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Chair: Mr. Ali Ahsassi



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• (1115)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.)):** We are now back in public.

Mr. Chong, the floor is yours.

• (13115)

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

Mr. Chair, the motion in front of the committee is not one that I can support. In part (c), the motion reads that the committee “Supports the recognition of a viable and independent state of Palestine”. That part of the motion has no conditions on the recognition of a viable and independent state of Palestine and implies that the committee supports the immediate recognition of a Palestinian state.

This is a radical position in our view. It changes Canada's long-standing position that the recognition of a Palestinian state can only be achieved at the end of a negotiated agreement between the two parties, the Israelis and the Palestinians. This has been a long-standing position of the Government of Canada for many years. It has been the long-standing position of previous Liberal and Conservative governments. This motion would be a departure from that long-standing and cogent position.

The motion, as it's currently worded, would also isolate us from our closest and traditional allies. We would be isolated in the G7, which is arguably our most important multilateral membership. We would become the first national legislature of a G7 member to encourage the government to immediately and forthwith recognize a state of Palestine, or, at the very least, recognize a state of Palestine before a negotiated agreement had been concluded between the Israelis and the Palestinians. This would isolate us from the rest of the members in the G7.

It also would isolate us from our traditional and closest allies within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Canada would become the first major and founding member of NATO to take a position in its national legislature—and, arguably, it would encourage the Government of Canada to do the same—to recognize a state of Palestine before the two parties in this long-standing conflict had come to a negotiated settlement.

I want to make the argument why Canada, across previous Liberal and Conservative governments and with our closest allies within the G7 and NATO, has held to this position for many years.

The reason for this long-standing position is that people have rightfully concluded that the only way a long-standing and durable peace can be achieved is through a negotiated settlement between the two parties, the Israelis and the Palestinians. Anything unilateral, on the part of one party or the other, is inherently the opposite of a negotiated settlement between the two parties. That is the reason for this long-standing position of the Parliament of Canada, of this committee in its majority, of the Government of Canada and of our closest and traditional allies. That is the logic of why we have adhered to that position for so many years.

Since the events of October 7 last year, it seems farther away than ever that we could achieve a negotiated settlement. Nevertheless, we must keep that as our objective. To veer from that path, in my view, in the context of what's happened since October 7 of last year, would only award violence and authoritarianism as a path to achieving statehood.

I believe that what is going on in the Middle East is similar to what is going on in eastern Europe, similar to what is going on in the South China Sea and similar to what is going on in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa. These are clashes between democracies, however flawed, like Israel, Ukraine and Taiwan, and authoritarian states like the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China, North Korea and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

• (13120)

In that clash, there is no question on which side of the line Canada should stand. Out of some 190 member states of the United Nations, there are only two or three dozen democracies. The argument that 140 member states of the UN have already recognized a state of Palestine is not a cogent one, because the vast majority of those member states are not in any way, shape or form democratic states that believe in the trinity of rule of law, democratic institutions, and human rights and freedoms.

I would add this, Mr. Chair: The democracies that have recognized the state of Palestine are not long-standing democracies. Many of them were not on our side when blood was shed during much of the 20th century in defence of democracy and during the Second World War from 1939 to 1945. Forty thousand Canadians gave their lives in defence of democratic ideals, and many tens of thousands more were brutally wounded, either physically or mentally. The democracies that participated in that fight from 1939 to 1945—Canada included—fought for those democratic ideals. In the aftermath, they created the rules-based international order that has ensured peace and security relative to the previous centuries for the last almost 80 years. We must stand with our fellow democracies that fought this fight. That's why we need to adhere to this long-standing position. Canada is a long-standing western liberal democracy.

Mr. Chair, what I would like to do now is present an amendment to the motion. I believe the clerk has copies. I would like to read it into the record. We intend to speak about the amendment, and I hope members of the committee will support it.

Mr. Chair, I move that the motion be amended by adding to part (b) the following—

**The Chair:** Are there hard copies?

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Chair, while we're waiting, could I raise a question of privilege?

Would that be all right, Michael, while we wait for it to be shared?

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Sure.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** I would like to raise this with the committee and ask for your support, Mr. Chair.

Last week's meeting was an in camera meeting. Information from that meeting was leaked to the media. This goes against all the rules that everybody in this room understands very well. The fact that it was leaked is something that harms this committee's ability to do its work. A point of privilege was taken from us. The right for us to speak in camera without leaks was not granted to members of this committee.

I would ask that you, Mr. Chair, investigate how such a leak could have happened. I'd like you to report back to the committee, and I would like the committee to share that information with the House.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Would you like to speak about this question of privilege? I need to clarify this. I completely agree with you. It was regrettable. We all had the opportunity to see—

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** With all due respect, it was more than regrettable. It was illegal.

**The Chair:** If you will allow me, I'm not quite sure how you're proposing I investigate this. If you could elaborate on that, I'd be grateful.

• (13125)

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** To start with, you could have a conversation with those who were in the room. You could have a con-

versation with all the different parties and see whether there is any willingness to come clean among members of this committee. You could talk to the journalists who reported on this story. There are a number of things you should undertake.

Certainly, it is important that you make it extraordinarily clear to this committee that it is not just unfortunate. It is against the rules of this committee. It harms all of us—even those who leaked that information—when we can't trust that other parties will not go to the media. I would certainly like you to say something publicly to admonish the behaviour that has led to this leak.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I will take all of that under advisement.

Mr. Chong, you have the floor.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Mr. Chair, I support Madam McPherson's proposal.

What I would suggest, Mr. Chair, is that you direct the analysts to prepare a draft report for the committee that states which members of the public, including members of the media, had knowledge of our in camera proceedings and that the committee consider that draft report at some future meeting when the analysts have prepared it.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that.

As the clerk has explained, I agree that this is a question of privilege, that it's a very serious matter and that we should do everything possible to get to the bottom of this. As to how we want to proceed with this, we need a motion. We can't—

**Hon. Michael Chong:** I move—

**Hon. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.):** On a point of order, you can't make a motion on a response to a question of privilege; however, we could have a conversation about this. The chair could come up with a suggestion as opposed to doing a motion.

