



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 124

Friday, October 18, 2024

Chair: Mr. Ron McKinnon



Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

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● (0920)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 124 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

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

I would like to remind participants of the following points.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking.

All comments should be addressed through the chair.

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

We have been having some sound issues, so if there are any, if they persist and haven't been resolved, please bring them directly to our attention.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(4), the committee commences the consideration of the request to undertake a study of recent events surrounding the expulsion of Government of India diplomats and the situation of foreign interference in Canada.

I will give the floor to Mr. MacGregor.

Mr. MacGregor, please go ahead.

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

Good morning, committee members.

First of all, I want to start by thanking everyone who joined with me in signing the Standing Order 106(4) letter. As you can imagine, it's pretty rare that we get unanimous support for an emergency meeting, but I think the revelations from the RCMP that were delivered to the Canadian public on Thanksgiving Monday were nothing short of explosive, and I think they demand this committee's attention.

I will be moving a motion, Mr. Chair. I know that the clerk has both French and English copies available—hard copy and digital—for members who are participating in person and online.

Before I move the motion, I think it's important to add a bit of brief context, because of course this is not the first time that we have been witness to serious allegations involving the Government

of India and its agents in Canada. In fact, it was more than a year ago, in September of 2023, that the Prime Minister stood in the House of Commons and levelled these accusations against the Government of India, accusing it and its agents of nefarious criminal activity, election interference and a whole host of things. Needless to say, the Prime Minister's rising in the House of Commons and making such a statement did make headlines around the world.

Since then, the Hogue commission has released an interim report. That was in May of 2023. If you read that report, you can see that there are broad mentions of India's interference in Canada throughout. Then, of course, in June 2024, the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians released its special report on election interference, which again mentioned the activities of the Government of India throughout.

That brings us, Mr. Chair, to October 14, 2024, this past Monday. For the RCMP—indeed, for any police force that is conducting an active investigation—to come out with such explosive revelations I think underscores just how serious this is, and I think the RCMP made a point that they were doing this because some individuals in Canada have their lives directly in danger. The threat had reached such a level that they felt compelled to ignore the traditional way of going through the judicial process and made these accusations public so that particularly the members of the South Asian community whose lives might be in danger could be forewarned and so that we could remain extra vigilant.

I also think, Mr. Chair, that the House of Commons and the Senate came together quite quickly in June of this year to pass Bill C-70, which contained important legislative measures to deal with foreign interference.

With all of these events coming together and culminating in what we saw on Monday, I think it is quite appropriate for this committee to be seized with the matter. With that in mind, I would like to move the following motion:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study concerning the electoral interference and violent criminal activities carried out by agents of the Government of India, as identified by the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians' report and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's report from October 14, 2024, and the subsequent expulsion of six diplomats from the Government of India.

As a part of this study, the committee hold no less than six meetings, ensuring an equal distribution of time for witnesses, and invite the following ministers, senior officials, and expert witnesses from impacted communities and academia to provide briefings:

1. Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Honourable Mélanie Joly.
2. Minister of Public Safety, the Honourable Dominic LeBlanc.
3. RCMP commissioner, Mike Duheme.

4. National security and intelligence adviser, Nathalie Drouin.
5. Experts from Canada's South Asian community.
6. Brampton mayor Patrick Brown and any former leadership candidates of the 2022 Conservative Party leadership race.
7. National security subject matter experts.

With that, Mr. Chair, the motion is moved. I hope that copies have been distributed to members.

I will give my time back to the chair. Thank you very much.

● (0925)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacGregor.

We'll start the debate now.

I see that Ms. May has her hand up.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Does she need unanimous consent?

The Chair: Pardon?

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Chair, I may need unanimous consent to be allowed to speak, but I have had a top secret security briefing from Nathalie Drouin and from the new head of CSIS, Daniel Rogers. I'd appreciate an opportunity to support this study and also to suggest a reason beyond the one Alis-tair just mentioned for why the RCMP had to move forward and make this information public, because there's a larger context that has to do with having to disclose that with regard to the criminal activities, criminal charges have already been brought.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Chair, she needs unanimous consent.

The Chair: Hold on for just a minute, please.

I understand that as a member of the House of Commons, you can participate. You do not require unanimous consent.

I'll let you carry on.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just wanted to add some more context. I know I'm not a member of the committee, but as the leader of the Green Party, I have top secret security clearance, and as a leader of a party, like all party leaders in the opposition, I have received briefings from Nathalie Drouin, the national security and intelligence adviser to the Prime Minister, and I also, on that call, was with the newly appointed head of CSIS, Daniel Rogers.

The context in which they had to go forward was that they were aware that the RCMP was aware that the ongoing criminal investigations required that much of this was going to have to be disclosed in court for the defence counsel for people engaged in the criminal prosecutions for the murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar. They were also aware that six diplomats and their proxies were involved in an active and continuing ring that represented a threat to Canadians.

I'm not taking anything away from what my colleague Mr. MacGregor has said. This is just to say that this is an additional reason for the urgency that led the RCMP to make public this absolutely chilling additional information. That was another part of that context.

I'd like to participate in the hearings going forward. I promise not to take much of the committee's time. I just appreciate the opportunity to say that after our briefings, some of us have more information than others, and I think that all Canadians should have the same kind of briefing that I received, just with care taken to ensure that certain parts stay behind an absolutely secure wall for national security reasons, while the rest can be shared with Canadians so they understand why there is the need for the public sharing of this information.

I completely agree with focusing on people who are most at risk, because there's an active effort by a criminal network, coordinated out of India, to collect information on Canadians in their normal patterns of life, such as what routes they are taking when they are walking their dogs.

This couldn't be more significant and urgent. It should be disrupted so that Canadians can be reassured that the RCMP, CSIS and our intelligence apparatus are coordinating their work to protect Canadians' lives.

I'll stop there. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

● (0930)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. May.

We'll go to Ms. Dancho, followed by Madame Michaud and Mr. Hallan.

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

In past practice, when a motion is not provided to members to review in advance, you have provided a five-minute recess to review it, so I would ask for that five-minute recess to review the motion, please.

The Chair: That sounds reasonable.

We will suspend for five minutes.

● (0930)

(Pause)

● (0945)

The Chair: The meeting has resumed.

We'll carry on with Ms. Dancho.

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

The allegations of the RCMP are extremely concerning and must be taken very seriously by all parliamentarians and certainly by this committee. What India has allegedly done on Canadian soil represents an outrageous assault on Canada's sovereignty and is completely unacceptable.

Foreign interference from any country, as we know, including from India, must be put to a stop. The first job of the Prime Minister and the Canadian government is to keep citizens safe from foreign threats. That is the first job of the Prime Minister and the Canadian government. The first job of the official opposition, of course, is to hold the government accountable for their ability, or lack thereof, to prevent foreign interference and to keep Canadians and people in Canada safe from foreign threats. We certainly expect the full criminal prosecution of anyone who has threatened, murdered or otherwise harmed Canadian citizens or people on Canadian soil.

The public safety and national security committee, as we know, has the responsibility to look into this matter promptly, in a professional manner and thoroughly on behalf of Canadians and all those who have suffered in Canada as a result of the federal government failing to prevent foreign interference over this last number of years.

Mr. Chair, I want to mention that the Conservatives on this committee, and the official opposition at large, certainly take this matter very seriously. We are deeply concerned that the situation under the Liberal Prime Minister continues to worsen for Canadians. It is shocking to learn from the RCMP that 13 individuals are facing an imminent threat, potentially as bad as murder, from a foreign government, notably from India. We are very seized with this issue as Conservatives.

On this committee, we are, of course, reviewing the motion put forward by Mr. MacGregor. We thank him for bringing forward his Standing Order 106(4) letter. Of course, we were keen to sign it so that this committee could look into this matter very thoroughly.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I did want to include my thoughts on this, and I believe my colleagues would like to as well.

• (0950)

The Chair: Thank you.

We go now to Mr. Uppal, followed by Mr. Hallan and Ms. Lantsman.

I apologize. Next is Madame Michaud.

[Translation]

The floor is yours.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): No problem. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I would like to thank Mr. MacGregor for proposing this emergency meeting. The Bloc Québécois didn't hesitate to sign the letter requesting this meeting, because this is an incredibly concerning issue.

Initially, I was afraid that if we called only the RCMP to testify before the committee, we wouldn't be able to learn more than what had already been revealed by the RCMP, given the ongoing investigation, of course. Now, I think the witness list is very reasonable. I think the various proposed witnesses will be able to tell us more.

I'm therefore in favour of the motion.

I do have a question, though, about the wording. It may just be a bad translation, but on the sixth item on the proposed witness list, the English version says "any former leadership candidates", while the French version, if translated, says "all former candidates". The words "any" and "all" don't have the same meaning.

I would like Mr. MacGregor to clarify something. Do we want to invite any of the candidates in the 2022 Conservative Party leadership race, or do we want to invite all of the candidates? I'd like some clarification on that.

That said, the Bloc Québécois is in favour of the motion.

[English]

The Chair: Madame Michaud, perhaps you could offer that as an amendment to ensure that the—

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Actually, I'm asking for clarification, since the two current versions don't mean the same thing. I'm just asking if it's Mr. MacGregor's intention to have all of the Conservative leadership candidates testify or just any of them.

I won't move an amendment, since I don't know what the real intention is. The English version is probably accurate.

By "any", do you mean "*n'importe lequel*" in French?

[English]

The Chair: I will ask Mr. MacGregor to clarify that.

Would you like to jump in quickly?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Yes, Mr. Chair.

The word is "any". That's how I intended it in the English version. I'm sorry if it didn't come out clearly in French.

The Chair: I guess we'll take it as a friendly amendment that the French version as well incorporates that as "any".

[Translation]

Is that okay with you, Ms. Michaud?

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Yes.

[English]

The Chair: We'll go now to Mr. Uppal.

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

Again, we are dealing with a very serious issue after hearing of the allegations that the RCMP has made against agents of the Indian government. We heard accusations of murder on Canadian soil, extortion, the use of organized crime, intimidation and coercion. This is a matter of protecting our sovereignty and protecting our democracy.

It's important for us, as a committee, to be able to get answers for Canadians. Any government's first duty is to protect the safety of Canadians and, of course, to take steps to stop foreign interference here in Canada.

We want to ensure that this government takes national security seriously. At the Hogue commission, the Prime Minister himself admitted that the Indian government has been committing foreign interference here in Canada for a number of years. However, this has continued; this has gone on.

In the U.S., we have seen that the Americans have been able to stop incidents of murder and assassination, but unfortunately that has not happened in Canada. Arrests have been made earlier in the U.S., but that has not happened in Canada. I think it's important that we, as a committee, look into the reasons for this. We can look at what the gaps are in order to best protect Canadians, our democracy and our sovereignty, and to ensure that Canadians are kept safe.

• (0955)

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go now to Mr. Hallan.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate the opportunity to be able to speak on this. I think that these very, very serious revelations by the RCMP on Monday came as a shock to many, but I will say to many in the Sikh community that this is definitely something about foreign interference that the Sikh community knows well and has been talking about for more than 40 years. In Canada, we're at a very critical point now in our history for this very, very important issue on foreign interference that's being committed.

The allegations that the RCMP made, those serious ones, I'd just like to read into the record. This is from their statement.

...the RCMP has obtained evidence that demonstrates four very serious issues:

1. Violent extremism impacting both countries;

They mean India and Canada.

2. Links tying agents of the Government of India (GOI) to homicides and violent acts;
3. The use of organized crime to create a perception of an unsafe environment targeting the South Asian Community in Canada; and
4. Interference into democratic processes.

Investigations have revealed that Indian diplomats and consular officials based in Canada leverage their official positions to engage in clandestine activities....

By far, they're not the lightest of allegations that have been made by the RCMP on foreign interference happening in Canada.

Canadians should feel safe in Canada. Canadians should be safe from extortions. Canadians should be safe from murder. They should be safe, and their families should be safe. We should be living in communities that are safe from threats of violence, not just from anyone living here but also from any foreign governments.

After nine years, that's not how Canadians feel. We saw last year that a Canadian was killed on Canadian soil, allegedly by a foreign government. India is what the RCMP has alleged, or there are allegations towards it.

It's a very difficult time in Canada right now after nine years of this Prime Minister. I think that's why it's very important that we don't just study this. Real action needs to be taken now for the safety of Canadians. It's been far too long.

As I said before, for the Sikh community, this is something they've been advocating for more than 40 years. The allegations that were made by the RCMP on Monday were more of a vindication of the advocacy that has been going on for the last 40 years.

A criminal is a criminal, and a Canadian is a Canadian. We should not look at any type of religion. This has nothing to do with religion or anything like that. This is simply about foreign interference happening and Canadians feeling unsafe in Canada. That is a very, very serious thing that we need to address here.

I'm very, very happy that my Conservative colleagues and I all want answers on behalf of Canadians. As our leader has said, any foreign interference from any country, including India, is unacceptable and must be stopped. That's why we're here today.

Given that we know all this information and given the murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar last year, I do also want to point out that the U.S. went from allegations to arrests in one week, whereas under this Prime Minister, there were allegations. Absolutely nothing happened after that. It kept the communities at large feeling very unsafe that these allegations were taking place and that this could happen to anybody. No arrests were made immediately; just allegations were made. That is another thing that I hope we can cover in this study.

Given all of that, Mr. Chair, I'd like to add a few people to the list if my colleagues would agree to that. I would like to amend some of the witnesses we want here.

The first is the director of CSIS, Daniel Rogers. The second is the deputy minister of Public Safety Canada, Shawn Tupper, and the third is the deputy minister of Global Affairs Canada. I think adding those three would give us a wider range to be able to study this issue.

If you want to call it a friendly amendment, that's what we're proposing.

Thank you.

• (1000)

The Chair: I'll take that as a simple amendment.

The discussion now is on the amendment. We have the director of CSIS, the deputy....

I'm sorry. Could you say them again?

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: First is the director of CSIS, Daniel Rogers. Second is the deputy minister of Public Safety Canada, Shawn Tupper. Third is the deputy minister of Global Affairs Canada.

The Chair: Is there any discussion on adding those witnesses to the list?

We'll go to a vote on that, in that case—

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): I'm sorry, Chair, but I have my hand raised.

The Chair: I'm sorry. I missed who spoke there.

Ms. Khalid, go ahead.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you very much.

I understand and appreciate the witnesses who are being added here—the CSIS director, the deputy minister for Public Safety and the deputy minister for Global Affairs—but I'm just wondering, given how the scope of this motion is being outlined, why we need to add these witnesses to this list. I'm hoping the member who's moving this amendment can help us clarify what exactly he is seeking to extract from the witnesses named in his amendment.

The Chair: I should just clarify that apparently we don't have a director of CSIS at the moment. We have an interim director, Vanessa Lloyd, so we'll consider that modification to be made.

Who's next? We'll get clarification from Mr. Hallan.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Thank you, Chair.

Just to clarify, I think it's very self-evident that the people we're putting forward more than likely had a direct link to anything that was happening at that time, and if we really want to study this issue of foreign interference, I think it's important to hear their voices in this debate as well. They have the expertise, as we know, to answer some of these questions, because they have a direct link to information that can be helpful in this.

I'll end there.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: If I can take back the floor for a second, Mr. Chair, I think 100% that getting as much information as we can from as many people as we can is a really good thing, so I have no problems with these names being added.

The Chair: Next on my list is Ms. Lantsman. I'm wondering whether you want to speak after we vote on this amendment.

You do. Okay.

Is there any other discussion on this proposed amendment? No.

(Amendment agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Thank you.

We go back to the motion as amended, and we go to Ms. Lantsman, please.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Thanks, Mr. Chair. Thanks for bringing this forward to the committee.

As my colleagues have already said, the news and allegations from the RCMP are certainly concerning, and I think this committee is the right place to be seized with that.

Furthermore, any interference from any country, including India, is entirely unacceptable and should be stopped. It is the government's first job to keep Canadian citizens safe from all of these foreign threats and the foreign interference that we know has been happening in the country for some time.

For nine years, the Liberal government has failed to keep Canadians safe and has failed to take national security and foreign interference seriously, and Canada has become a playground for these activities. We have heard that over and over again, and we hear it over and over again from experts. I suspect that the witnesses at this committee would not try to hide that. Canadians need to know what and when, and they need to know why it took so long for the government to act. This is just another example of the Prime Minister's failure on foreign interference.

We heard the Prime Minister at the commission admit that our intelligence agencies have been gathering this information for years, indicating that India had been committing foreign interference on Canadian soil, and it's very clear that the Prime Minister had done nothing about it. Even when provided the opportunity to do something about it and protect Canadians against extortion and the violent actions that the RCMP has brought to light that Indian officials have engaged in, they voted against Bill C-381, the protection against extortion act, in the House of Commons, which was brought forward by my colleague.

At every single juncture, the Prime Minister has not acted on the information that he has. I think this committee, and those watching this committee, should know that. His government stalled for years on the creation of a foreign influence registry, and it was only introduced as a result of Conservative pressure.

