you see those opportunities being afforded by funding from other sources to augment what's provided by the taxpayers of Canada?

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: Let me explain to you what I consider is really our main challenge. We have a core funding of \$9 million. In fact, 60% of this amount is going into the field; 40% is on overhead and on activities in Canada. More than going forward, with the increase in cost of living, the increase in the salaries, this amount over the yield will be reduced to a point that our capacity, with only a core funding to conduct our mission, will be substantially reduced. What we need is to diversify our funding, to find an alternative source of funding, and also to do important projects, projects based on getting your funding through international donors and increasing your capacity to achieve your mission by doing just that. That's why I also need Parliament to help me to give the centre this capacity of diversifying its funding.

This is also where this world of international development works. It works with projects that are funded by international donors, and more importantly, we're doing grants, but we're doing small grants. If you have a small grant of \$200,000 in Zimbabwe and at the same time you have a capacity for your organization to do a program of \$1 million or \$2 million, you're a lot more effective. That's where I want to lead the organization.

• (1610)

Mr. James Lunney: The final question I would have for you here is about your asking for the committee's help in looking at the legal framework of Rights and Democracy. I mentioned there seemed to be an identity crisis in how this organization operates in the world and about the centre's powers in the field of fundraising. I wonder if you could shed any light on how you see that working.

You also asked for a closer relationship with parliamentary committees and parliamentarians as a whole. I notice you have a function coming up in the near future in Parliament about women's issues in the Ottawa area, I believe. I wonder if you could help us to better understand what you see as the changes you envision.

The Chair: I'm going to have to cut you off there. We'll have to pick that up in the next round, if your colleague wants to. We're out of time.

We're going to move back to this side of the table.

Mr. Dewar, sir, the floor is yours. Seven minutes.

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

I am glad to have Mr. Latulippe in front of the committee. It was unfortunate that our meeting was cancelled. I understand you were here and available, and I have voiced my concern about how that happened, knowing that we shouldn't have that happen again.

I have some questions on the information that's been provided by Mr. Latulippe: the letter you sent to the committee, and the information you sent today. I just want to go over what I think is very important.

First of all, do you have a tally of how much money was spent in that interim period when Mr. Gauthier was president and the contracts for Deloitte & Touche, for the PR firm, and for SIRCO? Because as of April 1 of last year it was about half a million dollars, and I'm just wondering if you can tell us how much money was spent on those contracts as of today.

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: The SIRCO report was \$170,000.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Right, you mentioned that.

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: Deloitte was \$250,000.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Yes.

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: The lawyers—

Mr. Paul Dewar: Can't forget them.

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: —over and above, until now, it's about \$400,000, at least.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Okay. And then we had some per diems for Mr. Gauthier, which were added.

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: When I'm talking about the lawyers, I'm talking the main cost of the lawyers, related to the action in court.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I understand that. I'm just trying to get a ballpark figure, because we have a budget of \$9 million, and we're talking about getting close to \$1 million, easily.

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: Yes.

Mr. Paul Dewar: We had the board members in front of this committee, and at the time we were led to believe they were engaged in due diligence, particularly with SIRCO, around concerns around theft, around terrorism—some very serious charges—conflict of interest, etc.

I read your letter carefully. I'm looking through these documents. When I look at what was asserted and the rationale by Mr. Gauthier and Mr. Braun and others to engage in these contracts, I'm seeing that.... First, from your own read of the situation and your meetings with SIRCO, I don't see any of the allegations having stuck at all. What I see here is that when it comes to the case of the collective agreement, it was legally done. Right? You just said that.

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: Right.

Mr. Paul Dewar: No conflict of interest between Mr. Beauregard and Mr. Akhavan.

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: Right.

Mr. Paul Dewar: There was this Durban 2 conspiracy. That's a dud, from what you're showing in the document here. I'll say it's a dud. You can say there was nothing there.

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: What I did is I'm giving you all the facts

Mr. Paul Dewar: So there was no funding of terrorist organizations, according to what we have in SIRCO's report.

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: The SIRCO report was not about that.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Sorry, you're right, the Deloitte & Touche report.

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: The SIRCO report is mainly about the dismissal of the three directors.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Right.