I'd like to have some consideration of this. I would like to respond to the question of privilege, and I'm on a point of order, so I'm in a difficult situation. I think the question of privilege is really well taken, but on the issue of that question of privilege, we have a range of options, including reporting this to the House and having the Speaker deal with it. This is a hugely serious issue.

I'm in total agreement with Ms. McPherson, because we can't do our work if we can't trust each other. There are a variety of ways, and there are precedents on this. Maybe in response to Ms. McPherson, it would be helpful if the chair asked the clerk, not the analyst, to prepare an outline of what our options are—Ms. McPherson's, and I believe all of ours—in the case of a breach of privilege.

**The Chair:** Absolutely. We'll certainly do so.

Go ahead, Mr. Bergeron.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ):** We're currently facing an extremely worrisome situation, and it must not go unaddressed. That said, since last week, I myself have been wondering what to do about it. Ms. McPherson was quite right to raise this question of privilege. I continue to ask myself: Are there any precedents for this type of situation where members of a committee breached or violated in camera proceedings to share information from the discussion with journalists?

Because, generally speaking, journalists refuse to disclose their sources—and one can understand why—what options do we have?

I welcome Mr. Oliphant's proposal to ask the clerk to present us with options so that we can put forward a response, because we can't simply act as if nothing happened. In my opinion, the situation is too serious for us to act like it didn't happen or there's no reason to talk about it. Something serious happened: This committee's in camera proceedings were violated. I think we need to do something, whatever it is, but having said that, I need options to be presented to us because, honestly, I've been asking myself since last week: What options do we have? We need to be informed on what the options are, but we need to do something. That goes without saying.

• (13130)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Absolutely. All of your points are very well taken. We will ask the clerk to prepare a menu of options, if you will, and then we will revisit this issue, if necessary, to make sure that we've accommodated everyone's perspective and we can get to the bottom of this.

Go ahead, Mr. Oliphant.

**Hon. Robert Oliphant:** I would get the clerk's advice on this, however, because I believe that for what happens on a question of privilege there is not a range of options for us. The chair rules on the question of privilege—

**The Chair:** I already have.

**Hon. Robert Oliphant:** —based on the advice of the clerk on your options. You present to us the options and your decision, and we take that.

It's not really, I believe, a committee choice to respond to a question of privilege. I think it's yours. I would think it's probably best to say, as the Speaker does in the House, "I will consult the clerk. I will get the best advice, and I will come back to the committee to respond." That's better than us trying to put forward a motion, but the clerk could help us with that.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Marie-Hélène Sauv ):** Do you want me to speak to this?

**The Chair:** Sure.

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

In terms of procedure, how this works at the committee level on a question or a matter of privilege is that it can be raised at the earliest opportunity in a meeting. The chair will rule whether or not the chair believes it relates to privilege or not. If the chair rules that it does relate to privilege, the committee has the option to move a

motion to report to the House on the breach of privilege in committee. The House can take further steps at that point.

That's one of the options. Otherwise, the committee could discuss the matter and choose not to report the matter to the House. Those are the options: whether to report the matter of privilege to the House or not.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Bergeron.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. St phane Bergeron:** Unless I'm mistaken, Madam Clerk, I believe I heard our chair say that he thought it was a question of privilege. Therefore, if I understand what you've just recommended to us, we can either report to the House what the chair has just said, or discuss it and decide amongst ourselves not to report the matter to the House.

Is that correct?

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

Thank you for your question.

Yes, the committee can report the situation to the House. The committee can pass a motion setting out the facts of what happened, not necessarily including allegations. It can report to the House and ask the House to take action that the committee can determine in the text of the motion.

In that case, it will be up to the House to decide if additional steps are to be taken. Otherwise, the members of the committee can discuss it amongst themselves and decide not to report to the House.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I would like to say, and hopefully we can close this for the time being, that yes, I did rule on it.

Secondly, as you will recall, I did turn to Ms. McPherson and asked what she thought needed to be done, because this was a very serious matter. Mr. Oliphant actually said that we should ask the clerk to provide us with some options. Mr. Oliphant now says, no, that's not the way to go, so if everyone could remember their own remarks....

Those were your specific remarks, Mr. Oliphant. You said to go to the clerk and canvass all of the options that are available. Now you're saying, no, that's not the way to deal with it.

If everyone can just remember that this is a very serious issue. I would much rather report back to the members to ensure that everyone does have full confidence that we've taken it as seriously as we should. That is what I will do before advising the Speaker, but as was pointed out, we will wait for the clerk to set out what all of those options are to the extent possible, and then we'll take it from there.

We will now go back to—

**Hon. Robert Oliphant:** I have a point of order.

Just to clarify what I said or tried to say. Maybe I misspoke. I believe the chair should get all of the options from the clerk. That is the chair's prerogative. You should then report back to us your understanding of it, because I think it's a good idea to get all of the precedents, all of those things, and then come back to us. It's hard to do it in this meeting, at this time, and the clerk can help you on that.

• (13135)

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

I'm now being advised by the clerk that the only option.... This is very different from what Ms. McPherson originally had in mind. She was of the opinion that I can get to the bottom of this, that I should contact the journalist, but that is not possible. I'm advised that the only option is for me to inform the Speaker.

Go ahead, Ms. McPherson.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Then I would request that you do so if that's the only option we have on the table.

**The Chair:** That's fair enough. I will certainly do so.

**The Clerk:** That's done by way of a motion of the committee.

**The Chair:** We will draft something and then bring it back for the approval of the members.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** I'm happy to move a motion right now.

**The Chair:** Just to make sure—because I'm sure there are several different options—we'll definitely look into this and put it at the top of our priorities for the next meeting.

Mr. Chong.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Continuing a debate on the motion in front of the committee with regard to the State of Israel and the Palestinian people, I propose the following amendment. I believe, Mr. Chair, that all members of the committee should now have that amendment.

**Hon. Omar Alghabra (Mississauga Centre, Lib.):** They got an email.

**The Chair:** Is everyone satisfied? Do they have access to their emails?

**Hon. Michael Chong:** I move that part (b) be amended by adding the following words “and defend itself”; that part (c) be amended by adding the following words “which is the result of a negotiated agreement between Israelis and Palestinians”; and that part (d) be amended by replacing the numeral “6” with the numeral “4”, and that the following words be struck: “the recognition of the State of Palestine within”.

