



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 2nd SESSION

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# Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 011

**PUBLIC PART ONLY - PARTIE PUBLIQUE SEULEMENT**

Tuesday, December 8, 2020

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Chair: Mr. Sven Spengemann



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• (1535)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.)):** Colleagues, welcome to meeting number 11 of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

[Translation]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the Committee on October 22, 2020, we are resuming our study on the vulnerabilities created and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

[English]

To ensure an orderly meeting, as always, I encourage all participants to unmute their microphones when speaking and to address comments through the chair. When you have 30 seconds remaining in your questioning or speaking time, I will signal with this yellow piece of paper. Interpretation services are available through the globe icon at the bottom of your screens.

[Translation]

I would like to welcome our witnesses.

This afternoon, we have with us Rahul Singh, executive director of GlobalMedic, Alexis Gaipman, executive director, and Ryan Duly, regional programme director, of Humanity and Inclusion Canada, as well as Zaid Al-Rawni, chief executive officer of Islamic Relief Canada.

[English]

We will start with Mr. Singh and GlobalMedic for five minutes of introductory remarks.

The floor is yours, sir.

**Mr. Rahul Singh (Executive Director, GlobalMedic):** GlobalMedic is a great Canadian story. We're an agile, small and innovative aid agency that's managed by professional humanitarians, but driven by volunteers. We believe in getting the right aid to the right people at the right time. GlobalMedic has run 226 missions in 76 countries and helped four million people.

In the past decade, humanitarian needs have doubled. The money to service those needs has not grown at the same pace. COVID has simply exacerbated a bad situation. One solution is to program more money, which seems fiscally unlikely. I would urge you to do more with existing funds and look for value for money.

I propose the following four recommendations.

First, focus on creating a supply-style project where you can buy and stockpile Canadian aid items in bulk and push them into crisis zones. Many of our allies have similar programs. In fact, GlobalMedic implements a program for the Americans where we provide a peanut-based nutritional supplement to stave off malnutrition for 12,000 kids in Somalia.

As an agency, GlobalMedic looked inward and we saw that we were buying a lot of items like water purification units. We drove down the costs by buying in bulk and had volunteers assemble these kits. This meant we could do more with the limited funds we had. We replicated the same model and found significant savings across other products, like emergency food kits and soap.

I would suggest that you take up to 1% of your aid budget and use it to buy, stockpile and deploy life-saving items. Studies show that aid is not pushed in fast enough early on in a crisis. This program would address the needs of scarcity, while controlling price and engaging Canadians. This approach demonstrates value for money and represents the best that Canada has to offer the world.

Second, Canada should ensure that its policies do no harm. Recently, while responding to Lebanon, Canada decided to match only funds for donations made to the Humanitarian Coalition. While matching funds may be a useful tool to help raise more money, it should not be used to single out one group—especially a group that agencies pay to join. This tilts the playing field. In fact, it divides the sector. I personally received calls from donors saying they would not contribute to our response because it would not be matched. The government would never create unfair competition in other sectors. It would never tell Canadians that they would get a free phone if they bought a phone from Bell Canada, but not from Rogers. This policy hurt some agencies and, therefore, it hurts beneficiaries. It was rolled out without consultation. I suspect the reason this occurred was that the government was lobbied for this, which leads me to my next point.

Third, large agencies in the UN lobby the Government of Canada so much that GAC, Global Affairs Canada, has simply become a cheque-writing machine to them. The focus is only on these large groups. This does a tremendous disservice to Canadian agencies and small to medium organizations. The UN especially has been proven to be bureaucratic, slow and heavy on administrative fees. A focus on Canadian agencies and a sharper focus on small to medium organizations would help. Often, UN agencies take Canada's funding, keep the administrative fees and implement through smaller partners. Canada can cut out the middleman and do more with less.

I would encourage you to meet with leaders of Canadian small to medium organizations and have a frank discussion with them. Even if you held an in camera session with them, it would help your committee gain insight into the problems of funding. If you're just listening to the voices in the room that agree with you and that you fund, you'll never improve.

Fourth and finally, as a nation we need to follow through on the promises we make. In 2017, Canada said it recognized the need to focus on small to medium organizations, and it created a fund for \$100 million for five years. It's a small amount of money and it has only funded 20 programs. The sector is still waiting for the rest of the program to be rolled out. In 2018, Canada announced a \$900-million program over five years to fund innovative aid programming. That fund has only spent \$120,000.

Our government is very good at making these promises and these announcements, but its ability to program the money that it promises is lacking. It begs the question of whether its infrastructure to program the money is fit for purpose. There have been two reviews by the Auditor General that have raised several concerns in the last decade, and they don't seem to have been addressed. I would encourage the committee to look at those reports and learn from them.

In closing, lives are on the line. We're talking about millions of people in need who are suffering. Policy failures hurt people. Canada needs to do better.

**The Chair:** Mr. Singh, thank you very much. You were very judicious with your time.

We will now go to Humanity & Inclusion Canada.

Ms. Gaipman, the floor is yours for five minutes.

**Ms. Alexis Gaipman (Executive Director, Humanity and Inclusion Canada):** Committee members and fellow witnesses, last week was the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. While persons with disabilities are estimated to represent 15% of the world's population, in countries where conflicts and humanitarian crisis are present, these figures may be much higher.

While people with disabilities are already too often excluded from the rest of society, the long-term effects of COVID-19 threaten to further exacerbate this exclusion. There is no excuse to leave people with disabilities behind.

On behalf of Humanity & Inclusion Canada, I will elaborate on findings collected by programs in 19 countries of intervention on how the COVID-19 crisis triggers disproportionate risks and barriers for men, women, boys and girls with disabilities living in hu-

manitarian settings. In conflict- and disaster-affected or fragile countries, the pandemic can increase the risk of discrimination against persons with disabilities, creating the added challenge to access information and assistance which can lead to higher risks of contracting COVID-19 for certain groups.

Humanity & Inclusion has several concerns. People with disabilities too often do not have access to health services. These vulnerable groups, in many countries, already face significant barriers in accessing health care and other services, due to general stigma and discrimination, lack of accessibility, limited health care services and limited awareness. These barriers may become even more prominent during a health crisis like the current pandemic.

Persons with disabilities may have greater difficulties in accessing prevention messages due to inaccessible communication. For example, in the Philippines, half of the youth with disabilities surveyed, between the ages of 18 and 39 in Manila and Jakarta, needed more accessible information about COVID-19 and community quarantine. They also needed much more health support, such as medicine, access to hospital care, and medical consultation.

People with disabilities face heightened protection risks, such as abuse and violence. Evidence shows that the risk of violence to children and adults with disabilities is routinely three to four times higher than for those without disabilities. Women with disabilities are 10 times more likely than women without disabilities to experience sexual violence.

