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# Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 006**

Thursday, October 9, 2025

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Chair: Chris Bittle





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• (1100)

[English]

**The Chair (Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.)):** I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number six of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3), the committee is meeting in public on the actions of the longest ballot committee in recent Canadian elections.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application.

Before we continue, I would ask that all in-person participants consult the guidelines written on the back of the cards on the table. A QR code links to the video, should you have any questions. This is for the health and safety of participants, especially our interpreters.

I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of members. All comments should be addressed through the chair. For members in the room, if you wish to speak, please raise your hand. For members on Zoom, please use the “raise hand” function. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can.

I'd like to welcome our panel. First we have David Moscrop, a political writer. Then we have Ryan Davies from Northern Perspective.

You will each have five minutes to deliver your opening remarks. Then we'll proceed with questions from all sides.

Mr. Moscrop, you have five minutes, please.

**David Moscrop (As an Individual):** Thank you so much for having me.

The last time I was here, I was beamed in from South Korea in the middle of the night, so I want to start by saying that this is much more convenient and much more pleasant, but the food isn't as good.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**David Moscrop:** I am delighted to be here today, because this is something I've been following for some time. In this statement, I want to focus on the goals, trade-offs, effects and risks to our democratic institutions of the longest ballot committee's activities.

Let's start with trying to conceive of what this thing is. I mean, it's a protest. The goal is to protest to effect change. As a protest, it's meant to disrupt, because that's what protests do. Disruptive tactics are typical for protests, but the mechanism here is a slightly unusual one, at least in the way the longest ballot committee has proceeded, because they've effectively weaponized election rules meant to facilitate public access to the ballot to raise awareness of two perceived problems and to subsequently make the case for change.

Now, the perceived problems, as far as I can tell, are these: one, inadequacies and distortions inherent in the first-past-the-post electoral system; and two, the fact that politicians who stand to benefit from electoral rules are the ones who set those rules. This is what I take to be their complaint. We can discuss my personal opinions on those issues if you want, but I want to focus on the longest ballot for now.

The effect of long ballots, as far as I can tell, has been to draw attention to the group—and to their goals, I believe, to a lesser extent—but I've seen no evidence that the tactics have helped make the case for electoral reform or for a non-partisan electoral rules-making body. In fact, a poll from the Angus Reid Institute this summer found that a plurality of Canadians support a law restricting the capacity of the longest ballot committee to stack ballots with names. In that sense, the efforts of the organization may in fact be undermining their stated goals, at least at this time.

We shouldn't overstate the scale or the effects of the longest ballot committee's actions, as previous witnesses have suggested. The effects on election outcomes and voting are likely limited, but we can imagine a protest like this at scale becoming a more serious problem that would undermine the trust in our elections, discourage voter turnout at an equal scale and even shape the outcome of a race or races. As the world faces a democratic recession, from which Canada may not be immune, maintaining trust in elections is critical.

While our elections are regulated, some elements of the process rely on the forbearance of individuals and groups to maintain electoral integrity: There are certain things you can do that may, strictly speaking, be legal or permitted, but you shouldn't do them. Doing those things undermines the spirit of the laws and regulations that govern the process. The net outcome may be deleterious effects on the public good, even if the stated aims of certain actions are perceived to be rooted in other, complementary public goods.

Ultimately, I believe that those who take part in the activities of the longest ballot committee are acting in good faith to protest in favour of changes they think will help strengthen Canadian elections and electoral outcomes. But I also believe that their efforts don't serve those ends, and in fact undermine them by disrupting the electoral process, irritating voters and election workers, and encouraging election law changes that will make it harder for candidates to get on the ballot.

Thank you.

• (1105)

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

Mr. Davies, you have five minutes, please.

**Ryan Davies (Northern Perspective):** Thank you for the invitation to appear.

My name is Ryan Davies. I am the president and co-host of Northern Perspective, an independent Canadian media platform focused on parliamentary transparency and civic education. I'm a 20-year IT professional and executive, where I have spent my career leading teams and improving systems, processes and organizations across broadcasting, health care, data management and government.

We have already made multiple recommendations within our parliamentary petition on how to address the longest ballot problem, such as mandating 100 unique signatures, having candidates sign an affidavit of genuine intent to run and fining candidates up to \$2,000 if they fail to live up to the genuine intent to run.

We first reported on the longest ballot committee during the Toronto—St. Paul's by-election, but we began a deeper investigation after the group publicly announced its plan to run more than 200 candidates in the Battle River—Crowfoot by-election. What followed raised serious concerns about the integrity of the electoral process.

In July, following our exposé on the group's origins, we interviewed a verified LBC whistle-blower and obtained internal communications, including text messages, emails and organizer videos sent to LBC candidates. These materials, along with the group's own public posts, revealed four key findings.

One, the internal communications show a centralized direction, coordinated timelines, standardized messaging and top-down instructions from organizers to participants, functioning in practice like a political party apparatus rather than a decentralized protest. I believe this is a direct violation of the Canada Elections Act, as they are operating as a registered political party despite not being registered.

Two, our evidence shows that organizers stated they already had the signatures for participants who had not yet registered or even agreed to run. The communications we received from the whistle-blower acknowledge that signatures were collected before organizers knew who the candidates would be. This is a clear violation of section 67 of the Canada Elections Act and may amount to forgery under section 366 of the Criminal Code.

In a testimony on October 2, the Chief Electoral Officer confirmed that Elections Canada has seen the longest ballot committee

submit blank forms in past elections and confirmed that the candidate's name must be present.

Three, key internal messages state that there were no authorized delegates acting for specific candidates while signatures were being collected. Electors were asked to sign without a properly authorized representative of that candidate, as emails show organizers asking candidates to ensure they designate their delegate after signatures had been collected. This violates section 67 of the Canada Elections Act and constitutes impersonation under paragraph 480.1(1)(e). This was further corroborated by reports from volunteers for the Libertarian candidate, Michael Harris, during the Battle River—Crowfoot by-election, who heard from electors that individuals had approached them falsely claiming to be collecting signatures on behalf of his party.

Four, separate from signatures, our investigation uncovered a substantial and sustained overlap between the LBC and the Marxist-Leninist Party of Canada. LBC messaging, announcements and narrative pieces regularly appeared on the MLPC's official website and social channels, with posts encouraging voters to support candidates of the longest ballot project. We could not find similar statements on any other social media platform, including the longest ballot committee's.

We invited the LBC to appear on air to discuss their conduct, but they refused the opportunity. One candidate initially agreed to an interview but then withdrew, after being told by organizers they were not allowed because the narrative could not be controlled. Shortly after our whistle-blower episode aired, we received a legal demand to remove all coverage of the longest ballot committee within 48 hours. We declined.

We compiled our evidence package and emailed Elections Canada on July 25, 2025, at 12:06 p.m. eastern. To date, we have received no response.

The longest ballot committee is not a protest. It is a coordinated campaign of mischief designed to make a mockery of our democratic process by violating the charter section 3 rights of Canadians across the country—nothing more.

• (1110)

**The Chair:** Thank you so much, Mr. Davies.

We'll now turn to Mr. Cooper for six minutes, please.

**Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Sturgeon River, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, witnesses.

Mr. Davies, you testified that you've interviewed and have been in communication with a whistle-blower who has been associated with the longest ballot committee. That whistle-blower provided you with communications from the committee, including text messages and emails, as well as photographic evidence. Is that correct?

**Ryan Davies:** That's correct.

**Michael Cooper:** Okay.

Now, pursuant to the Canada Elections Act, in order to get on the ballot, a candidate must receive the signatures of at least 100 electors endorsing their candidacy. Some of the text messages and email evidence from the committee indicates or is evidence that the committee was collecting signatures from electors before they had candidates to collect signatures on behalf of, in violation of the Canada Elections Act. Is that fair?

**Ryan Davies:** That's fair. Some of the text messages that we have from the whistle-blower confirm that they hadn't even started the process and were asking for help in order to navigate that process while the signatures were already in hand, as evidenced by the text messages.

**Michael Cooper:** I'm going to go through some of the relevant text messages and emails, copies of which you provided to me. I have what appears to be a mass email dated May 31, 2024, sent out from the longest ballot committee. This was during the Toronto—St. Paul's by-election. It reads, "Please excuse me, just throwing out the invite one last time!" Then it goes on to say, "We've collected the 100 nomination signatures you will need, and we'd love to have you; but certainly understand there are many many many good reasons not to participate in our crazy project. Just 3 more days till the deadline for candidate nominations arrives." It was signed, "Kieran"; that's Kieran Szuchewycz.

How is it that electors could have signed nomination forms endorsing candidates before the candidates themselves knew that they were candidates?

**Ryan Davies:** That's the whole question we're asking. That is why we try to raise awareness of this and emailed Elections Canada to ask about this. If a candidate has not registered as a candidate and therefore has not authorized somebody as their delegate, how can you have that authorized delegate, who hasn't been authorized, to actually collect the signatures in the first place?

**Michael Cooper:** Precisely.

Then, I have another text message exchange between the whistle-blower and Kieran Szuchewycz, dated August 16, 2024, during the LaSalle—Émard—Verdun by-election, in which the whistle-blower writes, "How many people so far? Gonna break the record?"—as in, going to break the record of candidates—to which Szuchewycz replies, "Its 53 right now, probably 60 tmw. We collected signatures for 109 so it's possible we ll break 100 but it depends on who can get it all done in the next week! Fingers crossed".

