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

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**EVIDENCE**

**Monday, March 21, 2011**

**Chair**

**The Honourable Shawn Murphy**



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

Monday, March 21, 2011

• (1900)

[English]

**The Chair (Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.)):** I will now call the meeting to order.

I want to welcome everyone. *Bienvenue à tous.*

This meeting, which is the 51st of the year and the second today, is called pursuant to the Standing Orders. I'll just read the reference. It's a study of the issuance by the office of the Minister of Immigration of the letter dated March 3, 2011, on the matter of the circulation of the presentation entitled "Breaking Through - Building the Conservative Brand in Cultural Communities".

The committee has only one witness before it tonight, and that is Kasra Nejatian.

Mr. Nejatian, welcome to the committee and thank you for appearing.

Mr. Nejatian has, I understand, a very brief opening comment. I'm going to turn the floor over to him for his opening comments, and then we can begin.

A point of order, Mr. Easter.

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** I would ask that the witness be sworn in.

**The Chair:** I'm going to ask the clerk to do that.

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian (As an Individual):** I, Kasra Nejatian, do swear the evidence I shall give on this examination shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God.

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

As I stated previously, we're now going to turn the matter over to you, Mr. Nejatian, for your opening comments.

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** Mr. Chair and members of the committee, thank you for giving me an opportunity to appear before you today.

Before I start, I'd like to wish you and all the members of the committee *Nowruz Mobarak*, happy new year. I wish you all nothing but peace and good fortune in the coming year.

If I may, I'd like to make a short statement, and then I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

My name is Kasra Nejatian. Until March 3 of this year I was the director of multicultural affairs in the office of the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism. I began working for the minister in the second week of January of this year as a

ministerial-exempt employee. Before starting work in Ottawa, I was a corporate lawyer engaged in private practice in New York city.

Allow me to give a brief outline of the events that have led to my appearance before you today. On March 3, I was asked by the minister to follow up on a conversation the minister had had with the members of the Alberta caucus of the Conservative Party of Canada. The minister asked me to reach out to various Conservative electoral district associations in Alberta to solidify their support for an advertising campaign that the Conservative Party of Canada wished to run focusing on ethnic communities.

I drafted an outline of a letter seeking such support and asked my administrative assistant to further edit the text and to print one letter addressed to each member of the Alberta caucus. Pursuant to the minister's instructions, I asked that this letter be printed on non-governmental letterhead.

It may be appropriate to take a moment here to discuss some clerical issues. As it turns out, the office of the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism at any time can stock at least five different letterheads. The first three of these I was well aware of. They are, first, the departmental letterhead used by the minister to send out letters; second, the departmental notepad used for handwritten notes within the office; and, third, the personal letterhead of Jason Kenney. None of these was used.

The office also, I learned recently, stocks from time to time two different parliamentary letterheads, one for printed letters and another for handwritten notes. It was the first parliamentary letterhead that was used for the letter that went out on March 3. It is possible the office stocks other letterheads as well. I am just not aware of any.

As events have shown, the letters I have spoken about were mistakenly sent to all Alberta members of Parliament instead of all the members of the Alberta caucus of the Conservative Party of Canada.

About two hours after the letters were delivered by two volunteers, I noticed that the leader of the New Democratic Party was asking a question in question period about these letters. Until this point I did not know that the letters were printed on parliamentary letterhead. Up until this question was asked, I was not even aware that the office maintained a supply of parliamentary letterhead. I had assumed that the only three letterheads in the office were the Citizenship Canada letterheads and the personal letterhead.

Before the end of question period on that day, I submitted my letter of resignation to the minister's chief of staff.

A mistake was made under my watch. It was a mistake made in contradiction of the minister's orders. The mistake was mine. I have taken full responsibility for it.

• (1905)

Before I take your questions, I'd like to take a moment to formally apologize. First, I would like to apologize to the minister for not taking the due care required to ensure that his instructions were followed.

Second, I would like to apologize to you and to all members of Parliament. This building is a place I've admired ever since I came to Canada. I became politically active when I was a teenager. I became active because I didn't speak the language and wanted to find a place where I could learn English and learn about Canada and its traditions. It wasn't long before I fell in love with this place, its history, and its traditions. That I have caused a violation of them is deeply embarrassing. It is also the biggest personal disappointment of my life.

Third, I would like to apologize to the taxpayers of Canada. You have been kind enough to share your country with me. I love Canada. Serving its citizens in this limited way has been the greatest honour of my life. I am deeply sorry that my carelessness could cause a further distrust in public institutions.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am happy to answer any questions that you or the members of the committee may have.

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

Speaking about traditions, I see also that you're a walking advertisement for Tim Horton's.

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I try my best.

**The Chair:** Given the controversial nature of this issue, I want to read the guidance that comes from the most recent edition of O'Brien and Bosc regarding questions to be put to the witness:

There are no specific rules governing the nature of questions which may be put to witnesses appearing before committees, beyond the general requirement of relevance to the issue before the committee. Witnesses must answer all questions which the committee puts to them. A witness may object to a question asked by an individual committee member. However, if the committee agrees that the question be put to a witness, he or she is obliged to reply. On the other hand, members have been urged to display the "appropriate courtesy and fairness" when questioning witnesses. The actions of a witness who refuses to answer questions may be reported to the House.

Having said that, I am now going to go to the first round, of seven minutes, and the first member is Mr. Easter.

You have seven minutes, Mr. Easter.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Nejatian.

I'm not sure whether I pronounced that right.

• (1910)

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** It's as close as anybody has ever gotten it.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Thank you for appearing.

Here is an off-topic question first, because we're having this discussion this afternoon. Were you ever a candidate for the current

Conservative Party or its forerunners, the Alliance or the Reform Party?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Easter and Mr. Chair.

In the year 2000 I was a candidate in the riding of Don Valley East for the Canadian Alliance. I was 18 years old at the time. I ran against the former minister of defence, David Collenette, who, I should point out, was extremely kind to an 18-year-old running against him and was a lovely man.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** There's nothing like the experience of knocking on doors.

Have you been in contact with anyone from the Conservative Party, the Prime Minister's Office, or Mr. Minister Kenney's office since your resignation?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I haven't spoken with anyone from the Prime Minister's Office since I resigned. I have to admit that, as best I can tell, it's possible that I've been in a bar where someone who works in the Prime Minister's office has been. I haven't reached out; they haven't reached out to me. I haven't spoken with the minister since March 3, and outside social occasions, I haven't spoken with anyone who works for the party or the minister's office.

I have long-standing relationships with some of these folks, so I have spoken with them about various issues, but not....

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** I see your job title with Minister Kenney's office on your letter here. Was that for both Mr. Kenney's role as Minister of Citizenship and Immigration as well as multiculturalism? Was it the whole capacity?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I'm sorry, I put the earpiece in my ear way too late for that question.

If I understand what your question is, yes, my job title was in the office of the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism. I worked for the minister in that office, and my job title was director of multiculturalism. I didn't really deal with any immigration or citizenship issues outside the portfolio of multiculturalism, I believe, in a substantive way.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** There's one other point. You mentioned in your remarks that you asked your administrative assistant to further edit the text. Who did your administrative assistant work for besides yourself? Did she really work for the minister?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** She only reported to me. She was my administrative assistant. She's still at the office, so I don't know who she works for now, but she was my admin assistant when I showed up on my first day.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Is she paid for by the Government of Canada?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I assume so.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** It's the Government of Canada, or the taxpayer, or the Parliament of Canada.

I find it rather strange—and this is the nub of the issue here—that in this office you would stock up on five different letterheads. In my view, the minister is the minister. He can't be the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration today, and tomorrow he happens to be Jason Kenney. This is one of the problems I have with what I think is a severe conflict of interest, and I think that to your credit you showed it to us in this letter and this outreach.

You have the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, who has discretionary authority to affect people's lives in this country, the lives of people who have come to this country. You also have him doing the role of ethnic outreach for the Conservative Party itself, which in itself is a conflict. If you're somebody in this country, and the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.... You can say you're ethnic outreach today and Jason Kenney another day, and you put your hand on their shoulders, but they know you're really the minister.

Don't you think it's a conflict and could be seen as strong-arming people for money or for favours to the party? Your letter shows us that. Do you think that's not correct?

