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Chair: The Honourable Geoff Regan



Special Committee on Canada-China Relations

Thursday, August 6, 2020

• (1505)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number nine of the House of Commons Special Committee on Canada-China Relations.

Pursuant to the order of reference of July 20, 2020, the committee is meeting on its study on Canada-China relations.

[Translation]

To ensure an orderly meeting, here are a few rules to follow.

Interpretation in this video conference will work very much as it does in a regular committee meeting.

You have the choice, at the bottom of your screen, of either floor, English or French. As you're speaking, if you plan to alternate from one language to the other, you'll need to also switch the interpretation channel so that it aligns with the language you're speaking. You may want to allow for a short pause when switching languages.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. When you're ready to speak, you can click on the microphone icon to activate your microphone. A reminder that all comments by members and witnesses should be addressed through the chair.

If a member wishes to speak outside the time provided for their questions, they must turn on their microphone and state that they wish to raise a point of order. If a member wishes to address a point of order raised by another member, they must use the "raise hand" function to inform the chair that they want to speak. To do so, you must click on "participants" at the bottom of the screen. When the list appears beside your name, you'll see an option to raise your hand.

Make sure that you speak slowly and clearly. I'll try to do the same. When you aren't speaking, your microphone should be on mute. The use of headsets is strongly encouraged.

[English]

I should mention that the clerk has informed me that there was a major Internet outage today in Ottawa. We're hoping that it will not reoccur and cause us any problems, but the technicians are aware of that. I don't think they can do much about it, but hopefully it won't reoccur.

• (1510)

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

You made reference to an option at the bottom of the screen allowing you to raise your hand with some device. I don't have such a thing. I have a "Reactions" button, which allows me to clap one hand or give a thumbs-up, but no raising of the hand, so I don't know....

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): You should hit "Participants". Then it will open up another screen and it will say "Raise Hand".

The Chair: You know, I could ask Mr. Albas to wait until he is recognized, but I think that was a very helpful intervention.

Could you go over that again, Dan?

Mr. Dan Albas: In the centre of the screen, you should see "Participants". Right now I see one that has 26 participants. Next to the "English" button, or your language button, you click on "Participants", and it will have a menu of all the people who are on there. At the bottom, I believe on the right, it will say "Raise Hand".

The Chair: Mr. Harris, is that helpful?

Mr. Jack Harris: No. There are three icons on the bottom: "Participants", "English", and next to that is "Reactions". When I press on "Participants", I don't get anything other than.... Hold on, there's a list on the right-hand side. Is that what you're talking about, Dan?

Mr. Dan Albas: Yes, at the bottom right.

Mr. Jack Harris: Okay. You have the actual list of the names of the participants. I see it now, sir.

The Chair: Beneath that list are three words: "Invite", "Mute Me" and "Raise Hand"—

Mr. Jack Harris: I have my hand raised there now.

The Chair: Excellent. I don't see it, but you know how to do it, so I think we're all right.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Jack Harris: It's raised there now.

The Chair: Apparently the clerk is indicating that she sees it. I don't see it. That's odd. Is it raised on the list of participants? I'm sorry, but....

Mr. Jack Harris: It isn't now. Mr. Williamson's is, but mine is not.

Oh, it is now. Yes, okay.

The Chair: I'm sorry for the confusion about this, but it's important to work this out. My expectation would be that we would see the raised hand on your screen. I wonder if that's not correct.

Perhaps the clerk could clarify this.

Mr. Jack Harris: I can see it on my screen now, yes.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Christine Holke): Mr. Chair, I see both raised hands, on Mr. Williamson's video and Mr. Harris's, as well as in the participants list.

The Chair: All right. Well, I'm going to ask Mr. Harris to do that again, because I didn't see it and I'm going to need to see it, obviously.

Mr. Jack Harris: I'll lower it now. Now it's gone. I'll press "raise hand" again, and now it's back up again.

The Chair: Okay, I see where it is. I'll have to have that off to the side then. That's going to be one more thing to have open here.

Mr. Jack Harris: That was my same problem. I did not have that list open.

The Chair: I'm sorry for the delay here, but that's very useful. That's going to be challenging, perhaps, but I'll try to keep my eye on that. Thank you very much.

Since my colleagues insist that the meeting stems from a recommendation by the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure, we need to ratify this recommendation before proceeding further. I understand that Mr. Oliphant is prepared to move a motion to do this.

Go ahead, Mr. Oliphant.

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. It's good to see everybody.

I begin by apologizing for not having a tie on. I would normally wear a tie, but I am at the cottage and the meeting was called while I was still at the cottage. I could do up my button, and hang something funny from my neck, but I thought that was ruder than not having a tie on.

I'm going to begin with a motion, and this is, as the chair said, in light of the fact that the subcommittee met but has not yet had a report ratified. We'll be able to do it at the end of the meeting, but to facilitate this meeting happening, I would move that the committee meet from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. today, Thursday, August 6, 2020; that former ambassadors David Mulrone, John McCallum and Robert Wright, as well as Dr. Lobsang Sangay, be invited to appear from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.; and that the committee discuss committee business from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m.

That is the motion.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Oliphant.

As stipulated in the latest order of reference from the House, all motions shall be decided by way of a recorded vote. I will now ask the clerk to proceed—

• (1515)

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I'm sorry. I guess you probably had a hand up. This is the problem with not seeing these hands up all the time.

Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As the subcommittee report clearly indicated, there were a number of former ambassadors, including Mr. McCallum, who were invited. I note today that we are going to be speaking with one of the invited guests.

Could I ask the clerk the status of the other two?

The Clerk: The other two, Mr. Wright and Mr. McCallum, have declined the invitation of the committee.

Mr. Dan Albas: Okay, so they've declined. Is it because they were not able to make it today or have they declined from participating completely? Could you elaborate?

The Clerk: They didn't give me any explanation. They just said they were not available to appear before the committee.

Mr. Dan Albas: Okay.

The Chair: All right. Thank you, Mr. Albas.

Now I'll ask the clerk to proceed to—

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Chair, I have a hand raised, but I believe Mr. Harris had his raised ahead of mine.

The Chair: Okay, I'm having trouble with that. Thank you.

Mr. Harris.

Mr. Jack Harris: I don't know how that hand got raised, Chair, so I'll take it off and pass the floor over to whomever was ahead of me.

The Chair: I think it's Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In light of the clerk's response to Mr. Albas's intervention, I want to propose an amendment to the motion, that we add to the text of the motion "that Canada's former ambassador to the People's Republic of China, the Honourable John McCallum, be summoned to appear before the committee at a time, date and location to be determined by the chair and the clerk of the committee".

The Chair: That would be a motion to amend the motion before us. I believe it's in order. I'm not seeing an indication from the clerk otherwise, so I'll now ask the clerk to proceed to a recorded vote on Mr. Genuis's amendment to the main motion.

The Clerk: Okay. The vote is on the amendment.

I need to hear a yes or no: Mr. Virani—

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Could I have a point of order?

I would like to have the amendment read. I wasn't prepared for an amendment, and it sounds contradictory to the motion. I want to make sure I understand the amendment and what it is.

The Chair: I'll ask Mr. Genuis to read his motion to amend, please.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I'm very happy to do that. I think it very much follows in the spirit of the proposal, given the witnesses that people wanted to hear from.

The amendment is “that Canada's former ambassador to the People's Republic of China, the Honourable John McCallum, be summoned to appear before the committee at a time, date and location to be determined by the chair and the clerk of the committee”.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: May I speak to the amendment?

The Chair: I have Mr. Oliphant and then Mr. Bergeron.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, we're in the middle of a vote.

The Chair: Mr. Genuis is quite correct. I did ask the clerk to proceed to a recorded vote on the motion.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Mr. Chair, with all due respect, I don't believe you asked if there was any debate on the amendment. I think you missed that part. I would beg that you allow us just a minute for clarification.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, that's obviously not in order.

The Chair: Mr. Genuis, Mr. Oliphant is correct. I did not ask for debate on the motion, which clearly I should have done.

So I will—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, look, if the government members want to filibuster this, it's up to them—

The Chair: Well, Mr. Genuis—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: —but they've missed the window.

The Chair: Mr. Genuis, you're out of order.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: They've missed the window, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Genuis, you're out of order.

• (1520)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: You can't just—

The Chair: Mr. Genuis, I would ask you to speak when it's your turn, when you're called upon to speak and when you're recognized.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: On a point of order, Mr. Chair—

The Chair: As I said, I should have called for debate. I did not do so. That's my error. I regret that.

It's important to allow members to debate on the motion that you've made.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: There were no speakers, but you know, you'd made a ruling—

The Chair: I did not call for debate.

We have Mr. Oliphant, followed by Mr. Bergeron.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To relieve Mr. Genuis's concern, I'm not going to filibuster. I would propose an amendment to the amendment. It would add Mr. Robert Wright, so that we would be inviting both the ambassadors who declined to appear before our committee. That's what I would

do, because I don't understand. The subcommittee requested three ambassadors. One was available and the other two were not.

I believe I would be voting for the amendment that Mr. Genuis made, but I would like a subamendment to add Mr. Wright. Then I would be voting in favour of the subamendment, the amendment and then the motion.

The Chair: I will now call for debate on the subamendment moved by Mr. Oliphant. This is debate on the subamendment.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I think it's great. I'll vote in favour of that too.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Bergeron, you have the floor.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): That was the purpose of my comments. I was wondering why Mr. Genuis' amendment didn't mention the two ambassadors. I welcome Mr. Oliphant's subamendment, and I'll vote in favour of it.

[*English*]

The Chair: Are we able to call this a friendly amendment, then? Is that what we're talking about?

Mr. Oliphant.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Mr. Chair, I would prefer just to go through the process.

The Chair: Fine.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I think it does change the motion. I think it also gives Mr. Virani a chance to actually vote on a motion.

The Chair: All right, I'll call upon the clerk to proceed to a recorded vote on the subamendment.

(Subamendment agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

(Amendment as amended agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

Thank you very much. I would now like to welcome our first witness, Dr. Lobsang Sangay, president, Central Tibetan Administration.

Dr. Sangay, you have up to 10 minutes to make your opening statement. Thank you very much for appearing.

• (1525)

Dr. Lobsang Sangay (Sikyong-President, Central Tibetan Administration): Thank you very much, Honourable Chair Geoff Regan, vice-chairs and members of the committee. Here in Dharamsala it is 1 a.m. Given the importance of the committee, I thought I should deprive myself of sleep and talk about China and Tibet.

[*Witness spoke in Tibetan*]

[*English*]

I just said in Tibetan what I said in English.

It's odd now that, because of COVID-19, which originated in Wuhan, instead of meeting in person we have to conduct such hearings online. It's an inconvenience caused to all of us, I think partly due to the Chinese government's irresponsible act of not letting us know that the coronavirus does transfer from human to human. Several thousands were infected, but they did not inform the world. That has led us to this very precarious situation.

I just want to say what I said in 2018, which is similar to what the U.S. government and others have been saying. The challenge posed by the Communist Party of China, or the Chinese government, is very serious. Either we transform China or China will transform us. Liberal values are at stake. Democracy is at stake. Human rights are at stake. Environmental issues are at stake.

Being the second-largest donor to the United Nations, China is trying to restructure the United Nations by putting in key personnel who support them and who compromise democratic values and human rights values. They are trying to redefine human rights. They have already passed two resolutions redefining human rights. If that is to continue, then the human rights we know, where freedom of speech and political rights are considered key, will be diluted. Then all over the world will be what happened in Tibet in the 1950s—elite co-optation of influencing politicians, influencing business people, intellectuals, the media.

All these things are taking place. Having travelled from Ottawa to Norway to Sweden to Australia, I've seen this over and over again. Because of this elite co-optation, the Chinese government is trying to get many people in your own countries favouring or supporting the Chinese version of events. This is what they are trying to do.

We see it in Canada with the issue of Michael and Michael. Obviously, my solidarity is with the family members of Michael and Michael, but it is a choice between morals and money. If the Canadian government submits to the Chinese government's demand to exchange Ms. Meng Wanzhou for Michael and Michael, that will lead to other cases where more Canadians could be arrested and used as hostages to put pressure on the Canadian government to give them concessions. I think the Canadian government has taken the right stand—not to succumb to the pressure from this Chinese government.

On the issue of Taiwan being a member of the WHO, I have been in favour of Taiwan's status being restored to pre-2016, when they were a member of the WHO. The coronavirus is simply a health issue, and Taiwan has performed brilliantly in dealing with the coronavirus. Their expertise and their experience could be invaluable in

handling this coronavirus. Their role should be provided for and accommodated at the WHO, but because of Chinese government pressure they are not allowed in.