Mr. Chair, that is my amendment. I'll just briefly speak to it before allowing other members to voice their views on it. I would amend the motion so that the motion adheres to the long-standing position of governments of various stripes and the long-standing position of—

**Hon. Robert Oliphant:** I have a point of order.

I'm sorry, Michael. We have two different written versions of the amendment. I have one that has a change to part (b) here with red

words added to it, and I have one without changes to part (b). I have two different written versions, and I really need clarity on how we got two versions and which version we're supposed to be looking at.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** It's the version that I read into the record, Mr. Chair.

**Hon. Robert Oliphant:** I'm sorry. I was waiting, on my point of order, for the written version because it was going quickly in the verbal version, so now I'm confused.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Mr. Chair, it's the version—

**The Chair:** We ask that you read it out one more time just so there's no confusion.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** I agree, Mr. Chair. It's the version I read into the record, for Mr. Oliphant's clarification, and I will reread the amendment.

I move that part (b) be amended by adding the words “and defend itself”; that part (c) be amended by adding the words “which is the result of a negotiated agreement between Israelis and Palestinians”; and that part (d) be amended by replacing the number “6” with the number “4”, and by striking the words “the recognition of the State of Palestine within”.

Mr. Chair, that is the amendment I move. I'll briefly speak to it.

I'm moving this amendment because it would amend the motion to ensure that the committee adheres in parts (a), (b) and (c) to the long-standing position of the two major parties in the House of Commons, which also happens to be the long-standing position of the Government of Canada through previous Conservative and Liberal governments.

I think it would ensure coherence in our position but also indicate to the Government of Canada a coherent path forward for the events taking place in the Middle East. That coherence rests on one fundamental assumption that I believe is the case: that there can be no lasting and durable peace in the Middle East without a negotiated agreement, a negotiated settlement, between the two parties to this conflict, the Israelis and the Palestinians, and that anything unilateral on the part of one party or the other takes us further away from that lasting and durable peace and from putting pressure on both parties to sit down at the table to negotiate, compromise and come to a two-party agreement.

That is the reason, Mr. Chair, for our amendment to the motion. Thank you.

• (13140)

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

We're now discussing the amendment.

We go next to Mr. Aboultaif.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC):** Thank you, Chair.

I was going to speak to the question of privilege over the leak that happened to the media. We received emails from the media. They seemed to know every single detail about what went on in the meeting. That's not acceptable. That's definitely illegal, and I think it's a very serious issue.

As for the rest of the time, Mr. Chong has spoken, and that will be the end of my remarks.

Thank you.

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

The next speaker up is Mr. Oliphant.

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

I will speak to the amendment, but since I haven't had a chance to speak to the motion, I want to refer to both of them throughout my conversation. I won't take too long. I think any conversation on this subject will be difficult. There are G7 parliaments and parliaments around the world discussing this conversation. I think we should, as parliamentarians, have a robust conversation about the issues in the Middle East at this time.

I always begin this conversation by talking about the heinous attack that happened on October 7. It was the largest attack on Israel, the Israeli people and, really, the Jewish population of the world by the terrorist organization Hamas. We will be approaching the first anniversary of that very soon. It has to be emblazoned in our minds and our memories as something that continues, as hostages still have not been released and as that war continues.

At the very same time, we are cognizant of the huge civilian casualties that have happened in Gaza as well as, frankly, in the West Bank in recent weeks. The large toll is the more than 40,000 people in Gaza who have lost their lives, including some 17,000 children. We recognize that Canada is one of the leading nations in calling for a ceasefire. We took a little time on that, I will say, as many countries did, because we also recognize Israel's right to defend itself from a terrorist attack.

However, the Prime Minister, as the head of the government, has been very clear that there needs to be a negotiated ceasefire, that hostages need to be returned, that both sides need to lay down their arms and that it should happen immediately. A variety of peace proposals have happened. Canada continues to work with a number of partners on those proposals, but we are extremely concerned about the continued loss of civilian lives.

We do put a responsibility on Hamas as the instigator of this conflict. We also put a responsibility on Israel to follow the rule of law with respect to war. We have also been very clear about that. These are complex, complicated and interwoven issues. The government has been attempting to provide assistance in world fora on this, and we'll continue to do that.

While we are calling for an immediate ceasefire, the laying down of arms by both parties, the release of hostages by Hamas and the delivery of humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza, we also have in our sights a two-state solution. That is firmly embedded in the government's policy. I fear that it is waning in some people's minds and that the events of October 7 have actually derailed other people's commitment to a two-state solution. Canada remains firmly in

favour of a two-state solution and in taking steps to ensure a two-state solution.

If we are to have a two-state solution, Mr. Chair, we need two states. That is very clear. Canada is a friend and ally of the State of Israel. We've been a friend to the Palestinian people. However, our Prime Minister has been very clear that the recognition of the state of Palestine has to be done "at the right time, not necessarily as the last step along the path." Let me say that again. The Government of Canada is prepared to recognize the state of Palestine "at the right time, not necessarily as the last step along the path."

The Prime Minister also said:

...we urgently need to build a credible path toward lasting peace. We oppose efforts by the Netanyahu government to reject a two-state solution. At the same time, Hamas, a terrorist group, currently controls areas in Gaza and has not laid down its arms or released its hostages.

● (13145)

That is the reality of the situation.

The reason we will continue to support the motion that was made is that we believe the best place to give government advice on those conditions for the right time for the recognition of the state of Palestine is in this committee. This is a forum where we can bring experts, academics, international NGOs and Canadians from a variety of opinions and backgrounds to find a way to advise the government as parliamentarians as to the conditions and the timing that will bring a lasting peace, a peace with justice.

This is something many of us have been committed to for decades. There is a huge possibility that this can happen in the very near future. There's also a chance it could be completely derailed for generations, so I think it's incumbent upon this committee to very seriously look at this issue to recognize that we're not all of the same opinion on this committee. There are a variety of opinions. There's probably a spectrum. In our House of Commons, we're not all of the same opinion. In the country as a whole, we're not all of the same opinion. What better place than Parliament and, most specifically, this committee, to have that discussion on the recognition of the state of Palestine?

