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# Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics

EVIDENCE

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Chair: Mr. John Brassard





## Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics

Tuesday, May 21, 2024

• (1105)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC)):** I call this meeting to order.

[Translation]

Welcome to meeting number 119 of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h) and the motion adopted on Tuesday, February 13, the committee is resuming its study of the impact of disinformation and of misinformation on the work of parliamentarians.

[English]

Before we begin, I remind everyone again to consult the cards that are on the table for guidelines to prevent audio feedback incidents. Please take note of the following preventative measures in place to protect the health and safety of all participants, including the interpreters. Use only the black, approved earpiece. The former grey earpieces must no longer be used. Keep your earpiece away from all microphones at all times, and when you're not using your earpiece, place it down on the sticker that is on the table for this purpose. I thank everyone for their co-operation.

Before we begin, we are going to be dealing with bells at some point this morning. I'm not sure when that's going to be, so I have to keep an eye on that. We'll all keep an eye on that, for projected votes that are to come.

I now welcome our witnesses for our first hour. From the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, they are Nicole Giles, who is the senior assistant deputy minister, policy and strategic partnerships—welcome, Ms. Giles—and Mr. Bo Basler, director general and coordinator, foreign interference—welcome to you, sir, this morning.

Ms. Giles, the floor is yours to address the committee. You have up to five minutes. Please go ahead.

**Dr. Nicole Giles (Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Policy and Strategic Partnerships, Canadian Security Intelligence Service):** Good morning, Chair and members of the committee. It's an honour to join you today and to have the opportunity to contribute to your discussion related to misinformation and disinformation. These complex issues cross into a number of different areas of concern for CSIS, as you might imagine, as well as for the government and all Canadians.

Under the CSIS Act, CSIS is mandated to collect intelligence on threats to the security of Canada, to advise government on those threats and, when appropriate, to take measures to reduce them.

Misinformation is incorrect or misleading information that is presented as fact, whereas disinformation is deliberate and deceptive planned messaging to alter narratives. When these activities constitute a threat to the security of Canada, as defined by the CSIS Act, we investigate and we take action. CSIS has long-standing investigations into specific threat actors believed to be targeting Canada's democratic institutions through clandestine, deceptive or threatening means. This is foreign interference.

[Translation]

Foreign states use many tools to counter Canadian narratives and advance their own inflammatory ones.

As state actors become more sophisticated, these threats become harder to identify and counter. A growing number of foreign states have built and deployed programs dedicated to undertaking online influence.

These online influence campaigns attempt to change voter opinions, civil discourse and policy-makers' choices, as well as sow confusion, discord and distrust in Canadian democratic processes and institutions. They may use a coordinated approach to amplify a single narrative while also promoting inflammatory content.

[English]

These tactics can also be leveraged by non-state actors, which can magnify the threat further. Unfortunately, violent extremists use misinformation and disinformation to promote their own narratives, to sow division and discord, and to create mistrust in institutions and authorities in furtherance of a particular ideological position. The spread of misinformation and disinformation online can, in extreme cases, even have the effect of radicalizing individuals to violence.

It is therefore imperative that all Canadians work together. This effort begins with informed and transparent discussions among all levels and branches of government, as well as with communities, academia and businesses. As a committed partner in this effort, CSIS continues to investigate, to provide analysis and advice to government and, when appropriate, to take measures to reduce threats. CSIS also routinely engages and briefs public officials, including members of Parliament, to promote awareness of threat activities and to strengthen individual security practices.

• (1110)

[Translation]

Other tools include stakeholder engagement, which, through education and knowledge dissemination, builds awareness and resilience against these activities in order to protect their interests.

[English]

CSIS is keenly aware that diaspora, marginalized and otherwise vulnerable communities are directly targeted by foreign interference and disinformation efforts and are often the most vulnerable in our country. This is why CSIS works hard to listen and better understand the communities that we serve, to establish trusted relationships and to convey threat-related information in multiple languages to increase awareness and resilience to foreign interference, in particular.

[Translation]

The government has proposed amendments to the CSIS Act that seek to close gaps in the legislation. The global shift towards digital communication and technology has widened these gaps. These amendments would enable CSIS to better equip national security partners outside the federal government.

Finally, I will note that I cannot publicly comment on investigations or operational matters in order to protect the safety and security of Canadians. Nonetheless, I welcome this opportunity for a frank and transparent discussion, to the extent possible, and will be happy to answer your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Giles. I also want to thank you for sticking to the allotted time.

We will begin the first round of questions. Each party will have six minutes.

Mr. Barrett, the floor is yours.

[English]

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** The communist dictatorship in Beijing clandestinely and deceptively interfered in both the 2019 and 2021 general elections in Canada. Is that correct?

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** That's correct.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Prime Minister Trudeau, members of his Liberal government and Liberal Party officials knew that the interference had occurred. Is that correct?

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** The report that's recently come out from the commissioner under the public inquiry into foreign interference laid this out very nicely in terms of the briefings that took place.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** There were briefings that took place.

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** That's correct.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** How many times was Prime Minister Trudeau informed?

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** What's important to recall is that the structure put in place by the government to govern how information was shared and managed in the case of the federal elections during 2019 and 2021 was done through the critical election incident public protocol panel, or the panel of five.

As a member of the task force related to that—the security and intelligence threats to elections, or SITE, task force—we worked very closely with partners to ensure the panel had the information it required to brief all levels of government, as well as parliamentarians and the government.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** I appreciate that. The question is how many times, madam.

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** I don't have the exact figure, but, again, what's important is that those would have been the conversations that the national security and intelligence adviser would have had, and CSIS fed into those briefings.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Are you able to say how many times Liberal Party officials were informed, separately from the Prime Minister?

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** There were numerous conversations that took place through the course of both of those elections via the panel of five. CSIS was not a part of all those conversations.

• (1115)

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** In the 2021 election, disinformation campaigns perpetrated by the communist dictatorship in Beijing against then Conservative leader Erin O'Toole and Conservative candidate Kenny Chiu were detected. Is that correct?

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** There were foreign interference activities that took place in the 2021 and 2019 elections, and those spread across a number of different ridings, including the riding for Steveston—Richmond East.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Were the Liberals briefed on this? If the answer is yes, who was briefed on it?