• (1530)

Then there's the security laws in Hong Kong. This is what we saw in Tibet with the unity laws in Tibet. Similar security laws were passed in Tibet, and these laws are simply to undermine democratic values, undermine freedom of speech and allow political oppression of the Tibetan people, environmental destruction of the Tibetan Plateau and the economic marginalization of the Tibetan people. All this is taking place primarily because the Chinese government has imposed, like Hong Kong, security laws, unity laws. These are used to undermine the freedom of the Tibetan people.

Hence, what we have been saying is that what happened to Tibet could happen to you. From Taiwan to Hong Kong, to East Turkestan, with a million or so people detained, including a Canadian citizen, a Uighur Canadian, Huseyin Celil, who has been detained in China, all this clearly shows that what happened in Tibet 60 years ago is happening all over the world. There are a lot of lessons you can learn from Tibet.

With this, I want to recommend that the Canadian government, especially the committee, pass a motion and support a middle-way approach as a policy which seeks genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people within the framework of the Chinese constitution. For that to happen, there ought to be a dialogue between the envoys of the Dalai Lama and the representatives of the Chinese government. This is, in fact, a win-win proposition for the Chinese government and the Tibetan people. I hope the committee will consider supporting a middle-way approach.

Religious freedom is vital. This year marks the 30th birthday of Panchen Lama and the 25th anniversary of his disappearance. We don't know where he is. He has disappeared for 25 years, and Panchen Lama's case reflects the tragedy of the situation for religious leaders and religious freedom in Tibet. The Chinese government is trying to interfere in the selection of reincarnated Lamas. The reincarnation is strictly a spiritual business that the Communist Party of China is politicizing. They are saying they will interfere and they will select the reincarnated Lama, and the Tibetan people should follow those religious leaders. This is in clear violation of basic human rights and basic spiritual traditions.

Also, I would urge the Canadian government to join alliances of democracies or like-minded countries that support and uphold liberal values, to be together, so open coordination with other countries to press on the Chinese government that they ought to be a responsible member of the international community, and international norms and regulations ought to be followed. If they don't do it, they will not get the respect they want as an upcoming superpower.

The Chinese government ought to respect human rights and liberal values of the Tibetan people and Uighurs, Hong Kong, and the people in Taiwan as well. These are the issues, which are very important.

Finally, Tibet is very important from the environmental point of view. Ten major rivers of Asia flow from Tibet. Tibet is called the "water tower of Asia". More than a billion people depend on water flowing from Tibet. Climate change is all over the world, including whether the winter will be cold or warm in Ottawa, or the summer will be too hot or not. It's partly dependent on jet streams from the Tibetan Plateau, so that's also a very important matter. The Chinese government does talk about providing leadership in climate change, but their actions and their record in Tibet are abysmal, a very poor record, so the Chinese government should be held accountable as far as the environmental destruction of the Tibetan Plateau is concerned.

These points were also raised by a Tibetan-Canadian called Sangyal Kyab, who walked all the way from Toronto to Ottawa and visited Parliament, asking parliamentarians to support dialogue between the Chinese government and the envoys of the Dalai Lama to find a peaceful solution to the Tibet issue, and the whereabouts of Panchen Lama, and religious freedom.

● (1535)

I would like to end here, because my time is up, and thank the committee members for inviting me. Even though it is past midnight, past 1 a.m. here, I am here to represent the Tibetan people and to emphasize how important the Tibet issue is. With that, I want to thank the chair, the clerk and all the members of the committee.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. Sangay, and thank you for sticking to your time allotment. I know that members are looking forward to asking you questions. Of course, you will have opportunities to speak, and they will be looking forward to hearing from you.

The first speaker in the six-minute round is Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Dr. Sangay, for being here and for staying up so late. Dharamsala is certainly a beautiful place to be.

I want to start by expressing my support for everything you said in your opening remarks. I appreciate your challenge to this committee to put forward a motion or initiative expressing our clear support for the middle-way approach, facilitated through direct dialogue, and also standing up for religious freedom inside Tibet.

It is amazing that we have an official atheist regime that also claims to control and know reincarnation. It would be comical if it weren't so tragic. I want to express my support for you on those points. I'm hopeful that this committee will be able to adopt motions to that effect, adding our voice to yours and to the voices of so many Tibetan Canadians, who I know raise these issues on a regular basis.

You framed some of this discussion of Tibet as Tibet being kind of the first victim of CCP colonialism. I think it's such an important point for us to think about, that with so many of the techniques of colonialism, of elite capture and of control that the CCP is trying to deploy around the world, Tibet was the first case where we saw that happen.

I wonder if you can just speak a bit more about Chinese state colonialism and also the implications that you're seeing for the Tibetan diaspora community, for instance with issues of Chinese state influence in Nepal and the implications for Tibetans in Nepal, and the intimidation and pressure that Tibetans face even in Canada, the United States and other western countries. What are the manifestations of that for the diaspora?

● (1540)

Dr. Lobsang Sangay: Yes, the Communist Party is a declared atheist party, but it claims to have the authority to recognize reincarnate lamas. We saw the Dalai Lama jokingly say that if they are very serious about reincarnation, then they must first find the reincarnation of Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping, the great Chinese Communist Party leaders. Then once they have developed some expertise and credibility, only then can they talk about the reincarnation of Tibetan lamas. I think it's bizarre for them to claim to have authority on spiritual matters.

Yes, I think that Tibet has been the first victim. The blueprint that they used in Tibet is being used everywhere. Having travelled to the African continent, Latin America, Europe and elsewhere, I know that elite co-optation is the classic case, where they co-opt the elite and influence various leaders to support the Chinese version of the narrative as well as Chinese government policies.

As far as the colonization of Tibet is concerned, with regard to natural resources, such as gold, copper, borax and uranium, the Chinese government has declared that Tibet has around 123 different kinds of minerals, billions and billions of dollars' worth, and all of these are being exploited by Chinese companies, in tandem with Chinese officials, purely for profit. For example, I think that 70% of the lithium in China comes from Tibet, and we all use Chinese products that have lithium batteries.

Why are Chinese products so cheap? It is because they do not pay anything to the Tibetan farmers and nomads from where they extract all the lithium. When the extraction is very complicated, they use a lot of chemicals. They pollute our soil. They pollute our air and water, but they extract it for free. They put it in Chinese gadgets and sell it.

Similarly, 90% of rare earths at one time came from Inner Mongolia or Outer Mongolia. However, they don't pay anything to the Mongolians, but they extract it and use it in Chinese products. Obviously, colonization and exploitation of natural resources is taking place.

Tibetans in Nepal are in a very serious situation. Since 1990, any Tibetan who was born and brought up in Nepal does not even get a birth certificate. They don't have a residency card. They don't have travel documents, so a lot of Tibetans are forced to leave Nepal and go to Canada, Europe and other places. Under Chinese government pressure, Tibetans in Nepal even today are living in very, very tough conditions. You can clearly see that the Chinese government influence is not just restricted to Tibetans inside Tibet. Even Tibetans in exile in Nepal are under tremendous pressure. This is the situation of Tibetans in Nepal.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

I wonder if you could also speak to.... You talked about some of the repression around natural resources and mining. We've heard suggestions at the human rights subcommittee around the issue of Uighurs and doing something about supply chains. What suggestions would you have around ensuring that our supply chains are not polluted by the abuse of human rights or that companies are not involved in supplying security technology that's used in the abuses of human rights?

Dr. Lobsang Sangay: Yes, I think it's very important that for any kind of exploitation of natural resources we find the origin of the raw materials. Often it comes from Xinjiang or it comes from Tibet.

We always say that for any Chinese company or any company—Canadian companies had investment in gold mining and copper mining in Tibet as well—we have to investigate these cases and find out if they are environmentally sustainable, culturally sensitive and economically beneficial to the Tibetan people. If that is not the case, then these Canadian companies or investors should be held accountable.

• (1545)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. Sangay.

We've gone over Mr. Genuis's time by a few seconds.

Mr. Virani, go ahead.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

[Member spoke in Tibetan]

[English]

For the benefit of those of you who don't speak Tibetan, I just said, "Thank you very much for participating in this special Canada-China committee today."

It's obviously very late in Dharamsala. We are also very grateful to you for putting up with our procedural indulgences at the start of this meeting. Thank you for participating, but also thank you for your leadership in promoting internationally the cause of Tibet and the struggle of the Tibetan people for basic human rights.

I am the representative of 7,000 Canadians of Tibetan descent in my riding of Parkdale-High Park, one of whom you mentioned in your remarks—the fellow who walked back and forth from Toronto to Ottawa. Know that your advocacy is appreciated by my constituents and by me personally.

I want to raise at least a couple of issues in the time that we have. I'll ask you to be somewhat brief in your responses.

The first relates to the Panchen Lama. It is a very important year, as you outlined, because it is the 25th anniversary of his disappearance. At the age of six, when he disappeared, he was known as the world's youngest political prisoner and religious prisoner. He was six years old at the time, and he has not been seen for 25 years.

When the official Tibetan delegation appeared in the last Parliament in 2018, I felt it incumbent upon me to appear at that committee and ask some pointed questions. I asked Mr. Baimawangdui about the whereabouts of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, and he said that he is living a normal life with his family and does not wish to be disturbed. We know that there have been statements from the Chinese foreign ministry stating that he has finished his schooling and he is now working.

The first thing I want to ask you—if you could answer in about 60 seconds—is, are you satisfied with this type of response from the Chinese foreign ministry, and has the Central Tibetan Administration attempted to verify the accuracy of this information?

Dr. Lobsang Sangay: Absolutely not. Five UN human rights experts have recently—just a few days ago—raised this issue, that they want to know the whereabouts of Panchen Lama.

It's been now.... He's 31 years old. The Chinese government says that he is 31 years old, a college graduate, has a job and his family members do not want to be disturbed. I think it's absolutely baseless. From what we know, even his siblings are not allowed to visit and meet him, like regular siblings. Parents are not allowed. Parents and siblings are all kept apart in various parts of China. They can meet only with the permission of the Chinese government, once or twice a year. Even family visits are not allowed.

If he's actually free, if he doesn't want to be disturbed, we would like to see him in Ottawa. Let him appear before the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations. Let him speak his mind. Let his parents come. Let his siblings come.

Absolutely, we are very worried about his whereabouts. To be disappeared for 25 years is a gross violation of human rights.

Mr. Arif Virani: Thank you, Sikyong Lob.

I want to build upon that and ask you about the state of basic religious, linguistic and cultural freedoms within the PRC.

We've heard about the Uighurs. As a Muslim Canadian, I am appalled by what we are hearing about the Uighurs, but I'm also troubled by their status being a bit more well known right now than some of the other violations of basic cultural, religious and linguistic freedoms, such as those that relate to your community: Buddhist temples, which are ostensibly open in China, not being allowed to display a picture of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, a man who is an honorary citizen of our country; the fact that Larung Gar and Yarchen Gar in the Kham province in eastern Tibet, where thousands of monks and nuns receive their training, were literally decimated by the PRC; and the fact that in January 2016, Tashi Wangchuk, a language advocate who promotes the use and the instruction of the Tibetan language, was arrested and subsequently convicted, against the pleas of many international countries, Canada included.

Can you please tell us a little bit about the current state of affairs regarding the linguistic, cultural and religious freedom of Tibetans living in the People's Republic of China and what that should indicate to us in terms of policy to be developed here in Canada, along with those international allies you mentioned we need to be developing?

Dr. Lobsang Sangay: Thank you very much.

According to one report, 92% of publications in Lhasa are in the Chinese language; only 8% are in the Tibetan language. Clearly you can see that China's government is investing a lot to promote the Chinese language as the medium of instruction, using China's language as the main one and undermining the Tibetan language, even though, constitutionally, the Tibetan language ought not only to be used, but also to be promoted by the Chinese government.

Yes, Buddhist temples and monasteries are destroyed. You mentioned the cases of Larung Gar and Yarchen Gar. You can google Yarchen Gar. You can see clearly that half of the infrastructure of Yarchen Gar has disappeared. It's flat. It just happened in the last few years that several nuns also committed suicide. Nowadays even a monk or a nun, to leave their monastery to go to another place, needs to seek permission. For district-to-district travel, they need to seek permission. This is the kind of repression and constraints put on the Tibetan people who would like to follow their religion.

Now, Tashi Wangchuk was simply asking for what is already guaranteed in the Chinese constitution and the minority national act, 1984: that the Tibetan language be allowed to be used, bilingually, as a medium of instruction. He was chronicled by none other than The New York Times, saying that he was following the law of the land. However, he was sentenced as a separatist and is in prison.