It goes without saying that we hold in our hearts and in our minds the people of Israel who have, for generations, for millennia, faced hatred, anti-Semitism and horrendous loss of life. Israel is their homeland, safe haven and a place that we need to defend and protect. There's no question about it, but people take up space. What I learned on my very first trip to Israel was that people take up space. We have two peoples living on a small piece of land, and we need to find a way for the two of them to not just coexist but thrive together. The safety and security of Israel is dependent upon the safety and security of Palestine, and they go hand in hand. That means we believe in the two-state solution. That means you need two states to do it.

The question for this committee, which we believe is well expressed in the motion, is to let us study that without presupposing. We read the motion differently, I understand that. I've heard the opposition. We read the motion differently. We are not presupposing the timing of the recognition, but we are presupposing the recognition, because we have presupposed the two-state solution. That's how we're reading it. We are committed to that. We want to work with this committee.

It will be an uncomfortable set of hearings. We'll have people bringing their pain, bringing their differences and bringing their anxieties, their worries and their fears on both sides or maybe more than two sides. That is what we need to do.

I want to close by saying that we are on the verge of this becoming a regional conflict, so we have to find a way to de-escalate. I speak particularly about the Israel-Lebanon border, south Lebanon and attacks that are taking place both in Israel from Hezbollah, a terrorist organization, and in Lebanon, which have killed civilians. That has to stop.

We also recognize the role of Iran in this. We recognize that the Arab states are trying to find a way to broker peace. The United States is trying to do that. Canada is playing its role. The Palestinian Authority is attempting to play its role. We will continue to do that.

I will close by saying that this is the place for us to have this discussion, and it shouldn't wait. That's why we will be supporting the motion and continuing to defend it.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (13150)

**The Chair:** Thank you, but you didn't really speak to the amendment.

**Hon. Robert Oliphant:** We will be supporting the motion as it was presented, which then is tacitly that we don't want to entertain the amendment, because we will be getting into issues that we think should be debated in the study.

There are issues that are there around the negotiated settlement and all of those things. Of course, we believe in Israel and its statehood, so we're not going to go there. We believe that the motion can stand to get us into the study and put us into a difficult study.

I'm not saying that it's going to be easy. We'll disagree. We'll have disagreements on our own side. You'll have disagreements on other sides. I believe that, but the world needs the Canadian Parliament to advise the Canadian government on the timing and conditions that we think will be best suited for lasting and just peace.

Thank you.

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

Can I propose that we suspend for a couple of minutes to allow everyone to read this amendment and to have any chats that they want to have?

**An hon. member:** No.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Go ahead, Ms. McPherson.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

There are so many things I want to mention.

To start with, I just want to say that I think, as the foreign affairs committee of the Government of Canada, the Parliament of Canada, that it is very important that we acknowledge what happened in Lebanon yesterday. It was the most deadly day for the Lebanese people since 2006. Over 1,000 people were injured. Many civilians, including multiple children, lost their lives yesterday. I have heard from Lebanese Canadians from coast to coast who are heartbroken, who are afraid and who are terrified for their loved ones and their family members, and I want to acknowledge that the fear is real.

I also agree with my colleagues. What happened on October 7 was horrific. I am a mother. My children are the same age as those children who went to a music festival. That's something that everyone should have the opportunity to do, and the terrorist attack that took place on October 7 is appalling. I have been very clear from the very beginning how horrific that was, how we grieve with all of those who lost a loved one and how we continue to grieve for those who are waiting for their loved ones to come home.

I have to tell you that, right now, what is being put forward is unsupported. We listen to the government say that, when the time is right, we will recognize Palestine. I'm here to tell you the time is right. The time has been right for a very long time. We have seen, for the last 11 months, the deaths of children, the targeting of civilians, the breaking of international and humanitarian laws, the attacks on media and the attacks on humanitarian workers. It's unconscionable that there is a person in our Parliament who isn't saying, right now, that this is the time; this is the right time. What has happened over the last 11 months has not made it one iota safer for anyone in Palestine or in Israel. It's not one iota safer. It has made it more dangerous, more difficult and more of a struggle for all of the people living in the region.

Mr. Chong talked about the fact that we shouldn't acknowledge the state of Palestine because the G7 has not done that. I would like to point out that Canada used to have bravery. We used to have the bravery to stand aside from whatever position the United States was taking. I think about Brian Mulroney on South Africa. I think about other times when we were the architects of the international justice system, the International Criminal Court, and now, the government's not sure they're going to support them. Come on.



I'm going to support this motion as it was written by the Liberals, not because I think it is a great motion. I'm going to support it because I think people in this room need to hear from Palestinians, and I think there are people in this room who have never listened to the voices of Palestinians. I will support this motion, but be very clear that not a single one of these things requires a study. The minister could do this today. The minister could sanction Netanyahu, Ben Gvir and Smotrich today. The minister could stop arms loopholes going through the United States today, and the minister could recognize the state of Palestine today.

We do not need a study. We do not need to be doing this work. This could happen today.

Thank you.

● (13155)

**The Chair:** Mr. Bergeron.

[*Translation*]

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

As you can see, this is a heated debate and it will certainly raise differences of opinion, but we need to have this debate.

As the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, we should have addressed what's currently happening in the Middle East several months ago. We chose not to, other than briefings from Global Affairs Canada staff. Was that a head-long rush to steer clear of uncomfortable discussions? Be that as it may, as the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, turning a blind eye to what was going on in the Middle East certainly wasn't the responsible thing to do. From the moment Hamas savagely attacked Israel to Israel's response in Gaza, and now in Lebanon, an independent country that's being attacked by a neighbour, the response has violated international law.

Item by item, I'm going to repeat the points raised in the amended motion proposed by Mr. Chong and say that I'm going to have to vote against it. It's not because I don't think there's anything worthwhile in this motion, but because what it proposes overall seems unacceptable to me. For example, point b. talks about supporting Israel's right to defend itself. Within minutes of the savage Hamas attack in Israel, we denounced the attack and recognized Israel's right to defend itself. Of course, like most members of the international community, we added that it had to be done in adherence with international humanitarian law and so on, and yet so far Israel has shown no respect for international humanitarian law in the way it has defended itself against Hamas. So Israel's right to defend itself is not an issue. We recognized that right from the get-go. We could add what we added at the time, that is to say in adherence with international humanitarian law. We could also add that we recognize the right to defend oneself against aggression and resist oppression and occupation.