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: The SIRCO report is about governance issues. The Deloitte report is about government—

Mr. Paul Dewar: That's why I want to get at this, because everything that SIRCO was looking at—there's conspiracy around working and having a relationship with terrorists—they didn't find anything. You submitted to the police, and they didn't find anything. Right?

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: Right. Regarding the Cairo thing, if I can explain—

Mr. Paul Dewar: I don't have much time.

We just know there was nothing there.

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: The Cairo thing was the fact I gave that to the RCMP, and they told me they're not going to pursue the inquiry—

•(1615)

Mr. Paul Dewar: Right.

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: —except they are going to give the information to the security service.

Mr. Paul Dewar: So the question is, did the previous interim president pursue it with the RCMP, this whole concern that they had, or was it just with SIRCO?

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: What I understand and what I was told on many, many occasions and from documents I've seen, the former president concentrated his efforts.... The aim was that SIRCO would serve for the firing of the three directors, and that he put an end to SIRCO's mandate. What I did when I arrived, because there were so many e-mails all around, I went and I saw SIRCO and I said, Do you have some other thing? Do you have something problematic that I should be aware of? Tell me and I will look at it. In fact, that's what he did and that's what's in the letter of—

Mr. Paul Dewar: So who directed him to investigate these other matters?

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: There's no investigation on the other matters. There's no investigation.

Mr. Paul Dewar: But someone was looking into this—

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: He was raising with me the fact—and this was a concern to me also—that a certain number of persons who were participating at the Cairo conference did have relations with terrorists.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Yes, and he was looking into that.

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: That's what he said to me.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Right.

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: He said to me.... And I don't know how he did that. He said he was looking on the Internet. Just a click.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Yes. What I want to just establish here—

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: And what I did, for me, I think it was my duty to say okay, I don't have to judge that; that's a serious matter and I'll bring that to the RCMP.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I just want to be clear that Mr. Gauthier hadn't pursued this with the RCMP, these concerns?

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: He didn't.

Mr. Paul Dewar: No. And—

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: No. Look, just one moment. Gauthier made an end to the SIRCO inquiry, and for him SIRCO was about the dismissal of the three directors. It was not, for him, about other things.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Okay. Just to be clear here, because my time is short—

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: Yes, I know.

Mr. Paul Dewar: —we have a firm that was paid almost \$200,000 that was off investigating what they thought was important, without direction. We had a board here that said this was a concern of theirs. So someone is zooming someone here, and I think we're getting zoomed.

The fact is we are talking about \$1 million being spent for problems that didn't exist, and you're trying to move on. I say to you, Mr. Latulippe, the problem you have.... You had a board that still wanted to pursue, until you intervened, this SIRCO contract. Is that correct?

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: Deloitte is important, is useful for me—

Mr. Paul Dewar: Yes, yes, of course.

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: No, no, no.

Mr. Paul Dewar: No, I understand.

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: It's essential in order to permit me to move ahead on three major factors. Look at the discretionary funds: \$1.5 million given to small organizations—

Mr. Paul Dewar: No, I get that. You could have read that on your own, though, and determined that.

I'm saying on the SIRCO report, what you have is that what they're looking at, they came up with nothing of real value. You've just told us that. You said it in your letter. I see it in the e-mails. So on this concern about the contract—nada. This concern about having relations with “terrorists”—nothing there.

So what we have is SIRCO really not giving you much value for money. If I'm an administrator, I ask who signed us on to this; I want it ended. I'm glad you ended it, but my understanding was that the board wanted to continue until you intervened. Is that correct? Did the board want to continue with SIRCO?

The Chair: Go ahead, answer the question. That's all the time we have. We're going to move on, but go ahead and answer the question.

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: There was a debate on the board on the question about more reports, more work from SIRCO. I was against that.

But the SIRCO report is useful, Mr. Dewar, because this is in fact in relation to the activities of the three directors who were dismissed. It was essential for that.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Yet so much more.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Dewar, that's all the time.

We're going to move into our second round, which is now five minutes for questions and answers. I'm going to move it back to this side of the table.

Mr. Van Kesteren, sir.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for coming, Mr. Latulippe. This is very difficult for you, I know, and many of the questions that have been asked of course are before the courts and it is difficult for you to answer some of those.