Even those basic rights are not allowed—

• (1550)

The Chair: Doctor, I'm sorry to interrupt. You may have chances with other questions to go further on that.

[*Translation*]

We'll now continue with Mr. Bergeron.

Mr. Bergeron, you have the floor for six minutes.

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

Thank you, Mr. Sangay, for joining us despite the late hour. I'm sorry for the procedural delay at the start of the meeting.

As you may know, this committee is particularly concerned about the current situation in Hong Kong. Over the next few days, we'll be looking at the situation more closely. I gather that you've drawn a parallel between the situation in Tibet and the current situation in Hong Kong. You spoke of the 17-point agreement negotiated in the early 1950s and the national security law that was passed and that now applies to Hong Kong.

What specific point are you trying to make by drawing this parallel, which you established some time ago? What should we learn from this comparison?

[*English*]

Dr. Lobsang Sangay: Yes, I think the honourable member raised the right issue. As I said, what happened in Tibet could happen to you.

In Tibet, the one country, two systems, which was later provided to Hong Kong, was already promised in 1951 through the 17-point agreement. For example, article 4 of that agreement says that the authority and status of the Dalai Lama would remain the same. The Tibetan language would be allowed to be used, and monasteries could function as before. Any reform would happen only after consulting and seeking the consent of the Tibetan people. All of these were provided in the 17-point agreement, but from 1951 to 1959, the Chinese government violated, essentially, all of the provisions of that agreement. Even though this agreement was forced on us, it was violated, which forced the Dalai Lama and 80,000 Tibetans to flee into exile.

Since then, they have passed a unity law. Now, whenever unity and autonomy come into conflict, unity prevails. Similarly, in Hong Kong, the security law is the same. With security and autonomy, when they come into conflict, security will prevail. Human rights, freedom of speech and the right to protest will all be secondary to the security law and the security of China and Hong Kong. Hence, the dilution of the one country, two systems in Hong Kong is not surprising. It happened in Tibet before.

We are very concerned. I have said recently that Hong Kong is becoming a second Tibet. What happened in Tibet and what is happening in Tibet will surely happen in Hong Kong. All of those promises made by the Chinese government to the Tibetan people were betrayed; similarly, that's what is happening in Hong Kong.

Yes, there are 300,000 Hong Kongers who have Canadian residency or citizenship. Whether they'll be allowed to return to Canada should be considered positively, like the Government of the United Kingdom is doing.

• (1555)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Based on this definitive assessment of the current situation in Hong Kong, how can you hope to reach an agreement with the Government of the People's Republic of China? In your opinion, what level of openness and what type of international pressure would be required for the Government of the People's Republic of China to agree to sit down with the Tibetan authorities to reach a new agreement that would be even remotely credible and that would stand the test of time?

[*English*]

Dr. Lobsang Sangay: Yes, every small gesture or major initiative will matter. Passing a motion in the Canadian Parliament saying that the one country, two systems of Hong Kong should prevail and that violations of it should be condemned; passing a resolution in the UN Human Rights Council, on Hong Kong; having coordinated efforts with other countries to do similar things in their parliaments, including passing acts in the different governments and executive orders that the one country, two systems in Hong Kong should be upheld—all of these should be recorded so that there's a reference.

When it happened in Tibet in the 1950s, many countries felt the same. They did not support us at the United Nations. Of course, we passed three resolutions; thereafter, they did not. Canadians and all of the governments essentially did not put anything on the record. The more noise you can make, the more resolutions you can pass, the more hearings you can hold, the more opinion pieces you publish in newspapers...will be very helpful.

Eventually, democracy is inevitable. We must push China to embrace democracy, and human rights should be guaranteed. Eventually it will all happen, but for that to happen, coordinated efforts and bilateral efforts to press the Chinese government are very, very important.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Bergeron, you have only 15 seconds left.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, I believe that it would be unreasonable to continue the discussion with Mr. Sangay in 15 seconds. It would be disrespectful.

The Chair: Okay.

Thank you.

[*English*]

Now we have Mr. Harris for six minutes.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Dr. Sangay, for joining us at this late hour where you are. It's a pleasure to meet you in this way.

I was very interested in your idea of a solution involving dialogue between your organization or the Tibetan people and the

Government of China. It seems to me that you're looking at the 17-point agreement, not necessarily as a blueprint but at least as a model that was attempted and agreed upon by both sides. It involved autonomy for Tibet, but it also stipulated that Tibetans recognize Chinese sovereignty over Tibet, etc. That is the model, like the one country, two systems that you talked about, which has been in Hong Kong since 1997.

The idea that you call the “middle way” seems a direction towards a solution. Is there any support for that? You're suggesting that Canada should perhaps adopt that formally or support that. Is there support for that from other countries at the moment, or is it something that you're working on as part of your ongoing interactions internationally?

Dr. Lobsang Sangay: Thank you very much, Honourable Harris.

Yes. When President Obama met with His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 2014 and 2016, both times the White House issued a press statement supporting the middle-way approach of the Tibetan people. Not only did it support it, but it applauded the middle-way approach.

In the European Parliament also, many of the members have moved motions, and in several countries, 17 or 18 countries, parliamentarians have issued statements as well. In fact, in the Canadian Senate, there is a motion to support the middle-way approach.

The middle-way approach is, essentially, to say that the Chinese government should end the repression of the Tibetan people and guarantee genuine autonomy of the Tibetan people within the framework of the Chinese constitution. Then separation by Tibet would not be sought. That is what we are seeking.

Yes, any kind of motion and statement will help; otherwise, these Chinese officials in Tibet will continue their violation of all kinds of human rights. They act with impunity because no one says anything. Unless you come to support the people in East Turkestan, or Xinjiang, or Hong Kong, Taiwan and Tibet, they act with impunity and think they can get away with it.

Now there is a reassessment of China's policy all over the world, including in Canada. So yes, one must be assertive as far as your principles and values are concerned.

• (1600)

Mr. Jack Harris: Can I ask you another question, which arises from some of the background information we were given? It talks about ethnic Tibetans outside of the Tibet Autonomous Region, which the Government of China recognizes. But there are Tibetans in a number of other provinces, as well. How do they fit into your narrative and your proposed solution of the middle way?

Dr. Lobsang Sangay: Yes, I think they are Tibetans. The traditional definition of Tibet is Ü-Tsang, Kham and Amdo. These are the three traditional provinces of Tibet.

For example, Amdo is mainly the Qinghai and Gansu provinces of China. That's where His Holiness the Dalai Lama was born, which is outside of the Tibet Autonomous Region. My father comes from Kham, which is presently in Sichuan province. To say that Tibet is only the Tibet Autonomous Region is to say that the Dalai Lama is not Tibetan or that my father was not a Tibetan. We all are Tibetans.

What we seek is genuine autonomy and administrative authority over Tibetan people, because they have the same language, the same culture, the same spirituality and even the same terrain. The territory is all a mountainous region; hence, having one administrative structure is more efficient and capable.

Yes, the Chinese government sometimes says, "Oh, what Tibetans are asking for is one fourth of China. This is unreasonable. The Dalai Lama is unreasonable." No, we are not unreasonable because, historically, that's where Tibetans have lived, and that's where Tibetans are living now. The Dalai Lama is a Tibetan. My late father also was a Tibetan. That's the Tibetan Plateau.

Mr. Jack Harris: There are both, then, the human rights issue, which has to do with the suppression of the culture and the religion, and also this issue of autonomy as it relates to Tibetans in the Tibet Autonomous Region, but also elsewhere.

Dr. Lobsang Sangay: Definitely.

Mr. Jack Harris: That provides some complications, I should think.

Dr. Lobsang Sangay: The human rights situation of Tibetans in the whole of the Tibetan Plateau is the same. Their economic marginalization is similar. The environmental destruction is similar. Even the Chinese government says that the Tibet Autonomous Region and other, adjacent Tibetan areas are all Tibetan autonomous prefectures and Tibetan autonomous counties. The Chinese government also called them "Tibetan autonomous areas". Essentially, the Chinese government recognized them as the same Tibetan area. It's just that they have called them "Tibetan autonomous areas" and put them in different Chinese provinces.

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

Mr. Jack Harris: That's not an impediment, I guess.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Harris.

Now we will go to the second round.

Ms. Alleslev, you have five minutes.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Thank you very much.

Thank you so very much for being here, especially since it is so late. My apologies that I don't have any phrases in Tibetan, but I will say in English how important it is and how much we support you and Tibet in the cause. As you said, Tibet is the first casualty, and none of us are immune. We need to provide that support, not only to Tibet but also to ensure that we don't lose our freedoms in the same course as well.

On December 19, the Americans passed the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act. It required the Department of State to deny visas to Chi-

nese officials involved in restricting access to Tibet for U.S. officials and journalists, etc. Could you speak to that a bit and give us an idea of whether or not, from your perspective, it has achieved the objective it was meant to achieve? Is it an effective tool and something that we, perhaps, should be considering?

• (1605)

Dr. Lobsang Sangay: Yes, Tibet was the first case. When Tibet was occupied and human rights violations took place, many people, many leaders, thought they could keep quiet in Tibet and make deals with the Chinese government. Later they realized that what happened in Tibet was now happening in Xinjiang, with almost a million in detention. You know, the party secretary of Tibet Autonomous Region was sent to Xinjiang to implement what he did in Tibet. The architect of the situation in Tibet and Xinjiang is the same.

Similarly, yes, the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act was passed by Congress. It essentially says that for scholars, journalists or diplomats.... A lot of tourists, even, come from China to America, and from Tibet, so.... But Chinese embassies and consulates don't give visas for Canadian researchers, Canadian students, even Canadian tourists and Canadian diplomats to go to Tibet. This reciprocal access act simply says, look, if you want to come to Canada, we welcome you, but you must give similar access to Canadians to go to Tibet. If you don't do that, this is a basic violation of human rights.

As well, if there are Chinese officials who violate human rights, who torture Tibetans, who act with impunity, and who think they can get away with it because no one will talk about it, then the American government is saying they will deny their visa to come to America. They have named some officials of East Turkistan who have violated the human rights of Uighur people.

That's what we are saying: Similar things should happen. For example, 2018 was a year of tourism between Canada and China. How many Chinese came to Canada? But how many Tibetans came from Tibet to Canada? It was almost zero, because not even 1% of Tibetans in Tibet are allowed to have a passport. Even those few thousand with passports who went to India for pilgrimages had their passports confiscated when they returned to Tibet. One Tibetan blogger wrote that Tibetans have a better chance of going to heaven than getting a passport from the Chinese government.

The reciprocal access act simply says, yes, Canadians should be allowed to go to Tibet. Similarly, Tibetans should be allowed to come to Canada, and researchers especially. Freedom House says that Syria is the least free region in the whole world. The second least free region in the whole world is Tibet. How many people know about that? Not many, because journalists are not allowed to go to Tibet to investigate the situation.

That's why 50 UN independent experts and 30 UN special procedure mandate holders have written to the Chinese government: Allow them to go to Hong Kong; give them access to Tibet; they want to do research. But the Chinese government says no. Even visas are used to blackmail scholars to write their research papers favourable to the Chinese government and unfavourable to the Canadian government and Tibet.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: So from your perspective, it is the beginning of an effective tool.

Dr. Lobsang Sangay: Yes, definitely; it's a deterrence. When a Chinese official is about to violate or torture a Tibetan or a Uighur or a Hong Kongese, they will think twice and say, hey, if my son or daughter has to study in Canada or America, I had better not torture, because my visa could be denied. Canadian journalists who come and investigate this issue could also report on it.

Otherwise, they're acting with impunity. This is a small deterrence, but nonetheless a necessary one.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Alleslev and Dr. Sangay.

Mr. Fragiskatos, you have five minutes, please.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Dr. Sangay, for being here and for your advocacy on behalf of so many. It's an honour to engage with you this afternoon.

I have a question relating to the specifics of President Xi. Is the Tibetan experience markedly different under Mr. Xi than it was under previous Chinese leaders? Certainly, the Tibetan experience is one of enormous difficulty. Human rights suppression has defined what the Tibetan people have faced in the Tibet Autonomous Region for decades. We acknowledge that, and that is extremely clear, but have things taken a decidedly different path under President Xi, or it is simply a continuation of previous Chinese policy? Could you comment on that?

• (1610)

Dr. Lobsang Sangay: I think the situation of Tibetans has been bad, and it could get worse, but under Xi Jinping, in the last 10 years or so, it has gone from bad to worse. The repression is so severe, with the technological control and the manual control of the Tibetan people. Movement has been restricted, so in that way I think the human rights violations are very severe.