● (1915)

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** Thank you for the question.

I was only there for six weeks. I'm probably not the best person to speak as to the relationship of a minister, a member of Parliament, and a member of the party. I suspect the minister may have some thoughts on that; I don't think I do. I think it is certainly open to you to ask those questions of folks.

I have to admit that I was there for six weeks. I wasn't a—

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** You were there for six weeks. You were working on the Canadian taxpayer's dime, your administrative assistant was working on the Canadian taxpayer's dime, yet you were doing political fundraising for ethnic outreach for the Conservative Party of Canada. Is that not correct?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** In my time in the minister's office, I spent a significant amount of my time on departmental issues, but it is correct that from time to time I did personal work and volunteer work for the Conservative Party of Canada. I think it should be noted that my six weeks there were not spent ignoring my departmental duties. During the time I was there—

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Mr. Nejatian, look, we've got the biggest cabinet in Canadian history, with 16 staff in most of them. In some of them, I don't know what the ministers do. I wonder if there are more like you in this system doing this kind of thing, which is using taxpayers' money to promote the party.

Let me get to another fact. I hope that later we can get into some of the documentation in this letter in terms of where the data came from, but at the bottom of your letter you say, "Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions or concerns. I can be reached on my mobile at 613..." I will not go through the number in case somebody out there listening calls you.

Was that a government phone—a phone paid for by the taxpayers—or was that phone paid for by the Conservative Party of Canada?

**The Chair:** Mr. Easter, your time is up.

Go ahead, sir; answer the question.

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** That was the government phone. It was issued to me by the Department of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism.

I have to admit, Mr. Chair, that I hadn't unpacked my boxes and I hadn't gotten a personal cellphone since I got there. I was using my personal cellphone from New York, but it just so happened that I didn't list that one. It was a mistake to include my departmental cellphone number, and I apologize for it. It was an oversight caused by the fact that I literally had not unpacked many of my boxes and hadn't had a chance to actually get a personal cellphone. I do apologize to members of the committee for this.

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

Go ahead, Madame Freeman, for seven minutes.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ):** Good afternoon, Mr. Nejatian. Thank you for your presentation.

So, you used House of Commons resources during office hours. Did you put in the work during business hours? We're not talking about volunteer work here.

Are you getting the translation?

[English]

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I think I am getting the translation, but if I may ask, is your question whether this letter was sent out between nine o'clock and five o'clock? Is that the question?

[Translation]

**Mrs. Carole Freeman:** Yes.

[English]

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** In my six weeks at the office of the minister, I frequently probably worked, on average, 80 to 90 hours a week. The great majority of that time was spent doing departmental work, but from time to time I would spend time on personal and volunteer matters. I tried to bookend my day with those things, so I was doing it either at the beginning of the day or the end of the day—

[Translation]

**Mrs. Carole Freeman:** If I understood correctly, in your presentation you said that, two hours after sending said letter, you heard the NDP leader asking a question in the House of Commons regarding the letter you had just sent. Question period is not scheduled for 11 p.m.; it is from 2:15 p.m. to 3 p.m. That means that you sent your letter during office hours.

● (1920)

[English]

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I think what happened—and I have to admit that I don't know all the details of when the letters actually left—

[Translation]

**Mrs. Carole Freeman:** All I want to know is whether the letter was sent during your regular working hours. It was not volunteer work, it was done during business hours. You do work from 9 a.m. until 6 p.m. or 7 p.m., so the letter was sent during your office hours.

[English]

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I usually worked from 9 a.m. to around 2 a.m. or 3 a.m., but yes, I—

[Translation]

**Mrs. Carole Freeman:** Oh, so you don't sleep. You said that you work from 90 to 95 hours per week, so I assume that the letter was sent during your working hours.

[English]

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I asked my assistant to send the letter out around 9 a.m. or 10 a.m.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Carole Freeman:** What you are saying contradicts your opening statement.

[English]

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** If I may, Mr. Chair, I asked my assistant to send the letter out; she took some time to prepare it and sent it out. I don't think it contradicts my opening statement. I apologize if I'm being confusing.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Carole Freeman:** Perhaps your memory will be less fuzzy regarding how the letter was sent out. Was it sent by internal mail, by email, by courier? How was this letter sent to the Conservative MP for Alberta, supposedly, but really to all MPs?

[English]

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** It was delivered by two parliamentary interns.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Carole Freeman:** We are talking about House of Commons staff here. When drafting your letter, did you use Citizenship and Immigration Canada information, confidential information, to target partisan political advertising?

[English]

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** No.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Carole Freeman:** How did you target those people—since we are talking about ethnic targeting—if you possessed no data? How did you do this? I don't think that Arabs were targeted? You targeted the Chinese, South Asians, Jewish people, but no one of Latin or Haitian origin. How did you decide to whom to send the letter?

[English]

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** My letter went out to the Alberta caucus or, as it turns out, to all Alberta members of Parliament. It didn't go out to ethnic groups.

I may be confused. I apologize; I'm not trying to be difficult, I'm just—

[Translation]

**Mrs. Carole Freeman:** I will repeat to you what you said in your presentation. We have your document. You say the following:

The Minister asked me to reach out to various Conservative electoral district associations [...] for an ad campaign that the Conservative Party of Canada wished to run focusing on ethnic communities.

How did you target ethnic communities? Which data did you use to target which ethnic communities?

[English]

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** The Conservative Party of Canada has engaged, for some time, in outreach to various ethnic groups. I believe the party uses various resources to do that. I'm probably not the best person to speak as to how the party chooses its—

[Translation]

**Mrs. Carole Freeman:** Okay, you are not the best person to answer this question. I will move on to another question.

Did it appear to be common and customary practice for Ms. Chamberlain, your assistant, to use House of Commons documents to engage in partisan activities? Was this obviously standard procedure for Ms. Chamberlain or yourself?

[English]

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** In my six weeks at the department, I sent out a sum total of one letter. It is the letter that you have in front of you.

I have to admit that if I had known that we stocked so many different letterheads, I would have paid closer attention to the letter going out.

I'm not a letter-writing person. I'm more of a text and BBM person, but I don't know...I can't tell you whether it's—

● (1925)

[Translation]

**Mrs. Carole Freeman:** In other words, during your six weeks at the office, all you managed to do is send out a letter, the one we are talking about today. That is not a coincidence.

In your statement, you said that you did draft this letter, but that you asked your administrative assistant to revise it and to print a copy addressed to each member... So, your assistant revised the letter you drafted, correct?

[English]

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** Yes. I come from a law firm background, and it's fairly common. It was fairly common in my previous life to send a—

[Translation]

**Mrs. Carole Freeman:** I want to know whether it was indeed your assistant who revised this letter. She did not question the fact that she had to revise a partisan letter like this one in the Minister's office, during office hours. She did not bat an eyelid and did not let you know that this was wrong.

[English]

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I missed that entire question. I'm sorry; I apologize.

I think the question was whether my administrative assistant—

[Translation]

**Mrs. Carole Freeman:** I will repeat my question.

[English]

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I believe she edited the letter. I couldn't remember what she added to it or what she subtracted, but I sent a couple of, I think, sentences to her, and she edited it.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Carole Freeman:** I am not so much concerned about the changes she might have made to your letter. Did she not find it strange or out of the ordinary to do work related to partisan activities during office hours, in the Minister's office? Did she not call you out and say you shouldn't be doing that? She never said anything about it to you? You said that you had just begun working at the office. You had only been there for six weeks. She did not tell you that what you were doing was out of the ordinary. Did it seem to her completely normal to do something like that?

[English]

**The Chair:** Would you go ahead, sir? You were asked a question.

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I was the newest member of the minister's staff. My assistant was the second-newest member of the minister's staff. You may want to ask the minister about these things, but I didn't have a conversation with her about the letter, other than what I've spoken about.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madame Freeman.

We're now going to go to Mr. Siksay. You have seven minutes.

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you for being here, Mr. Nejatian. I appreciate the full apology that you've offered the committee and Canadians for what happened in this case. It doesn't mean that I don't have questions for you, but I appreciate that you've been so straightforward on that point.

Have you ever worked for the Conservative Party in a paid position, Mr. Nejatian?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** Thank you for the question.