For those watching this at home, I hope this committee reveals the inaction of the Prime Minister over his years of knowing information and his continued inaction, as we heard about just this week, in letting Canada become a playground for foreign interference. That's on him.

I hope this committee gets to the bottom of all of this.

Thanks, Mr. Chair.

● (1005)

The Chair: Thanks, Ms. Lantsman.

I am advised that Daniel Rogers is in fact the new director of CSIS. He was appointed three days ago, but he will start on October 28, so we will make those appropriate adjustments.

Before we go to Mr. Gaheer, I want to ask Mr. MacGregor to clarify something in the motion.

The clerk has pointed out that in the English part of the motion it says, "the committee hold no less than six meetings, ensuring an equal distribution of time".

We're unsure what "an equal distribution of time for witnesses" means. Maybe you could clarify that for us, Mr. MacGregor.

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

I was just trying to ensure that.... The wording of the motion says "no less than six meetings", so I think it's quite open. I was just trying to find a space where the parties' witness lists were all treated in an equal manner.

If people have an issue with that or want further clarification, I don't want to interrupt the proceedings. From what I've heard so far, there seems to be broad agreement with the overall direction this motion is taking, so if people want to clarify that or suggest a friendly amendment, I'm open to that, but I don't want to, in any way, delay other committee members.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacGregor.

The clerk wanted to know if it's going to be one hour per.... Anyway, I'm proposing that we let our esteemed clerk sort this out as best he can. I think he will give us a fair....

Ms. Dancho, do you wish to speak on that point?

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

With regard to our adding the amendment of the additional deputy ministers, we would like them to appear separately. Of course, they're welcome to come with their ministers, as they normally do, but we would like them to appear separately, on their own, for questions, and not at the same time, so that we can ensure we're getting the full breadth of the committee's potential to question those deputy ministers on their knowledge and expertise.

They should be appearing separately on their own for at least one hour each, but notably, two hours probably has been a good standard in the past. I leave it to you.

The Chair: I will rely on our esteemed clerk to execute this in good faith. He will do his best, as he always does.

We will continue now with Mr. Gaheer.

Mr. Gaheer, go ahead, please.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer (Mississauga—Malton, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

I want to thank my NDP colleague for bringing this motion forward. It's of grave concern to our party, to this committee and to me personally as a practising Sikh.

Canadians were rightly shocked last year when the Prime Minister stood up in the House of Commons and declared on the House floor, on the record, that there was credible evidence to show that agents of the Government of India were involved in the killing of a Canadian citizen, Hardeep Nijjar, on Canadian soil. Since then, we've learned a lot.

In February 2024, the RCMP created a multidisciplinary team to investigate and coordinate the efforts to combat further threats that existed. We know that members of the South Asian community and members of the Sikh community are being targeted with credible and imminent threats to their lives.

That brings us to the events of a couple of days ago, when the RCMP made statements alleging the involvement of agents of the Government of India in serious criminal activity in Canada, including homicides, extortions and interference in our democratic processes.

I now want to highlight how unprecedented this is. This is an extraordinary situation. The RCMP normally does not comment on [Technical difficulty—Editor] to protect Canadians from political interference. Obviously, it's going to be the RCMP that's going to—

• (1010)

The Chair: Mr. Gaheer, you cut out there for a minute. You cut out just after you said that "the RCMP does not comment". Then there was a gap.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Okay. I will continue.

Obviously, this is an unprecedented situation, where the RCMP is commenting on an ongoing investigation—which they normally do not do—and this is because of a threat that's posed to Canadians. We've seen that the Government of India has refused to co-operate with Canadian law enforcement agencies, despite having been presented with that evidence of the involvement of their agents in serious criminal activity in Canada. There's organized crime being used to engage in intimidation, threats, violence and interference targeting members of the Sikh community and the South Asian community within Canada.

We support this motion. The only amendment that I would like to introduce will be along the lines of misinformation and disinformation, given that right after the RCMP made their statement and the Prime Minister, the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Foreign Affairs came out to make their statements, we saw this very coordinated effort through Indian media channels—and by the Government of India, frankly—to engage in a disinformation campaign.

This followed the announcement that six Indian diplomats and consular officials would be expelled from Canada to ensure that Canadians and diaspora communities are protected from acts of political interference, violence or intimidation on Canadian soil.

What we've seen as a response from Indian media and the Indian government is an attitude of deflection and denial and just outright lying about the situation and what's happened.

I would demand to include another bullet point in that list in the motion, something along the lines of "witnesses to testify on the impact of the disinformation campaign". I can leave it to Mr. MacGregor to propose that language, maybe, or to the clerk.

That's my amendment.

The Chair: Okay. Your amendment, I understand, is to add to that list of bullet points a category of witnesses, which is.... I'm sorry. Say that again.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: It's "witnesses to testify on the impact of the disinformation campaign by India".

The Chair: It would be a category under point 7 or maybe point 8—

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: It's for point 8.

The Chair: —and would say “witnesses to testify as to the misinformation campaigns”.

Is that correct?

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: It's “disinformation”. There's a difference there. Disinformation is when it's actually by design.

The Chair: It's not “misinformation”. Okay.

All right. We have an amendment on the floor. The motion as previously amended is now being proposed to be further amended.

Is there any discussion on that amendment?

Ms. Dancho, do you have a question on that?

Ms. Raquel Dancho: I do, yes. Thank you.

I just wasn't quite clear on where in the motion it would be emphasized, but I don't see any issue with this.

The Chair: It would be at the end of the list.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Okay. It's just that when he was talking about it, I felt that he was almost putting it into the bulk of the explainer at the beginning.

The Chair: The list is a bunch of categories. He just wants to add a point 8.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: I understand. That's fine.

The Chair: Is there any further discussion on Mr. Gaheer's amendment?

(Amendment agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Did that wrap up your question, Mr. Gaheer? Did you have more?

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: No. I just wanted to amend the motion.

I thank my NDP colleagues for bringing this motion forward.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go now to Mr. Lloyd, I believe.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): I will cede my time, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Do we have any more questions or discussion on the motion as amended?

Seeing none, I will call the vote.

(Motion as amended agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Thank you very much.

That wraps up our business. Thank you very much, all.

We are adjourned—

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Chair...?

The Chair: Go ahead.

• (1015)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: I had my hand up.

The Chair: I'm sorry. I was too quick.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you.

This is related to the same subject matter that we have before us. I want to put one more motion on the record for colleagues to consider. It is related to the subject matter at hand. The clerk has digital and paper copies.

It reads as follows:

That, given the Royal Canadian Mounted Police report on violent criminal activities linked to agents of the Government of India from October 14, 2024, the Hogue Commission's identification of foreign interference activities by Russia, Pakistan, China, and Iran, and the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians' special report on Foreign Interference in Canada's Democratic Processes and Institutions, the Chair reports to the House that the committee calls for all federal party leaders to apply for the appropriate security clearance level in the next 30 days in order to review classified information and take necessary actions to protect Canadians.

Mr. Chair, I think it's important that we move this motion, because all federal party leaders have now received security clearance to review unredacted briefings on this very serious matter—all except for one. I think it's high time, given the revelations we heard on Monday, that we present a united front. I think it's incredibly important for this committee to report back to the House that we recommend this course of action.

I will leave it there, Mr. Chair. I think the motion is self-explanatory.

Thank you.

The Chair: This does relate to the matter at hand, I think, very directly, so I will consider it in order.

I see that Mr. Lloyd wishes to speak to this.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Thank you Mr. Chair.

It's our very strong contention as Conservatives that anyone—any member of Parliament, any member of our political parties—colluding with foreign powers to advance the interests of a foreign nation's agenda in our country needs to be named so that Canadians can know. We must be fully transparent and clear the good name of the Parliament of Canada, which has been sullied these past many months by innuendo and allegations that were made without full evidence.

It's the contention of the Conservative Party of Canada that we need to release all those names so that we can take appropriate action and move on. We strongly believe that a motion like this, which attempts to force the hand of all federal leaders on the security clearance front, is an attempt to muzzle the Leader of the Opposition from speaking out on the very important issue of foreign interference.

We have to remember that I was raising the issue of foreign interference at this committee years ago, and we were assured repeatedly, by ministers of this government, that foreign interference was not taking place in Canada's elections. We were being reassured that foreign interference was not serious in Canada. This was just two years ago, and due to leaks from CSIS and our security agencies, we have now come to learn that this was not the case and that there were widespread allegations of foreign interference. Sadly, today, with the recent RCMP announcement on Monday, it's escalated to the lives of Canadians being threatened—allegedly—by a foreign government.

How was this allowed to happen? Back in 2015, working in the previous government, I remember that it was unheard of that foreign governments were threatening the lives of Canadian citizens, yet after nine years under this Liberal government, due to its complete lack of action and lack of proactive activity to protect Canada, this was allowed to proliferate in this country.

There are not just allegations against India: There are a number of countries that see Canada and its leadership as a completely soft target for foreign interference. It's a lack of leadership in Canada under this Liberal government and under this Prime Minister, who now decides to try to weaponize the issue of foreign interference for his own political ends to distract from the very real problems his leadership is facing, even within his own party.

To try to weaponize the issue of national security for his own partisan ends is, frankly, disgusting. I find that what this Prime Minister has done is disgusting, and so I move forward with an amendment to this motion. It is that we release the names of all members of Parliament, all parliamentarians, who are alleged to have interfered with...who knowingly colluded with foreign powers.

• (1020)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lloyd.

We have an amendment on the floor, and the discussion is on the amendment.

We have Mr. Hallan up next. Do you wish to speak on the amendment?

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: He moved an amendment, so it's a new speaking list, is it not?

The Chair: I'm asking whether you want to speak to this amendment.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: I'll speak to the amendment....

Well, I do want to go to a vote.

The Chair: There is a list on the main motion once it's done.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: I'll wait for that.

The Chair: I'll open it up. Are there any questions? Is there any debate on the amendment by Mr. Lloyd?

I see Ms. Dancho and I see Ms. May. She's had her hand up for a while.

I'll start with Ms. May and then go to Ms. Dancho and Ms. Khalid.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Chair, thank you so much for allowing me to speak to this point.

As someone who has a top secret security clearance and is perhaps more aware of the legislative framework around security of information, I feel duty bound to say that this motion would be very inappropriate and in fact would be calling on people who have access to top secret security information to break the law.

I know that can't be Mr. Lloyd's intention, but the Security of Information Act, which used to be called the Official Secrets Act, requires that information that is collected and has a top secret security designation not be made public. There are many reasons for this, including that we could be risking the lives of intelligence assets of the Government of Canada; these are people—real, live human beings—unknown to us around the world who help Canadian security agencies and the RCMP collect information.

Even the publication of the numbers of people involved can help a hostile foreign power work backward by inference and figure out that if Canadians know about that, they can only have obtained it from this source, and then that source's life could be in danger, so it's very important that all....

I agree with the intention of Mr. MacGregor's motion. It's very important. I really do urge Mr. Poilievre, as a friend and a colleague, to ask for his top secret security clearance to clear the air. It must be done.

However, that is another matter altogether from saying that the names should be made public. To do that is to urge colleagues to break the law and, perhaps even worse, place Canadian intelligence assets at risk.

I think the amendment might come back to the committee after the committee and all members have had briefings on this point, not from me but from our intelligence apparatus—the people at CSIS, the people who handle security within the Privy Council Office, the RCMP and so on—so that everybody around this committee table is fully informed that releasing the names is a non-starter and a threat to Canadian security and can actually jeopardize lives.

Thank you.

The Chair: We'll go now to Ms. Dancho.

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

It's interesting; Ms. May's story seems to have changed quite a bit in tone and scope from her perspective when she read the unredacted NSICOP report. I just find it interesting that her perspective has recently changed.

Anyway, I would say that this amendment to ensure that the names are released would be in line with what a number of our allies do. For example, the United Kingdom rightly names and shames any members of Parliament who are acting in a treasonous manner or who are colluding with foreign countries to undermine the United Kingdom's national interests. I do believe that Canada should be doing the same. I agree with my colleague Dane Lloyd that otherwise, the Prime Minister, to his own advantage, seems to just be weaponizing this so-called secret information that he continues to talk about without actually saying the names.

I certainly would agree with a former NDP leader who won many more seats than the current leader of the NDP. He said just recently, "I agree completely with Poilievre's decision not to take the bait."

He's referring to Mr. Trudeau's claims.

He said, "Trudeau's been trying for a year and a half to restrain what Pierre Poilievre can do by trying to say, 'Come and get this private briefing—and oh, by the way, then you'll be held to an official secret and you won't be able to talk about this anymore.'"

It seems notable, and frankly formidable, that former NDP leaders would agree with Pierre Poilievre, our leader of the Conservative Party, that any effort to do this is really an effort to put him under some sort of gag order so that he can't really do his duty to hold the Prime Minister accountable for matters of foreign interference.

It's interesting to see that Mr. Singh is now working hand in hand with Mr. Trudeau yet again to try to gag-order Pierre Poilievre from being able to speak about this issue.

It's interesting that Mr. Singh recently made a big show of ripping up some so-called informal coalition with the Liberal government, but it would appear now that the NDP is really helping Mr. Trudeau to carry water on the shameless partisan politics he's playing in the foreign interference inquiry. It was quite a serious, respectable and professional undertaking until the Prime Minister decided to make some sort of ruthless and shameless political show and circus out of the whole affair.

I think it's really important for this committee to remember—and certainly Canadians will—that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau had to be dragged kicking and screaming into this foreign interference inquiry. You'll remember that he had first denied there was any election interference from China, for example, and had denied that anything was going on with the member for Don Valley North in that nomination, yet here we are, in a foreign interference inquiry, and there is clear interference from not only China but also India, Iran, Pakistan and Russia. We are, in fact, at the worst point in history when it comes to foreign interference, and we've had the same Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, for nine years. What does that say about his leadership or lack thereof?

I would also point out that the person in this country most responsible for foreign interference and preventing it and keeping national security safe is the Prime Minister of Canada. If we've had the same Prime Minister of Canada, and now this has come to such a point that the RCMP has had to announce that 13 individuals are in peril because foreign interference has become so bad, what does that really say about his leadership?

What's interesting to me is that in the foreign interference inquiry, which he's made a farce of with his recent partisan attacks, he's really trying to do two things. Number one is to distract from his failed record to prevent foreign interference in this country and the fact that he's created an environment in which foreign interference is worse than it has been at any time in Canadian history. Foreign adversaries and others feel that we are a weak country that they can bully under Prime Minister Trudeau's so-called leadership.

The second thing is that the Prime Minister is trying to distract from the fact that he has an ongoing revolt in his caucus that is looking to overthrow him. It's no wonder he's doing this, but certainly, if he continues to weaponize this, as my colleague said, then he should release the names. Canadians deserve to know who in Parliament right now or in the past has been undermining the national interest on purpose to aid a foreign country. They absolutely deserve to know that, and those individuals need to be held accountable.

I would also say that it's interesting that he won't do so. I wonder why that is. Well, perhaps it's because it makes the Liberal Party look bad.

Again, he was the one who denied that there was election interference from China, for example. He's the one who denied there was any issue here at all, and yet here we are. He continues to deny that there's any issue there. I would suspect that this is why he's not releasing the names.

I think we could put this to bed. It's rapidly devolving into some McCarthy witch hunt as a result of the Prime Minister's actions. I think we can easily clear this up today by releasing the names. Canadians deserve to know. The Prime Minister should be showing leadership in this regard and in ensuring that he's actually taking action on this intelligence.

● (1025)

The last thing I would say, Mr. Chair, is that it's not clear why we are taking intelligence if we're not able to utilize it to ensure that these individuals are held accountable. If they semi-wittingly or unwittingly know, then they should know and they should be informed, so I think it is imperative that Parliament learn who these people are, if any, and move forward with that information.

Mr. Chair, I'd also say again that the responsibility for national security lies with the Prime Minister. The only reason we are here is that he has failed to protect it, Mr. Chair.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go now to Mr. Gaheer, please.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Thank you, Chair.

It's rich that the Conservatives are talking about this issue when their leader engages in wilful blindness by burying his head in the sand and not getting a top secret security clearance. He can quite literally get a top secret clearance, learn the names of the people in his own party who are vulnerable or have been vulnerable to foreign interference and have engaged with foreign governments and then remove those names. Because he has the ultimate power in his party, he can remove those names from his party.

This subamendment that's been brought is practically out of order, because the RCMP and CSIS have stated that anyone who reveals classified information is subject to the law equally. Obviously, in this case, to reveal publicly the names that are classified at this time would be a criminal offence. That's what this subamendment is asking for. It's asking the Prime Minister to engage in a criminal offence.

What we can see is that for the last few months and for the last year, Ms. May and Mr. Singh, from the Greens and the NDP respectively, have done a wonderful job of commenting on this issue. They have not been muzzled at all on this issue, so I think it's very rich that the leader of the Conservatives engages in this behaviour, refuses to get a top secret security clearance and points fingers.