Before, Tibetans in Tibet could listen to news from outside, although illegally, but nowadays it's all shut down. For Tibetans to travel outside of Tibet, as I said, it's not allowed. For Tibetans to move from one place to another, it's not allowed. With the social credit system that is implemented in China, everything is photographed, everything is reduced to an algorithm. In Tibet, if your social credit is low, you go to jail. In China, you are denied a plane ticket or a train ticket, but in Tibet, you go to jail.

So, yes, the situation in Tibet has gone from bad to worse in the last decade or so.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you very much.

I want to ask another question, and it offers you an opportunity to clarify.

There are those in China, particularly within the Chinese leadership, who will say that if you look at the economic aid that has been contributed to the Tibet Autonomous Region, the investment is equivalent to about \$100 billion since the annexation of Tibet in 1951. Chinese subsidies have funded substantial transportation and hydro power projects that have resulted in a local economic growth rate over the past two decades that exceeds the national average. I'm reading a briefing note prepared for us by the extraordinary analysts we have from the Library of Parliament. This is not their view; this is a view that, as I said before, some in the Chinese state have put forward. What would you say to that? It is something that is brought up by the Chinese leadership.

I'll run out of time and won't get a chance to ask the third question, so I'll put it here: What would you say to concerns that have been expressed by China about secessionist tendencies within the Tibetan movement?

Do you have a response to both of those questions? Again, I am very sympathetic to Tibetan calls for greater human rights, certainly, but I think this offers an opportunity for you to clarify these two points here for the committee and for Canadians watching.

Dr. Lobsang Sangay: If the Chinese government is so confident in what they're saying—subsidies, economic development and benefits for the Tibetan people—then let's have a referendum. Let Tibetans and Tibet choose a Tibetan leader or a Chinese leader. Let them vote. I'm absolutely certain, hands down, that Tibetans and Tibet would vote for a Tibetan leader.

Now, if you want to go into details, where are the subsidies going? So many Chinese migrants are moving to Tibet: 90% of businesses and enterprises in Lhasa, the capital city of Tibet, are controlled by Chinese people. So, all the hydro power you were mentioning is owned or run by Chinese companies and Chinese officials. How are Tibetans benefiting? All the minerals extracted from Tibet are befitting Chinese officials, not Tibetan people.

We were talking about the Panchen Lama. Even the 10th Panchen Lama, who was the vice-chairman of the National People's Congress, said, a few days before he died, that the Chinese government has benefited more after the occupation of Tibet than the Tibetan people. So, all those promises that the Tibetan people had benefited are proven wrong, as per the statement of Panchen Lama, who was the vice-chairman of the National People's Congress.

Clearly, they talk about those things, subsidies and all, but most of them go to the Chinese migrants who moved to Tibet to own businesses.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Williamson, you have five minutes.

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Dr. Sangay, I want to thank you very, very much for being here today. I have to say that you have a very impressive resumé, with your work in Asia as well as your studies in the United States and elsewhere, and of course your election as well.

I want to go back to something you mentioned earlier about China's growing role in the United Nations. You touched on its infiltration of certain very key spots. One, of course, is its ability now to oversee some of the reporters and the investigating on the human rights file. How do you think this will impact Tibet and the hearing that Tibet has received both at the United Nations and in publications around the world?

• (1615)

Dr. Lobsang Sangay: Yes, if you investigate the United Nations and different agencies of the United Nations, you will see a lot of Chinese personnel in key positions. If Tibetans want to move a resolution, let's say, at the Human Rights Council, it's extremely difficult. If you want to register a Tibetan NGO at the United Nations, it's not allowed. I've been to country after country where....

For example, when I first visited Australia, the talk was whether or not the then foreign minister of Australia would meet with me. The next time I went there, he had become a consultant for the Chinese government. When I went to Norway, the key person who discouraged the meeting between the Dalai Lama and the Norwegian leadership was then the foreign minister of Norway. The next time I went there, I found out he had become the president of the World Economic Forum. How did he get there?

I've been to so many countries where minister after minister has been brainwashed or pressured or co-opted by the Chinese government. Take the coronavirus pandemic. Why was the WHO president in China, shaking hands with Xi Jinping when the reports were delayed? According to one report, 95% of the pandemic could have been prevented had the Chinese government informed the international community three weeks prior to or ahead of what the Chinese government did later.

They are masters of co-opting leadership at every level. I think if you check YouTube, you will see a group of children wearing traditional dresses singing a song in praise of the one belt, one road initiative. You realize that this is the youth leadership forum of, I think, UNICEF. The song they are singing is a rip-off of a Coca-Cola advertisement from the 1980s. How can you have youth leadership training by a UN agency where they're singing a song in praise of the one belt, one road initiative of the Chinese government? Mainly, it's because a key Chinese official was in charge of the leadership training.

The Chinese influence is everywhere.

Mr. John Williamson: Yes. We see that elite capture here. I know there's pressure afoot to have government officials who have worked on the China file to have a cooling-off period so they can't immediately go to work for the Chinese regime once they leave government service, whether they are politicians or public servants.

I think I have about a minute left here. Could you talk to me a little bit about what life is like on the ground in Tibet in terms of Tibetans getting news and transmitting that news? I know there's a problem all over China, where the state controls news outlets, but

your people are folks who are looking for information and to get the word out. Do they get that information in Tibet? Can they share it, or does the state really close things off there as well?

The Chair: You have about 20 seconds, please.

Dr. Lobsang Sangay: Okay.

It's very difficult. If there's a small protest in one village or town, the whole Internet is shut down. There is very repressive technological control. Having said that, there's mouth-to-mouth. When relatives talk to each other, they have to talk in code language. That's how they pass information. Otherwise, technologically and manually, the Tibetan Plateau and the Tibetan people are repressed and absolutely controlled.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Williamson.

Now we have Ms. Zann for five minutes.

I'm not hearing Ms. Zann, so, if members don't have a problem with this, I'm going to go on for a moment to Mr. Bergeron, and then I'll return to Ms. Zann. Maybe she's having a technical problem, and we'll give her the opportunity if she reappears.

• (1620)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bergeron, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

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

I'm sorry that we still have this mute issue, which we're trying to resolve.

Anyway, I'll spare Mr. Sangay the details of all the technical issues that we encounter from time to time.

I'm listening to Mr. Sangay's answers to the various questions. In particular, regarding his answers to my questions about the situation in Hong Kong, the whole thing seems a little hopeless.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to come back to the question that I asked him.

How can there be any hope of reaching an agreement with the Government of the People's Republic of China that satisfies the Tibetan authorities?

[*English*]

Dr. Lobsang Sangay: I'm Buddhist, and as a human being one should always remain hopeful. Things change all the time. Nelson Mandela was in prison for 27 years, eight years in solitary confinement, but he was released and he has restored democracy in South Africa. In Northern Ireland, people of the same faith were killing each other for so long, but the Good Friday Agreement was signed. The Berlin Wall came down and the Soviet Union collapsed.

There are so many examples around the world that things do change. We must keep at it. We must keep speaking; every hearing, every motion, every statement counts.

Tibet was the first, and it was neglected by the whole world. The price that we're paying in Hong Kong and everywhere, including in Canada, is because you refused to speak once and that's the price you are paying. Silence is complicit. We lost our country. The Tibetan people are repressed, but we are still hopeful because our civilization is based on Buddhism, which is 2,500 years old, and the Communist Party or communism is only 100 years old, so comparatively we are very mature and old and senior to the Communist Party of China. Communism has come and will be gone, and Buddhism and the Tibetan civilization will prevail. The Tibetan Plateau will prevail, and democracy and the human rights of the people of Hong Kong will be restored, so we must keep at it.

That's why I'm here, after midnight, because this is a struggle. That's why the term "struggle" is very important. It is a struggle. Every minute, every day, it's a struggle, but one should always remain hopeful and keep moving forward. We will get there. The truth always prevails.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you for your wise words.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bergeron.

I'll now switch to English.

[English]

We'll go to Ms. Zann, whom I now see on the screen. Hopefully she's there.

Ms. Zann, you have five minutes, please.

Ms. Lenore Zann (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Hello, can you hear me?

The Chair: Please go ahead. We can hear you, yes.

I think she's having difficulty with her connection. I see that her image is frozen.

Ms. Lenore Zann: Hello, can you hear me?

The Chair: Yes, we hear you. Can you hear us? Can you go ahead with your questions, please?

I'm afraid we'll have to carry on. Sorry, Ms. Zann—

Ms. Lenore Zann: Hello. Actually, I think I'm here now.

The Chair: Yes, please go ahead with your questions.

Ms. Lenore Zann: I'm so sorry, but my Internet keeps cutting out.

I want to say hello to Sikyong. It's so nice to meet you virtually here. I'm calling today from Nova Scotia on the east coast, and we have a large Buddhist community here in my riding in the Truro area, and also in Halifax. We have approximately 2,200 Buddhists, and three centres, so many people are concerned about what's happening with Tibet. I know many people would be very pleased to hear you today and say that we will do our best to try to support your issues and the problems that are going on with China.

I'd like to ask you what is happening with regard to health care during the pandemic in Tibet. We're not hearing too much about that. How are people being looked after, and what is going on?

• (1625)

Dr. Lobsang Sangay: It's so good to see you virtually.

I do come to the Halifax security forum every year, so I hope to come even this November and meet with this community as well.

Ms. Lenore Zann: Excellent. I will come and meet you.

Dr. Lobsang Sangay: Sure.

When we have these technological problems with muting and unmuting, we should all know it's all because of the coronavirus, which originated in China. If there is something about karma, something should happen pretty soon in a good way, that is, a resolution for the Tibetan people.

After the coronavirus spread all over China.... It's odd that if we look at the trajectory or the trend around the world, it wasn't restricted to one place, but in China it was restricted mainly to Wuhan and the extended province. It did not spread all over China, so there is a growing suspicion that information was suppressed. It infected more people, and that's why when Chinese people started travelling outside then, to Europe, America and Canada, it started infecting more people.

As far as Tibet is concerned, it's very interesting. As per the Chinese report, 101 Tibetans were infected and all were cured; no one died. We know for a fact that in one county, more than a dozen people were infected and several Tibetans died, just for one county, but after March 18, nothing, no information came from inside Tibet. Everything was shut down. So they took advantage of the pandemic and they have resorted to more repressive policies in the Tibetan Plateau.

You know that 154 Tibetans have committed self-immolation since 2009, which means the situation in Tibet is so desperate that the Tibetan people are resorting to self-immolation. Sometimes we get cases of self-immolation, but we never get the details because it's repressed. It's absolutely controlled. Even the coronavirus and the health issue are extremely difficult to know. Since March 18, we've had no information whatsoever. That means the Tibetan Plateau is completely shut down as far as health-related or coronavirus-related information is concerned.

Ms. Lenore Zann: Thank you.

I also wanted to ask you about the Indian-Chinese skirmishes along the border. I know that in May and June there were these deadly skirmishes. What is CTA's view of these skirmishes, and what impact did they have on China's military presence in Tibet?

Dr. Lobsang Sangay: That's the Indo-Tibet border. We say Indo-Tibet border now; the Chinese government says Indo-China border. It's a border that's 3,500 kilometres long, and not even one kilometre of land border was there between India and China. Tibet acted as the buffer zone between India and China. Hence, there was very deep peace because they never met face to face. Since the occupation of Tibet, the Chinese army has moved to the border now. It's called LAC, line of actual control.

The agreement was that there would be no violence or no gun fighting, so all the guns, even for army personnel, have to be pointed down, but this time the Chinese side used violence and killed 20 Indian soldiers and injured more than a hundred by using batons and all kinds of weapons. So for the first time in 40 years, there was violence and there were deaths. It has created a lot of anxiety and elements of resentment, even in India.

I've appeared—

The Chair: Thank you, Doctor.

Dr. Lobsang Sangay: —on 40-some television shows in India and reminded them that it's always the Indo-Tibet border.

Ms. Lenore Zann: Thank you.

The Chair: Doctor, I'm terribly sorry to interrupt.

Thank you, Ms. Zann. That's the end of your time.

I would ask members.... Maybe that was me, but I don't think I did that. I don't think we should be using the symbols for clapping and thumbs-up and so forth. We can express it when it's our turn, of course. That may have been up by mistake in your case, Ms. Zann, because you had technical problems, obviously. It's appearing on the screen and I'm not sure why.

Oh, I think it's my fault. Pardon me; it's entirely my fault. It's my mistake. I apologize.

Now we're on to Mr. Harris for two and a half minutes.

• (1630)

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, Chair.

First of all, Dr. Sangay, let me just say that I wish to acknowledge it everywhere.... I know it's a long and uncertain road, but you have offered very great hope and I think that's a very positive thing.

