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Chair: Mr. Ben Carr



Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

Tuesday, December 3, 2024

• (1100)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Mr. Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.)):
Good morning, everyone.

[*English*]

I hope you've had a good start to your week.

I'm calling to order meeting 136 of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. Today we are beginning our clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-65.

Just as a reminder to our witnesses, when your earpieces are not in use, please make sure you place them on the stickers in front of you to avoid any injuries to our interpreters, who are working hard on our behalf.

Colleagues, I'll start by reading a brief preamble. For some of us, it's maybe been a little while since we've engaged in clause-by-clause. I'll read something that's been provided by the clerks to help bring clarity. Then we will get going.

[*Translation*]

I'd like to explain to the committee members how committees go about clause-by-clause consideration of a bill.

[*English*]

As the name indicates, this is an examination of all the clauses in the order in which they appear in the bill. I will call each clause successively. Each clause is subject to debate and a vote. If there's an amendment to the clause in question, I will recognize the member proposing it, who may explain it.

In addition to having to be properly drafted in a legal sense, amendments must be procedurally admissible. The chair may be called upon to rule amendments inadmissible if they go against the principle of the bill or beyond the scope of the bill—both of which were adopted by the House when it agreed to the bill at second reading—or if they offend the financial prerogative of the Crown.

Amendments have been given a number in the top right corner to indicate which party submitted them. There is no need for a second to move an amendment. Once it is moved, you will need unanimous consent to withdraw it.

[*Translation*]

During debate on an amendment, members are permitted to move subamendments. They do not require the approval of the mover of the amendment. Only one subamendment may be consid-

ered at a time, and that subamendment cannot be amended. When a subamendment is moved to an amendment, it is voted on first. Then another subamendment may be moved, or the committee may consider the main amendment and vote on it.

[*English*]

Finally, if members have any questions regarding the procedural admissibility of amendments, the legislative clerks are here to assist the committee. However, they are not legal drafters. Should members require assistance with drafting a subamendment, they must contact the legislative counsel.

Colleagues, if you intend to move an amendment from the floor, I would ask that before you move that amendment, you send it to the clerks, ensure that it's translated in both official languages and, to the best of your ability, get an opinion as to its admissibility. This is for the sake of efficiency and productivity.

With that, colleagues, we have some witnesses we would like to welcome back.

From the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, we have Robert Sampson, general counsel and senior director, legal services, and Trevor Knight, general counsel. Welcome back to PROC, gentlemen.

From the Privy Council Office, we have Rachel Pereira, director, electoral and senatorial policy unit, and Candice Ramalho, senior policy officer.

With that, colleagues, we will begin.

I see that Mr. Cooper has his hand up. I will turn the floor over to him.

• (1105)

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I would like to move a motion. I move:

That the committee shall not proceed any further into clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-65 until it has dispensed with the motion that was moved and debated on Tuesday, November 26, 2024.

To refresh members of the committee as to the motion put forward by me on Tuesday, November 26, it was a motion that called on the Prime Minister's Office, the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs and the PCO—essentially, this government—to turn over all documents and communications relating to the secret meetings that were held with the NDP in drafting what has been sold to Canadians as an elections bill, but what really is a pension bill in disguise, because it moves the date of the election back. As a result of doing that, it secures the pensions for MPs, many of whom are NDP and Liberal MPs who are likely to be defeated in the next election and who otherwise would not qualify for their pensions.

Mr. Chair, I'll seek your direction without ceding the floor. Would you like that the motion, as is the usual practice, be sent to all members? Then I can continue my remarks.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Cooper. I would very much appreciate—as I'm sure all members would—that a written copy of the motion you've just presented, translated into both official languages, be sent.

Until that is completed, I'm going to suspend, at which point you will maintain the floor. You can speak to it once it has been presented in both official languages to committee members.

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): I have a point of order. Can I just get the confirmation of the speaking order after Mr. Cooper will have the floor again? I know that some hands have been up.

The Chair: The speaking order I have is Mr. Cooper, Mr. Turnbull, Mr. Duncan and Mr. Calkins.

We are suspended briefly.

• (1105) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1120)

The Chair: Colleagues, I believe all members have now received and have had adequate time to consult the motion presented by Mr. Cooper.

Mr. Cooper, you retain the floor. I'll give it back to you so you can speak to the motion you presented to the committee.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I will just put on the record the motion I put forward on Tuesday, November 26. It reads as follows:

That, given that the committee has learned that staff from the Prime Minister's Office and the Office of the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs met with New Democratic Party (NDP) representatives, representatives from the Privy Council Office (PCO), and the Chief Electoral Officer on Thursday, January 25, 2024 on matters relating to Bill C-65, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act, and that the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, along with his Parliamentary Secretary and staff from his office and the Parliamentary secretary's office met with NDP representatives, an NDP Member of Parliament, representatives from the PCO, and the Chief Electoral Officer on Saturday, March 30, 2024, on matters relating to Bill C-65, the committee:

a) order the Office of the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs and the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) to provide the committee with all of the dates on which any representatives from the Liberal Party, including Party Officials, Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries, Minister's Office Staff, and Members of Parliament met with any representatives from the

NDP, including Party Officials, and Members of Parliament on matters relating to Bill C-65, and the names and titles of the individuals who attended those meetings;

b) order the production of any documents under the control of the PCO, PMO, any Minister's office, and Elections Canada, including any documents used as briefing materials in any of those meetings, and any records of conversations, including emails, text messages, or any other form of communication, about those meetings, and any records of discussions that took place at those meetings and/or decisions that were made at those meetings, and that these documents are to be provided to the Clerk with no redactions within one week of the adoption of this motion; and

c) invite Daniel Blaikie, former Member of Parliament for Elmwood—Transcona and former Democratic Reform Critic for the NDP and a co-author of Bill C-65, to appear before the committee on its study of Bill C-65.

It is important that we have from this government and their coalition partner, the NDP, transparency about what went on leading up to the tabling of Bill C-65, a bill that purports to be an elections bill but is in fact a pension bill in disguise.

This is a government that snuck a clause into this elections bill that pushes the date of the next federal election by one week. The basis upon which the date of the next election was moved back was purported to be that the current fixed election date conflicts with a holiday of cultural importance to certain diaspora communities in Canada. That was the pretext.