This subamendment is a non-starter, and we should just go to a vote.

● (1030)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gaheer.

We'll go now to Ms. Lantsman.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

While I appreciate that members of this committee think that the motion is out of order because they don't like it, that's not exactly how it works.

What we're seeing now, here at this committee, is that there's only one party in this country that is calling for the release of these names—the names that the Prime Minister has alluded to, the names that we know are being kept secret. Everyone else is trying to work to hide the names, particularly in the changing stories of Ms. May from before and after she was briefed. Now we see that the NDP is trying to distract from what was brought to this committee as a serious issue today—the serious issue of foreign interference by India—and they're now playing politics with it.

Listen to this: "I agree completely with Poilievre's decision not to take the bait. Trudeau has been trying for a year and a half to restrain what Pierre Poilievre can do by trying to say, 'Come and get this private briefing—and oh, by the way, then you'll be held to an official secret and you won't be able to talk about this anymore.'"

Do you know who said that, Mr. Chair? That was Thomas Mulcair, who was the leader of the NDP when the NDP used to be an opposition party that wasn't helping the Liberals cover this up.

The question is this: What is the government trying to hide?

Everybody watching might not know that the CSIS Act allows the government to offer information to any Canadian about specific risks of foreign interference without forcing them into sworn secrecy or controlling what they say. However, this motion is particular-

ly about releasing the names that Canadians deserve to know of any parliamentarian, in any party, who has been wittingly associated with foreign interference or with a foreign government working against the interests of Canadians. Receiving a secret briefing would, even according to the Prime Minister's chief of staff, prevent the recipient from using that information in any manner.

I don't think that's very smart for the only opposition party that can force the Prime Minister to come clean with Canadians on what he is trying to hide.

This particular motion that was dropped at committee is a mockery, the same kind of mockery that the Trudeau government has repeatedly made with foreign interference. What we witnessed at the public inquiry this week was nothing more than well-rehearsed partisan smears by a failing Prime Minister who is facing rejection from Canadians from coast to coast and is increasingly facing it from members of his own Liberal Party, who are conducting letter-writing campaigns to oust him from his leadership.

It is beyond rich for the Prime Minister to grandstand, given the record that his government has on not taking foreign interference seriously. With all of the benefit of information from the government agencies that he has and with all of the information that he was warned with, including in the Liberal Party, he refused to act.

This Prime Minister and his government repeatedly claim that they weren't aware of foreign interference happening right under their noses, despite a massive paper trail of warnings from officials.

It is Justin Trudeau's government that mysteriously sat, as we learned from the inquiry last week, on a CSIS surveillance warning, a warrant application for a Liberal power broker, for 54 days. Still there are no answers about that. The minister says that he doesn't know. Other ministers say that he doesn't know. There are staffers who gave absolutely no answers at that commission.

It is Justin Trudeau's party that willingly allowed Chinese high school students to vote in the now infamous Han Dong nomination race, and that was fine.

It was Justin Trudeau who ignored calls from the Leader of the Opposition to release those names to Parliament. He has repeatedly done that, and now the entire country is asking for those names.

You cannot go to the committee under the guise of providing information, drop that kind of partisan smear job on members of Parliament and then not come clean with the names.

● (1035)

The only people who are looking to have those names told to the Canadian public are in the Conservative Party. We are fighting, now, every party that is working with Justin Trudeau and his government to cover up these names. Canadians deserve to know which members of Parliament in which party, no matter what, are colluding with foreign governments, wittingly or unwittingly.

Others are willing to limit their ability to hold government to account on important issues of national security; Conservatives will not do that. Mr. Poilievre will not be left under a gag order, unable to speak about any of the information he receives.

All of that is to say that these names have to come out. There's only one person who can do that, and that's the Prime Minister of Canada. The government, through CSIS, is authorized by a particular section in the CSIS Act. It's section 12.1. He could act at any time to utilize threat reduction measures and notify the leader of a political party of issues concerning national security. He did not do that. Instead he chose to make it public in an inquiry and cast aspersions, with absolutely no evidence and no follow-through to let Canadians know who those people and members of Parliament are. This tool has been available to his government since he started, since 2015. He could use that tool to inform Pierre Poilievre, but he's not doing that.

All of that is to say that the amendment on the table is to release the names. Again, there is one party asking for this Prime Minister to release every single one of those names. The other parties, which are purportedly in opposition, are helping the Prime Minister to hide those names and the identities of all of those members of Parliament. The question really is, for the entire committee, "What on earth are you hiding? What is the Prime Minister hiding?" I think that's the question we have to get to the bottom of in this committee.

I hope that members will vote for this amendment to make those names public for the betterment of our national security and for every Canadian to know who represents them and, ahead of the next election, who they are actually voting for, which country they are working for and whether they have Canadians' best interests at heart.

Only the Prime Minister can do that. Everything else is pure politics. That's what we've seen this week and, unfortunately, that's what we're seeing right now at this committee.

The Chair: Thank you.

We go now to Mr. Hallan.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Thank you, Chair.

Once again, we see this costly cover-up coalition in full force. Jagmeet Singh, in this fake theatrical performance that he probably learned from Justin Trudeau, pretended to rip up his so-called agreement. Then, once he used the people of Winnipeg, he taped it right back together. Once again, we're seeing the Liberals, the NDP and, obviously, the leader of the Green Party try to cover up, divide and distract Canadians from this flailing Prime Minister.

This is a very serious issue of foreign interference. The RCMP has alleged that members of the South Asian community have been targeted by a foreign government—in this case, India—and made allegations of murder, extortion and violent threats. What do the Liberals and the NDP do, with the help of the Green Party? They want to distract from a Liberal revolt happening within Justin Trudeau's caucus. They want to distract Canadians from the pain and misery Justin Trudeau and Jagmeet Singh have caused them with the high cost of living by doubling their housing costs and making sure there's more food bank usage than ever before in this

country. On top of all of that is letting Canada become a safe haven and a playground for foreign interference.

I'd like to give one clear message to Justin Trudeau and Jagmeet Singh from our common-sense Conservative leader, Pierre Poilievre, in a letter he just recently wrote: "Release the names of all MPs who have collaborated with foreign interference."

We can put this whole thing to bed. Canadians want to know. Canadians want to know who are those MPs working in the best interests of foreign governments and not in the best interests of Canadians. It shouldn't be that hard to do.

As Mr Poilievre also wrote:

The CSIS Act allows the government to offer information to any Canadian about specific risks of foreign interference without forcing them into sworn secrecy or controlling what they say.

and further:

Receiving a secret briefing would, according to Justin Trudeau's Chief of Staff, prevent the recipient from using "the information in any manner", and "even where that is not the case, briefing political parties on sensitive intelligence regarding an MP could put the leader or representative of a political party in a tough position, because any decision affecting the MP might have to be made without giving them due process.

In clear words, Justin Trudeau and the NDP are trying to muzzle not just the leader of the Conservative Party but all Canadians.

Justin Trudeau doesn't need to wait for an inquiry. According to the CSIS Act, he can walk over to Pierre Poilievre and give him the names. He doesn't need to continue to muzzle. He muzzled the NDP leader because of his greed for his \$2.2-million pension, and he's also obviously muzzled the Green Party leader. This is why Canadians are so fed up and want an election now.

Common-sense Conservatives are the only MPs inside the House of Commons and outside the House of Commons who are calling for the names to be released now.

Can you imagine that there are people sitting in the House of Commons today who are not working in the best interests of Canadians? This can include anyone. A sitting member of the House of Commons could have major implications in trade deals by doing what's in the best interests of foreign governments and not in the best interests of Canadians.

• (1040)

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: We have Ms. Khalid on a point of order.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you.

I take a lot of exception to the member calling into question the integrity of members of Parliament, in our Parliament, with what he's saying. I take major exception to that.

The Chair: Thank you.

I think that would be Standing Order 18, and I would advise members to be cognizant of that.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Yes.

Look, Mr. Chair, we see once again that the Liberals will do anything to distract away—

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I have a point of order again, Mr. Chair. I don't appreciate....

If the member has points to raise on his motion, as is absolutely his right, please do so. Please don't try to call into question the integrity of members who are in this chamber.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: On a point of order, Mr. Chair...?

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Lantsman.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: I just want to remind the member that it was the Prime Minister himself, at the inquiry, who called into question the integrity of members of Parliament by naming parties and affiliations without actually putting the names down, and that's exactly what we're arguing here today.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Hallan.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Thank you to the great Melissa Lantsman from Thornhill, our co-deputy leader, for that clarification.

I also didn't know that hurt feelings could be points of order, because that's what it seems like the Liberals keep doing—

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I have a point of order again, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: We have Ms. Khalid on a point of order, please.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Please don't. It's not nice. Make your arguments, as is the right of every parliamentarian in committees. Let's not call people names. Let's not go down this path. Let's be respectful, please, of everybody.

● (1045)

The Chair: Thank you for your point of order.

The point is well taken. Please, everybody, try to be polite to each other.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: I'll continue, Mr. Chair.

Hopefully, I'm not interrupted because I hurt feelings, but further to our leader's letter to Justin Trudeau:

Furthermore, my Chief of Staff has received classified briefings from the government. At no time has the government told me or my Chief of Staff of any current or former Conservative parliamentarian or candidate knowingly participating in foreign interference.

This is in stark contrast to what the Prime Minister has alleged and what we've heard Ms. May flip-flop on from when she said she took the briefing to now and to what the NDP is claiming.

Our leader goes on to say:

If Justin Trudeau has evidence to the contrary, he should share it with the public. Now that he has blurred it out in general terms at a commission of inquiry — he should release the facts. But he won't — because he is making it up.

and:

...Justin Trudeau is doing what he always does: he is lying. He is lying to distract from a Liberal caucus revolt—

The Chair: Mr. Hallan, it is inappropriate parliamentary language to refer to a member as “lying”.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: I just want to get some clarification. I'm reading a letter that was sent to the Prime Minister—

The Chair: It's not acceptable.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Thank you. I'll retract “lying”, but I will say that what our leader is saying in general is that Justin Trudeau is misleading. It's “what he always does”. He is distracting “from a Liberal caucus revolt against his leadership and revelations he knowingly allowed Beijing to interfere and help him win two elections.”

Later the letter states:

It is beyond rich for Justin Trudeau to grandstand, given that the record now shows that he and his government, with all the benefits of government agencies, were repeatedly warned about foreign interference — including within the Liberal Party — and refused to act.

It is Justin Trudeau and his government who repeatedly claim that they just weren't aware of foreign interference happening right under their noses, despite a paper trail of warnings from officials.

It is Justin Trudeau's government which mysteriously sat on a CSIS surveillance warrant application for a Liberal power-broker for fifty-four days.

It is Justin Trudeau's party that willingly allowed the PRC consulate to bus in PRC international high school students to vote in the now infamous Han Dong nomination race.

It is Justin Trudeau who has ignored [our leader's] calls to release the names of Parliamentarians referenced in this spring's NSICOP report who have wittingly worked for the benefit of foreign governments against the interests of Canadians.

This is nothing but a cover-up.

Once again, Justin Trudeau, with the help of the NDP, is just trying to distract away from the pain, misery and foreign interference they have allowed in this country after nine years. This is nothing but politics for these people. This has nothing to do with the safety and security of Canadians or the democracy that we should be upholding. The sovereignty of Canada is not being upheld by these parties. It is only the Conservative Party that is asking for full transparency and for the names to be released.

That's what this is all about. We're calling the bluff of this costly coalition, this cover-up coalition, now. Just release the names. Release the names of those MPs who are not working in the best interests of Canadians. It is that simple.

There should be no excuse now. There should be no reason for anyone to doubt that any parliamentarian who is duly elected to the House of Commons is working in the best interests of Canadians.

I also want to mention that it's this Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, who admitted at the public inquiry that there are Liberal names and names from every party.

Conservatives are not scared of the names being released. We're saying to release the names now. Only the Liberals and the NDP in their cover-up coalition are afraid.

What we want to know is this: What do they have to hide? What do they have to hide? They're scared to go to an election because they're scared of Canadians, but they are wilfully letting foreign interference, which includes threats, violence, extortion and even alleged murder, happen in this country to Canadians, all so they can cover up their incompetency. This is nine years of Justin Trudeau with the help of Jagmeet Singh.

I'll make it clear one more time: The common-sense Conservatives are asking for the names to be released immediately so that Canadians can feel safe once again on Canadian soil.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1050)

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go now to Ms. May.

Ms. May, go ahead, please.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To my friends and colleagues around the table, I make it very clear to my friend from Kildonan—St. Paul and to Melissa Lantsman as well that I haven't changed my position at all.

I don't own any flip-flops. I don't flip-flop; I stand on principle. I was trained as a lawyer—I'm honoured to have been admitted to the bars of Nova Scotia and of Ontario—and so, when I went through the process of getting top secret security clearance, I was very mindful of what I could and couldn't say.

I was quite sure when David Johnston, as former special rapporteur, opened the door for the first time that leaders of opposition parties could seek top secret security clearance and potentially obtain it—you don't get it as a right—had something in my past been uncovered that would make me subject to blackmail or intimidation or to being compromised through any form of interference, then I wouldn't have obtained top secret security clearance. I would have been denied it.

Now, I go to the matter of, “Did my story change?” No, not one bit. I read the unredacted version of the report of the committee of parliamentarians.

I think it's important for me to explain to my colleagues how I navigated this: How do you obtain top secret security clearance, read information that must, by law, remain secret, and still talk about it? Well, the answer is that you're careful as you navigate, and so, before I spoke publicly, I shared with security agencies the notes that I planned to use in the press conference.

I want my colleagues around the table to know that some things I had intended to say, which I thought would be non-controversial and not reveal any secrets, included the exact number of people who were considered “witting” or “semi-witting”.

I repeat again that I do not believe any of our colleagues currently serving in Parliament, at least in terms of the report I read.... There may be other information, and certainly the Prime Minister had other kinds of briefings that I haven't, but based on the text of the report of the committee of parliamentarians, into which our colleagues from the Liberal Party, Bloc Québécois, NDP and Conser-

vatives put an enormous amount of work.... Our colleagues read 33,000 pages of top secret security material and condensed it into a report that they could all stand behind, and then, with some deletions and other modifications to make it publicly accessible, it became public information.

I was able to read the report unredacted. I stand by every word I said, but before I said a word—because I wasn't gagged, clearly, and I was able to talk about it—I went through my notes with security experts to make sure I didn't inadvertently violate any laws of Canada or place at risk any of our intelligence assets.

To my colleagues around the table, I want you to know that I actually edited and changed what I was going to say in the press conference, not taking out names but even the number of people who might be considered “semi-witting” or in any way potentially compromised. That's to say again—I repeat—that to my knowledge, no one currently serving in Parliament, in the House of Commons, was compromised or is serving the interests of a foreign government.

There are some people who were referenced as “semi-witting”, but I was told clearly that even the number, the numerical categorization of how many people might fall into that category, could not be said publicly without placing at risk the lives of our intelligence assets around the world.

I want my colleagues to understand that this isn't a game. This isn't politics. I'm not playing games here. I'm telling you how it is when you navigate, with top secret security clearance, what you can say and what you can't say. The amendment to this motion to release all the names sounds grand if you operate in ignorance of the law and of how security and intelligence operatives and intelligence and security information gathering operates in the real world, where there are bad people. We have to be careful as members of Parliament not to allow political rhetoric to get in the way of what we do to serve Canadians.

I just wanted to clear that up. I hope it helps. We can't just say, “Release all the names” unless we're operating in ignorance of the ongoing knock-on effects that it could have in terms of endangering the lives of intelligence assets of Canada.

I navigated this as carefully as I could because I think it's really critical that Canadians know as much as we possibly can share without violating national security.

• (1055)

I think this committee is on a good path in choosing to have an investigation. Again, I do believe it's important to clear up any suggestion that foreign interference had an impact on the Conservative leadership race. That's an obvious point. That's already out there in public. That's on page 32 in paragraph 72 of the public version of the committee of parliamentarians' report. I think Mr. Poilievre would want to know exactly what is referenced there and get a top secret security clearance. Unless there's some reason he thinks he won't get it, I can't see any reason why he wouldn't want to obtain it.

I think I've made it clear and I think Mr. Singh as leader of the New Democratic Party has made it clear—Mr. Blanchet is still in the process of getting his top secret security clearance—that we believe we can serve the people of Canada and share the information that we can share without breaking the law and help all Canadians understand.

Again, I wrote each individual leader of all the parties in the House of Commons to please get top secret security clearance so that we can meet as a group, as a unified force, and tell foreign powers, whether Russia or the People's Republic of China or India or any of the sources of foreign interference, that we operate in Canada as a solid wall and we tell foreign powers, “We're not giving you space here. We unify. We pull together.” For that, it would certainly be helpful if all the leaders of all the federal political parties obtained top secret security clearance so that we could work together without the risk of violating the security establishment and the safety and security of non-Canadians somewhere else around the world who are sharing information with our operatives. Those people must not be placed at risk because of reckless political rhetoric here at home.