In the current circumstances of COVID-19, public restrictions, self-isolation of households and disruption of community life and social support may lead to increased protection risks for persons with disabilities and their caregivers. Those include separation from families and caregivers, domestic violence, gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.

Persons with disabilities and their relatives are also less likely to disclose and report violence because of shame and fear, because family members and community members are often the perpetrators, or because the subject is still perceived as a taboo.

People with disabilities are disproportionately affected by the economic shock caused by COVID-19. Specifically, vulnerable and marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities, persons with chronic illness and older persons, who were already vulnerable due to socio-economic exclusion, are even more likely to get hit harder by the reverberating effects of the pandemic.

According to UN estimates, half a billion people, or 8% of the world's population, could be pushed into poverty by the end of the year, largely due to the pandemic. The fight against poverty could see a setback of as much as 30 years.

Humanity & Inclusion calls on Canada to consider endorsing the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action. Canada committed that its humanitarian funding will be inclusive of people with disabilities. We call on Canada to ensure that the \$400 million devoted to combat COVID-19, announced by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau last September, directly targets the most vulnerable and marginalized people around the world, especially in crisis- and conflict-affected areas.

We recommend that Canada ensure that its funding of COVID-19 awareness campaigns promotes inclusive information on prevention and response through diverse accessible formats and technologies, specifically to reach people with visual, hearing and intellectual disabilities, such as sign language, easy read, plain language, audio, captioned media and Braille, so as to leave no one behind.

In addition, we recommend that public communication also use inclusive messages and images to share information with persons with disabilities on how to stay safe and healthy, and how to access assistance or submit concerns.

Thank you.

• (1540)

**The Chair:** Thank you so much, Ms. Gaipman.

Our final set of opening remarks goes to Islamic Relief Canada.

Mr. Al-Rawni, the floor is yours for five minutes.

**Mr. Zaid Al-Rawni (Chief Executive Officer, Islamic Relief Canada):** Thank you all so much for giving this issue your time and deliberation.

First, I will introduce Islamic Relief. Islamic Relief has become the largest Muslim faith-based NGO in Canada. When I came in 2010, Islamic Relief was raising roughly \$900,000 a year from Canadians. This year, despite the COVID pandemic, Islamic Relief has raised over \$50 million in cash from Canadian donors.

That money is predominantly spent to help some of the most vulnerable communities in some of the most failed states in the world, places such as Somalia and northern Syria, places such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, and central and sub-Saharan Africa. Our projects are primarily helping in areas of humanitarian crises. That means people who are in an emergency situation and who need aid.

The evidence I'm going to share is based on our experience with some of those most vulnerable people and some of the challenges where, from a development perspective and from a humanitarian perspective, we could really support with the work we're doing and could really affect people in a more positive way.

The first thing I will say is that Canada has a really good reputation globally. Everywhere we go, people are really impressed and really happy to see the Canadian flag. There's a general good feeling about Canada. Our values as Canadians are known by people. Unfortunately, we made a commitment as Canadians to give 0.7% of our GDP to the world's poorest people, and currently, we're sitting at roughly 0.27%. We haven't really ever met the commitment we initially made to meet 0.7% of our GDP.

What that means is that some of the problems we're seeing globally, especially the refugee crisis, are exacerbated. I've been all over the world. I have met refugees first-hand, and I have yet to meet a single refugee whose main ambition or main desire is not to go back home, to stay home. They never wanted to leave their homes. Nobody ever wants to be forced out from where they live and where they're coming from. Unfortunately, a lack of support means that many of these people are forced into migration camps, forced into refugee camps, forced to cross the channel now from France to England, forced to cross the different treacherous seas and put their lives at risk.

Therefore, it's really important that we consider the 0.7% that we have committed to. This is not lobbying to make a commitment; this is a commitment we have already made, and we try as best we can to meet that commitment.

More aid is actually good aid, and Canadian organizations are well placed to deliver that aid. As a member of the Humanitarian Coalition, Islamic Relief serves with 12 of the best and most respected Canadian organizations in Canada. We work together and collectively to remove the confusion around whom to give to in a time of crisis when all these people are asking for whatever it is.

We came together and we committed to reducing the noise in a humanitarian crisis, saying, look, all these organizations you know, which you give to for child welfare projects, which you give to for these types of projects, are coming together under one banner and working together to support the most vulnerable people on the ground. Canadian organizations are well placed to do this.

All across the globe, there are Canadian humanitarian workers working day and night, risking their lives, running into the fire when others are running out. You have exemplary organizations such as Oxfam, World Vision, Plan International, the Canadian Foodgrains Bank and others that are part of this coalition moving forward, but we find sometimes that the commitments made from an international development perspective are made and given to unilateral agencies, UN agencies.

Here's the real kicker from our perspective: We have a high burden of showing our direction and control. That same burden does not apply to these multilateral agencies such as the UN agencies.

I will end my comments there.

• (1545)

**The Chair:** Thank you so much, Mr. Al-Rawni.

We will now go to our rounds of prepared questions by members of the committee.

Just before we do, I want to remind colleagues that periodically we might get requests from interpretation services to adjust our microphones, because really sometimes a fraction of an inch difference in positioning is what they require.

Ms. Gaipman, there was a request for you to lower your microphone ever so slightly. That should probably work for the Q and A. If there are any other deficiencies, we will be advised.

The first round consists of six-minute segments, the first of which goes to Mr. Diotte.

Mr. Diotte, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC):** Thanks very much.

Thanks to all of you for all the good work you do. It's really essential, especially with the times we're seeing today.

Mr. Singh, I'd like to start with you. It sounds like you probably have a lot to say about certain topics. I like how you gave some very, very practical suggestions so that the foreign aid that goes out there is used appropriately and we're using best practices, etc.

You mentioned the reviews by the Auditor General that raised some concerns about Canada's foreign aid. Could you detail a little bit of that for everybody's benefit?

**Mr. Rahul Singh:** Yes. Before I do that, I'd love to quantify some of the numbers I gave you earlier.

When we started looking inward at the water units we were buying, we were paying about \$50 for a unit. When we did it ourselves by buying in bulk and leveraging volunteers, we were down to about \$10.50. We were able to push out four to four and a half times more. While some arguments will be made that you have to double the amount of aid you're giving, I'm saying to you that you can actually quadruple the amount of aid you're giving by being more efficient with the money you're spending. With the systems we're using, we're able to push out much more aid than we ever did before, simply by changing some supply chain methods. If I look at 2018-19, year over year, we're up 95% in beneficiaries and deliverables with only a 35% increase. It's a very good multiple.