I'd like to understand a little better how your organization has evolved since the Dalai Lama and the leadership of your organization.... Not that it has gone in a different direction, but it has separated out in terms of authority. What was the purpose of that, and has that been effective in advancing the cause of the Tibetan people?

Dr. Lobsang Sangay: The head of the Central Tibetan Administration was always His Holiness the Dalai Lama. In 2011, he separated the church and state and devolved all his political authority. In 2011, I took over as the political leader.

Our administration functions like any other government. We have an education department, which runs between 70 and 80 schools. The Department of Religion and Culture oversees about 250 monasteries and nunneries. We have our own health system. Our own settlements have a mayor-like system. We run like any

other government. The building I am in is the information and international relations building. We have 13 offices, like embassies, all over the world.

I'm grateful to the Canadian government for providing funding for the education of Tibetan children in South Asia. We educate our own children. This is a self-sustaining and quite efficiently run administration. If you compare it with any refugee community anywhere in the world, you will find that the Central Tibetan Administration is the most efficient. We provide education up to high school and provide scholarships for children to go to college. We provide welfare to people who are poor and who are sick. We have old-age homes, and monasteries and nunneries to preserve and promote our spirituality and our culture and language. Our finance department runs financial services, including a bank-like system.

So yes, we run like any government. We provide a very good service to the Tibetan people. Our literacy rate, for example, is 94% and—

The Chair: Dr. Sangay, I apologize for interrupting you again. I'm afraid we're over Mr. Harris's time.

Thank you, Mr. Harris.

We started a bit later than planned. As a result, I had in mind that we could go to about 4:45 p.m., if that's acceptable. I'm trying to manage it so that we have an equal amount of time for each witness. That would allow one more five-minute set for the Conservatives and one for the Liberals.

I hope that's acceptable to members. We'll have to pause for five to seven minutes between witnesses, and then at the end, after the next witness, we'll have to pause for about 15 minutes, I'm told. I'm trying to manage all this time.

I don't see anyone objecting, so I'll carry on with Mr. Genuis for five minutes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I don't think Dr. Sangay will mind my doing this. Instead of asking him questions, I want to take this round to move a motion that reflects one of his asks. This would maybe take about five minutes and be a matter of consensus for the committee.

I want to move the following: that this committee call for dialogue between the Central Tibetan Administration and the Government of the People's Republic of China with the view to allowing the exercise of genuine autonomy for Tibet within the framework of the Chinese constitution, and report this motion to the House.

• (1635)

The Chair: Is there any debate on the motion?

Mr. Harris.

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Chair, I thought we were doing a study. We were going to hear from people and make some decisions afterwards. It seems to me a bit unusual that in the middle of testimony from a witness we would have a motion on something that may require some further thought.

Other people might have some comments. I'm not objecting to the particular motion, as such, but procedurally this seems to be a bit unusual.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Harris.

I believe the motion is in order. Of course, if members wish to debate it or not, it's up to members.

I don't see anyone else seeking to debate the motion—

Mr. Arif Virani: Could I raise an issue, Chair?

The Chair: Well, I have Mr. Oliphant first, and then it will be you, Mr. Virani.

[*Translation*]

We'll now continue with Mr. Bergeron.

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I would be speaking generally in favour of this motion. I don't disagree with it. I think that the spirit of it is absolutely correct. I think this is one issue where there is very little daylight among our parties. We are all concerned about Tibet and human rights. When you look over the last 20 years, over various governments, we've been fairly consistent regardless of what party has been in power and where we're at.

I do agree, however, with Mr. Harris. I'm worried that it feels a little premature. We've just started, really, a little bit more on human rights. We were going to do a fairly in-depth set of discussions around various human rights issues. I would feel, personally, a little bit more comfortable if we had a little more witness testimony and then sorted out our plan about how we're going to address these issues publicly in the House and make decisions.

Again, I'm not against it, but it seems to me that it doesn't give us time to really look at the whole picture and whether or not it is timely. It's always timely to discuss human rights in Tibet, but is this the best time for a motion to come from this committee?

The Chair: Mr. Virani.

Mr. Arif Virani: I have three points, Mr. Chair.

Building on what Mr. Oliphant just mentioned, I think the position of various Canadian governments has been exactly that: the Sino-Tibetan dialogue needs to restart. That's been consistent. I also think there's a fundamental misunderstanding among large parts of the Canadian populace about what the middle-way approach is. That's the first point of concern, just having people have a better understanding of what would be in the content of the motion.

The second point is that Dr. Sangay very rightfully raised a number of issues that bear a lot of scrutiny and a lot of understanding and consideration by this committee about what a potential motion might look like: things such as reciprocal access and other nations that have passed legislation that relates to this principle of reciprocity.

A third issue that was raised was the commonality between various human rights causes—such as Hong Kong, the Uighurs, Taiwanese—and the Tibetan cause. In my view, having as broad and as sweeping an analysis before putting forward a motion might be the best way forward. I think it's clear, from Dr. Sangay's testimony, that what we are upon is an opportune time to shine a light on human rights abuses, but doing that with a more multilateral approach, bringing in multiple issues, multiple stakeholders and multiple nations.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Bergeron, you have the floor.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, I'd like to echo the comments of my colleagues who spoke before me. First, I just want to say that, in principle, I completely agree with the motion. I believe that common sense tells us to support this type of motion. However, I have some concerns about the timing of the motion, since—I'm reminding Mr. Genuis—we were supposed to spend a few meetings discussing the specific situation in Tibet. This motion may not be comprehensive enough in terms of everything that we want to recommend to the government regarding the situation in Tibet.

I don't want to start a debate in front of Mr. Sangay. However, I think that this way of proceeding, which always involves facing a *fait accompli* with the presentation of motions, undermines the atmosphere of trust among the committee members.

I believe that we should try to avoid this type of process. As I said a few moments ago, it prevents us from establishing this atmosphere of trust, which would help us move further towards the goal that we all want to achieve.

Once again, we've ended up in this type of situation. We must discuss this issue in front of Mr. Sangay, which I find particularly improper. I want to assure Mr. Sangay that I support the idea of recommending a dialogue between the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Tibetan authorities.

We wanted to take a closer and more in-depth look at the situation in Tibet. Therefore, at this point, the motion seems very incomplete and very inadequate when it comes to all the recommendations that we may want to make to the government.

I'll finish on that note, Mr. Chair.

• (1640)

[*English*]

The Chair: Next is Ms. Alleslev, and then Mr. Genuis.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I think we need to be clear on the specifics of this motion. This motion is simply calling for dialogue between the Central Tibetan Administration and the People's Republic of China, with a view toward allowing the exercise of genuine autonomy for Tibet within the framework of the Chinese constitution. We're reporting this motion to the House. At a later date, absolutely, we would want to do other studies, because it is an important topic. Our next study is not this. Our next study, depending on what we decide, is on Hong Kong. We will look at other things as well.

So for us at this moment to say that we don't have enough information or that we would need to do a further study to be able to call for dialogue—I'm quite concerned about that. I would like to ask my honourable colleagues to vote in favour of this motion. It does not in any way preclude us from doing further studies. It simply shows our commitment to the situation in Tibet by calling for dialogue.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

I have Mr. Genuis, Mr. Oliphant and Mr. Harris.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, I will strike myself from the list. Ms. Alleslev made the points I wanted to make.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Oliphant.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I would just reiterate that we are not against, or I am not.... It's hard for us to communicate virtually. Normally, I would actually call a time out and do a little bit of a caucus. We're not able to do that. I do want to have it very clearly stated that we are obviously in favour of this sort of dialogue.

We are also very clear about how our committee processes should be fair. We didn't have an understanding that this motion would come today. I don't think that is fair. I think we will have the right time to make a set of motions on the very important human rights issues that we will then have a great deal of credibility as a committee to make and that will be heard well.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, with the unanimous consent of the committee, I would suggest that, if there's agreement, we suspend discussion of this motion until after Mr. Mulroney's testimony. I think the issue is fairly straightforward. I do see value in moving forward with it today. However, if there's unanimous consent to defer discussion of this until after Mr. Mulroney's testimony, I think that will give members a little bit of extra time to reflect on it, if that's what they're looking for.

The Chair: I did have Mr. Harris next, but I think I'll go to the question of whether there's unanimous consent.

Does anyone disagree?

Mr. Harris, I think you wish to speak to this.

Mr. Jack Harris: Yes.

I don't agree with that. I mean, look, my question was not based on the procedural issue. It's obviously in order, as the chair pointed out. Are we moving to a point, which I'm afraid we may be, where we're going to do one-offs and ad hoc motions all the way through? This is the Canada-China relations committee, which was struck to

come up with a response on the whole issue of Canada-China relations. This is an aspect of it. We're not doing a study on Tibet. We aren't doing a study on Hong Kong. We hearing witnesses on Hong Kong. It's all part of the relationship between Canada and China, and they are intertwined.

I have no problem with the motion, by the way. Obviously, a dialogue would be a positive thing. I did hear two different motions from Ms. Alleslev and Mr. Genuis, but that's beside the point.

I think we should decide whether we're going to have this piecemeal approach to our work or not. That's a fundamental way of proceeding as a committee, because we can have one of these after each witness if it suits someone to bring a motion. I don't think that's a very positive way for our committee to work.

● (1645)

The Chair: Not seeing any further requests to take part in the debate, I'll call upon the clerk to proceed with a recorded vote on Mr. Genuis's motion.

Mr. Arif Virani: Mr. Chair, I believe Peter Fragiskatos wanted to participate in the debate.

The Chair: Oh, I'm sorry. Perhaps I'm not seeing all the hands.

Mr. Fragiskatos.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I would just say this. We have Dr. Sangay here, and with all due respect to Mr. Genuis, we've now eaten up about 10 or 15 minutes. The meeting has gone very well to this point. Dr. Sangay has been able to answer thoughtful questions and enlighten the committee. I've learned a great deal. I wish we would have continued in that vein.

I would just very politely suggest to my colleague Mr. Genuis that he bring this back to the committee through the proper avenues, make us aware ahead of time, and we can discuss the matter then. I don't see the need to continue to discuss it here and now, and certainly not later today. We can continue the meeting as originally planned.

That would be my view.

The Chair: I don't see anyone wishing to speak at this time.

Mr. Jack Harris: Is it in order to table that motion, Chair?

The Chair: I'm going to have to check that question. I'll have a quick check on that with the clerk.

I'm sorry about that, folks.

Mr. Harris, do you wish to move to adjourn the debate? That's what I think you're trying to do.

Mr. Jack Harris: No, what I suggested was that we deal with it later, that we not deal with it now, and tabling a motion is normally a way to do that in various meetings so that there won't be a vote.

I'm loath to vote against a motion that I favour, so it's one way of saying, look, this is not an appropriate time to be dealing with this.

The Chair: I'm interpreting that to say that you wish to move to adjourn the debate, which is the proper motion.

Mr. Dan Albas: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I can appreciate it, but he's clearly not wanting to table a motion, so let's just leave it on the table and let the process go forward.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Arif Virani: Mr. Chair, can I ask for one point of clarification?

Are there normally rules in this committee with respect to providing notice, like 48 hours' notice on a votable motion, or not?

The Chair: There are rules about votable motions, of course. However, when a matter is before the committee, a motion can be brought in relation to the matter that is before the committee.

Mr. Oliphant.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I would make the motion to adjourn debate on this motion, as the most appropriate way to do effectively what Jack has suggested, which is to come back to it later.

That's the way we do that in a committee, so at this point, I would move that we adjourn debate on this motion.

• (1650)

The Chair: I'll ask the clerk to proceed with a recorded vote on Mr. Oliphant's motion.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 4)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I think it's time for me to thank our witness, Dr. Sangay. I know that all members have appreciated having you here. We're very honoured to have you, and especially to have you at what is now well after midnight. It's been very gracious of you to be with us at such a late hour and to give us so much of your time.

Thank you so much.

Dr. Lobsang Sangay: Thank you very much to the chair and the committee members for this opportunity. It's a great honour to be on your committee.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now have to suspend for a few minutes as we prepare for the next witness.

• (1650)

(Pause)

• (1700)

The Chair: I'll now call the meeting back to order. Welcome back.

I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of the new witness. Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. When you are ready to speak, you can click on the microphone icon to activate your mike. I remind you that all comments should be addressed through the chair.

Interpretation in this video conference will work very much as it does in a regular committee meeting. You have the choice, at the

bottom of your screen, of floor, English or French. As you are speaking, if you plan to alternate from one language to the other, you will need to also switch the interpretation channel so it aligns with the language you are speaking. You may want to allow for a short pause when switching languages.

When you are not speaking, your mike should be on mute. The use of headsets is strongly encouraged.