I do wish that this committee is able to continue on the study and that the accusations of one party versus another are kept to a bare minimum. I guess it's impossible to avoid it altogether, but I haven't changed my story—not one bit. I do believe you can have top secret security clearance and navigate that responsibility. It's an onerous responsibility to respect the security establishment of this country, navigate it and share with Canadians that we have, in terms of elected members of Parliament, not one person who has actively worked against the interests of Canada.

There is, as we said, the category that the committee used, and the language that they used, of “witting” or “semi-witting”. It's unusual language, but that's the language they used. There are some people in that category. On my reading of the unredacted version of the report, the MPs in the semi-witting or witting category have not committed acts that fall into the category of proactive betrayal of their country's interests. Those names, and even the number of people in that category, I have been warned by people in our security establishment must not be shared publicly. Therefore, I'm uncomfortable with the idea that we can taunt various people to just make it all public. I'm not hiding anything. I do my best to be transparent. That's why I'm grateful for the chance to take the floor again.

I hope that has helped clear things up. I do hope we can all be on the same side here of getting as much information as we can. We've moved from where we were when David Johnston was made spe-

cial rapporteur with the concern of how much foreign interests had interfered in our elections. We're now looking at very clear accusations that the RCMP uncovered—a network of operatives reporting to a criminal element within India, operating on Canadian soil to endanger lives. They're very different categories of foreign interference. They all require deep respect and a degree of caution in how we go forward so that we don't betray any information that must be kept secure and secret in the interests of our ability to work with Five Eyes partners and be understood to be a country where secure and secret information remains respected and stays secure and secret.

Thank you very much.

• (1100)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. May.

We go now to Mr. Uppal, followed by Mr. MacGregor.

Mr. Uppal, go ahead.

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

First of all, I must say that this committee started off discussing a very serious issue of national security, an issue of protecting Canadians, an issue of addressing the very serious matter where RCMP made allegations of murder, extortion, organized crime, intimidation and coercion by agents of the Indian government. There was agreement by this committee to move forward and address that. It's unfortunate that we have now gone to a place where we are discussing and debating how the NDP and the Liberals are working together to cover up names of MPs—not wanting to release names of MPs—who have not been working in the best interests of Canadians.

Ms. May talked about how she cannot release those names and that she, in fact, cannot take any action based on the information that she has because she has taken that clearance and read the names. She has the information, but she cannot release the names. She cannot do anything with that information. That is particularly the point. Receiving a secret briefing would, according to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's own chief of staff, Katie Telford, prevent a recipient from using the information in any manner. Essentially, the person who receives the briefing would not be able to use or do anything with that briefing. It is a gag order. It doesn't allow that person to take any action or discuss it with the information that they have.

Then she goes on to say, “Even where that it is not the case, briefing political parties on sensitive intelligence regarding an MP could put the leader or representative of a political party in a tough position, because any decision affecting the MP might have to be made without giving them due process.”

That is why the better situation would be for the Prime Minister.... He brought this up at the Hogue commission. He's the one who came out and said that, yes, there are Liberals and members of other parties on that list. He should bring that information forward. He should bring it publicly. He should release those names. In that way, political party leaders can take action as they see fit, based on those names, based on that information. Otherwise, as Ms. May herself has said, you cannot take any action. You cannot discuss those names, and you cannot release them.

For that reason, that is a better way to go. Within the CSIS Act, there actually is a provision to be able to give the leader of a party sensitive information, pertinent information, especially when it comes to the national security of the nation. All of that process is available. Justin Trudeau, as the Prime Minister, can give that information to any political leader, or he can release those names publicly. We would say that he release them publicly, because if there are members of Parliament who have been elected by Canadian citizens, by their electorate, and who are not working in the best interest of Canadians, then that information should be made public. That is the best way to deal with this. Canadians deserve to know who these people are.

Let's get back to the situation that we originally were dealing with. We were on foreign interference, and this is coming out of that. With regard to foreign interference, there are a number of steps that could have been taken to protect Canadians. It's unfortunate that we are now, on this very serious issue of foreign interference, discussing the NDP and the Liberals playing political games when we should be discussing how we can stop foreign interference. One of the very serious allegations that the RCMP has made against agents of the Indian government is that they were taking part in the extortion of Canadians.

• (1105)

We have heard in the last number of months, for over a year now, that very serious cases of extortion are happening across the country. There have been shootings at homes. Homes have been burnt down; over a dozen newly built homes in Edmonton were burnt down. There are businesses that have been shot at, some alleged to have been directed by international gangsters. These are issues that we should be looking at and should be debating.

I brought forward a private member's bill, Bill C-381, that would have given stricter penalties to anybody who takes part in extortion with mandatory minimum sentences to keep extortionists in jail longer. There would have been a minimum penalty of at least three years if somebody were to commit extortion; a four-year mandatory minimum sentence if somebody were to commit extortion using a firearm; and a five-year mandatory minimum sentence if someone were to commit extortion in connection with organized crime.

This links back to exactly what the RCMP has alleged: that agents of the Indian government are working with organized crime in Canada, particularly an organized crime unit out of India, the Bishnoi group, to extort Canadians here on Canadian soil. That last provision would aim to convict anyone who is involved in organized crime and extortion with a minimum of five years in jail.

Unfortunately, all of the NDP members in the House of Commons, as well as the Liberals, voted against that bill. It is unfortunate

that when we talk in this place about protecting Canadians, taking steps to ensure that Canadians are kept safe and ensuring that Canadians are able to express themselves freely, to have political opinions that are different from others and to do so in a peaceful manner, and solutions come forward, the Liberals and the NDP do not take action. They did not vote in favour of that bill. They essentially are saying that they are fine with not keeping extortionists in jail longer. That, again, really speaks to how serious they are about addressing these issues. The issue that we are dealing with right now goes along in the same manner. We should be discussing ways of stopping foreign interference from any country, including India, and not looking at ways to make cheap political points, as they are doing right now.

On the issue of security clearance, the same day that the RCMP made these very serious allegations, the Leader of the Opposition, Pierre Poilievre, received a briefing from Canada's security agencies. He received all of the information. He got the same briefing that the leader of the NDP, Jagmeet Singh, got. Provisions are there to be able to give the Leader of the Opposition the information that is required without gagging him and without his not being able to speak about that information or take action against that information.

When it comes to the names of members of Parliament who have not been working in the interests of Canadians or have been colluding with a foreign nation, this is actually an issue that the Prime Minister brought up. I know the Liberal member was saying that we should not suggest that some members of Parliament in this place may be colluding with a foreign government or cast aspersions on other members of Parliament. It was actually the Prime Minister himself who did so. Those names can and should be released. Canadians deserve to know who those members of Parliament are. No other individual, including a party leader, just like Elizabeth May said, can release that information. Nobody else can do that, but the Prime Minister can.

• (1110)

If there are serious national security issues that the Leader of the Opposition should know, CSIS has the ability, within the CSIS Act, to provide that information to the Leader of the Opposition—the future prime minister—to ensure that he can take appropriate action.

Instead of going down this path of the NDP helping the Liberals cover up these names and getting together to make these cheap political points, I think this committee should continue with what we originally started off with, which is dealing with the very serious issues of foreign interference, of Canadians being assassinated—murdered—on Canadian soil, of extortion taking place across the country, of organized crime being used by a foreign government and of the intimidation and coercion of Canadians. This is a matter of our sovereignty and our democracy, and this committee now has—because of the NDP and the Liberals—turned to trying to make cheap political points. I suggest that we get back to the very important issues.

There are a number of questions that we have and should have as Canadians. If the RCMP alleges that a foreign gang is using gangsters in Canada and international gangsters to carry out extortion and the other organized crime, intimidation, then how is it that those Canadians, those people, are in Canada? Why are those people in Canada?

The RCMP statement reads, “Through our national taskforce and other investigative efforts, the RCMP has obtained evidence that demonstrates four very serious issues”. These are issues that we should be addressing here. One is “Violent extremism impacting both countries”. This is an issue that this committee should be looking into. There is also “Links tying agents of the Government of India (GOI) to homicides and violent acts” that are happening here in Canada. There is “The use of organized crime”—they actually named an international gang—“to create a perception of an unsafe environment targeting the South Asian Community in Canada”, and “Interference into democratic processes.”

It also says, “Investigations have revealed that Indian diplomats and consular officials based in Canada leveraged their official positions to engage in clandestine activities”. These are very serious issues.

I must say that these issues are very serious, but they are also ones that have been very difficult to speak to Canadians about. I had a number of phone calls from members of the Sikh community and others from across the country, but I also had to have conversations with my children. They're old enough now to hear about information and news, and they're also concerned about what's happening in our country. I talked to many Canadians who said that it's not the same country that they came to, a country that has that safety and security. After nine years of this government, we are not as safe as many people used to believe and not as safe as people were.

There are a number of ways that information can be shared in order to protect Canadians. What the Prime Minister wants to do is have our leader gagged, essentially, sworn into secrecy and provided some information but then not be able to talk about it, to tell Canadians about it or to take any action on it. CSIS already has ways of providing that information to the leader. In fact, the Treasury Board Secretariat's policy on government security has provisions through which they can provide that information to the leader. Cabinet ministers and, possibly, privy councillors can be provided that information. There is the NSICOP, a committee, that has been provided that information.

• (1115)

As I said before, there are the threat reduction measures, commonly known as TRMs, under section 12.1 of the CSIS Act. This information can be provided to the Leader of the Opposition to be able to take action as appropriate.

As for the names of MPs who have been possibly working or colluding with, knowing or unknowingly, and the leaders of the different parties...because there are Liberals on that list. I believe the Prime Minister also said members of the NDP. I know that he specifically mentioned Conservatives to make that political point, but there are Liberals on that list as well. The leaders of those parties, if that information is provided properly, can take action as they see fit. I also think the information should be provided publicly.

As I said, I think it's important that we get back to the very important issue of foreign interference in this country. Let's drop this attempt at making political points here in this committee and work at taking steps to protect Canadians.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will go now to Mr. MacGregor.

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

I want to take the opportunity to address a few of the points that my Conservative colleagues have made. I am going to do so in a respectful manner, and I'm not going to resort to petty insults.

First of all, I raise this point because, given Monday's revelations, I think it is incredibly important for Canada to show a united front, and right now we're at a stage where the only federal party leader who is refusing to get top security clearance is Mr. Poilievre of the Conservatives. This has gotten to a stage now where his continued refusal to get this clearance is raising far more questions than is necessary.

I don't know what his motives are. I know the Conservatives keep on talking about him being gagged. It certainly hasn't prevented our leader, Jagmeet Singh, from talking openly and frankly about this in a way that does not risk top security information. Perhaps, for Mr. Poilievre, ignorance is bliss. Perhaps it allows him to continue talking on Twitter and to Canadians about things he knows absolutely nothing about, and maybe he simply wants to have that freedom to keep on spouting off nonsense and remain in ignorance. I don't know; that's up to him.

He can still refuse to take the clearance. This is simply asking him to do so. He is not even named in the motion. It simply asks that all federal party leaders get the necessary security clearance levels so that we can take the necessary actions to protect Canadians.

I do want to address some of the points that my Conservative colleagues have been making about how this would prevent a party leader from taking action. I completely disagree with that, and here's why. We know that in political parties, the leader wields an enormous amount of power. The leader is able to determine who in caucus has what parliamentary roles. The leader is able to determine who gets to run under the party's banner in the next election. They have to sign the nomination papers. If Mr. Poilievre were to get this security clearance, and if he were to learn of certain individuals within his own party—I'm not singling out the Conservatives, because we've heard allegations about members in the Liberal Party—what it would allow him to do is to take the necessary internal actions to perhaps isolate those individuals and, if it's very serious, to prevent them from running as members of Parliament under the Conservative Party banner in the next election.

He could do all of that without having to breach the top security rules in place that prevent the divulgence of this information. It is false to claim that he can't take action when, in fact, he could. If there's a compromised member of Parliament or someone who goes over the threshold of suspicious activities on behalf of a foreign power, Mr. Poilievre could prevent that individual from running in the next election, and that would inoculate us against having that person in the House of Commons in the 45th Parliament. That is a direct action that the leader could take.

I also take issue with the way the Conservatives are trying to frame the NDP. There are two members of our caucus for whom this issue is deeply personal and who have been directly impacted by this—Jenny Kwan and Jagmeet Singh—so I take great issue with their saying that we are doing this for politics.

This is a serious and personal issue for our party. It has directly impacted the lives of two of our caucus members, and that needs to be underlined. Both China and India have directly impacted two of my fellow caucus members. This is a very serious issue for us, and it is an issue that our leader takes very seriously. That is why he took the appropriate steps to get his security clearance, which allows him to take actions that I may not be privy to, but I can operate knowing that the leader has the information he needs to govern his own caucus accordingly. That's what we're asking every party leader to do within their respective caucuses.

● (1120)

To show the Conservatives that I do support our in some way releasing these names...because the other thing I want to also put on point is that I've had many conversations with members of the security and intelligence community, both at committee and in private conversations. These are their words, not mine: There is a wide gulf between evidence and intelligence. This needs to be underlined. We can't just go about releasing the names without understanding that key point.

I don't want to repeat what Ms. May said, but there is a very real danger that we could compromise the way we got that information. What the Conservatives are essentially asking us to do with their amendment right now is to potentially put our own intelligence operatives at risk. I think, for anyone who sits on this committee, that is completely unacceptable.

Again, these are not my words. These are words coming directly from the intelligence and security community. Conservatives know this, because they have heard those exact same words from those members at this committee table and in conversations they've had in private with those individuals.

Mr. Chair, I am going to propose a subamendment to Mr. Lloyd's amendment to my motion. His amendment was tacked onto the end. It simply said, "that we release the names of all members of Parliament and all parliamentarians who are alleged to have interfered and knowingly colluded with foreign powers."

My subamendment to this would read as follows: "that the government release the names of all members of Parliament and all parliamentarians who are alleged to have interfered and knowingly colluded with foreign powers while protecting national security and those who gathered the intelligence."

Jenny Kwan and our leader has said it very much on the record that we would love for the Canadian public to know these names. I hate the fact that I have to serve in the House of Commons with this cloud of suspicion hanging over us. I think Canadians deserve to know. It caused a huge uproar when that NSICOP report was released in June, but we also have to respect the very real concerns that our intelligence community has repeatedly relayed to this committee and its members. I do believe that, if there is a way of publicly releasing these names, it needs to be done in a very careful fashion. It needs to be done in a way that is fully coordinated with our national security and intelligence partners on this file.

I am not going to support just simply releasing the names with no context, but I will support a non-political, professional way of releasing the names that has the full support of members of the RCMP and CSIS. If Conservative members are willing to publicly say that they support the important work of those agencies, I hope they will support this subamendment to their amendment.

I'll conclude there, Mr. Chair.

● (1125)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacGregor.

We are substantially over time. Our resources run out at 11:30 a.m., so at this point I will suspend. We will resume this discussion on Tuesday.

The meeting is suspended.

[The meeting was suspended at 11:25 a.m., Friday, October 18, 2024]

[The meeting resumed at 11:05 a.m., Tuesday, October 22, 2024]

The Chair: I call this meeting to order.

Welcome back to meeting number 124 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. We are resuming our meeting of Friday, October 18, 2024.

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

I would like to remind participants of the following points. Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. All comments should be addressed through the chair. Please raise your hand if you wish to speak, whether participating in person or via Zoom. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can.

We are resuming debate on the subamendment by Mr. MacGregor to the amendment by Mr. Lloyd to the motion by Mr. MacGregor.

Since we have some people here who weren't present on Friday, I'll read the motion as it currently stands:

That, given the Royal Canadian Mounted Police report on violent criminal activities linked to agents of the Government of India from October 14, 2024, the Hogue Commission's identification of foreign interference activities by Russia, Pakistan, China, and Iran, and the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians' special report on Foreign Interference in Canada's Democratic Processes and Institutions, the Chair reports to the House that the committee calls for all federal party leaders to apply for the appropriate security clearance level in the next 30 days in order to review classified information and take necessary actions to protect Canadians.

Mr. Lloyd moved an amendment to that motion, as follows: "that we release the names of all members of Parliament and all parliamentarians who are alleged to have interfered and knowingly colluded with foreign powers."

Mr. MacGregor modified it with this subamendment: "that the government release the names of all members of Parliament and all parliamentarians who are alleged to have interfered and knowingly colluded with foreign powers while protecting national security and those who gathered the intelligence."

That's where we stand. We're starting a new speakers list. We have Ms. Dancho, followed by Mr. Lloyd. We will be vigilant in looking for hands going up.

With that, we will pass the floor to Ms. Dancho.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this subamendment.

I will note, Mr. Chair, I find it a bit disconcerting that we're talking about this motion, amendment and subamendment, in general. Given that even just today, with the latest news on the India affair, it would appear that Canadian officials, for example.... This subamendment is interesting, because it talks about protecting national security, which is obviously important.