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** Again, the timelines and the briefings that took place as part of this are laid out in the report that was tabled by Madam Commissioner.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** The director for CSIS, Mr. Vigneault, said he briefed the government. Are you able to furnish the committee with the names of those who were briefed in writing following your appearance?

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** We will have to take that back. A number of briefings that we do are, for obvious reasons, confidential. I'm not able to commit at this time to providing the committee with all of those names, but we'll see what we're able to provide.

Again, I would stress that all of the information that we can make public on this has been provided to the PIFI commission, and a lot of it has already been disclosed in that report.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** What action was taken when the disinformation campaign was detected?

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** The way the process works with SITE is that as the members of the SITE task force collect information and intelligence, we feed it into that process, and then protocols are triggered in terms of providing that information up to the senior officials in the panel of five. Decisions are also taken on whether to brief the cleared political parties.

That's during the election period. As this committee is very aware, there are a lot of foreign interference activities, including misinformation and disinformation campaigns, that take place outside of the writ period.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Yes.

In 2019, were Liberal Party officials told that the current member for Don Valley North was being monitored by CSIS?

Give a yes or no answer, please.

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** Bo, do you have the specifics on that?

**Mr. Bo Basler (Director General and Coordinator, Foreign Interference, Canadian Security Intelligence Service):** I don't have the specifics in terms of whether Liberal Party members were advised on related matters or not. For operational reasons, I can't get into the specifics of what we were or were not investigating at any point in time.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** The current member for Don Valley North ran as a Liberal member. Are you not able to share the reasons for his being monitored by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service with us today for operational reasons?

**Mr. Bo Basler:** I can't confirm if we were monitoring or not monitoring any specific individual at a point in time.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Are you aware of open source information through judicial proceedings, public inquiries and reviews of foreign interference that has demonstrated it to be a fact that CSIS was in fact monitoring the member for Don Valley North?

**Mr. Bo Basler:** I'm not aware of judicial proceedings that say that, no.

I can't comment further on that. I apologize.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Barrett. That concludes your time.

Mr. Fisher, before we begin, I just want to thank you and your staff for providing a speaking list to us today.

I have Ms. Khalid on that for six minutes.

Go ahead.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.):** Thank very much, Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

I'll start by picking up on something, Ms. Giles, that you said in your opening remarks about providing awareness. How do you provide awareness specifically to MPs, as we are in a more vulnerable

position for foreign interference, disinformation, misinformation and being facilitators of information to the general public? What is the role that CSIS plays? How do you deal with MPs?

Over the past number of months, there have been questions around the Leader of the Opposition's refusing to get security clearance so that he can have more access to a lot of this information. How do you deal with those kinds of challenges?

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** CSIS plays a variety of roles in terms of both countering foreign interference and raising awareness with the public.

We have a series of public documents that we issue, including the very snappily named "Foreign Interference and You", which is published in, I believe, seven languages right now. It informs the public, including parliamentarians, on how to identify and protect themselves against foreign interference. As well, we have a 2021 publication on threats to Canada's democracy, which does the same.

We also do a number of civil society engagements to try to build resilience. In 2023 alone, we did over 150. As well, we do security briefings for elected and unelected officials. In 2023, we did over 200 security briefings for both elected and unelected officials, to help build resilience.

The other thing I would add is that we have a number of social media campaigns that try to raise awareness with parliamentarians and Canadians. I have a couple of packages that we were able to print out. It's a bit difficult from X, but I'm happy to share those afterward. Again, it's aimed at helping Canadians and parliamentarians to identify when those actions are happening and how to protect themselves.

• (1120)

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** Is there a hotline that MPs can call when they feel they are being targeted by a disinformation campaign, perhaps?

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** Absolutely. There is a hotline, for ourselves as well as for the Canadian Security Establishment and the Canadian cyber centre. We'll be very happy to provide those to the clerk afterwards.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** How do you balance? Certain diaspora communities are more vulnerable than others when it comes to disinformation, etc. How do you engage with diaspora communities? How do you make sure that the awareness is there in their communities and in a fair and balanced way, without making them feel targeted?

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** That's been a major concern and focus for CSIS in the last couple of years. We've really tried to change the channel in terms of how we undertake our engagement with those communities, understanding that the first step is to listen and understand their concerns as well as to ensure that we're communicating in the language of their choice. That's why we've moved to preparing our materials in this space in the languages of the communities that are most targeted by foreign interference. They include Persian, Chinese, Russian, Hindi and others.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** Thanks for that. I appreciate it. I know that it's a huge challenge as you navigate that space. It must not be an easy thing.

There's another space that I think is really challenging right now, and that's the social media landscape. Perhaps you can help us understand a little about the current climate of partisanship within Canadian politics and within Canada today on a lot of issues on social media. Do you see any correlation between hyperpartisanship and disinformation? What do you do about it?

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** What we've seen in terms of the threat landscape relating to foreign interference is that the threat has increased dramatically in terms of both breadth and depth due to technological advances in social media. That has become a very significant part of that.

It's increasingly difficult for individuals to be able to identify the reality of the information that's sitting behind what they see online. That's why we work very carefully across government to ensure that we're able to provide the best possible information to Canadians to allow them to practice good cyber hygiene and to identify when disinformation and misinformation are taking place.

That said, it's certainly not an easy thing to do. It is a bit like pushing a rock up the proverbial hill. The way that we'll be able to counter this is by having all Canadians work together.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** How damaging is it, when you see elected officials, for example, peddling that disinformation and misinformation and using it for partisan gains, in terms of how our communities work together and the gaps that we leave open for foreign interference, for example?

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** Making those types of assessments is not something that CSIS evaluates or engages in.

• (1125)

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** Thanks.

CSIS director David Vigneault raised concerns about Canadians' use of TikTok.

**The Chair:** Ms. Khalid, can you ask quickly? We're over time.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** Absolutely. I'll ask this very quickly. Thank you.

He said, "there is a very clear strategy on the part of the government of China to be able to acquire personal information from anyone around the world."

How can the government encourage Canadians to take these risks to their security very seriously, especially when it comes to our young people?