Then, two days later, there was a video posted on the longest ballot committee's YouTube channel of Tomas Szuchewycz, with the title of the video being "Message from the Official Agent". I've watched the video. Tomas Szuchewycz states as follows: "If we're going to break the record for the longest ballot, we need everyone

to sign up as soon as possible. We've already collected a hundred nomination signatures for you." Just to be clear, that YouTube video has been removed by the longest ballot committee. Is that correct?

**Ryan Davies:** That's correct. After our exposé, they removed that, and lots of the other longest ballot organizers disappeared from social media.

**Michael Cooper:** That's very interesting. How convenient.

Then, there is a text message from, again, Kieran Szuchewycz dated March 31, 2025, in the context of the longest ballot committee recruiting candidates in the Carleton riding, in which he states to the whistle-blower, "I emailed you the nomination signatures and Official Agent form a few days ago."

Now, you've talked to the whistle-blower about his involvement in the longest ballot committee. According to the whistle-blower, he had not indicated any interest in running for the longest ballot committee in Carleton. Is that correct?

• (1115)

**Ryan Davies:** That's correct.

**Michael Cooper:** He was not involved in the longest ballot committee at that point.

**Ryan Davies:** That's correct. Evidence even shows that there were repeated attempts by Kieran to engage him over the course of several days and even in the course of a week, trying to get him to say that he was going to run. There was no response by the whistle-blower.

**Michael Cooper:** Yet, the longest ballot committee had already collected his signatures. How is that possible?

**Ryan Davies:** That's the whole point—it wasn't. In Tomas Szuchewycz's testimony on Tuesday, he was trying to say they already knew who was interested and that's how they knew to collect the signatures. However, if that person hasn't registered as the candidate.... There's even another email we have that's specifically from the longest ballot committee to the whistle-blower, asking him not to forget to assign Tomas as his delegate as soon as possible. But in the same email, they say they already have the signatures. One cannot happen without the other if you're playing by the rules.

**Michael Cooper:** Mr. Chair, this evidence is very disturbing. It raises serious questions about whether the longest ballot committee collected invalid signatures, which in turn raises the question of how many candidates connected with the longest ballot committee have appeared on the ballot but should not have, because they didn't have the requisite 100 valid signatures as required by the Canada Elections Act. It raises further questions about whether the longest ballot committee broke the law.

**The Chair:** Mr. Davies, give us a very brief response.

**Ryan Davies:** When you look at the scale of it and how many candidates the longest ballot committee has engaged since it started back in 2019, and if you multiply this procedure—if they've followed it every single time for every single candidate—you have hundreds of violations of the Canada Elections Act. That potentially compounds. It could be impersonation or obstruction. Depending on how the Criminal Code interprets it, it could amount to forgery as well.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Davies. You can elaborate on that through further questions.

Mr. Wilkinson is next.

You have six minutes.

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (North Vancouver—Capilano, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to the witnesses for appearing today.

I have a question for Dr. Moscrop.

We had Dr. Turnbull here on Tuesday talking about her perspective. That is, in order to restrict the freedom of citizens to engage in the electoral process, it's a high bar. Even if it's annoying, one has to be clear that there are either impacts or significant potential impacts associated with the actions of folks like the longest ballot committee.

You touched on this in your comments, but how significant do you think the long-term impacts or potential impacts of this would be on a widespread basis? In looking to restrict them, do they rise to that level? If so, what would your prescription be for addressing this?

**David Moscrop:** I think it's necessary to study this, and I'm glad you're studying it. I also think it's necessary not to blow it out of proportion. We have a world in which we're facing a number of serious problems, and we shouldn't pretend the longest ballot committee is going to destroy Canadian elections and make it impossible for folks to run and get elected. The fact is, the vast majority of people who run are running with parties. If you're going to win, you're likely to be with a party.

The problem is the long-term chipping away at the quality of our elections and trust in our elections, and making life more difficult for the people who make the elections in this country possible. Frankly, this country has one of the best electoral machines in the world. We run the best elections in the world, and we run them with a piece of paper and a writing implement. We have part-time, full-time and temporary workers who have other things they do, and we should work very hard to preserve that. I don't worry that the longest ballot folks are going to destroy Canadian elections, but I do worry that, if it gets scaled up or persists over time, it's going to start to add up and create problems.

As for prescriptions, I was listening to the testimony of Dr. Turnbull and others, and I was thinking that there are a few sensible things. One, I thought you couldn't have one person be an agent for more than one candidate. It is absurd to me that this is the case. That seems like an extraordinary oversight on the part of regulation in the first place, so that's a gimme, I think.

The other is this: Whether it's 100 unique signatures, or perhaps you can sign three to five, it's reasonable to have a bit more grit to get onto the ballot, in order to prevent stunts like this. It's a protest, but I also think it's a stunt. It needs to be corrected to preserve trust long-term, but we shouldn't overreact. In a sense, if we end up overreacting, the cure is going to be a bit worse than the ailment.

• (1120)

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson:** Thank you.

Let me ask you a question about disinformation and misinformation. You appeared before PROC in 2018. Obviously, a lot of things have happened with respect to artificial intelligence and other things since then. At that time, you spoke about the need to be vigilant. Could you tell me about how your views have evolved and what we should be thinking about in that regard?

**David Moscrop:** Well, things haven't gotten better. Things have gotten so much worse. When I get nervous about the future of Canadian democracy, I get nervous about the information environment.

When I did my Ph.D., I studied the psychology of democratic deliberation and political decision-making. I often joke that if you were to custom-design a world hostile to making informed, honest, good-faith and rigorous political decisions, it would look exactly like ours. It moves way too fast and there's way too much information. There are often emotional or in-group considerations that trump rational reasons or the public good. There's a massive corporate incentive to feed people slop to keep their eyeballs glued to the machines in their pockets that make them money. It's bad news.

However, we don't want to over-prescribe a solution that makes life difficult for people who are just trying to navigate the Internet and get through their day. We have the unenviable task of trying to rethink how we build citizens. It's very tough.

I'm in favour of an approach that labels. People should know what they're looking at and they should know what they're reading. They should have a sense that they can trust it. That onus will likely fall, in part, on the platforms.

We also need to build better citizens. We need people who have the capacity and the literacy to navigate a changing information environment. That's going to take effort by organizations and to some extent the state, but it's also personal responsibility. People have to want to be able to navigate this space.

When you look at data on who shares misinformation and disinformation, and who falls for it and who doesn't, you often see that there's a split among the population. Some folks who grew up with this technology are better able to navigate it than those who didn't. We may need an asymmetrical approach to see who's actually falling for this and where.

I'll close out on this point. I read this morning a bit from the Media Ecosystem Observatory saying that in the last election, influencers dominated political discourse. Something like nearly half of the engagement and the information that was shared about the election wasn't from politicians and wasn't from the media. It was from influencers. We don't even know what's going on there.

I would recommend to the committee and to the folks here that at some point, we ought to be thinking about that very carefully as part and parcel of this.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Wilkinson. That was exactly six minutes.

We're moving right along.

[*Translation*]

We now go to Ms. Normandin for six minutes.

**Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Thank you.

Since the beginning of the study, our main goal has been to figure out whether we need to reform the act, to prevent actions such as those taken by the longest ballot committee in the future, or whether we should refrain from doing so. After all, a more restrictive act would have negative consequences as well. That is the balance we are trying to achieve and that is what my questions will focus on. They are for both of you.

In light of all this attention on the longest ballot committee and the violations that were committed, which you talked about, Mr. Davies, do you think the movement could die out on its own? Isn't it likely that fewer people would want to put their names forward, knowing that they could be violating the Canada Elections Act?

[English]

**David Moscrop:** I mentioned forbearance earlier. I was thinking about this yesterday while walking around. I thought, I'm going to think about this as a democratic theorist. I'm going to think about this as a journalist. I'm going to think about this as a citizen of this country. I'm going to think about this as someone who actually supports electoral reform. What's the best outcome here? The best outcome is that they stop. It's that they take the message, exercise some forbearance and say, this isn't working and in fact it's doing harm to our elections and also our stated goals, so let's try something else and let's move on.

Then, perhaps, Parliament could look at small legislative changes to make it slightly less likely that this happens in the future.

Honest to God, I think the best answer is that they stop. I know they'll be seeing this. I certainly hope they take that message to heart, because it's not doing us any good.

• (1125)

**Ryan Davies:** We've done a lot of monitoring of the long ballot social media. They've been monitoring these committee meetings. They were monitoring the committee meetings last fall. They have heard all of these suggestions. On their own social media, they are saying not to worry, that no matter what happens, they're going to continue. They seem intent on this.

I think that was evidenced in the original court decision in Alberta, in 2017, when the lead organizer, Kieran, tried to have all of the restrictions to register as a candidate and to vote wiped away. Luckily, Judge Inglis ended up only striking down the \$1,000 bond.

[Translation]

**Christine Normandin:** As the Canada Elections Act is currently drafted, is there a way to better enforce the act so that this doesn't happen again? Is that possible?

[English]

**David Moscrop:** I don't know the details about signature checking. I did listen to the testimony previously and heard that some candidates.... The returning officer rejected some things, so there was a check and balance there at some point.