I have never worked for the Conservative Party of Canada in a paid position.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** But you have been a volunteer and a candidate. Have you had a party position at all, in your past?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I was the president of the Ontario PC Campus Association. It's an elected volunteer position. I have to admit that I don't know if the position still exists, but at the time it was a position that did campus recruitment for the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Have you ever worked on the Hill in another position or at Queen's Park in another position?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I've never worked at Queen's Park. The last time I worked on the Hill was as an intern for Minister Kenney, back when he was a member of the Canadian Alliance. I believe it would have been 2002.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** But you never had a paid position working for a member of Parliament?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I think I got paid \$900 a month back then.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Oh, you were an exploited worker back then.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Anyway, that's off to the side. Sorry about that.

Have you ever worked for the public service of Canada in any position?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I've never worked for the public service of Canada.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Did you have a written job description for your position as director of multiculturalism for the minister?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I got a letter offering me the job. It did not have a job description.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** How was this job that you applied for described to you? What was your responsibility in this job?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I've known the minister since at least 2000. I've been involved in ethnic outreach and promoting ethnic outreach for the Conservative Party of Canada and other Conservative parties before then. I think it's important for people who have difficult-sounding last names like mine and who come from places like I do to be reached out to. I think it was a series of conversations back and forth over the years. When the job became open, I had, I believe, a telephone call from the minister saying it was open if I was interested and—

• (1930)

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Now, there was an incumbent before you in this position?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I believe the person before me left for health reasons.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** But the position existed before you took the job?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** From the best I could tell, the position existed before I showed up, yes.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** The minister offered you the job, but did he describe the job in any way? What were you hired to do? What did the minister hire you to do specifically?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** My job involved three parts. The multiculturalism branch of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration does three things in multiculturalism and I helped oversee that for the minister. The first is to make sure that the Government of Canada engages the ethnocultural groups across various services. The second is to ensure that various members of those ethnocultural groups are integrated well into society. The third is to oversee the compliance with the Multiculturalism Act.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Was the minister your direct supervisor or did you have another supervisor in the minister's office?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I reported to the minister's chief of staff, who reported to the minister.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** So was it usual for you to have a direct meeting with the minister, as you did in the case when he asked you to do this letter, or was that request directed to you through someone else?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I'm sorry. I missed the second part.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Did the minister ask you to do this letter directly, and was that the usual process that he would ask you to do something directly, or did the chief of staff communicate that request to you?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I can't really speak to what is the usual process. I spoke with the minister from time to time. We both kept fairly odd hours.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** It sounds like it.

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I think this request came from him. I believe he was in London or Paris or Dubai. I don't know.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Okay.

Did anyone train you in how to do your job? Were you offered training in your position?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I received various types of different training, both from the department and from sources outside the department.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** What kind of training did you get?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I received I think—if I had to guess—about 10 or 12 briefings from the department on various things the department does. I received a briefing from the ethics commissioner and a briefing from the lobbying commissioner. I believe it's fairly frequent for the minister's staff to go through those two briefings. I got one I think about two weeks after I started—those two back to back—with everyone else in the office.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Did anyone train you in the importance of keeping track of partisan activity or doing partisan activity in the minister's office?

Who trained you in that aspect of the job? Who talked to you about those issues?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I was told by the minister himself that I was not to use my position or abuse my position for personal, private ends. That included using my position improperly to further various causes, I believe, then, including my political party of choice.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Did you see the letter that you drafted for the minister as furthering the interests of the Conservative Party?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** Yes, I did. I should point out that I believed and do believe that it was entirely improper for parliamentary letterhead to be used to send that letter out. I apologize for it. It was a mistake that was made under my watch.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Yes, I appreciate that.

Now, in your statement today, you said that you recently learned that the minister's office also.... And I'll quote it directly:

The office also, I learned recently, stocks from time to time two different Parliamentary letterheads....

When did you learn of that, because you mentioned earlier that you hadn't had contact...?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** March 3.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** So on March 3—

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I learned it after the New Democratic Party's leader got up in the House of Commons.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Okay, but why do you use the phraseology here, "The office also, I learned recently..." because you're not referring specifically...? It sounds like—

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I apologize if my statement was vague. I learned on March 3 that the office stocks parliamentary letterhead.

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

Mr. Poilievre, you have seven minutes.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC):** I'd like to thank the witness, Mr. Nejatian, for being with us today, and for his very forthright presentation. I know it must be very difficult for you, having made a mistake, to acknowledge it in front of a large group. But you've done that, and you've taken responsibility.

Before I get into the substance of the events that led to this, just so we understand where you are right now, there was a report on CBC's *The National* on this subject. I understand Terry Milewski said that "you were in the process of selling your effects and moving to Iran". He said that you had advertised your effects and that you were moving overseas. You had put them for sale on Kijiji, and that you had sold a desk for \$1,400. Is that accurate? What we understand from this report is that you would be in another continent by now. Is that...?

• (1935)

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I would like to say two things, if I may, Mr. Chair.

First, I have never owned any piece of furniture worth \$1,400, I think.

Second, I have done human rights work on the Iranian issue. My family left Iran because I started getting into trouble at a young age. I worked at the Iran Human Rights Documentation Center in New Haven, Connecticut. If I went back to Iran, I don't think you would ever see me again. I have no intention of ever going back. I love... this is the greatest place in the world. I couldn't imagine leaving it.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** Right, so that's clear. I wanted to ascertain that you were not trying to leave the country in order to avoid testimony and moving to a different part of the world for that.

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** No, the chair and Mr. Easter have been extremely kind to me. When the request first came out, I was on a job-hunting trip and not in the city. I have no intention of avoiding the committee. I have the greatest respect for this committee and I'm happy to be here.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** You've acknowledged that you made a mistake in issuing this type of letter on parliamentary letterhead. Do you think there is a need for new parliamentary staff and political staff from all parties to have a little bit more training, perhaps, in the rules and the protocols so that we might see young people enter and avoid making similar mistakes in the future?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** Thank you for the question.

I think it's obviously open to Parliament to require that it be done. I felt that in my six weeks in the department I received lots of training. I had lots of meetings and lots of briefings. It was—I don't have a better way of putting it—a dumb mistake. I will never, ever not look at the top of another letter, ever again, and I apologize to committee for having made the mistake.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** I appreciate that. I'm sure all members of the committee equally appreciate it.



I think Mr. Abbott wanted to ask some questions, so I'll just give the rest of my time to him.

**The Chair:** Three minutes.

**Hon. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC):** Okay.

Certainly from this side of the table we really respect the fact that you have taken this stand and come before us, dealing in a very forthright way with this issue.

If I may ask you a personal question, I'd like to know how it must feel for you to know that I had actually tabled a motion—that was not accepted for technical reasons—wherein the chair of this committee was actually accused of doing something very similar, and, by a strange twist of fate, the MP that your document went to, who shed the light on your mistake, had an employee, Erica Bullwinkle, commit the same kind of offence.

How does it make you feel to be held to this level of accountability when you don't see...?

I beg your pardon?

● (1940)

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, the matter the member is talking about was ruled out of order...for the clerk.

This is a hearing related to Mr. Nejatian. I don't think the member's remarks have any merit. He's trying to put you in a conflict to try to divert attention from the real issue, which is the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration abusing his power.

**An hon. member:** What's fair for the goose is fair for the gander.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** You guys don't understand what it is to be a minister of the crown.

**The Chair:** Now, I wasn't here, but the clerk has just informed me—and it wasn't him who ruled it out of order at the time, it was actually the chair—that the reason it was ruled out of order was that it was not within the mandate of this committee.

Mr. Abbott, I will let you finish the question. Go ahead.

**Hon. Jim Abbott:** Thank you very much.

I guess, as they say, if we're going to be having accountability, which I think all Canadians deserve—we don't question that—you have stepped up, and you are holding yourself in a totally transparent way in being accountable.

My question, if you'll permit me, is a very personal question. How does it make you feel to be on the spot when other people in the system supposedly administering the accountability don't seem to be taking the same stand?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** If I may, Mr. Chair, I'd like to say two or three things.

The first is that this is deeply embarrassing for me. I place the greatest value on this place and various members. I'm deeply apologetic for making a mistake.

I can't judge what other folks do. I can only tell you what I did. I felt that my actions were inappropriate. They caused a breach of the rules of this House, and I took them to be disrespectful to the members of the House. I apologize.

