



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 132

Thursday, November 28, 2024

Chair: Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer



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• (1555)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer (Mississauga—Malton, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 132 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format.

I'd like to remind all participants of the following points.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. All comments should be addressed through the chair.

Members, please raise your hand if you wish to speak, whether participating in person or via Zoom. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can.

Ms. O'Connell, you had your hand up.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

I don't want to interrupt proceedings, so I hope we can take care of this very quickly. I would like at this time to move my motion:

That the committee summon Mayor Patrick Brown to testify alone for no less than two hours on the study of Indian interference, and that he appear before Tuesday, December 10, 2024.

I'll quickly speaking to that, Mr. Chair. We have spoken about this before. This notice has been on the record for quite some time. I don't want to take away from our important witnesses and testimony, but because we have discussed this previously, I think it's important that we deal with this motion in order to be able to summon this witness and get him scheduled so we can continue with this.

Hopefully we can handle this quickly. I would like a recorded vote.

The Chair: We have a motion on the floor.

Ms. Dancho, go ahead.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am just reviewing some of this and looking at past witnesses who have been summoned, for example, Ms. Lauren Chen. Certainly she seemed to be, from the indictment, the receiver of \$10 million from Russia to further Russian propaganda. That seemed quite severe. Kristian Firth certainly was summoned and ultimately looked to have been defrauding the taxpayer of millions of dollars.

I'm not aware that we are accusing Mr. Brown of any wrongdoing. I am not familiar with whether the Liberal members are or not, but it would just seem that this is quite a significant sledgehammer of a tool to use on someone who I don't believe is being accused of anything. Certainly we agree with inviting him to committee. That's why we voted in favour of that. However, to use a summons.... I'm not sure, Mr. Chair, and perhaps you could consult with the clerk. Has a summons been used in this way? I'm not very clear on that. It just would seem from our perspective that this is quite an abuse of this tool in this regard, given my knowledge of those who have been summoned.

Those are my opening comments, Mr. Chair, and I would appreciate it if you could provide a response.

The Chair: I'm being told that an invitation was given to Mr. Brown, and he declined. Alternative dates were provided, and there was no reply. That's why I think this motion is before us.

Mr. Sarai, I have you next on the list.

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Thank you.

Having sat as the chair in justice, I think there is a precedent once somebody has refused to testify. If the committee so wills, they can subpoena the person. It's not to say there was any wrongdoing. It's a matter of getting the witness here if the committee decides that it's very important and vital to have that person as a witness.

I don't think this committee decides or any committees decide if somebody's guilty of anything. It's an investigative tool and a reporting tool. Never is the guilt the reason to subpoena somebody. It's to have them here and respond. As Parliament is paramount, I think it's very important that people respond to that and take it very seriously. If they don't respond in another manner, I think a subpoena is an appropriate method.

• (1600)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sarai.

I have Mr. Uppal as the next speaker.

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Maybe it's a point of order, or maybe it's more of a request, but we do have witnesses who have travelled to be here. I understand that just recently, our last witness has decided not to come due to the rescheduling, so we do have time at the end of this meeting to address this issue. If we could put this off until after the witnesses are done, we could address this as well. We would respect the witnesses and their time, and also this committee's time, if we were to deal with this motion after the witnesses.

The Chair: Ms. Dancho.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, I would just like to underline that I think this is quite disproportionate, given he's not being accused of anything. We're not sure why there's such aggressive action from the Liberals. I wonder. Perhaps Mr. Brown is just guilty of being a member of the Conservative Party and running for leadership, and they wish to punish him. It seems to be that way. Certainly, this is politically motivated—that's very clear—but regardless, it just seems very disproportionate to use this kind of tool, and we don't support that, Mr. Chair.

Thank you.

The Chair: I hear those comments, but we do have a motion on the floor. I have no one else on the speaking order. We'll move to a vote on the motion.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4)

The Chair: A summons will be sent to Mr. Patrick Brown.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted on October 22, 2024, the committee resumes its study of electoral interference and criminal activities in Canada by agents of the Government of India.

I'd like to now welcome our witnesses for the first hour.

As an individual, we have Mr. Ward P.D. Elcock, and, from the Sikh Federation of Canada, we have Prabjot Singh, legal counsel.

I now invite Mr. Elcock to make an opening statement of up to five minutes.

Mr. Ward Elcock (Former Director, Canadian Security Intelligence Service, As an Individual): Mr. Chairman, I don't actually have an opening statement, but just for the benefit of the committee, since I'm usually introduced as a former director of CSIS, it might be useful for members of the committee to know a little more about my background.

Prior to becoming the director of CSIS, I was the senior lawyer in the Privy Council Office for 10 years. During that period, for four years I was deputy clerk of the Privy Council and coordinator for security and intelligence, which is the old title for the national security adviser. That title was changed as a consequence of 9/11, in part because our colleagues to the south never knew what a deputy clerk was, so they were never sure who they were talking to. That change was made post-9/11.

After CSIS, I had several national security-related posts, but they're not particularly relevant to this hearing, I assume.

I'd be happy to answer any questions that any of the members have.

The Chair: That's great. Thank you, Mr. Elcock.

A notice is sent before the committee convenes, obviously, with the names of the witnesses appearing. My hope is that members do look at the witnesses appearing and their bios.

I now invite Mr. Singh to make an opening statement of up to five minutes.

Mr. Prabjot Singh (Legal Counsel, Sikh Federation (Canada)): *Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa Waheguru Ji Ke Fateh.*

Before I begin, I want to acknowledge that we're meeting today on the unceded, occupied territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people. As a settler here, I'm grateful to the generations who have taken care of this land for thousands of years.

Over the past year and a half, particularly, we've heard a lot about Indian foreign interference and transnational repression. As legal counsel for Sikh organizations at the foreign interference commission, I had the opportunity to review government and intelligence documents and cross-examine officials across a broad spectrum of government departments.

Having reviewed that evidence and heard that testimony, one thing is unequivocally clear: India is in a category of its own in terms of its corrosive and violent actions in Canada. India has no equal or peer in this regard.

For years, India has misused its diplomatic and state resources to directly target the Sikh community in Canada. Its specific objectives are criminalizing political advocacy for an independent Sikh homeland, Khalistan, and marginalizing Sikhs from all parts of public life, regardless of their political opinions.

To achieve this objective, we've seen evidence of India discrediting party leaders using materials drafted by Indian intelligence, interference in the leadership race of the Conservative Party, the use of proxies to influence the issues that are raised in Parliament and cognitive warfare and disinformation tactics that demonize the Sikh community while also manipulating public narratives about political differences to reframe them as sectarian conflicts. One of the most subtle tactics is how India misuses its own security agencies, judiciary and diplomatic staff to provide a cover of legality in its persecution of Sikh activists.

Given this reality and the events over the past year and a half, it's important to acknowledge that Canada's security and intelligence community failed to detect the extent of India's activities until after the assassination of a pillar of our community. This was despite the experiences and complaints of the community for years before this attack.

The lack of public transparency and decisive action to combat Indian foreign interference in Canada until after it was already too late appears as though it's largely related to the fact that foreign policy considerations were given greater weight by Canadian decision-makers than the long-term domestic harms caused by foreign interference. This is something that's been echoed and reported by NSI-COP as well.

Media reporting regarding NSICOP's 2019 annual report in particular suggests that officials consciously redacted every single mention of India throughout the entire report, effectively hiding not only the significance of the threat but even the existence of a threat from India. The report actually details, according to media reporting, that the government chose not to dismantle an Indian intelligence network due to foreign policy priorities, to export pulses to India and, particularly, to ensure the success of the Prime Minister's trip to India in 2018.

This de facto impunity granted to Indian diplomats and intelligence operatives appears to have emboldened Indian officials to escalate their operations in this country. This ultimately paved the way for the assassination of Shahid Bhai Hardeep Singh Nijjar in June 2023.

There's work to do by this committee and across government to address vulnerabilities in Canada's capacity to detect and monitor Indian disinformation, to put an end to the abuse of redactions, to hide threats from the public inappropriately and to make meaningful changes to ensure that Canada doesn't allow foreign policy priorities to dictate the response to foreign interference.

It's also important to note that this is an institutional problem across successive Canadian governments, which have failed to address this issue year after year after year. The Sikh community has paid the ultimate price for this.

Despite the violence and the threats our community has faced, our community members remain resolute and steadfast. We've faced persecution, massacres and genocides throughout our history, simply for existing. India's targeting of our community today is simply the latest iteration of that.

Our community will continue to advocate for justice and engage in its right to advocate for a sovereign Khalistan. We will continue to stand up to tyrants and pursue justice for all oppressed peoples all around the world, no matter the cost. Shahid Bhai Hardeep Singh is a testament to that fact.

• (1605)

The question and the work before the committee today is on whether all parties sitting around this table can demonstrate the commitment to not allow our community to be used as a bargaining chip by India and can demonstrate the courage not only to call out India's actions unequivocally but to actually hold it accountable and make sure there are consequences for the violence inflicted.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Singh.

I will now open the floor to questions. First I have Mr. Uppal for six minutes.

Hon. Tim Uppal: Thank you very much.

I will start with the legal counsel for Sikh Federation Canada, Prabjot Singh.

Thank you for being here.

Obviously, from what you're outlining, there's a very serious situation with foreign interference from India. I know we heard from the RCMP about cases of intimidation—a lot of it to the Sikh community—violence, extortion, assassination and attempts on a number of other lives as well.

The Prime Minister admitted that they have known for a number of years about foreign interference from India, yet they failed to take action. They failed, frankly, to protect Canadians from that foreign interference.

There's one thing I want to start off asking you about. We have seen a significant amount of misinformation coming from India. We saw a lot of this during the farmers' protest a couple of years ago. Maybe most recently we saw this again with some of the unfortunate instances in Brampton. Have you tracked or seen this information? Also, what have you seen as the Canadian government's response to this disinformation coming from India?

• (1610)

Mr. Prabjot Singh: With regard to that disinformation issue and with regard to foreign interference more broadly, as I outlined, this is an institutional problem that's plagued successive governments for the last 40 years. There's evidence on the record in public media reporting and other government documents that India has been engaging in foreign interference and that there has been some degree of awareness of those activities in this country.