**The Chair:** Please make it a very brief response.

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** The government undertook an important first step when banning TikTok on government devices. It's a very astute approach, as the director said. We would continue to encourage everyone to be very thoughtful about the personal information they provide to companies.

**The Chair:** That's good advice.

Thank you, Ms. Giles and Ms. Khalid.

[Translation]

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

**Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our two witnesses for being here with us today.

Ms. Giles, at the beginning of your remarks, you made a distinction between misinformation, disinformation and malinformation. Which do you think is the most common of the three?

[English]

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** That's an excellent question. There are some pretty clear distinctions in terms of how the threat is assessed. Part of it is related to the goals that are being achieved by the threat actor.

Bo is one of our specialists in this area. I'll ask him to explain it in more detail.

**Mr. Bo Basler:** It's important, as well, to recognize that the service isn't monitoring all social media, so we don't have an opinion on all matters of misinformation, disinformation or malinformation that may be spreading on social media or within media ecosystems. The service looks at those instances of disinformation or misinformation that rise to threaten the security of Canada. We have a much more narrow and focused look than the entire information ecosystem.

[Translation]

**Mr. René Villemure:** Okay.

Ms. Giles, you mentioned that non-state actors are using these techniques. It's possible that Canadian actors might be using these tactics. Theoretically, political parties could also use these tactics. Is that correct?

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** Theoretically, anyone can use these tactics.

**Mr. René Villemure:** Okay.

I'll give you a couple of examples, but again, these are hypothetical. I would like to know whether they are disinformation, misinformation or malinformation.

If a political party uses a narrative that intentionally omits certain aspects, is that misinformation, disinformation or malinformation?

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** It depends on the intent.

Mr. Basler, would you like to answer the question?

[English]

**Mr. Bo Basler:** As Ms. Giles stated, it absolutely depends on the intent. When we distinguish misinformation from disinformation, we are focused on misinformation, which is the spread of incorrect information. That may be a very organic spread of information through a media ecosystem or through a community.

[Translation]

**Mr. René Villemure:** Providing information to confuse people is a form of malinformation. I'm assuming you could also include omission, exaggeration and falsehoods. Those are forms of disinformation, right?

[English]

**Mr. Bo Basler:** For the service, the definition that we use, when we're looking at disinformation, is one where we're looking at information that is intentionally spread to misinform. For example, there may be actors saying that they're going to create a false narrative and they're going to spread that false narrative to achieve a certain objective.

[Translation]

**Mr. René Villemure:** Okay.

If I understand correctly, it can be a Canadian or foreign state actor or non-state actor. It can also be through social media or any other dissemination method.

[English]

**Mr. Bo Basler:** Absolutely, they could be any actors that you mentioned, although for the service's mandate, we're focusing only on those actors that are within our mandate. For us, we're focusing on violent extremists, or foreign governments that are spreading misinformation.

[Translation]

**Mr. René Villemure:** The topic before us this morning is the impact of disinformation and misinformation on the work of parliamentarians.

Ms. Giles and Mr. Basler, what public policy recommendations would you make to parliamentarians to help them avoid the harmful effects of malinformation, disinformation and misinformation?

• (1130)

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** That's another very good question.

Again, I will highlight the importance of ensuring that public information is properly understood and properly used.

[English]

This in order to ensure that parliamentarians understand the threats and are able to ensure their protection against them.

I would also encourage the continued engagement between the security and intelligence sector and the Government of Canada with parliamentarians to ensure those briefings continue to take place. That is certainly a focus for CSIS. There are some public policy gaps that exist, including in the CSIS Act and the legislation that the government has introduced. Bill C-70 will go some way in helping to address those gaps.

[Translation]

**Mr. René Villemure:** Could you send us some written examples of public policies that we could study in order to reduce the impacts? Bill C-70 has not yet been passed. What does CSIS suggest?

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** We would be very pleased to provide you with that information.

[English]

Much of what you'll see is the advice that has been manifested, both from CSIS as well as from what we heard from Canadians when we conducted consultations over several months on proposed changes to the CSIS Act. That's reflected, currently, in Bill C-70.

The changes that are being proposed to the CSIS Act, especially as they relate to enhancing our ability to provide information and intelligence outside the federal government, will help further build the resilience of parliamentarians and Canadians.

[Translation]

**Mr. René Villemure:** Thank you.

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

[English]

We're going to go to Mr. Green now for six minutes.

Go ahead, Mr. Green.

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Thank you very much.

I'd like to pick up on my friend Mr. Villemure's line of questioning. Ms. Giles, you mentioned that there are some policy gaps in Bill C-70 and that Bill C-70 had addressed some of those. Can you identify what the gaps are, what gaps you feel have been addressed, and which gaps remain?

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** Thank you very much for the question, and it's nice to see you again, although virtually.

The fundamental challenge is that the CSIS Act tool kit is old and predates the digital age. That's why it urgently needs to be updated. The conversation we've been having, where the milieu, for example, of misinformation is focused on social media, speaks to how big those gaps are and the challenge in having it predate the digital age. The information sharing to build resilience on threats outside the government in Canada is one of the largest gaps that we see, and that's also what we heard from Canadians. That, we believe, is very well addressed in Bill C-70.

The other challenge that we're experiencing is that there are some gaps in CSIS's ability to operate in a digital world. For example, we are missing some modern investigative techniques that most of our Five Eyes intelligence partners have in addition to law enforcement, such as production and preservation orders. Those are also being proposed as part of Bill C-70, as well as closing the foreign intelligence gap that's currently created by the borderless nature of data.

We'd be very happy to give a more in-depth briefing to parliamentarians on the elements of the CSIS Act that are included in Bill C-70. We did so a couple of weeks ago, but we'd be very pleased to have another session.

**Mr. Matthew Green:** I'm to take it that you're not necessarily identifying further gaps for fear that it may compromise the service in some way, or did I just miss that?

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** No, there is, I think, a constant opportunity to improve the legislation, policy principles, policies, procedures and programs that we have in place. We need to constantly be learning and adapting.

