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Chair: Mr. Sven Spengemann





# Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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• (1655)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.)):** Welcome to the second portion of our meeting 27, which is now in public. We are resuming discussion on the COVAX motion.

When we left off discussion on this motion, we had captured—and I think there was agreement within the committee—that we would preserve the speaking order, which, at the time, was Ms. McPherson followed by Mr. Oliphant.

Anyone else who would like to be placed on that list should raise their hand virtually as per the usual custom.

Ms. McPherson, the floor is yours.

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I believe there have been some discussions, and I would like to just very quickly ask if we have some ability to go forward with this and make an agreement instead of continuing to waste time.

I'm wondering if Mr. Oliphant has anything he'd like to bring forward. I see that his hand is up.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. McPherson.

Mr. Oliphant, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.):** It's not exactly the best procedure, but I think it would work for us informally if we could.... I've talked to a few of you, and we think Mr. Bergeron came up with a good subamendment to the amendment I had made to the motion that was made by Mr. Harris with Ms. McPherson. We would propose that we move fairly quickly to voting on the subamendment made by Mr. Bergeron, which would then nullify the amendment that I had made, and then I think we would have a motion as amended by the subamendment that we might all be able to live with, and we would be happy to proceed that way.

It's not that we're tired of talking about the motion, but we're tired of talking about the motion. Mr. Bergeron presented a very good solution, and it had two weeks to germinate, and I think that would be a great way forward.

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

[Translation]

Mr. Bergeron, do you want to read your subamendment?

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Yes, Mr. Chair.

The text, as amended, would read as follows:

That the committee recognizes that due to a variety of factors, the government has faced delays in the supply of vaccines for Canadians through national manufacturing and international procurement, Canada is the only G7 country accessing vaccines through COVAX, an initiative intended to provide vaccines to high risk individuals in low and middle income countries. These supply difficulties accentuate the vulnerabilities of Canadians to dangerous variants and extends the detrimental global economic impacts of COVID-19 by delaying vaccinations to high-risk people in poor countries. Finally, that the Minister of International Development be invited to discuss this issue with the Members of the Committee.

• (1700)

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

Are there any further debates on the subamendment?

[English]

Is there additional debate on the subamendment?

Ms. McPherson.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** At the very, very terrifying risk of extending this further, I just wonder whether or not it would be possible to have something at the end that just said to invite the minister as soon as possible, or whether that can just be direction—not within the motion, but just direction that we could give to the clerk.

**The Chair:** I think the latter could most certainly be accommodated, Madam Clerk. We can just have implicit direction to you that this be done as soon as possible.

I'm getting a nod from our clerk.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** I don't need to make an amendment, because goodness knows how long that would take.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. McPherson.

Are there any other points?

Ms. Sahota.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.):** I just want to say I'm happy with the amendment. It's pretty much in line with what I was proposing earlier regarding inviting the minister. I was speaking to that being an option. I just wasn't able to quickly revise on the fly, but absolutely, it's exactly what I envisioned as well, so I want to thank Mr. Bergeron for coming to this agreement.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Sahota.

Are there any other comments or any other debate on the subamendment?

I see none. Is the committee prepared to adopt the subamendment by unanimous consent? Is there any opposition?

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

**The Chair:** Madam Clerk, we've adopted the subamendment proposed by Monsieur Bergeron.

That takes us back to the original amendment by Mr. Oliphant, which textually has been nullified, but which procedurally we still need to vote on.

Is that correct, Madam Clerk?

Is there any discussion on the amendment to the motion?

Mr. Oliphant.

**Mr. Robert Oliphant:** I would check with the clerk about this, but I think it is now irrelevant. The amendment is now irrelevant. Does it really have to be voted on?

**The Chair:** Procedurally, I believe it does, but let me just double-check.

Madam Clerk.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Erica Pereira):** Yes, Mr. Chair. However, if there's unanimous consent, then that's fine. We can just say that it amends the whole motion.

**Mr. Robert Oliphant:** I would ask for unanimous consent then, Mr. Chair, through you, just to move to the motion.

**The Chair:** Monsieur Bergeron had his hand raised.

[*Translation*]

Do you want to comment, Mr. Bergeron?