Mr. Chong invoked the fact that, during the Second World War, apparently, the countries that supported recognizing the Palestinian state were not on the same side as Canada. I find that startling because, although we can say that Spain wasn't on Canada's side, how can we say the same thing about Norway, which was occupied by the Nazis during the Second World War? How could we say such a thing? Slovenia was occupied by Germany during the Second

World War. How could we say Slovenia wasn't on our side? During the Second World War, Canada recognized the right to defend oneself against aggression and resist oppression and occupation. Why has Canada remained silent for so many years about the aggression, occupation and oppression Palestinians have been experiencing since 1967? It's an illegal occupation. We could have said that in the motion. The settlements in the occupied territory are illegal. We could have said that in the motion. We chose not to mention those illegalities.

Now, point c. talks about recognizing the Palestinian state following negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The United Nations did not want there to be just one state in the former British protectorate of Palestine, but two. Today, there is only one. Several decades later, there is still only one of the two states the international community wants. The other is recognized by much of the international community, but many industrialized nations still refuse to recognize the Palestinian state.

● (13200)

Most countries that used to be called third world countries or developing nations, whatever you want to call them, recognize the state of Palestine. There are more and more industrialized nations doing it or looking at doing it. Spain did it recently, as did Norway and even Ireland. I hope Mr. Chong is not suggesting that Ireland was on the other side during World War II. Slovenia has done it, and Belgium is considering it. What is Canada waiting for?

As Ms. McPherson said, in the past, Canada was bold and brave. Canada stood alone at the front in its fight against apartheid in South Africa. A Conservative government did that. Should we be any less bold and brave today because that's always been the policy? Not recognizing the Palestinian state was a bad policy, because from the outset, the international community always wanted the Palestinian state to be recognized.

I hear the argument that, if we were to recognize the Palestinian state, we would be saying we believe in Hamas and the absolutely brutal acts perpetrated on October 7. Yes, they were brutal acts, but we're quick to forget that the State of Israel itself was born of terrorist acts against Great Britain. We may want to forget the fact that Jewish organizations in Palestine, not the population itself, carried out terrorist acts against Great Britain so that the State of Israel would be created.

Don't get me wrong: I make no apologies for terrorism, not by any stretch of the imagination. I think that these are despicable, unspeakable and unacceptable acts, that any violence against civilians is completely unacceptable and intolerable. This applies to terrorist organizations, but it applies to countries that deliberately engage in vicious attacks on civilian populations as well. We've seen it in Gaza and the West Bank, and now we're seeing it in Lebanon. Where does it all end?

If it were true that keeping the Palestinian state from being recognized would eventually lead to fruitful negotiations that allow the state of Palestine to be recognized and, ultimately, lead to the conclusion of a peace agreement that benefits both Israelis and Palestinians, we would know it. It would already be done. It doesn't work, because there's an imbalance of power: One internationally recognized state has the backing of powerful nations around the world, and the other has been under illegal occupation since 1967. Slowly but surely, the country under occupation is being eaten up.

Will this situation continue for decades to come, or will we decide to be bold and brave to force all the parties to sit at the table and finally agree to lasting peace that will benefit both the Israelis and the Palestinians? These two peoples can't possibly live in a state of permanent war. That is what they're doing, since the original United Nations resolution, which was supposed to create two states, has not been respected and implemented. There are many historical reasons for that, but let's get back to the spirit of having two states.

• (13205)

As Mr. Oliphant mentioned—and I agree with him—for there to be a two-state solution, there have to be two states. It has to be two states at the negotiating table, not one state and a country under occupation. In the current situation, there is a state and a country under occupation, a country whose territory is being eaten up by the occupying power.

During World War II, Canada would have been on the front lines denouncing a situation like this and encouraging people to fight this oppression, this occupation. What happened to Canada's boldness, its tradition of bravery that Mr. Chong referred to when he talked about World War II? We hope to get it back. As Ms. McPherson said, we don't need a study from this committee for the Minister of Foreign Affairs to do that immediately.

If I may say so, I fear that a study would help sidestep the issue so that the minister doesn't have to do it. Also, the original motion suggested that we devote “no less than six meetings” to it.

You're aware of the tense atmosphere in our Parliament at the moment. There's a constant threat of non-confidence motions from the official opposition. The government is hanging on by a thread, and we think we can hold at least six meetings to debate whether or not to recognize the Palestinian state?

I asked last week that the number of meetings be reduced to four at the most. However, the amended motion before us proposes “no less than four meetings”. I think it has to be “no more than four meetings”, otherwise it will never happen. But it has to happen. It's an absolute necessity.

Under the circumstances, Mr. Chair, I'm sad to say that I'm going to have to vote against this amended motion and support the government's original motion, even if I don't like it, because to me it seems to be all about saving the minister's skin, plain and simple. It's to save her from having to speak out publicly, to buy her some time. It will dodge the issue and kick the can down the road, and keep from having to make a decision while the committee reflects on the issue.

We should be able to do this today, but we are choosing not to by moving this motion. I don't like the way the government is proceeding right now, but it's better than nothing. I will therefore be supporting the government's original motion.

Thank you.

• (13210)

[English]

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

We now go to MP Zuberi.

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.):** I'd like to cede my time. I'll contribute after we vote on this amendment.

I'd like for us to vote on the amendment.

**The Chair:** We'll go to Mr. Aboultaif.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** I'll give my time to Mr. Chong.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Briefly, we support a two-state solution. However, we strongly believe, based on logic, that this two-state solution can only be arrived at as a result of negotiation between the two parties—the Israelis and the Palestinians—who must come to an agreement that has popular support and legitimacy among Israelis and Palestinians.

The Prime Minister has indicated, as the parliamentary secretary said, that his government would consider recognizing a Palestinian state at the right time but not necessarily at the last step along the path. Mr. Chair, the risk in that statement is that the government is considering the recognition of a Palestinian state sooner rather than later. The committee, by adopting the motion as it was originally worded, risks encouraging the Government of Canada to do the same. The reason we are opposed to this, as I said before, is that a two-state solution cannot only be the result of a declaration of Palestinian statehood. Rather, it's the result of an agreement negotiated between the two parties.