I want to shift channels. And I know that you'd probably appreciate that, but I think that it's important that we shift channels too because we are in perilous times. I think most people would agree, when we look at what's happening in Egypt, across the Middle East. And this morning I read in the paper, I think others did too, that Indonesia, which is.... Oftentimes we think about the Middle East and that as being the largest democracies of Muslim countries, but Indonesia, of course, has that distinction. We read the alarming trend where we're starting to see some...discrimination, we'll just call it, and more than that, some violence against other groups of people within their own Islamic sects as well as, of course, Christian churches.

It is absolutely important that we maintain and that we grow our democracy. I know that's really the job of your organization, and I know that's where you want to go and that's where you want to take us. So I wish you would just talk to us at this particular point and tell us what we're doing there and what we can do to just stop what's taking place there.

● (1620)

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: Maybe I can give you an example of what we just did in Egypt. It is interesting. We supported the training of bloggers, teaching them how to use and secure blogs and how to use that for promoting democracy and human rights in Egypt. This is quite useful.

We need to want a more equilibrated approach to human rights and democracy. We cannot protect human rights without strong democratic institutions. I have never seen human rights protected in a dictatorship. That is one reason one of the strategic shifts we have to do is to work with other actors of democracies.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: But you're walking a real tightrope between what we all hope is going to be achieved and of course what could be the direct result of the violence and the disruption, especially in the Middle East. I'm thinking more in terms of the Muslim Brotherhood and where that could lead.

What are you doing to possibly encourage and help direct that fledgling democracy to move in the right direction, toward what we would all agree would be a better place for them?

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: Everywhere we work we have to put more emphasis on the reinforcement of democratic institutions, to play a better role in increasing democracy. That is whether it is Parliament, political parties, civil society, or other institutions that have a role in democracy.

Let me give you an example. We're working with civil society organizations and municipalities in Colombia to help link them together to develop their budgets. It's participative budgeting so the decisions of a city have a role to play in saying where the money will go to improve development in their municipalities. This is a way to increase democracy.

In Morocco, where there are a lot of disaffected youth, we have a program to train youth to play a better role in their society. We have an excellent program that can be reproduced across the world with youth citizenry.

That's where I want to lead Rights and Democracy.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: You spoke in your opening remarks about the role that parliamentarians have. I know the last time you visited you were also quite passionate, and we all caught the passion about possibly training better parliamentarians.

Mr. Goldring and I have just come back from an African country. It's part of our duty, as parliamentarians, not only to view what's going on there but to encourage these people. We have a unique role here. I want you to maybe elaborate on that and on what your plans are for the future. That is very important. That is something I am passionate about as well.

The Chair: I'll let you answer the question, but we're out of time for Mr. Van Kesteren.

Go ahead and answer the question.

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: I'll give you an example of what we can do. There are so many countries where parliamentarians and citizens are very far apart. There is a gap, a credibility gap. We can bring those countries' MPs together with their constituents. I've done that in the past in many countries of the world. Here we don't work with parliamentarians.

We can organize town hall meetings. We can organize the relationship between the citizens and the parliamentarians. This is something that is very important, that can bridge the civil society and the MPs and bring more political rights to the citizens. It's increasing their participation in democracy.

That's where we have to go. That's what we can do.

•(1625)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now move over to Dr. Patry, for five minutes, sir.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair. My thanks to Mr. Latulippe and our guests.

Mr. Latulippe, through our clerk, you have provided us with a document whose goal is to demonstrate “due diligence”—as you call it—that you have done on, and I quote: “...the problems indicated to me by the SIRCO firm...”

I have read your report in its entirety. It has 10 chapters. It contains nothing about the computers. I will come back to the Cairo conferences. As to the Alternatives organization, Ms. France-Isabelle Langlois has been cleared of all charges, if I may put it that way. You already mentioned the Iranian Human Rights Documentation Centre in connection with Mr. Akhavan because he was a member of its board of directors. Mr. Akhavan had no conflict of interest. That was what the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner said. It was the same situation for the Iranian film director. Same thing for the discretionary grants for Durban II. The questions were dealt with; those interns never worked on preparations for Durban II. There was no collusion on the collective agreement. In terms of Mr. Beauregard's meeting with a member of Hezbollah, you say that: “the president of SIRCO told me that...the president met a representative of Hezbollah...” You know, those are very damaging allegations against Mr. Beauregard, who is now deceased. It is serious to say such things and to come to that conclusion when maybe there was one representative from Hezbollah in the room.