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** That's in line with my thinking. I think that the subamendment negates the amendment. So it is no longer necessary to discuss the amendment.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

[*English*]

Colleagues, can we then adopt the motion as amended by unanimous consent?

(Motion as amended agreed to)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for the fulsome discussion and your indulgence. We have achieved the resolution of this motion.

That leaves us a good amount of time. I had asked Dr. Fry if she would be prepared to move her motion, which has been put on notice. I think the discussion time that we have left should be sufficient, but I don't want to prejudge that.

Dr. Fry, would you like to formally move your motion?

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

I would. I'm hoping it's not a contentious motion, but you never know, obviously, because everyone is entitled to an opinion.

The motion reads:

That the Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development devote three (3) meetings to a study, on the nature of and solutions to, the increasing violence and human rights abuses by right wing extremists against women, LGBTQ2+, ethnic minorities, female journalists and Parliamentarians, inflicted

and condoned by certain nation states, through legislation, policies and incarcerations.

The piece about right-wing extremists I added, because, if you recall, Mr. Fonseca had a motion he wanted to bring forward on that issue alone, so we kind of combined it to find one that was acceptable to both of us.

The point I'm trying to make is this. We know there are right-wing extremist groups, such as the Proud Boys, neo-Nazis, Ku Klux Klan and all these kinds of people floating around. We accept this from non-governmental organizations and from non-state actors. What is becoming increasingly evident is that state actors, governments, are now condoning this kind of extremist activity and are doing so by bringing forward legislation that actually abuses human rights.

I can give you examples. One of them is what's going on in Belarus right now. It's mostly women who are taking to the streets in Belarus and they are being picked up by police and thrown into jail. We see it happening in Hungary and to a great extent in Poland. We see that even the democratic right to protest peacefully is actually being denied, not because people—NGOs or non-state actors—are scaring them, but because states are putting a heavy hand on this. It is increasingly becoming the case in a lot of countries. In Latin America, for starters, and in countries in the OSCE, this is beginning to become a trend.

I really think we need to do two things; this is what I am asking for. I'm asking for us to look at the nature of the abuses and the forms that these denials of human rights are taking. What forms are these restrictions on democratic principles taking, and what are the solutions? I hate having us just sort of wandering around deciding how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. I'd like us to come up with some sort of solution at the end of the day.

I think the motion we just agreed to has shown that if we can discuss something long enough to get answers, we can actually come together and find an agreement, and I want to thank Mr. Bergeron for making that happen in the COVAX motion.

We talked and a lot of people think we wasted time, but we didn't. As Winston Churchill said, "Jaw, jaw is better than war, war." By talking to each other, we begin to understand and we begin to find that we can come to some kind of consensus when we do things.

I'm hoping one of the things we can do is to talk about not only what is going on but what forms it's taking, whether legislative or otherwise, and what the solutions are. COVID has shone a strong light on what is going on, and it's happening greatly around the world. I can just throw names out there: Venezuela, Brazil, Belarus, as I said before, and other countries, nation-states in the OSCE region that are not only denying democracy but actually making these things formal—we saw it to the south of us—by bringing in legislation and policies to try to move that agenda forward.

For me, it is the thin edge of the wedge. It's a slippery slope. We know we can point a finger at NGOs that are running around doing things and we can say, "Oh, but that's not legal. You can't do that and you can't do this." However, when nation-states decide to make it formal by legislating it in many ways, I think we need to start looking at this.

● (1705)

We remember what happened in the Second World War and how it all began. We remember that nation-states agreed to and created a great deal of man's inhumanity to man and genocide and many other things. We're seeing this happening against minorities. I know specifically in Europe it's happening against the Roma. It's happening against the Sinti. It's happening against women. We see some of these nation-states denying fundamental rights to LGBTQ2 persons, to racial groups. It is happening. Minorities are under attack right now, and it's being sanctioned by certain states.

I would really like us to pay attention to this, to find out what's happening and why it's happening, because I do believe that as more and more nations believe they can get away with it, we will actually begin to see the movement towards what happened in the Second World War, a globally rising fascism by certain nation-states, which we never expected to embrace democratic principles and they are now walking away from them.