One may say the election could be changed in light of that. I don't object to that. In fact, we Conservatives have been calling for a carbon tax election as soon as possible so that Canadians can have an opportunity to go to the polls and replace a government that has for the past nine years been costly and corrupt, a government that really has lost, for all intents and purposes, the moral authority to govern, a government that Canadians cannot wait to see replaced.

• (1125)

Yes, we would like to see an election—not in October 2025, but as soon as possible. It's why, this week, we're going to be moving a motion of non-confidence in this government. It's so that Canadians can get the carbon tax election they want and the carbon tax election they deserve.

Be that as it may, going back to the bill and the purported reasons for moving the date of the next election back by a week, the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Dominic LeBlanc, asserted it was on the basis of avoiding a conflict with a cultural holiday for certain communities. The election could have been pushed ahead by a week, but we were told that would conflict with Thanksgiving. If the election were moved ahead a week prior to that, it wouldn't conflict with anything, as I understand it. If it were pushed ahead a week before that, again, I don't believe there would be any conflict.

The point I'm making is that there were plenty of options on the table for the government to accommodate Canadians who celebrate this particular holiday, Diwali, without selecting the date provided for in this bill, which pushes the date of the election back by one week.

One of the objections to moving the election ahead by two or three weeks instead of pushing it back by one week, according to an official from the Prime Minister's department, the PCO, when he appeared before this committee to speak on behalf of the PCO and therefore on behalf of this government, was that it would result in the election getting into the summer period and would conflict with the Labour Day holiday. I believe he said it was the Labour Day holiday.

An hon. member: The summer holidays.

Mr. Michael Cooper: It was the summer holidays or the Labour Day holiday. That was something the government wished to avoid.

I found it a bit unclear why the government would specifically want to avoid that. Many federal and provincial elections have overlapped with the Labour Day holiday. I can think of, for example, the 1990 Ontario election, when David Peterson, three years into his mandate, went to the polls. He had a big majority. I think the Liberals won 95 seats in the 1987 election. The 1987 election in Ontario was in October, so less than three years into his mandate, he made the decision to drop the writ in early August. It not only overlapped with the Labour Day holiday; it also overlapped with the August long weekend.

• (1130)

I stand to be corrected, but I believe the election was on September 6, 1990. That was when David Peterson was severely punished for calling what Ontario voters perceived to be an opportunistic early election. There was also a bad taste in the mouths of many Ontarians over the record of the Peterson government. A whiff of scandal and corruption surrounded that Liberal government.

If only the same could be said of these Liberals, that there is a whiff of scandal and corruption, because after nine years of this Prime Minister, it's far more than a whiff of scandal. What we have with this government is a culture of corruption that goes right to the top, right to the Prime Minister. We have a Prime Minister who has been found guilty—not once, but twice—of violating the Conflict of Interest Act. We have a Prime Minister who obstructed an RCMP investigation into his potential criminal wrongdoing, which included the fact that he may have obstructed justice, and likely did, when he completely improperly and likely illegally ordered his former attorney general, Jody Wilson-Raybould, to intervene in the prosecution of SNC-Lavalin.

When the RCMP came before the ethics committee last spring, I asked them why they had suspended their investigation into the potential matter of obstruction of justice on the part of the Prime Minister. The RCMP, when I put to them whether it was as a result of the Prime Minister hiding behind cabinet confidence, whether that was a factor, essentially answered in the affirmative. When I asked whether lifting cabinet confidence might lead the RCMP to reopen their investigation into what happened during SNC-Lavalin, including the conduct of the Prime Minister, they said that was possible.

It's within the Prime Minister's right to invoke cabinet confidence. I'm not suggesting otherwise. There are legitimate reasons for invoking cabinet confidence. In this particular case, while the Prime Minister has the right to invoke cabinet confidence, given what transpired with SNC-Lavalin and what we know, I think

Canadians can judge for themselves why the Prime Minister invoked cabinet confidence.

If the Prime Minister had nothing to hide and wasn't afraid that the RCMP could potentially lay charges against him for obstruction of justice, as well as potentially others in his office who were involved in putting pressure on Jody Wilson-Raybould.... There were many in his office, right to the top of those in his office, including his then principal secretary, Gerald Butts, who met with Jody Wilson-Raybould more than once, I believe. There was also Katie Telford, the Prime Minister's then and current chief of staff, and Mathieu Bouchard, among others. If the Prime Minister wasn't fearful that either he or the likes of Telford and Butts had done anything wrong, why would he invoke cabinet confidence? Why would he obstruct an RCMP investigation?

• (1135)

If the Prime Minister had nothing to hide, it follows that he would co-operate with the RCMP. He would let the RCMP do their job. He would let the RCMP follow the evidence and would respect the independence of the RCMP to make a determination about whether charges against the Prime Minister or anyone in his office are warranted for putting pressure on Jody Wilson-Raybould to shut down the prosecution of SNC-Lavalin and, in so doing, to obstruct justice, if the evidence demonstrated that it met that threshold.

I was on the justice committee during SNC-Lavalin. I was the vice-chair of the justice committee at the time. In fact, I can remember sitting down in the committee room below when Jody Wilson-Raybould came before committee and gave her powerful testimony, bombshell testimony, on the type of pressure—

• (1140)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Cooper, we have a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Go ahead, Ms. Fortier.

Hon. Mona Fortier: I'm listening with interest to Mr. Cooper, but I believe he is no longer speaking to the motion. I'd like the debate to be directed back to the motion.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Fortier.

Mr. Cooper, if you can try to keep your remarks as close as possible to the nature of the motion, that would be appreciated.

Mr. Michael Cooper: I appreciate the comments made by Madame Fortier. If I may, before I continue, I will respond to her comments.

What I'm speaking of—the culture of corruption in this government—is pertinent to the motion. It's pertinent insofar as showing why, I would submit, there needs to be a carbon tax election, but it's also pertinent to the decision on the part of the Prime Minister, in collaboration with the NDP and the minister, to push back the date of the next election. We're lacking transparency. Essentially, the government tried to sell this bill as one thing when it in fact did another. I would submit that we're talking about a lack of transparency. We're essentially talking about presenting a fake bill to Canadians on the need for an election and the timing of the next election. That is pertinent to this very bill. The bill fixes the date of the next election. The record of this government, including the culture of corruption that the Prime Minister has set, is pertinent. There is, of course, wide latitude in these debates.