I should point out that, as a member of the bar, I also find myself under ethical guidelines that may be different from other folks'. Speaking for myself, I thought what I had done was entirely inappropriate. I'm sorry that it happened. It's embarrassing to me that it happened under my watch, and I apologize to you and to other members of Parliament.

**The Chair:** That concludes, members, the first round. We're now going to go to the second round.

We're going to start with Dr. Bennett.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Thank you again.

Minister Kenney has two offices, is that correct? He has a parliamentary office on the Hill as well as a ministerial office?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I think the minister has at least three offices. He has one in Calgary as well. I think he may have another one as the political minister for southern Alberta. I have to admit I find myself a bit at a loss speaking to....

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Usually the parliamentary work gets done in the parliamentary office, the ministerial work gets done in the ministerial office, and the non-exempt staff who are paid by the department are precluded from doing work that isn't about the job of the minister in the department.

As to whatever pads of stationery were around, it seems wrong that the parliamentary office stationery was in the minister's office. You would be asking members of the staff who are paid by the Department of Immigration to be doing parliamentary work or casework for the member in the riding. It is clear how you can set this up so these mistakes don't happen.

I would like to know how many exempt staff and non-exempt staff knew about this letter going out. Perhaps you could list them for us. We want to know who knew about this letter going out—the chief of staff, the director of communications, Conservative campaign manager Irving Gerstein, the Prime Minister's office, and so forth. We also want to know how many non-exempt staff—admin assistants paid by the department, not paid as exempt staff—were involved in the preparation of this comprehensive deck that was being sent out to the Conservative Alberta members.

● (1945)

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** Is your question about the letter or the presentation attached to the letter?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** It's about both. A lot of work went into both. Who did the work, and who were they paid by?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I will take them each in turn. The letter was sent out by me. My admin assistant knew about it, and the volunteer interns who delivered it also knew about it.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** I think we are coming down to a lack of training, or whatever the Ethics Commissioner briefing said. Were you not told that your admin assistant isn't supposed to be doing any partisan work? We always knew that the people paid by the department, in my case by Health Canada, did not do partisan work at all.

The fact that you asked your ministerial assistant to prepare or edit the letter is wrong straight off the top. It's not a matter of the stationery. It's that there was a hive of partisan activity going on within the minister's office.

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I think my admin assistant was an exempt staff. I'm pretty sure she was, and she is. I agree with you that it's inappropriate to use parliamentary letterhead to send this letter out.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** But I don't think we're talking about the letterhead. I think all of us who have seen this deck know that a lot of preparation went into it. Who did this work?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** The deck was created for the Conservative Party of Canada by one of its contractors. I added three or four different take-aways to it. The majority of the deck was created by the party's ad agency.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** The ad agency had all of this riding-by-riding data? Where did the data come from for this?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** The party I think maintains a supply of data, some of it publicly available, others paid for. I don't know who all of the players, the contractors, are, but I've only ever dealt with two advertisement agencies in my life and only one since I showed up here six weeks ago, and they both seemed fairly sophisticated with this type of information.

Sorry, I don't mean to cut—

**The Chair:** Finish your thoughts, sir.

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** The Conservative Party of Canada maintains and gathers this sort of data, and I think has for some time, although I shouldn't speak for them. You may want to ask them.

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

Mr. Poilievre.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** Thank you very much, Mr. Nejatian.

Once again, thank you for the forthright manner in which you've conducted yourself here at this hearing. It appears that you've dedicated a good part of your life to the political process, particularly to expanding the political process to include newcomers and to broaden the diversity of our political discourse in this country.

Would you have any comments generally on how our system and its actors could do a better job of reaching out to new Canadians and to people who don't have a lot of experience in Canada's political process?

• (1950)

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** Thank you for the question.

I find myself in an odd position, Mr. Chair. I believe strongly in the cause of reaching out to new Canadians, be they Conservative or not. I think there are folks in all parties who, either on a volunteer basis or a paid basis, do this work. This is the best place on the planet. It is a wonderful country. The more that various political parties try to engage new Canadians and folks of different ethnic origins, the better this place can become.

I don't really have much specific thought to share with the committee, other than to say that as an immigrant to this country, I find it a great privilege to be able to go to a voting booth. I've been

involved in more losing campaigns than winning campaigns, but each one of them has been an absolute honour. I couldn't possibly imagine leading any other life.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** You were involved at a very young age in the political process. Do you have any thoughts on how we could all be doing a better job of outreach to Canada's youth?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** Mr. Chair, if I may, I don't pretend to be an expert in this area. I got involved for a reason that probably isn't all that common. I didn't speak the language. I wanted to go somewhere and practice and there happened to be an election campaign. The various media groups used to at least engage the young Canadians, I remember, after elections. I think the state broadcaster used to set out materials after elections to high school. It was a fantastic program. I don't think they do it anymore, and if they could, they should. It encourages civic activity, which I found to be the most important thing in my high school experience anyway.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** You went to high school in Toronto.

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I went to York Mills Collegiate in Toronto.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** So you would recommend efforts at outreach even at the high school level, before voting age.

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** Speaking as a young person, or at least someone who views himself as a young person, it is a shame that Canada's youth don't vote in greater numbers. It is unfortunate that more is not done to reach out to folks who will end up paying for a lot of things that the good folks in this room, and in Parliament generally, decide in their wisdom is good for the country.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** Mr. Abbott has a question he wants to ask.

**The Chair:** There are 19 seconds left.

**Hon. Jim Abbott:** Okay. I'll save it for the next round. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** Speaking of voter turnout for younger people, do you have any idea why we're not doing a better job in this area?

• (1955)

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** Like all Conservatives, I suppose, it is difficult to create government programs that have 18 steps that require 25 things to be done to reach out to  $x$  number of young Canadians. It's important for folks, like the members of the committee and the members of Parliament, to reach out more frequently to high schools by visiting them.

I remember when I was in high school, Mr. Godfrey was the member of Parliament for Don Valley West. He was a fantastic man. He used to come to our high school. He used to wear this beige suit. He would just sit down and chat with folks. I once had an hour-and-a-half or two-hour conversation with him after assembly. He was a Liberal and he knew I was a Conservative, but he sat down and chatted with me. I thought it was fantastic. He encouraged other folks to come out. I have a lot of time and a lot of admiration for Mr. Godfrey for doing that. I think more folks—

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

We'll now go to Madame Thi Lac.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Ève-Mary Thaï Thi Lac (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Thank you very much for accepting to testify.

I will ask you to keep your answers short because I have several questions for you.

You were the president of the Ontario association and you said to the committee that you had done some recruiting. Did you do that using Conservative Party letterhead? Was there such a thing as Conservative Party letterhead?

[English]

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I was the president of the Ontario PC Campus Association when I was 19. I no longer qualify because I'm no longer a university student.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Ève-Mary Thaï Thi Lac:** No, that was not my question. You had seen letterhead when you were campaigning for the Conservative Party. Is that right? Have you seen paper with your party's letterhead before, or were you unaware that there even was such a thing?

[English]

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** The only time I saw Conservative Party letterhead was when the party wrote to various members announcing various events.

I should point out that I was the president of the Ontario Progressive Conservative, not the federal.... I don't think the federal party has a campus wing.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Ève-Mary Thaï Thi Lac:** Thank you.

Did you see the letter after it was revised? After you gave it to your assistant, did you see the letter again before it was sent out?

[English]

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I signed the letter, so I saw it. Yes, I saw the letter.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Ève-Mary Thaï Thi Lac:** Once the Minister asked you to do this, at no point in time did you go see him to confirm or try to get his approval before sending the letter. Did the Minister not see the end product of the task he had assigned to you before you sent it out?

[English]

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** The minister, I believe, was in Pakistan when the letter went out. He didn't see the final letter, no.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Ève-Mary Thaï Thi Lac:** So he never saw the wording. I find that strange. You have apologized, but I think that it is rather the Minister who was sloppy, since he did not see the end result of the task he had given you, especially since you were still in training and on probation. I believe that the Minister made the mistake. When I give my employees a job to do—especially if they have been in the office for only a few weeks—it is normal to ask to see the letters before they are sent out, so that I can approve the end product, since the employees are still on probation. The Minister never asked to see the letter before you sent it out, correct?