A democracy cannot come into existence simply because of a declaration or the conduct of a single election. A democracy is the result not only of an election or the adoption of a constitutional order but also of democratic institutions and democratic checks and balances on power that are ongoing—ones that are daily and that have popular support and legitimacy. That is how democracies come about. It's a long, arduous process, as we see in history. It's the same thing with achieving statehood. It cannot simply be the result of a declaration. It must come about as a result of a difficult process of negotiation between the two parties involved in a conflict.

That is the reason, Mr. Chair, why I presented this amendment and why we cannot support the main motion if it is not amended.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Next we will go to MP McPherson.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** I'll be very quick, Mr. Chair.

The only thing I will follow up on from Mr. Chong's comments is that the state of Palestine exists. It already exists. What we are talking about here is the recognition from the Canadian government of that state. For him to bring forward the argument that there needs to be an agreement by Israel for Palestine to exist is actually factually incorrect. In fact, when you have a partner like Israel right now saying that they will not negotiate, that can hardly be a rationale for us to move forward as a country.

Thank you.

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

I have no one else on the speaking list. Would we like to put this to a vote?

**Some hon. members:** Yes.

**The Chair:** I should underscore that this is on the amendment.

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** We will now go back to the original motion.

Mr. Hoback.

• (13215)

**Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC):** On a point of order, Chair, the original motion talked about six meetings, and I believe Mr. Bergeron made an amendment to change it to four meetings. Where does that fit into the process? We never debated or passed that.

**The Chair:** It is currently at six, unless Mr. Bergeron would like to move a motion on that.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** I think we agreed last week on a friendly amendment that there would be no more than four meetings. I just want to make sure that's what everybody understood.

[*English*]

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** Mr. Chair, as the mover of the motion, I accept this as a friendly amendment, that it be no less than four meetings.

**An hon. member:** He's saying no more than four.

**An hon. member:** It's a maximum of four.

**Hon. Omar Alhabra:** Okay. Well, I was hoping that it would be no less than four. Maybe that would be the compromise. Let's aim for four, but if the committee agrees that we need more, then we can discuss it.

I think no less than four is a good compromise, Mr. Bergeron.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** I was proposing that there be no more than four meetings.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Did you want to leave it or did you want to introduce an amendment?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** If this doesn't become a friendly amendment, I will move that the motion be formally amended so that the wording is "no more than four meetings".

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Do we want a recorded vote?

**An hon. member:** No.

(Amendment agreed to on division [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** We will now go back to the original motion as amended.

Mr. Zuberi.

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am very happy and pleased that we are having this discussion in the open. This is an important discussion around something that has been on Canadians' minds for the last several months, if not years.

This foreign affairs committee is tasked with studying matters that relate to what is happening on the global stage. Right now, what's happening in the Middle East is top of mind for not only Canadians but people across the globe. As so many of my colleagues from all parties have mentioned, we mourn the loss of all life that has happened since October, regardless of one's faith or ethnicity or one's background within the Middle East. We mourn the loss of life of every innocent person. Each and every life that has been taken unjustly and wrongly in this conflict is a tragedy, and that's why this committee must be seized by this issue.

I think of Vivian Silver, who dedicated her life to building peace for everyone in the region. She was Israeli, but she was tragically killed on October 7. She dedicated her life to building a better future for everyone within the region, and I think that is the spirit with which we need to approach this issue, this study, the topic of and the conversation about the Middle East.

In my riding, I speak with people who are connected to the region in multiple ways, but one thing that always rings true is that everyone is feeling the same emotions, including sadness, guilt and pain. There are so many different emotions people are feeling. The thing is that everyone is feeling the same thing, and it's important for us to recognize that. It allows us to also firmly remind ourselves that, while we're feeling this pain and seeing this tragedy and nightmare unfold, each and every one of us at this committee has to be committed to peace. We have to be committed to building a better future for everyone within the region, regardless of faith or ethnicity. That should be top of mind as we enter this conversation and this vote, top of mind as we hopefully study this in the future, and top of mind in each and every interaction we have with Canadians, with each other and with the subject matter.

It's important to remind ourselves about that, because oftentimes we get caught up in our silos, and our silos are not going to help us build true peace in the Middle East. Our silos will maintain the status quo.

The study in this motion that we have in front of us now talks about the Middle East globally. It is an opportunity for us at this committee to look at how we can build true peace in the region. It is a motion that recognizes Canada's position—the common position we have across this table, no matter what side we're sitting on—of a two-state solution. It is a solution that, when realized, will be in everyone's best interest, regardless of which border one lives across and regardless of what ethnicity somebody happened to be born with or had the good fortune to be born with. This is, I would suggest, a way in which we could approach this.

I plead with you, committee members. While some of you may not feel this motion is perfect, I ask you to support it and also to raise the points that you want to raise and challenge the elements you want to challenge. That's the work we do in Parliament and those are the debates we have in Parliament. This is about the job that we do and what we signed up for when we put up posters and when we were elected. Our job is to debate, to discuss and to make things manifest.

• (13220)

We will not all see the same issue in the same way, eye to eye. However, with respect for each other and while we might differ, this endeavour, this process, will allow us to come to something better, something better than each and every one of us around the table could come up with.

I'll conclude with the reminder that we approach this with this idea in mind: We're here to bring true peace to the region in our small interactions, be it in our local ridings, in Ottawa at the capital, in international fora or wherever we are. That's what we, as elected officials, as leaders, as teachers, should be doing.

I look forward to our debating and discussing this, questioning the witnesses who will come forth and helping move the world in a better direction.

Thank you, Mr. Chair and members, for indulging me.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We next go to MP Alghabra.

**Hon. Omar Alghabra:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Colleagues, this is an important discussion, and there isn't a more fitting place to have this discussion than at this committee.

As I have said before, there seems to be a unanimous consensus that we support a two-state solution. Implicit in that definition is a recognition for a Palestinian state, yet the idea and the dream of a Palestinian state in today's moment of time seems to be slipping away. We are hearing from radical voices on both sides that are moving away from a two-state solution. They are publicly speaking out against a two-state solution, and I think that's dangerous.