**Mr. Matthew Green:** Ms. Giles, respectfully, that is a lot of words. I'm going to ask you a question for the purpose of the committee. I don't say that disrespectfully, but I'm trying to elicit a direct answer from you. It is this: What recommendations would you provide to this committee that we could provide to that process to help strengthen it against the threat of foreign interference, given the context of this study?

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** With regard to helping counter the threat of foreign interference, I'll go back to my opening remarks. The biggest defence we have is to ensure that there is awareness and sufficient information, so that parliamentarians and Canadians can identify the threat and know how to defend themselves against it. It's that awareness piece, that constant engagement piece.

• (1135)

**Mr. Matthew Green:** In relation to that awareness, there were, I think, some identified gaps in responding to individual parliamentarians being notified that they were targeted. Has that since been corrected? Is that something that has been addressed, or have you updated your policies in terms of when parliamentarians might be identified as being the targets of foreign interference?

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** I think the reference is to the ministerial directive that was issued last year, which encouraged CSIS to continue to engage and brief parliamentarians. We have been taking a different approach as the attention on this issue has increased, and we've diverted some increased resources to that. However, I would stress that we were, and always have been, briefing parliamentarians on threats.

I think how threats are perceived is sometimes a bit misunderstood in terms of when things reach a threat to the security of Canada as defined by the CSIS Act, and that's when it becomes our responsibility.

**Mr. Matthew Green:** That's fair. I appreciate that.

We've spent a lot of time talking about the threat actors targeting Canadian parliamentarians. Can you speak about any work you may have encountered or thoughts you may have on corporate interference? What I mean by that is this: While it is true that state actors and non-state actors, violent extremists and others that you have identified might use these tools on certain political agendas, ideologically extreme agendas, has there been any thought on where multinational corporations also use misinformation, disinformation and malinformation for the purposes of their pecuniary interests, their financial gains? I reference the kind of money that's put in through a lot of back channels, astroturf campaigns, online campaigns, etc. I know I get targeted by them myself around the oil and gas sector as it relates to climate change denial.

Is there any thought about corporate actors in relation to foreign interference?

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** That's another very thoughtful question.

One thing we try to recall is that the People's Republic of China does not really distinguish between private companies that operate from within China, state-owned enterprises, and using whatever means they can to try to further the strategic objectives of the Communist Party of China.

We see corporate actors out of the PRC using all means and various techniques at their disposal to try to further the objectives of the Communist Party of China.

One thing is, when it comes to the more criminal-related aspects of that, it falls outside the CSIS mandate.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Green and Ms. Giles. That completes our first round of questioning.

We're going next to Mr. Brock for five minutes.

Go ahead, sir.

**Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC):** Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the witnesses for their attendance today.

Kenny Chiu, former Conservative member for Steveston—Richmond East, testified twice at committee. I believe they were both at the ethics committee.

The first time he appeared, on March 31, 2023, he didn't provide any specifics other than to make a very bold statement saying that foreign meddling, particularly from Beijing, China, played a role in his defeat.

The Liberal candidate, MP Parm Bains, who won the election, was spoken to by the press afterward. He was asked whether or not foreign interference played a role in his election. He was very emphatic in saying no, not at all, while simply walking away from the cameras. Again, Mr. Chiu did not provide any specifics in relation to Mr. Bains.

He did, however, do that on April 30, 2024. Mr. Chiu said:

Now, let me introduce my former opponent. In my view, his ascent to power was paved with disinformation. Perhaps it was through a calculated strategy or, at the very least, he was a willing participant in a now proven disinformation campaign. He willingly embraced and propagated accusations targeting Conservatives, including our then leader Erin O'Toole and me, accusing Conservatives of racism and of harbouring anti-Asian sentiments. Exploitative and manipulative, these allegations linked to foreign states reverberated through biased media channels and chat groups.

Further on, Mr. Chiu said, with respect to Mr. Bains:

He publicly pledged to the Chinese audience that he would not support a foreign influence registry. This promise directly contradicted the then minister of public safety's announcement back in 2022 and 2023.

During my intervention, I asked for more specifics. Mr. Chiu said that Mr. Bains had propagated, elevated and amplified this misinformation. He said:

From what I've gathered, it was by attending radio interviews and community events where he publicly announced that he was not going to support what he called this "anti-Asian foreign interference registry". There was zero clarification as to what exactly Bill C-282, which I had proposed, would have done. There was no mention of any country whatsoever. The fact is that it was to inject transparency into political lobbying activities, but these subtleties and intricacies were not clarified during those opportunities. By doing that, and by not helping me to clarify my character, he perpetuated and continued the assassination attempts.

This was very specific language. Was that relayed to CSIS?

• (1140)

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** As you can imagine, CSIS does follow the media, as most Canadians do.



For the specific question that you're asking about, the unclassified summaries of these incidents that were released by us as part of the PIFI commission do speak to this.

I think I would also stress that the panel of five for both federal elections did make a determination that the detection of foreign interference did not threaten Canada's ability to have a free and fair election in a way that warranted public communication.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** I'm not challenging that. I'm simply asking this: Did he share those specifics of what I read out to you? Did he complain about that to CSIS during the 2021 campaign? Yes or no?

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** I am not personally aware of that.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Thank you.

Chair, at this time I'm moving a motion. I believe Madam Clerk has received it via email in both official languages.

I have several copies for distribution, which I can pass to the clerk.

**The Chair:** Okay. Go ahead and read your motion, Mr. Brock.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Thank you.

The motion reads:

That, as part of the study agreed to by the committee on February 13, 2024, the study be extended to examine the actions of the MP for Steveston—Richmond East during the 2021 election.

**The Chair:** For clarity, how many meetings are you looking to do here, Mr. Brock? That might help the committee in its—

**Mr. Larry Brock:** I would say that, probably, one to two meetings would suffice.

**The Chair:** The motion is in order. It's in relation to the study.

Have you distributed that, Madam Clerk, to...?

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Nancy Vohl):** Give me a second.

**The Chair:** I'm going to go back to you, Mr. Brock, but I'm going to suspend for a minute so that members of the committee can have this motion.

Mr. Kurek, I see your hand.