Here's the thing. If there are problems with signatures, that needs to be caught before a candidate is on the ballot. If it's caught after

the fact, then we're talking about consequences for that, but the damage to the public good is already done, to some extent. If people who ought not to be there are sneaking onto the ballot, that's a problem, and now we don't need to talk about checking these things a priori.

Incidentally, if we can't control signatures now and if we're going to introduce further restrictions on signature requirements, we need to be sure we're ready to actually check them. We can't just say, "Well, we'll let Elections Canada figure it out later." This comes at a time when the country is looking at reducing budgets, so there is also a budgetary concern. If we are going to spend money, are people going to be ready to spend this money to do it?

I would say, before we start looking at making things tougher, make sure you can actually enforce the regulations that you currently have on the books.

**Ryan Davies:** I would say that I agree. Money is going to be the issue here.

There's an issue with the Canada Elections Act as it is right now. I look at this from a process architecture perspective, where this is just a big process on how to run an election. However, I don't see any controls in place for this process. You can say, for a candidate, or for a person who is authorized to act on a candidate's behalf, that is a requirement. I don't see any way to enforce that. Where's the control for that? There are many other examples in the Canada Elections Act where that's the case. The Chief Electoral Officer admitted that they don't have the resources to even implement any controls to check the act as is.

[Translation]

**Christine Normandin:** If we are constantly trying to fix something, don't we actually run the risk of encouraging groups like the longest ballot committee to find all the gaps, all the loopholes in the act? We don't want to end up playing cat and mouse and ultimately missing the mark.

[English]

**David Moscrop:** Absolutely. As we heard from Mr. Davies a second ago, if the longest ballot committee decides to keep going in different iterations, it's going to be whack-a-mole. We're all going to be back here in 18 months—maybe that's too soon—or in two and a half to four years, doing this again, and then again.

Meanwhile, there are serious problems at scale about the misinformation and disinformation environment, about the health of our democracy and so on. This is why I keep saying that often the best solution is forbearance, but if that's impossible, then it's going to invite a response that works against the outcomes that the longest ballot committee wants. It's going to make life more difficult for people to engage in electoral democracy. It's going to make people less inclined to want proportional representation. I'm less inclined to want it. I've been fighting for it for 15 years. I wake up thinking that it's getting hard to go to bat for this.

I hope they take this seriously, because I think there's a very serious problem, and the last thing we need is a game of whack-a-mole right now.

[Translation]

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

[English]

We will go on to Mr. Calkins for five minutes, please.

**Blaine Calkins (Ponoka—Didsbury, CPC):** Thank you very much, Chair.

Mr. Davies, in your opening testimony, you were very clear in what you surmise to be happening here, based on the information that you have. Could you elaborate a bit more on why you think the longest ballot committee is actually operating as a political party rather than as a protest group?

• (1130)

**Ryan Davies:** You just have to look at your own political parties. It doesn't matter which one you're a part of—Liberal, Bloc, NDP, Green, PPC, or what have you. If someone wants to know more about your party, where do they go? They go to your centralized party website, where you have all of your media. The longest ballot committee was centralized on X, and now they're centralized on Bluesky. Most of their media isn't there. They have random social media posts that they put up there, but all of their formalized statements, political statements and formal responses—even to committee meetings or to statements by the Chief Electoral Officer—are all posted on the Marxist-Leninist Party website, so there's that. They formalize all of that into one specific website.

Where it really comes into play is that they operate as if they're a political apparatus. They're talking to their candidates as if they're running across the country, but they're not; they're running in one riding. They give them all one direction. They're running under a single platform. They are—

**Blaine Calkins:** Just to be clear, a political entity is allowed to have only one candidate on the ballot in each constituency. Is that correct?

**Ryan Davies:** That's correct.

**Blaine Calkins:** You believe they're committing an offence either by running more than one candidate or by failing to register as a party. Is that correct?

**Ryan Davies:** That's correct. The main crux of it is that a registered party is allowed to run only one candidate per riding, so they get around this by not being registered.

**Blaine Calkins:** Do you think a legitimate candidate gets zero, one or two votes in an election?

**Ryan Davies:** I think a legitimate candidate would be embarrassed to get that number.

**Blaine Calkins:** I've personally been quite frustrated, since 2017, with a decision by a court in Alberta. Ironically, the witness who was here on behalf of the longest ballot committee is suggesting that people outside of Parliament should be making rules. We have a ruling made by a judge in Alberta in 2017. Somebody who's not a politician, has likely never run and appears to have no political experience whatsoever made a decision to remove the \$1,000 bond. I've often thought it was a mistake by the government at the time not to appeal that decision.

Can you tell me more? The individual was Kieran Szuchewycz, and the case was Szuchewycz v. Canada. Is there any relation between that Mr. Szuchewycz and the one who testified here two days ago?

**Ryan Davies:** Sure. He's the brother of Tomas Szuchewycz.

The biggest thing that jumped out at me in this decision is in paragraph 23, which reads, "The Applicant submits that while the deposit requirement is allegedly an attempt to deter frivolous candidates, it may well deter non-frivolous candidates who are not affluent."

**Blaine Calkins:** Does the longest ballot committee, in your opinion, have anything but frivolous candidates?

**Ryan Davies:** No.

**Blaine Calkins:** Obviously, from my perspective, this appears to be a well-orchestrated campaign that started well before the election. They knew they would have to get that \$1,000 bond removed and were prepared to go to court.

What does that suggest to you about political motivations and the actions of an actual political party?

**Ryan Davies:** Given the fact that they're trying to get all of the requirements removed, this seems to be a well-thought-out, orchestrated attempt to engage in this behaviour in the first place. After he won this court challenge, did he run in the election? He didn't run as a legitimate candidate. All of a sudden, he teams up with the Rhinoceros Party and they start running these long ballots.

The biggest thing about this court challenge is that he was saying it violated his section 3 charter rights, but now they're going on to violate the section 3 charter rights of people with disabilities and seniors across this country. For people to say this is a small issue.... It is not. This is an issue that our forefathers fought for, and we need to take that seriously.

**Blaine Calkins:** I couldn't agree with you more.

With all of the information you have from the whistle-blower, plus everything that is in the public domain, is there anything that leads you to believe that the longest ballot committee is actually just a protest, or is it operating with clear and decisive intent?

**Ryan Davies:** I think the fact that they couldn't even answer the chair's question about.... Fine, let's accept that this is a protest. What's their solution? They don't even have a thought-out solution, and they've been doing this for six years. Haven't they thought about that at all? This shows they're not serious about an actual resolution, and this is just malicious intent.

**Blaine Calkins:** Do you think—

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

Mr. Calkins, I cut you off with three seconds left. I apologize. I'll give you three more seconds next time.

[Translation]

It is now over to Mrs. Brière for five minutes.

• (1135)

**Hon. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses this morning.

Mr. Moscrop, you said in your remarks that maintaining electoral integrity was essential. You called our election process, which is still paper and pencil-based, one of the best in the world, and you said that the longest ballot committee's actions could undermine voter trust.

As we all know, getting people out to vote can be difficult. We've talked about this a fair bit, but do you think tactics like those used by the longest ballot committee could really deter people from exercising their right to vote?

[English]

**David Moscrop:** Well, from the number of votes their candidates are getting, we know that it's not encouraging people to turn out to vote. I think it could potentially discourage people at the margins from turning out, because who wants to wade through 200 names in a general election or a by-election—which already suffer from low turnout—when it looks like a farce?

It raises the accessibility issues we've talked about. It makes life more difficult for everyone and irritates people. As we know, every time you introduce a bit of a barrier, the turnout is going to go down. It's just the very rational calculation of, "Okay, it's going to be a little more work to do this. Do I really want to put that work in?" It's already a problem that people are deciding they don't want to turn out, especially young people. When you look at the distribution of who turns out and who doesn't, and you say, "Well, you know, we got a 60% turnout", it's because you have 80% of older folks and 20% of younger folks. I don't think they're going to be bothered to turn out when they're staring down something like this.

Ultimately, the way I see this problem is that we're trying to balance the right of an individual to get on the ballot versus the right of an elector to cast their ballot, and that's the core balance that needs to be struck. If the longest ballot thing continues, it's going to make life more difficult for people to cast their ballots, and that's the last thing we need right now.

[Translation]

**Hon. Élisabeth Brière:** Now I'd like to talk about data piracy in connection with the Canada Elections Act.

Do you think we risk winding up in the same boat as the United States and the United Kingdom, where elections were previously undermined because the data held by a party or multiple parties were hacked?

[English]

**David Moscrop:** That's a good question. I don't know. The one thing... I was discussing this earlier. When we approach this issue, we need to think of it as an issue of freedom, ultimately. That might sound silly, but it's not. It's ironic, but freedom requires constraints; if you were to have an ultimate lack of constraints, you wouldn't

have freedom; you'd have chaos. We need constraints in our lives. Anyone who's ever had to force themselves to go to work knows that you need constraints in order to be free. If you want to pay your mortgage, you have to go to work. I'm sorry. I don't like it either, but that's the way it works.

In elections, it's the same thing. We limit how much money you can spend, because that maintains the integrity of an election. We limit how you can get on the ballot, because it maintains the integrity of the election. We try to make sure that third parties or foreign parties aren't unduly influencing the election, and so on. Part of that is making sure that you have good constraints, and part of it is making sure that your elections are as simple as possible.