What is also risky is the notion that we are in an environment where there's a zero-sum outcome. If one talks about Israel's right to exist, some people will see it as an erasure of a Palestinian state,

or if somebody's talking about the recognition of a Palestinian state, it's a detriment to the State of Israel. We need to find ourselves out of that discussion. We need peace-loving and rational voices to put an end to this zero-sum outcome. In fact, we should talk about how, if we move in that direction, everyone will be in a better position to live in peace, dignity and prosperity.

I encourage anybody who supports a two-state solution to support this motion. This motion does not presuppose the outcome of what a Palestinian state would look like. It does not reward extremists, as some of my colleagues have been saying. Extremists do not support the wording of this motion. We need rational people to stand by their words when they say they support a two-state solution and engage in this study.

As my colleague said, we have different ideas of what that means. That's fine. Again, that's what I expect from an intelligent debate. That's what I expect from a rational conversation. However, to claim that one supports a two-state solution but that the recognition of a two-state solution undermines peace, that is contradictory and does not make any sense to me.

By the way, almost all states that have been recognized in modern history have not been asked to go through the same conditions that we're asking the Palestinian state to go through. This motion marginalizes voices like Hamas, because Hamas is not asking for a two-state solution. This marginalizes extremist voices within Israel, because those extremist voices are not asking for a two-state solution.

This motion offers hope to peace-loving people—Palestinian people, Israeli people, Canadians—who want to see leadership by their representatives saying they're going to do everything they can to advance the cause of peace and to advance a real, tangible, viable two-state solution. We should hear from witnesses who can provide us with input, and at the end of it, we'll provide advice to government.

I'm sorry. I think people who oppose this motion must ask themselves whether they are against a two-state solution. This motion talks about a two-state solution. That is the centrepiece of this motion. We need to ensure that Canada has a voice to advance that against the extremist voices who are pushing us away from peace and a two-state solution in which Israelis and Palestinians live side-by-side in peace and harmony.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (13225)

**The Chair:** Thank you, MP Alghabra.

We next go to MP Chatel.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Sophie Chatel:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Many people are obviously suffering in the Middle East right now, and it's also being felt in our communities. We have a duty to be the voice of our communities and the people we represent. We are the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, and our role is to move issues forward to shed light on the situation and perhaps pave the way for sustainable peace solutions.

Until we understand that peace in the Middle East will require a solution that brings together two states living side by side with mutual respect and respect for human rights, there will be no lasting peace in the Middle East. If there is no lasting peace in the Middle East, there will be no lasting peace in the world. That's why it's important. Canada is not in a bubble. Obviously, we see how the suffering of the Israelis and the Palestinians is affecting us here every day.

The committee not only has an opportunity to promote dialogue and put forward solutions to achieve lasting peace; it also has a responsibility. We need to ask ourselves how Canada can lead the way and offer solutions. In fact, the committee will be meeting and welcoming witnesses to try to see how Canada can be an ally to the international community in promoting sustainable peace in the Middle East and around the world. Canada has played a key role in that respect in several global conflicts. I don't see why it would be any different today. We have a credible voice, a voice that is central to our identity as Canadians, and we need to promote peace in the world.

This is not only a great opportunity to adopt the motion introduced by my colleague Mr. Alghabra. It's also a committee responsibility. I look forward to seeing if there's a light at the end of this long, dark tunnel.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (13230)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, MP Chatel.

We next go to MP Chong and then to MP Fry.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to reiterate that we are strongly opposed to this motion. Conservatives believe that the only way to a durable and lasting peace is the creation of a two-state solution that is the result of negotiations and the arrival at an agreement between the two parties involved in this long-standing conflict. The risk with the committee adopting the motion in front of us is that it risks encouraging the Government of Canada to do the same and to recognize the Palestinian state sooner rather than later.

This would hurt Canada's interests, make no mistake about it. Canada is part of the G7. We are a founding member of NATO. We are struggling in these memberships. It's clear, over the last several years, that we are not taken seriously in G7 capitals and not taken seriously at NATO headquarters in Brussels. We have very few hard assets in the region. We once had many assets in the region.

We once were able to deploy missions to the Suez, major missions to Cyprus and major missions to the Golan Heights. We no longer have the capacity to do that. We are stretched beyond thin with our current deployments. As a result, we have very few hard assets in the region.

Other democracies are doing the heavy lifting in the region, whether it's patrolling the gulf, whether it's patrolling other parts of the Middle East or whether it's in the Mediterranean. Other democracies have hard assets in the region and are doing the heavy lifting. They are not making these declaratory recognitions of Palestinian statehood. By this committee encouraging the government to do the same, to recognize, sooner rather than later, Palestinian statehood, we risk damaging Canada's interests and further diminishing our presence on the world stage.

For that reason, we cannot support it. Canada needs to be hard-nosed about its interests. Too often we are not. As a result, Canadians have suffered. We strongly oppose this motion. We think it's illogical. It's also in a context where it would reward violence and illegal activity on behalf of non-state actors to achieve statehood. We think that sends the wrong message about the rules-based international order.

For those reasons and others that I've outlined during this committee meeting, Mr. Chair, I will be voting against the motion.

• (13235)

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

Now we go to Dr. Fry.

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

I heard some very eloquent speeches this morning—I refer to Mr. McPherson, Mr. Bergeron and Mr. Alghabra. We talked a lot about history around this table as we debated the motion.

I recall that, historically, and I know that, when I was a minister in this government—and for those of you around the table who say you are Conservatives, I recall Prime Minister Brian Mulroney—Canada was a player on the world stage, and it was not because we had a lot of arms and massive armies. It was not because of anything other than the power of our convictions, our sense of fairness and our ability to find answers to complex solutions and to go about making that happen. When Brian Mulroney helped to create the end of apartheid in South Africa, he went against the G7 nations, the United Kingdom and so many people. However, he spoke out because Canada, whether it be under a Progressive Conservative government or a Liberal government, had always been recognized for its ability to speak truth, to find solutions and to get to peace.

This is our seminal role in the world: to be a peaceful and peace-loving nation, a nation that seeks to find peace. You cannot find peace unless you have a two-state solution. There can be no permanent path to peace other than that. Everyone around the table agrees with this.