I ask our witnesses, if they can, to stay where they are. Perhaps we can dispose of this quickly, but I'm going to suspend for a minute to give—

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** Mr. Chair, I'd also like to be on the speaking list.

**The Chair:** I have you after Mr. Kurek.

Thank you.

• (1140)

(Pause)

• (1145)

**The Chair:** Everyone, I call the meeting back to order.

The motion, as proposed by Mr. Brock, has been moved.

For the benefit of the committee, Mr. Brock, I do need to seek clarification on whether you're asking for...

**Mr. Larry Brock:** I'm going to err on the side of caution and ask for two meetings, Chair.

**The Chair:** Okay, so you're going to ask for up to two meetings. It's just because, as you know, we like working on timelines and being very specific.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Yes.

**The Chair:** The motion has been moved.

Mr. Brock, you have the floor.

Right now the list that I have is Brock, Kurek, Khalid and Bains.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** I'm sorry, Chair, but if you want to switch Bains and Khalid, that would be awesome.

**The Chair:** Okay, so I have Bains, Khalid, and I saw your hand, Mr. Fisher.

• (1150)

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** Yes, that's right.

**The Chair:** I don't expect that we're going to get through this quickly, given the list that we have, but we'll see how far this goes. I ask for your patience, please, Ms. Giles.

I go to Mr. Brock to start. Mr. Brock, you have floor on the motion, but first I have Mr. Kurek on a point of order.

Go ahead, Mr. Kurek.

**Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC):** The witnesses mentioned, I believe, that they had printed off some information. Regardless of what happens for the rest of the meeting, I ask, Chair, if you can ensure that members get the information that the witnesses referred to. I believe there are some packages. I can see some there—I believe those are the ones that were referred to. Can you make sure that committee members do, in fact, get them?

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Kurek. I will make sure that the clerk looks after that.

Mr. Brock, you have the floor on the motion. Go ahead.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Thank you, Chair.

I'm mindful of the comments of my colleague Ms. Khalid in terms of having these witnesses present. I'm very doubtful that I will be in a position to cede my opportunity to speak on this motion within the next 40 minutes, which I believe will coincide with the ringing of the bells. Nevertheless, things could change.

In any event, should my motion pass, I will just offer this as an observation. Clearly, key witnesses in my motion will be members of CSIS—very likely, Ms. Giles and Mr. Basler—getting into more specifics of how Mr. Bains furthered and propagated the disinformation originating from Beijing, China. It really begs the question: If it happened in that particular riding, did it happen in other Mainland B.C. ridings?

We know that other members of the Conservative Party have levied accusations of foreign interference. I have heard and read of those accusations at a very general level. I think some of those former members have actually testified at committee how they felt foreign meddling and foreign interference, particularly from Beijing, China, altered their perception of fairness in the 2021 election and, in some cases, the 2019 election.

I think what I can say as fact—I believe this is the position of CSIS; it's certainly the position of former Conservative leader Erin O'Toole, and it's certainly the position of the Prime Minister and the government—is that regardless of the interference, the results of the election were sustained, there was integrity and it would not have altered the composition of government.

Our former leader, Erin O'Toole, has surmised that, in his opinion, interference affected the outcome in at least eight ridings. I know of one in central Ontario and several in British Columbia. Therefore, I think it's incumbent upon this particular committee, on this particular study, to expand its ambit to do a really in-depth review and examination by hearing from various experts on this matter as to why and how the messages of misinformation and disinformation were amplified and used specifically against Conservative members.

I take, for example, former member Kenny Chiu. As I indicated in my opening question to the CSIS members, Mr. Chiu testified twice. The first time he testified, he just talked about his perceptions that foreign interference impacted the outcome, without naming anybody. I was part of that particular committee hearing, and I was intrigued, listening to his testimony.

In fact, there was an intervention by my colleague Mr. Villeure—he may not remember this, but I'm sure he does—when he actually opened up a thought as to whether or not Mr. Bains is now in a conflict of interest by sitting at that committee and specifically hearing about his riding and the interference that happened in his riding, where he took absolutely no steps to correct the misinformation and disinformation, but did something even further, which I think undermines the character of Mr. Bains. He amplified it. He took that wrong, incorrect message and used it for purely partisan reasons.

It's appalling. As a parliamentarian, we come to this position, we come to this office and we come to Ottawa maintaining integrity, honesty and character.

● (1155)

I believe in the concept of fair play. I teach that to my children. Taking advantage of someone's miscues is not acceptable.

In this case, it was taking advantage of a foreign entity, a foreign enemy and a communist government that wanted to maintain diplomatic relations with the Liberal government of Canada notwithstanding that, at the time, the two Michaels—two Canadian citizens—were wrongly detained.

We have evidence of many members of the PRC stationed here in Canada openly bragging about and supporting the concept that their foreign interference worked. They got the outcome they wanted: They got the Liberal government in power again, and they got

into the position where a prime minister says one thing to the public and does the complete opposite in reality.

The Prime Minister talks about the integrity of this country and how our elections need to be fair and transparent, and he says that we have mechanisms in place to deal with foreign interference. Clearly, those mechanisms failed miserably, but what does that say to the Canadians who are now listening to my intervention? What does that say about the character of a Prime Minister who, in the lead-up to the 2015 campaign, openly bragged about his admiration of the basic dictatorship in China?

We are a democratic nation. I can't think of anything worse from a potential prime minister than the admiration of the suppression of human rights and a nation that illegally detains and executes its own citizens. Think of Tiananmen Square and the aftermath of that debacle on the world stage; our Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, was very proud of the administration in China for committing those abuses.

It's absolutely appalling, but it runs deep in his family. His father admired basic dictatorships and admired China and Cuba. His brother admired that, as well. When we heard from his brother, Alexandre Trudeau, at committees studying the Trudeau Foundation issue, it was very clear that he had been on a number of trips to China and was welcomed by the government of China. It's clear from all the evidence I have heard that China has no relationship more special than its current relationship with the Liberal government here in Canada, and in particular with the Prime Minister.

I look, as well, at the genesis of this motion to see all the overt attempts by Justin Trudeau and his government to avoid having any study, inquiry or thorough examination into the extent that foreign interference was involved in the 2019 and 2021 elections.