Continuing where I left off, I can remember the very powerful testimony of Jody Wilson-Raybould. I can remember how she was treated by Liberal MPs, including the member for Edmonton Centre, Randy Boissonnault. I will have some comments to make about him shortly, but I digress. The SNC-Lavalin scandal really shook public confidence in the Prime Minister and this government. After that, the Prime Minister sat at around 30% to 33% support, in 2019 and going into the 2021 election. Of course, support for this government has now plummeted into the low 20% area, and Canadians are eager to see an election called. That's why I will repeat that I think the government could have moved the election ahead to resolve the issue, or the so-called problem, that they asserted was the basis of pushing the election back. We're quite content to have an election as soon as possible.

Going back to the Prime Minister, this is a Prime Minister who has in his cabinet ministers who violated the Conflict of Interest Act. Dominic LeBlanc, for example, the very minister who introduced this bill, was found by the Ethics Commissioner to have violated the Conflict of Interest Act. Likewise, the Minister of International Trade was found guilty of violating the Conflict of Interest Act. Bill Morneau was guilty of violating the Conflict of Interest Act. The Liberal member for Hull—Aylmer, while he served as parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister, was found guilty of violating the Conflict of Interest Act.

One must ask how ministers of the Crown who were found guilty of violating the Conflict of Interest Act are still in cabinet. In the normal course of things, I would submit that violating the Conflict of Interest Act is a serious matter and ought to result in the immediate resignation of a minister. Of course, for a Prime Minister who's been found—

• (1145)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

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

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

As you mentioned at the beginning of the meeting, we have officials here to help us. However, I see a second row of people who have not been introduced to us. I was wondering whether or not these people were going to be called upon to answer our questions.

Would it be possible for them to introduce themselves so that we can know who is here to answer our questions? Are they government representatives, people from the NDP, or people who attended the secret meeting?

[*English*]

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): I have a point of order, Chair.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Berthold.

[*English*]

Go ahead on the same point of order, Mr. Turnbull.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Number one, that's not a point of order, Chair.

The Chair: That is correct.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Number two, I don't think it's appropriate for the Conservatives, as they filibuster their own motion, to ask to be introduced to witnesses who are sitting at the committee. Even implying that they intend to ask witnesses questions today is a false pretense at best.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Berthold, go ahead on the same point of order.

Mr. Luc Berthold: I was just asking as a courtesy. If you don't have an answer for me, Mr. Chair, I'll understand.

The Chair: I can't rule that a point of order.

[*English*]

I'd ask all members, when they're raising points of order, to ensure that they are in fact points of order.

Mr. Cooper, you retain the floor.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We have ministers of this government who were found guilty of violating the Conflict of Interest Act. That's a serious matter. That should be grounds for being immediately fired from cabinet, but the Prime Minister has a problem, because he's been found guilty twice. The Prime Minister is a serial lawbreaker. What is a serial lawbreaker going to do about ministers who have also broken the law? Well, I guess he'd have to fire himself if he were to fire them. Canadians would very much look forward to the opportunity to fire the Prime Minister, if we can finally get on with having a carbon tax election.

Speaking of the culture of corruption in this government, I alluded to what I thought, and many Canadians thought, was the disgraceful performance by the Liberal member for Edmonton Centre, Mr. Boissonnault, when he insulted Jody Wilson-Raybould when she gave her powerful testimony before the justice committee in the spring of 2019. I can tell you that his performance at that committee hearing certainly contributed to his defeat in the 2019 election by the voters of Edmonton Centre. If he puts his name on the ballot going into this next election, he'll be fighting for third place.

Needless to say, Mr. Boissonnault resigned from cabinet in disgrace two weeks ago. Mr. Boissonnault has, nonetheless, a lot to answer for. We're going to demand that He should come to committee and sit in front of committee to answer questions about some very serious matters. Indeed, now that he has resigned from cabinet, he has gone into hiding. He was scheduled to appear before the ethics committee on the very day that he resigned from cabinet.

Is that a coincidence? I think not. I think it was very well timed. He made the decision to resign because he didn't want to appear before the ethics committee. This is why we were debating yesterday in the House a concurrence motion asking that Mr. Boissonnault appear before INAC. It was specifically relating to the fact that his shady pandemic profiteering PPE company falsely and fraudulently held itself out as being a wholly indigenous-owned company.

Mr. Boissonnault's company held itself out as such with respect to two federal government contracts. The Liberals said when Mr. Boissonnault was still sitting in cabinet that there was nothing to see there because Mr. Boissonnault's shady pandemic profiteering PPE company didn't receive any contracts from the federal government. Well, that's good. I'm glad that his company, Global Health Imports Corporation, didn't receive contracts, but that misses the point, or at least part of the point. It misses what is really the main point, which is that Mr. Boissonnault's company misrepresented itself as being wholly indigenous-owned. That raised questions about his suitability, his fitness, to serve in cabinet.

• (1150)

Let's be clear about why Mr. Boissonnault's company held itself out as being wholly indigenous-owned. It was in a blatant attempt to give it an advantage in the government's procurement selection process. In short, what Mr. Boissonnault and his business partner Mr. Anderson sought to do was steal contracts that would have gone to legitimately owned indigenous businesses bidding on federal government contracts. That is about as low as it gets. It is cultural appropriation in its most offensive form, or among its most offensive forms, and it's fraud.

The Prime Minister stood behind Mr. Boissonnault in the face of that. The Prime Minister kept him in cabinet. The Prime Minister even went so far as, when he was at a conference in Brazil, to publicly affirm his confidence in the then minister Boissonnault. He did so notwithstanding that it had been more than a week since Global News reported that Mr. Boissonnault's company had held itself out falsely and fraudulently as being wholly indigenous-owned.

It's not as if Mr. Boissonnault denied that this happened—not at all. It's not in dispute. That's what his company did while he was active in the company, while he was one of two partners working at the company and handling its operations on a day-to-day basis. This was before he was returned to the House of Commons in 2021. This was sometime in 2020 or 2021 but prior to his return to the House of Commons. It was only when—

• (1155)

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yes, Ms. Romanado.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: While I allow my colleague to have a sip of his coffee, I just want to say that this is not relevant to the

motion at hand. I wanted to give him a chance to take a sip of coffee.

The Chair: I would agree.

Mr. Eric Duncan: On a point of order—

The Chair: Give me one moment, Mr. Duncan.