Today, we learned that it would appear that national security officials in Canada leaked information to The Washington Post that Canadians weren't made aware of. The Washington Post journalists apparently have a greater right to know information about this India issue than Canadians.

That is something we could get into if we were studying the motion we all agreed to, which was to review the India affair and bring in various deputy ministers, the CSIS director, the RCMP commissioner, a number of security officials and other experts to testify on some of the information they knew and when they knew it. Why is it that The Washington Post knew before Canadians?

There are a number of issues, even putting that aside, that could fill in many of the blanks on this important issue that many Canadians are seized with, particularly Canadians in the Indian and Sikh communities.

It's a bit disconcerting that we're seeing various parties playing politics with this issue. Our party's been very clear on where we stand on this motion, and that's not going to change. Certainly, I feel we could get back to the matter at hand. I believe all parties are interested in learning more, particularly in light of the breaking news today out of The Globe and Mail from Bob Fife.

Certainly, Mr. Chair, I think we should be moving on and getting back to the study at hand. In particular, if we were focusing on the study that we passed as a committee, we could be asking the com-

missioner today, "Why is it that we had to learn from The Washington Post that the killing of an individual in Winnipeg had been linked to the whole India affair, in general? Why is it that we had to learn it in American news, and that the RCMP didn't release that to the Canadian public?" I would like to know that, amongst other things. We could be doing that today.

Instead, we're going to be focusing on playing politics. Unfortunately, this motion is from the NDP, with presumably Liberal support. We've made our position very clear on this, and that's not going to change.

I'd ask the members of other parties to consider getting back to the matter at hand, so we can focus on the India affair. Certainly, Mr. Chair, it would be worthwhile for this committee to immediately take up that study. I don't believe we could get to that today, but I would assume that, on Thursday, you could do the work to have various witnesses come and testify.

If we're looking at this, I feel that the subamendment, in general.... Overall, I feel it is implied within it, but perhaps, in general, this motion was not moved in the best of faith. We've made our position clear, as I said. I do feel we could be focusing on the matter at hand. I believe all members of this committee are intelligent, can fight from their corners with respect and, certainly, have information to put on the record that would be of public interest on the India affair issue.

Mr. Chair, again, just waking up today and hearing repeatedly, for example, from the Prime Minister and others, that all of these issues are classified and we can't talk about them, it just seems.... I don't believe this is the first time, in fact, that we've seen various members of American news outlets in the United States get information before we get it. I believe you'll remember, Mr. Chair, when there was that issue of the Chinese spy balloon. American news had more information about what Canadian intelligence knew than the Canadians themselves. This isn't the first time we've seen issues like this.

When we're talking about protecting national security, I would wonder what processes were followed when The Washington Post journalists were entitled to some of this information, and we weren't. I think that is of interest to this committee, certainly, as the public safety and national security committee. It should be with haste that we have a number of these witnesses come to testify. Perhaps, we'll have them testify more than once, given the importance of this issue.

I know we'll go through this today, but we've made our position very clear on this matter. We do not feel that this motion reflects the best interests of the duties of the opposition to hold the government accountable. That is our position, and that's not going to change.

Again, I'd ask other parties to consider that. If we can get to work as soon as Thursday on questioning members of CSIS, the RCMP and others, that would be of great public benefit by further understanding the details of this India affair.

I'll leave it at that for now, and I ask that you put me back on the speaking list.

The Chair: Thanks, Ms. Dancho.

We'll go to Mr. Lloyd, please.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to echo the comments made by my colleague Ms. Dancho. They are very apt and disturbing.

Information was shared with a foreign media outlet, The Washington Post, before Canadians were made aware of the situation involving the allegations that a foreign government, in this case India, has been sponsoring acts of crime in our country, which is of concern to all Canadians as our sovereignty is impacted in this case.

I think that, if the allegations made by The Globe and Mail are true, then it illustrates a greater point that speaks to the subamendment my colleague Mr. MacGregor put forward. He talks about how the release of the names must only be done in accordance with national security. I'll say that, at all times in my original amendment, it's implied that we will not violate the safety of agents who are in the field in the release of any information.

However, with the addition of this subamendment, I have concerns. It's clear to me that we have a government that feels that it can leak information if it's to its own political benefit. Information gets shared with groups like The Washington Post. Information is being leaked, like the Prime Minister outrageously at the Hogue commission selectively saying that he has information related to Conservative parliamentarians. I think that people in the media and across the country have rightly denounced and criticized that as a blatant partisan act by the Prime Minister.

We know from security officials that foreign interference is a broad issue across this country. For the Prime Minister to try to weaponize information that he's privy to in a way that is vague really puts a cloud of suspicion over all members of Parliament. Frankly, I think it devolves this foreign interference debate into a partisan debate when it really doesn't need to be. We will call this out. We will hold this government accountable when they put their own partisan interests above the national security of our country.

We know that this is a Prime Minister who's facing an internal revolt. He's facing numerous pressures. He's attempting to distract in any way he can by outrageously using selective information curated solely to benefit himself politically and not to benefit the national security of our country.

I will note that this all could have been avoided. Our House leader, the Honourable Andrew Scheer.... In the wake of findings from the NSICOP report that there were members of Parliament who

were compromised by foreign interference, Conservatives put forward a way that would respect our national security in a letter that was put forward to Parliament. It requested that the Hogue commission be given a broader set of powers and a broader mandate and receive the unredacted information needed in order to reveal, when possible, the names of members of Parliament or other parliamentarians, both current and former, who have been implicated in foreign interference.

I think it's only fair that those members of Parliament who are involved be notified about this. They're under a cloud of suspicion, and they need to have the ability to clear their names if they are innocent. Canadians need to be given a chance to, you know.... There will be an election by October 2025, guaranteed. Canadians need to know that the air needs to be cleared and that our Parliament is free from these serious allegations of foreign interference.

I'm sure that, if this Liberal government had its way, Canadians wouldn't even know that foreign interference was happening in this country. We saw the lengths that this government went to to hide this very serious information and the lengths it went to even to outright deny that foreign interference was happening.

In the case of Minister Blair, when he came to this committee in his role as Minister of Emergency Preparedness and answering for his tenure as Minister of Public Safety, he said they had received no evidence that there was foreign interference in the 2019 and 2021 elections. This was the Minister of Public Safety saying this in 2022, and we now know, from the Hogue commission and from information what's been shared in the public space, that there was indeed foreign interference that affected at least eight ridings in the 2021 election.

I feel very personally about this, because one of those members of Parliament was a good friend, Kenny Chiu, in Richmond. His name was slandered, and it was found to have been done by agents of a foreign government that was using its arm in Canada and numerous assets in Canada to spread falsehoods that Mr. Chiu, a man of Chinese descent himself, was attempting to create a foreign agent registry that was going to list all Canadians of Chinese descent. It's a patently ridiculous, absurd and ludicrous idea, yet, as we've seen with foreign misinformation and disinformation campaigns, a lie can spread around the world before the truth has a chance to tie its shoes. Kenny Chiu was a victim of that.

There were a number of other Conservative MPs in particular who, to the benefit of Liberal MPs in all of these cases, coincidentally, lost their elections because of this foreign interference. If it had not been for leaks from our national security apparatus and if it had not been for the work of the Hogue commission and enterprising journalists like Sam Cooper, Canadians would have never known about this serious threat to our country's national security. They would have never known the depths and the extent to which foreign powers, be they numerous, are attempting to influence our country, intimidate politicians and intimidate diaspora communities in our country so they don't participate in politics or they vote out of fear instead of in their own self-interest.

To see that be allowed to happen.... I saw a journalist tweet on X the other day that the Canada of 2015 seems so quaint now after nine years of this Liberal government. Certainly, we can't rule out foreign interference prior to 2015; however, the extent of the foreign interference that we've seen in the last nine years proliferating under this Liberal government is shocking.

If you took somebody who was here in 2015 and they could travel forward in time and they woke up in 2024, they'd be shocked at what has happened to their country—what has happened to our country—where not just one country but multiple countries with different complicated layers of intrigue are actively interfering in our democratic system and in our public debate, yet we have a government that said it wasn't even happening just a few short years ago.

We had here, previous to this motion coming forward, a motion to explore the very serious issue of foreign interference in relation to the alleged threats of India threatening Canadian citizens, particularly citizens of the Sikh community. These are very serious allegations, and the fact that we're not studying that right now, I think, is problematic.

I understand that we're dealing with a motion here today related to clearances. We have a Prime Minister who has access to this top secret information and has chosen to weaponize it for his own partisan ends and has, having had this information, failed to act for nine years.

In the case of one serious allegation involving a former Liberal member of Parliament, the Prime Minister, who had been fully briefed on the issues related to that member of Parliament, stood up in the House and said that he looks forward to welcoming him back to caucus in the future. For the Prime Minister, with the knowledge that he has, to make a claim like that is absolutely shocking.

It's only because this information has not been transparent or has not been shared and has been basically kept, keeping Canadians completely in the dark, that this has been allowed to continue. The government has been able to get away with the selective release of national security information for the purpose of keeping Canadians in the dark about their members of Parliament.

The fact is that there's been lots of talk about the importance of getting these security clearances. However, it's also been noted quite effectively that even with these security clearances, there is basically nothing that any member of Parliament can do to act on this. It's been said earlier that the names can't be revealed.

If a leader of a party were to get clearance and receive information that one of their members was compromised by a foreign state, they couldn't kick that member out of caucus because, if there was a risk, as has been said, that the information about that member had been gathered clandestinely by a member of our intelligence or our allies' intelligence, then it could compromise them.

I don't know what people expect when the Prime Minister, who has had this information for years—he's had this information for as long as he's been Prime Minister—failed to act in numerous cases within his own party. He has not removed a single member from his caucus. There was a member who left caucus voluntarily, but the Prime Minister has failed to act on these issues.

I don't know how they can expect any other leader in this Parliament to be able to act on this information, especially when this information was ostensibly supposed to be shared with the chief of staff of the Conservatives. They're being told that it's on a need-to-know basis. Well, I think the chief of staff needs to know. I think certainly the chief of staff to the Prime Minister knows this information. I know the chief of staff of the Conservative Party to be a man of honour and a man of integrity. I think that's entirely suitable.

What we will not accept is a situation where our leader, who has been fighting the fight on foreign interference publicly in the House of Commons, would in any way be restricted in his ability to hold this Liberal government to account.

We have Conservatives who are members of the NSICOP committee. We have a chief of staff who has top secret security clearance. We have all the tools that the government says we should have at our disposal, yet what I see here from the NDP and the Liberals is just a blatant attempt to prevent the Leader of the Opposition from doing his constitutionally mandated job, which is to hold this government accountable for its failures. I think one of its chief failures is going to be remembered as its lack of action on foreign interference, which has allowed us to get to this point today.

With that, I'd like to get back to the very important debate that we're having about India. I was really sad to see that we didn't receive unanimous consent in the House yesterday. I heard a Liberal member deny consent for starting a committee to deal with this very important issue.

With that, I would like to move a motion to adjourn, and I'd like a recorded vote, please.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Are we voting to adjourn debate on the motion?

The Chair: It was a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: No, it's to adjourn debate on....

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): That would then call a vote on the motion.

The Chair: The motion is to adjourn debate on the subamendment.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Technically, I think the whole motion gets adjourned if there's a motion.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: No, we're on the subamendment.

The Chair: We're on the subamendment, so we're going to take this as a motion to adjourn the subamendment.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I would maybe ask the clerk to clarify this: If you call a vote to adjourn debate, is that only debate on the subamendment or is that debate on the entire motion?

The Chair: We are engaging in debate on the subamendment, so adjourning debate, to me, would be on the subamendment, but I'll check with the clerk.

I am informed it would be a vote on the whole motion.

We have a motion to adjourn the debate on the motion with the proposed amendment and subamendment.

Mr. Clerk, take the roll, please.

(Motion negatived: nays 6; yeas 5)

The Chair: The motion passes and the debate is adjourned. There being no business, this is the end of the—

Ms. Elizabeth May: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. I may have misheard, but I thought that the—

The Chair: I apologize. I think I've gone into a catatonic state here.

The vote is to carry on, so we're going to carry on. We have Mr. Motz, followed by Ms. Dancho, Ms. O'Connell, Mr. MacGregor and Ms. Lantsman.

If I fall asleep again, please....

Ms. Pam Damoff: We'll wake you up.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Motz, please go ahead.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Thank you very much, Chair.

I think those who have been party to this, watching this debate, watching these conversations, this committee, just witnessed the true politics of not really caring about our country or the foreign interference that exists in this country. The Liberals and the NDP would sooner play politics with the issue of foreign interference and this very serious information we've received about India and its interference and the acts that have been alleged to have occurred on Canadian soil. I'm very troubled by that.

Last Friday, the emergency meeting resulted in a motion that we supported, calling for meetings to bring witnesses in to talk about foreign interference and the allegations of India's involvement in acts of violence on Canadian soil. We had a number of witnesses who were on the list to provide briefings to the committee, evidence to the committee, that would help us further understand this issue and then take the issue beyond just an understanding into some action that would go back to the House and force the government to take this seriously.

What I find really disturbing, beyond the obvious of the politics, is that, while this committee is seized with a responsibility to explore the India-Canada events that have occurred—and this is just what's on the surface; there's probably a lot more going on that obviously we don't know about—we're stuck spinning our wheels, talking about whether federal party leaders should receive a security clearance.

Of course, we know there are some serious limitations. The comments made by Ms. May at Friday's meeting shone some light on the fact that there are things you cannot say after receiving this briefing. That is very clear. Another member of this committee and I have top security clearance. We know the limitations that exist with receiving this information.

What that means is that you've effectively put a gag order on leaders to be able to speak as freely as the Prime Minister is able to on some of these issues. You can't name names. You can't even take action, to be honest with you, if you receive this briefing.

It's important to appreciate that even the Prime Minister's chief of staff has indicated that receiving this security clearance would prevent a recipient from, and I will quote from her interview summary:

...[using] the information in any manner. Even where that is not the case, briefing political parties on sensitive intelligence regarding an MP could put the leader or representative of a political party in a tough position, because any decision affecting the MP might have to be made without giving them due process.

That's from the Prime Minister's own chief of staff on the fallacy that, if all political leaders receive this briefing, they can go back and act. We know that's not necessarily the case.

What our leader, the Conservative leader, Mr. Poilievre, has made very clear is that we take this matter seriously. We're asking for the names to be released and that actions will be taken, and should be taken, by all parties, should there be anyone found to be willfully complicit in assisting any foreign state.

What's interesting is the CSIS Act actually provides for an opportunity for people to receive information without receiving the security clearance. If you look at section 19 of the CSIS Act, it talks about the disclosure of information. It goes through a whole series of pieces of information.

Subsection 19(1) says:

Information obtained in the performance of the duties and functions of [CSIS] under this Act shall not be disclosed by the Service except in accordance with this section.

Subsection 19(2) goes on to say:

The Service may disclose information referred to in subsection (1) for the purposes of the performance of its duties and functions under this Act or the administration or enforcement of this Act or as required by any other law and may also disclose such information

I'll jump down to paragraph 19(2)(d), which applies. Paragraphs 19(2)(a), 19(2)(b) and 19(2)(c) don't apply to what I'm referring to here. It says:

where, in the opinion of the Minister, disclosure of the information to any person or entity is essential in the public interest and that interest clearly outweighs any invasion of privacy that could result from the disclosure, to that person or entity.

I think it's quite clear that the minister has the authority to provide information. In this case, what the NDP and the Liberals are after is Mr. Poilievre receiving this security clearance. However, the act says that he can receive the information without receiving the security clearance. It's not necessary.

I would be hard-pressed to believe that anyone in this country thinks the public interest is being served by withholding the names. The Canadian public deserves to know who these people are. It deserves to know. Then, action needs to be taken if there is any active member of Parliament who is not acting in the best interests of this country. I'm shocked that there are those who believe it's best for our political leaders to be handcuffed, if you will—pardon the pun—and not be able to speak what they know.

I strongly support the leader of our party Mr. Poilievre's decision not to be gagged or limited in the scope of what action he can take if the Prime Minister ever makes the decision—which he should, in the best interests of this country—to release the names of the individuals alleged to have some wilful involvement in protecting foreign states and working for foreign states against Canadians' best interests. It should be in the public interest that those names be disclosed. I can't think of any reason why the Minister of Public Safety, or the Prime Minister for that matter, would not think this is in the public interest. It's alarming to consider the fact that we keep doing this little dance about whether or not the names should be released and whether, if the leader of a political party is aware of the names because they've received this political briefing, they can then act. Well, it's quite clear that you can't act. You're prohibited from acting, which is unfortunate.

I know that Mr. Mulcair, the former leader of the NDP, came out recently with some very strong statements about his position on the whole idea of the CSIS Act and whether or not political parties should have this briefing. He says he agrees with Mr. Poilievre's decision to not receive a security clearance.