As you pointed out, the question of disinformation is particularly dangerous, not only because India's disinformation bolsters racist stereotypes about Sikhs and tries to paint the entire community as extremists and terrorists, but also because it is targeting Canadian institutions all across the board. Weldon Epp, the ADM for the Indo-Pacific, has noted that India has a massive potential to engage in this kind of disinformation activity.

You talked about the farmers' protest in particular. The rapid response mechanism that's housed in Global Affairs Canada started operating around that time. It noted that India was engaging in significant activity that was targeting Canadian officials, government officials and the Sikh community in particular.

In addition to this narrative of Sikhs being extremists or terrorists, I think one issue is that there is a concerted effort by Indian actors to paint political difference around issues of political rights in Punjab as a sectarian conflict. The RRM did actually observe in 2021 that pro-BJP outlets were trying to manufacture and amplify a narrative of tension between the Hindu and Sikh communities in the country, and that there was some degree of insecurity.

Earlier this year, in March 2024, CSIS provided a high-level security briefing in which it talked about the fact that India engages in foreign interference, particularly with its Hindu nationalist agenda at the forefront. One of its objectives is to target and marginalize Sikhs from political life in Canada altogether.

Therefore, the impacts of this foreign disinformation and this kind of interference are not only in terms of electoral interference; it also has corrosive impacts on social cohesion by trying to paint sectarian conflict in Canada where it doesn't actually exist.

In terms of the government's capacity and in terms of that rapid response mechanism, one of the most shocking things is that, in 2021, by the RRM's own account, its analysts, its employees and those involved in that project didn't actually have familiarity with non-western media ecosystems like India. It noted particularly that this makes Canada vulnerable to Indian disinformation and the amplification of those kinds of messages.

There's a lack of familiarity, then. There was an acknowledgement that this was the case. The mechanisms or methodology are particularly concentrated on mainstream messages or political leaders and are not actually trying to differentiate how Indian disinformation is targeting the community or acting in Canada particularly.

There's a methodology that's clearly ineffective. There's a lack of familiarity. Also, to my understanding, as of the spring of this year, there's nobody within the rapid response mechanism who even speaks Punjabi or Hindi, which are the languages of choice for Indian disinformation. Even broader than that, even within civil society, the Media Ecosystem Observatory, an academic resource to monitor disinformation, also doesn't have those resources.

We're looking at a country with a juggernaut of a media apparatus and social media capacities that is specifically and aggressively targeting Canada, and it doesn't look like Canada really has any mechanisms or capacity to monitor, understand, analyze and actually counter that disinformation.

• (1615)

Hon. Tim Uppal: Thank you for that.

I want to get back to something you said about the redaction of documents that clearly took out any notable incidents of Indian foreign interference.

Can you elaborate a bit on why you think that was the case or why that happened? Obviously, that alone would have, at the time, helped protect Canadians further, but it was taken out. No action was taken because of it.

Mr. Prabjot Singh: From the community's perspective, it's particularly shocking. As I said at the outset, it's not just that the gravity of the threat was consciously hidden from the community and

public. It was also the existence of this threat and how it operates in the first place.

We talked about how foreign interference by India has been happening for decades. In 2018, after the Prime Minister's trip to India, NSICOP published a special report that was meant to look into allegations of disinformation, particularly by Daniel Jean, who was the national security and intelligence adviser at the time. That report was meant to be a transparent mechanism for talking about and dealing with national security and intelligence issues. It talks about Indian intelligence targeting Canadian officials with disinformation in order to pressure the government to take law enforcement and security actions against Sikh activists in this country based on that disinformation. The report is significantly redacted and doesn't divulge very much detail about the nature of that disinformation campaign. It doesn't appear there was any assessment of the potential efficacy of that disinformation campaign in terms of manipulating or pressuring Canadian security and intelligence agencies. From the community's perspective, we have felt significant unwarranted activity on that front.

The more concerning part is this: After that, the 2019 NSICOP annual report is all about foreign interference and Canada's capacity to combat it. There are case studies dealing with Russia and China. For those cases, there's a summary of two to three sentences describing the nature of the information that was redacted. There's a case study of Russian foreign interference and one of Chinese foreign interference. Then there's a second section that talks about Canadian operations to counter that foreign interference. There's a third section that is completely redacted. All it says is that another country is targeting Canada for foreign interference.

Based on media reporting, I believe that Sam Cooper, in September of last year, reported getting access to an unredacted copy that outlines how, in 2016 and 2017, CSIS observed an Indian intelligence network operating and proliferating in Ottawa and Vancouver. Intelligence operatives were developing assets in those areas, engaging in intimidation and—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Singh. We're over time. Perhaps the next member can give you time to finish that answer.

Mr. Chahal, go ahead for six minutes, please.

Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for joining us today to provide testimony on this very important topic the committee is studying.

I'm going to start with you, Mr. Singh.

You made some comments in your opening statement regarding foreign interference, particularly in the Conservative leadership race.

Do you believe there was Indian interference in the Conservative leadership race?

Mr. Prabjot Singh: I think it's important to note and understand, based on Canadian intelligence's own observations, that India's foreign interference is pervasive at all levels of government and in all parties.

Just finishing off that last point, in that 2019 annual report where you're talking about electoral interference, the reporting is that when CSIS wanted to dismantle that intelligence network, the Government of Canada actually told CSIS to stand down and not take the action that it wanted to take to dismantle the intelligence network, because it was going to disrupt Canada's intention to export pulses. Also, it would have created complications and potentially kiboshed the Prime Minister's trip to India. That was a conscious decision that was taken at that time.

With regard to foreign interference in the Conservative leadership race, we saw that the NSICOP report in June of this year talks—I believe it's in paragraph 73—about intelligence reporting interference in the Conservative Party's leadership race.

If you go into the exhibits of the foreign interference commission, there is an intelligence assessment by CSIS—I believe it was in October 2022—that's heavily redacted. It talks about foreign interference by India in the leadership of a political party, which coincides with the Conservative Party's leadership race at that time.

Sam Cooper, who engaged in media reporting around this time, talks about getting exclusive access to an unredacted copy that goes into detail that India targeted the leadership race of the Conservative Party at that time, particularly by excluding a leadership candidate from the Conservative Party from attending any events that were being held by the Indian diaspora community, and the consulate in particular, because that individual had taken policy positions that were contrary to India's interests.

• (1620)

Mr. George Chahal: Are you aware of any concerns with the financial funding of individuals who ran in that leadership race or in nomination races before or after that in the Conservative Party of Canada?

Mr. Prabjot Singh: My understanding, based off Sam Cooper's reporting, is that there are Indian proxies who claimed or were observed to be engaging in illicit funding and buying party memberships to influence the outcome of that leadership race.

Mr. George Chahal: Most federal party leaders have had security clearance and have reviewed the documents. I believe the Bloc leader also has received a security clearance.

Do you believe that all leaders of Canadian political parties should get their security clearance? The only leader who hasn't is Mr. Poilievre of the Conservative Party of Canada.

Do you think this should be a requirement for a leader of a political party?

Mr. Prabjot Singh: This is something that was addressed by my colleagues who appeared earlier as well. It's our position that any federal party leader or any official who is able to get that access should get security clearance to be able to access information regarding the nature of the intelligence that Canadian agencies have about Indian foreign interference, because, as we discussed, it's in-

credibly pervasive; it's elusive, and it's at all levels of government for all parties. The only way to effectively combat that is to increase our situational awareness and even increase public awareness.

I would actually go even further than the security clearance for leaders by taking active steps to inform the broader public about the nature of Indian interference. The only way to combat it is if you're actually informed as well as you possibly can be to identify and note where those threats exist, so that you can take active steps to counter them and make sure they're not undermining Canadian institutions or targeting the community.

Mr. George Chahal: Mr. Elcock, I'm going to ask you the same question.

Do you believe that party leaders here in Canada should get their security clearance?

Mr. Ward Elcock: I think there are advantages for a party leader to have a clearance, clearly, for managing their own party and the members of their own party. I think that is probably a necessity. I certainly would recommend it.

Having said that, whether all party leaders require a clearance or not...I'm not sure that is a necessity.

Mr. George Chahal: If it were offered to a party leader, should they get it?

Mr. Poilievre has not received a security clearance. He is not aware of the actions of his members, on whom security agencies might have information that could be provided in those documents.

Do you think he should get a security clearance?

Mr. Ward Elcock: I can't understand, frankly, why the honourable Leader of the Opposition would choose not to get a clearance, given that there appears to be information about members of his party. However, at the end of the day, I can't read the honourable Leader of the Opposition's mind, so I don't know why he would choose not to.

Mr. George Chahal: Would the reason be that he doesn't want to know the truth of what's in those documents so he doesn't have to take action on members of the Conservative Party of Canada? Do you think that might be a reason?

Mr. Ward Elcock: That would just be speculation on my part. I have no contact with the Leader of the Opposition. I can't really comment on his motivations one way or the other.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chahal.

Next is Madame Michaud.

[Translation]

You have the floor for ten minutes.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In light of the questions so far, in the context of this study—which I think is essential—I find it unfortunate that parties are turning this into a partisan issue and taking advantage of the witnesses' presence to ask them whether or not a party leader should have security clearance. I think there are far more important questions to ask.

Mr. Elcock, you mentioned that you were the head of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service from 1994 to 2004, if I'm not mistaken. You didn't make an opening statement, so I'd like to give you a chance to tell us about that experience.

Several witnesses told us that there was foreign interference in elections by agents of the Government of India and that criminal activities had taken place on Canadian soil. I don't know how many years ago that was, but when you were in that position, was that something you were starting to see?

What difference do you see today? Has the situation gained momentum? We're seeing criminal activity, and the RCMP is holding press conferences to reveal certain aspects of ongoing investigations. It's almost unheard of.

Can you tell us about your experience and how you see things?