Coming to the point you're asking about, those specific reviews talk about how our aid is not focused. We don't understand why we're giving certain amounts to different countries. It's not based on KPIs. It's very slow to respond and then it's not programmed quickly. If you look at the comment I gave you about 2018, when we promised \$900 million for innovative aid projects, that's a beautiful-sounding thing. Then we spent \$120,000 on it. It's very hard for us in the sector to take you seriously as a nation when you fail to deliver on that. The Auditor General...your own government's folks are saying what the problems are, and then they don't get fixed.

I'll be very frank; I was in a meeting, in Chatham House rules, where I heard senior officials talk about the Auditor General and their findings. They downplayed it. They said, look, this is not so bad. As an external participant, as somebody coming in and hearing all these bad things or opportunities to improve for us as an agency, I would take them very seriously. They're right there. I recommend that you take a hard look at these. The guidance to improve is right in there. It would have a significant impact.

• (1550)

**Mr. Kerry Diotte:** Again, maybe you could elaborate on that a little bit. I know you touched on these, but what are some of the key recommendations from the Auditor General?

**Mr. Rahul Singh:** A couple came up in different segments. There's the uncoupling of the unilateral...or the giving to the UN. What ends up happening is that you give all this money into a very large system. They then take a significant percentage of it as an administration fee and go out to try to program it. They will come to smaller agencies and say to them, "We want you to implement, but we're not going to give you an administrative fee. In fact, you need to give us some form of a match." Basically, the UN becomes your middleman, if you will, or your power broker in between. That becomes a problem. If you just cut them out of the system, you could have saved that 13% management fee, put it to the side and saved the money. When we talk about \$1.4 billion, which is what you program, it's a significant amount of money. So I would look at that one.

The other thing is this: Look at Haiti versus Pakistan. Haiti was a horrible incident that involved three million. In Pakistan it was 20 million—seven times the number of folks involved. The money given to Pakistan didn't correlate to the number of beneficiaries or victims who were affected by an incident. Often the questions were raised of...

You can come back to the whole matching program, which the Auditor General touches on as well. As Canadians, we thought of using a matching fund to encourage Canadians to give. If we left the program alone, many agencies would get their match. We would get our funds. We would report to the government what we raised. The government could simply take all that and say, hey, Canadians gave \$10 million to all these agencies, so we're now going to match it and give to the agencies we want to. You'd still achieve the exact same objective, which was engaging Canadians to give, without hurting agencies.

Now we're in the middle of a pandemic. We have agencies that are struggling to raise funds. All of a sudden the government tilts the playing field. I know that one is not mentioned in the Auditor General's report. I'd be surprised if it weren't in the next Auditor General's report, because that's certainly something the government should not be doing. Then it came down to efficiency and value for money.

Respectfully, if we're able to push more aid into a crisis zone at a lower cost.... Imagine if we ran this dual program as a nation, where we said to our partners who have boots on the ground, delivering the aid, that we are not only going to fund them, but we're going to provide them with the right aid solutions. We know that all those refugees who are fleeing fighting, or the IDPs who are fleeing fighting in Syria, really need access to clean water. The Rohingya who are in Bangladesh, who have fled all that horrible fighting in Myanmar, need clean drinking water. Now we're going to give you all of this aid at a much lower cost. We'll still give you the money to go and distribute it, but then we get to control costs and actually get to do way more with the money we have right now.

**Mr. Kerry Diotte:** Thanks so much. Your comments are right on the money.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Diotte.

Thank you, Mr. Singh.

The next round goes to Mr. Fonseca for six minutes, please.

**Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the witnesses who are joining us.

My first couple of questions are for Islamic Relief Canada.

Plan International and some United Nations agencies have informed their members that the pandemic is correlated with an increase in gender-based violence, early marriage and genital mutilation. Care Canada has said that these increases are particularly significant in fragile or conflict-affected countries.

My question is for Mr. Al-Rawni. Has Islamic Relief Canada collected similar evidence in the countries where it's working?

• (1555)

**Mr. Zaid Al-Rawni:** Yes. We're in the process of actually collecting data from various projects in fragile states in places where the incidences of GBV, forced marriage and FGM are an issue. We published a report a few years ago about FGM and the effect of FGM and how faith-based organizations can actually play a pivotal role in ending FGM.

Unfortunately, there is a correlation between an increase in poverty and an increase in vulnerability and the price that women and girls are paying. In every single context we've been to to date, in the most vulnerable communities, women and girls are paying the highest price for the family trying to grapple with the challenges, and that often means fathers and mothers are forcing their children into marriages at a very early age.

We have anecdotal evidence currently from Yemen, where early child marriages are on the rise, unfortunately, in a context where the only difference between now and previously is that the pandemic has exacerbated the situation.

We are still collecting data from most places, but unfortunately, the data that you represented resonates quite heavily and unfortunately stands true. We suspect—not to pre-empt the data we find—that it will be the case, and the research that we produce will say as much.

**Mr. Peter Fonseca:** Thank you.

I know that this November you came forward with your Islamic gender justice declaration. I want to ask you about that declaration. Did it take into account the vulnerabilities created and exacerbated by this pandemic?

**Mr. Zaid Al-Rawni:** Unfortunately, the declaration was produced and worked on before the pandemic. The idea was that it would encourage faith healers to play a pivotal leading role in ending GBV—gender-based violence—in their local communities. They can be some of the strongest actors in local communities in some of the most vulnerable and fragile states where we work.

It didn't take into account COVID specifically, but unfortunately, we suspect that, again, COVID will make things a lot harder for the poor generally, but specifically a lot harder for women and girls.

**Mr. Peter Fonseca:** Thank you.

Now I'll go to GlobalMedic.

Mr. Singh, it's good to see you again. I've had the opportunity to visit your facilities in the past, both here in Mississauga and over in Etobicoke, and help you pack some of those kits.

GlobalMedic has sent equipment and volunteers to more than 75 countries since it was established, so congratulations. What factors determine the emergencies to which GlobalMedic responds?

**Mr. Rahul Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Fonseca.

There's a triad that we always look at. The first thing we have to do is determine if we can we validate, if there is a need. The second thing we look at is whether there is access. Is there a need that we can help with? Is there access into that nation? Then, third, do we have funding, whether that funding is in the form of material aid or actual funds to come in?

When we're inside that triangle, we're usually deploying. As you yourself know, we deploy about 15 or 16 times a year.

**Mr. Peter Fonseca:** Okay.

I do want to ask you about what you brought up about this double administration fee and the partners. The programming money takes an administration fee and the partner receiving the money takes an administration fee. What can Canada do to mitigate that double administration fee when providing its foreign assistance during COVID-19?

**Mr. Rahul Singh:** There are a number of ways. It would be ridiculous if we all thought that you could stop funding the UN. Obviously that doesn't work. If you cap the amount that you are giving to the UN and the big systems, cap the amount that goes to large organizations, and introduce, let's say, that 1% for a stockpiles program that I talked about, just so we can control the amount of money that we're putting into those stockpiles pushing out Canadian-made aid, then all of a sudden you have a mirror effect where you can say to smaller agencies on the ground that you're going to give them the right aid. If you just gave them a little bit of money and forced them to go and buy products, they're going to be at the mercy of the market.