Again, one core virtue of Canadian elections is that they're very simple and mechanical. In many ways, they're run the same way today that they were run in the 19th century and the early 20th century, with better access to the ballot, thank God, but the mechanics are similar. Those constraints are effective at running good elections, but when you turn it into a farce and make it open season on exploiting loopholes, then I think you invite activity that will further undermine it. So, at the risk of committing the slippery slope fallacy, when things like this pop up, you have to deal with them, because I worry it invites further shenanigans that are going to undermine our elections.

I'll say it again: This is the worst possible time to be messing around with elections. We could lose the institutions that bind this country. We've seen them lost in other countries and undermined here in the past. It's just not something to screw around with.

• (1140)

**The Chair:** Thank you so much, Madame Brière.

What I'm proposing to do—and by “proposing to do”, I mean that we're going to do it, and it worked well last time—is go to Madame Normandin for three and a half minutes, then have six minutes each for the Conservatives and the Liberals, and then move to our next panel.

Madame Normandin, go ahead for three and a half minutes, please.

[Translation]

**Christine Normandin:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Professor Moscrop, I'd like to turn to you now, since we've already heard Mr. Davies' answer to my hypothetical question. It's a moot point, because the court struck down the \$1,000-deposit requirement in its decision. We've talked about this a few times, but I would still like to hear your thoughts.

I have a short preamble. Had the \$1,000-deposit been necessary when I ran for Parliament, I probably wouldn't have run, which means I wouldn't be an MP. I can assure you that, when I ran for my seat, my candidacy was anything but frivolous.

Talk, if you would, about the risks or negative impact of being required to pay such a deposit in order to run. It could jeopardize the plurality of votes and parties, which I see as one of the strengths of our democracy. It could also result in fewer candidates from different walks of life running in our elections. We want a Parliament that is representative of voters, a Parliament that reflects who they are.

Can you talk about those aspects?

[English]

**David Moscrop:** I think we need to understand the nature of the problem. The nature of the problem isn't that people have access to the ballot. The nature of the problem is that someone has weaponized the fact that people have access to the ballot.

We think it's good that people have access to the ballot, for the reasons you just suggested. You get candidates who otherwise couldn't afford it. You get candidates from different backgrounds. The lack of a bond presupposes that you want individual candidates who aren't connected to parties, or at least rich parties. Parties have no problem coming up with the money, at least the big ones, and some of the smaller ones, in places where they have a shot. What we're really talking about here is individuals who want to take part in the electoral process but who otherwise find \$1,000 prohibitive. What if it were \$100, or what if you needed \$200 or whatever? We could talk about scale.

I think the problem isn't that people can access the ballot. The problem is that they've weaponized it. I worry that an overreaction, or let's say an aggressive reaction that creates barriers to getting people on the ballot, will affect not just those who are weaponizing it but also those who in good faith really want to present themselves as candidates and otherwise can't raise the money. You end up privileging the incumbents, privileging parties, privileging wealthy folks and deprivileging everyone else.

So I would be at least skeptical of that, for the reasons you stated.

[Translation]

**Christine Normandin:** Can you talk about balancing the risk of limiting the number of candidates who are not frivolous, if we adopt some sort of legislative solution to address the issue, and the negative impact of frivolous candidates? I would point out that frivolous candidates could also be good for democracy in some cases.

[English]

**Ryan Davies:** I think the issue here is this: How do we uphold everyone's section 3 charter rights? How do we protect the people who are most disadvantaged in terms of allowing them their democratic right to vote? That's one of the main concerns here, but we should not go too far in the other direction in overreacting.

I think we need to enforce the act. It seems that one of the biggest problems we have in this country overall is enforcing the laws that we do have. In having an honest review of the Elections Act, where there is a determination that there are missing controls in order to do that, we need to come up with new controls and punishment for people who try to weaponize democracy against itself.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Davies and Madame Normandin.

We will move on to Mr. Jackson for six minutes.

**Grant Jackson (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, gentlemen, for being here today.

I'd like to start with you, Mr. Davies. You mentioned earlier in your testimony that you or your organization filed a complaint with Elections Canada regarding the longest ballot committee's actions. Can you make it very clear, on the record, who specifically you submitted that complaint to?

**Ryan Davies:** We initially contacted Elections Canada by phone to ask them how to report this. They provided the email address of info@electionscanada.ca. That's the mailbox we were advised to send it to.

• (1145)

**Grant Jackson:** To date, you have received no response to that. Is that correct?

**Ryan Davies:** That is correct.

**Grant Jackson:** Okay.

Would you be willing to table all the evidence and correspondence you have between you or your organization and the whistleblower, so that we have that evidence, which I assume was part of the complaint you filed to Elections Canada?

**Ryan Davies:** Certainly. Yes, it was.

**Grant Jackson:** Thank you very much.

Dr. Moscrop, I want to thank you for your testimony today. I was going back and forth a little bit with Dr. Turnbull on Tuesday. I know you watched this, but just to summarize, I agreed—and I agree again with what you've said—that we've probably given this far too much airtime, which they have only gotten excited about. That being said, I do think we have to come to an outcome here. I don't think this can go on.

I asked Dr. Turnbull if it summarized her position that if she did not support the restriction of signatures to people only being able to sign one candidate's paper, she would support a change such that one official agent can be the official agent for only one candidate. "Absolutely," she said with regard to the official agent piece. She said she wished we didn't have to do the piece about the candidate signatures, but unfortunately that's where we are. She actually ended up agreeing with both of those solutions.

What is your perspective on that? Would you find yourself in a similar place?

**David Moscrop:** Absolutely. There are reasonable and unreasonable barriers to running. Financial barriers can be unreasonable, but I think old shoe leather barriers—as in, go get signatures, go knock on doors and go prove you're serious—are utterly reasonable.

Again, I was stunned that you could have one individual act as an official agent for more than one person. On the face of it, it is absurd and, incidentally, a conflict of interest. One of the premises of the longest ballot is that politicians are in a conflict of interest. Apply the same standard to what you're doing: Using one agent for 191 people is also a conflict of interest. It's inconsistent.

On the one hand, yes, I think if you have to get 100 signatures, or whatever it might be, that's fine. Regarding whether they're unique, I did notice the witnesses brought up the point that if you're an elector, you might want to sign two or three people's forms. Maybe you haven't decided who you're going to vote for yet. I've gone back and forth in a couple of elections; people change their minds.

However, 191 is obviously against the spirit of the law, so it would be reasonable to have a limit of some sort, because here's the thing: Ultimately, if you can't get 100 unique signatures, are you a serious candidate? I could get 100 unique signatures when I ran for student council president—I was a two-termer, by the way—in a high school of 1,200 people. You can get 100 unique signatures.

**Grant Jackson:** Okay. Thank you.

I appreciate the clarity on that. I do think this committee will need to take expert advice as to an outcome when we get to the conclusion of this study, to ensure a balanced but swift approach so that this is in place for future by-elections and this farce doesn't continue any longer. I certainly appreciate that.

I wonder about your perspective on the overall number of signatures that are required. The number is 100 right now. We know that in a previous Parliament the Liberal government actually brought forward a bill to reduce the number of required signatures, I believe, to 75. I'm just wondering if you have a perspective on that and whether you think that's appropriate or wrong-headed, given the longest ballot committee and the general context overall.

**David Moscrop:** To use a contemporary reference, it's the difference between winning a ball game 6-1 and 7-1. Whether it's 100 signatures or 75 signatures, I don't think there's a material difference there, because if you can get 75, you can probably get 100. Now, can you get 1,000? That's unreasonable. It's really a matter of scale, so I don't think there's any real pressing.... I don't think it would be worth the paper you'd have to print it on to reduce it to 75.

It's a show. It's more of a gesture than it would be a substantive change, and ditto for raising it to 125. The 100 is entirely reasonable. I don't see why you would lower it, unless you're going to lower it to zero, and then you're having a philosophical debate, not a regulatory debate.

**Grant Jackson:** All right.

Do you have any further perspective on Mr. Davies' commentary about the longest ballot committee operating, rather than as a protest movement, as either a political party or a third party, as has been suggested in previous conversations? This is a centrally organized group of a very small number of individuals who are giving central direction sometimes to people who are not even full candidates yet, as we've heard in testimony—people who are prospective candidates.

Should they be governed in some way by either the rules that govern third parties in our elections or the rules that govern political parties in our elections?

• (1150)

**The Chair:** Give us a very brief answer, Dr. Moscrop.

**David Moscrop:** I hadn't thought about it until Mr. Davies brought it up, but I found his argument cogent.

Again, I'll go back to this: We have, effectively, an exploitation of loopholes in the law right now that is in violation of the spirit of the law. Mr. Davies made quite a cogent argument.

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

We'll move on to Mr. Louis, please.

**Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair. I'll be splitting my time with Ms. Kayabaga.

Thank you to both of the witnesses. I appreciate your time.

In the limited time I have, I'll direct my questions to Dr. Moscrop because of his journalism background.

You spoke about the need for trust in elections. I—and, I'm sure, most Canadians—believe that a free and independent press is essential to Canadian democracy. You referred to what you called an “information environment”, which I imagine is a combination of traditional media and social media. I want to ask you questions to address that, specifically during the election period.