• (1625)

[*English*]

Mr. Ward Elcock: I think the answer to that question, frankly, is that there is more than there was when I was the director of CSIS, but it would be wrong to say that there was no foreign interference, or no evidence of foreign interference, at that time. There was foreign interference. There has always been foreign interference. It is, in effect, a result of our being a country of immigration. There has been foreign interference in many communities across the country over the years for a variety of reasons, either because foreign countries are concerned about the actions of their former citizens or because they see advantages in taking advantage of their former citizens in Canada.

There are different reasons for countries to engage in foreign interference, but it is not new. It has happened before. It will likely continue well into the future.

There are things we need to do about foreign interference. There were actions we took in that period, and I'm sure the service has also taken action in some cases to deal with the issues of foreign interference, but clearly it has gotten worse. It has gotten worse with respect to the Chinese and clearly in the case of India as well. India has become much more aggressive in recent years than it was in an earlier time, although they were active even when I was the director of the service.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you.

I would like you to provide a few more details. Why do you think India is increasingly aggressive in terms of its activities in Canada?

Is it related to the resurgence of the Sikh separatist movement or to attempts at a referendum on Khalistan independence, for example?

I know there's a large community of Indian origin in Canada, and India seems to want Canada to protect Indian diplomats more than Canadian citizens of Indian origin.

What are the reasons for this increased aggression by Indian government agents in recent years?

[*English*]

Mr. Ward Elcock: The answer to that question, in the case of both China and India, lies in the increasing role both of those countries play in the world and the greater sway they hold across the world. They have both become much more aggressive in terms of their foreign interference.

In the case of India, clearly the Modi government and its strong Hindu agenda has been an increasing challenge. I would, however, also make the comment that there is a history in this country of terrorism in a number of communities, and the Sikh community is one of the communities in which there were terrorist elements or extremist elements. As I said earlier, that does cause countries to have concern about the activities of their former citizens.

Is any of that activity being addressed at this point, properly or not? I really can't say, because, obviously, I no longer see secret intelligence, so I have no idea whether, in fact, there are still extremist activities within the Sikh community in Canada. Even if there were, none of that would justify the actions the Indians have taken in the last few years.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Michaud.

[*English*]

Mr. MacGregor, go ahead for six minutes.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to echo my colleagues and thank both of our witnesses for coming before our committee. Your testimony is quite valuable in dealing with this very sensitive and timely subject.

Mr. Elcock, I'd like to start with you. You were quoted last month in an iPolitics article, saying that "there was no reasonable justification for [the leader of the Conservative Party] not to pursue the security clearance", especially if it is being offered. We often hear his excuses that he doesn't want to be subject to a gag order. I personally think that's a red herring and a distraction.

From your perspective, and based on the expertise you have, could you offer this committee some insight on what a security clearance allows a federal party leader to do in terms of caucus management and in terms of ensuring that the sanctity of their own internal political party process is really taken care of? Can you offer some insights on the actions a leader could take?

Mr. Ward Elcock: I can't speak to the exact actions that the Conservative leader, the Leader of the Opposition, could take.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: What could any leader, theoretically or hypothetically, do with that information?

Mr. Ward Elcock: Clearly, that information, once provided, would not be information that the leader could provide, really, to anybody else who was not similarly cleared. Having said that, it could influence their actions and cause them to make choices they might not otherwise be able to make if they did not have access to the information.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Okay, I appreciate that.

Mr. Singh, we have learned a lot about how Indian intelligence agencies' operations in Canada are often in partnership with criminal organizations. The Bishnoi gang is one that has been mentioned.

I was wondering if you could offer this committee any insights on what your community has noticed in terms of that relationship. I know we have to address Indian intelligence activities, but could you maybe provide a bit more testimony on the organized criminal aspect of that relationship?

Mr. Prabjot Singh: I think at the outset it's important to understand, as I spoke about at the beginning, that India's objective is to criminalize Sikh advocates for Khalistan or other critics of the Indian government, particularly using this narrative of extremism and terrorism that has been unsubstantiated and baseless. Based on CSIS's own accounts and their submissions before the foreign interference commission, India does not differentiate between individuals engaged in lawful advocacy, protests and freedom of expression and those who may be believed to be engaging in or using force in the pursuit of Khalistan. India tries to use this national security construct to clamp down on political activism. That's something that's been echoed by the RCMP as well as Global Affairs.

When you bring in this element of organized crime, it's very shocking for a lot of Canadians, but it's important to understand that this has been the standard MO of Indian security agencies in using state-sanctioned and -facilitated criminals to do their bidding, whether that's to manufacture evidence or whether that's to intimidate folks. Particularly when we talk about disinformation, in the last several years we've seen a concerted effort by the Government of India to try to tar Khalistani activists in the Sikh community with this allegation of being interconnected with organized crime, and using gangsters themselves.

In reality, when we look at the case in the U.S. of the attempted assassination of Gurbhant Singh and what took place here in Canada, India has been using those organized crime networks to do its own bidding. At the same time, in terms of disinformation, we've seen and heard from the RCMP that a number of homicides took place in Canada in addition to the assassination of Bhai Hardeep Singh in June. There was also the murder of an individual named Sukhdool Singh in Winnipeg around that time. When you look at Indian media outlets, it was pretty much plastered, in every headline and in every outlet, that Sukhdool Singh was somehow related to Khalistani activism and was killed because he was a political activist. When you actually engage with communities on the ground, there is little to no familiarity with who this individual was in the first place.

I think this goes to something that CSIS spoke to in front of the foreign interference commission. India is seeking to increase its cyber capabilities and move beyond just disinformation campaigns to something called cognitive warfare. That's using neuroscience, technology and the Internet to not just confuse people with wrong information but actually engage in certain forms of aggression that manipulate and shape people's and the public's political opinions, outlooks and behaviours. There's a narrative around organized crime that India alleges against the community, for which there is

no basis, and the orchestration of violence, such as the homicide of Sukhdool Singh after trying to paint him as Khalistani activist, against a number of other individuals within Canada who are designated as so-called terrorists and who in reality don't actually have any interactions with the community.

• (1635)

The Chair: Thank you.

That completes the first round. We'll move on to the second round.

Mr. Genuis, you have five minutes.

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

Mr. Singh, you mentioned, and it's been reported elsewhere, that Indian foreign interference networks in Canada have operated for years and were left undeterred as a result of a political choice made by the government not to disrupt those networks. Is it correct that the government had information about these networks as early as 2016? Why did this government choose not to disrupt the activities of these networks?

Mr. Prabjot Singh: As I said earlier, this is an institutional problem of successive governments for the past four decades. There's been public reporting on this issue since as early as the 1980s, about Indian operatives intimidating community members here in Canada and interfering in media reporting as well as elections over the past 40 years—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I'm sorry. My time is tight. I want to give you the time, but I want to get through a few points.

In the last nine years.... I understand that there's a history here that goes back decades, but specifically there were networks, from what I understand, identified by CSIS in 2016. In 2017 there was a proposal brought to disrupt these networks. According to reporting we've heard from Sam Cooper, the government chose not to disrupt these networks.

Is that correct? Is that consistent with your—

Mr. Prabjot Singh: That is correct. When CSIS wanted to dismantle these networks, based on that public reporting about NSICOP's actual contents, the government chose not to engage in that action because it would disrupt its export and trade priorities with India and would also potentially jeopardize the Prime Minister's trip to India.

I think that gets to the root issue, which is that successive governments have failed to take action against India because they have looked at a marginalized visible minority that isn't seen to be "true Canadians" and that may have interests that are not the interests of the establishment, the state or that political party. There's also the prioritizing of foreign policy over the domestic harms. That's something we've seen consistently. That's been reported by NSICOP as well.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I appreciate your point about the history.

There's also a present that you're describing, though, which is that the government of the day, the Liberal government, made a choice, and you've confirmed that choice. It made that choice in 2016 and 2017, and that choice contributed to the continuing ability of these networks to operate.

I know there's an institutional history, but something changed significantly when the Prime Minister made a choice about not disrupting these networks so that the public image effects of what he hoped for from the trip to India would be there. Then, as part of that trip, he signed an intelligence-sharing agreement with India.

I think you'd agree that the Prime Minister, knowing about these interference networks in Canada, choosing to sign that intelligence agreement in spite of what he knew, changed the dynamic, because that meant a kind of sharing of information between Canadian intelligence and Indian intelligence that didn't exist before.

What was your advice to the government at the time about that intelligence-sharing system, and what have been the effects that you've seen since that decision by the government?

• (1640)

Mr. Prabjot Singh: The community has been unequivocal, since as far back as the 1980s, that any kinds of intelligence and information co-operation or agreements with India are incredibly dangerous. They have led to the loss of life, potentially, in the past, and they are continuing to do harm in Punjab and in Canada today.

Even in 2018, when that agreement, that co-operation framework, was signed, the community was unequivocal and was very resolute that this agreement should not have been signed in the first place and that it should be suspended immediately, particularly given the revelations.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Why, then, did the Liberals choose to sign it, in your view?

Mr. Prabjot Singh: If you look particularly at that 2018 report by NSICOP, you can see it's heavily redacted. However, when you read between the lines, India was significantly pressuring the Government of Canada around the security co-operation issues and was amplifying this narrative of Sikh extremism.

When you read that report, officials from the government, including from the public service, are described as having a strong priority to convince India that Canada is taking their concerns seriously, and it took a number of steps, including signing that agreement to, I would suggest, appease India and to further foreign policy priorities.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Let me get one more question in.

I had an Order Paper question to the government, asking if any intelligence-sharing between Canada and India contained information about Mr. Nijjar. The government refused to answer that question either way. I was surprised by that. If the answer was no, it could have said no, but it refused to answer the question.

What's your reaction to the failure of the government to answer a question about whether intelligence was shared with respect to Mr. Nijjar?

Mr. Prabjot Singh: It's incredibly concerning. There needs to be immediate transparency and immediate action to put an end to that

agreement and to any kind of co-operation that targets political dissidents in Punjab and in Canada. We have seen evidence of harm coming to individuals in Canada and in Punjab, on both sides of these interactions, that put members of the community in harm's way and that harm their well-being.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Genuis.

I have Mr. Sarai next for five minutes.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Thank you, Chair.