Just look at people buying PPE. Look at our own government buying PPE in the last few months. We're at the mercy of the market, and that can go way up and way down and have an incredible impact. So, by just putting parameters in and going directly to some of the smaller and medium organizations.... You had it bang on when you launched in 2017 that small and medium organizations fund, but it was only \$100 million over five years. If we just did more with it, you would be helping more of those agencies in need and you'd be avoiding that double administration.

Respectfully—I testified at another committee—we make the same mistake here in our system when we're trying to help domestically, because we programmed all the money through three really large agencies that had an admin fee, then gave another admin fee over, and it just created this double admin. We have a civil service. They're professional, they're competent, and there's no reason that they cannot be assessing and evaluating those smaller agencies and getting the money directly to them.

I encourage you. There are so many small agencies here in Canada, and I think I'm the only one speaking to you who is not funded by the government. Again, you have to talk to these other agencies. They have so much knowledge, and it will do so much good to help push Canadian dollars into where they're needed most.

• (1600)

**The Chair:** Mr. Singh, thank you very much.

Mr. Fonseca, that's your time. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bergeron, you have six minutes.

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

Thank you to our witnesses.

Again, I appreciate your contribution to the committee's work.

My first questions will be for Mr. Singh from GlobalMedic.

I did some research on your organization. Unlike Mr. Fonseca, I haven't had the opportunity to visit your facilities in Ontario or to participate in the development of a number of your kits. I understand that you use unmanned air vehicle technology.

Could you tell us what unmanned air vehicle technology is all about? What is its purpose? How do you use it in the areas where you operate?

[*English*]

**Mr. Rahul Singh:** First of all, I would like to say that we are often in Quebec and we have volunteers out helping us pack aid, so I'd encourage you to come. We've worked with L'Oeuvre Léger, who have since changed their name. The next time we're in Quebec, I'll reach out. Please come out and help us pack some aid.

The drone program we call RescUAV, and we use drones for four reasons. One is to deliver aid into areas that are hard to reach. We are running a program right now with one of the first nations in Canada, on an island that's very hard to reach. We've launched an air bridge with a Canadian company, Drone Delivery Canada, where we have a drone that goes back and forth all day ferrying aid

in. We can use that same principle to reach folks who are really hard to reach, whether they're the Yazidis on the mountain during the conflict a while back, or folks who are in the last mile after hurricane Matthew in Haiti. There are many people in tragic need, and drones will help.

The second reason we use the drones is what we call situational awareness—what road is out, what bridge is out and where populations have moved. After a crisis, we want to be able to tell emergency managers and give them better information so they make better decisions and aid is delivered immediately.

The third reason is that we support search and rescue teams. The fourth reason is that we take hundreds of thousands of photos, cross-stitch them and make maps, and then make comprehensive damage assessments. In countries like Bahamas after it was hit by hurricane Dorian, they say they have a hundred thousand homes that are damaged, and the World Bank has to give them money. The World Bank will ask them to prove it, and then we're able to offer them the evidence by producing the map.

It's excellent technology. It is Canadian—you'll notice a theme that I speak of often is delivering Canadian aid out there—and it's an excellent Canadian solution. By the way, we won an award from Google—I'm not sure if you've heard of them—but Google said we were great at using innovation and technology for good.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Thank you for those clarifications.

I understand you've sent nearly 700 emergency kits to families affected by the crisis during the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. Did you have to use this type of technology to deliver your aid?

How did you ensure that the kits you sent were actually getting to the families who needed them?

[*English*]

**Mr. Rahul Singh:** First, I assume you're talking about Azerbaijan. I didn't quite hear the translation, but I'm sure it's that. I don't think we should be using drones in conflict zones, because it muddies the waters, especially in that conflict, where drones were too often used to launch weaponry and harm people. I don't know that people can tell the difference between a good drone and a not-so-good drone, so I wouldn't use them in that.

Ensuring that aid reaches the right people and isn't taken by the wrong people and sold for weapons or weaponized is something that all humanitarian aid agencies lose sleep over, and they really work on that. We're no exception to that. Every aid agency has roles and protocols, etc. that we follow to make sure that aid reaches the right folks.

While we really push the agenda of using drones, there is a time and a place to use them, and I don't think we're quite at the point of using them in that conflict zone. We did not use the drones to deliver those kits to those families. As you know, with that conflict many of those families have fled that area and gone into a different zone now, which is where those kits are being distributed to. We have the highest amount of confidence that they're not going to the wrong folks.

And then remember: We're providing hygiene kits and water purification solutions. These things cannot be weaponized.

• (1605)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Thank you very much for these very clear answers.

I would now like to turn to our witness from Islamic Relief Canada on an issue that has been raised a number of times during the work of this committee, and that is the difficulties that some UN agencies are experiencing, which are compounded by this health crisis. I'm thinking in particular of the Palestinian refugee agency, UNRWA.

Do you work with Palestinian refugees or is this an area where you'd like to become more involved in the near future?

[*English*]

**Mr. Zaid Al-Rawni:** I'll answer the question. I think I have 30 seconds.

Palestinian refugees are all around the Middle East but predominantly in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon and Jordan. We are trying as much as we're able to help these communities. Unfortunately, there are many places and in many cases they are vulnerable and do require help. Where we can, we will help.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Bergeron.

[*English*]

Thank you very much, Mr. Al-Rawni.

We'll go to the final series in this first round, and that goes to Mr. Harris for six minutes, please.

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for coming today and making their presentations.

Each of you has a particular interest in your activities and a relationship to, potentially, the pandemic that the world is going through. I wanted to ask you about your organizations in particular.

The Minister of International Development, Karina Gould, was before this committee on November 17 and told the committee that

the government has allocated \$1 billion for international aid dealing with the pandemic crisis.

I'm going to ask each of you to answer this, one at a time. First of all, for GlobalMedic, has your organization received any money from this fund, or have you asked for any, and if so, what was the result? If not, why not? Would this be an opportunity for you to participate?

**Mr. Rahul Singh:** The short answer is no, we haven't received any money. The other answer will be, when will the money roll out? When will it be made available for agencies to apply to?

I can tell you that, in keeping with the past and what's been happening, this money will just flow to the big agencies, which is my fear. We're going to keep repeating the same mistakes, which is why I urge you to do more with smaller organizations. They can do a lot more, with a lot more value.

Also, Mr. Harris, can you imagine if we had a central supply depot where we were providing PPE to all these nations that are not going to be out of the vaccine process as fast as other agencies? Again, these are just better ways of delivering more aid faster.