I remember when Mr. Chrétien was accused of that at the Francophone Summit in Lebanon because someone from Hezbollah was in the room. There may have been 300 people in the room and who knows if they were from Hezbollah. When I go to some of those countries, they all look alike to me to some extent. It's hard to tell, you know. These are allegations. I have one request, one question, for you. Could you provide the committee with the full wording of the mandate given to SIRCO by the board of directors? I would like to read the full wording.

So, you are here to talk to us about the future of Rights and Democracy, but can you really move forward if you do not know what happened? That makes it difficult to move forward. Do you have the tools to move forward with the current board of directors?

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: Since January 20, the board of directors and I have closed the door to the past. I have put an end to the investigations and reports. I have done nothing more than report the facts as told to me by Mr. Sarrasin. I have just reported the facts. With that done, we have to build for the future. I think it is my job to build for the future and that is what I am doing. Look, let me do my job. I need you so that I can do it. This has been going on for a year. It is 2011 now. Nothing is to be gained in rehashing the problems and talking about a crisis that hurt people on the staff, people on the board of directors, and Mr. Beauregard's family. Are we going to be rehashing it all for years to come? As Canadians, we all want an organization with a role to play on the international stage. Help me to move past what I will be the first to acknowledge was an unfortunate crisis for Rights and Democracy. Help me.

• (1630)

Mr. Bernard Patry: What is your reply to my request for the wording of the mandate given to SIRCO?

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: The wording of the mandate has two parts to it. Are you talking about SIRCO?

Mr. Bernard Patry: Yes, just SIRCO, not Deloitte and Touche.

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: You received that document. It was submitted to the committee. Essentially, it had to do with the dismissal of the three directors. What did SIRCO do? I am not justifying the company's actions. It took 20,000 emails and picked some of them which lawyers used in the process of dismissing the three directors. The lawyers tell me we have a strong case.

Mr. Bernard Patry: But...

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: You asked me and I am going to tell you. They were asked to investigate the theft of computers. I personally left that with the police. It is not up to SIRCO to investigate the theft of computers; it is up to the police. The police found no suspects. They investigated the matter thoroughly.

In the beginning, the mandate to SIRCO also dealt with the Access to Information Act. But I did not want matters under that act to be dealt with by a private investigator, so I asked an expert that we work with to handle it. The final part was what is contained in the due diligence report.

You have in your possession all the emails that SIRCO chose, in chronological order. If you want to find out the details, read those emails. Personally, I have no interest in doing that because I am not here to read emails, I am here to build an organization...

[English]

The Chair: Sorry to cut you off, but we're over the time.

We're going to move to Mr. Goldring for five minutes.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Latulippe, to return to the question of my colleague, we just came back from a visit to Ghana. There was a Canadian group over there doing some governance work with the Ghanaese government. One of the comments that was made there was that one of the difficulties is that the members of Parliament, particularly in the northern regions, are desirous of being involved in policy-making. This policy now is brought down from the government that is in power. The suggestion was that if an organization such as yours would work with the members of Parliament to show them the way to develop this policy

at the community level and bring it forward before the government was formed, that policy could probably contribute to the election campaigns themselves and be reinforced through the campaigns so that when the government was formed there would be a reasonable chance that policy would be initiated. This was a comment that was very strongly made.

I saw that also in Haiti, when I was there in 2006. There was a void of any type of policy development by the political parties. I see that you have been doing some work in Haiti.

Again, as you said, you're not working with the members of Parliament yourself. You're working with agency groups that are there in the field. Could you expand on that and tell us, is that local group qualified? Do they have this political party experience themselves, or should that work be done within those local agencies, maybe by former parliamentarians that would be able to guide the process much more effectively?

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: That's music to my ears and gives a specific case of what we can do easily. That's one of the new strategic objectives of our organization, to work in those types of projects. Until now, we have worked, essentially, on civil society, with civil society organizations. We should involve parliamentarians, train parliamentarians on how to do policies in countries where it's very difficult. I have been working in Haiti, for example. They don't have a research centre. They don't have anything. If you have peers who teach them and discuss with them, that's the way to improve their work. Also, it's related to the protection of human rights.