Thanks to both of you. It's always great to be on this committee and to hear some of the great testimony that comes before us.

I'll first go to Mr. Elcock.

You were the longest-serving director of CSIS, serving your entire term. My colleagues already asked the question, but this is a follow-up question to that.

Do you recall any previous party leaders, in your years from 1994 to 2004, who were offered security clearance and refused to take it?

Mr. Ward Elcock: No, I don't.

It's never really come up before, frankly, nor has there, in my memory, ever been a suggestion that party leaders should have a clearance. I think this was generated by the events of the last year or so.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: You've never heard anybody deny if they've ever been offered to get the security clearance, not even just a party leader but any other person of significance who has been offered this for information-sharing purposes to protect the country for the safety or security of the country.

Mr. Ward Elcock: In most cases, that offer wouldn't have been made to anybody else. Party leaders have on occasion in the past been briefed, usually not at a highly classified level, but on both security and defence issues. There's never been a suggestion that party leaders should have a clearance. This is, I think, generated by the events of the last year.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: In that regard, there was a suggestion made by the Conservative Party leader that the Prime Minister could just walk over in the chamber to the other side and whisper the names of people who might be subject to breaches of security or controlled, infiltrated or influenced by foreign countries.

Have you ever heard before of top secret evidence being shared in a manner where you walk over and use the protection of Parliament from prosecution as a tool to pass over information?

Mr. Ward Elcock: No, I haven't. It would be an odd way, frankly, to do things.

The reality is that, even if the Prime Minister were to walk across the floor and provide the names of individuals, I'm not sure what the Leader of the Opposition would be able to do with it, since he would have no evidence to support the listing of the names. It's really kind of a silly way to try to achieve anything.

● (1645)

Mr. Randeep Sarai: That would be the same case for giving evidence or showing evidence. It would be a very silly or probably inappropriate method of showing evidence, say, for example, on this Indian involvement in Mr. Nijjar's assassination or the other matters before, including the other murders.

Mr. Ward Elcock: My point is that, if one were to provide sufficient information for it to be useful, one would be providing a lot of classified information. If you're going to provide a lot of classified information, then you really need to think about whether or not security clearance is required. If you're only providing a little bit of information, that may not be a challenge, but that little bit of information probably doesn't achieve anything.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Elcock.

Mr. Singh, we heard in a presentation that you gave earlier this week on the Hill, as well as from news reports, that not only is false information used in India to charge people under the UAP Act, the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, but a lot of times, they use Canadian.... They don't source the evidence, but they'll use evidence that somebody was given money from here. It may be just a transfer of funds to help a family. It may be a speech in a gurdwara or a temple or on a political stage, and that was used to incarcerate.

We've also heard of evidence that India has provided that meant a Canadian government employee, a CBSA officer, was suspended for a very long period of time on absolutely false claims.

Do you think, after that fact, that Canada should share information with India in any regard?

Mr. Prabjot Singh: I don't think Canada should have been sharing any information with India in the first place, nor should Canada accept any information that's coming from India, as very clearly, as you've laid out in the example you gave and other evidence that we've seen, it not only leads to undermining the integrity of any kind of credible institution, whether it's a judiciary or a security agency, but also is leading to harm and very serious risks to members of the community, both in Punjab and in Canada.

With the kind of information sharing we've seen so far, particularly around that 2018 trip, once the government returned from that India trip and signed that co-operation agreement, we saw very quickly that there was what appeared to be an overcorrection whereby the security and intelligence community in Canada began targeting the community based off unfounded and unreliable evidence from India.

We've seen a number of impacts, including a Canadian permanent resident from Vancouver who has been incarcerated and harassed by Indian security agencies since approximately 2016, because India and security agencies have been trying to coerce and intimidate him to provide evidence against Hardeep Singh that was

false. Because he refused to co-operate, he hasn't been able to leave the country since then and has been implicated in multiple false cases.

Any of those allegations against Bhai Hardeep Singh specifically and others as well have been found to be completely unfounded and have not led to any convictions.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: What is the conviction—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sarai. That concludes your time. Actually, you're a bit over time.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Michaud you have the floor for two minutes.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Singh, I'm going to quote part of the testimony provided to the committee by Michael Duheme, the Commissioner of the RCMP:

Over the past year, we have seen a number of situations where people have been intimidated, killed or harassed. On some occasions, we have also had to invoke the duty to warn, which is used when we have information deemed credible and imminent regarding the safety of an individual. We then have an obligation to meet with that person and warn them that their life is in danger.

What relationship has your organization had with the RCMP or security agencies in Canada over the past number of months or years? Obviously, the situation has evolved quickly in recent months, particularly with regard to criminal activities carried out by agents of India.

What relationship do you have with the RCMP, specifically? Do you feel safe?

Has that type of a warning requirement been directed at any of the members of your organization?

Finally, what did you think of the RCMP's public release, which revealed details of this ongoing investigation in order to reassure Canadians?

Has that reassured some of the members of your organization?

● (1650)

[*English*]

Mr. Prabjot Singh: There are a number of issues there that I'd like to address.

First, when it comes to the duty to warn, it's very important to note—and the RCMP confirmed this when they were cross-examined during the foreign interference commission as well—that the RCMP will go to a number of individuals within the community. I believe it's been publicly reported that there have been over a dozen individuals who have been warned of an imminent threat to their life without being provided any information about where that threat is emanating from and without any resources or support to actually confront that.

When you're looking at a political activist being targeted by a foreign country because of their political opinion and their community leadership, and the RCMP is showing them a slip of paper saying that they're being targeted by another country and their life is at risk, what they're then essentially provided with is the option to disengage from public life and stop exercising their charter rights to engage in political expression and political activism, or continue to engage in public life and face a risk to their life.

When it was put to the RCMP, I believe the commissioner's response, and I'm paraphrasing, was roughly something to the effect that it's the individual's choice. I think the entire system, particularly with the threats that we're seeing from India, and the government's response, the lack of resources or supports, is shocking to most Canadians. It is very concerning and something that needs to be acted upon.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Singh.

Mr. MacGregor is next for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Singh, the Sikh community in Canada, as you said, has been aware of Indian intelligence activities for decades now. What we've "discovered" over the last year is that the Sikh community is finally feeling validated. We've been trying to tell you about this, and hopefully we're shining a light on just how serious this is.

How does the level of foreign interference in Canada relate to the political temperament in India itself under a Modi-led government? Has there been a link between the level of foreign interference and how malevolent it's been and the political temperament in India? One way or another, we're going to have to continue having relations with India as a country. In terms of how we chart a path forward, do we have a chance of improving that with a Modi-led government, or do we need to wait until the political climate there changes somewhat?

Do you have any thoughts you can offer on those questions?

Mr. Prabjot Singh: I think the answer to that question is related to what I was just about to finish saying, which is that with the RCMP's announcement, in terms of reassurance, the only reassurance the community can have in this situation is action that ensures the accountability not only of the lower-level individuals who perpetrated the violence but of those at the highest levels of government who actually directed this in the first place.

I think that touches on your point very nicely. It's important to understand that this aggressive activity has definitely increased since 2014 in the rise of the Modi-led BJP and the RSS conglomerate that's been active and on the rise in India. I think you have to understand that Hindu nationalist mindset and its authoritarian approach domestically not only to completely persecute and target religious minorities, but also to stamp out any political dissent.

I think that Hindu nationalist ideology also informs the foreign policy, the approach and the activities of the Indian government, particularly in some of their foreign policy narratives about India as a *vishwaguru*, the enlightener and teacher of the world. That approach to global politics is ingrained in that Hindu nationalist chau-

vinistic approach, and I think that hubris and that arrogance are part of the reason that India felt that it could get away with this.

Even more importantly and more concerning, I think, the reason that India felt it could get away with this is that it feels that Canada, the U.S. and other countries are trying to actively court India as part of a global strategy to counter or contain China.

In terms of addressing this issue, first, as I said, is absolutely the accountability of the individuals who directed the violence against the Sikh community and who need to be held accountable. More importantly, though, Canadian policy-makers need to reflect on the place of India and its government in this world. Having a trade, strategic or military partner that is as volatile and unpredictable as India, that's engaging in extrajudicial assassinations all around the world—not just a one-off in Canada, but multiple, all around the world—is, I think, somewhat of an indication of how India also operates domestically. Alongside that, the flip side of that arrogance is also the simmering and increasing tensions domestically.

What you're looking at is a tinderbox of nations that have been imprisoned within the Indian state and within that construct, and the fault lines within that country are bursting at the seams. I think the assassinations are also a demonstration of the Indian administration's and regime's desperation to neutralize and eliminate any political threats that it sees from the Sikh political community in actually championing justice and human rights for the entire sub-continent.

• (1655)

The Chair: Thank you.

Next is Mr. Uppal for five minutes.

Hon. Tim Uppal: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

For almost a decade now, this government's soft-on-crime approach and loose border policies have contributed to the fact that organized crime elements in Canada have increased. We've seen the highest levels of violence in this country that we've ever seen: extortion, shootings, arsons.

Mr. Elcock, would you agree that the criminal environment here in Canada—it's much easier to get bail now, and lesser sentences—would contribute to or create a pathway to make it easier for Indian agents to use criminal activity to carry out that work here?

Mr. Ward Elcock: No, not particularly. I don't think those things are related.

As the previous witness said, a lot of what we see now in terms of Indian interference is a product of the current Modi government and its Hindu ultra-nationalism. That, I think, has driven much of what has come to light in the last year or so.

Hon. Tim Uppal: Thank you very much.

Mr. Elcock, I just wanted to address something.

Is it true that the CSIS Act allows the government to offer information to any Canadian on the specific risks of foreign interference, without forcing them into sworn secrecy or controlling what they say, and that information can be provided to any Canadian if necessary, if there's a risk to Canadians?

Mr. Ward Elcock: The issue of classified information always arises, but to the extent that the service can provide some information to individuals, that has happened in the past, including, I assume, recently.

Hon. Tim Uppal: That information can be provided, which also includes—

Mr. Ward Elcock: The issue of classified information arises. There is a limit to what can be provided.

Hon. Tim Uppal: Thank you.