I read through the motion again, Mr. Cooper, as you were speaking. I'm not sure I see relevance to Mr. Boissonnault given the motion you've presented. Perhaps you have an explanation, which we'll certainly give you the opportunity to share.

On this same point of order, we have Mr. Duncan.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If I could, I'll contribute to that.

I respectfully disagree about relevance. What Mr. Cooper has been doing for the last several minutes... Sadly, it takes some time because there are many examples of the culture of corruption and secrecy and of not having access to the full information when it comes to the actions and conduct of the Liberal government—

The Chair: You're venturing into—

Mr. Eric Duncan: It may take some time, but these points are relevant in soliciting support for the motion.

The Chair: Mr. Duncan, you are venturing into debate now.

Mr. Cooper, the floor is yours.

Mr. Michael Cooper: It does take a long time. Mr. Duncan is quite correct that when we look at the record of this government, there's a long list of scandals. In fact, I had my staff go back and look at all of the scandals of this government over the past nine years. My team, after going back and chronicling the various scandals, came up with a list of 78 scandals. While I want to continue on with Mr. Boissonnault, I think it's important to perhaps identify what some of those scandals are, but I will do that later.

What I will say on Mr. Boissonnault is that only when the Edmonton police announced that they were launching a criminal investigation and only when Mr. Boissonnault was to appear—

The Chair: Mr. Cooper, I'm going to interject given the point of order raised by Mrs. Romanado a moment ago. I'm going to ask you to get to the point you're making about Mr. Boissonnault and the relationship you see between those affairs and the motion at hand.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Where I'm going is that Mr. Boissonnault is the latest example of misconduct on the part of ministers and represents the type of corruption and lack of ethical behaviour that we see on the part of this government, which speaks to the need for an election.

While Bill C-65 pushes the election back, we need to move the election ahead, and we need to understand why the NDP, in collaboration with the Liberals, drafted a bill to push the election back. In that regard, Mr. Boissonnault has resigned from cabinet, but the Prime Minister, as part of his culture of corruption, defended him, not just for about a week but for months, on the matter of his company falsely representing itself as being indigenous.

Notwithstanding that there were very serious allegations against Mr. Boissonnault, as we've seen with a number of ministers in this government, including the Prime Minister, he almost certainly violated the Conflict of Interest Act. He almost certainly violated the Conflict of Interest Act when text messages revealed that someone named Randy at Global Health Imports was involved in the operations of the company—

● (1200)

The Chair: Mr. Cooper, I'm going to interject again. I don't want to be forced into a situation between you and me where I have to make a more stern ruling on relevance. I would ask that you get back to the motion.

You have indicated that you believe relevance is founded in the connection to the corruption that you allege has taken place by government officials and Mr. Boissonnault. However, again, I'm reading very clearly the terms of the motion you put forward, which is what we are debating at the moment, and I would ask that you get there. There will only be so many times that I'll afford you the opportunity to say, "I'm getting there", so I would ask that you get there. Of course, the floor is always yours to speak with relevance to the motion, but you are skirting that territory pretty clearly.

Thank you, Mr. Cooper.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): I have a point of order, if I may.

The Chair: You may, Mr. Calkins.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I, for one, am enjoying the comments by Mr. Cooper. I think you'll find that relevance is rooted in the notion of trust and corruption. The government and its friends have been implicated numerous times in matters of self-interest, and this bill directly has in it a clause that can be and has been widely interpreted as a matter of self-interest.

The Chair: Mr. Calkins, I'll ask that you get to your point of order. Just for your benefit, we're not debating a clause in a bill; we're debating a motion. Unless you can speak specifically to a clause that you think is relevant to the motion that I'm telling Mr. Cooper he's veering away from, then I don't see a point of order here.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: My point, Mr. Chair, is that Mr. Cooper is bang on with his notion that we need to hear from more witnesses to establish whether or not the intentions behind the clauses in the legislation have been duly heard by members of this committee. I'm looking forward to Mr. Cooper's continued testimony.

The Chair: Okay. I am not hearing a point of order. I appreciate your interpretation, Mr. Calkins.

Mr. Cooper, the floor is yours.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I take your point.

I submit that I have wide latitude, but at your request to move closer to the text of the motion, I'll note that the bill was drafted behind closed doors with the NDP. The bill would push back the date of the next election. It was purported that the basis for pushing the date of that election back was to avoid a conflict with a cultural holiday. As I stated before, there was no reason the election couldn't have been moved ahead rather than back to avoid that conflict.

An official from the PCO said the election could not be pushed ahead by one week; if it did, it would conflict with Thanksgiving. I think most Canadians would agree that they don't want to see an election over the Thanksgiving weekend. However, if the election were pushed ahead a week or two weeks before that, Mr. Sutherland from the PCO, the Prime Minister's department, said that would go into the summer.

As I cited with the example of the 1990 Ontario election, there are plenty of examples of elections that took place over the summer. Indeed, my first election in 2015 started in late July and concluded in October. One can question whether it was the best decision to have an election at that time, but nonetheless, the election was called in the summer. There's plenty of precedent for it.

It is most ironic that this government is using the summer as an excuse to push the date of the election back one week to avoid a summer election is. When was the last time we had an election called in the summer? I don't know if anyone can remember, but those who can't remember obviously have short memories, because every member sitting at this committee contested a summer election. It was the last election called by the Prime Minister, as part of another cover-up relating to the national security leak at the Winnipeg lab.

The Prime Minister hid documents and refused to turn over documents ordered by Parliament. Does that sound familiar? He took the then Speaker, the Liberal member for Nipissing—Timiskaming, to court to stop those documents from being turned over to Parliament and called an election to cover up the massive national security leak at the Winnipeg lab.

It's quite unbelievable that a Liberal government that as recently as three years ago called an election during the summer—the most recent election—now says we can't push the date of the election ahead to avoid a conflict with a cultural holiday because it might encroach on part of the summer. It simply doesn't stand up to basic scrutiny. It is simply not credible. It's not credible because it wasn't the reason the Liberals, with the support and collaboration of the NDP, picked the date provided in Bill C-65, which moves the election back, not forward.

● (1205)

There was another reason cited by the minister for the need to change the date and move it ahead: The current fixed date would conflict not only with a cultural holiday but also with municipal elections in the province of Alberta. I understand that could potentially be an issue and might best be avoided, hence the need to change the date, but if that is the reason, why did the Liberals choose a date that conflicts with the territorial election in Nunavut? If the objective is to avoid having two elections on the same day, as was purported to be a secondary reason for the change in date, why would the date the government chose as a substitute for the current fixed date be one that does exactly that—conflicts with a territorial election?