We are in a transition. We have to reach out to those new types of projects. That means for us to increase our funding through project funding, to use our core funding, to raise money from international donors, not just to rely on the Canadian government. Also, it means working with other actors, such as parliamentarians.

• (1635)

Mr. Peter Goldring: I have another quick question. You had indicated in your remarks that the funding arrangements from CIDA are complicated, a serious constraint. Could you elaborate on what type of funding is from other organizations? You had also mentioned that your group gave funding to the United Nations group. At the same time, you're saying that CIDA is giving money to United Nations groups. My question would be, why the middle person? Why wouldn't CIDA do it directly, or are these two channels both contributing to the same United Nations groups in particular in the rights and democracy field?

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: What we want to do is move out of doing only grants. In the case of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, it was in fact discussed at length in the Deloitte report. We're not going to leave all grants apart, but we are still going to do some grants.

You know, when you go to an international donor, you say, "I have core funding". Peer organizations don't have this advantage of having core funding that you give us. You go to the Swedish CIDA, or you go to the Norwegians, and you say, for example, that we have a good project here for helping civil society and citizens and for doing town hall meetings in Haiti, and if you want to give us some money, we can put some money into it, because we have core funding. We'll put in \$200,000, and they'll put in a million. Peer organizations don't have this capacity. That's where we have an advantage. That's where I want to lead.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Goldring.

That's all the time we have. We're out of time.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Dorion: A point of order, Mr. Chair.

I notice that you gave the floor to Mr. Goldring even though it was clearly after 4:30 p.m., the time when our meeting was supposed to end. A little earlier, you made a gesture to me indicating—at least as I understood it—that you would not be giving me a second round. Could you tell me how rounds can be assigned like that? Perhaps there are rules that I am not familiar with. I am asking the question in all sincerity.

[English]

The Chair: Sure. It was just based on the ability to tell time. We spent an hour, and we were a little late starting, so we went over to get the full hour in.

[Translation]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): We can ask for the consent of the other members so that we can continue.

[English]

The Chair: Yes.

Hon. Bob Rae: I have no problem with one question.

The Chair: Okay, we'll come back over here for one question, and then we'll wrap it up. Okay?

Go ahead, Mr. Dorion.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Dorion: Mr. Latulippe, I have in front of me the document that you provided us with. By the way, your name appears

nowhere on it. We have to guess that it is yours. In a number of places, someone says that they did this, that or the other, but nowhere does it specify who wrote the document. It is a technicality, but I am just pointing it out to you. I have the English version of the document in front of me. You end the introduction by saying that you are happy to close an unfortunate chapter in your history and you undertake to the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Development to move resolutely into the future.

How can you be happy? Do you really believe that the unfortunate chapter is closed? We around this table clearly see that the chapter is not closed. Mr. Beauregard's widow has written to the minister asking for the injustice to her husband to be put right. People who contributed to that injustice are still on the board of directors and the government is about to reappoint two of them.

I would like to ask you very candidly how you can be happy under those circumstances. As I said, you represent an organization called "Rights and Democracy"; but Mr. Beauregard's basic democratic rights have been violated. Yet you refuse to correct the injustice done by the board of directors whose president you are.

• (1640)

Mr. Gérard Latulippe: I have closed the SIRCO file. I am the one who said enough is enough, that we are going to put a stop to investigations and reports. I took a stand on that and so I put my job on the line. SIRCO is over and done with. The board of directors voted unanimously for that. The board's resolution is clear. For the people affected, the due diligence report closes the door on the events of the past. We could still be talking about it centuries from now, but none of us wants that. Canada needs to be playing a role through an organization like ours. It is doing so, as are our employees. You have a role to play in that too.

Mr. Jean Dorion: Apparently, you have excellent employees and they have protested en masse about the injustice done to their president. Mr. Latulippe, I find your comments to be surreal.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dorion.

Thank you, Mr. Latulippe, for coming today.

We're going to wrap it up now. We have a committee meeting on Monday to discuss some future business, and I believe Mr. Braun is scheduled to come next Wednesday.

Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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