I think this is something we need to pre-emptively think about as a whole issue of security and peace, and we really need to discuss it, because I think it's the very edge of the wedge.

Thank you.

● (1710)

**The Chair:** Dr. Fry, thank you very much.

I have a list that currently includes Mr. Chong, Mr. Fonseca and Mr. Diotte.

Colleagues, if you wish to intervene, please use the "raise hand" feature as usual. Mr. Genuis also raised his hand just now.

We will start with Mr. Chong.

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

There's one part of the motion that I think should be amended, and I move an amendment to the motion that we remove the two words "right wing" so that it would simply read "abuses by extremists", and so on and so forth.

The reason I'm proposing that amendment is twofold. First, extremism can come from both the extreme right and the extreme left. In fact, Dr. Fry enumerated a number of countries in which we are seeing attacks against women, LGBTQ2+ individuals, ethnic minorities and the like. She enumerated countries like Belarus and Venezuela. Venezuela is an example of a country in which an extreme left government is in place. In fact, it's a socialist party that is in power there.

More importantly, I think we should follow the advice of CSIS, which has actually eschewed using the terms "right-wing extremism" and "left-wing extremism". In fact, I'll quote from the 2019

CSIS public report of the Government of Canada. In the report, they have a paragraph titled "Ideologically Motivated Violent Extremism (IMVE)":

Ideologically Motivated Violent Extremism (IMVE) is often driven by a range of grievances and ideas from across the traditional ideological spectrum. The resulting worldview consists of a personalized narrative which centres on an extremist's willingness to incite, enable and or mobilize to violence. Extremists draw inspiration from a variety of sources including books, images, lectures, music, online discussions, videos and conversations.

Given the diverse combination of motivations and personalized worldviews of recent mass-casualty attackers, the use of such terms as "right-wing" and "left-wing" is not only subjective, but inaccurate in describing the complexity of motivations of IMVE attacks in Canada and abroad.

I just bring that to the attention of the committee as a constructive suggestion. In subsequent reports of the Government of Canada, they've actually not used the terms "right-wing extremism" or "left-wing extremism" because clearly the government has concluded that they are a subjective and inaccurate way of classifying these hate-filled ideologies.

I move the amendment for that reason.

Thank you.

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

Colleagues, there's an amendment on the floor. I have a list of speakers. If you have raised your hand to speak to the original motion and your comments are not directly on the amendment at the moment, I would ask you to lower your hand. If everybody is prepared to speak on the amendment as introduced by Mr. Chong, the sequence right now is Mr. Fonseca, Mr. Diotte, Mr. Genuis, Monsieur Bergeron and Dr. Fry.

We will start with Mr. Fonseca.

**Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to MP Chong.

Dr. Fry, thank you. I concur with everything you said. I couldn't agree more. Having the terminology "right-wing extremist groups".... They are out there, these right-wing groups. It's what we hear every day. It's on the news every night. We hear about the Proud Boys, and we saw what happened south of the border. We see what's happening in many countries in Europe. We see how it's being supported through policy and through different governments.

So I would keep that terminology. I believe it gets used every single night by our media outlets, so why wouldn't that be the terminology that we use? These are right-wing, paramilitary-type groups. We saw what happened in the U.S. and we see what's happening around the world, so I would keep it.

● (1715)

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

Mr. Diotte.

**Mr. Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC):** I agree with my colleague Mr. Chong. I love the fact that we could be looking at exposing a lot of human rights abuses and so forth. We know the world is full of that. In some ways it's way too broad. I don't know where you would even start, because I think there are probably human rights violations in almost every nation in the world if you started drilling down. It is far too broad.

It's very subjective when you talk about right-wing extremists. I'll give you an example. I was just looking at the Toronto Star today. This columnist opined the following:

In truth, the vast majority of mainstream media leans to the right. That includes the Globe and Mail, National Post and other Postmedia newspapers, the Toronto Sun and other Sun papers across Canada, CTV, Global TV and a slew of radio talk shows.