The Chair: You still have three minutes.

Hon. Tim Uppal: I'm done.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Uppal.

Ms. O'Connell, you have five minutes.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): I'm sorry. Can you turn that over?

The Chair: If it's okay with Ms. O'Connell, we will pass the time on to Mr. Motz.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: That's fine. Let's see what they have.

Mr. Glen Motz: Thank you very much, Chair.

Briefly, thank you to both witnesses for being here.

This was already mentioned, Mr. Elcock: You talked about Indian interference. It's not a new issue. It's become a more pressing concern of late, as a number of countries have become more aggressive in recent years.

As a country, are we properly positioned with our national security framework to address the emerging and aggressive threat of foreign interference? What do we need to prioritize, if we're not?

Can both of you answer, please?

Mr. Ward Elcock: I can't speak to the level of intelligence the service has at this point. Obviously, I don't see that intelligence, so I can't comment on whether the service has enough coverage to respond to foreign interference.

My guess, however, would be that one challenge is resources. Foreign interference is a consuming task. Terrorism has not gone away, and espionage has increased substantially in the last few years as a number of countries have become even more aggressive in terms of conducting intelligence operations in various countries, including Canada. The challenge in terms of resources is always there.

There is a question, too, about whether, to some extent, in a world of review, the service has become more risk-averse in terms of what actions it might take. I can't speak to that. My assumption is that they are doing their job and doing it as well as they can.

However, they do it within a framework that may not entirely always assist them. That takes you back, again, to resources.

Having said that, the authority the service has and its ability to operate do exist. It's a question of having the resources to do it. Years ago, somebody asked me whether, as an intelligence service, we had enough resources. The truth is that no intelligence service ever has enough resources. If you were the old East German Stasi, you had half the country watching the other half of the country, and that probably wasn't enough for you. That isn't true in Canada, obviously. The resources the service has are fewer than what the old East German Stasi had, but I'm sure they are a challenge when dealing with these issues.

Foreign interference is a complicated and difficult area to work in. As both of us have said, the Indians and the Chinese have been much more aggressive in the last few years, so it's more demanding.

• (1700)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Motz.

Mr. Prabjot Singh: Do I have time to answer the question, as well? It was put to both of us.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Prabjot Singh: I'll be quick.

I would strongly suggest, as my response and concern, that foreign interference is not a security problem per se. The institutional vulnerabilities and gaps Canada has are policy issues. It's primarily that the foreign affairs ministry has almost all the tools it needs to combat foreign interference. What that leads to is this lopsided approach whereby foreign policy priorities are consistently prioritized over the security, domestic and charter-related concerns, vulnerabilities and attacks Canadians are facing.

As long as foreign policy priorities or partisan interests dictate our response to foreign interference, we're not going to be able to respond effectively.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. O'Connell, go ahead for five minutes.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to both of our witnesses for being here.

Mr. Singh, I'm going to start with you, if you don't mind.

I'm curious. As a lawyer and as a representative of the Sikh Federation, how do you feel watching your Canadian Parliament, time after time, and in particular the official opposition leader, ask questions about a car being stolen, or someone receiving bail or parole—things about crime? We heard that here today. It's about our borders. However, asking a single question about a member of your Sikh community being murdered.... The RCMP, in quite an extraordinary way, outlined very serious criminal allegations and an investigation that is still ongoing. They mentioned homicides.

There are a lot of questions about cars being stolen, but not a single question about a Canadian community member and member of the Sikh faith being murdered.

Mr. Prabjot Singh: What I would say to that, as I just answered, is that as long as the response to foreign interference is dictated or driven by foreign policy interests or partisan interests, communities like ours will continue to be marginalized and vulnerable and targeted.

Foreign interference, obviously, is not a partisan issue, and on this issue, particularly, we lost a loved member of our community who was a father, who was a brother, who was a friend, who was a leader. I would suggest, and I would like to emphasize, on all sides across the aisle, that for anybody to try to turn any element of this issue into a partisan issue is incredibly problematic, and it continues to promote this feeling among the community that we're being used as bargaining chips by political parties domestically, and internationally, in terms of geopolitics, we're being used back and forth between Canada and India.

Our political aspirations, our safety, our security and our dignity are paramount, and they should be the primary focus of everybody around the table, rather than trying to take partisan cheap shots against each other on both sides.

• (1705)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you.

Following up on Mr. Singh's comments about naming, I want to ask Mr. Elcock this question.

The questions around foreign interference, as both witnesses have said, have long existed. Perhaps, Mr. Elcock, you can speak to the challenge, which Mr. Singh raised in his opening statement too, around the naming of information, or naming and shaming, as some countries do when it comes to some of these activities. What is that process like? In your experience, obviously, you may not have access to the intelligence currently, but in that debate around the naming of countries, what goes into that process and what are some of the risks?

Mr. Ward Elcock: On the issue of actions that are taken to deal with foreign interference, there are a range of actions that can be taken. Some of them are within the control of the service. Some of them are within the control of the police, depending on the nature of foreign interference actions. To some extent, as the previous witness said, as my companion said, there are sometimes decisions taken on the issues of foreign policy, and those decisions are decisions that the government is responsible for and is accountable for. I can't speak to whatever decisions were taken in more recent times, obviously, but generally speaking, in the past, when action has needed to be taken, there has not been a serious issue.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: In that process, one would assume, based on intelligence, that process is constantly reviewed, and there would be thresholds in terms of at what point, for example, there is a risk to not informing Canadians. I point, again, to the RCMP's announcement and press conference. I can't imagine that a policy stance is taken, and then it doesn't matter what country X does because it's then never reviewed and there is not an ongoing process based on intelligence gathering.

Mr. Ward Elcock: I assume there certainly would have been in the past, and I assume that would be true at this point in time. I would make the point that, frankly, although I have seen foreign interference over the years, certainly the last year has been a bit of a

challenge in the sense that I have never seen anybody, any other country, attempt to assassinate Canadians in the past. We have reached somewhat of a new level in terms of foreign interference when that happens.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Elcock. Thank you, Ms. O'Connell.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you.

The Chair: That concludes the first hour. To both witnesses, thank you for your testimony and thank you for appearing for this study. That concludes this portion of the meeting.

We're going to suspend for a few minutes to change panels. Thank you.

• (1705)

(Pause)

• (1715)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order.

I'd like to welcome our witness for the second hour.

From the Centre for International Governance Innovation, we have Aaron Shull, managing director and general counsel, by video conference.

I now invite Mr. Shull to make an opening statement of five minutes.

Mr. Aaron Shull (Managing Director and General Counsel, Centre for International Governance Innovation): Thank you, Mr. Chair, vice-chair and members of the committee, for the opportunity to address the critical issue of foreign interference and criminal activities in Canada, specifically by agents of the Government of India.

To me, this issue strikes at the heart of our national sovereignty and public safety and, indeed, the integrity of our democracy. In my remarks today, I want to help clarify what happened, why it happened and what I think you can do about it.

Number one is what happened. The assassination of Hardeep Singh Nijjar in June 2023 was a flashpoint in uncovering the extent of foreign interference activities conducted by agents of the Government of India. Through investigations led by the RCMP and supported by CSIS, it became evident that these actions are part of a broader pattern of transnational repression. Indian diplomatic officials in Canada have been implicated in coordinating intelligence-gathering efforts and collaborating with criminal networks to intimidate and harm Canadian citizens.

The methods include espionage, whereby Indian officials gather intelligence on individuals within the Indo-Canadian community using diplomatic channels and coerced proxies, and criminal facilitation, whereby organized crime groups such as the Lawrence Bishnoi gang have been directed to carry out acts of violence, including assassination plots, intimidation campaigns and disinformation campaigns. Indian narratives have sought to polarize communities in Canada, labelling lawful advocacy for Sikh rights as extremism while amplifying propaganda through diaspora-targeted media.

This interference, however, is not isolated. Believe me, it reflects a deliberate strategy to suppress dissent and manipulate Canadian political and social systems to align with India's interests. Despite multiple diplomatic meetings and law enforcement interventions, the problem has persisted, underscoring the need for a stronger and more coordinated response.

Number two is why it happened. India perceives segments of the Canadian Sikh diaspora, particularly those advocating for Khalistan independence, as a direct threat to its national security and territorial integrity. This perception has driven the Indian government to conflate lawful political advocacy with violent extremism, resulting in a systematic campaign of surveillance, intimidation and violence targeting individuals and communities in Canada. India's actions are fuelled by its long-standing internal conflicts and an aggressive foreign policy aimed at silencing dissent abroad.

Number three is what I think you can do about it. First, expand CSIS and RCMP resources for counterintelligence operations targeting Indian proxies and agents. Under this, I think you should look at strengthening the threat reduction measures, or TRMs as they're referred to, to disrupt foreign intelligence networks and prevent imminent threats.

Second, use legislative and policy measures. Leverage the new tools under Bill C-70, such as production orders and cross-border information collection, to enhance investigations. Continue statutory reviews of intelligence legislation to make sure you're keeping pace with evolving threats and have flexibility in addressing emerging tactics.

Third is community protection and public outreach. I've heard other witnesses talk about the duty to warn. I think you need to maintain timely, transparent warnings for individuals facing credible threats, while also pairing these with robust protective measures, including law enforcement support and safety planning. There would be nothing quite like getting a notice that you are being targeted for assassination from a foreign state actor without anything else other than the warning. Build resilience within affected diaspora communities through education, direct engagement, public awareness campaigns and ensuring trust in Canadian institutions. Look at addressing the disinformation campaigns by countering narratives spread by Indian state media through coordinated efforts with the Department of Canadian Heritage and the CRTC.

The fourth area is diplomatic and multilateral efforts, so coordinating through coalitions like the Five Eyes and bilateral diplomatic channels. You need to make clear that violations of sovereignty through interference and violence will prompt significant consequences, and you can't just say it—you have to do it. You have to raise the cost.

The fifth area is a new idea that I don't think anyone else will have said. We should look at using speaking indictments. What I mean by that is that Canada should follow examples of jurisdictions like the United States in using speaking indictments to address and expose foreign interference.