In your opening statement, you said we can't over-prescribe a solution, but we can address issues in a way that supports quality, fact-based and local journalism. As a journalist, what role do you see Canadian journalism playing in helping to safeguard democracy and building that trust, particularly during election periods?

**David Moscrop:** I am a strong believer in the supply-side argument of good information. It is a betrayal of my politics otherwise.

Part of the challenge here is that you have good information and bad information competing in an information environment. What are people going to go to? To a certain extent, they are going to go to whatever is in front of them, whatever's easiest and cheapest to access. In another sense, they are going to go to things that emotionally resonate with them and confirm their preconceived notions. They'll go to things they find entertaining, things that their social group approves of and so on. That information may be good or bad. I'm not talking substantively, but it could be bogus. It could be informed; it could be ill-informed. The challenge is to supply enough good information that you displace the bad information. This is my approach. You can try to regulate it, but it's extraordinarily difficult. You run into issues of freedom of speech and expression. You run into technical issues and regulatory enforcement issues. It's really hard to do.

What you can do is say that we're going to displace the bad information with better information by ensuring that we have well-trained individuals, journalists, out there doing their job. The problem is that we have an environment in which influencers, some of whom are quite good and some of whom are definitely not quite good, are out there capturing more and more attention. I don't know how you address that.

That's why I keep saying that the committee ought to think about this. Parliament ought to think at some point about how you displace the bad information with better information, particularly in an environment where the incentives and the structure push a new model of media that includes people who, quite frankly, just aren't journalists.

**Tim Louis:** Thank you.

Part of limiting interference in elections to maintain the integrity of an election deals with donations. In social media, you control what you write, but you don't control what you see. However, money can influence what is out there.

On the subject of untraceable donations, such as cryptocurrency and prepaid cards, what is your stance on allowing or disallowing those outright in Canada's political financing system?

**David Moscrop:** When it comes to political financing, every time someone makes a donation, you should know who it is. You should be able to know who that person is, but that's not what worries me. What worries me is what happens between elections. People's opinions aren't just formed at election time; they're formed prior to election time. I am sure we have all kinds of questionable money floating around funding people between elections. What I want to know is who's getting paid by whom and in what way between elections.

We've seen scandals in the United States over the funding of influencers, people on YouTube, people on TikTok and people elsewhere, because there are people in the world who want to shape those democracies. I'd like to know who's funding that and why.

**Tim Louis:** Thank you.

I'll turn it to Ms. Kayabaga.

**Hon. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.):** Thank you to my colleague for allowing me to take the extra three minutes in this panel.

Thank you so much for being here today. My questions will also be directed to Mr. Moscrop.

Building on the questions my colleague was asking and what you were saying about influencers.... You said in your opening comments that most information that Canadians consume right now comes from influencers online, more so than from official channels of elected officials or even Elections Canada. I am curious to know how you think we can manage that and where governments can play a role in regulating misinformation, because a lot of information is not factual. It can't be tracked, and it can't be true. A lot of foreign actors can be using those influencers to pass massive information that is probably not true. What does that do to our electorate and our democracy?

Can you talk a little about what our role would be in managing that without partisanship or censorship?

• (1155)

**David Moscrop:** That's a very easy question. We'll be out of here by next week.

That, to me, is the primary question for the future of good political decision-making and democracy. How do you manage information so that people have good information and can make good decisions? You indicated the core challenge, which is that, at some level, we want to be able to control what's out there, but the state shouldn't be adjudicating truth—or facts, for that matter, unless we're talking about labels on products. That's one thing. When it comes to democracy, we're making value statements and judgments. I'm very nervous when the state starts deciding what is fit to pass as a judgment and what's not, because that's going to be inherently subjective and based on values that may not be universally shared in this country.

I come back to this argument: We want to maximize the information Canadians have so that, if something is on the Internet, you should have a reasonable expectation that you're getting what you think you're getting. If it's AI-created, for instance, I'd like to know it's AI-created. It's becoming increasingly difficult to know that. If it's just partially AI-created, how do we do that? I don't know. At least at the theoretical level, you want to be able to know what you're consuming. You want to have the capacity to navigate that as an individual, as an educated person, not have the state do that work for you. We need to make sure we're educating people to navigate these spaces, but also incentivizing them to do the work.

I'll close on this point. Let's ask ourselves how people consume this stuff. Maybe they're walking around. Maybe they're watching the ball game in the background. Maybe they're playing a video game. Maybe they're on the bus. When people are consuming things, they're not necessarily sitting down and thinking, "I'm really going to dig into what I'm watching now." It's white noise.

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

I would like to thank both of our witnesses.

We'll suspend for a few minutes for the next panel.

• (1155)

(Pause)

• (1205)

**The Chair:** We are back.

I'd like to welcome our witnesses for today's second panel.

As individuals, we have Professor Jon Pammett, distinguished research professor of political science at Carleton University; and Dr. Holly Ann Garnett, Class of 1965 Professor in Leadership at the Royal Military College of Canada, by video conference.

Professor Pammett, you have five minutes, please, to deliver your opening remarks.

**Jon Pammett (Distinguished Research Professor, Political Science, Carleton University, As an Individual):** Thank you. I appreciate the invitation.

I know you've been hearing from quite a number of other witnesses, so whether, when we get to this point, I'll be able to come up with anything new or anything that you haven't already heard is doubtful, but I'm certainly willing to tell you what my thoughts are.

I think the long ballot committee is a protest group that, according to its statements, is in favour of electoral reform and wants this to be done by a citizens' assembly. The nature of that reform, as I'm sure has been pointed out by other people, is not clear at all, nor is it clear how the change would actually be brought about with a citizens' assembly working with existing institutions. However, I think those would be reasonable goals.

Its method has been to discover a loophole in the electoral rules that allows the nomination of a large number of candidates in an election in one constituency, which is the way our system works, thereby overloading the electoral mechanisms there and causing inconvenience and annoyance of various sorts. The annoyance is accentuated by the fact that the tactics don't appear to relate to the overall goal very well.

I think that's my basic view.

So far, the impact of this protest has been confined to single constituencies. It's not widespread throughout multiple constituencies and has had a relatively minor impact, but a lot of the discussion that we've been having here relates to the possibility that it will become more widespread and, if so, what the consequences would be. I'm certainly prepared to add to that discussion. I think it's important to keep in mind that in most cases, it's potential that we're talking about, not actual effects.

It has the potential to be a physical deterrent to voting for the disabled and perhaps others, and a psychological deterrent to others due to the delays in the electoral process, possibly ultimately affecting voting turnout rates. I can speak more about that later, if you wish.

I think it has the potential to affect elections in the local constituency in which it's taking place, in a number of ways. Because it's not really a local issue, it draws attention away from local issues in constituencies, which I think is unfortunate. I think local constituency issues have a hard enough time making their way to the fore in elections as it is.

I think it generally raises information costs for voters, because voters are seeking cues as to who the candidates are and what they stand for. It creates difficulties there. It creates obstacles for local community associations that might be seeking to organize all-candidates meetings, debates or otherwise local information sessions. These are volunteer organizations of people trying to organize ways in which voters can see all the candidates talking about issues in the same place. They organize whom to invite, whom not to invite and that kind of thing.

I think it can have an impact on local media as well—

• (1210)

**The Chair:** My apologies, Dr. Pammett, we don't have sound on ParlVU.

I'm going to suspend for a moment while we try to sort it out. We're having technical difficulties.

Hold on for one moment, please.

• (1210) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1210)

**The Chair:** We are back. There were some technical issues, which seem to have been resolved.

Professor Pammett, if you could please start from the top.... We did hear all of your evidence. If it's not exactly the same this time, it's fine. We've still heard it. It'll be part of our record, but this is just in case anyone's watching at home. It's entirely up to you. You don't have to repeat anything that the committee members have heard.

**Jon Pammett:** I can do that if you wish. Do you wish?

**The Chair:** Yes, please.

**Jon Pammett:** The longest ballot committee—as I see it, anyway—is a protest group that, according to its statements, is in favour of electoral reform and wants this to be done by a citizens' assembly. The nature of that reform has not been made clear, as has been pointed out already by multiple people. Neither has exactly how this change would work and how a citizens' assembly would be achieved and would work with existing institutions.

With regard to the method that the group uses, it has discovered a loophole in the electoral rules that allows for the nomination of a large number of candidates in an election in one constituency—and potentially in more than one consistency, in all constituencies—to therefore overload the electoral mechanisms there, causing inconvenience and annoyance. The annoyance is accentuated because the tactics don't seem to relate very well to the ultimate goals as expressed by the group.

The impact of this protest has been confined to single constituencies in elections or by-elections, but it has the potential to increase if it were expanded to other places and to other constituencies. At the moment, it has not had a terribly major impact, but it could have. Everything else is being discussed on the basis of the potential that it might have.

It has the potential to be a physical deterrent to voting for the disabled or for people who might have to wait in long lines at polling stations because of the slowed proceedings. It also has the potential to be a psychological deterrent to others due to not just these delays but also the information-gathering difficulties they might have, possibly affecting, ultimately, the voter turnout rates.

It has the potential to affect elections in local constituencies in a number of ways, diverting attention away from local issues to what is essentially a national issue of overall electoral reform—the changing of the electoral system—if that's what they're wishing to talk about.