Mr. Mulcair said, "I agree completely with Poilievre's decision not to take the bait. Trudeau's been trying for a year and a half to restrain what Pierre Poilievre can do by trying to say, 'Come and get this private briefing, and—oh, by the way—then you'll be held to an official secret and you won't be able to talk about this anymore.'"

This is so true. Instead of this dark cloud hanging over Parliament.... Canadians and parliamentarians don't necessarily know who's working for whom. Trudeau should do what a leader is supposed to do: safeguard our nation and ensure that those who sit in the House of Commons who aren't working for Canada are exposed and dealt with according to the law.

Was that a dramatic statement I made that somebody fell over back there, or...?

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Glen Motz: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: You have that effect on people, Glen.

Mr. Glen Motz: Yes. Thank you.

We know that politics is filled with political games and partisanship. There's a time for it to go away. When you're dealing with foreign interference, that's a time for it to go away. It's a time to identify those who are a risk to our country and a risk to our democracy. I will be so bold as to suggest that those who are actively working for the interests of other governments and other entities besides Canada and Canadians are traitors. Traitors need to be dealt with according to the law. We need to ensure that the protection of our national security is maintained at all costs.

The Prime Minister has released information more than once. He stood up in the House and before the media and talked about the murder of Mr. Nijjar, releasing sensitive information. At the Hogue commission just recently, he took the liberty, under oath, to speak what I would suggest are very blatantly complete falsehoods. If

they aren't falsehoods, where's the evidence? Present the evidence. Let's see the evidence.

He is not doing that. When pressed at that commission, he admitted that there are allegations of other members of other parties who also are of concern with respect to the security of information or foreign interference. I think it's important that those names come out. I think it's very important. Canadians have lost trust in government over the last nine years. In a lot of institutions they've lost trust. I hear in my riding all the time about losing trust in this government, and by extension all governments.

I think the least that can happen or that should happen is that the information be provided and the Prime Minister make a decision to brief Mr. Poilievre without security clearance, as allowed by the CSIS Act in paragraph 19(2)(d). That allows the government to offer information to any Canadian on specific risks of foreign interference without forcing them into sworn secrecy or controlling what they say. Prime Minister Trudeau really has no excuses. He can and should release the names.

Chair, I could go on and on, but I will pass my time to whoever is next on the list.

Can you put me back on the list after, please? Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Motz.

We go now to Ms. Dancho, followed by Ms. O'Connell, Mr. MacGregor, Ms. Lantsman, Ms. May and Mr. Motz.

Ms. Dancho, go ahead, please.

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

I appreciate the perspective from Mr. Motz, given his experience on NSICOP for a time, so it is good to have on the public safety and national security committee an individual who does have a security clearance, and I appreciate his expertise in that regard. I may be wrong and there may be others on this committee who have that security clearance, but not to my knowledge.

Thank you, Mr. Motz, for your expert feedback in that regard.

Mr. Chair, I want to go on a bit more about what we've learned recently. I do feel that this is a concern. The motion that we passed—and just to review, we passed it collectively and unanimously as a committee—said that we would have about six meetings and that we'd have the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Public Safety, the RCMP commissioner and the national security intelligence adviser. We'd have other experts.

There was a little bit of politicking in there from the NDP, but there were certainly a lot of good experts there. We all unanimously agreed, I believe, to have the CSIS director, the deputy minister of public safety, the deputy minister of Global Affairs Canada and other subject matter experts.

If we had a few of those individuals here today, we could ask them, for example, why it was that it was not revealed to Canadians and it was not in the U.S. indictment. It was not in the public domain that other Canadians were allegedly targeted by the Indian government, or through the Indian government through various criminal entities, and that there was an individual in Winnipeg who was killed.

In fact, I remember that because it was two days after the Prime Minister stood in the House and made quite a bombshell statement about the Indian government's alleged connections to the killing of Mr. Nijjar. Two days later, another member of the Sikh community was murdered or killed in Winnipeg, and it's been connected now, allegedly leaked from Canadian security officials to The Washington Post, that the individual was identified to them but not to Canadians as Mr. Gill.

I do find it odd that we're having to, again, learn from American news outlets things that security officials refuse to tell Canadians. Of course, the Liberal government is the head of government and has been for nine years. It's interesting to see the situation they've created. We've heard the Prime Minister repeatedly talk about leaks and how, when the information first leaked to CSIS about Chinese election interference in various recent elections, the Prime Minister was more focused on the leaks than anything else.

When it comes to a number of issues about this issue and others, whether he's on the public inquiry with Justice Hogue or not, he often says that he can't speak about it because of national security, yet we have his own officials who seem to have leaked information to The Washington Post that was not made clear or not made public to the Canadian public.

We certainly have a situation where the Sikh community, in particular, has been...I would imagine and what we've heard from my quite notable colleagues in the Sikh community.... I represent a number of Sikhs, and I've heard from them that this is very unsettling for them.

I do feel that we have the obligation to ensure that we're doing our due diligence in this regard. There are a number of holes to fill. A lot of this doesn't seem to make sense in a timeline. It doesn't seem to add up. We're trying to piece together things that were allegedly leaked to The Washington Post that apparently Canadians aren't entitled to know but a Washington Post journalist is. That may speak to a realm of secrecy and of revealing intelligence when it suits the Prime Minister.

I would like to know why this information was leaked. Did the Prime Minister know? Did he authorize it? Was it part of some sort of campaign to get the American officials on board? I would imagine that a lot of American presidential staffers, congressmen and women, senators and others read The Washington Post. Was there some sort of strategy in that regard? Did we need the Americans to come out and help us because we're not able to stand up for ourselves after nine years of the Prime Minister and his lack of strength on foreign interference? Why is it that they knew and we didn't know?

We could be asking officials that today.

If the RCMP commissioner was here—we have invited him—I would ask him why he never acknowledged that, as an example, “Mr. Gill's killing”—I'm just going to read part of The Globe and Mail's reporting—“in Winnipeg was connected to India nor did the RCMP reveal other sensitive information reported by The Post.”

We've also invited Ms. Drouin, who's the national security adviser, and Mr. Morris, whom I believe.... Actually, do we have him on the list? Perhaps we should add him.

They denied any classified information was shared. However, as The Globe and Mail points out—I'll just quote it, actually, because it's better that way—“The U.S. indictment identified the killing of Mr. Nijjar, but never mentioned the names of two other Canadians targeted for assassination, including Mr. Gill from Winnipeg.” It quotes a former senior executive at CSIS, Dan Stanton, who said that the information about Mr. Gill's killing would have been considered classified as would the intelligence links to Mr. Shah since it wasn't in the public domain until reported by The Washington Post.

It's interesting. Everyone was focused on Thanksgiving with their families on Monday. I reviewed what the Prime Minister shared, what the RCMP shared and what Minister Joly and the Minister of Public Safety shared. They shared a bit, but we certainly should have all just gone and read The Washington Post article for real answers.

I mentioned earlier that this isn't the first time we've had to turn to American media to get answers about what Canadian security intelligence knows, yet we have a Prime Minister who goes to the public inquiry and releases classified information as he sees fit. I find it very interesting, Mr. Chair, that it's being weaponized on one side and then used as a shield on the other when they don't want to talk about things that perhaps aren't helpful to them.

Again, what sort of confidence are we supposed to have in the government when, after nine years, we have multiple foreign governments interfering in our democratic processes and our institutions? We have alleged murders, in fact, by foreign governments in Canada. That's after nine years of Liberals running the show. We have a situation now where they don't feel Canadians are entitled to information, but Washington Post journalists are.

We could be getting to the bottom of this today. I would really appreciate the opportunity to question the RCMP commissioner, the CSIS director and others, but instead, we have a situation where a motion has been put forward by the NDP, and this is something they knew we would not be able to support. We've made our position very clear. We do not feel that we will be able to fulfill our opposition duties to hold the government accountable if our leader is silenced.

I know Ms. May is with us. Perhaps she can chime in on this. I'm sure she will. I remember her press conference. I believe it was the one in the spring when she was talking about how she read the unredacted version of the NSICOP report.

Ms. May, I apologize. I'm just going to paraphrase what you said. From memory, you didn't have any worries about anyone in Parliament. You were very confident about that. That was my take-away from what you shared. However, you also mentioned that you had to check with the RCMP on what you wanted to say, and I'm sure you did, because you had classified information.

Imagine a world now where any time our leader wanted to speak, question others, speak to media or whatever it might be to fulfill his duty—he's brought this up in question period a number of times over the last year and a half or two years—he'd have to check with the RCMP to see exactly what words and sentences he would be allowed to share. I feel that would put him in quite in a difficult position, so we won't be able to support this. We've made our position very clear on that.

We'll continue to talk about this, but perhaps my words have moved the NDP, so I'd like to check in again. I move to adjourn the debate on this motion, and I'd like a recorded vote.

(Motion negatived: nays 6; yeas 5)

The Chair: Once again, the nays have it.

We shall continue with Ms. O'Connell, followed by Mr. MacGregor, Ms. Lantsman, Ms. May and then Mr. Motz.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thanks, Chair.

Let's remind Canadians what's actually happening with the Conservatives right now. Despite their twisting themselves into pretzels and knots to try to fool Canadians, Canadians won't be fooled. We are in this situation because Conservatives are filibustering our meeting because they don't want to deal with a very serious issue around national security.

I've written down some quotes from the members opposite. Actually, Mr. Motz, who sat on NSICOP, talked about how he would be “handcuffed” and silenced if the Leader of the Opposition were to get his security clearance. However, Mr. Motz, who sat on NSICOP and who has security clearance, as do I, as we sat together on that committee, spoke for over 15 minutes. Talk about being handcuffed—he had no problem speaking for over 15 minutes about national security issues even though he's been privy to national security information and national security clearance.

That's what Conservatives are trying to suggest. They're trying to suggest, on one hand, that they deserve to know this information, but they don't want to be the ones to break the law to release it. They're saying things like “do what a leader is supposed to do”. Isn't Mr. Poilievre trying to become prime minister of this country? However, he doesn't want national security clearance. Is that leadership? Is that what Canadians expect out of a prime minister—to close their eyes to some of the most sensitive information in this country?

If Conservatives feel that this information from NSICOP should be released, Mr. Motz, release it. If not, why? Why are they silenced? It is because they understand that releasing national security information would harm Canadians, would harm agents in the field and would, frankly, be illegal. They're trying to suggest that the Prime Minister is hiding something, yet their own members would have every ability to release it if they felt that they wouldn't

be then arrested for breaking the law. They talk about a lack of strength and getting to the issues around India, which we all have agreed unanimously to support. It's incredibly important, but we can't get to it because we are in a filibuster because Conservatives don't want to act like the adults in the room.

You talk about a lack of strength. You know, it's not just previous NSICOP reports that the Leader of the Opposition, if he had his security clearance, could look at. The Leader of the Opposition could be briefed on the situation in India if he had his national security clearance, but he doesn't want to be. They send their members here to get clips to suggest that they stand up for the Sikh community, yet their leader won't even get briefed on the actual situation. They pretend to stand up for the Sikh community while not being briefed on it.

I'm curious. Andrew Scheer has met with Prime Minister Modi a number of times. What did they talk about? Perhaps Mr. Scheer should be a witness. Perhaps if the Leader of the Opposition had his national security briefing and could actually understand—

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I just want to correct the member. The Leader of the Opposition has been briefed, but she says that he hasn't.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: That's not a point of order.

The Chair: That's debate. You're on the list for debate. You can carry on in debate.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Perfect.

The Chair: Carry on, Ms. O'Connell.

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

It seems I'm hitting a nerve with the Conservatives now, hence why only they want to speak on this issue and then try to shut down the rest of the debate. They want Canadians to believe that they are the only ones looking out for their security while not getting national security clearance for their leader.

What are they hiding? What don't they want to know? Why won't they go into meetings with people like Prime Minister Modi, like Andrew Scheer has, and not stick up for Canadians? What are they hiding?

We're in this situation where we can't get to the very real work of this committee because Conservatives want to filibuster. They don't want to be leaders of strength. They don't want to be informed. They are putting party over country.

I was watching.... In the U.K., they are talking about foreign interference as well by Russia and China. I found it interesting how opposition parties spoke to the Prime Minister openly about their united commitment to stand up against foreign interference. What struck me so strongly was the fact that, in this country, Conservatives seem to be the only party that is willing to put party over country.

They don't want to have the briefings because they don't want to know the facts. They like to make wild accusations without knowing the facts. They don't want to know what's going on in their own party with members. They don't want to stand up for Canadians here at home. Instead, they want to attack for their own political advantage.

I'll remind the committee members that, when the Leader of the Opposition was the minister of democratic institutions, he was asked about foreign interference and why they did nothing. He said that it wasn't politically advantageous to do so at the time. This is a long history of the Leader of the Opposition not taking national security seriously. We now see the Sikh community being impacted by their wilful blindness.

If I'm wrong, Mr. Chair, then let's have the members of the Conservative Party stop their filibuster and let's vote. They can put their money where their mouths are. Let's vote on this and get to the India study.

If they continue to filibuster, then I think we know exactly the fake presentation they're trying to show Canadians. They're not actually standing up for the Sikh community. They're standing up for the Leader of the Opposition, so he can skirt his responsibilities to this country and so that their party can continue to pretend that it cares about national security while just putting its own political aspirations ahead of our national security. I think it's something every Canadian should see very clearly.

Let's see. Let's let them vote. Let's see where the votes lie, and let's get on with the work.

If the members oppose filibuster, that sends a very important message to the Sikh community in particular that the Conservatives will put their own political advantage over getting to the bottom of members of our community and Canadians being targeted. Conservatives don't care about that.

Let's see. It's time to vote. Let's vote, and let's see where Conservatives actually fall.

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

We'll go now to Mr. MacGregor, followed by Ms. Lantsman, Ms. May, Mr. Motz and Mr. Hallan.

Mr. MacGregor, go ahead, please.

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

Regarding the last two votes to adjourn, I'm certainly not going to let the Conservatives get off that easily, because—for Canadians who are watching the committee proceedings right now—the Conservatives are essentially running interference and defence solely for their leader. They simply do not have any justifiable reasons for this charade to go on any further. Their leader's reasoning for not getting security clearance has been thoroughly debunked by multiple national security experts.

I do believe that, given the seriousness.... This issue has come up in the past, but given the fact that we had these RCMP revelations come out on Thanksgiving Monday, I think the game has changed significantly right now. If you look at what is contained in that RCMP report—the references to very serious criminal activity on

behalf of the agents of the Indian government—I believe this is a time when we have to put our country first and when the partisan interests of our party need to come second to the interests of Canada.

I believe the interests of our country right now demand that we form a united front. That means all federal political party leaders getting the clearance necessary to receive those briefings so that they can make informed decisions within their own caucuses and so that our foreign adversaries can see, when they look at the House of Commons, that yes, we have our political differences and we fight very hard on the floor of the House on many different issues, but when it comes to an issue as serious as foreign interference, we stand united and we have a united front within which all political party leaders are getting the briefings necessary to take relevant actions.

Now I want to refute a few points that were brought up in arguments by my Conservative colleagues.

Mr. Motz earlier talked about the CSIS Act, and I want to quote Wesley Wark, who has been at this committee many times and who has been a member of both Liberal and Conservative governments as a national security adviser. He has briefed them. I just want to quote from this iPolitics article. It says:

Wark also shut down the idea previously floated by the Conservative Party that the federal government had other avenues of briefing Poilievre on critical information that don't involve a security clearance, namely invoking the "threat reduction measures" included in the CSIS Act.

"He [is] playing with the public on that one too," said Wark. "Threat reduction measures are not meant to be a tool to provide intelligence to people. They've been used as a workaround by CSIS because they don't otherwise have the authority to share intelligence."

"The important thing to understand about threat reduction measures is that they are targeted. They are not designed to provide broad information."

That directly refutes the arguments that were just made by Mr. Motz at this committee.

This is a time, I think, when the continued refusal of only one leader in the House of Commons to get security clearance is raising far more questions than is necessary, questions such as, what could possibly be holding back the Leader of the Opposition from getting it? Is he even able to get it? Are there concerns about his ability to apply? Is that why he's not making it?

The other thing that's bringing me quite a bit of levity is the fact that my Conservative colleagues love to quote Mr. Mulcair, the former leader of the NDP. I haven't spoken to Mr. Mulcair since 2017. He doesn't represent our party anymore. He is paid, I believe, by CTV, to be a political commentator. He is not a national security expert, and if he's on the air and you're quoting him as an authoritative source and you're completely ignoring the many CSIS officials who have spoken out on this measure, I think you're obviously doing the argument here a complete and total disservice.

I also want to talk about some other quotes on this particular subject. In the Hill Times, former CSIS executive Dan Stanton was also quoted. I'll read from the article:

Stanton said Poilievre deserves criticism for not getting a security clearance. He said that classified data is necessary for the Conservative leader to take action on any compromised members of his party.

He said Poilievre's explanation that his chief of staff takes briefings "is ridiculous."