But no, we have not gotten any money.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** There's no mechanism to apply for the money at this point. Is that what you're saying?

**Mr. Rahul Singh:** Well, there are mechanisms in the sense that you could submit, but the problem with the mechanism is that, if I said to the government that I have a way of getting meals into Syria for 33¢ a portion, which is about a third of what the UN can do for its 67¢ U.S. a portion, the government would just say, look, that's our partner for emergency food, and they would just end the conversation.

There would be no opportunity. We're not innovative enough in our approach as a government to look for better value for money.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Thank you.

Ms. Gaipman, Humanity & Inclusion Canada, of course, is very interested and focused on people with disabilities. Is there a role for your organization in terms of accessing some of this \$1 billion that the government says it has available for this? Have you an interest in applying for or being part of that stream of funds, and what would you want to do with it?

**Ms. Alexis Gaipman:** Of course, we would be very interested in applying.

I think that, in the context of the pandemic, it's really important that we make sure we have a disability-inclusive response overall. We serve some of the most vulnerable populations in the world. We want to ensure that humanitarian law, humanitarian rights, refugee rights and the rights of persons with disabilities are central to the COVID-19 response.

We want to make sure that there is no discrimination in any form. We want to make sure that we can continue to facilitate the movement of goods and humanitarian personnel and staff in these regions that we don't always have access to.

I'd like to invite my colleague Ryan, from Uganda, to add his comments as well.

• (1610)

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Could I just insert something before we hear that?

**Ms. Alexis Gaipman:** Of course.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Where in particular would you focus or how would you focus that assistance to people with disabilities in the pandemic? Is there anything about the pandemic where you see a role specifically for this type of work?

**Ms. Alexis Gaipman:** We would want to make sure that we continue to work with women, men, boys and girls with disabilities and make sure they have access to resources and information regarding the pandemic, access to clean water, and access to the proper sterilization for all the equipment they need. As you can imagine, social distancing in the context of people with disabilities is nearly impossible for some people who are dependent on caregivers or on certain technologies, so we want to make sure that they have access to the proper hygiene as well, all around the world.

However, it has to start with making sure they have access to the proper information about how to take care of themselves and their loved ones as well.

**The Chair:** Ms. Gaipman and Mr. Harris, can I just interrupt for five seconds?

Ms. Gaipman, can I just ask you to lower your mike a little bit more than you already have? That would be helpful for interpretation.

Back to you, Mr. Harris.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Mr. Al-Rawni, I know that you raised an impressive amount of money from private sources this year—\$50 million. That's very commendable.

In terms of this \$1 billion that the government says it has allocated for the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, do you see your organization as being a participant in that? Have you applied for or have you received any funds to support your work, particularly with refugees and others who might be particularly affected by the pandemic?

**Mr. Zaid Al-Rawni:** We haven't received any funds, because we haven't applied yet for any funds from this specific pot. The mechanism is still—to us, at least—unclear as to how this money will be rolled out.

When it is rolled out, there are a myriad of ways that these funds can be used in specifically responding to the COVID pandemic. The most obvious way is.... There are so many more families now that are in trouble. I'll give you a very brief example in the 30 seconds that I have.

In terms of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon, some of them were able to find work, and families were able to find ways of supporting themselves. Because of the COVID pandemic and the crush that it's had on the already vulnerable communities, there is, in some cases, literally zero work available, so the dependency on food aid has shot through the roof, from our perspective, beyond our capacity to deliver in that space.

That would be an example of the type of funds where the resources can be allocated effectively to support the most vulnerable.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much, Mr. Harris.

We'll now go on to our second round. The opening series goes to Mr. Genuis.

You have five minutes, please.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Thank you so much to all the witnesses.

Mr. Singh, I think your testimony underlines for us the importance of hearing from people who are working in international development and who don't receive government funds at the moment, because—with great respect to all the organizations involved, of course—people who are reliant on government grants are going to have to be a little bit cautious in their criticisms. I appreciate the opportunity that your testimony brings to us.

One of the points you made struck me; it was the one about doing no harm. A major concern that I have about aid involving UN organizations is that, if we end up being too dependent on the existing state system, the United Nations has to work with states in the delivery of aid, even if that entails some greater risks of diversion.

Do you have any comments on the implications of that?

**Mr. Rahul Singh:** I think if anybody in your committee does an analysis of articles from The Guardian or some of the foreign press that's been very critical of some of our allies and the way they've been spending money through the UN, particularly in Syria....

Here's what happens, in our case. Ms. Freeland when she was foreign affairs minister, said, look, these are bad people, so I'm going to put them on a sanctions list, a PNG list, and we're going to freeze their assets. These are bad folks in Syria and we can never work with them. They're sanctioned.

Ms. Bibeau, in her office the very next tower over—I honestly can't make this stuff up—then pledged an incredible amount of money through a UN agency that was actually working with the very same people who are on the sanctions list. The UN, because it doesn't have the same accountability to you as an agency as ours would, actually spends funds.... And you can look this up in articles. The UN spent \$10 million in a hotel in Damascus that's owned by a gunman, a thug, who's the right hand of al-Assad. And this is my tax dollar going in through these systems.

This happened with the U.S. This happened with the U.K. This happened with Australia. It was amazing to see that we didn't really raise those points here, because it certainly happened with our money. These are some of the concerns that occur, which is why we can't just rely only on UN systems. We really need to put more of a focus on some of the smaller groups, because they can do so much more.

I'm just saying this is a big sector. We can all help, and we can all do our part. Right now, the system is too heavily weighted towards the big fish in the sea.

• (1615)

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Singh—

**The Chair:** If I can just interrupt very briefly, I'll ask you the same thing that we asked Ms. Gaipman, which is to move your microphone down a bit, and I will pass it right back to you to continue.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Thank you.

Absolutely, working with smaller organizations, but at a minimum, we shouldn't be funding al-Assad's right-hand people here. That's really incredible. I appreciate your reference to those news articles. I'll reference those as well. It's something that we've raised in the past with Minister Gould, but I think it's something we'll need to raise again and reflect in our report.

I have a question for Mr. Al-Rawni. Thank you for all the work you do.

I wonder if you can share with us a little bit about what it's like doing international development through a faith-based or a faith-affiliated organization. I know there are many faith-based organizations from different faith traditions that are working in this space. What is the impact in terms of your engagement with Canadians, and what's the impact on the ground? Are you viewed differently on the ground, or are there maybe spaces you're able to get into on the ground that others wouldn't, or vice versa? What are the implications of that?

**Mr. Zaid Al-Rawni:** Thank you, Mr. Genuis.

The first thing I'll say is that, as a faith-based NGO, we are part of a myriad of organizations, secular or faith-based. Our unique position in both ends of the space, so to speak, is that we're able to speak to people's faith and merge our Canadian values with our faith values; they're not removed at all, in any sense.