It generally raises information costs for voters who seek information and cues as to who candidates are, what they stand for and why they're seeking election. If voters take this information gathering seriously, the sheer numbers make this overwhelming.

It creates obstacles for local community associations that may be seeking to gather candidates together for all-candidate meetings, debates or other kinds of events. These organizations, run by volunteers, may be unsure, perhaps, about whom to invite, whom not to invite and what procedures to undertake. There may be a deterrent there.

Finally, I think it can have a negative impact on local media that are attempting to cover the election and would have some similar difficulties.

I think the situation could be corrected, if it is considered necessary to do so—as I said, this is the potential aspect of things—with some of the suggestions that have been made, such as some tightening of the electoral rules to require that those signing a nomination form only do so for one individual, and the suggestion that there be a unique agent for each candidate. These seem to me like reasonable suggestions that might correct the situation.

• (1215)

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

We will move on.

Dr. Garnett has five minutes.

**Holly Ann Garnett (Class of 1965 Professor in Leadership, Royal Military College of Canada, As an Individual):** Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this committee today.

I am a Class of 1965 Professor in Leadership at the Royal Military College of Canada, and hold cross-appointments at Queen's University and the University of East Anglia in the U.K. I am also the co-director of the Electoral Integrity Project, an international network of scholars and practitioners seeking to improve the quality of elections with academic evidence. I will refer, in this statement, to the work of myself and co-director Toby James.

Elections are designed to achieve the goals of democracy, to empower citizens through equality of contestation, deliberation, participation and adjudication. Choices of electoral procedures and laws must be aimed toward these principles. I will briefly outline how three of these principles are affected by the actions and arguments of the longest ballot committee, which is the subject of our meeting today.

First, contestation requires that elections allow a wider range of groups, individuals and parties to put their names forward for election. A large number of candidates on the ballot can counterintuitively threaten this principle, as it makes it more difficult for legitimate smaller parties and candidates to be noticed or heard in public forums. In response to this challenge, any measures to discourage the protest activities of the longest ballot committee must not have the by-effect of discouraging legitimate candidates who wish to put their names forward in hope of getting elected, nor should it discriminate against certain candidates based on their platforms or group affiliation.

I believe the suggestions of the Chief Electoral Officer to address the consequences of this protest are reasonable means to ensure the seriousness of candidates, while also permitting open contestation. I support a move to allow citizens to sign only one nomination form. Given the size of our electoral districts, this should not unduly dis-

courage legitimate candidates from running. Second, each candidate should have a unique official agent to work with them in the campaign. I do not believe this would be a barrier to serious candidates.

Next, I will highlight that elections should foster wide and even participation. Long ballots may be an annoyance for the average citizen, but for those with accessibility needs, long ballots reduce their ability to independently take part in the election. I would refer you to the consultations that Elections Canada conducted with advocacy groups, noting that long ballots could affect electors with low vision, blindness, dyslexia, challenges with dexterity or mobility, our second-language English or French speakers, or our wheelchair users.

The Chief Electoral Officer's decision to use write-in ballots in the Battle River—Crowfoot by-election was the best option in a difficult situation. However, I would caution that write-in ballots also present barriers to many of the same voters and are not a long-term viable solution, given the example of inevitable situations of similar-sounding last names. Perhaps, in this regard, the proposal from Bill C-65 from last fall to allow for party names to be written in rather than a candidate's name on a write-in ballot could help to alleviate these concerns.

Finally, long ballots and the workaround write-in ballots are more difficult to count, making the vote-counting process more susceptible to technical error. Given that we have safeguards in place in Canada to ensure that the vote count is accurate, I would be surprised if these ballots directly caused any inaccuracies in results, but I must stress the burden that it places on a temporary workforce that, in many cases, has been working since early in the morning. It could even discourage voters from signing up to be poll workers and further exacerbate very real concerns about the future workforce of elections.

Finally, I wanted to address the principle of electoral adjudication. This involves ensuring not only that the rules of the election are followed but that new laws are determined fairly. The issue of effective electoral reform mechanisms is, as I understand it, the main goal of the longest ballot committee. I will thus end with a few comments on best practices for the creation of electoral laws as set out by the global network for securing electoral integrity and a forthcoming volume by my colleague, Toby James.

These principles first recognize that electoral reform is not simply a technical but a political activity. It is true that the policy-makers involved in reforming elections will have a vested interest in the rules that will get them elected in the future. However, there are measures that can mitigate these threats, which include building solutions to problems based on empirical evidence, meaningfully involving a variety of stakeholders while acknowledging that all actors have political incentives in the process, and ensuring transparency throughout the process. Citizens' assemblies can be part of this process, but like any other mechanism of governance, the rules and procedures that guide their discussions will have political implications, and thus require transparency and oversight as well.

To recap, long ballots pose an accessibility issue for those seeking elected office and for voters. The proposals set forth by the Chief Electoral Officer are reasonable measures to address the challenges posed by this movement. Reforming electoral laws does pose challenges related to conflict of interest for all stakeholders, but there are principles that can be followed to mitigate these threats.

• (1220)

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

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

We'll go to Mr. Van Popta for the Conservatives for six minutes, please.

**Tako Van Popta (Langley Township—Fraser Heights, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to both witnesses for being here and sharing your insights for our study on the actions of the longest ballot committee in recent Canadian elections.

At our meeting last week with the Chief Electoral Officer, Stéphane Perrault, he shared some of his thoughts on the negative impact of the political pranks that are being used by the longest ballot committee. That's a term that the committee actually uses to describe their own actions. Others have called it "weaponization" or nothing but "malicious intent". Dr. Pammett, I think you called it "inconvenience and annoyance".

Is the annoyance at the point where we as parliamentarians should actually take some action? Everybody has their section 3 democratic rights to be involved in election campaigns. We don't want to overreact, but I think a consensus is growing that Parliament has to do something about this weaponization of our electoral system.

What are your comments on that?

• (1225)

**Jon Pammett:** Whether it is time to act is a question I was trying to avoid. I don't know whether I'm the one to decide that.

If it's convenient and if there's general agreement, perhaps—I don't know whether there is or not—and if it doesn't take up a lot of time.... What I'm thinking, of course, as I said before, is that this is all on the basis mainly of what might happen if things got worse, rather than the current situation. It's quite possible that this might peter out. If it's possible, then yes, I think it should be corrected.

**Tako Van Popta:** You've been listening to the testimony. Dr. Garnett said that it would be appropriate to change the law to require 100 unique signatures and to limit the ability of one person to acting as an official agent for just one candidate.

Do you think that both of those changes would be reasonable?

**Jon Pammett:** Yes, I do.

**Tako Van Popta:** I have a question for Dr. Garnett.

You talked about conflicts of interest for parliamentarians to be passing laws and reviewing laws relating to elections and citizens' assemblies. Perhaps you could comment on that. Are we actually in a conflict of interest?

I would note that in my home province of British Columbia, there have been several citizens' assemblies to deal with exactly this issue of electoral reform, and each one of those has resulted in a referendum where the electors of the province turned down any attempts at electoral reform. Perhaps you could comment on that.

**Holly Ann Garnett:** Thank you for that question.

One thing I want to highlight is that there are political interests involved for all stakeholders: not just for politicians but also for citizens and advocacy groups. Anyone involved in the electoral reform process—any stakeholder—is going to have political interests involved. It's a matter of using electoral reform processes that are going to build upon the principles that can ensure that is being done in a transparent manner.

There are some ways to go about doing that. The first is to clearly identify challenges before identifying solutions. You'd be surprised how many times solutions come for problems that don't exist. Try to use empirical evidence and consult those who have done the research on the impacts of these sorts of reforms. Allow input from a variety of stakeholders, which includes you as politicians but also community groups and advocacy organizations, in an acknowledgement that there are political incentives for all actors involved. Establish clear timelines and have a transparency of goals and processes. Have oversight by independent actors.

Citizens' assemblies are not the only way to go about doing that. Parliament can pass laws as well. It's just about ensuring that the procedure being used is following those general principles. I can direct you to the global network for securing electoral integrity for a set of principles that you might find interesting to take into consideration when reforming election laws.

**Tako Van Popta:** Thank you.

Have you had any opportunity to research the electoral reform attempts in my province of British Columbia?

**Holly Ann Garnett:** I have, yes.

**Tako Van Popta:** There have been several referendums, and the citizens always just turn down any attempts at reform.

**Holly Ann Garnett:** Yes. I think the citizens' assemblies on electoral reform that have happened in British Columbia, in Ontario and in other places demonstrate a few things. First of all, they show that this form of deliberate mini-public can happen and can take place in a constructive way and can be very useful for talking through different technical proposals that maybe not all citizens have a chance to really dig into deeply. That can be a very positive thing.

However, I think something we've also seen is that even the use of citizens' assemblies is not going to eliminate political considerations. The way they are set up, the sorts of thresholds that are required for any sort of action to take place afterwards, the way the public is educated about these sorts of issues.... These are all going to be decisions that are essentially political decisions. I think it's a misnomer to think that citizens' assemblies are the only way to reduce the politics from these sorts of decisions, because there is politics involved in citizens' assemblies as well.

● (1230)

**The Chair:** Thank you so much. The time is up.

Mr. Louis, you have six minutes, please.

**Tim Louis:** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to both of the witnesses for being here today. I will start by directing my questions to Dr. Garnett.