[English]

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** Believe me, there is no one here who wishes more than I do that there had been a third, fourth, or fifth set of eyes on this letter. But no, he didn't ask to review it. I don't remember. You may want to ask him what his normal practice is. This was literally the first time I sent a letter out.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Ève-Mary Thaï Thi Lac:** When he instructed you to write the letter, he did not tell you not to use letterhead paper, office staff and your working time. He didn't make that clear when he asked you to draft this letter.

● (2000)

[English]

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** The minister asked me not to use governmental letterhead to send a letter out. I don't recall—

[Translation]

**Mrs. Ève-Mary Thaï Thi Lac:** I want to go over what Senator Champagne, a Conservative Senator, said about me at the beginning of 2011. She accused me of being disloyal to the country that has welcomed me and of trying to break it up, since I am a sovereignist. Does writing such a letter on behalf of the Department of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism not increase immigrants' feelings of insecurity? Could it not be interpreted as intimidation with regard to their political options?

Is a mixed message not being sent, between what the Senator said about me and a letter asking for support from ethnic communities written on the Department of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism letterhead paper?

[English]

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I think I'm being asked to interpret a comment made by a senator. This is the first time I've met you. I wouldn't dare to suggest such a thing. I have no reason to doubt—

**The Chair:** Go ahead and finish off.

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I was saying that I can't interpret the comments someone else made, especially when I haven't seen the comments. I apologize. I don't mean to be unhelpful, but I just don't know what to say.

**The Chair:** *Merci*, Madam Thi Lac.

Mr. Abbott.

**Hon. Jim Abbott:** My friends in the opposition seem to be hung up on so-called working hours. In other words, if things happen between nine and five, then everything is fine. But if I understand your testimony correctly, at 90 hours a week, you were working 14 hours a day, seven days a week, which seems unusual. But it's not unusual for a person as dedicated to democracy and this great country as you are.

In the 14 hours a day that you would be working, at 7 o'clock, 8 o'clock, 9 o'clock, or 10 o'clock at night, would you be doing work for which you were directly remunerated, work for the minister and for the ministry?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I should point out that it wasn't unusual for me to work that many hours. I regularly billed over 2,000 hours as a lawyer in New York. I've never really worked a job.... Before going to law school, I worked at a private equity portfolio company. It wasn't unusual for me to work those hours.

I think the Treasury Board guidelines required me to work 37.5 hours per week. I assure members of the committee that I worked significantly longer hours than those on departmental matters. I helped organize two diplomatic trips, one of which, I assure you, took more than 37.5 hours in the week that I helped organize it.

**Hon. Jim Abbott:** My point is, for the benefit of the opposition, that in working 14 hours a day on average—and I'm totally prepared to believe your testimony that you were doing that—at some times after the so-called normal working hours of 9 to 5, you would be taking care of the 37.5-hour work week that the Treasury Board guidelines were giving you. In other words, whether you were doing the work explicitly for the Conservative Party between 9 and 10 a.m. was irrelevant to the fact that you were putting your 40 or 50 or 60 hours a week in to meet Treasury Board guidelines during that 90-hour week. That's the point I'm trying to make.

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I regularly received briefing binders from the department that were as thick as a book. I frequently read them well after 7, 8, or 9 p.m. I couldn't tell you how often I worked past 9 p.m. reading departmental briefing materials.

I was very excited to get this job. I spent a great deal of time learning about the department and its operations. I assure the members of the committee that I don't think there was a single day when I didn't do departmental work past 5 p.m. I don't think there was a single weekend when I didn't do departmental work.

In my first week on the job, I worked on the annual report the department puts out, which required me to learn everything the department had done the previous year. I couldn't imagine doing that working 9 to 5. I couldn't imagine doing it working 9 to 7.

• (2005)

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Do we have time left?

**The Chair:** You have one minute.

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a quick comment and a question to make. I too want to thank you very much for being here and answering forthrightly. I understand this is a difficult situation for you to be in as well.

You've talked about different things. We've talked a little about the need, or not, for more training, whichever way we've talked about it. You've freely admitted that it was definitely just a dumb mistake, and mistakes are made. What can you tell us as a “go forward”, so that other staff members wouldn't face a situation like this? What would you recommend?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** Mr. Chair, I can't. I find myself in a position where I'm asked to give advice to people who are much more experienced at this than I am. I believe I received adequate training while I was in the minister's office.

I can't tell you how much I wish this mistake hadn't happened, for no other reason than the fact that I loved that job. It is an unfortunate mistake. I'm deeply apologetic for it. I've tried my best to remedy the situation by taking what I thought would be the appropriate action, which was to offer my resignation.

I don't want to suggest that such mistakes happen. I believe all political staffers, Conservative or otherwise, come here with the best of intentions. I have friends in all parties, and I'm deeply apologetic, especially to those folks who come up here to do this type of work, for any embarrassment I may have caused them.

**The Chair:** Do you want to go on, Mr. Siksay, for five minutes?

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Nejatian, I have to say that you need a union. If you're working those kinds of hours, it's not surprising that you screw up eventually. I don't think any human being can work those kinds of hours and do so effectively and efficiently. If this is the standard that is demanded of people working for this government, it doesn't surprise me that people screw up and then lose their jobs.

That's coming from somebody who works long hours himself. I have to get that in there, because something's wrong with this picture if we're hiring somebody who's never worked on the Hill before, giving him responsibility in a minister's office in a complicated job, and not really training or supervising him, and then six weeks later something bad happens and he takes the fall for it.

I'm a little frustrated from the point of view of someone who was a staff person for many years on the Hill before I got this job. There's something wrong with this picture, and I don't think we're going to get that here. But the more I hear about it—and I don't really want you to comment on that, because that's neither here nor there.

I want to ask you, though, who was responsible for training you in office procedure, or was it assumed that because you were the director, you didn't need that, and somebody else was going to assist you with office procedure?

● (2010)

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** No, I received a briefing. I sat down with the person who had been doing my job on an acting basis, for a couple of hours, I'd say. I'm ashamed to say that the topic of letterhead just never came up; it just didn't.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Okay.

Now the minister is quoted in *The Hill Times* as saying, and I'll quote:

Anything that's of a strictly partisan or political nature such as fundraising, I do on my own personal letterhead using my own stamps that I've bought with my own money. That's the procedure in our office. It wasn't followed in this case.

Did you know that the minister had his own supply of letterhead and his own stash of postage stamps someplace to do that kind of work in his office?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I was certainly aware that the minister had his own letterhead. I think from time to time the minister purchases, or at least he had an assistant purchase, out of his pocket, some stationery and some stamps.

I have to admit that I have never put a stamp on a letter, so I wouldn't know where to find them.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Yes, that's a generational thing.

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I mean, in the six weeks I was there....

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Did you have any supervisory responsibilities for staff other than your administrative assistant? What about regional multicultural staff?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I shared supervision for a few MRO staff. They technically don't report to me. They report to the MRO directors...and they report to me also, I suppose.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Who are those folks?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** There were two folks in Vancouver, two in Toronto, and there was an additional person in Montreal.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Is the current Conservative candidate nominated in Burnaby—Douglas one of the people who was a regional representative?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** The current Conservative candidate in Burnaby-Douglas was a member of the MRO.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Okay.

Did you ever have any contact with Conservative Party fundraising officials in the course of your six weeks in the minister's office?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I think I spoke once with a fellow, whose name I forget, about how the party's fundraising was going. It was...I have to admit I think it was on Sparks Street.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Okay. With regard to the document that was attached to the letter, who gave you that document? Who provided that document to you? Did the minister provide that document to you?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** The party's advertising agency provided a fairly long document that included some of the information that's in there. I took out some of the pages that were there and added a few pages of my own.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Who referred you to the agency?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I believe the agency had been working with the party before I showed up.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Did the minister tell you to call the agency and get this document? How did you get the actual copy of the document?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I don't think the minister actually referred me to the agency. I'm trying to remember who told me about the agency. I think it was the person who had done the legwork before I showed up and who is no longer on the Hill.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** So this was a project that started before your conversation with the minister about the project?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** Yes. I think the Conservative Party had been working on this ethnic outreach campaign for some time. I was only involved in it for...I think about a couple of days before I showed up.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Mr. Nejatian, in your six weeks there, did you feel that Minister Kenney was somebody who had control of his office and that he was the guy who was in charge?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I think Mr. Kenney worked incredibly long hours. I speak as someone who's known him for some time. I think he has an incredible grasp of the files, and he gave office direction and oversight. I couldn't tell you if he knew what every single person was doing at any given time, but he works extremely long hours and he has a great grasp of the files, I can tell you that.