"Briefing his chief of staff is pointless," said Stanton. "[He] cannot advise [Poilievre] as to the contents of the briefing. Nor can [the chief of staff] take the action a party leader can and should."

I want to also go back to the iPolitics article because there are more quotes here from Wesley Wark, who basically said that the arguments being made by the leader of the Conservatives are nonsense. Mr. Wark said:

"...the Tory leader is knowingly misleading the public by claiming he doesn't need the clearance because his chief of staff has received briefings."

"Pierre Poilievre's idea that it's sufficient for his chief of staff to be briefed for him and for his chief of staff to share that information with him is complete nonsense," Wark told iPolitics.

"And Poilievre, having been a former privy councillor and minister, knows it's nonsense."

Ward Elcock, the former director of CSIS.... I don't think you can get more authoritative than that. It says:

Both Wark and Elcock agreed that there was no reasonable justification for Poilievre not to pursue the security clearance.

I know, from conversations I had in private with the RCMP and with CSIS, that they absolutely would like it to be a fact that every single federal party leader has the necessary security clearance.

Everyone keeps on talking around this table about a "gag order" being placed on the leader. First of all, I'm not sure it's actually physically possible to place a gag on the leader—he's not a verbally challenged person—but they're missing the point completely here. This is not about what you can and cannot say. This is about actions, and the leader of each party wields an incredible amount of power in their caucuses. I mean, that has just been a trend in politics. There has been a centralizing focus of power, and in each party caucus the party leader has the ability to determine who has which parliamentary roles, who sits on which committees and, most importantly, who gets to have their nomination papers signed to run under that party's banner in the next election.

There's a huge difference between intelligence and evidence, which is why our national security experts are quite loath to have the names just released out into the ether, as there might not be room for proper judicial process. I think we have to respect those very real fears, Mr. Chair, and I'm not the one saying this: These are our national security experts, the people, the men and women who work in the field.

If a party leader were aware that there may be some compromised individuals in their caucus, this kind of clearance would allow them to take the necessary briefing to ensure the person is nowhere near sensitive parliamentary proceedings and, what's most important for Canadians so that they can have confidence in our elections, that the person does not run under their party banner.

Again, Mr. Chair, all of the arguments that were put forward by the Conservatives and by their leader have been directly refuted by men and women who are former and active members in our intelligence and security agencies. If the leader of the Conservative Party thinks he knows better than them, he should have the courage to go on the record and say so—level with Canadians—because right now it's becoming increasingly clear that this is nothing more than a partisan charade. It is meant to.... I don't know what the actual

reasoning is, but I think the Conservatives have definitely painted themselves as agents of chaos in this Parliament, and this is yet another example of it, at a time when we should be taking this extremely seriously.

I would love to get to our study on India. We have a study about Russia going on. There are all kinds of important matters that this committee needs to be seized with. It's great that we had that unanimous consent last week to get into that, but if we are serious about that, let's get to a vote and get this to the floor of the House of Commons. Maybe we can have a concurrence debate, and then the wider House can be seized with this issue and we can have a debate about what the right course of action is.

I don't think that this going on and on serves Canadians, so I urge my Conservative colleagues to stop their speaking spots and listen to the evidence that's been presented by multiple people who work in this field. Let's get on with this.

Let's show our foreign adversaries that, while we may have our political differences, on this front we stand united. We stand united in wanting all of our federal party leaders to have the security clearance and briefings necessary, so that they can take the actions within their respective caucuses to make sure that in the next election there is no candidate who might be compromised by a foreign power.

I'll leave it there, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacGregor.

We go now to Ms. Lantsman, followed by Ms. May, Mr. Motz, Mr. Hallan and Mr. Shipley.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Thank you so much.

On the heels of what I witnessed last night in the House, when Liberal member after Liberal member came to debate an emergency debate last night on this issue and spoke directly to those in many of their communities, and frankly right across the country in all of our communities, about the pain that this has caused the communities.... This is, of course, on the heels of the NDP bringing forward a motion in the House, right after question period, to set up a parliamentary committee to study interference from India as a stand-alone committee. It was actually Kevin Lamoureux who ran back to his seat and said, "No, we cannot have this."

Today, in this committee, we have members who have put forward this motion after getting complete agreement from everybody on this committee, from every party, to study the importance of interference from India. They now get this unserious motion. What the NDP has done, it has helped the Liberals again block us from doing this work. That happened the first time yesterday when Kevin Lamoureux said, "No" and blocked an actual committee of the House that could do this.

Today, we see on two occasions already that both the Liberals and the NDP have blocked this committee from doing the work it was supposed to do. We could be hearing right now from the head of the RCMP and CSIS. We could be hearing from all of these.... Hearing members of the House from every party speak to the importance of this last night, I think this has created great division in the country. It's division caused by the Prime Minister, but it's created great division between communities. The seriousness of this issue was certainly something that we saw in the House from all members.

The very fact that they said no to a committee and no to a study in the public safety committee suggests that their actions are really different from their words for every single community, not only for the Sikh community but for every single community on every single issue. Foreign interference.... We're speaking about India today, given the revelations, and the seriousness of the RCMP press conference on that holiday Monday.

However, on every single issue, it's always divide and distract, whether it's the Beijing interference that was ignored by the Prime Minister, the Chinese police stations that were found to be operating in this country or interference from the tyrannical regime in Iran, which this government refused to deal with for the better part of six years by not listing the IRGC as the terrorist organization, allowing 700 agents that we know of to intimidate communities, to raise money and to organize.

Whether it's political interference from any number of places, the Prime Minister has allowed Canada to become a playground for these activities. With every single expert, every time you read it, there's more and more that is revealed. It is revealed because of the Hogue commission, a commission that only came to existence after the Prime Minister appointed his family ski buddy to be a rapporteur and produce a Coles Notes version of a report. It was only after Conservative pressure that we now have the Hogue commission. Clearly, we found out more from the Hogue commission than we ever did from Mr. Johnston's Coles Notes on the issue.

I think that was deliberate by the government to instill a friend and somebody who would be friendly to the interests of the Liberals who have benefited from foreign interference. We know that, as well. The Hogue commission has given Canadians more interest.

What I don't understand is that everybody watching this will see that the motion on the table is a political motion. We could very well be studying this issue, but first, it was Kevin Lamoureux who said no to the committee, and now we see the Liberals and the NDP working on stopping this committee from getting the work done.

There are lots of questions you can ask today, particularly as to why The Washington Post has information that Canadians don't even have through a briefing that was sanctioned to be given by politicians in this country, by politicians in the governing party. I think Canadians have way more questions than they have answers, and I think the government has increasingly failed on this issue, and it's becoming very clear.

We saw the Prime Minister, last week particularly, at the Hogue commission. If you think it's inappropriate to name the names—which are some of the nonsense arguments we've heard from every-

one—of those who have either wittingly or unwittingly been part of foreign interference efforts in any way, then you should think that it's equally inappropriate for the Prime Minister, at the Hogue commission, to be casting aspersions, frankly, on members of Parliament, be they Conservatives or Liberals. If I were a Liberal.... I understand that there is a bit of a mutiny against him right now, and whether there are 20 or 40 people, we don't know. Certainly they can maybe apply to speak at caucus tomorrow and make it all known to the Prime Minister that they don't have confidence in him anymore.

In all of that, you should be furious with the Prime Minister. He has just put on the table, in such an inappropriate way.... He has cast aspersions on every single member of Parliament in this place, including those in his own party. He said that Liberals are involved. If you ask a few more questions and if you prod a little, he certainly didn't offer that information, but he said that. If I were serving as an MP, if I were still hoping to get into cabinet in the dying days of a Liberal government and if he had cast an aspersion about my allegiance to the country, I would be furious, but that's neither here nor there.

Let's talk about the Prime Minister's failure on the foreign interference file, frankly, more generally. It's the Hogue commission that let Canadians know.... We still don't have answers to this. Why did a CSIS warrant sit on the desk of a minister in the Liberal government for 54 days, a warrant about a Liberal power broker, which could actually have had an effect on the election of a member whom we sit in the House of Commons with? We know this is true. We know that members of parties, all parties, frankly, have been the target of this.

We had members of parties at the Hogue commission. In fact, a member from the Conservative Party testified at the Hogue commission about being targeted by a foreign government, about his family being targeted by a foreign government.

I'll go back to the Hogue commission. If the Prime Minister, who is supposed to be there and who is supposed to act with the dignity of the office, is able to say that some members are involved in this, then we want to know why he wouldn't release the names. Why not put everybody on a level playing field? Why not protect the people in his own party, who have served him loyally for nine years, hoping that things would get better in this country? Why not put their names out? If you can talk about party affiliations, and if you can talk about where they are in their careers, then certainly you could put those names out because I think that's what Canadians want to know. I'm happy to talk about this motion for as long as it takes if it means doing the responsible, accountable thing of releasing the names.

On the idea of being sworn to secrecy, I can only just give you the example of how ineffective the NDP leader has been because he's been sworn to secrecy. I can only tell you how ineffective the Green Party leader has been because she's been sworn to secrecy on this. In fact, their stories don't even match. If I were them, I would want to at least be able to tell Canadians, with regard to the foreign interference that the Prime Minister is talking about very openly in the Hogue commission, that he has actually done something about it.

We know that he did something with one member, the member for Don Valley North. We know that he no longer sits in caucus, but if the Prime Minister has evidence of others, frankly, who are engaged in foreign interference, then Canadians should ask the question of what he's actually done about it. The answer is nothing. There is a long paper trail of evidence of foreign interference in every part of our political process, whether it's in nominations or...

By the way, I know that lots of things are said in committee when you're trying to argue, but the Leader of the Opposition was briefed on this on October 14. To my NDP colleague, after the Reform Act was passed, leaders don't sign nomination papers, official agents do. I don't want to let facts get in the way of their arguments, but if you're actually going to explain to Canadians your position, then I think you should do it on a factual basis.

Here is the factual basis. This Prime Minister has used foreign interference to be the most divisive Prime Minister in the history of this country. I think that's the one clear take-away from the debate last night. We are a country divided. We are a country divided based on where you come from, when you got here, what language you speak and what your customs are. Unfortunately, it is the Prime Minister who is at the forefront of all that. He's using this issue of foreign interference to drive further division into the Canadian public.

You don't have to go very far to see it. You can see this division playing out in the streets. You can see it on the streets with the protests happening right now in almost every major city, with absolutely nothing said from the government about where that funding is coming from or whether those protests are organic. I suspect they are not. In fact, there is evidence that they are not.

I want to go back to the issue of clearance, because that's what we're discussing at the crux of this motion. I want to talk about how political parties have acquiesced to the Prime Minister's silencing them. There used to be a time—in fact, when Thomas Mulcair was the leader of the NDP—when the NDP was an actual opposition party. They took their responsibility seriously to hold the government to account. I think that was a better time for the NDP. Even he agrees. He agrees, certainly, that taking security clearance would only muzzle the Leader of the Opposition in being able to do his job.

In fact, here he is saying, “I agree completely with Poilievre's decision not to take the bait. Trudeau's been trying for a year and a half to restrain what Pierre Poilievre can do by trying to say, ‘Come and get this private briefing—and oh, by the way, then you'll be held to an official secret and you won't be able to talk about this anymore.’” Those are wise words from a once opposition leader, from when the NDP was an actual opposition.

Here's another one. According to the Prime Minister's chief of staff, it would prevent a recipient from:

...[using] the information in any manner. Even where that is not the case, briefing political parties on sensitive intelligence regarding an MP could put the leader or representative of a political party in a tough position, because any decision affecting the MP might have to be made without giving them due process.

This is right from the Prime Minister's chief of staff.

You have the former leader of the NDP—who I understand doesn't talk to some of the caucus, which is neither here nor there—when the NDP was a respectable opposition party, and you have the Prime Minister's own current chief of staff saying exactly the same thing. I guess there is still agreement.

I know that the leader of the Green Party, Ms. May, brought up some issues about how she couldn't release the names. She's right in the sense that she can't release the names, but in fact it is exactly our point that she is restricted on what she is allowed to say. I suspect that, if I were her, I'd probably be furious about the fact that you continue to see foreign interference in Canada from not only India but from more and more countries and you have to stay silent while watching the Prime Minister do nothing at all about it.

The Prime Minister—and this would make me angry too, if I were muzzled with the security clearance—has actually demonstrated that he is able to publicly communicate classified information, like he did on the matter that brought forward these charges and this study at committee. It's not that he's withholding.... I mean, it is that he's withholding information. He's withholding releasing the names.

To go back to the conversation on releasing the names, I think it's incumbent on the Prime Minister to release the names. I think it's what Canadians want to hear. In fact, I probably have the experience of many parliamentarians where, because he has thrown everybody into the same mix—whether they're Conservative or Liberal members, members of Parliament who are not there, former senators, whatever is out there—and it casts aspersions on everybody. Once in a while, you get those Canadians who believe without any evidence, because the Prime Minister put it out there, that you are somehow involved in foreign interference.

I think that it would actually benefit every single member, and certainly the members of the Liberal Party, who we know are on this list, if the Prime Minister actually just released the names. We want to see the names released of all of the times when the Prime Minister failed to act on foreign interference, when he failed to do anything about the Beijing police stations, when he failed to act on the nomination of candidates where memberships were bought and sold—this actually had an effect on who ran as an MP, potentially, or at least, as we know, who is sitting in the House of Commons right now—and when he failed to do anything about the terrorists who lurk in our midst and terrorize communities.

We heard that all. We heard that all yesterday in Parliament over last night's debate, yet we are sitting here debating the unserious part of a serious issue that affects more and more Canadians, as we see. I think that it should be known to Canadians watching this that instead of studying this issue.... Frankly, first, instead of having a committee, which the Liberals said no to yesterday, they've said no to even studying this in a committee that already exists, where a motion was passed and they got agreement from every party. That rarely happens here in the House of Commons, but because of this issue, you get agreement from every single party to study the importance of this issue. However, there was the political stunt put forward by the NDP and supported by the Liberals. The coalition is working again to stop the study of something very important.

I suspect the Liberals have an interest in stopping the Minister of Foreign Affairs from coming here and giving, probably, four or six positions in the hour that she would sit here, in stopping the Minister of Public Safety from coming to this committee and stopping representatives and the head of CSIS and the RCMP from testifying at this committee.

Instead of doing the work, we're in this motion right now. I want people to see this. I want people to see the very fact that this motion—after passing a serious motion to study the issue of Indian interference—is the thing that's holding.... The words that you hear from the government on caring about this issue, on caring about the members of the community that it affects, and the actions that we see—this is stopping the study of this.

I'm going to put forward another, because I think that we should show people at home, once again, that the Liberals and the NDP are working together to stop us from getting to the bottom of this, to stop the study by committee.

With that, Mr. Chair, I'm going to move a motion to adjourn on the motion.

The Chair: Are you moving to adjourn the debate or moving to adjourn the meeting?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: I'm moving to adjourn debate, so we can get back to the business of the study—

The Chair: That's enough.

Mr. Clerk, would you call the roll, please?

Wait a minute.

Ms. Lantsman, you're actually not subbed in for anybody on this committee at the moment, so you can't move that motion.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: I guess I'll continue talking. Perfect.

I'm sure that one of my colleagues will move that motion because they feel exactly the same way about this. This motion that we are debating, which is entirely political, stops us from doing the work we need to do.

I'm absolutely fine talking about the failures of this government on foreign interference, which we have seen play out over the last nine years.

This particular issue has, frankly, proven that the Prime Minister has failed on foreign interference. The Prime Minister, at the Hogue commission, admitted that our intelligence agencies have been gathering information on India and that it has been committing foreign interference on our soil for a number of years, yet it's clear that he did nothing to act on this.

Now, he didn't need secret clearance to be able to say any of that at the Hogue commission. He didn't need anybody else to have secret clearance when he got up in the House of Commons and gave out information about what we knew and when we knew it at the time. He certainly didn't need anybody else to have clearance. He doesn't really need clearance to be able to walk across the House of Commons—take 10 steps—to tell the Leader of the Opposition if there are members in his party...like he suggested at the Hogue commission.

Look, if the Prime Minister has nothing to hide, then I think Canadians have a very reasonable question about why he wouldn't release the names. Is it that they actually sit in his caucus or in his cabinet and he's done nothing about it?

Anyway, this all casts aspersions certainly on members of Parliament. I think it casts a greater amount of scrutiny on the Liberals, who perhaps have members of their own caucus, members of their own cabinet, perhaps committee chairs and perhaps parliamentary secretaries who have been involved in foreign interference. It's the Prime Minister who's really withholding that information from Canadians.

Going back to the foreign interference that he's done nothing on, even when the Liberals were given the opportunity to protect Canadians from extortion.... Bill C-381 was brought forward by my co-deputy leader, the great Tim Uppal, who worked hard to speak to communities right across the country about an extortion issue. I know that some Liberals didn't want to look like they were voting against the bill, so some were absent. They knew that extortion had gone up threefold, fourfold or fivefold in their communities. I get that. What I don't understand is that a party claiming to be seized with this issue would vote against an extortion bill that would put these violent offenders behind bars.