It is now my pleasure to welcome our witness, as an individual, Mr. David Mulroney, former ambassador of Canada to the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Mulroney, you have seven to 10 minutes to make an opening statement. Please proceed.

Mr. David Mulroney (Former Ambassador of Canada to the People's Republic of China, As an Individual): Thank you very much, and thank you for this second opportunity to meet with you.

I'd like to begin by summarizing the points I had intended to make in my original appearance, updating them where necessary, and offering some ideas about first steps in getting to a smarter engagement of China.

It will soon be two years since our current China crisis began with the arrest of Meng Wanzhou, followed by China's retaliatory seizure of Canadian citizens Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor. Since then, we've also seen death sentences imposed on Canadians Robert Schellenberg and Fan Wei in circumstances suggesting yet more retaliation. Today brings news that yet another Canadian, Mr. Xu Weihong, is facing the death penalty in China.

Beijing has also resorted to economic blackmail against some of our exports.

As these events have unfolded, we've also witnessed China's growing repression in many places. Dr. Lobsang Sangay has just described the grim situation in Tibet. In Hong Kong, since your last meeting, Beijing has now completed its demolition of the one country, two systems commitment it made to the people of the territory. China's steady assault on the faith, freedom and dignity of the Uighur people has transformed western Xinjiang into a prison camp, a place where China perfects and advertises the technology of the 21st century surveillance state.

Since your last meeting, we've learned that China is enforcing coercive birth control, including abortion, on Uighur women. Impatient with cultural genocide in Xinjiang, China now appears to be experimenting with the real thing.

China's repression resonates personally among Canadians from Hong Kong and among those of Tibetan and Uighur origins. They fear and feel the long arm of the Chinese state, which activates harassment and intimidation here in Canada via various proxy groups.

It was my hope that our government would use this period of crisis to rethink our relationship with China, to consider more clearly what China actually is, where it's going and how this is likely to affect us. However, old approaches die hard. It's not clear that the government has completely given up the fiction that China is our friend, nor has it consistently summoned the courage to speak and act with integrity. Powerfully placed Canadians continue to argue that if we appease China just one more time, all will be well. While it's reassuring that Global Affairs now acknowledges China's "long-term strategic challenge" to Canadian interests and values, which is surely the central lesson of this crisis, the same department somehow originally selected a Chinese company to provide the security technology that screens visitors to our embassies.

Canada suffered more than most from China's deadly lack of transparency at the outset of the SARS epidemic in 2003, and I remember that well from my work in the Asia branch of foreign affairs. It was, therefore, troubling to hear our health minister praise China's response to the current pandemic, even as reasonable concerns about this were emerging.

This isn't just an Ottawa problem. Dangerous myopia about China can also be found at the provincial and municipal levels. Last year, concerned citizens asked the City of Markham, Ontario, not to raise China's flag on its national day, citing, among other things, China's cruel treatment of our detained Canadians. However, the city ignored the protests and China's flag rose over Markham on October 1, just as it did over the prison camps of Xinjiang and Tibet, and over the three jails that hold the two Michaels and their long-incarcerated fellow citizen Huseyin Celil.

Something's wrong here, and it has to change. People need to remember that the ultimate objective of foreign policy is not to flatter, not to obscure inconvenient truths, but to advance and protect Canadian interests and values. I am not suggesting that we insult or provoke China. Rather, I'm proposing that we begin to defend our interests reasonably and realistically by doing two important things.

First, we need to take action, and quickly, against Chinese interference in Canada, starting with the implementation of something like Australia's foreign influence transparency scheme.

• (1705)

Second, we need to identify a few achievable objectives to reduce our vulnerability and dependence. These could include working with allies to establish new supply chains in vulnerable sectors, launching trade diversification efforts for exports targeted by China, and working with allies on measures to frustrate China's efforts, successful so far, to take on countries one by one, to isolate and dominate.

It goes without saying that this long-overdue course correction must be shared with Canadians, who would be enormously reassured. It would also provide a needed sense of direction to the public service and send an encouraging message to our allies.

These are reasonable first steps, but only first steps. Getting to a relationship with China that protects our interests and values will not be cost-free or easy, but it's a task we must face up to, because it's ultimately about making our way as a truly independent country in a changing world.

Thank you. I'd be happy to take questions, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Mulroney. You've assisted us by keeping your comments quite brief.

We'll go to the first round now.

Ms. Alleslev, you have six minutes.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Thank you very much for an incredibly powerful and important conversation.

I'm wondering if we could touch on your first comment around "powerfully placed" persons who are influencing us, in terms of policy to appease China. In your other remarks that you provided us, you identified that we have high-placed senior people who, through their connections, may have complicated the relationship with China. Essentially, we do have influence here in Canada.

What can we do to be able to mitigate that influence or bring that influence into the light and protect Canadian interests, so that Canadians can have a clear-eyed perspective on the actual truth, as you said, about our relationship with China and the compromises and threats to our national security?

• (1710)

Mr. David Mulroney: I think two things are happening. One, some of the people who have spoken out—for example, some of those who signed that recent letter seeking to have Ms. Meng returned to China—I think simply display a kind of fatigue. The effort to remain autonomous and independent in the face of an increasingly aggressive China is great. It worries me when I see people who are thought leaders lacking that sense of energy that it takes to defend our national interests.

But there is something else as well—in fact, Dr. Lobsang Sangay spoke about it—and that is what's referred to as "elite capture". For a variety of reasons, many of them having to do with money, China has been able to capture the loyalty and attention of elites in many countries, and indeed encourage people to repeat its own talking points.

Australia passed its Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Act because it was feeling the effects of this in Australia. Again, Dr. Sangay pointed to some of the transitions where people go from being ministers to being representatives of Chinese corporations. What this would do is simply request transparency. If you choose to go to work for China or for another country, you can do that, but you have to be transparent about it. But if you're a leader—if you're a member of Parliament, a former ambassador or a cabinet minister—you have an extra burden. That is, anything you do to share with a foreign power, directly or through a state-controlled company, the skills, contacts and experience you gained while you had the privilege of serving the Canadian people must be transparently reported to the Canadian people—or the Australian people, in that case.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Could you also speak to almost the inverse, where we actually have Canadian citizens, whether or not of Chinese background, who are being intimidated by the People's Republic of China right here on Canadian territory? What types of things could we do to protect them and also to put them in a position to provide the truth about our relationship with China?

Mr. David Mulroney: You know, I've spoken to Canadians of Uighur origin. I can recall hearing from a woman who is no longer able to communicate with her children in China. I know other people who have had to say goodbye to their parents because any communication will incriminate the parents, will cause them to be incarcerated or maybe make their conditions even worse than they are.

There are a number of things we can and should be doing. I talked about intimidation by proxy groups, whereby the Government of China activates groups in the diaspora; it activates student groups. We've seen troubling incidents both at McMaster University in Hamilton and at the University of Toronto's Scarborough campus. It activates them to attempt to intimidate people from those communities. In one case it was to suppress a Uighur speaker in Hamilton. In another it was to intimidate a woman of Tibetan origin who had become the president of the student council at Scarborough.

That would come under the transparency scheme. If you're acting on behalf of a foreign actor, that must be disclosed. The government would have investigative powers, and there would be criminal sanctions for organizations or people who violated that, who failed to be transparent. It would give us a handle on this kind of intimidation by proxy.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: You make an excellent point about your concern around what you talk about as the courage of our policy-makers, both elected and senior public servants, to protect the national interest. What can we as a committee, as a society, do to encourage, inspire, and almost demand that our institutions have the courage to protect the national security interests when, perhaps, we haven't been able to do that up to this point as effectively as we need to?

• (1715)

Mr. David Mulroney: You know, my particular concern is the public service. I'm worried that, since this crisis began, although we've done things like raising the travel advisory, the government is continuing to promote visits and exchanges with China. The public

service, which does that almost automatically, is quite happy to oblige. You have to lead from the top. People learn from actions.

You also have to avoid normalizing what's happened. By not speaking about what's happening in Xinjiang often enough, we're normalizing something that is the worst human rights crisis we've seen.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Alleslev.

Mr. Fragiskatos, you have six minutes.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Mulroney, for being here and for your work as a public servant, your contributions to the country.

I do want to ask you about the view that many have taken within some media circles, and certainly some opposition members, this idea that a hawkish approach towards China is what is needed. I don't count you in that category, Mr. Mulroney. I think yours is a view that is much more nuanced.

I do want to point your attention to something that you wrote—not recently, actually. It was when Stephen Harper was Prime Minister. This is a piece you put forward in Policy Options in May 2015. You were talking about the challenges of being a middle power and a way forward in terms of Canadian foreign policy.

You wrote the following:

[W]e came to take pride in being among the first to close embassies, cut off dialogue and impose sanctions in the face of clearly unacceptable international behaviour. And while our new-found toughness made us the first to pack up and leave, our relatively small size made us among the last to be welcomed back.

What that says to me is that there are second- and third-order consequences to any decision. If the advice that some have given the federal government—as I said, in media circles and I do hear it from the Conservative opposition—is that a much more hawk-like approach is required vis-à-vis China, how do we prepare for possible consequences? I'm thinking not only of the Canadian economy, but of other consequences too. Do you have any advice on that?

I think of the western provinces, for example. We heard from the Canada West Foundation. You can't see it, but I'm looking at data it has amassed. Trade with the western provinces—it's looking at Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and indeed British Columbia most especially—has dramatically increased over the past 10 years. Economic consequences would certainly follow, I think, from a hawk-like approach, but we do have responsibilities to advocate for Canadian values and Canadian interests.

Do you have any thoughts on the matters I've just raised?

The Chair: Mr. Mulroney.

Mr. David Mulroney: Thank you.

What I was talking about in Policy Options five years ago was the notion that we have to be smart in our diplomacy. We have to work with allies and we have to take measures that we can achieve—we need to be realistic. The notion that somehow speaking honestly about China is hawk-like, I think, is one of the reasons we never get to a realistic China policy, because people say, “I know China is doing all these things, but there's nothing we can do.” There are a lot of things that we can and should be doing.

One of the things that China seeks to do is to get into your head. They get into your head and get you thinking so much about how catastrophic China's reaction will be that you actually do even less than China was concerned about. You put the red lines out further than China was concerned about, and Canada has been doing that repeatedly.

The reality is that Canada has what China needs. The north of China is a virtual desert. China's agricultural land has been tainted by its industrial pollution. China needs the products that Canada, Australia and the United States produce. They need this over the long term, and we have to remember this.

The other thing I'd say is that China is currently posing a threat to our autonomy as a country. Telling us that we can no longer enforce our extradition treaties is forcing us to change our policy. We have currently shut down our economy because we're concerned about coronavirus. A lot of environmentalists have said—I don't agree with them—that we need to shut down our energy industry to deal with climate change. What price do we put on autonomy? I don't think we have valued it enough.

• (1720)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: I only have a couple of minutes left, but I do want to ask you about paths forward.

You talked about working with allies in your introduction. How can we effectively work with like-minded allies in a traditional, middle-power sense? I think there are opportunities, certainly, to do that, but I do worry about, again, the second- and third-order consequences that flow.

If Canada was to decide, on its own, to close embassies, stop dialogue, impose sanctions as some have said—and I think those ideas are worth considering, certainly—there's blowback, potentially, for Canada. Does it make sense for Canada to protect itself by aligning with other middle powers to prevent any of that blowback, as much as possible, from hitting us?

Mr. David Mulroney: Thank you. You'll recall that what I was advocating was, first, taking steps to push back against Chinese interference in Canada, which is growing; second, protecting our vulnerable supply lines, our exports; and the third thing was, indeed, working with other countries.

One of the things you will all have found working on China is how dynamic it is. The things you were talking about before you went into recess have now changed considerably. One of the things that have changed is the number of countries that now have concerns with China, and there was a great question for Dr. Lobsang Sangay about the China-India crisis in the high Himalayas. Unchar-

acteristically for China, which is usually quite savvy about these things, it's picking fights with a broad range of countries.

I'm going to have to stop there. I'm sorry.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Mulroney, for recognizing the signal I was giving there.

[*Translation*]

We'll now continue with Mr. Bergeron.

Mr. Bergeron, you have the floor for six minutes.

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

I want to address the issue of multilateralism, since the Minister of Foreign Affairs spoke highly of it on July 3. If the COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated one thing, it's the limits of multilateralism. As soon as the national interests of states were implicated, each state simply tried to safeguard its own interests at the expense of the interests of its allies. We've even seen allies going in to get medical supplies to prevent another ally from obtaining the supplies first. Given what the coronavirus crisis has shown us, what are our chances of actually creating some type of common front against China that will stand firm once the national interests of each state become implicated when China implements retaliatory measures?