• (1720)

A speaking indictment is more than a legal document. It's a public accountability tool. It details the evidence behind the criminal

charges. It outlines the methods and actors involved and explains the broader context of foreign interference. It creates a clear narrative for the public. It names specific actors, including diplomats, proxies and criminal networks in an indictment, and it publicizes the risks and consequences of engaging in these activities.

As an example, in the United States, the Vikas Yadav superseding indictment effectively exposed the methods and coordination of foreign operations. In Canada, a similar tool could be used to detail India's role in directing and facilitating acts of violence, coercion and disinformation through both state and non-state actors. That superseding indictment read like a spy novel, but no one took issue with it. When it was an indictment, it did exactly what it was supposed to do.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Shull.

I have Mr. Motz for six minutes, please.

Mr. Glen Motz: Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you to our witness for participating today.

Obviously, as a think tank, the Centre for International Governance Innovation follows these sorts of things and has a view that many of us don't always have. I'd be interested to know from your perspective if Canada's legislative framework is sufficient and appropriate to properly combat the rising and more aggressive foreign interference.

Mr. Aaron Shull: It's a great question, Mr. Motz.

I would say maybe two things. There's one answer that deals with our legislation. There are a bunch of statutory reviews that we're still waiting for. I think we should start there. Also, there are the legislative reviews and tune-ups that would be required, but also a national security strategy.

I appreciate what we're doing here. We're having one single conversation about one single government in one single area. It was ditto for the foreign interference commission, where we were looking at elections. Of course, it's much broader than that.

What I would urge is a strategy that looks at the relationships among trade, economic development, intellectual property theft, research support and defence industrial strategy. They're all connected, so I think treating them as categorically discrete things actually misses a huge opportunity.

The last thing I'll say is that adversarial states view these areas as strategically linked. I think it behooves us to do the same.

• (1725)

Mr. Glen Motz: I'm going to ask you to expand on that just a bit.

I was very intrigued with the testimony of our previous witness, Mr. Singh. He kind of alluded to the fact that sometimes a government needs to put aside its foreign policy for the sake of protecting potential domestic harms.

When you build a national security strategy, how do you properly marry that to...? Every country needs to have a relationship with its allies in other countries, obviously, but it also has to keep its citizens safe.

How do we do that and develop a national security strategy that is appropriate for as serious an issue as foreign interference?

Mr. Aaron Shull: I'm a realist, and not in the Clausewitzian sense of the word. Obviously, I realize that there are strong states out there, and strong states are going to behave in any way they see fit. I think we're on the receiving end of a bit of that right now, where India is flexing its new-found muscle on the global stage. This is inevitably one of the things that you're going to see.

That being said, I think the highest order or highest concern of government is to keep citizens safe. If we're talking about a series of counterbalancing trade-offs, it's awfully hard to trade citizens' lives for the purposes of a trade deal.

I realize that the world's a complicated place, but I would just say that if we're going to be doing a strategy and if we're going to be looking at what the first objective is in the first sentence of that strategy, the highest responsibility of government is to keep Canadian citizens safe, period.

Mr. Glen Motz: Thank you. I appreciate that, because I think that is one of the government's initial responsibilities.

Does Canada have the capacity to handle the more aggressive foreign interference that we're seeing?

Is the current government taking sufficient action on foreign interference? If not, how can we improve that?

Mr. Aaron Shull: It's interesting. With the example I was drawing from when I said we should look at speaking indictments, when that happened in the United States, you should read how the U.S. treated it. They caught the guy before he was able to commit the assassination. They deployed a sophisticated undercover apparatus. The charging document is beautiful.

I went to law school at Columbia, so I know a bit about the U.S. legal system. This individual's chances of successfully defending that prosecution are about 0%.

Look at the way it worked in the U.S. They interdicted it before it happened. Look at the way it happened here. Someone lost their life, and now there's an investigation.

When I'm thinking about the best way to answer your question, I would start to think about the resources of the RCMP and whether or not that institution as it's currently constructed is fit for service, because the 21st century is very different from the 20th. What does a modern police force that has to deal with everything from sophisticated foreign interference operations to cyber-attacks and on and on look like?

Mr. Glen Motz: Thank you. I appreciate that.

You almost drew me in to ask a question about the RCMP, but I want to stick with the statement you made about this speaking indictment. It intrigues me.

What you're really saying is that the role of government in a situation like this is one of transparency, and that's really what a speaking indictment is. It's a transparency document.

How do we address the lack of transparency that's currently happening? How could this government, or any government, handle foreign interference, now and moving forward?

Mr. Aaron Shull: That's it. I watched the press conferences, as you did, when the commissioner was out there. I looked at the previous witnesses' testimony. I've read all of the reports.

For us, it was drip, drip, drip. The story was revealed slowly. When we first really heard about it as Canadians.... Look, I'm not security cleared. I'm just some guy. I was watching this on TV, like everyone else. The story was revealing itself quite slowly, and it was unclear. As a consequence of that, we probably did a bit of a disservice to Canadians, because they were having a hard time following the shifting narrative. In contrast, in the U.S., you pick up that indictment, you know exactly what the guy did, who he was working with and how he did it. There is no room for debate, so the transparency piece through that mechanism is crystal clear.

• (1730)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Motz.

Mr. Glen Motz: Thank you, Mr. Shull.

The Chair: We'll go to Mr. Sarai for six minutes.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Thank you, Mr. Shull.

It's very interesting, listening about the speaking indictments. With you being a lawyer in the U.S. and me being a lawyer trained in Canada, I think the difference.... I agree with you. The speaking indictment of an American court is pretty appealing, because it actually lays out the exact evidence, how it was obtained and what it is, and the general public sees that before a person even stands trial. In contrast, in Canada, the accused usually gets the disclosure after being charged in court, and it's not really made public; it slowly trickles out. This is probably a difference between the Westminster model versus the American model of legal process.

Do you think there are ways that can be...? I don't know if you're also well versed in Canadian law, but could you give some opinion on how Canadians could do it better without changing our legal system in its entirety?

Mr. Aaron Shull: For what it's worth, I did my LLM at Columbia law, but I did my first degree at Ottawa law, and my very first legal job was actually at the Crown attorney's office in Ottawa, as a summer student. I'm very proud of that.

I think all it would require is rolling over the information just to add additional particulars. I understand that we often talk about counterbalancing the rights of the accused—they're innocent before trial and all that type of stuff; I agree—but even in the courtroom, which is an open courtroom, the evidence comes out eventually anyway.

All I'm saying is to front-load your evidentiary claims. Just call your shot. Say, "This person did this. Here's the evidence we're going to pretend to rely on," and then it's clear to everyone what happened and what the implications of it are, rather than having this shifting narrative. If the narrative shifts, hostile states get in there. The textbook growth area for disinformation is when you start to see a shifting narrative. If we can be clear about it, I think it's going to solve two problems for us.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: You also mentioned disinformation, and there's a big problem with diaspora communities watching channels that are aired from India, China or other places, or are not really under CRTC purview.

What's the best method of countering disinformation for our Canadian audiences? We have done it—and I asked this the last time, I think—with Russian television's RT, which, under CRTC, got removed from cable networks, but what are other methods that other states you might have studied use that are better than what we do currently? How can we improve on how we deal with disinformation campaigns by foreign entities?

Mr. Aaron Shull: The one distinction I wish to draw here is that, when we're talking about it, let's be crisp that we're speaking about information operations run by state actors, because normal people have the right to be wrong. You can say pretty much anything you want, so leaving aside individuals and the various free speech rights that go along with that, when it comes to state actors, we haven't talked about leaning on the sanctions regime at all, so that was one thing I advocated in a fairly pronounced way when it came to Russia.

Make it harder for people, because no one wakes up in the morning with a sense of civic duty to do disinformation operations. People want to get paid for it, so if you can make it harder for them to get paid to run these things, that's great. If it's on TV or whatever, then yes, you have the regulatory mechanisms that are available, but, to be frank, most of this stuff is social media, and I just advocated using your intelligence apparatus to find who what they call "the trolls" are. There are bot farms, which are computer programs, and then there are the trolls who run those things. Find the trolls and sanction them, and then, to the extent that it's possible, if CSE can use some of its offensive cyber-capabilities under Bill C-59, hammer them and try to take them off-line.

The NSA did it before the last election, so you watched what happened to Russian disinformation. They made it technically more difficult.

There are tools available for this, so I would encourage a hard look at those.

• (1735)

Mr. Randeep Sarai: You also mentioned that diplomatic...getting strength diplomatically. I recall that when we had the two

Michaels incarcerated in China, at one of the hearing dates, I think 16 or 16-plus ambassadors and high commissioners from around the world who were present in Beijing showed up at the hearing to show solidarity with Canada. It might have been more. I might be using a number much lower.

Do you think this is the type of solidarity that, beyond the Five Eyes, the west or western democratically aligned countries around the world need to show in banding together to compel countries like China, India and Russia to not engage in such forms of transnational aggression? Are there any strategies that other countries might have done that have been effective?

Mr. Aaron Shull: Statements are important, but they're also cheap. They're just words, so, for me, this is about actions.

Let's be clear about what we're talking about. The point here is that you cannot come and kill Canadian citizens, so there's a cost that's extracted as a consequence of that. Look, owing to diplomatic immunity, which I support—there are good reasons under international law for having that—we couldn't prosecute, but that does not mean there should not be a consequence. Think about trade remedies; think about sanctions, and think about working together to punish this behaviour. There needs to be an actual corporeal, tangible consequence.

Statements are great, and I think that's your entry point, but for me there has to be a significant cost associated with this.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sarai.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Ms. Michaud, you have the floor for six minutes.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Shull, thank you for joining us today.

You said, among other things, that the safety of Canadians should be the government's priority.

I'm wondering about the Canadian government's response so far. The RCMP has come out publicly to reveal elements of the ongoing investigation, and diplomats have been expelled, as you mentioned. However, we must not forget that there is a fairly significant economic relationship between Canada and India. The witness before you said that there are more foreign interference activities by certain countries because they are taking up more and more space on the world stage, which seems to be the case for India.