**The Chair:** Mr. Easter, five minutes.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Abbott tried to leave the impression that the opposition is hung up on the hours of work. No, we're not—or at least I'm not. What I'm concerned about is the abuse of power, and the targeting of the ethnic community, and using ministerial resources and taxpayer dollars to do so. That's what I'm concerned about.

But let's sum up where we are so far. You admitted to using government letterhead, working on government time, using ministerial phones. There's more staff than you involved in this exercise of ministerial pressure for partisan purposes, and heaven only knows what departmental resources were used to develop this document we have here, which is also strictly for targeting the ethnic community.

But I would submit to you that.... You know, I have sympathy for you, because I think you're paying the price for having taken direction, either directly or indirectly, from a minister, but I thank you because this letter that you put out I think shows us the skulduggery that the Conservative Party of Canada is up to in abusing its power.

I have several questions for you. You mentioned that somebody hand-delivered this document and that letter to other offices. Do you know how many people from Minister Kenney's office were involved in that? Who were they?

● (2015)

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** Mr. Chair, I should point out that I'm happy to help out the Liberal Party of Canada whenever I can.

It is the two volunteer interns who delivered.... I don't think they sought help from anyone else.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Okay.

Did the minister's chief of staff see the letter? Do you know if the minister's chief of staff saw the letter?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I think the minister's chief of staff reviewed the text of the letter, but I don't think he actually saw it printed, no.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Okay.

Did the minister's director of communications see the letter or review it?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I certainly didn't show it to him. I don't know anyone else who did.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Okay.

Now, the document gets into some very what I would call "concerning" words in terms of the selection. The document itself contains data showing voting patterns among Chinese and South Asian communities. It highlights targeted ridings that are called "very ethnic". That term used, "very ethnic", is that a commonly used term around the minister's office, do you know?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I know that this has caused some concern with folks. I should point out that I added the words "very ethnic" to the presentation. The presentation only initially said I think "target ridings". I certainly didn't mean any insult by it. I consider myself an ethnic Canadian. I think the term was meant to say that some ridings have a higher proportion of folks who are ethnic than others do and those target ridings were the ridings that had the highest proportion of ethnic votes. But if it wasn't on a PowerPoint presentation...if it was an essay, I would try to be more articulate.

I certainly apologize to folks who think that was meant to be—

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** That's fine. We understand that. As I indicated, I think you're ending up being the fall guy here to a certain extent. Although the government will try to say this was a dumb mistake, this was not a dumb mistake. It's much more than that. This goes to the heart of what this government is all about in terms of targeting an ethnic community. That's where it's at.

Media reports indicate that this package, this PowerPoint presentation, was presented to caucus. Do you know if it was?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I have never been to a.... That's actually not true; I have been to a caucus meeting, but it was in 2000. I haven't been to a caucus meeting since then. I can tell you that the caucus meeting at which the minister spoke about this was a meeting of the Alberta caucus on Tuesday, March 1. I don't think the presentation was even ready by then, so it could not have been presented.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Okay. The letter says, "...we require an additional \$200,000 of financial commitment from various Conservative Electoral District Associations to make this campaign a success". That means the advertising campaign to target ethnic or, as your document says, "very ethnic" communities. This is the letter to Alberta MPs. Is there a similar document and a similar letter—that you're aware of—targeting Ontario MPs' ridings or other areas across the country?

● (2020)

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** If I may, I'd like to say two things. The first is that I know these are things that folks have said, and I probably would have spun it the same way if I were in other folks' shoes. The

PowerPoint presentation doesn't call any communities very ethnic. It calls ridings very ethnic. I've worked on anti-racism causes since I was in high school. I did not intend to cause offence to folks, and I'm deeply apologetic if I have.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** I can understand that.

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I'm not aware of any other letters having gone out to seek funds for this campaign to other members of Parliament. I'm simply not aware of them.

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

Mr. Albrecht, you have five minutes.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, up until about five minutes ago, I was feeling quite calm. But when Mr. Easter accuses anyone of skullduggery....

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** That's what it is.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** And a couple of minutes ago he refused to allow information like we have here, with clear Liberal Party advertising, requesting members to buy memberships in a member's riding office. At that point, Mr. Easter, through you, Mr. Chair, I find that unacceptable.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** On a point of order, that's already been ruled out of order. What we're talking about here is ministerial responsibility, not some backbencher in an opposition party. This is a serious issue that goes to the heart of government and democracy.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** Thank you very much, Mr. Easter.

**The Chair:** Okay, thank you, gentlemen.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** Mr. Nejatian, earlier tonight you indicated that you had received adequate training, and I take your word for that.

When we came here as MPs, I think all of us received orientation sessions, very information-intensive sessions.

It would be nice if Mr. Easter would listen for just a few minutes, Mr. Chair.

They were information-intensive sessions where we were overloaded with information. We could call that adequate training. But I know as an MP that the first six weeks were intimidating, and I'm sure I made my share of mistakes. I challenge MPs around this table to say they didn't make a few mistakes in those first six weeks. Even staff who are hired in those first six weeks, many of them are new to the Hill. If we want to point fingers, there's enough blame to go around this table, Mr. Chair. I just think we should be aware of that.

I want to return just briefly to a question Mr. Poilievre raised earlier about the CBC's *The National* reporting that you, Mr. Nejatian, sold your effects and were moving to Iran, specifically saying you advertised your effects and were moving overseas. You advertised these on Kijiji and sold your desk for \$1,400. You indicated earlier that was not true. So here we have a completely inaccurate and misleading statement with no basis in facts at all. But earlier today, Mr. Chair, we heard the CEO of CBC say this:

When others use that information to distort or misrepresent the facts about the public broadcaster, we will speak out.

Fair enough. You, though, as an ordinary citizen have no recourse to set the record straight on so-called facts that were presented by a CBC reporter. So doesn't it seem to you that there are two sets of criteria in terms of misrepresenting facts or getting facts straight and then taking accountability for it: one for media reporters, one for ordinary citizens?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** Mr. Chair, I want to thank the member for the question.

I should point that I'm actually a fan of the state broadcaster. I think CBC radio is absolutely fantastic. I think the media has overall been very fair to me throughout this matter. My mother made a complaint that they kept referring to me as "she". That seems to have been corrected. I'm sure no ill intent was there when questions were asked about my going back to Iran. Having made a mistake for which I'm here before you to apologize, I'm happy to.

• (2025)

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** Mr. Chair, I have no question as to whether there was ill intent or not. The fact is a statement was inaccurate, it's on the public record, and I think it's important to recognize that you as a private citizen, or myself as a private citizen, or any member of Parliament has the right to expect that accurate information is given, and when it isn't that there's a full public apology. Even that often ends up going to Canadians who didn't even see the original statement. So you can never correct a wrong that's being done.

But thank you for appearing tonight and thank you for your forthright apology.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I should point out that, on my own behalf, I'm happy to accept an apology from the state broadcaster. I don't need one, but I'm happy to meet any of its reporters in any fine establishment in Ottawa and he can apologize and buy me a pint.

**The Chair:** Don't hold your breath.

Okay, we have time for a third round, colleagues.

Dr. Bennett, five minutes, if it's necessary.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** In that this was a mistake, can you tell me, other than hearing this in question period by the leader of the New Democratic Party, had any other member of the Alberta caucus noticed this mistake and reported it to you?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** Mr. Chair, I want to thank the honourable member for the question.

I left the office, and the phone number listed on the letters, about 20 minutes after the issue came up in question period. If folks in the

Alberta caucus have reached out to the office, I wouldn't be aware of it. I certainly haven't had any contact with any member of the Alberta caucus since I left.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Do you not think it's a bit odd that if this was indeed a big mistake, another member of caucus wouldn't have noticed the mistake and let you know about it? We are only led to believe that it was not abnormal to get a letter from the minister's office with totally partisan content.