When we get to places like Somalia, where people are very conservatively religious, or places like north Kenya, where the level of religiosity is quite high, it gives us access that other agencies may not have, and it's specifically useful when we're talking about things like FGM. When we're saying to people that FGM is bad, that it does bad things to girls and to their development, and to families and to women, and that it shouldn't be justified using theological text or imams, it's a very powerful tool.

The same applies when we're encouraging girls to go to school, when we're encouraging girls to stay in school and not be married off, from a faith lens. So it's a very powerful piece of the puzzle in terms of tackling some big, heavyweight issues that we wouldn't be able to handle without putting a faith lens on it.

**The Chair:** Thanks very much.

Thank you, Mr. Genuis.

The next round goes to Ms. Sahota, for five minutes please.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My first question goes to Mr. Al-Rawni.

I wanted to talk a little bit more about the Humanitarian Coalition and its effectiveness. You talked about the various organizations that are within this group. What brought this group together? Is it more effective and efficient? How do you screen the different organizations that can come under this umbrella, and how can other organizations join?

**Mr. Zaid Al-Rawni:** It came about because we found ourselves competing for digital space and off-line space in an emergency. In an emergency, you go to Canadians and say, I'm here and I can help. We were all falling over each other trying to say the same thing, and people were like, I don't know whom to give to; there's too much going on.

So the organizations with the most effective programming and the most effective engagement.... These are the two tools. You have to have two pieces of the jigsaw: You have to be able to engage Canadians locally in Canada, and you have to have the capacity to deliver the aid where it's needed. Those really are the two metrics that are used.

We came together and said, look, instead of competing with each other for space and spending more money on fundraising and administering the money, etc., let's just join together as a coalition and come out as one. That's been probably the most effective organizational umbrella that I've ever been a part of. The operation of the Humanitarian Coalition is really effective and really powerful.

• (1620)

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Before joining this coalition, what did you find were the costs incurred by Islamic Relief, and what has changed in that area in terms of effectiveness? Have you been able to save costs?

**Mr. Zaid Al-Rawni:** Of course. The per-dollar for what we would have to raise normally, for us, actually, is quite efficient, but we are spending half of what we used to spend to raise money in emergencies. We don't need to spend any more. We're pulling together.

You don't pay to be part of the agency; you pay into the agency, so that when the time comes, the agency can launch and launch well and effectively. It's a very effective tool.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** What about the cost when it comes to the supplies and aid that you're distributing?

**Mr. Zaid Al-Rawni:** We always source locally. Many of the agencies source locally, because the costs of sourcing locally don't compare. You're only shipping if you absolutely have to, so sourcing locally for us has been very effective. Sometimes it's 90% more cost-effective for us to source locally than it would be to gather supplies here and ship them.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** What would you say about stockpiling here in Canada?

**Mr. Zaid Al-Rawni:** Especially for small items that you can't find anywhere, it can be useful, but for most items, sourcing locally does several things, including supporting the local economy, the local infrastructure.

In some of our programming, we try to do what we call cash programming, which means we're supporting.... I remember when I was in Haiti—I was there within 48 hours of the earthquake—one of our projects involved employing local people in a cash-based program to remove rubble from a particular site. Then we again paid cash to erect camps. This local cash injection goes a long way. It starts the ball rolling.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** That's excellent.

How much more time do I have, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** You have a bit over a minute.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Okay.

Mr. Singh, I found your comments very interesting. I want to know a little more. You've done work in many countries. Haiti was just mentioned, and you've done work there as well. When you have a smaller organization and Canadians are confused about figuring out where to donate their money, how can they be assured that your organization has the ability to have the coordination on the ground, the prep and the logistics that would be needed? I know you've done a lot of good work. I'd like to hear more.

**Mr. Rahul Singh:** The fact that we've worked in 76 countries and run 226 missions is proof enough. I'm not going to ask someone for money if I can't be within that triangle I talked about. If we're not deploying, we're not asking for money.

Respectfully, Mr. Al-Rawni's point is well accepted that you have to be part of this coalition or you want to be part of this coalition. However, it does create another layer of bureaucracy and a percentage point. If you read their website, 85% of the money will flow to—

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Would you be open to working with other organizations, if needed?

**The Chair:** Please give a very brief answer, Mr. Singh. We're past time.

**Mr. Rahul Singh:** Sure.

Ms. Sahota, we work with hundreds of agencies all around the world.

As the last point, I'm talking about allocating 1% very early on, for 72 hours, for very specific items that you cannot buy on the ground. This is not an either/or. This is a plus to help.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** We'll have to leave it there. Thank you so much.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bergeron, you have two and a half minutes.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to piggy back on Ms. Sahota's first line of questioning regarding the Canadian Humanitarian Coalition, which includes not only Islamic Relief Canada, but also Humanity and Inclusion Canada.

I'd like to come back to the crisis that occurred after the explosion at the Port of Beirut. The Minister of International Development, Karina Gould, announced on August 8 that the Canadian government would match each individual donation made between August 4 and 24.

My question is very simple. Since the coalition was a beneficiary, how many donations were raised in total through this campaign, including both individual and government donations?

How were these funds used on the ground?

• (1625)

[*English*]

**Mr. Zaid Al-Rawni:** Thank you.

I'll start with the last question, on how the funds are used. They're still being used. The funds are still supporting people in need right now.

Was it useful and did it work? Absolutely. In the past, when people were “match giving” and the Government of Canada said it was going to match people's donations, people weren't really sure what that meant. They'd call us and ask whether, if they gave us a dollar, that meant we were going to get a dollar from the government ourselves, as Islamic Relief and as a stand-alone agency. We said no, not really. It's probably going to go into some UN pot.

This was part of the government responding to agencies and saying that it needed to give the funds to Canadian agencies that could deliver. That's why the Humanitarian Coalition kind of entered into this partnership with the government. It meant that Canadian dollars were being given to Canadian agencies to deliver on the ground.

In terms of numbers—to give you a sense of how successful it was as a campaign—when we launched the campaign as the Humanitarian Coalition, we set a target of \$2 million for the entirety of the campaign. Canadians understood what it was and understood where it was going. Within a day, there was \$2 million and we were done. We went back to them and we said that the \$2 million that we have is already finished on day two, and we still have several days of the campaign left. Either we shut the campaign down, or additional funds are committed. Additional funds were committed. A total of \$11 million was raised from the agencies, and the government would match \$8 million of those \$11 million. That's in that time frame.

It was a very effective way to engage Canadians. It has always been an issue with our sector that we haven't done as well as we would like in talking to Canadians, convincing them of the effectiveness, and telling them there's a trusted partner for Canadian dollars. This was a great way, from our perspective. We didn't even have to say Islamic Relief, World Vision, CARE Canada or Action Against Hunger. We just went as the Humanitarian Coalition.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Al-Rawni. We'll have to leave it there.