Do you think the Canadian government's response might be a little weaker than we would like because of the economic relationship between India and Canada, which could be even greater than it is today? There seems to be significant economic potential.

Are you concerned that we are losing sight of the security of Canadians, which should be paramount, by instead prioritizing economic relations and trying to be nice to India to avoid offending its government?

How do you see this relationship, not only human, but also economic, that remains unresolved between India and Canada?

Mr. Aaron Shull: I thank the member for her question.

[English]

For what it's worth, I'm doing Duolingo. I've been doing it for 81 days straight. The next time I appear in front of this committee,

[Translation]

I would like to be able to speak French one day. I'm working very hard to achieve that.

[English]

I think the answer is *realpolitik*. The answer, unfortunately, is that strong states are going to do what strong states are going to do. When they're able to push their way around, that is exactly what you can expect here. The question for me is, what can Canada do to counterbalance that? I think the answer inevitably will involve friends and allies. India is a much larger country. It's a much more populous country. This is what we're seeing now.

Expect more of these transactional types of diplomacy and bullying. China was doing it. India's doing it. I would expect that to continue. The operative question in my mind is this: What do we do to increase Canada's ability to deal with that?

• (1740)

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you.

We were talking earlier about the RCMP's duty to warn. When they become aware of criminal activities potentially placing a person's life in danger, they are somewhat obliged to warn them.

Representatives of the Sikh community who came to testify told us that this obligation was a good thing. At the same time, however, no action is being taken. There's no support. These people are not offered security.

I think I heard you say that more resources should be provided to the security agencies to help them deal with this. Adding resources may not necessarily be part of the solution—it's not the only thing that will solve the problem—but we should at least make sure that the people who are targeted feel safer.

Do you denounce what these people from the Sikh communities have also denounced?

What do you think of all that?

[English]

Mr. Aaron Shull: Like the previous witnesses, I would be in favour of enhanced security measures where they're warranted. Where threats are severe, provide personal protective security measures such as police escorts, temporary relocation or surveillance systems. Not to be overly calculated about it, but for me it's a two-for-one. First, you get to save people's lives. You get to protect peo-

ple when they are at their most vulnerable. For me, that is just the right thing to do as a matter of moral obligation, to say nothing of a legal one.

There's also a second benefit. By virtue of doing that and behaving that way, you're showing that you are a trusted institution that can be counted upon to do the right thing. Part of the solution to this goes to trusted, effective, deep and meaningful relationships in those communities. If people feel like they're on their own at the worst possible moment, when they're the most vulnerable, that doesn't inspire a whole lot of trust. If you're able to show that during severe times of strain, stress and danger you're able to provide personal protection and security measures, then I think that will help you in those communities as well.

For me, then, there are actually two benefits.

The Chair: Thank you.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you, Mr. Shull.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. MacGregor, go ahead for six minutes.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome back to our committee, Mr. Shull. Thanks for being here and helping us with this particular study.

As you said in your opening statement, we know that India does see a lot of these separatist movements around the world as a direct threat to its national security. That's its perception. We know, in its internal politics, that a lot of minority religious groups are not having an easy time, for lack of a better term, under the current Modi government.

I'm just looking at India's overall strategic objectives. Using this heavy-handed approach of partnering with organized crime, using blackmail, death threats, coercion and of course outright murder, do you think India has overstepped itself now? Is the bad press it's getting now internationally...? This made the news worldwide. I mean, the Prime Minister stood in the House of Commons last year in September and used ministerial statements to name India. Of course, we've had a whole series of reports come out since then. Has India ruined its strategic objectives by now being suddenly put in the limelight?

Mr. Aaron Shull: It depends on what their strategic objectives are. I'll back up a step and say that this has harmed their reputation among real democratic nations for sure, but I think what it is.... Inevitably, you see this time and time again: states putting their short-term interests in front of long-term geostrategic stability. They are playing checkers when they should be playing chess.

Here's what I mean by that. They're now seen as a bit of a pariah. You can say the words "Russia, China, India and North Korea" in the same sentence, and that kind of fits. If that's your club, if that's who you're hanging out with, what does that say about you?

Not to turn this into a political science lesson here, but for me, democracy is actually two things.

It's a process: You get to vote, and the votes get tallied, and whoever gets the most votes in some fashion wins. It's a process.

It's also an outcome: a pluralistic society built on the rule of law. I think that's the erosion we're seeing here.

Yes, if you can be lumped in with the North Koreans of the world in the same sentence, your brand is not doing well, but the fact that they are travelling as a herd now also should give us pause in the western world. This is the geostrategic reality that we're part of now.

• (1745)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: On that subject, of course, every country has its national interest, and our allies are no exception. I know that in recent years stronger relations with India were seen as a way to counteract China's growing influence in the Asia-Pacific region.

Now, we had testimony from one of the deputy ministers from foreign affairs. They're quite satisfied that our allies are standing with us on these very serious allegations, but of course our allies have their own strategic objectives as well. How do you see this playing out in the coming years? I know that many of our allies also have a deep desire to forge stronger relationships with India. There's great economic potential there and so on.

Mr. Aaron Shull: Yes, well, there's that old saying: Countries don't have friends, they have interests. A part of it is that there's a political culture in Canada.... We haven't really paid attention, because we haven't really had to. We've had the United States, so we're safe. We've had access to the U.S. market, so we're rich. It just hasn't really required us to think about the world that way, but the fact is, that's the way it is.

Believe me, when the new U.S. administration gets in there, buckle up for that as well. Countries have interests. The question is, how does Canada leverage its position, its strategic position, to maximize its interests vis-à-vis what we see going on in the world? That's the way I would start to position this conversation. Maybe I won't get into the strategy that I'd pursue right here, but the next time we have a chat, I can maybe think a little about the way I would do it, based on the way I'm seeing the world.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: You had some suggestions. You talked about how we need to greatly expand the counter-intelligence capabilities of the RCMP and CSIS and really maximize the new tools that we have, such as Bill C-70.

Just turning to the political realm, we know that India and other countries have a desire to influence our politics. Outside of the things I just mentioned, what do you think political parties should be doing? Are there any recommendations that you want our committee to focus on?

Mr. Aaron Shull: Yes, I think this idea of having every member of Parliament briefed for real when there's a new session—a deep and meaningful brief—would be helpful.

There is another thing to think about. I've mentioned this in another committee. There's precedent for it. There used to be a per vote subsidy for parties. I think we should bring back a subsidy, so that each party can hire a national security adviser: someone who's cleared, who's within the party and who looks at it from a political lens but has the necessary clearances.

There's a book called *Political Tribes* by Amy Chua. It's just a matter of human psychology that people are more likely to believe or listen to folks who come from their own party: someone who understands the political lay of the land. Having a dedicated asset and resource in the party would be another thing to think about.

Briefings across the board, a dedicated asset and then, for what it's worth, encourage your staff to come to the lunch-and-learn session that I host once in a while to be educated on national security matters. As I've joked, come for the turkey sandwich and stay for a lecture about what CSIS does.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Dancho, go ahead for five minutes.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I wish to move the following motion:

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), given that Canadians continue to be affected by the geopolitical impacts of the October 7, 2023 attack by Hamas on Israel, and given that recent court filings have revealed disturbing details about a thwarted ISIS-linked bomb plot targeting Jewish Canadians on Parliament Hill, and given that an antisemitic riot occurred in Montreal on November 22, 2024, the committee immediately prioritize a study to run concurrently with the study on border security agreed to on Thursday, November 21, 2024, to investigate the dramatic rise in terrorist plots and acts of violence targeting Canada's Jewish community, including the thwarted terror attack on Parliament Hill; that the study be comprised of no fewer than eight meetings; and that the committee invite

1. the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Immigration on the matter of the motion passed on Thursday, September 19, 2024;
2. the special adviser to the Prime Minister on Jewish community relations and antisemitism;
3. the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, or RCMP, commissioner;
4. Brigitte Gauvin, the RCMP deputy commissioner for national security;
5. representatives of the RCMP's federal policing integrated national security enforcement team;
6. Robert Burley, executive director of the Canada Centre for Community Engagement and Prevention of Violence;
7. the director of Canadian Security and Intelligence Service and other law enforcement officials;
8. the director of the Parliamentary Protective Service;
9. recognized experts in national security;
10. representatives from TikTok, X, Snapchat, Discord, Reddit, Facebook, Telegram, Minecraft and Roblox;
11. civil society and academic organizations, including the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs and B'nai Brith,

to discuss the foiled terrorist plot, the rise of violent antisemitism and recent measures the federal government has undertaken to address it, and the role that social media and gaming platforms play in radicalizing youth and mobilizing violence; that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House; and, pursuant to Standing Order 109, that the government table a comprehensive response to the report.

Mr. Chair, as you know, Conservatives have made multiple attempts to bring forward a motion. We want to bring forward this one in this format. It considers what Ms. Damoff put forward and includes a number of witnesses we know are important to Liberal members. It seems there is an interest among all parties to study this, although I want to make the point that anti-Semitism has to be the focus of this study. If we look at what the Jewish community has faced over the past 13 months, I'm sure the committee would agree.

Certainly, there was a 109% increase in anti-Semitic incidents in 2023 compared with the previous year. In the most recent data available, there were nearly 6,000 documented acts of violence, harassment and vandalism aimed at Jews in Canada in 2023. In 2024, 66% of hate crimes with religion as a motivation were targeted at Jewish Canadians. Again, Jewish Canadians make up only 1% of all of Canada's population. It's incredibly significant.

There were 16 anti-Semitic incidents occurring every single day for the data available in 2023. As we know, in November 2023, two Jewish institutions in Montreal were firebombed exactly one month after the October 7 attacks in Israel. Also in November 2023, two Jewish schools were shot up with gunfire. Notably, these were an elementary and a kindergarten school. Then, twice in 2024, a Jewish girls' school in North York was subjected to gunfire. In May 2024, there was an arson attack on a synagogue. We know that synagogues have, by and large, across the country, experienced an increase in vandalism. In August 2024, across Canada, 100 Jewish institutions received bomb threats.