[*English*]

Mr. David Mulroney: Thank you.

It's very interesting to watch various interpretations of multilateralism through the pandemic period. I was interested that Australia, for example, which has much greater exposure to China economically than we do—China is its number one partner—began, as a middle power, to convene other middle powers to say, “Let's find out what happened. Let's have an inquiry into how this virus originated. What was the role of the World Health Organization?” China didn't like it much, but Australia began to get take-up from countries that are increasingly going through some of the things we're going through. There's an appetite for that here. What we were doing at the time was our campaign for the non-permanent seat on the Security Council, which to my mind is the multilateralism of the seventies and eighties.

New Zealand offered an even more interesting example. They listened, of course, to the World Health Organization, but they had some of their epidemiologists talk to epidemiologists in Hong Kong and in China. They went through informal networks to get their own sense of what was happening on the ground in China. It's a very creative multilateralism and a modern multilateralism that I think we need to embrace.

I think we would get a good hearing in Europe, particularly in Scandinavia, but also with the U.K., with France, and with Australia and New Zealand. There are more and more countries that are feeling as we feel.

• (1725)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I understand what you're saying. However, when you give the example of New Zealand, this doesn't seem to be an argument in favour of multilateralism. As you said, New Zealand had direct contact with Chinese epidemiologists. We saw that state interests were very selfish during the coronavirus crisis. How can we expect states, which are selfishly defending their national interests, to not break a common front against China as soon as China implements retaliatory measures?

[*English*]

Mr. David Mulroney: This, of course, has been a worry. The old canard was that you shouldn't gang up on China. The result is that China, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, isolates and dominates countries one by one, with the sole exception of the United States. It has done this to Sweden. It's done it to Norway. It's done it to Japan. Australia and New Zealand have felt this. I think there is a growing appetite to talk about this.

The other thing is, just to return to that virtue of optimism that Dr. Sangay mentioned, this is a strong suit for Canada. We're very good at convening people and motivating them and getting them to share our ideas. This should be the objective of our new multilateralism as Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: What are the chances of creating a common front consisting of middle and, presumably, small powers, given China's efforts to establish its new silk road? On the contrary, will some countries be very reluctant to join a common front to discipline China for its retaliatory measures against individual countries?

[*English*]

Mr. David Mulroney: I think the example of the belt and road is an example of how not to do things. Similarly with the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Europeans broke rank in the most undignified way to rush to be the first, and certainly not the last, to curry favour with Beijing, but I think there's a recognition that this is not a smart way to approach it.

What I would do is sit down with half a dozen countries—Australia and New Zealand certainly, but also Sweden—countries that have felt the same kind of people-to-people reprisals we have felt, to say, “How can we come up with common consular language when it comes to the risk you face visiting China? How can we support one another when we have one of our nationals detained?” I never believe in trying to invent a really complicated set of objectives. Why don't we start simply on common measures to protect our citizens? If we had a common travel advisory, that would get China's interest and attention very quickly.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bergeron.

We'll now continue with Mr. Harris.

Mr. Harris, you have the floor for six minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Mulroney, for joining us. I think you will agree that we have a very complex task in front of us, dealing with the Canada-China relationship as a whole, and I don't think anyone could disagree with you that we have to be smart when we're dealing with international relations, particularly with a country as complex as China.

We're trying to put all the pieces together, I guess, and it's pretty clear that we need to have a new relationship with China. The old one is still kind of reaching out to us, though, and I want to draw your attention to something that may prevent us from being as independent as we'd like to be, which is an agreement that was negotiated, I think, while you were the ambassador to China. I think it has a couple of names, but it mostly goes under Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement, which was decried as being one-sided towards China. That binds us for over 31 years and is a version of chapter 11. It is one-sided towards China, and it was negotiated in secret, with no consultation. I think there was one hour of discussion in Parliament.

How are we going to be constrained by that in the future, when we're talking about heavy investment by China, particularly in mining and western Canada energy projects?

Mr. David Mulroney: I think things we rely on, which went into the consideration of this, are the net benefit and national security provisions that are part of the Investment Canada Act. We don't have to take actions that are against our national interest, and I think as we see more of China's intentions, whether they be control of strategic minerals or rather untoward and somewhat unsettling interest in the north, in the Arctic, there's more reason to apply those principles.

What I think the investment agreement was designed to do was to try to level the playing field for Canadian companies that had been treated abominably in China, and it did that to a certain extent, but I think the more robust application of net benefit and national security, as long as the government is willing to do it, guards us against Chinese investments that clearly are not in our interest.

• (1730)

Mr. Jack Harris: Well, sir, that's not the assessment of the very well-known trade lawyer, who talked about it as one of the most seriously one-sided agreements in Canadian trade history, but I hope you're right. We haven't seen the full effects of it yet, and we'll have a long time to wait.

I agree with you on the foreign influence transparency business. That has to be addressed—and unfortunately it hasn't been yet—by China and by other countries. We've seen the example today of the Saudi government state actors or proxies interfering inside Canada, and that's something we ought to address very, very quickly.

As you pointed out, we've had the experience of China being very heavy-handed with individual countries. I have in front of me an excerpt from the deal with Norway. When a Nobel Prize was awarded to a Chinese person imprisoned for eight years, China had nothing to do with Norway, and then in order to get back in its graces, Norway had to sign an agreement:

The Norwegian Government reiterates its commitment to the one-China policy, fully respects China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, attaches high importance to China's core interests and major concerns, will not support actions that undermine them, and will do its best to avoid any future damage to the bilateral relations.

That's a very strong act of humiliation in order to restart that free trade agreement. That China has that kind of power over a country like Norway, which is normally independent and self-sufficient, shows that there has to be more than just an agreement among nations; there has to be a real coalition to act against China.

Would you happen to agree with that, that we have to get countries like Norway and Canada and whatever others we can get together to counterbalance the Chinese power?

Mr. David Mulroney: Absolutely. In the Chinese action, one of the immediate effects you saw was a dramatic decrease in exports of Norwegian salmon to China and a dramatic increase in exports of Scottish salmon to China. Here are two European countries with pretty close relations that were unable to coordinate. This is the kind of thing that's difficult to do among countries, but it's not impossible. I always believe that you can look at all the reasons not to do something, but if we could improve it by 15% or 20%, wouldn't we be better off than we are now? I think that is possible. It's time to strike.

What happens so often with our China dialogues is that we all acknowledge the problem, but then there's the “but” or “on the other hand” and we get back to the kind of robotic diplomacy on auto pilot, which says we just better go along with everything that China is saying and doing. This is a chance. In this period when China has provoked so much unrest in so many places, this is our opportunity to build some alliances, and I think Norway would probably be one of the countries we would want to talk to.

Mr. Jack Harris: Can I reference your comments about the United Nations? I'm a little disturbed to hear you say that we should downplay that involvement in multilateralism, particularly when China is exerting such heavy influence there.

Yes, we have to work together to counterbalance China and the new world that we have, but surely the United Nations is a forum whereby all sorts of other countries are active and important to

have relationships with. I'm very surprised for a diplomat to say that the United Nations is no longer an apparently valid multinational forum.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Harris. That's the end of your time.

I'm sorry, Mr. Mulroney. You'll have to wait and maybe you'll have another chance to answer that when someone else comments or asks a question.

We're on to the second round.

Mr. Williamson, you have five minutes.

Mr. John Williamson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador Mulroney, we actually met 20 years ago in your office in Taipei. I was covering the Taiwanese election there. I think that place remains the truest expression of Chinese democracy, and it's on display every number of years for the world to see that democracy is alive and well in Taiwan.

I'm curious. You've had a long career in mainland China and Taiwan, and you're familiar with the area. Have your views evolved in terms of Taiwan? Looking back 20 years, and before that, how have your views concerning mainland China and Beijing changed over the years, or perhaps they have not?

• (1735)

Mr. David Mulroney: If I could just respond to Mr. Harris, I think he may not have heard me correctly. What I said was that I thought that our multi-year, multi-million dollar campaign for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council wasn't the best use of or the best priority for Canadian diplomacy, and I don't withdraw that.

Working in Taiwan and running our office there was one of the most inspiring experiences of my diplomatic career. Let's just note here that this week we're mourning the passing of Lee Teng-hui, who was really the father of democracy in Taiwan.

I got to meet and see lots of people. I was there when Kuomintang was defeated and the Democratic Progressive Party came to power. It was a very inspiring time and it was impossible not to feel excited.

I also recognize that there are some things.... We have to be careful in terms of how we support Taiwan, because there are some things that would—even though it's inhuman to think about this—provoke China to attack Taiwan. There are red lines that we need to observe.

The reality, though, is that Canada is nowhere near any of those red lines. We're entirely passive in our approach to Taipei. With a little creativity, we could be supporting one of the great democratic success stories, and one with some really interesting links to Canadian history—think of the story of Dr. George Leslie Mackay, who was a hero in Taiwan. It was an inspiring time.

I would add that one of the lessons we should take from Hong Kong is that Hong Kong is where it is now because, for two decades, Hong Kong's elite sold it out, and the countries that should have supported it didn't support it sufficiently. We were one of those countries.

The next focus will be Taiwan. This is the time to be supporting Taiwan thoughtfully.

Mr. John Williamson: I appreciate that and agree with that.

You mentioned in your opening remarks that there would be an economic cost to a divergence from mainland China. I think that's true. Could you talk as well about the costs to Canada in terms of our values, and even economic costs, of continuing on the path we're on, where we're afraid to speak out and the prospect of more trade is more alluring to our business elites?

Mr. David Mulroney: First, I think it's interesting to see that although Australia has been even more outspoken than we are and is more exposed, it's not clear that it has suffered economically. China often encourages us to fear the worst, but I think over the long haul we have what China needs, so I'm a little bit less concerned about that.

If we look at things like China's demands in the case of Ms. Meng Wanzhou, saying yes to a "prisoner exchange", which is again a form of normalizing what China has done, would essentially make it more likely rather than less likely that China would do the same thing to us again in the future. It's just unacceptable.

Mr. John Williamson: You would agree, then, that a sheepish policy towards Beijing has only served to embolden them and to cause us economic difficulties, economic harm. China thinks that because we are sheep dressed up in sheep clothing, we will not do anything, and they feel they have the freedom to push us around.

Mr. David Mulroney: Yes. It's always—

The Chair: In 10 seconds, please.... I'm sorry.

Thank you very much.

Now we have Ms. Zann for five minutes.

Ms. Lenore Zann: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Mulroney.

Many observers have noted that the former Conservative government had a shift in its approach to China in the last years of its mandate. You were ambassador from 2009 to 2012. Could you tell us, perhaps, about your efforts to deepen our commercial relationship with China back then? Here in Nova Scotia, of course, we have a major supply of lobster, seafood and other things going to China. Our governments have really increased our exports.

I'm curious to know whether you ever pushed back on your superiors at that time for tougher stances and not pursuing a friendlier stance. What has actually changed since you were ambassador?

• (1740)

Mr. David Mulroney: I should say that one of my favourite success stories in China was the success story of Clearwater Fine Foods of Nova Scotia, which moved from selling lobster as a commodity to selling lobster as a delicacy, with a Canadian flag on the claw.

I'm very proud of the fact that the message I took to Ottawa when I was ambassador and within the embassy, where I had people from a dozen Canadian departments and agencies and provinces and our security establishment, was that we needed to see China as all of a piece. It's an important market for us, but even then, and we were talking frankly about this, it was an increasing challenge to Canada and posing an increasing threat to many Canadians and Canadian values and interests.

I'm proud that we went out to.... I was told a number of times and harangued by Chinese officials not to say and do things, not to go and see the families of detained Canadians. We sent our diplomats out to see someone who was under house arrest, where they got roughed up. A number of times I was followed in western Xinjiang for going to see human rights champions. I'm proud that on the front of religious freedom, we opened the embassy to mass when the international Catholic community had no place to go. We had about 200 people from around the world coming into the embassy, and very gratefully.

My message—I spoke to deputy ministers on a regular basis—is that the security people need to be talking to the economic people. This is a challenge like no challenge we've seen before. Sometimes we can't say yes to every economic opportunity if it is threatening. Not every idea is a good idea. At the same time, with the security people, saying no to everything doesn't always make sense either.

It's a new kind of diplomacy, a much more challenging kind of diplomacy, but I think we're capable of achieving it. I think we did for a time, when I was there. That was very important to me.

Ms. Lenore Zann: Thank you.

Of course, all of us are concerned about human rights issues. We've been talking a lot about them already today, with regard to the Uighurs and also the Tibetans. When it comes to your advocating for a tougher stance now, though, are you advocating for a full decoupling of the Canadian economy from China, or are you suggesting that we should continue? What would be the consequences, do you think, for the Canadian economy, including Canadian exporters like Nova Scotia and Canadian consumers, if we actually decoupled our economy and pulled back?