It seems to me this is just the latest effort to try to provide reasons that were not in fact the reasons for the date the government chose. The date the Liberals chose, with the assistance of the NDP in drafting the bill, just happens to be the date when MPs elected in 2019 would suddenly qualify for their pensions.

Why would the Liberals and the NDP want to do that? Very simply, we have a Prime Minister who is the most unpopular prime minister in a generation. One would have to go back to the early 1990s, or back, frankly, to Pierre Elliott Trudeau. In fact, I stand corrected. I think polling might suggest the last prime minister who was more unpopular than the current Prime Minister was Pierre Trudeau. We have a very unpopular Prime Minister and an NDP that for more than three years has been part of the coalition with this unpopular Prime Minister and has at every opportunity propped up the costly and corrupt Liberal government.

Accordingly, the NDP is not doing well in the polls either. Jagmeet Singh and Justin Trudeau can certainly see where things are headed whenever an election is held. It doesn't look good for either Justin Trudeau or Jagmeet Singh.

● (1210)

Jagmeet Singh and Justin Trudeau have a problem on their hands with respect to the current fixed date: Many Liberal and NDP MPs will face almost certain electoral defeat. I don't want to be presumptuous, but based on every piece of information one can gather that assesses where the mood of the public is and where the mood of the public was when this bill was drafted, there's a very strong probability that many Liberal and NDP MPs elected in 2019, who wouldn't qualify for their pensions, will not be returned to the House of Commons whenever the next election is held. By moving the date back, the Liberal and NDP MPs who face almost certain electoral defeat will suddenly qualify for their pension.

Canadians are not unaware of this. Canadians immediately recognized the change in date for what it is. This bill, this fake elections bill, is a pensions bill. It is a desperate attempt by the Liberals and NDP to pad their pockets on their way out. It is cynical and dishonest, and frankly, it speaks to why the sooner we can have an election to replace this government and its coalition partner, the better.

Canadians are not buying the pretexts offered by the Liberals about why they changed the date, because we have heard their excuses, their justifications, of why they changed the date. They said

it conflicted with a holiday. Then they said they moved the date to avoid conflict with a municipal election, but the date they chose conflicts with a territorial election. They said they moved the date back a week to avoid going into summer, yet they were happy to call an election in the summer when they wanted to cover up the national security breach at the Winnipeg lab.

With a straight face, despite the explanations they offered having no credibility and not making any sense, they say unequivocally that the date has nothing to do with pensions. It was just a coincidence. Come on. No one believes the Prime Minister, no one believes the Liberals and no one believes Jagmeet Singh on this one.

I think it would be helpful to get a sampling of some of the feedback I've received from Canadians outraged at this NDP-Liberal pension grab.

One Canadian wrote the following to me:

● (1215)

As a tax paying citizen of this Country (technically your boss) it has come to my attention that the Trudeau government wants to delay the next scheduled election by one week so that he can give dozens of politicians a taxpayer funded pension to the tune of \$120 million. This may not seem significant to the Trudeau government given how he [has] taken our tax dollars and spent [them] on initiatives that have zero to no value to us (the tax paying citizen). All of you need to do the right thing and stop this disrespectful plan by the Trudeau government to take our hard earned dollars (\$120 million) and give [them] to politicians that do not deserve it. The Trudeau government has proven over the past 9 years that they do not care about the well being of Canadian citizens...only themselves and this is just another example of that. Do the right thing and don't allow this plan to happen.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: I have a point of order, Chair. There are over 40 amendments in our amendment package that deal specifically with the date of the election, all of which this side has said they would support a change to. If Mr. Cooper would stop his filibuster and let us move on to clause-by-clause, we could deal with the very issue he's filibustering about.

● (1220)

The Chair: I appreciate your commentary, Mr. Turnbull, but I will remind you, as I did our colleagues on the other side of the table, that this is not a legitimate point of order.

I ask members to please make sure that points of order are consistent with the rules.

Mr. Cooper, go ahead.

Mr. Michael Cooper: It's fine and well that there are amendments to the bill. Conservatives have submitted all kinds of amendments with respect to the date of the next election to move it so that we can have an election as soon as possible. I would hope that we don't even get to those amendments and that we simply have a vote of non-confidence in the House of Commons following the Conservative opposition day motion for there to be a carbon tax election. The ball is very much in the court of the NDP, because it is the NDP that has said, Jagmeet Singh—

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: I have a point of order, Chair. I'm still struggling to understand the relevance. Relevance is a point of order. I think we're all aware of that point of order.

The motion that Mr. Cooper has moved at this committee essentially says that we shouldn't move to clause-by-clause until we've dispensed with his previous motion, so what's his argument here? How is this relevant to that particular motion? It doesn't seem to fit.

The Chair: Relevance is a legitimate point of order.

Mr. Cooper, you're about to get the floor back. Perhaps you want to take a couple of seconds to address the question of relevance raised by Mr. Turnbull. I'm going to allow you to continue, but we'll keep a close ear to the ground on how far you may be veering away from the relevance to the motion.

Mr. Michael Cooper: The fact is, this was a cynical, dishonest attempt by the Liberals and the NDP to pad their pockets with pensions. They sold it as an elections bill—

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: I have a point of order, Chair.

Mr. Michael Cooper: —and Canadians are outraged about this. Canadians deserve answers.

The Chair: Mr. Turnbull, go ahead on a point of order.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: I believe there's a standing order that talks about impugning the motives of another member of Parliament. I think Mrs. Romanado knows that's Standing Order 18.

I would suggest that Mr. Cooper's claims are not only false but impugn the motives of other members of Parliament, and I think he should retract those statements. I encourage you to ask him to do so as our devoted chair, sir.

The Chair: It's always nice to be recognized for devotion to a shared cause, so thank you for that, Mr. Turnbull.

I will keep a close ear to whether there's been a violation of Standing Order 18.