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I assure the member it was abnormal for me to send out a letter. I can't tell you how much I wish someone else had caught the mistake before it showed up in question period. No one did.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** I guess the question is this. In a culture that is so hyper-partisan, do you think that people have actually stopped noticing that this is abnormal, in the sense that it didn't seem to be in your training, the administrative assistant didn't catch it...? Nobody caught it because maybe this is normal in terms of how this government operates, by carrying out totally partisan activities with a great number of staff within a minister's office.

We're going to ask again for you to list the number of members of the minister's office who actually participated in not only the letter but in the preparation of these documents, the ministerial staff, the exempt staff, and the non-exempt staff. Who had their hands on this in the minister's office in the government department?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I know this is the second time the member has asked the question, so I will take that part of it first.

The letter was, I suppose, handled by me, my assistant, and the two volunteers. I believe the chief of staff saw a text of the letter, but not the actual letter. The presentation was handled by the party's advertising agency. I made some edits to it. I don't think anyone else in the office saw it.

• (2030)

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** In the letter it said that you were writing on behalf of the minister, that he'd instructed you. I guess I'd like to know when and on how many occasions the minister discussed the material with you. How did the minister instruct you? Verbally? By phone? E-mail? Had the minister vetted the content and the letter?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I've stated before that the minister didn't see the letter. He didn't see the content, the wording, anything. He was in Pakistan. I spoke with the minister about the presentation once. I believe it was around 2 a.m. or 3 a.m. on Tuesday night. He didn't see the letter. I'm trying to be helpful. I don't know if that's adequately definitive. I assure you that the minister did not see the letter before it went out.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Our colleagues on this side are wondering as staff member after staff member gets thrown under the bus...with ministerial accountability—

**An hon. member:** How many?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Well, we have very many.

**The Chair:** One speaker, please.

Dr. Bennett.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** In your understanding of ministerial accountability, is the minister not responsible for everything that happens in his office?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I would like to say two things in response.

I certainly don't feel wronged. I made a mistake. A mistake was made under my supervision. It was made in direct contradiction to the minister's request. I don't feel wronged by anyone through this process. It was my responsibility. I failed at it.

I believe there was a second part to the question about ministerial responsibility. While I know some things about this place, its history and traditions, I don't pretend to be an expert on ministerial responsibility. I can say that I don't feel wronged by this. I feel I made the mistake. It was my responsibility. I feel that I took the appropriate corrective action.

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

We're going to go to Mr. Calandra.

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC):** Thank you very much for coming. I know it's difficult for you.

I remember you from when you were running as an Alliance candidate in 2000. I was also an Alliance candidate. I remember how unique it was having an 18-year-old run at the time. It's not an easy time to be young and working in government. You had the Liberal Party at one point not long ago calling people who worked for us young, 25-year-old jihadists. I'm not sure how that would have made you feel, but there is obviously a lot of disrespect that comes from the opposition. They seem to pile on. You've acknowledged that you've made a mistake. You don't feel wronged or slighted by what happened, and I commend you for that.

I can tell you as an Italian Canadian that it's truly funny to be here and listen to the Liberals, in particular the Liberal Party, start talking about how frightening it is that the Conservative Party of Canada is actually speaking to immigrant communities or new Canadian communities. As somebody who grew up in the 1970s and 1980s with Italian parents who came in the 1960s, I can tell you I spent a lot of time at meetings where the Liberal Party of Canada did nothing more than talk about how bad Conservatives were, how pathetic the NDP were, and why the only party you could ever trust was the Liberals.

One of the reasons I became a Conservative was because through all those years I saw that the Liberals didn't really care about new Canadians; they only cared about their vote every once in a while.

Look at the Italian Canadian community. I'll get to a question. A Liberal member of Parliament sponsored a bill we have in front of this House that sought to apologize to Italian Canadians. They didn't bring down that bill through 13 years of Liberal majority. They didn't think the Italian Canadian community was important enough to talk to during all of those years of majority Liberal government, but when they thought they could divide the Italian community and sought to

win a seat in Vaughan, they brought a bill forward that they knew would try to divide or put a wedge between the Italian Canadian community. They're all about wedge politics, and it is truly, absolutely offensive to somebody whose parents came here and busted their behinds—as yours did—to hear this kind of garbage from the opposition.

This is a minister and a government that has welcomed and brought in 280,000 immigrants to this country, the largest portion ever. When the economic downturn struck, we actually opened the doors more because we see immigrants as a positive benefit to our community. We work with our provincial partners to make sure that the right type of people are coming to Canada so they can have jobs when they get here. We've reformed the refugee system to make it more responsive so that the right people are getting here. We've reduced the waiting list from a million people almost in half, if not even further. We've increased the budget for Immigration Canada dramatically. Through all of this the opposition have consistently voted against us at every turn, and yet the only thing they can bring forward to committee are young people...they call them jihadists. They tell us that we should somehow be worried about young people working within the public sector.

Let me ask you this again. Did you make a mistake, yes or no?

• (2035)

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** Yes.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Okay. Do you regret the mistake you made, yes or no?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I deeply regret the mistake.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** If you had another opportunity, would you make the same mistake?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I assure you I will never, ever, ever, ever send another letter out without looking at the top—

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Do you think you're the only person in the history of this country, since 1867, that has ever made a mistake in government?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I certainly hope not.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** The opposition talks about ministerial accountability. I remember when I was a student. I think it was...oh, gosh, I think it was the HRSDC minister. There was a billion-dollar boondoggle about money that wasn't getting spent. I don't recall the minister who resigned at that point from the Liberal Party. I remember when the sponsorship money was being stolen, the hundreds of millions of dollars. I don't recall which minister it was who resigned for that. They might be able to refresh my memory a little bit later on.

What I'm trying to get at here is this. I hope that what has truly become simply a partisan attack—

**An hon. member:** [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**The Chair:** One speaker.

Mr. Calandra.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** It has simply become a partisan attack on your character. You're being used to try to score cheap, partisan, political points. I think that is quite clear tonight.



I hope, despite all of that, you will continue to work on the things you value and perhaps one day seek political office, because you seem to be a person of great character.

I hope that this opposition, for the most part Liberal, witch hunt—when you have nothing else to talk about, I guess bringing in a young staffer who has admitted to making a mistake is good theatre—hasn't dissuaded you from moving on, continuing to be a part of our society, and continuing your contributions to this place.

**The Chair:** Mr. Nejatian.

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I appreciate the member's comments. I don't feel particularly wronged by this committee. I don't feel that the questions have been inappropriate. In fact, I have a great deal of affection for individual members of this committee who have on more than one occasion, whether they know it or not, been very kind to me.

I should point out that about seven weeks ago when I was first flying to Ottawa, Dr. Bennett helped bump me up to the front of the line on a flight.

I don't feel wronged by anyone here. I don't feel wronged by the committee. I have nothing but the greatest of respect for this committee.

• (2040)

**The Chair:** Madam Freeman.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Carole Freeman:** Mr. Nejatian, I have been listening to your testimony from the beginning, and I must say that I am rather confused. You do have some experience. You were an Alliance candidate in 2000, you campaigned for the Conservative Party, and you studied law. I feel that your testimony is rather unbelievable in some respects. You were hired as the Director of Multicultural Affairs in Minister Kenney's office, but you seem to have no job description and you don't know exactly what your mandate is. You do not have a job description. That's what you said earlier.

You have been testifying for about an hour, and I am trying to understand some elements of your testimony better. There are certain contradictions between the brief you submitted and your oral presentation. Among others, you write that two volunteers delivered the documents, but in your oral statement, under oath, you say they were parliamentary assistants. There are two versions of the story, and you appear somewhat bemused. I don't know what is going on, whether you are playing... I understand that you had been working there for six weeks, but with the experience you have, some things are inexcusable. Some of your answers are just not very clear.

I will try to ask you a few clear and simple questions to see if you can provide us with clear answers.

Who delivered the letters to Conservative MPs? Were they volunteers or parliamentary assistants?

[English]

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** They were volunteer parliamentary interns.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Carole Freeman:** So they were volunteer interns. There are volunteer interns who are not paid by the government working in the

Minister's office! Could you provide us with the names of those two individuals?

[English]

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** Mr. Chair, I'm happy to share the names of the volunteers with the committee. Is it okay if I do it offline?