Take a look at all the times these issues came up and, of course, the Liberal members exercised all of their tools to avoid any sort of study or any further examination. Take a look at the Prime Minister himself, who talks about the integrity and the fairness of elections but, when it comes to scrutinizing his actions and those of the government, says, "There's nothing to see here, Canadians. Just trust us. Trust that we have a robust system in place to detect, flag and suppress the influence of our enemies and keep our elections fair and square."

● (1200)

However, when it comes time for asking repeatedly—as Conservatives did, supported by the Bloc—for a full inquiry into all the circumstances, we were met with the complete opposite from this government. Only at the very last opportunity did Justin Trudeau finally accede to the will of Parliament in asking for sunlight on this issue.

What did he do before that? He hired his special rapporteur, someone who had the most respect of all Canadians and whose judgment we would not dispute for one minute. To that, I say yes. Yes, our former Governor General has that position in history. He's earned it. He is a man of integrity. He has served this nation very well. In fact, anecdotally, he is a former president of my University at Waterloo. He was a lawyer, a law professor and a dean.

That's what bothered me when I was invited—and I was privileged to be invited—to committees where David Johnston actually had to testify and defend his initial report. I say “initial”, because he ultimately resigned before he tabled his final report.

However, to all the lawyers sitting on this committee, on the question of conflict of interest and bias, it's not only real bias or real conflict of interest; it's the perception of a conflict of interest. When we had evidence, evidence that still exists, that there was a close familial relationship between our former Governor General and the Trudeau family, that they lived fairly close to each other, vacationed with each other and dined with each other, it raised, from a legal perspective, the perception of conflict.

When I had an opportunity to raise these issues directly with the former Governor General, I was actually surprised, as a lawyer and listening to his understanding of the conflict, that it wasn't an issue to him. I understand it's not an issue to him, but it certainly was an issue to Canadians. It was an issue for parliamentarians that a conflict does not abate over time. It still exists.

Of all the esteemed and learned remarkable men and women who have served this country well in various positions, why did we have to choose David Johnston, given the baggage that existed between him and Justin Trudeau's family?

• (1205)

**The Chair:** Mr. Brock, I'm going to just ask you to pause. You still have the floor. The normal time when this panel would have ended would have been 12:05, and I would have been dismissing the witnesses. Therefore, I'm going to, given the list I have and the—

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** We still have questions, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Do you want them to stay?

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** I would appreciate that.

**A voice:** I have questions.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** I know. We're hoping this matter ends quickly.

**The Chair:** I have a speaking list on this motion.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** That's right. It's just unfortunate—

**The Chair:** Let me defer to the witnesses.

Mr. Basler and Ms. Giles, are you able to stay while the committee...?

**Dr. Nicole Giles:** We are at the disposal of the committee, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Brock. You still have the floor.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** I was talking about my interventions when our Governor General appeared and defended his report. Leaving aside the conflict issue, because I think I made my point on that, he didn't see it the way that parliamentarians, particularly in opposition, and Canadians saw it, that there was an actual and a perceived conflict of interest.

Did it come to anyone's surprise across Canada that his recommendations and his conclusions—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Mr. Brock, to interrupt you again.

I see that the bells have begun ringing.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** You have UC from our side, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Do we have UC to continue?

**Mr. Larry Brock:** There's no UC here.

**The Chair:** Okay. I'm sorry—I don't have UC.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** I think it's very important. You don't need 30 minutes to vote.

**The Chair:** I don't have UC, so we are going to suspend the meeting until the votes, and then we're going to return.

Thank you.

**Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Can we go for 20 minutes? Do we still have time to go vote?

**The Chair:** I need unanimous consent, Mr. Fisher. Those are the rules.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** The Conservatives are giving UC on their own motion.

**The Chair:** We don't have UC. It doesn't matter who gives it. We don't have UC, so the meeting is suspended.

• (1205)

(Pause)

• (1255)

**The Chair:** We will resume the meeting. I'm sorry for the disruption.

Mr. Brock, when we left, you had the floor. Go ahead, sir, on the motion.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Thank you, Chair.

As much as I would like to continue my narrative, I'm mindful of the clock. At this point, I'll move to adjourn the meeting.

**The Chair:** Okay. Mr. Brock moves to adjourn the meeting. It's not to be discussed. It's a dilatory motion. Do we have consensus to adjourn the meeting?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Chair:** We don't have consensus, so I'm going to ask the clerk for the roll call.

(Motion negated: nays 6; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** Mr. Brock, you have the floor. Go ahead.

• (1300)

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** No. I'm sorry, Chair, but on a point of order or clarification, because Mr. Brock moved that motion, would it not go to the next speaker?

**The Chair:** That's correct. I'm sorry. You're right.

Go ahead, Mr. Kurek. You have the floor, sir.

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate the motion my colleague has moved. I think it highlights something that has been, shall we say, referenced and insinuated, and I'm glad that we're able to talk about it very directly.

I want to back up for a brief moment. One of the challenges that exist in talking about election interference and some of the very troubling circumstances, whether it be the Hogue report, which certainly was very enlightening, or the circumstances around other examples of election interference, is when the Prime Minister makes a declaration saying that there wasn't an issue with either the 2019 election or the 2021 election and that their integrity was preserved, etc. Something that has failed to be acknowledged is that it is, interestingly, a very American type of statement, because it speaks not to our system but rather to a system that is so often reflected in the narrative that defines much of the political commentary in Canada. That's because there is not one election in Canada.

In the case of the current and previous two Parliaments, there were 338 separate elections. We don't elect a president. We don't elect a prime minister. It may be a shock to those who are listening that I would make a statement like that. However, it is by convention that the prime minister is the leader of the government. There's a host of history as to why that's the case, and there have been constitutional challenges, but it's more or less the evolution of 800 or so years of Westminster-style democracy.

What is deeply troubling, and the reason I want to highlight a few of those specific things, is that we have a statement that there wasn't interference in the election. Well, let's look at some of the rules surrounding what an election is. There are the financial rules. All of us around this table, as members of Parliament and as those who have been involved in the process of running in an election, would have had our names on a ballot once, at the very least, and some of us more than that. Whether we were successful or unsuccessful, we would understand some of the dynamics around finances and the rules around advertising and the various.... We've talked fairly at length about some of those things.