I want to talk about an old aphorism: Evil exists where good people do nothing. I substitute the word “people” for “men” in this gender-sensitive age. One has to move forward. We heard a lot of talk about democracies here. Canada is a democracy—a true democracy. A democracy includes the voice of civil society. If we're going to ask for a study to occur, we are engaging civil society in Canada by asking their opinions and by debating an issue that very few people even understand—the historical background for it, the problems and the course that it can lead to—so I think this is a very democratic thing to do. This is what standing committees are supposed to do.

People say, “If the Government of Canada wants to do it, they can go ahead and do it.” I think that is very true, but at the same time, while this is happening and everyone is sitting on their hands, more and more civilians are being killed, children especially, in Gaza. We stand up and scream when this happens in Russia, and we stand up and shout loudly about what's going on with Ukrainians, but we have to believe that all human beings are equal. All human beings, all children, all families can hurt in the same way, so we either believe in the rule of law that says... There's a law around conflicts with regard to civilians: We either agree with that or we don't. We do agree, and we've always agreed and stood for that.

This is saying that we're really trying to find out how to get to that two-state solution that would lead to lasting peace. We're doing it in the face of the fact that... We just heard Norway last night—and I must tell you, I watched the Prime Minister of Norway speak, and I was moved. He talked about principles, about fairness, about standing up and speaking out. This is what Canada is renowned for—not for having the largest number of forces in NATO nor the biggest number of armies but to always... I remember when North Korea was having its problems. Who did they send? They sent a Canadian diplomat. We've seen it in Northern Ireland. Who did they send? They sent a Canadian general. We've always been out there whenever we're looking for solutions to conflict. This is our history, our legacy and who we are as Canadians.

We are now going to the people and to civil society writ large, whether they be academics, experts or whoever, and saying, “Look, we all know this is what we say we agree with. Everyone around this table agrees with a two-state solution, so now we want to know”.... However, there's a problem getting there. Mr. Netanyahu has said that he does not and will never recognize the state of Palestine.

Where do you go from there? There's going to be no negotiated settlement. If we have to push that envelope—like Mr. Mulroney did in South Africa when he pushed the South African government of the day to decide what was going to happen with apartheid and to back down—we are going to be following the Canadian tradition by doing that. I think this is an important motion.

• (13240)

As Mr. Alghabra said, nobody knows what the outcome will be. We may hear from a lot of experts in civil society that we should not have a two-state solution. We could hear from them that we should wait and let things take their course.

Do all of you remember that, in the Second World War, Britain sat by and let Germany say that it only wanted to march into southern Czechoslovakia? Of course, then World War II happened. We don't want a regional war right now. There's a risk of a regional war in the Middle East.

This summer... I haven't spoken. I'm just speaking this bit right now, so don't everyone stare at me as if you want me to shut up because I'm not going to. I have the floor.

This summer, I was in Bucharest for the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. At that meeting, some of the 57 states represented were Mediterranean states. The Mediterranean states were very concerned about the fact that Mr. Netanyahu had said that he was going to go into Lebanon, which is in itself a sovereign nation. They were concerned that this would be the start of a regional war of which they would be a part. They would be hurt and they would be harmed.

They spoke out very clearly about this issue of a two-state solution. These were parliamentarians from 57 nations. They spoke out about ending what is going on. They said that Putin is a monster, doing things like taking children, kidnapping them, killing civilians and raping children, and that they were not talking about other countries and they don't apply that same principle to other countries.

I'm not blaming anybody. Israel has a right to defend itself. It was absolutely awful what happened in October, but the Israeli people want an end to this. They're walking in the streets by the tens and hundreds of thousands, saying that they want this to end. They want a ceasefire. They want the hostages back, and they want peace.

How many generations of Israeli and Palestinian children have grown up not knowing what it is to have hope for what we are talking about here? It's a house, a safe place to call home, health care and the ability to go to school and realize their potential. None of these people, over the course of generations, have ever had that hope. They have always had the dream, which is now no longer a dream. It is a lack of hope. It has died. There's no dream there.

This is what we stand for as Canadians. Let us engage our civil society in this study. Let us listen to what they have to tell us. Let us go ahead and make the decisions, even if it means we have to tell our government that this is what we want to do, that we heard from civil society and this is what the people want you to do. Let us do that.

What are we afraid of? Are we afraid of what the people will tell us? Are we afraid of our people—our civilians?

Thank you very much.

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

Now we go to MP McPherson.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will just say this very quickly because I have spoken to this at length. Again, this could be done today by the minister. We don't need a study, but I would ask that this committee undertake this study as soon as possible and that we treat it with the urgency it deserves.

I think we all understand that there is an election coming soon, potentially. The Conservatives have made it very clear that they will never take this step. I think it's important that we do this as urgently as possible.

**The Chair:** If memory serves, I do think I saw the term “immediately”. That was part of the motion.

There's no longer anyone on the speakers list, so we'll put this to a vote now.

Mr. Chong.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** I have just a quick intervention.

The wording in the motion implies that you will be reporting this to the House at some point, because it asks for a government response pursuant to Standing Order 109.

I want to ensure that we will have the opportunity, afforded by this committee, to append a dissenting report to that report to the

House, indicating our position that Canada and this committee should adhere to the long-standing position of the Government of Canada prior to this current government and the long-standing position of the two major parties in the House of Commons.

• (13245)

**The Chair:** Yes, Mr. Chong, that is standard procedure. I don't think anyone has the intention of departing from that procedure.

Before we vote on this, there was the amendment by Mr. Bergeron.

Could I just ask the clerk to clarify what that was, before we vote on the motion?

**The Clerk:** I just wanted to clarify whether or not the amendment proposed by Mr. Bergeron was adopted. That was not quite clear.

**The Chair:** It was adopted, but what was the wording of the amendment?

**The Clerk:** It is at most four meetings—“a maximum of 4 meetings”.

**The Chair:** It was for a maximum of four.

**The Clerk:** That's correct.

The vote now is on the motion as amended.

**The Chair:** Yes.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** Thank you for that.

Mr. Oliphant.

**Hon. Robert Oliphant:** I move that we adjourn the meeting.

**The Chair:** Is that unanimously agreed to? Excellent.

The meeting stands adjourned.







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