In this person's opinion, all mainstream media appears to be right-wing. I think you would get a pretty good argument from most Conservatives that this is not true.

I agree with Mr. Chong that we should take out the "right-wing" reference and talk about "ideologically motivated", perhaps, and make it as broad a study as possible.

Thanks.

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

Mr. Genuis.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll have to comment on the main motion when we get back to it, because procedurally this is a recommendation for a study. Generally speaking, these are conversations that happen at the subcommittee on agenda and procedure, which is an effort to work out specific parameters around what kinds of studies we want to do and prioritize different agenda items. I think obviously there is a lot of value to the things that could be studied in terms of the issues that Dr. Fry referred to. She referred to a very broad spectrum of issues, and I do think the call for some degree of focus is important.

To speak to the amendment in particular, I think we see an authoritarian trend around the world. My view is that a great deal of that is enabled by the more aggressive posture of the Chinese government to the world. It is trying to push authoritarian norms that are contrary to democratic norms, and that authoritarian trend puts on "right-wing" clothing or "left-wing" clothing.

**The Chair:** Mr. Genuis, I'm getting a flag from the tech department. Is it possible to just lift your microphone a bit, please? That should probably help us to resume interpretation.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Thank you. My apologies for that. I had to transition to be a bit closer to the House, because I have a speech in a moment.

We see that this authoritarian trend puts on right-wing clothing, it puts on left-wing clothing and it puts on centrist clothing in certain countries. It justifies itself very often in terms of ethnic nationalism, but drawing from all different parts of a conventional right/left economic and political spectrum.

I think we know this. I think we see the authoritarianism of the regimes in Venezuela, Cuba, China and Belarus. We see the human rights abuses perpetrated by the governments of Iran and Saudi Arabia. It seems like an odd enterprise to try to classify as "right-wing" or "left-wing", according to our own understanding of those terms, the authoritarian trends and human rights abuses that are taking place in some of these countries.

I think Mr. Chong has made that point well. He has alluded to best practices recommended by CSIS. In response to that, Mr. Fonseca said that, well, we hear the media use the term "right-wing extremism". I don't know if that's really true. There may be some media that use this terminology, but there may be other media that use different terminology. Even if what he said is correct, I think we should be more motivated by the best practices coming from CSIS to correctly classify the kinds of extremism we're talking about.

At the end of the day, based on what has been said so far, I don't have a sense of what in particular, in three meetings, we would study, with a limited possibility of witnesses we would hear from, of course, in just three meetings, or what the scope would be. I think you could identify a few specific ideological movements. You could identify a few specific countries or a few specific organizations that you might want to study in the time prescribed, but this is a big catch-all, with an ideological buzzer attached to it that doesn't fit.

I would suggest that, first of all, we adopt the amendment, and then we take a bit of a step back. We have a full agenda for the next few meetings. We can have discussions at the subcommittee on agenda and procedure and say that there's some merit to the ideas here. Let's figure out if we want to look specifically at violent movements that identify with national socialism. Do we want to look at two or three particular countries that are moving in an authoritarian direction? Do we want to look at one particular group of victims mentioned in the motion? Do we want to look particularly at persecution against LGBTQ+ people? Do we want to identify some category of violence or state—

● (1720)

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** Point of order, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** I think that would be a more productive way of focusing our—

**The Chair:** One second, Mr. Genuis.

Dr. Fry, you have a point of order.

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** I'm sorry. We're discussing the amendment. I appreciate Mr. Genuis's points about the motion as a whole, but can we stick to the amendment right now, please? Then we can go ahead to the motion as a whole.

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

Yes, in the interests of time, colleagues, just to remind you, we have a hard stop at 5:30.

Mr. Genuis, if you could just redirect your comments as precisely as possible to the amendment, that would be helpful.

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

I'll just make one more comment on the amendment, then, and I'll wrap up on that.

I think the goal of this should be that we be united as a committee in identifying language we can use that isolates extremists and that condemns extremism. Generally speaking, I think we stay away from terminology like “Islamic extremism”—or at least I very much try to stay away from it—because the implication of that use of language for people from the Muslim community, they have told me, is that they see it as potentially making implications about or casting aspersions on all those who are Muslim. That's why I think that even the media, but certainly parliamentarians, try to be precise in their language to avoid the implication of associations with broader groups.