I think one of the intricacies of our system that needs to be highlighted in the context of what we are talking about here is the need to understand an election race in the context of a larger general election. That's why they're called general elections in Canada. There is a dissolving of Parliament, and there cease to be members of Parliament. That Parliament literally ceases to exist. In fact, the constitutional clarity around that is pretty direct.

For any of us who have been in that circumstance, we understand that there are changes that do, in fact, take place. Then, in the case of the current Parliament and the previous two, there are 338 elections that take place to elect members to create a Parliament. Then there are some nuances around by-elections, when somebody either resigns or passes away, as we've seen tragically. There have been a number of those circumstances over the last number of Parliaments. Those dynamics exist.

I think it was absolutely irresponsible of our Prime Minister to make such a definitive statement that was simply not true. The Hogue inquiry made that point explicitly clear. I'll get into a few of the specifics and highlight some of the frustrations that certainly I and many of my constituents, who reach out to me on a regular basis, have when it comes to how the Prime Minister approaches things that would put his political circumstances at risk versus those of his adversaries. I'll get to that in a few minutes.

It needs to be highlighted—and for all those watching, I would emphasize this—that when one of those 338 elections is called into question, it causes questions to be asked about the entire system.

• (1305)

Now, the allegations have been very clearly articulated. My colleague Mr. Brock did a good job of outlining that in the constituency of Steveston—Richmond East, but there are a number of other circumstances. Parliament is an interesting place. You get to know people. I know, having gotten to know Mr. Chiu over the time he served as an MP, including hearing from him how his stance to protect democracy was weaponized against him by malicious forces. However, there were a number of other examples.

Can one definitively point to a specific instance and say that was the turning point? It would be incredibly difficult. Quite frankly, it would be irresponsible to do so, in the same way that it would be irresponsible to claim that there was no influence.

Therein lies the key, Chair. We have to take seriously these allegations, because when one vote is compromised, it calls into question the entire system. I think—

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** I have a point of order, Chair.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Mr. Kurek.

Go ahead on your point of order, Mr. Barrett.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** There was closure notice given in the House, so I think at 1:25 p.m. we'll have bells again. I just wonder if there might be consensus to dismiss our witnesses. There might not be.

I imagine that you have a speaking list there, Chair. I know that we can't debate whether or not to dismiss them, but perhaps you have consensus on this, out of appreciation for their having been here today.

**The Chair:** I appreciate that, Mr. Barrett. I do have a speaking list. I did ask the witnesses earlier their availability. They said they were at the disposal of the committee, but we do have a time allocation motion, as you say.

The bells will start ringing at 1:25. We have resources until 1:30, just to let everybody know.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** I thought we had resources until two o'clock, Chair. That's what we understood.

**The Chair:** Madam Clerk, do you want to answer that? My understanding was that it was 1:30 p.m.

We've now had it confirmed that it was 1:30 p.m.

I will ask for unanimous consent to relieve the witnesses.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** Mr. Chair, I'd like to speak to that same point of order, if I may.

We've been waiting. We have questions for our witnesses. It's not every day that we have such esteemed witnesses come to our committee on this very important topic. I'm hoping we'll move through this motion. I'm not understanding why members are filibustering their own motion here.

I'm more than happy to finish this and move on to our witnesses.

**The Chair:** Mr. Kurek still has the floor, Ms. Khalid. Nothing will change that unless he gives up the floor, so I will continue.

I will ask again, based on Mr. Barrett's request, whether the committee agrees to release the witnesses.

**An hon. member:** Yes.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** No, Chair, we don't.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Khalid.

We will continue with Mr. Kurek.

I thank the witnesses again for their patience and for being at the disposal of the committee.

Mr. Kurek, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Thanks very much, Chair.

It's just an interesting observation that when I, along with a number of those sitting around this table, had joined to be a part of the meeting last week, the Liberals certainly didn't seem very interested in working during the break week.

I digress on that point. I'll get back to the subject matter at hand.

As I was saying, when it comes to the integrity of our elections, it was incredibly irresponsible for the Prime Minister to make the assertion that he did. I don't know whether that was an intentional deflection. I don't know whether that was ignorance of what may have been happening under his watch. I, and certainly many, have postulated about why he may have said those things.

The evidence has become increasingly clear that the direct benefactor of some of these very serious instances of interference that did have a noted effect.... Did that change the results of the election?

We cannot make clear, definitive statements about the totality of that, but what is absolutely clear is that it did have an effect. As a result, the trust in the entire electoral process is compromised, especially when it is not taken seriously.

Chair, we have before us a number of seats—it's been said that it could be as many as eight seats—where there was a noted effect of the difference between being...that a hostile foreign actor, whether it's the Communist dictatorship in Beijing or others.... I know there have been a number of other instances where other states and quasi-state organizations have had an impact in endeavouring to influence the outcome of elections.

I think that the fact that it was so flippantly disregarded cannot be ignored. When we have such clear evidence when it comes to the riding in question in the Lower Mainland, where we've heard the testimony and we've seen the reporting, it is difficult to dispute the fact that it had an impact on the rights.... It does not come down to who sits in Parliament, necessarily. That's the result, but it comes down to whether or not Canadians are truly able to exercise their franchise.

I would suggest to you that when those circumstances are called into question, it constitutes a direct threat to our democratic institutions because at the very basis of what our democracy is, it comes down to trust. We have to be able to trust the process. We have to be able to trust the institutions. We have to be able to trust that when you go into that voting booth and mark your ballot, not only your vote, but also each and every vote in that electoral district, multiplied by 338 in the case of where we are in this Parliament—I believe it will be 343 in the next Parliament, with a few seats added—will be counted. You have to be able to trust that.

I would suggest that the conversation and this motion are so incredibly valuable because we have to be willing to ask the tough questions. Whether it's in the Lower Mainland in B.C. or whether it's the vote that every Canadian has the opportunity to cast in each and every electoral district across our country, not having that trust and not being able to have some of those difficult conversations erode our ability to address the challenges our system is clearly facing.