Mr. Cooper, you're an experienced parliamentarian who is surely aware of where that line exists. I am going to turn the floor back over to you. I am not going to ask for a retraction at this point, but per Mr. Turnbull's point of order, if we can stay relevant and be careful about the skirting of that standing order, that would be appreciated.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I can appreciate that Mr. Turnbull doesn't want to be reminded of the many Canadians who have expressed outrage at this cynical attempt to secure pensions for soon-to-be-defeated Liberal and NDP MPs under the guise of an elections bill, but I want the voices of Canadians who have expressed their outrage to be heard, including

some of those who wrote to me and provided their views on the matter to be read into the record.

In that regard, I will continue.

Another Canadian wrote to me and said:

It takes the average person 40+ years of working before they can get a company pension. Same amount if they want to get a decent cpp or oas pension.

2 million Canadians survive because they have other Canadians providing to the food bank so they can survive.

The government wants to change [the] election date so politicians can get an early pension. How many years have these politicians actually worked to get these pensions? 40 years I think not.

That's other than Louis Plamondon. That's my editorial to that. He has been here for 40 years, since before I was born in 1984.

He also said, "Do the right thing [and] leave the federal election as is and make those politicians earn their pensions like the rest of Canadians have to."

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

That's exactly what we're trying to do here with the amendments to Bill C-65. That's what we were here to do. That's what we were scheduled to do today. That's what witnesses have given up their time to do. It would be nice if Mr. Cooper would let us amend the bill to take out the very issue that he's referring to.

• (1225)

The Chair: Thank you for sharing your thoughts, Mr. Turnbull, but that was not a legitimate point of order.

I will ask members to ensure that they—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Colleagues, can we keep our crosstalk down, please, for the benefit of our interpreters?

That was not a legitimate point of order, Mr. Turnbull. I'd ask that you reflect prior to raising your hand for a point of order.

Mr. Cooper, the floor is yours.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Another Canadian wrote, "Please stop political pensions and the week delay in voting. A great majority of Canadians are struggling to survive, please help us! Justin T. must go! Bring common sense back."

Another said:

It's bad enough that the NDP Liberal coalition is continuing to prop up this unwanted government. Do not allow the due process of mandatory elections delay an extra week just to enable MPs to illegally get their pensions.

If these same politicians were honoring their mandate and governing in the best interest of their constituents, we would have had an election by now.

Let them run on their political record and see if the people of Canada want these folks re-elected. My thoughts are that they have absolutely no chance of that.

Stop election interference and do not delay our long overdue elections.

I could go on, because my office has received thousands and thousands of emails from Canadians. I suspect my colleagues across the way on the Liberal side and in the NDP have also heard from many Canadians who have made their voices heard.

Mr. Turnbull has asked why we don't just get on to amending the bill. I would like to amend the bill. Conservatives have put forward a number of amendments to amend this very bad bill, including with respect to the date of the next election, but Mr. Turnbull is perhaps missing the point of the motion.

Now that the NDP and the Liberals have been caught with this pension grab, they have said it's one big misunderstanding. Even though they drafted a bill that by no coincidence just happens to be the date on which soon-to-be defeated NDP and Liberal MPs get their pensions, they now say that, actually, they don't support having the election change to that specific date; they're not interested in their pensions anymore. Now that they've been caught, that's what they've been saying. I'm not so sure that's what the Liberals have been saying, but that's what Jagmeet Singh has been saying—that it's all one big misunderstanding.

If that's the case, then there are amendments the Conservatives have put forward that I would hope the NDP will support. They would support their rather convenient assertion that it's all one big misunderstanding, which up until now no one believes. Simply to say that now that we've been caught—

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: I have a point of order, Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead on a point of order, Mr. Turnbull.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Not to give Mr. Cooper a break or anything, but I wonder if we could release the witnesses given that Mr. Cooper has been filibustering for about an hour and a half. I'm not very confident we're going to get to use their valuable time today and their expertise, so perhaps we should let our witnesses go. Mr. Cooper intends to continue this until the end of the meeting, I'm sure.

The Chair: I appreciate your sentiment, Mr. Turnbull. I did speak to the witnesses prior to the beginning of the meeting and subsequently once we began. Although I am sympathetic, there could be a change in the direction. We have so few meetings to deal with this legislation that I'm not prepared to let them go at the moment.

Witnesses, I apologize, but I am going to ask you to stay in the event that we do move forward with clause-by-clause.

Thank you, Mr. Turnbull.

Mr. Michael Cooper: For the Liberals to say that we should just move to clause-by-clause misses the point of this motion. What this motion demands is that there be a level of accountability for the cynical and dishonest attempt to secure pensions for soon-to-be-defeated Liberal and NDP MPs.

It's important to note the history of the drafting of this elections bill. It really is a pension bill in disguise, because we know that the NDP was heavily involved in drafting it, for all intents and purposes.

NDP critic and former member of Parliament Daniel Blaikie was the co-author of this bill. Mr. Blaikie was quoted in a CTV news article on January 27, 2024, as saying that “a fair amount of work [was] done” towards drafting what is now Bill C-65. The headline was “Trudeau and Singh's teams quietly planning electoral reform legislation”. Mr. Blaikie stood side by side with Minister LeBlanc after Minister LeBlanc tabled the bill at a press conference that Minister LeBlanc convened to try to sell to Canadians that the date of the election had been changed to avoid conflicting with a cultural holiday. Mr. Blaikie and the NDP were in on it. They were working hand in glove with the Liberals and with Minister LeBlanc, and that's not speculation. It was obvious when Daniel Blaikie said that a fair amount of work had been done towards drafting this bill and then showed up and stood side by side with Minister LeBlanc.

We also have learned, as a result of the appearances of Mr. Sutherland from the Privy Council Office and of the Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Perrault, that secret meetings were held between the Liberal government, the NDP and the Chief Electoral Officer specifically about the drafting of this bill. Based on the submission of the Chief Electoral Officer, there were two meetings involving the Liberal government, the NDP and the Chief Electoral Officer. One meeting was on January 25, which just happened to be two days before Daniel Blaikie was quoted as saying that “a fair amount of work [was] done” towards drafting the bill. At that January 25 meeting with the Chief Electoral Officer were staff from the Prime Minister's Office, staff from the minister's office, staff from the Prime Minister's department, the PCO, and staff from Elections Canada. That was the first meeting.

• (1230)

At the second meeting, held on March 30, in addition to the Chief Electoral Officer being present, there was Minister Dominic LeBlanc; the co-author of this bill, NDP MP Daniel Blaikie; the parliamentary secretary to Minister LeBlanc, Jennifer O'Connell; staff from the minister's office; staff from the PCO; and staff from MP Blaikie's office. My note says staff from the MP's office, so I presume that is in reference to Daniel Blaikie's staff being present. There was also staff from Elections Canada.