Although not all of the same issues apply, I think a similar principle applies, in that when we are calling it “extremism”, we shouldn't associate that extremism with another political philosophy or faith tradition or anything else. We should try to identify and isolate the extremism itself as being the thing we're condemning, not the group whose name those extremists may be trying to use. I think that should be taken into consideration by members as well, and I hope this amendment will pass.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Bergeron.

[*Translation*]

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

I was fine with the initial version of the motion. That said, I rather think that we must try to avoid elements that could divide us, as is the case with these two terms. I think that anything that attacks the rights of women or the rights of LGBTQ+ communities constitutes extremism. I completely agree with the motion as initially worded, but I am quite ready to accept it being amended to focus on extremism only.

Mr. Genuis is absolutely right to point out that there are suspicions of women being forcibly sterilized in the People's Republic of China. I don't think that is a country we could refer to as far-right. He also pointed out very appropriately the fact that Islamist extremism, which attacks women and the rights of gays, lesbians and so on, is also extremism. I think that any attack on the rights of women or of the LGBTQ+ community constitutes extremism.

I would tend to rather agree with Mr. Chong's amendment, namely that we should stick to the term “extremism” only. That would avoid politicizing our motion and dividing us. Its effect would be to make our motion unifying and make us all recognize ourselves in it.

Ultimately, the objective is to look into any extremism that could attack the rights of women and of LGBTQ+ communities. I must say that I am in favour of Mr. Chong's motion, even though I think it was very appropriate to vote in favour of the initial motion.

• (1725)

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

[*English*]

We have about three minutes remaining. We have a hard stop tonight because of resource constraints. What I propose to do is preserve the speaking order, just like we did last time. We'll adjourn at 5:30, and we will resume the discussion at the very next opportunity in committee business.

Dr. Fry, you have the floor.

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I actually agree with Mr. Chong's amendment. I think if you want to do a good job on a study, you want to walk away from being too subjective or using too many adjectives to describe what your ideology is about.

I think the word “extremism”.... When you look at Belarus, Russia, China, Venezuela and at non-governmental organizations like Antifa, etc., we have left-wing extremists and we have right-wing extremists. I have heard the argument CSIS made. It's a good argument, so let's take away this florid language and just talk about extremism in whatever form it takes.

As a mover of the motion, I'm happy to support Michael's amendment.

**The Chair:** Dr. Fry, thank you very much.

We are now down to about a minute. I will give the floor to Ms. Saks.

**Ms. Ya'ara Saks (York Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate Dr. Fry's support of the potential amendment. However, I think it's really important to clarify that how we got here with putting this motion on the floor in the first place, and the temperature and the rise...and the particular rise in extremism that we're seeing, as Mr. Fonseca mentioned, south of the border. There's a lot of good work to be done, but we need to be clear on the lenses we're looking at in identifying and naming each of these categories of extremism. It's very easy to do this broad lens, but there are definitive categories that are in mainstream news outlets and also academic conversations and studies on whether it's religious extremism, xenophobia and so on and so forth. I don't want us to start to make the umbrella so wide we lose the purpose of why we're honing in on this at this time.

I'm mindful that we are at the 5:30 mark. We need to explore this a little bit so that when we put the lens of extremism we're not making it too broad for the purpose of the study that we want to do in three sessions.

• (1730)

**The Chair:** Ms. Saks, with apologies, let me interrupt you there. We are at 5:30 p.m. Tonight we have a hard constraint because of House of Commons resources.

I propose that we do exactly what we did last time. On Mr. Chong's amendment, I have Ms. Saks, Mr. Oliphant and Mr. Fonseca as being in line, as well as Dr. Fry. I propose that we preserve that order and reopen our discussion at the very next committee session on Dr. Fry's motion. We will go in that order, with colleagues being invited to add themselves to the list as we continue the discussion.

If that's agreeable to the committee, we will capture it that way.

Thank you so much, colleagues. Be safe.

We stand adjourned until our next session next week.

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