The final question series in this round goes to Mr. Harris for two and a half minutes, please.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Thank you, Chair.

I have a question that was presented to the committee by the president of the Canadian Red Cross. It had to do with the suggestion that Canada should actually be helping countries develop their own capacity and resilience to deal with humanitarian crises and to operate on their own. That's a unique perspective in this humanitarian crisis called the pandemic. As we see, there's a race for vaccines on now. Many countries will not receive them until the latter period of time and will experience some of the second wave that we have.

Is there an opportunity during this situation for Canada to build that into part of what it does in the long run? Would anyone like to tackle that? Mr. Al-Rawni, you spoke about some of the big-picture items and our 0.7%. Would you like to take that question on?

**Mr. Zaid Al-Rawni:** I think that's essential. I think the CEO of the Red Cross was absolutely spot on. Increasing local capacity is absolutely key. Where we've done it—and we have done it at Islamic Relief Canada in areas like north Bangladesh, which is prone to flooding—we have to spend \$1 compared to spending \$10. It's 90% cheaper to prepare for an emergency and give the local population the capacity to look after themselves. You almost kind of work yourself out of a job. It's very important.

More importantly, it's very effective and a very good use of donor money, from our perspective, and government money, from a government perspective. It's really essential.

The only challenge with it can be that CRA's direction and control policies sometimes inhibit our capacity to increase capacity directly. We still have to jump through hoops to make it compliant with CRA regulations.

**Mr. Rahul Singh:** I would love to give you an extra comment on that, Mr. Harris.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** All right, go ahead if there's time.

**Mr. Rahul Singh:** It's great to build firehouses. It's great to build local capacity. We're all for that, but if people don't have water in the hose to put it out, that's a real concern. By allocating a certain percentage early on in a crisis and making sure people get the right aid, you can do both.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Thank you.

Chair, I guess that's pretty close to my time.

**The Chair:** You're within 10 seconds of your time.

• (1630)

**Mr. Jack Harris:** I don't think there's enough time for another question, let alone an answer.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Harris.

Colleagues, that takes us to the end of our scheduled time with the witnesses. I'd like to remind you all that you can avail yourselves of the opportunity to ask a question in writing if we've run out of time and if you feel there's something you'd like clarification on. You can do that through the clerk's office.

On behalf of all of us, I'd like to thank our witnesses from GlobalMedic, Humanity & Inclusion Canada and Islamic Relief Canada for being with us today, for their expertise and for their tremendous service in the name of humanity around the world. Thank you so much.

We will let you disconnect at the moment. We have some committee business in public, and then an in camera portion to follow. Thank you so much for being with us this afternoon.

We will suspend to allow our witnesses to disconnect.

• (1630)

(Pause)

• (1630)

**The Chair:** Thank you, all, for being on time. This was an excellent session. Our witnesses were connected and sound-checked well before 3:30, and as a result of that we had two very good rounds of questions, or one and a half.

Mr. Harris, the floor is yours for discussion of a motion you have brought to the committee.

I don't see Mr. Harris. Let's suspend for a minute and bring him back into the public forum. He may have thought we were going in camera right away.

• (1630)

(Pause)

• (1630)

**The Chair:** Mr. Harris, apologies. Maybe I wasn't clear. We remain in public for this portion of committee business, and after that we will go in camera.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Okay.

**The Chair:** The floor is yours with respect to the motion you have brought to the committee.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Thank you very much. I wasn't aware of that nuance, Chair. Thank you for that.

Yes, I have a motion that I gave notice of on Friday, and I have talked to some members of the committee regarding it.

It has to do with the ongoing discussions and negotiations between Canada and the U.K. for a trade agreement, which is moving apace, apparently, and the situation with Ireland and the Good Friday Agreement. I will read the motion for the benefit of those who are watching.

The motion is:

That the committee recognize:

(1) the longstanding cultural, familial, political and economic connections between Canada and the people of both the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom;

(2) the important role played by Canada in negotiating the Good Friday Agreement and in ensuring the commitments laid out in the treaty were implemented;

(3) that the decision by the United Kingdom to leave the European Union could affect the Good Friday Agreement and the provisions in it regarding the border between the Republic of Ireland and the U.K., and;

That the committee calls on the government to ensure that any post-Brexit trade deal between Canada and the United Kingdom be consistent with the principles of the Good Friday Agreement, and;

That the committee report this motion to the House and, pursuant to Standing Order 109, request that the government table a comprehensive response to the report.

I won't say a lot about it, except to reiterate that we understand there may be some agreement taking place now, the details of which are not fully known, but the important point to make is that some concern was expressed very strongly recently that the disruption of that agreement may be possible. We wouldn't want Canada to play any role in exacerbating that or interfering with this agreement, which is extremely important to the future of the peace process in Ireland.

It's a statement of principle, not detail, other than to say that Canada should not do any harm in the circumstances and do everything possible to ensure the upholding of that accord.

I did it simply in that way. It is a foreign affairs matter in a general way and a principle, although it obviously reflects on a trade situation, but I think it's a matter of principle that our committee hopefully will be able to have a consensus and determination on.

• (1635)

**The Chair:** Mr. Harris, thank you very much.

I would encourage members to avail themselves of the “raise hand” feature on Zoom. For those in the room, you could signal to the clerk if you have comments you'd like to make, so we can put you into the sequence of people requesting to speak.

I see that Mr. Chong has raised his hand first.

The floor is yours.

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

I thank Mr. Harris for introducing this well-worded motion.

I will be supporting it. I think it's a topical issue because of the recent announcement by the Government of Canada that it has concluded a Canada-U.K. trade continuity agreement. We haven't seen the text of that agreement or the detailed legislation implementing that agreement, so I think it's a timely motion for the committee to adopt to make it clear to the government where we stand on the issue.

I think it's been a long-standing Canadian government policy to support the principles of the Good Friday Agreement. Canada was instrumental in helping negotiate and implement that agreement some 20 years ago. Obviously, Brexit has implications for the U.K.-

Republic of Ireland border, and I think whatever trade continuity agreement or subsequent full trade agreements may be negotiated in the future should be consistent with the principles of the Good Friday Agreement.

I thank Mr. Harris for introducing that motion, and I will be supporting it.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Chong, thank you very much.

Mr. Harris, just to clarify, this motion is currently also before the international trade committee. Is that correct?

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Yes, a similar motion has been put there. Whether they're going to be dealing with it as efficiently as our committee.... I'm told that may not happen. I am not privy to all the details of that; it's uncertain.

I thank you for putting it on the agenda in the public meeting for this purpose. I think we can do this independently. They may be more caught up in process and other issues, as Mr. Chong pointed out, looking for details as to what Canada is doing. This is separate, and I think we should do it on our own, regardless of what happens in the trade committee.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Harris.