Mr. David Mulroney: First of all, while this involves speaking out on human rights issues, my first priority, as you will have noticed from my remarks, is Canadian national security. China has picked up...and practised diplomacy by detention with Canadians. It has unjustly detained our citizens. It's interfering and harassing and threatening people at home, in Canada. It's stealing secrets. It's interfering on campuses. We need to speak out. We can't remain an autonomous sovereign country if we don't speak out honestly about that.

So yes, it's human rights, but increasingly—I've seen it in my own career—the theatre has moved from China into the international space. Now it's in Canada itself. I think we're capable of finding the courage to be honest and to say that—

Ms. Lenore Zann: Sorry, but would you suggest that we stop trading with China entirely? What would happen if we did that?

Mr. David Mulroney: No, I wouldn't suggest that at all. I would say, though, that we need to look at—

The Chair: Thank you, Doctor. I apologize, but we have limited time for each person, as you have seen by now, I'm sure.

Now we're on to Mr. Albas for five minutes.

• (1745)

Mr. Dan Albas: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Mulroney, for your past service and your ongoing engagement. I've heard you on a few different radio programs, as well as on a podcast. It's helpful to have a plethora of different views here, because the Canada-China relationship has many different components, as China expresses itself differently under the current leadership.

My concern is that you have made public statements in regard to the government and its interactions with you. In a *Globe and Mail* piece on July 24, 2019, you expressed the following regarding a request that was made to you by a public servant:

"I am deeply concerned about the way foreign policy is being managed, and don't wish to be silenced or co-opted," Mr. Mulroney said. He added any effort to discourage Canadians with expertise in foreign relations from speaking freely is "fundamentally an undemocratic idea."

I haven't heard very much from the government on this, other than it saying that no elected official caused that call to happen, but I'd like you to maybe take a moment to address that.

Mr. David Mulroney: Sure. This is what happened. Last summer, I got a message from someone who was on the special China task force that had been set up to deal with the crisis. It's someone I had met with before, an old colleague. We exchanged ideas, and the message was, "Can we talk again?" I'm always happy to do that. I can tell them what I'm thinking and they can bounce ideas off me, because I spent five years running the branch that they're in. I am always happy to do that.

On the day of the call, I got a message saying, "Oh, Paul Thoppil is joining the call." It was a little odd, but it was okay. At the start, Paul was very effusive, saying that he was running the branch, that he knew that I had run it in the past, and how honoured he was. It was even a little over the top, but I got a sense that the conversation was about to change. It wasn't going to be an exchange of ideas.

He then said, "Before you speak to the media, you should feel free to check your ideas with us and find out what we think." I got a little mad just because of the way it was expressed, and I said, "Paul, what's the issue? Who asked you to call me?" He said that the issue was with comments I had made about the travel advisory and that the people in PMO were not happy. That's what happened.

I said, "Paul, I'm not going to do that. I'm happy to exchange ideas with you guys, but I'm not going to feel constrained to call you. I'm a private citizen now." I said that because I think I know what the objective was. It's to kind of intimidate you before you put pen to paper.

So that's what happened. I was disturbed by it, and I've remained concerned. Paul, in his testimony, said that he calls people to compare notes and exchange ideas. That wasn't the nature of our conversation.

Mr. Dan Albas: Have you had any similar conversations since?

Mr. David Mulroney: No.

Mr. Dan Albas: I'm glad to hear that.

In regard to vulnerability, you mentioned activities that are happening on Canadian campuses. Can you give an example, please?

Mr. David Mulroney: I mentioned a case at McMaster University in Hamilton, where a Chinese student group was galvanized to block a speech by a Uighur human rights activist. I think that group has since delisted or lost its status at McMaster.

At the University of Toronto's Scarborough campus, a very promising young student politician of Tibetan origin was harassed by student groups on campus. My concern there is both the harassment itself, which is unacceptable, and, if we look at how China operates and how something called the United Front operates, how activating students is part of that process.

We should be cracking down on that. We should be cracking down on the consulate, for example, as that's way beyond anything in its mandate, and our security services should be looking at this kind of interference and intimidation of people in Canada.

Mr. Dan Albas: Okay. You said "intimidation" and, specifically, that the interference was done by the Chinese government, by consulate staff. Is that what you're saying?

Mr. David Mulroney: No, I'm saying that it was done by students, but there were kind of references to the consulate, and this is something that consulates do. They run student groups. They have education people who look at Chinese students. I'd be looking at that as a possibility. I have no proof that this happened, but I wouldn't be surprised.

Mr. Dan Albas: Sure.

Now, there's a lot of investment in our universities in order to create new innovations and intellectual property, etc. I have heard from some universities that have shown concerns about partnering with particular enterprises due to national security concerns. Do you think this is an area—

• (1750)

The Chair: Mr. Albas, I'm terribly sorry. I wasn't watching the clock closely enough. You're just past the five-minute time. We have to move on.

Mr. Dan Albas: Could he have just 30 seconds to respond?

The Chair: The problem is that we're over your time. As you and all the members know, we have limits for each member. There may be an opportunity for him to respond as we go on, although there isn't much longer in the meeting.

I will go to Ms. Yip, as I'm required to do.

Ms. Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you for coming today.

Canada has expressed deep concern regarding the national security law in Hong Kong. Why did China act now to impose a national security law on Hong Kong, especially during this pandemic time? What would be the implications for China's domestic and foreign policy?

Mr. David Mulroney: I think you may have answered your own question, in the sense that China took this opportunity because the world is so preoccupied with the pandemic. However, there is some history here. In 2003, they tried to introduce something that was actually, if anything, maybe even a little milder than what we're seeing now. Protests in the streets discouraged the Hong Kong administration from proceeding with that. Many years have passed since then.

My own reading is that last year Beijing lost faith in the Lam administration in Hong Kong and decided they would simply interfere in the system. One thing to remember is that, as I talked about, China would attack Taiwan if they felt their interests were imperiled. As valuable as Hong Kong is to them, they will quite happily see Hong Kong's future blighted to make sure they maintain control over Hong Kong. This is precisely what we're seeing.

What's serious here is that we're seeing the Chinese legal system penetrate the barrier that had kept Hong Kong separate—the notion that people who are accused of national security violations, which are very broad and ambiguous, could in fact be renditioned to China for trial.

So Canada was wise, I think, to cancel extradition. It's really, as I say, the death knell for one country, two systems.

Ms. Jean Yip: You just mentioned that China felt that Hong Kong was failing, or they felt disappointed. What did you mean by that? Could you elaborate?

Mr. David Mulroney: They felt that the Hong Kong administration was losing control to democratic forces and was being out-thought by very creative and very courageous young democracy advocates, whose success showed in local district elections just a few months later. The flames of democracy were really beginning to be kindled by this. That, of course, is the last thing China wants. They're doing everything they can to extinguish that.

There was a lot of hope at the time, in 1997, that China would be willing to see developments in Hong Kong and the growing autonomy of Hong Kong institutions. They've completely abandoned that.

Ms. Jean Yip: What more can the government do to respond to this new security law?

Mr. David Mulroney: Unfortunately, I think it's very late in the day for us to be asking that question. We've had two decades of China's steady strangulation of Hong Kong in which we should have responded. Now, when the python has almost consumed its prey, it's very late for us. I think cancelling extradition is the right thing to do, and creating a fast track for immigration to Canada, but none of this saves Hong Kong.

The one area where I have hope, however, is that, as I've indicated, I'm tremendously impressed by the young people who were part of the protests. I've met some of them. They're creative. They're adaptive. They're thoughtful. Unfortunately, I think they're going to have to carry out a lot of that at some distance, because it's no longer safe for them to return to Hong Kong.

I also think we should be prepared to use Magnitsky legislation to block, for example, access to Canada for people who have clearly rolled back democratic rights in Hong Kong.

• (1755)

Ms. Jean Yip: Other than the Magnitsky sanctions, are there other steps that Canada could take?

Mr. David Mulroney: I think continuing to speak out about it is important. But as I said, the most important thing for us now is probably to take the lesson of what inaction does and apply it to the next campaign, which will be Taiwan.

Ms. Jean Yip: How concerned should we be about the well-being of the 300,000 Canadians in Hong Kong? What can we do for them?

Mr. David Mulroney: Their status has changed. They are now living in a place that is much more like a Chinese city. I think we need to....

I notice that we have upgraded our travel advisory and talked about the dangers of arbitrary arrest and detention. You have travel advisories, but you also have [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]. They have to start thinking about whether it's the safest place for them to be.

The reality is that if it were a real crisis, it would be hard for us to support 300,000 people in that crisis.

Ms. Jean Yip: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Yip.

We have time for Mr. Bergeron and Mr. Harris.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bergeron, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

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

I'll try to use them as wisely as possible.

Thank you, Mr. Mulroney, for your answer regarding the sanctions resulting from the Sergei Magnitsky law. You answered one of the questions that I wanted to ask.

Here are two quick questions. We know that the Chinese are using health arguments as a roundabout way to implement sanctions against countries, including Canada. Given that the safety of Chinese products is far inferior to the safety of Canadian products, could we use the same argument to respond immediately to Chinese sanctions?

We also know the importance of supply chains for Canadian industries in China, given the low production costs in that country. How would we start the transition process? We saw the need for this transition during the coronavirus crisis.

How can we implement a transition plan for the supply chains of Canadian companies?

[*English*]

Mr. David Mulroney: The first thing is that a lot of countries are having the same discussion, and the smartest and best way would be to work with allies.

The other thing is.... As I said, we've had a year and a half in which things have slowed down. The relationship is not where it was. I was surprised that we sent our Minister of Small Business, who is now our trade minister, on a trade mission and she went to Beijing. She should have gone on to other markets in the region to signal our interest in diversifying and in restoring economic partnerships that we've allowed to languish.

The main thing is that we have to get at it, start talking to our allies and start focusing on very practical measures we can take.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, regarding the safety issue and the health arguments—

The Chair: Mr. Bergeron, you have 20 seconds left.

[*English*]

Mr. Mulroney, would you like to briefly respond to that part?

Mr. David Mulroney: What was the part?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: It concerned the fact that the Chinese are using product safety and health arguments to apply sanctions.

[*English*]

Mr. David Mulroney: I may have missed something in the interpretation, but I think we've been reminded through this of China's great willingness to use health as a form of coercion in health measures. It should encourage us to diversify and find other partners, including in things like the development of vaccines.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

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

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

I'll ask you your opinion as a private citizen, Mr. Mulroney, given your distinction there, which is good. What kinds of things should Canada have done in relation to Hong Kong? My understanding was that there was hope the rest of China would become more like Hong Kong, etc. Did that change at a certain point, or was it inevitably lost after 1997? What should Canada have done? Is there anything it can do now, with the exception of the Magnitsky sanctions that you talked about, and should they be done in coordination with other nations?

• (1800)

Mr. David Mulroney: I was working on Hong Kong in 1997, and I can recall that both Britain and China asked countries like Canada to pledge their ongoing support for the arrangement, ongoing support for the autonomy of Hong Kong institutions. We said we would. Chris Patten thanked Canada, and then we lost the thread. We weren't as supportive.

I'm someone who has been a bit of a critic of our parliamentary exchange with China. I think we could have spent better time focusing on democratic development and the transition of the Hong Kong legislature to something that was truly more representative, but at every pass, I think, again, we were stymied by our concern that somehow this would upset China.

This is a lesson that we have to learn. The end result is that China has essentially consumed Hong Kong. It's another city of south China. The lesson is that it's never too late to push back, but it sure is a lot easier to push back through the process as early as possible.

Mr. Jack Harris: Where does that leave us now? If we're talking about sanctions being suggested, how do we do that? Do we work with other countries on that, or do we just decide what we think is appropriate and go right ahead?

Mr. David Mulroney: I think it's important to work with other countries, which will help to identify.... There was a picture recently of a police officer who was helping me. The thugs who beat up people on a subway train, these are the kinds of people you might begin to target.

I think we also need to look at programs to support the Hong Kong democracy activists in Canada, maybe with scholarships, maybe with funding. That's probably the best way of keeping this dream alive.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Mulroney.

Thank you, Mr. Harris.

Mr. Mulroney, thank you very much, not only for appearing today, but for your service to this country. I think we all appreciate that very much.

This concludes this portion of the meeting. We now have to go in camera to discuss some committee business. We need to pause, I understand, for approximately 15 minutes. I hope members won't go away for very long. Maybe come back before that, because we have to actually disconnect and then reconnect into the in camera meeting.

We'll see you shortly. Thank you again.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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