Extortion, of course, is one of the crimes that the RCMP highlighted during its press conference that happened on the matter at hand. Voting against this protection against extortion act makes very little sense. In fact, it makes very little sense that the Liberal members have not taken seriously the rise in crime in our country.

First, it was Bill C-75, which allows violent, repeat offenders out on bail, sometimes minutes or an afternoon after they commit a crime. It's Bill C-5, which allows people to serve a sentence in their basements after repeatedly stealing cars, for example. They have made this country a more dangerous place.

When presented with the opportunity to work on things like extortion, members of this government, members of the Liberal Party and members of the House of Commons decided that, no, they are not going to take this issue seriously, even though it's the one that they purportedly are taking seriously because the RCMP came out and said that it was part of the issue at hand.

The United States managed to thwart an assassination attempt on American soil by agents of the Indian government. Canada was unable to do that.

I think conversations like that would be best had with the witnesses we all agreed on for this study before this motion was brought forward. I think I speak on behalf of many on our side of things when I say it is a great shame that we are not looking at the seriousness of this issue and that we are holding the actual study hostage.

After the Liberals said no to a committee, you would think they would do something to reverse themselves, like they always do. After Kevin Lamoureux stood up in the House and said we are not having a special committee on this, he spoke to members of the Sikh community and members of all other communities and he said no, we are not having this committee. You would think the Liberals would want to at least have the study here, which was agreed upon. It is a shame.

It turns out, Mr. Chair, that this was just enough time to have me subbed in. I'm going to move the motion I did before in order for us to close off the debate on this so that we can get back to the work of committee, which the Liberals and the NDP are stopping.

The Chair: I again have a motion to adjourn the debate.

(Motion negatived: nays 6; yeas 5)

The Chair: Before we go to Ms. May, I just want to bring up a housekeeping matter. In relation to our study on Russian interference, we have a witness who has been invited in relation to the movie *Russians at War*. We have been contacted by the producers of that movie, offering to share a link to the movie for anyone who wants to watch it.

Now we, as the committee, can't distribute it because it's only in one language, so if you wish to receive that link, please advise the clerk. He will share your email with the producers and, presumably, the producer can send you the link.

Anyway, that's my intervention.

We'll go now to Ms. May. Go ahead, please.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to all members of the committee.

I hope we will be able to proceed with a number of critical issues. Ultimately, the most serious issue that I think I've faced as a member of Parliament is the notion of evidence from the RCMP that a foreign government has committed criminal acts on Canadian soil, including homicides, and that they particularly target one community, the South Asian community, within Canada.

I am going to try, Mr. Chair, to be as concise as possible. I can't say my name was taken in vain, because it's always an honour to be called out for being ineffective by the deputy leader of the Conservative Party. I want to correct the record where I need to, but I will try to keep my comments fairly limited.

I share with Ms. Lantsman a sense that it was unfortunate that last night's emergency debate was unnecessarily.... Well, who can use the word "necessary" in terms of the hyperpartisanship we hear in Parliament? However, to the extent that she mentioned that all parties got to speak, I did get to ask questions but I didn't get a speaking slot.

However, I regret that in last night's debate, not all members.... I have to say that Ruby Sahota's speech was excellent on behalf of Brampton North. There was an awful lot more partisanship than is appropriate, I think, when we're talking about an issue as grave as the emergency debate on the actions that the RCMP has alleged the

Indian government has coordinated against Canadians on Canadian soil.

To the extent that last night's debate may have been characterized as bringing more heat than light, in the time I have right now, Mr. Chair, I'm going to try to do the opposite and bring more light than heat.

I'm going to start with the comments from Ms. Lantsman, just because I think it's important to remember that words matter and respect matters. When we're dealing with issues that are obviously bringing a great deal of emotion to the floor, Canadians want to see us speak respectfully of each other and of other Canadians.

In reference to the former governor general, the Right Honourable David Johnston, being referred to by Ms. Lantsman as a "family ski buddy" of the Prime Minister, I just want to remind everyone that when David Johnston was appointed Governor General of Canada, that decision was made by a former prime minister, the Right Honourable Stephen Harper.

The decision and the appointment process for David Johnston as Governor General was, at the time—and I recall it well—in 2010, extolled by many because Stephen Harper made the decision to have an expert advisory panel to keep politics out of it and to appoint an eminent Canadian to the role of Governor General.

Because I respect and admire David Johnston a great deal, even though I did vote that the special rapporteur role was not working and that he should resign, I had a hard time with that vote because of the depth of, I'll admit, my deep personal affection and respect for David Johnston. However, as former governor general, he should not be referred to, in any parliamentary proceeding, as a "family ski buddy". David Johnston served this country with extraordinary commitment and dedication, as did his wife, during the time he was Governor General, and he continues to do so.

As his role of special rapporteur has a direct bearing on the motion before us from my colleague from Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, who happens to also be my neighbour on Vancouver Island in Saanich—Gulf Islands, there's no question that leaders of opposition parties have never before had the right or the opportunity to ask for top secret security clearance. That opportunity was only created when David Johnston filed his report, which was not a "Coles Notes" summary but an effort to open up, for more Canadians, access to top secret information to understand the extent of foreign interference in our election process.

In his initial report, David Johnston said there are top secret security documents he had read that he thought should be available to leaders of opposition parties if they were able to obtain top secret security clearance. I took that opportunity as quickly as possible, so I had my top secret security clearance in the summer of 2023.

It's important for all leaders to have that, such that we can talk to each other without worrying that we're going to betray or violate what used to be called the "Official Secrets Act" but is now the Security of Information Act.

Again, I want to go to “words matter and respect matters” and continue along with that. Just to respond to one of the other people Ms. Lantsman mentioned, having denigrated our former governor general, she praises to the skies Mr. Mulcair. I also have a lot of respect for Mr. Mulcair, but his track record on “words matter and respect matters” isn't great.

Back in 2005, the Quebec court found—and Mr. Justice Denis' decision was really hard to read—that if you want to respect an individual in public life.... I'm sure Mr. Mulcair would rather that he had not defamed a former member of the Parti Québécois cabinet, Mr. Duhaime. It was found by Mr. Justice Denis that Mr. Mulcair used language that was imprudent, false, defamatory, malicious and a number of other adjectives. That was unfortunate. It was lucky for Mr. Mulcair that Quebec taxpayers paid the \$95,000 judgment against him for having defamed a former member of the Quebec cabinet.

Moving on from there, I wanted to speak to some of the points that really show, again, that what language we use really matters here. This goes to some of the points made by my friend, Ms. Dancho from Kildonan—St. Paul.

I want to start with a bit of a short preamble. In Debate, we've thrown around members of all parties, and I'm not trying to find fault with anyone for using language that's imprecise. It's easy to use language that's imprecise. We've variously referred to “receiving briefings” or “taking an oath”. I prefer to say that, when you have top secret security clearance, you have access to read top secret security documents yourself.

Now, to that extent, are you then muzzled? No. You can reflect; you can share, as I've tried to do.

Ms. Dancho was working from memory, and believe me, Raquel, I'm not saying a single thing in criticism of how you recalled what I'd said in press conferences. It was months ago, and I know it was your best effort to recall what I'd said. However, I never said there were no worries about what occurred in Parliament.

The committee report is called the NSICOP report. It's always a hard acronym to say, but it's the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians. I read the unredacted version, so I read the secret report. We know from that report that there was, in the language used by the parliamentarians, “witting” and “semi-witting” participation by people who might be sitting members of Parliament.

It led to a great deal of speculation, and I was worried that the atmosphere began to approach a witch hunt, asking if there were traitors among us. I didn't say that there were no worries. I think foreign interference is a significant worry. I think we need to pay a lot of attention to it, and that's why I continue to urge Mr. Poilievre to get his top secret security clearance, because we need to be a united front as Canadian parliamentarians.

We need to put Canada first and be able to let any any foreign interest—foreign government or non-state actor—that thinks it could interfere with Canadian democracy or, worse, commit criminal acts on Canadian soil, know that they will not find any daylight between us as leaders, that we stand together to say that there's no room here for foreign interference.

Where we have soft underbelly spots in how our own political parties may operate, we need to tighten those up. We need to make sure that we pay attention to the two places that were found to have the greatest vulnerabilities—nomination races and leadership races. Those we could clean up. On those, we could stand together.

Back to some of the comments Ms. Dancho made, I didn't say there were no worries. I want to repeat what I said, so that it's clear because people variously said that I changed my story in some way. I have not. I am not muzzled. What I am is keenly aware that I can talk about what I've read as long as I don't violate the Security of Information Act.

Violating the Security of Information Act is an offence for which you can be jailed. More than that, and I have explained this before, not all information you read runs the same risks to our security establishment.

As a Five Eyes partner, I certainly don't want Canadian security to be viewed as lax such that other Five Eyes partners don't want to share information with us. That's why I completely agree with the findings of our former governor general David Johnston that it is significant, worrying and unacceptable that anyone within our security establishment shared confidential and, in fact, privileged, top secret information with journalists. That puts our security establishment in a position of being less trustworthy to other Five Eyes partners.

I do think that David Johnston's report as special rapporteur was absolutely correct in that. That's not because I want to muzzle people or act out of partisan interest, but we have to ensure that, down the line, those who have access to information that is top secret and protected by the Security of Information Act do not feel that they can put.... Let's be clear. The Globe and Mail reporter Bob Fife, who has a great reputation for good reason, can't be on the speed dial of CSIS agents.

We have another question today, which has just come up, about The Washington Post. I'll turn to that in a moment, because I think it's important and needs to be investigated, but this isn't about muzzling people. This is about parliamentarians who have taken an oath of loyalty to Canada. That includes the Constitution of Canada and the laws of Canada. You don't go around recklessly violating the Security of Information Act.

Just to correct the record, I never had to check anything with the RCMP before I spoke. When you sit down to read a top secret security document, you're not allowed to take notes. You're not allowed to bring any electronic devices in the room with you. You should have to rely on your own mind and your own ability to assess information, to read and to remember what you've read. I went in to read the top secret, security-cleared document, which was the unredacted report of our parliamentary committee that included members of the Liberal, New Democrat, Conservative and Bloc parties as well as independent senators, the NSICOP committee chaired by David McGuinty.

When I went in to read that, there was, again, no pen, no cell-phone and no electronic devices of any kind. They're under lock and key outside the room, and the room is windowless so no one can train a telephoto lens on what you're reading from another building across the street. I had no staff, none of my staff. The Privy Council Office had someone there to keep an eye on me as I read. The only thing I was allowed to bring in with me was the redacted public version of the committee's report so that I could cross-reference back and forth and see that the redacted version on page 32, paragraph 72 has had a significant deletion where it refers to allegations of Indian government interference in the Conservative Party leadership race. I said, "Okay, let me read what it says where it's not redacted". That was the only point of reference.

Before I made any public comments, I felt it was incumbent on me as someone with top secret security clearance, to the extent that it was legal for me to do so, not to be muzzled. Quite the contrary, to be able to be certain that I was absolutely not exposing any of our security assets to any risk, I asked experts in security, "Is it okay if I say that, having read this report, I don't think there's any allegation, intelligence or evidence of proactive efforts by any currently sitting member of Parliament in the House of Commons to betray Canada in the interest of another country, that nobody here is a traitor?" That's what I asked. I stand by that.

We do know that there was a former member of Parliament. I think we should have an investigation of that individual.

Again, Alistair MacGregor made this point recently in this committee. I guess it was last Friday. It's really important. There's a distinction between intelligence and evidence, to the extent that you can have a security operative somewhere around the world who says, "We've heard blah blah blah", but "blah blah blah" doesn't become evidence against an individual unless it's tested in court and is actually pursued and is actually researched.

It becomes intelligence that's worth knowing, but I was very clearly warned by the officials in the security establishment before I gave a press conference, "If you say this part of the report out loud, it may look innocuous to you to share that, but don't share it, because it could expose one of our intelligence assets to potentially being killed." I took it very seriously to avoid saying anything that violated the Security of Information Act.

I don't think that means I'm muzzled. Again, I urge Mr. Poilievre to ask for—you don't get it as a right and you go through quite a process—top secret security clearance, with the goal that all of us, as federal party leaders from parties that have loads of differences with each other.... However, as individuals, we're Canadians first

and political party leaders second. If we were able to be on a level playing field, where we all have top secret security clearance, we could meet in one of those windowless rooms with nothing but other people with top secret security clearance. We could actually have an honest discussion about what we do to demonstrate to the rest of the world and to all Canadians that we are a unified front—no daylight between us—in our commitment to end foreign interference in Canada and in our elections. That's what Madam Justice Hogue's inquiry mandate covers.

In this extremely serious set of allegations that the RCMP has uncovered a criminal network operating within Canada and taking instructions from another government and threatening.... In fact, having already experienced homicides in Canada, which are being investigated by the RCMP, this could not be more serious. To the extent that it's fallen into a partisan debate, that's unfortunate, but that's Mr. Poilievre's fault. He's the only one who can ask for his own top secret security clearance so that this will cease to be a political football. I say that knowing that my comment will be seen as partisan by my friends in the Conservative Party from Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner and from Kildonan—St. Paul.

God knows, I think of you guys as my friends. I'm trying to be as fair and honest as I can here. I beg of you that Mr. Poilievre be encouraged by his own caucus to ask for top secret security clearance. I wrote to him back in June and asked him to do so. He has yet to reply to my letter. That's okay, and I know he's busy, but it's important that we're all on the same page and able to deal with this.

I would just like to say that I completely support the motion before you. I would vote for it if I were a member of committee and able to vote for this.

If we can create a Canada-India special committee, which I do support, I would like to ask other colleagues around this table to urge their parties to allow the Green Party to have a seat in that committee. I think we could be useful. We work hard and, as I've said, we try to bring more light than heat.

I was really pleased last night—I think it was at one minute to midnight—when the foreign affairs critic for the New Democratic Party, the honourable member for Edmonton Strathcona, said that she would support allowing a Green Party member of Parliament to have a seat on a committee. I do hope that we'll get established. I hope that whatever party said no.... I wasn't in a position to see who said no to the unanimous consent motion, so I won't speak to that because I don't have direct knowledge. In any case, for whoever said no, next time around, just let UC take place, but please rewrite the motion so that there's a seat on that committee for a Green Party MP.

Lastly, I want to refer to the allegations that we started this discussion with this morning, the allegations in today's Globe and Mail.

I'm not comfortable at all with the idea that Nathalie Drouin or the deputy minister of Global Affairs Canada would have shared information with The Washington Post before Canadians knew that information. I do note that representatives and spokespeople for both our national security adviser and the deputy minister of Global Affairs Canada have denied that they gave briefings to The Washington Post. I do note that the story in The Washington Post for October 18 falls some days after, of course, October 14 when the RCMP did a press conference. I do know that, in the briefing I received from Madam Drouin and also from the new head of CSIS, Mr. Rogers, on October 16, I did ask specifically whether the leader of the official opposition got this briefing. They said yes but that they were unable to share as many details with him as they had just shared with me because he doesn't have his top secret security clearance. I think it's very important.

Again, I support this motion by Alistair MacGregor. I think it's very important that we all encourage Mr. Poilievre to get his top secret security clearance because, otherwise, it leaves a cloud over the question of how much foreign interference there was in the Conservative Party's leadership race.

When the committee gets back to the business of the discussion on the motion to have a significant study calling before this committee as witnesses many of the people whose names I've just mentioned, I do hope that the question of this allegation that someone with security clearance sent information to a reporter.... That needs to be investigated because we, as a country, can't be respected in the world that takes intelligence and information shared with intelligence agencies from other countries.... They need to know that top secret information obtained through the work of intelligence assets around the world is protected. Otherwise, we could find ourselves frozen out of key information that we do need. I don't think there's anything more serious than this. I mean, obviously, I think climate change is a serious threat, imminently.

However, our obligation as parliamentarians is to ensure that Canadian laws are respected, and that includes respect for the Security of Information Act.

Again, I don't feel muzzled. Melissa, I don't feel angry or upset or any of the words you used. I'm honoured to be able to play a role that I hope is helpful to Canadians in saying what I can talk about, what I can't talk about and why. None of the reasons put forward by Mr. Poilievre so far have impressed experts like Wesley Wark or Mr. Fadden. They don't make sense. Asking for top secret security clearance, an opportunity we would not have had but for the report of David Johnston—back to where I started—is at this point an obligation of Mr. Poilievre. I don't think it's a choice. I believe he is duty bound to pursue that so that we can unify as political leadership in this country, regardless of how much we may disagree on other points.

As Canadians, we must be unified in shutting out any foreign interference in our electoral processes, but even more so in the day-to-day lives of Canadians who must not be subjected to extortions, threats or actual experiences of physical violence, including death. This is no place for partisan politics.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. May.

We have overrun our time slot at the moment. I'm going to ask if the committee is in agreement to adjourn.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: We are adjourned.

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