Something I want to talk about is campaign financing in Canada. I'm quite proud of our system. I think it's designed to uphold fairness, transparency and accessibility. By placing strict limits on individual contributions, we ensure that political influence is not reserved only for those who can afford it. I think that public financing mechanisms help to level the playing field and allow candidates from diverse backgrounds and communities to run viable campaigns. These rules not only reduce the undue influence of money in politics, but they also empower more Canadians to participate in our electoral system. However, a fast-changing tech environment makes it difficult to trace money that enters our political financing system.

Dr. Garnett, I understand that your research focuses on election integrity and campaign financing. Can you tell us about some suggestions you have to make our campaign financing more transparent, particularly with respect to third parties? Also, what can be done to limit problematic funds from entering our system?

**Holly Ann Garnett:** Thank you for that question. This is something I love to talk about.

You're absolutely correct. In the Electoral Integrity Project, one of the things we do is monitor cross-nationally the integrity of different stages of the electoral cycle, and Canada frequently comes out right on top in terms of campaign finance, because we have very strict donation caps. We have very strict limits as to how much you can spend. Many of my colleagues are very surprised at how much you would spend on one of your campaigns, so this is something we really have to safeguard.

The challenge with third parties is essentially that we see in other countries that third parties are being used as a means to circumvent those election financing rules. You end up with interest groups, cor-

porations, unions and even wealthy individuals who end up taking over that deliberative space in elections. It hasn't happened yet in Canada, but we've seen it happen in other countries, including with our neighbours to the south.

What we have to do, then, is limit the ability of certain rich interests or certain specific groups that have a lot of money to overtake that campaign, while also not limiting the ability of citizens to come together as groups to engage in deliberation. We want to encourage that. How do we do that? Essentially, as you said, we can look to our campaign regulations for parties and candidates as a guide, because it does seem to strike the right balance in terms of not limiting expression and also recognizing the important role that parties, candidates and even third party groups can have in this moment of deliberation. We want to have vigorous deliberation. We don't want to reduce it and tell people that nobody can be using money to talk about these sorts of issues.

I think a lot of the measures that were in the previous Bill C-65 were good starts there—spending based on individual donations from domestic actors only, to limit the influence of foreign actors, and transparency in reporting, which at the moment does exist, so that you can go in and take a look. There hasn't been quite as much study of transparent reporting, which is something I hope to do.

The challenge, of course, with all of this is that many individuals or organizations, especially if they are not based in Canada, are not going to follow the official channels. That's where things get a little more tricky, because we know that those sorts of issues are very hard to legislate. It's very hard to find rules and laws that the sorts of actors who are not following the official channels and who may not be within Canada are going to follow. For that, I'm afraid I don't have super easy solutions that involve legislation. Rather, we need to look at more broad-based foreign policy and also domestic policy on how we educate people.

I would say, though, that some of the discussion that happened last fall about third parties and recognizing their role is perhaps a conversation that should resume.

● (1235)

**Tim Louis:** Are you referring to untraceable donations, like cryptocurrency, money orders or prepaid cards? Is that part of the challenge in trying to track that down?

**Holly Ann Garnett:** Yes. As one of the previous witnesses I watched this morning said, if someone is donating, we should know who that is, and the money should be traced. That's a no-brainer. Obviously, there are very small amounts that don't have to be put publicly online, for example. However, if money is being spent in the electoral sphere, transparency is what has made Canada's system so high-quality compared to other places on the globe.

**Tim Louis:** Thank you.

I have less than a minute, so I want to thank both witnesses and cede that time to the chair.

**The Chair:** I appreciate that. I don't know what I'm going to do with it, but as a politician, I guess I can talk out those few seconds.

In light of that, we will move on to Madame Normandin.

[*Translation*]

Go ahead, Ms. Normandin.

**Christine Normandin:** Thank you.

Thank you to both witnesses for being here.

I have the same question for both witnesses, but through a slightly different lens. Generally, it's about the impact that the activities of the longest ballot committee could have on the perceived credibility of the electoral system.

I will start with you, Professor Pammett. You are an expert on polling, and you said that these activities could affect voter turnout by causing longer lineups and making it harder for people to simply open their ballots.

Do you think that, if the electoral process is perceived as being less credible, it could also be a deterrent, causing fewer people to go out and vote, for example?

[*English*]

**Jon Pammett:** Again, this is all based on the potential for this to become widespread if it were to be the case.

The cases we had have not shown noticeable turnout declines, but that's partly for other reasons—the prominence of the races themselves, and so on. What would happen if this was done in a constituency, for example, where there were no incumbent candidates, that didn't feature people who were prominent in party leadership seeking election, or where voters were coming out to find out who the people were? Then you might have a better test as to whether turnout is affected.

In general, there are a lot of people who vote, and they vote now.... One thing to say is that the general concept called “civic duty” has changed for a lot of people, particularly young people. It used to be that people voted because that was the thing to do. We all voted. Our parents voted and we voted. We voted more or less independent of the circumstances. There was an election, so we voted. The attitude toward that has changed, particularly among younger people.

The new kind of civic duty involves this idea: “It's not that I'm determined not to vote. I'll vote when it's important to vote. I'll vote if there's something that matters to me, if there's somebody I really want to support or don't like, or if there's some issue I want to promote, but I'll pick and choose my votes.” Under those circumstances, the difficulty of doing it becomes a factor—whether younger people, particularly, will take the time to study all the information in order to see what the proper vote would be.

If this were to be widespread, the potential is there to have an effect on turnout, which is already, incidentally, overall going down, even though we have these spikes when particular elections of interest come along. Overall, the trend has been going down and continues to be.

• (1240)

[*Translation*]

**Christine Normandin:** Thank you.

Professor Garnett, I'd also like to hear your thoughts on the issue of credibility, since you are a world leader in elections analysis. I believe you've worked with agencies that conduct election monitoring around the world.

Do you think this type of activity could somewhat undermine the credibility of Canada's election process abroad?

Furthermore, in your research, have you come across similar situations elsewhere in the world? If so, how were they dealt with?

[*English*]

**Holly Ann Garnett:** Thank you for that question.

I will echo a lot of what Professor Pammett said. For the vast majority of individuals, the length of the ballot will not be the deciding factor. Other factors will most likely affect whether or not they vote. Those are pre-existing things like socio-demographic factors, or whether they care a lot about the contest. We do have evidence that people are willing to stand in long lines and deal with complicated procedures when they believe the stakes are very high in elections.

That being said, I think it has huge potential to dissuade certain population groups, those who are already likely to be more marginalized in the electoral system, from voting. Those are the population groups I was mentioning earlier—those with disabilities, perhaps seniors, those who have second-language English or French, those with mobility issues, those with dexterity issues or those who can't wait in a line that long. If it is affecting those population groups, we have a problem, even if overall we might not see a decline in turnout.

The second question you asked was about whether we've seen things like this internationally. As I was preparing, I was actually thinking that this was a really good question. I did a bit of a scan of the literature to see what kind of research we have about ballot length, how it affects individuals and how it affects voters. The challenge with this is that most places that have very long ballots have a different electoral system. They might have a proportional representation system, where you're choosing through lists of candidates. It might be a system like the one you see in the United States, where you have multiple contests happening on a ballot. A lot of the research that is coming out on the length of a ballot or the complexity of a ballot and how that affects people tends not to come from the exact same situation. It is really hard to say how generalizable it is.

I can say that there is evidence that the more choices an individual has to make on a ballot, or the more they have to navigate on a ballot, the more it can tax the voter's ability to cast ballots. It can also reduce...some of the likelihood of errors on ballots. However, again, it is a bit of a different situation, since you are making only one mark.

The other thing researchers have found is that longer ballots can disadvantage those who are further down in the alphabet. If your name is up at the top, it will be a lot easier for people to just say, "Oh, to heck with it. I'll just vote for somebody at the top. Then I won't have to unfold and refold and sort all that out." This could possibly be important for long multi-page ballots, but we do not have very clear evidence, in the exact case of the Canadian context, how that would affect it.

That's what I can glean from international experiences.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Dr. Garnett.

I believe Mr. Louis' time.... I put that on the end of Madame Normandin's time.

We'll go to Mr. Jackson for five minutes, please.

**Grant Jackson:** Thank you, Chair.

I appreciate both of you being here.

I've asked a succession of witnesses who are academics these next questions. I think my colleague Mr. Van Popta got a very clear answer from Dr. Pammett, and I appreciate that.

Dr. Garnett, I would ask you the same question I asked Dr. Turnbull on Tuesday and then Dr. Moscrop this morning. Do you think that both 100 unique signatures and one official agent being the official agent for only one candidate are two reasonable provisions in order to address this campaign?

**Holly Ann Garnett:** Yes.

**Grant Jackson:** Great. That's excellent.

I'd like to pick your brains a bit, at this point. I don't know if you saw this or were able to take it in, but previous witnesses discussed the possibility or their conclusion that the longest ballot committee is actually operating as a registered political party without being required to register as one. There is a central organization of a very few people giving out centralized direction to candidates, or sometimes even prospective candidates who haven't agreed to fully participate in the stunt yet, as well as a unified collection of signatures, etc.

Dr. Moscrop said he hadn't thought about that before, but he felt the argument was compelling. That might not be quite the term he used. Actually—thank you, Mr. Cooper—he said it was a "coherent argument".