We know at this committee, certainly, that there have been multiple thwarted terrorist plots to massacre Jewish people, notably on Parliament Hill. We recently found out that, in December 2023, two teens were plotting to bomb Parliament Hill. Again, it's the heart of our democracy. There were a number of people from the Jewish community there, and a number of members of Parliament from all parties.

We also heard at this committee about the individual with a student visa who was en route to Brooklyn, New York earlier this fall to commit a massacre against Jewish people. We also heard reports and concerns about the father-son duo planning to make an attack in Toronto this past summer. They may have been targeting the Jewish community. There were multiple thwarted terrorist attacks on the Jewish community. Of course, we have all seen the protests targeting Jewish businesses and elderly care homes. Most recently, there were riots in Montreal at which someone called for the final solution for the Jewish people.

I want to conclude my remarks, Mr. Chair, with this: We are considering a lot of important matters at this committee. There are a lot of competing interests, but I think it's very evident that the Jewish community has faced something in the past 13 months that few of us can understand unless we're Jewish.

• (1750)

The trauma from October 7 is felt continuously, particularly by women in the Jewish community in Canada. Ultimately, I do feel that the Jewish community feels that they've been abandoned both by their government and by others. I think it's an important signal for the committee of public safety and national security to send to the Jewish community that we have their backs, that we're going to take this seriously and that we're going to study this and really send a signal that we care about this and are taking it seriously as a committee.

I'll just conclude by saying that I believe we have four more meetings on India. I know we're starting Ms. Michaud's study as well, so, as I mentioned, I would ask, Mr. Chair, that we concurrently look at that with this study and that we at least have one meeting on this before the holidays. I think that would send the right signal to the Jewish community and those who wish to harm them.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1755)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Dancho.

I think if the committee is okay with it, we can let Mr. Shull go.

Mr. Shull, thank you so much for your testimony today.

Mr. Aaron Shull: Thank you, everybody. It was nice to see you.

The Chair: I have Ms. Damoff as the next speaker.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to Ms. Dancho for bringing this forward today.

I also want to thank the Conservatives for including some of the witnesses we proposed.

Mr. Lloyd, I sent you some information on the social media and gaming platform, so I appreciate that you reviewed them and it's included in this motion.

I do have an amendment—not a lot—to make to this motion that Ms. Dancho has just brought forward. I will make a comment that I understand the justice committee did a study on anti-Semitism, which has not been tabled yet. It would be helpful for us, I think, to have access to that report before we start our own study at public safety. I'll read right now the changes I have:

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), given that Canadians continue to be affected by the geopolitical impacts of the October 7, 2023 attack by Hamas on Israel, and given that recent court filings have revealed disturbing details about a thwarted ISIS-linked bomb plot targeting Jewish Canadians on Parliament Hill, and given that an antisemitic riot occurred in Montreal on November 22, 2024, the committee immediately study the growing trend of violent extremism, in particular, the increase in youth involvement, the rise in foiled terrorist plots and acts of violence targeting Canada's Jewish community, including the thwarted terror attack on Parliament Hill; that the study be comprised of no fewer than four meetings; and that the committee invite—

I'm not going to read all of the witnesses again, but I would point out that we have changed witness number two. We've deleted what is there and inserted "Canada's special envoy on preserving Holocaust remembrance and combatting antisemitism".

The rest of the witnesses remain the same. Then, in the last paragraph, it's "to discuss the foiled terrorist plot, the rise of violent extremism, including antisemitism, and...."

The rest of the motion stays the same, Mr. Chair. I believe it's been sent electronically, and I would put that amendment forward.

The Chair: It will be distributed in a minute.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you. I'm just trying to write this down. I believe, if I'm correct, that it's removed the priority, the part where it says that "the committee immediately prioritize a study". Then it cuts it down from eight meetings to four and expands it beyond only violent anti-Semitism to violent extremism, with a focus or emphasis, perhaps, on anti-Semitism. However, it's been expanded beyond that.

If Ms. Damoff can just confirm that my three points are correct, I would then just like to respond.

The Chair: We'll just wait for clerk to distribute the amended motion.

Ms. Dancho.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: I appreciate the amendment, but I would say we have moved a number of studies that are not being pursued. They are just thrown in the heap with the rest, and we haven't gotten to them.

My concern with removing the priority mention is that that's going to happen to this one. Everyone can vote in favour of this and feel good about it, but then it's not going to be prioritized by the committee. I'll note that the Bloc moved their motion; we approved it, and all of a sudden, it's on the agenda, whereas there have been other motions that Conservatives have brought forward that have been sidelined despite apparent approval at this committee. My concern is that that's going to happen with this one if there isn't an immediate priority put on it.

Mr. Chair, I made the case that I think we should at the very least commit to one meeting on this to start the study before the holidays. I'm not sure if that is the Liberals' intention or not, but that would influence how we proceed on this amendment, if I could get that commitment.

• (1800)

The Chair: I'm seeing no.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I would just say, as I did when I introduced the amendment, that the justice committee has done a study on this, and we haven't seen that yet. I think Mr. MacGregor was part of that study, if I'm not mistaken.

It's not as though the government, or Parliament, I should say, has not been studying this issue. I'm quite comfortable leaving this amendment as I've tabled it, Chair.

The Chair: Ms. Dancho.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you.

Again, I don't believe the justice committee had a focus on the terrorist plots or certainly the rioting in Montreal. Given these are squarely the responsibility of public safety and national security, I think it's imperative that we focus on this.

I think it sends a message that the public safety and national security committee has not done anything on this at all, given the terrorist plots and given the escalation of what were protests and are now becoming riots. I couldn't support something that's going to put this off, and we well know in this committee that it could take years, if ever, for a report to come out. From my perspective, that's just veiled language to say we'll put this off. There's no guarantee that a report's going to come out, none at all, and members of the Liberal Party are well aware of that. That's just not something we could support, since that report may never come out.

If we can get a commitment to start the study reasonably, at least one meeting before then, I think we can move forward.

The Chair: Mr. MacGregor.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to get on the record, as someone who signed the original 106(4) letter calling for an emergency meeting on this subject, that I do believe it's important.

In terms of how we schedule stuff, over the last number of weeks we have had three proposals from the Conservatives, including this one. A couple of weeks ago, we were debating a programming motion that would have looked at the rise in violence against women and also at the intersection between public safety and mental health. Last week in the House of Commons, there was an attempt to get the firearms study referred back to this committee as a priority, and now we're trying to establish this as a priority.

They're all good ideas, and I'm not criticizing them, but I think what's needed, Mr. Chair, is maybe an off-line or a subcommittee meeting. We need to figure out the calendar. I think Ms. Dancho has expressed frustration on this. We have all these great ideas on the table, and we've said yes to a number of them, but it can be a bit frustrating, and I share her frustration at times, when we're not quite sure how we're making decisions on what study is coming forward.

For me, I attach a lot of importance to our current India study. I'm the person who brought forward the motion to get it started, and I think a lot of people in Canada are very interested in that. I'm always a fan of trying to get current business completed, but I think there's room to possibly get one meeting in on this subject. I'm not sure, because we haven't had those fulsome discussions yet on how we organize our calendar.

That's just something for us as a committee to collectively think about.

The Chair: Thank you.

I've looked at the calendar and I think we have five meetings before we break. I'm also a fan of completing what's on the docket, although obviously, I understand that important issues do arise.

I recognize Madame Michaud.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm not opposed to this motion. My only concern is that the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights seems to have done a similar study recently. That study took up a lot of time, and it was filibustered by the government and the Conservative Party. I don't want us to end up seeing the same thing here. We are already studying very important issues, such as interference in the electoral process by agents of India and interference by Russia. However, there seems to be partisanship in both cases. I don't know what the purpose of this motion is, but if it's to achieve the same result as the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, I don't see the point.

That's why I think the amendment proposed by the government to reduce the number of meetings to four seems more reasonable to me. Also, Ms. Dancho was kind enough to put forward witnesses that were suggested by the government in previous amendments. So I think an interesting consensus is emerging.

It's normal for the study on border security proposed by the Bloc Québécois to take precedence. According to the motion proposing this study, it will have priority over other studies.

In fact, I would like you to clarify something, Mr. Chair. You said there were five meetings left before the holidays. What is the schedule between now and the holiday break? Will we be able to start the study on border security?

Otherwise, I don't see any problem with adopting the amendment and the motion.

• (1805)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Michaud.

On Tuesday, the minister is appearing. On Thursday, we have a summons for Patrick Brown that will go out.

We have actually invited the ambassadors for your study. We haven't received a response yet. That's been the issue. Once we have that response, we should be able to get in at least that meeting with the ambassadors before we rise for the break. That's sort of where we are right now.

We're already over time, to be honest. If we can get a vote in, I think we should do the vote. If we're going to have a discussion, then the meeting is over.

Mr. Motz.

Mr. Glen Motz: I think we really have to accept the gravity of what happened. This is Parliament Hill. We had a bomb plot on Parliament Hill. The seriousness of that, the Canadian public's perception of that and then the role of this committee in not examining that... I mean, this is supposed to be the heart of democracy in this country, yet it doesn't seem to be taken seriously by the current government, unfortunately. Canadians feel that this is an important issue. I have constituents who were outraged at what was happening here.

Whether we have four meetings or eight meetings, we need to have some meetings. We need to give this some attention.

I'm sure our study will not be the same as the justice study. It'll be different. I think that's good. I think there will be parts of it that might overlap.

We can't just brush this off and hope that it goes away. We certainly need to at least show good faith that we are starting this process before we break for the holiday season and then bring this back, along with some of the other studies that are important as well.

I just think that where there's a will, there's a way. Let's exercise the will to make this happen.

The Chair: Ms. O'Connell.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Since we're out of resources, I move to adjourn.

The Chair: There's a motion to adjourn.

Are we good with that?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Chair, do we have a choice? Are we out of resources?

The Chair: We've made the request. We have a couple of minutes.

We'll know in the next five minutes whether we have additional resources and for how long. I am aware that it's Thursday and folks have flights out as well.

Mr. George Chahal: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I believe that's a dilatory motion that Ms. O'Connell brought forward, so we have to proceed to a vote.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

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