These are, I must say, unusual meetings to have with the Chief Electoral Officer, the minister, officials from the Prime Minister's Office and the PCO meeting with Daniel Blaikie, an NDP MP, except that perhaps it's not a surprise, as Daniel Blaikie and the NDP were working hand in hand with the Liberals in drafting this bill, this elections bill that is really a pensions bill. It's even more unusual to see that there was a meeting involving the Chief Electoral Officer; staff from the Prime Minister's Office, the minister's office, the PCO and Elections Canada; and the national director of the NDP, Anne McGrath, specifically relating to the drafting of this elections bill that is really a pensions bill.

I can assure you that I had no such meetings with the Chief Electoral Officer. I've met with the Chief Electoral Officer. We've had courtesy meetings. We discussed his report on the 2019 and 2021 election. We've talked about the pilot project in Nunavut. We've talked about a number of issues in my capacity as the shadow minister for democratic reform, but I can assure you that I was not invited as the shadow minister for democratic reform to sit down with Minister LeBlanc, his officials, staff in the Prime Minister's Office, officials in the PCO and the Chief Electoral Officer in relation to the drafting of this bill. That invitation was not given to me. I am certain it was not given to Madame Gaudreau.

There we have it. There were at least two meetings involving the minister, the Prime Minister's staff, the Chief Electoral Officer, Daniel Blaikie from the NDP and the national director of the NDP. Jagmeet Singh acts as if he knew nothing about this pension grab, that it was all one big misunderstanding, but there was his critic Mr. Blaikie, along with the national director of the NDP, in the thick of it working hand in glove with the Prime Minister's Office and the minister's office.

• (1235)

These two meetings were with only the Chief Electoral Officer. There were clearly many more meetings between the Liberals and the NDP, because, after all, the first meeting with the Chief Electoral Officer with the two was on January 25. On January 27, Mr. Blaikie was quoted as saying that “a fair amount of work [was] done”, so obviously there were many meetings and communications prior to the meeting with the Chief Electoral Officer.

Canadians deserve to know what those communications were. How many meetings did the NDP have with the minister, the minister's staff and the Prime Minister's Office in drafting this bill. The bill includes a pension grab that is going to put taxpayers on the hook in the amount of tens of millions of dollars to pad the pockets of soon-to-be defeated Liberal and NDP MPs.

That is what this motion gets to. It gets to transparency, so that Canadians can have a clearer picture about what happened in the lead-up to the drafting of this pension bill.

• (1240)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

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

Mr. Luc Berthold: I've been listening to my colleague for a few minutes, and it seems clear that one of the items requested in the motion he's talking about is that Daniel Blaikie be called to appear before the committee as a witness.

Standing Order 122 of the House of Commons defines an old rule of procedure as follows: “If any member files a certificate with the Chair of a committee of the House, stating that the evidence to be obtained from a particular person is, in his or her opinion, material and important, the Chair shall apprise the committee thereof.” That is Standing Order 122—

The Chair: Mr. Berthold, that is a point of debate.

Mr. Luc Berthold: No, Mr. Chair, it's—

The Chair: Yes, it is debate.

[*English*]

Mr. Cooper, the floor is yours, but you have to be in your chair.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Berthold, that leaves you 10 seconds to present me with something that actually constitutes a point of order.

Mr. Cooper has returned to his seat, so he can continue.

Mr. Luc Berthold: In that case, I will let him continue. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*English*]

Go ahead, Mr. Cooper.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This motion will see to it that there is the transparency that Canadians deserve by ensuring that documents and other communications involving the NDP; Minister LeBlanc and his staff; the Prime Minister's Office; the Prime Minister's department, the PCO; and Elections Canada are produced. Then we can understand how the clause that moves the date of the next election back was incorporated, can get an understanding of exactly what these unusual discussions between the NDP and the Liberals were and can hear from Daniel Blaikie, the co-author of the bill.

We heard from one of the two co-authors, Minister LeBlanc. I think it's important that this committee hear from the other co-author of the bill. Mr. Blaikie is certainly someone who has a great understanding of the Canada Elections Act, in my experience. I think he served on this committee for some time, so it would be good to hear from him so he can give his insights on this bill, address some of the issues we see with it and, most importantly, explain how and why he was working hand in hand with the Liberals to push the date of the next election back.

It's important to ask who first decided to incorporate this clause into the bill. Was it the NDP or was it the Liberals? We know that they're both desperate. We know that the Prime Minister and Jagmeet Singh are very unpopular. We know that Canadians are excited about defeating both the NDP and the Liberals in the next election. They know that so many of their MPs aren't coming back and won't qualify for their pensions, so it would be very interesting to know who raised the pension issue. That's part of what this motion seeks to get to.

When we had the Chief Electoral Officer appear before committee, he was asked whether the issue of Diwali—the fact that the current fixed date conflicts with Diwali—was brought up, and he said it was not brought up. If the government's pretext for changing the date was Diwali and this is the true basis on which they have decided to push the date of the next election back, it is rather surprising that it would not have come up with the Chief Electoral Officer. Then again, it's not surprising, because we know that the real reason for changing the date of the next election and pushing it back, is to secure pensions for soon-to-be-defeated Liberal and NDP MPs and to pad their pockets, which is going to cost taxpayers tens of millions of dollars.

• (1245)

With respect to this motion, it's important that we get all of the documents, but the motion specifies not only that we get all of the documents but that we get all of the documents on an unredacted basis. This government has a history, and not a very good history, of responding to motions passed by parliamentary committees, including this committee, and by the House of Commons itself by saying, "Here are the documents", but they're all full of black ink. They're blacked out and full of redactions. I can only presume, based on the track record of this government, that anything less than demanding that documents be turned over on an unredacted basis would result in documents being blacked out. I have to say, I'm not optimistic that if this motion were adopted we would see all of the documents, but we need to see all of the documents.

This committee passed a motion for the government to turn over documents relating to the APT31 hacking incident. It was passed in June. The order of this committee was for the government to turn over all relevant documents by August 9. It's now December 3, and we still don't have all of the documents. In fact, the understanding I have is that a sizable number of documents still haven't been provided to this committee. That speaks to a level of contempt, or certainly a lack of respect, on the part of this government for parliamentary committees and orders of parliamentary committees. That is in respect of a matter that should concern all members of Parliament. Members were targeted by a Beijing-based regime.