Mr. Oliphant, go ahead.

**Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Similar to Mr. Chong, I am predisposed to support this motion. I just want to make sure we are not out of step with the trade committee. I recognize the difference between the trade committee and their role in wanting to make sure that it is...the process and procedures and those sorts of things, and how it could affect Canada and our continuation agreement with the U.K.

We have a foreign policy perspective, which Mr. Harris has rightly indicated is our role. I recognize that we were witness to this—to steal Mr. Chong's wording from another committee—but more than witnesses, with Chastelain's involvement in this, we have a real Canadian stake in the accord, which was brokered by a Canadian, and we understand that.

We're predisposed to be in favour of the motion. However, I have heard that it is being discussed at the trade committee today. I think it would be a little awkward if one committee said yes to something in public, and one committee said no to something in public. I like being on the same page. When something goes to two places at the same time, it is just a bit awkward.

I wonder if our clerk has any information on the trade committee—I don't follow their schedule—whether they are meeting today, whether they have met, whether they have dealt with this or not.

That being said, when it comes to a vote, I suspect our side is predisposed to support the motion.

• (1640)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Oliphant.

Let's turn it over to our clerk for a brief intervention on the dynamics of this, and what options there might be for us within the parameters of this week to act in accordance with the sentiments expressed by Mr. Oliphant and Mr. Chong.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Erica Pereira):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I do not know if the trade committee has dealt with the motion. I will reach out to the clerk. Their next meeting is on Friday.

**The Chair:** Either way, unless we get a signal from them, informally, on how their dynamics are going, we would not get their answer prior to ours or with ours.

Are there other views?

I have Mr. Chong and Mr. Harris in sequence here.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Just to help the debate along, I note that this motion is consistent with what the Prime Minister said to his Irish counterpart about a year ago when they were discussing Brexit. In the readout, the Prime Minister noted the implications for Ireland of the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union, and they agreed on the fundamental importance of protecting the Good Friday Agreement, so it was clear they discussed that matter.

I think this motion is consistent not only with the Liberal government's position on the trade deal, but with its belief in adhering to the principles of the Good Friday Agreement. I want to make sure that everybody is aware of that comment made by the Canadian Prime Minister almost two years ago.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Chong.

Mr. Harris, go ahead.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** I'm in favour of moving on this today, and to have a vote as soon as possible, because, first of all, we want to report to the House. If we leave this until Friday, obviously we won't be able to report to the House. We would like to make a statement that can be tabled in the House as quickly as possible, so that the principle is on the table.

People in Ireland have been nervous about what's been going on for the last while with the Brexit situation and the concern that it might undermine this very important agreement. As was pointed out, General de Chastelain was extremely involved in brokering an important part of the deal and was very active in the implementation of decommissioning the weaponry, which was extremely important in achieving the lasting peace that we seem to have had up until now.

This would provide some reassurance to the process that Canada wants to make sure and affirm that the principles should not be interfered with on the trade deal or any arrangement. That would be a positive thing.

As for what the trade committee is doing, I think we can certainly take the lead on principle. In terms of trade, they may want to make some specific Brexit reference to that particular deal, but this is really about making sure that the principle we are espousing here is consistent with Canada's position. The fact that the foreign affairs

committee has this view and presents it to the House is a positive thing, and we should be there.

I know it's kind of the 11th hour, in a sense, but if we don't do it now, I don't think we will be able to do it.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Harris.

We have Dr. Fry, and then Monsieur Bergeron.

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair.

I want to echo what Rob said. I am really concerned that we might come up with something and put the trade committee in a difficult position in case we overreach, or whatever. Is it possible, perhaps, to find a way to resolve this?

The clerk can find out from her counterpart at the Standing Committee on International Trade whether it intends to say anything or do anything with regard to this, or whether it minds if we say or do something in this regard. Then we clear it up and we don't have two standing committees saying and doing different things at the same time. It's just for clarification.

Thank you.

• (1645)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Dr. Fry.

Mr. Bergeron, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Mr. Chair, this seems to me to be another one of these sort of strange situations where the debate goes on and on, even though we all seem to agree. So I call the vote.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Bergeron.

[*English*]

Madam Clerk, is that dilatory at this point?

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Chair, if it would be helpful, I'd like to point out one thing.

**The Chair:** Let's see if that's procedurally in order. I just want to find out if Mr. Bergeron's motion is now dilatory in the sense that it adjourns debate or whether we can continue the discussion.

**The Clerk:** You can certainly continue discussion if people would like to speak.

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** He didn't make a motion.

**The Chair:** Mr. Harris, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** I'll just point out for those who might be concerned about doing something inconsistent with the trade committee that the only actual motion here, aside from the preambles, is that the committee call upon the government to ensure that any post-Brexit trade deal between Canada and the United Kingdom is consistent with the principles of the Good Friday Agreement.

Surely the trade committee would not be coming up with anything different from that. They might do something beyond that, but this is a basic principle on which I think we should have no difficulty not running afoul of the trade committee.

**The Chair:** Okay, have we exhausted views? Does anybody else want to comment on this?

Mr. Oliphant, go ahead.

**Mr. Robert Oliphant:** As I said, I'm predisposed to do it. My dilemma is that there's an interpretive nature to something being consistent with something.

Mr. Harris, absolutely we can do this. I think we should have something that is consistent, but I don't know how you measure that: Something is consistent in the eyes of whom? I just want it on the record that it's a very difficult thing to determine whether something is consistent with an international agreement, because that would have to be adjudicated in some way.

That said, I'm fine to go with this and then move on, because I don't think it's a big issue.

**The Chair:** Okay. Are there any other views?

In that case, let's move to a vote.

Madam Clerk, just before we go there, you've signalled that unless we have unanimous consent we need a recorded division. Is that correct?

Let me just ask, is there unanimous consent to adopt Mr. Harris's motion?

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Sorry, Mr. Chair, why do we need unanimous consent?

**The Chair:** I will need the assistance of the clerk to answer that. I think there's a motion we passed previously that requires it.

Madam Clerk, go ahead.

**The Clerk:** Yes, thank you. It's per the terms of the motion adopted on September 23 in the House concerning voting in hybrid committees.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Do I have unanimous consent to adopt Mr. Harris's motion?

(Motion agreed to)

Congratulations, Mr. Harris.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Thank you, colleagues.

Thank you, Chair.

**The Chair:** This concludes the public portion of our committee business. I ask your indulgence for what I hope will be not much more than maybe another 20 minutes or so of discussion. I won't prejudge. We have until 5:30.

The link is in your inbox. We will take a few minutes to reconnect in camera.

Thank you so much.

*[Proceedings continue in camera]*

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