Chair, when it comes to the specifics around misinformation and disinformation, I'm glad we're able to have some of these conversations, because being able to confront that head-on is absolutely key.

I would note specifically that when dealing with the circumstances surrounding the Communist dictatorship in Beijing, it became so very clear that there was a concerted effort to have.... One political party in particular was a specific benefactor of those efforts.

● (1310)

That's not simply me talking. That's a clear consensus of what has been derived from the many conversations, whether they be testimony before a number of committees, the reporting that's been done on it or Justice Hogue's report. It is very clear that that's the case, yet when the Prime Minister, who has the first....

What should be the foremost responsibility of a prime minister is not their political fortunes. Now, it may come as a surprise that a politician would say that, but I think the circumstances in which we find ourselves have muddied some of the waters surrounding the integrity that needs to be had in the entirety of the process. If we cannot have some of those difficult conversations, it allows for these instances to be amplified.

Talking about it is step one. The investigations, whether they're the Hogue report or otherwise, need to be an important step two. Ultimately, however, it needs to come down to addressing the challenges that were brought forward.

Here is where I would suggest we see one of the biggest failures of Justin Trudeau's leadership. When his political aspirations were possibly being compromised, he spared no expense. He was willing to step in immediately and make requests to see social media posts removed in order to silence anybody who might be amplifying that disinformation, yet—and this is what is so astounding—had he been consistent and made that the case for those seen as his political rivals, one could have respected the fact that he wanted integrity in the process.

However, he didn't. When it came to Mr. Chiu being called... For those watching, I cannot imagine the hell that Mr. Chiu and his family went through when he was being called a traitor to his race and being called anti-Chinese. He is somebody who is a proud Canadian of Chinese descent.

Can you imagine, Chair, your heritage being called into question? To see that there was such a flippant disregard for the impact that had on the integrity of our electoral process comes directly back to Canadians being empowered.

Chair, it won't be any surprise to you—and I know there are a number of other rural members who sit on this committee—that rural MPs spend a lot of time driving. I listened to a book over the course of the last constituency break, which was about, by and large, the construction of the railway across Canada and the role that played in stitching together the Confederation. I won't go into the details of that. It's a fascinating book.

What was very eye-opening was the reminder—I knew this, having remembered learning some of these things in high school—of how Chinese Canadians, specifically... The heritage of how many of them came to this country is not a positive story. There's the fact that multiple governments... I think it was Wilfrid Laurier's government that imposed a \$500 head tax on Chinese Canadians. I believe it was implemented right around the turn of the 20th century. There's that sort of legacy.

All of a sudden, in the case of Mr. Chiu, you have somebody with Chinese heritage who was able to attain elected office and then had the rug pulled out from under him, stopping him from being able to have a fair fight. Nobody runs for office knowing that they'll win. If they do, they certainly have the wrong attitude, because whether they're so-called safe seats or swing seats, or whatever the case is—whatever commentators would suggest—no parliamentarian....

Certainly, I would never take for granted any electoral result, because it comes back to the people. It comes back to making sure that people, Canadians, are able to have their voices heard.

• (1315)

We see how the Prime Minister took quick and immediate action when it had to do with his political fortunes, but he either refused or delayed action when it came to those who might otherwise.... What creates such a concerning trend is this: When it comes to the actions of... That's not an isolated incident. In fact, it was astounding. Not only is there a series of things that suggest the Trudeau Liberals have been soft on the Communist dictatorship in Beijing, but there's also a whole host of reasons as to why some of those troubling allegations seem to be ringing true.

Specifically, I would highlight that a motion was brought forward in the House for a vote. There was an opportunity to condemn the genocide of Uyghur Muslims, a minority group in China that has been persecuted relentlessly, with forced abortions, sterilizations and slave-type labour. We're talking the worst of the worst possible circumstances. What did the government do? There have been a number of opportunities. They have since hardened their tone. I would suggest it's the pressure that has been applied by Conservatives and many across our country, including diaspora groups. We had a minister of the Crown abstain. Not only was there an astounding lack of understanding of our parliamentary system—I won't get into too much detail in terms of how insulting, quite frankly, that was....

It speaks to an unwillingness to call out abuses that are so clear to the international community. Canada, at one point in time, could be trusted to be a leader in calling out those sorts of things, yet you had the Trudeau Liberals, out of fear of offending a dictatorship.... It's very clear that the current Prime Minister, Mr. Trudeau, spoke about it prior to his election. There was an admiration for...but also has continued in the.... That's not me simply saying things. He said that very thing when asked what country he admires. He could have said anything. He could have even prefaced that by giving caveats. You can look at the quote. It's absolutely astounding.

Chair, we see how, in that instance and so many others, there was a refusal to take firm action. Leadership requires making hard choices. Unfortunately, when it comes to many of the hard choices when dealing with the seriousness of protecting our democratic infrastructure, the Liberals are found wanting. It's unfortunate that there seems to be this unwillingness to have some of these tough conversations. It's not for a lack of possibilities in terms of fixing the problem. I would suggest, Chair, that leadership is at the root of how we fix those things. We need leadership as a nation. We need leadership collectively, as parliamentarians. There are 338 MPs who make up Parliament. It is the government that is then subject to Parliament. It is not the other way around. It is quite something when you have members of the government unwilling to take a strong stand.

I think about previous prime ministers who have taken very strong stands, whether it was former prime minister Harper when he refused to shake Vladimir Putin's hand, telling that evil man to get out of Ukraine a decade ago.... When it comes to—

• (1320)

**The Chair:** I'm sorry to interrupt you, Mr. Kurek, but I do see that the bells are ringing to signal 30 minutes until the votes.

I am going to need unanimous consent from the committee to—

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** You have our consent, Chair.

**The Chair:** I'll explain the problem I have, but first I'll get unanimous consent to continue until at least 1:30.

**An hon. member:** No.

**The Chair:** Okay. We don't have unanimous consent.

The challenge we're facing right now is that we have resources until 1:30, but we don't have unanimous consent to continue. The bells will take us to 1:55, which means that we'll effectively be out

of time at 1:30, so as a result of the lack of resources, I have no other option but to adjourn the meeting.

Thank you.

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