[Translation]

**Mrs. Carole Freeman:** Pardon me, Mr. Chair, but his brief states that volunteers delivered the letter to Conservative MPs. In his oral testimony, he said two or three times that the delivery was made by parliamentary assistants. Afterwards, he was talking about interns, and now his version is changing again. He is testifying under oath, Mr. Chair. Could he tell us, once and for all, who actually delivered the letters?

You gave us three versions: one written version and two oral versions. Which is the true one?

[English]

**The Chair:** I would provide the names of the individuals.

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** If the committee heard me say three different things, I'm sorry. The letters were delivered by two volunteer interns who worked at our Parliament Hill office, one of whom split her time working at our Parliament Hill office and doing some work on the departmental side. I wasn't there when they were hired. Actually, I was there when one of them was hired.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Carole Freeman:** They are volunteers, so they are not paid, correct?

[English]

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** Neither of them, to the best of my knowledge, ever received a pay cheque, although I think they were both members of the party and wanted to volunteer for Mr. Kenney.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Carole Freeman:** We are talking about party members working in a minister's office on Parliament Hill. I think that this is a problem. This is extremely confusing! We get the feeling that this minister's office is being used as a base for the Conservative Party. Partisan letters are sent out, and anything goes, it seems. Mr. Nejatian's testimony makes me very uncomfortable. At first, I thought these were just unfortunate contradictions, but we are no longer talking about contradictions; this is now a consistent statement that they no longer differentiate between volunteers and employees. We are talking about party volunteers working in a minister's office. The witness has repeated this three times. Something is not right here. Party volunteers, Conservative Party supporters, are working in a minister's office!

● (2045)

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Nejatian, could you be a little more specific as to the capacity of these individuals? Were they part of the parliamentary intern program, or were they part of another established intern program? Were they volunteers to the Conservative Party of Canada? Please give the committee a little more information on the background of these two individuals.

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I apologize for not being clear. I believe they were both students at Carleton University, although I can't be sure. They are both current students of Carleton University. They both volunteered while they were in school. I volunteered when I was in school. I didn't think it was unusual.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Carole Freeman:** Mr. Chair, I demand that Mr. Nejatian tell us who these people are. If he does not wish to provide their names now, he could send them to us later so that we can know who is working in the Minister's office. We should know who these party volunteers, as he has referred to them, are.

[English]

**The Chair:** That's a legitimate question.

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I'm happy to provide you with a list of names.

**The Chair:** Do you know them now, Mr. Nejatian?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** This is a bit embarrassing for me because I called one the "main" one and the other the "Hill" one. One of them was called Alexis and the other one was called...I'm not trying to be unhelpful. I promise the members that if I have them both—

**The Chair:** Mr. Nejatian, we will ask you to get the information and perhaps within 48 hours provide it to the clerk of the committee. That will be fine.

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I have them both as Facebook friends. I'm happy to provide them to you.

**The Chair:** That concludes your time, Madame Freeman.

We're going to move now to Mr. Poilievre.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You have been now active in the political process for many years, given your early start, Mr. Nejatian. What advice would you give to a young person thinking about getting involved in their teenage years in the political process?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I think I would give them a couple of different pieces of advice. One is to look at the top of every letter they send out.

The second is that despite this deeply embarrassing incident, I am defined in some part by activism in political causes. It has been a great experience for me. I believe I have taken out more in life experiences than I have given back. I've made some great friends from all parties, frankly, whom I keep in touch with to this day.

If I may, I should point out that the first person to write to me after this incident was a member of the NDP, who's a dear friend of mine from law school.

I couldn't imagine getting to do what I've done without being politically active.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** Speaking about the circumstances surrounding the events that brought us here today, obviously one of the contributing factors was the temporary absence of the minister, given the fact that he was travelling to attend a funeral, and as a result was unable to communicate for that period of time.

Can you talk a little bit about the funeral that Minister Kenney was attending during the time these events were unfolding?

● (2050)

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** Shahbaz Bhatti was the Minister for Minority Affairs in the Government of Pakistan. On the morning of March 2 his car was riddled with bullets. He was assassinated for what seems to be his advocacy that Sharia edicts regarding blasphemy be taken out of the law of the land. He was the second person in a month to be assassinated for offending Sharia law.

As a Muslim I found it difficult, and frankly, he was a brave man doing something in a very difficult place. I believe it was a difficult process for everyone in our office, and the minister felt that the Government of Canada ought to be represented at the funeral. It wasn't my experience to have to deal with such matters, but the minister thought it was important. He had a friendship with Mr. Bhatti and he wished to be in Pakistan.

**The Chair:** We're now going to go to Mr. Siksay for a final question.

Mr. Siksay, you have five minutes.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Nejatian, Conservatives have raised the matter of the apparently erroneous CBC report. Have you filed a complaint with the CBC about that report?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I have no intention of filing a complaint with the CBC. I find the state broadcaster to be generally fantastic in the public work they do. If they get things wrong, I'm frustrated by them sometimes, but I think the media has been very fair to me.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Okay.

Mr. Nejatian, was it wrong for a party fundraising appeal to have gone out from a minister's office? I know you say it was wrong to have used the wrong stationery, but was it wrong for this appeal to have originated in the minister's office?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** Mr. Chair, I think this is the sort of thing that happens in every office and has for some time. I—

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** So you think it's appropriate that ministers, members of Parliament, do fundraising out of their parliamentary or ministerial offices?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** Well, in the United States there are clear rules against this type of thing. I suppose it is open to members of Parliament to change the rules as they exist in Canada.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Did you do other fundraising in the minister's office when you were there? You said this was the only time you had written a letter while you were in the minister's office, but did you do phone calls or e-mails to fundraise on behalf of the Conservative Party?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I didn't make any phone calls to raise money for the Conservative Party of Canada.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** What about e-mails—

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I certainly didn't—

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** —or SMS, or any other...?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I sent one e-mail, from a personal account, to suggest organization of a fundraiser, and helped do it, but I think....

I have to admit that I don't remember where I was physically when I sent the e-mail.

I'm not trying to be unhelpful.

● (2055)

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** No problem.

Does the MRO staff, the regional staff, have any role in fundraising? Would they have sent out fundraising letters as part of their job, or would the minister have asked them to do that in their regions?

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** Certainly not as part of their job; I think the MRO staff, some of whom are Conservative candidates now and are, I believe, on leave, I believe do fundraising on a volunteer basis.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** But you don't know what their job description is, or never saw—

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I certainly know what they do for a department. I'm not saying they don't do political things as volunteers. They from time to time do political things as volunteers. I don't think they do that as part of their job description.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Okay.

Thank you, Chair.

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

That concludes the questions, colleagues.

You have a point of order, Madame Freeman?

[Translation]

**Mrs. Carole Freeman:** Yes.

Mr. Chair, I can apparently point out contradictions in Mr. Nejatian's testimony. Our witness is under oath. His written

presentation and his oral testimony do not quite match. Given the fact that he is under oath, I think that we should verify all the elements of his testimony.

[English]

**The Chair:** That's not really a point of order, Madame Freeman. I think we can make our own assessments. I don't see that as a point of order.

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I'm happy to meet with any members of the committee after this meeting or at any time to clarify errors.

I apologize to the member if I have been unclear in anything I've said. It certainly was not my intention. I place great value, as a lawyer, on my oath. I'm happy to hang out and try to clear up any misstatements that the member feels I may have made.

**The Chair:** Okay.

That, as I said, concludes the questions from members of the committee.

I am going to now ask you, Mr. Nejatian, if you have any closing comments or remarks you want to leave with the committee.

**Mr. Kasra Nejatian:** I don't, other than to say that I want to apologize to you and to all members of Parliament for the mistake that was made under my watch.

I believe I have been treated extremely fairly by this committee. I am happy to have had an opportunity to appear before you, even though it has been in a situation that I'd rather not be in. I thank you for giving me the opportunity.

**The Chair:** On behalf of all members of the committee I want to thank you.

I want to thank the clerk, the analysts, the translators, and everyone else, because this committee meeting has been held outside of what I call normal parliamentary hours.

Mr. Nejatian, I understand this is a very special day in the Iranian calendar, and I want to wish you a very happy *Nowruz* festival. Thank you very much.

Since there's no other business to come before the committee, the meeting is adjourned.





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