While I'm not optimistic that if this motion passes the government will turn over all communications, I would say that if the Prime Minister were true to his word, sunshine is the best disinfectant. If there truly is one big misunderstanding, as Jagmeet Singh and the NDP would have Canadians believe, about the fact that this bill pushes the date of the next election back very coincidentally to a date that secures the pensions of his soon-to-be defeated NDP MPs and many soon-to-be defeated Liberal MPs, then the NDP and the Liberals would support this motion. They would support transparency, they would support the release of the documents and they would support us hearing from Daniel Blaikie.

With that, I welcome any other comments, but I hope we can get this to a vote so that Canadians can get the transparency they deserve and we can get to the bottom of what happened. Was it the NDP or the Liberals who asked for the pension clause to be added to this bill?

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1250)

The Chair: Mr. Turnbull, you're next in our speaking order.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: That's wonderful. I was beginning to give up hope that I would get a chance to take the floor today, and I'm glad I get the chance.

I'm glad Mr. Cooper has finished his filibuster and is finished, hopefully, delaying getting to clause-by-clause, which was scheduled today for our committee.

Our time is precious. It hasn't felt that way for the last almost two hours, but I feel like my time is precious. I don't know about Mr. Cooper, but I see him smiling over there. I'm sure he doesn't mind wasting the committee's time with long, arduous filibusters that we all have to listen to while witnesses are sitting here painfully waiting to get on to the clause-by-clause analysis.

As I said in one of my points of order, which was probably not exactly in the Standing Orders, but at least I got to make a small interjection to give Mr. Cooper a chance to sip his coffee.... The Conservatives say they want an election. They want an election right now. They want an election tomorrow. They want an election yesterday. What's interesting is that Bill C-65 deals with a whole bunch of things that Conservatives, even though they want an election, don't want to deal with. They don't want to deal with the fact that the very thing they keep pointing to is in an amendment the NDP put forward to remove the fixed election date and revert it back to the way it was before.

The Chair: Mr. Turnbull, I have a point of order from Mr. Calkins.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Oh, that's wonderful. I hope he cites the standing order.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Chair, could you advise the committee as to the status of amendments and their confidentiality prior to their being moved at committee? Mr. Turnbull just addressed an amendment that has not yet been moved and I wonder if he is in violation of our Standing Orders.

The Chair: Give me one moment, please.

I'm not sure, Mr. Turnbull. I didn't catch if you were referring to your own amendment or if you were referring to another one, so this is a reminder to colleagues about the rule cited by Mr. Calkins a moment ago. We have to be very careful about the way we reference amendments that have been presented but not moved.

Thank you, Mr. Calkins, for raising this.

Mr. Turnbull, the floor remains yours.

• (1255)

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: I know that other members in this committee have spoken about amending the very thing the Conservatives have claimed to be so concerned about, which was the subject of at least some of Mr. Cooper's filibuster today.

Let's just be honest. The point is moot because they won't get to the substance of the bill. Why? It's because they would rather keep their false narrative alive than get down to the substantial considerations of a major piece of legislation.

This legislation deals with the very issue that they've talked about and deals with a whole bunch of other issues that historically Conservatives don't want to deal with, such as voter disenfranchisement and participation—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm sorry to cut you off, but I have a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Berthold, you have the floor.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As Mr. Turnbull himself mentioned in one of his interventions earlier in the meeting, imputing motives or comments to a colleague is not permitted. However, he has just done so by saying that we are perpetuating a misleading narrative. That's not true. What we're submitting here is our thinking on how we should act with respect to Bill C-65. I would therefore ask him to choose his words carefully.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Berthold.

I don't know that I completely agree, but I'm going to be flexible with the opposition members. I will continue to listen carefully to what is being said.

Mr. Turnbull, you may take the floor again.

[*English*]

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: That's duly noted, Chair. I wasn't even close to the line though in expressing myself with my parliamentary privilege, which I have every right to do. We've just listened to Mr. Cooper make all kinds of false claims for the last two hours in his diatribe, in his false narrative, claiming all kinds of things about colleagues of mine, all kinds of things about the Prime Minister and all kinds of things about our party that are all false.

They're all false statements, Mr. Berthold. I sat here and listened to them, so you can listen to me now, just as I did respectfully to you and your colleagues.

Let's just be honest. The Conservatives don't seem to want to deal with helping our seniors. That's what the substance of this bill does. It helps seniors at long-term care facilities access their right to vote in the federal election and makes campus voting for students a

reality, ensuring that those things become permanent. There are all kinds of other aspects to this bill that increase voter participation, something that historically Conservatives don't like to support. As we've seen, they seem to always vote against or try to cut down things that increase voter participation. They'd prefer to have people disenfranchised so that their likelihood of success is improved somehow.

Let's also be honest about the news breaking yesterday on foreign interference in the Conservative Party leadership race. I'm sure that's why the Conservatives don't want to deal with the substantive issues in this bill that deal with foreign interference. There are numerous aspects of this bill for that, including a ban on disinformation intended to disrupt the conduct of elections and removing the time frame limit for offences involving impersonation and false statements. Boy, that would open the Conservatives up to a number of different infractions.

The bill ensures that malicious actions using artificial intelligence are captured. It also safeguards against untraceable and difficult-to-trace foreign donations, prohibits aiding or abetting a violation, and other things. There are a number of other ways in which this bill deals substantively with foreign interference.

Putting safeguards in place should be of interest to all of us, but of course the Conservatives would rather do something else, which is go on a fishing expedition. They don't want to deal with the substantive issues that this bill includes. I wonder whether a ban on disinformation is really what they're concerned about, because that seems to be what their entire narrative is based around. Everything that seems to come out of the Conservative Party these days is based on disinformation.

Mr. Eric Duncan: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Mr. Turnbull, I have a point of order from Mr. Duncan.

Mr. Eric Duncan: It's on the decorum of the committee. I'm not offended; I don't spread misinformation. It's his colleague Mr. Gertsen, a member of this committee, who has had to pay a \$1,000 fine and admit to and apologize for spreading misinformation. Mr. Turnbull shouldn't—

The Chair: Mr. Duncan, that's not a point of order.

The good news is we're out of time, colleagues.

The meeting is adjourned.

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