What would your perspective on that proposal be? Maybe we can go to Dr. Pammett first, and then Dr. Garnett.

• (1245)

**Jon Pammett:** Well, I'm afraid I have to say that I haven't thought of it very much either.

Can I ask you what would be behind your question? Are there implications you're getting at if it were considered to be a political party?

**Grant Jackson:** I think the act specifically requires that registered political parties are allowed to run only one candidate at a time in a constituency. These folks are operating—

**Jon Pammett:** They'd be operating illegally.

**Grant Jackson:** That's correct.

**Jon Pammett:** I'm afraid I am still not going to venture an opinion on that.

**Grant Jackson:** That is fair enough.

Dr. Garnett.

**Holly Ann Garnett:** Thank you.

I have been watching the activities of this committee, so I have had a little more time than everyone else to have a think on that one. Again, I'm going to give the caveat that I'm not a legal scholar. I'm just presenting some initial thoughts. I would say that the longest ballot committee appears to be acting more as a third party advocacy organization that is advocating for specific policies and proposals and using the ballot as a way to do that. They don't appear to be working as a party insofar as they are actually running candidates for election. Even with the fact that they're running multiple candidates, it doesn't seem as though getting elected or contributing to the conversation in an election campaign is really the goal.

That being said, I would leave it to the legal scholars whether they meet either of those two thresholds and thus should be treated as a party.

**Grant Jackson:** Interesting. I would question the third party piece a little bit because, while I understand they are advocating for a certain cause, the organizer who testified was quite honest that he had no prescribed outcome he is actually advocating for in terms of a solution. They say they want electoral reform, but when they were questioned by our chair as to what that might look like, the organizer had no answer and, in fact, stated that he hoped we would solve that problem for him if we ever got to that point. I don't know how you can be a third party advocating for something when you don't actually know what you're advocating for specifically.

Do you have any comment on that?

**Holly Ann Garnett:** That is fair enough. I have read some of their materials, and they seem to be advocating for citizens' assemblies to work towards electoral reform but, like you, I was a bit perplexed watching the exchange that happened on Tuesday.

**Grant Jackson:** Thank you.

I would give the rest of my time to Mr. Cooper, if I could, Chair.

**The Chair:** Certainly.

You can have that 60 seconds.

**Michael Cooper:** Okay.

What about the threshold for signatures? It's at 100. Should it be higher? This is for both witnesses.

**Jon Pammett:** I don't see any compelling reason for it to be higher.

Once again, it's not something that I've particularly thought about.

No, 100 seems reasonable to me.

**Michael Cooper:** Dr. Garnett.

**Holly Ann Garnett:** I would probably echo what Dr. Moscrop mentioned earlier: It would appear that 100 seems to be around the appropriate, and we know where that limit would be. Getting closer to a larger percentage of the electorate could be a means of dissuading those with fewer networks from being on the ballot. We know that network access is very important for ensuring diversity in the candidates we see, so I wouldn't be keen to see that number go very much higher.

However, I think the suggestion of the Chief Electoral Officer to ensure that there are unique individuals could help to prove the viability and the legitimacy of a candidate, while not discouraging diversity in people running for politics.

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

It was an effective use of your 60 seconds, as when Mr. Jackson effectively used his 40 seconds the previous meeting in the splitting of time.

We're moving on to Madame Kayabaga, please.

**Hon. Arielle Kayabaga:** Thank you, Chair.

I would also like to extend a warm welcome to our witnesses today.

I'm going to go to Dr. Garnett.

Earlier, in your opening remarks, you mentioned the write-in ballots. I'm curious to explore that a little. I'm glad this worked out for the people who used it in the Battle River—Crowfoot by-election. I wonder if there are any potential barriers that we would see with the write-in ballots, perhaps for the staff and for the folks who have to write those names.

Are there any potential barriers that you perceive?

• (1250)

**Holly Ann Garnett:** Absolutely. As I mentioned in my opening comments, it is not a viable long-term solution. It was a good workaround for the situation that Elections Canada and the local returning officer found themselves in, but it is not a long-term solution.

You're entirely correct, in that the same population groups that may find a long ballot difficult to manage are quite likely to find write-in ballots difficult to manage, especially as it refers to the independence of being able to go in and cast your own ballot without assistance. I think we need to always consider the dignity of the voter and their independence in being able to cast a ballot. Also, you can see that conceivably there will be issues of people with similar last names or last names that are more difficult to spell. These sorts of issues mean that write-in ballots can be very tricky for the same sets of voters for whom we are trying to alleviate some of the concerns in terms of a long ballot.

Then, when you get to the end of the day and you are counting them, that again is going to be more difficult for the election workers. Really, the thing to remember is that this is a temporary workforce that is doing this for one day. They have probably been up for a very long time and now it's the end of the day, it's getting dark out and they are going to have to start reading all of these names. The write-in ballot can be very difficult.

Also, although I don't think I have any specific evidence, it is possible and very conceivable to have a likelihood of contesting them or to have challenges in making sure what the ballot says—"Did they say this or that?"—especially if candidates' names are quite similar. It could just prolong the process. One thing we know is that people do have an expectation to get the results on election night, and with that many write-in ballots, it might not be the case.

It is not a long-term solution, although it seems to have, in some ways, taken some of the wind out of the sails of having a very long ballot if you actually end up having a much shorter ballot because it is a write-in one. Again, I agree with you insofar as it is not a viable long-term solution.

**Hon. Arielle Kayabaga:** Thank you for that answer.

I agree, especially with some names that are hyphenated. I imagine that if they leave out the hyphenation it potentially could be cause to remove the name off the vote completely.

Did you want to comment on that?

**Holly Ann Garnett:** Yes, please, I'd like to mention something else, if I could.

The other challenge is that currently ballots have names and parties written on them, whereas write-in ballots have just the name. That additional heuristic, as Dr. Pammett was mentioning, that additional cue that voters can use to make decisions, would be essentially eliminated in that case, unless there were an allowance for party write-in, but that is another issue for another day.

**Hon. Arielle Kayabaga:** Are you suggesting that write-in ballots would already have the political parties' names and the names of their candidates written down? Would that leave out the independents who may not have political parties?

**Holly Ann Garnett:** I believe that in the previous Bill C-65 there was a suggestion that, rather than writing in the name of the candidate in a write-in ballot, an elector could write in the name of the party, to allow that additional cue, but again, you're completely correct that it comes with its own can of worms and set of issues. Again, it is not the ideal situation to be using write-in ballots widely, beyond those who absolutely need special ballots.

**Hon. Arielle Kayabaga:** I will let the chair have the 30 seconds I have left.

**The Chair:** I am going to have lots of time at the end of this meeting to ask questions.

[Translation]

Go ahead, Ms. Normandin.

**Christine Normandin:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Garnett, the options that have been put forward include increasing the number of signatures, requiring unique signatures and having a single official agent.

I would like to hear your views on the responsibility of the candidate. Could imposing financial penalties for not complying with the Canada Elections Act be a way to counter the problem? What about making it a bit harder for candidates to register, in the hope that the problem would resolve itself? Fewer people would want to join the longest ballot committee if there were consequences to their actions.

• (1255)

[*English*]

**Holly Ann Garnett:** Is the challenge you're suggesting that of essentially encouraging returning officers to investigate more fully up front, before these people make it onto a ballot? Could you clarify?

[*Translation*]

**Christine Normandin:** What I would like to know is whether subjecting candidates who put forward their names to fines or more consequences is something to consider. I'm talking about candidates who violate the Canada Elections Act, as is assumed to be the case. Maybe we need to put a bit of fear into candidates wishing to put their name forward for the longest ballot. It could result in fewer people wanting their name on the ballot, so we wouldn't see these record-breaking ballots.

[*English*]

**Holly Ann Garnett:** What we have to be very clear about is what kind of violation is being made. In many respects, simply putting your name forward shouldn't be something that.... People shouldn't fear that maybe they're not a legitimate candidate and they're going to get charged for that or whatnot.

One thing that could be helpful is for Elections Canada to make it very clear to individuals seeking to protest using the ballot where the parameters are and what the consequences would be, to ensure that they're going into this following the correct procedures.

Other than that, I'm afraid I don't have more suggestions in terms of penalties or consequences.

**The Chair:** There seems to have been a little bit of loss in translation. If you'd like to ask another question before we adjourn for today, that would be acceptable.

[*Translation*]

**Christine Normandin:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have the same question for Professor Pammett.

Should we hold candidates more accountable and make them more aware of the consequences? If they realize they are violating the Canada Elections Act, it could deter them from putting their name forward for the longest ballot. Some may not even be aware. It could be a deterrent in terms of the number of people wanting to put their name on the ballot.

[*English*]

**Jon Pammett:** My initial reaction to that is that it's probably not necessary to go that far. I would have thought that the other two reforms that are being talked about—the unique signatures and agents—would solve the problem. I'm not a lawyer. I don't know whether trying to prove prior knowledge might be more trouble than it's worth in the legal sense.

That's just a response off the top of my head.

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

I'd like to thank our witnesses.

I did not welcome Mr. Kram to our meeting, so I will say hello as we're about to adjourn.

Happy Thanksgiving. We'll see you on the other side of the constituency week.

This meeting is adjourned.







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