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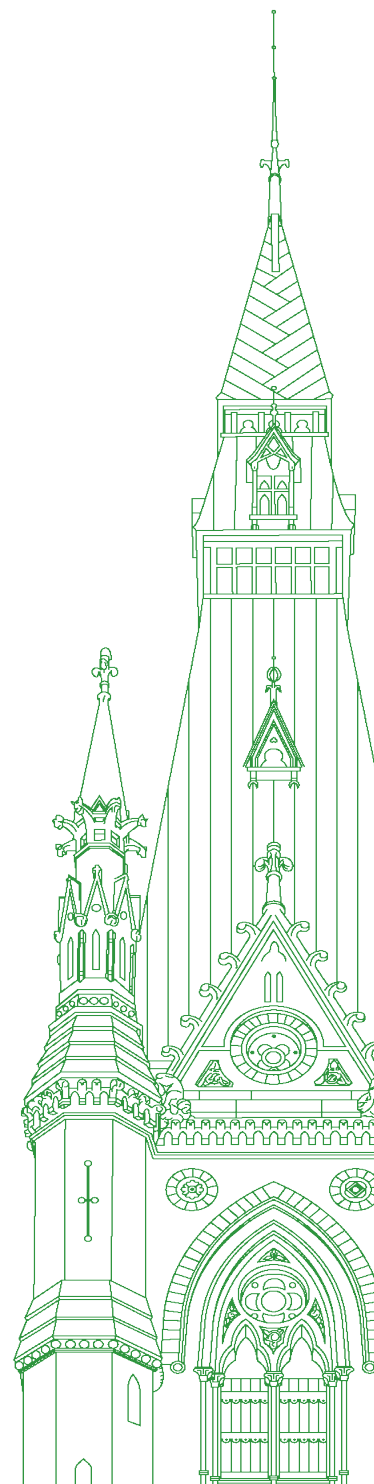
House of Commons Debates

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Thursday, May 4, 2023

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, May 4, 2023

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)
[English]

CANADIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table, in both official languages, the 2022 CSIS public report, as required pursuant to subsection 20.2(1) of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act. The report stands referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

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GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to five petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, in relation to Bill C-35, an act respecting early learning and child care in Canada. The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 16th report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, in relation to Bill C-281, an act to amend the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act, the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, the Broadcasting Act and the

Prohibiting Cluster Munitions Act. The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

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PETITIONS

SENIORS

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for your home, my home and our home, let us bring it home.

There are 127,000 Canadians who are dual citizens of the U.K. Every single year, their pensions are not indexed in the U.K. Therefore, petitioners in Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon and across Canada are calling upon the Government of Canada to consider those pensions in its negotiations with the British government for a new free trade deal.

EARTHQUAKE IN SYRIA

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present petition e-4340. It was signed by 913 Canadians, and they call our attention to the devastating earthquakes that occurred in February in Syria and Turkey. The earthquakes left thousands of people dead, injured or without homes and destroyed critical infrastructure.

The petitioners point to the urgent need for aid, and there has been a call by international human rights and humanitarian organizations and faith groups to remove sanctions so that needed assistance can reach all areas of Syria. The petitioners call on the government to reconsider its economic sanctions on Syria so aid can reach those who badly need it.

* * *

• (1005)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand at this time, please.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*Business of Supply***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

OPPOSITION MOTION—INTERFERENCE BY THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC) moved:

That, given that intimidation tactics of the People's Republic of China are being deployed against many Canadians of Chinese descent in diaspora communities across the country, which are widely reported and well established through the House of Commons' committee testimony and reports by Canada's security establishment, including reports indicating that families of members of Parliament are subjected to an intimidation campaign orchestrated out of Beijing's consulate in Toronto, the House call on the government to stop delaying and immediately:

- (a) create a foreign agent registry similar to Australia and the United States of America;
- (b) establish a national public inquiry on the matter of foreign election interference;
- (c) close down the People's Republic of China run police stations operating in Canada; and
- (d) expel all of the People's Republic of China diplomats responsible for and involved in these affronts to Canadian democracy.

He said: I rise to speak on our Conservative motion calling on the government to finally stand up to Beijing's interference in our democracy and our sovereignty.

This motion could not be more timely. On May 1, *The Globe and Mail* revealed that, in a CSIS report, it is stated that Beijing “sees Canada as a ‘high-priority target’” and that Beijing is the “‘foremost perpetrator’ of foreign interference in Canada.” The same CSIS report states that Beijing agents are completely “unconcerned about repercussions” in Canada. It is no wonder. When it comes to Beijing's interference, the Liberal government's response has been one of weakness, incompetence and inaction.

Under the Prime Minister's watch, Beijing has interfered in two federal elections. Beijing has set up illegal police stations to harass and intimidate Chinese Canadians. This week, we learned that a Beijing diplomat working at Beijing's Toronto consulate arranged to sanction and punish family members, in Hong Kong, of a sitting member of Parliament because that member voted in this place to stand up against Beijing's human rights violations. In other words, Beijing attempted to intimidate a sitting member of the House, a duly elected member. It attempted to interfere with that member's ability to do his job, which is to stand and vote in this place on behalf of his constituents and of Canadians, free from Beijing's coercion. This is about as serious as it gets.

I will be splitting my time with the member for Calgary Midnapore.

It is well documented that Beijing diplomats who are accredited here in Canada have been extensively involved in all these foreign interference activities. However, in the face of that, as well as substantial evidence, not one single Beijing diplomat has been expelled by the government. The government has pathetically cited the Vienna Convention as a basis upon which not to expel these diplomats. This is incredible, because article 9 of the Vienna Convention gives this government unfettered discretion to expel any diplomat at any time without having to provide a reason. Therefore, the govern-

ment's excuse for its failure and refusal to expel Beijing diplomats is no excuse at all. The government has been so weak that, for two years, it has known the name of the Beijing diplomat who arranged to punish the family of a sitting member of Parliament. That diplomat continues to work at Beijing's Toronto consulate.

Instead of doing what they should have done, which is to immediately expel that diplomat, the response of the government was to turn a blind eye, to effectively give the green light to this Beijing thug. Even worse, the government attempted to cover it up. The only reason Canadians know of this shocking incident is because of the May 1 report in *The Globe and Mail*. The government did not even have the courtesy to inform the sitting member whose family was in harm's way. That is truly disgusting behaviour on the part of the government.

● (1010)

The Prime Minister has been caught covering up for Beijing once again. It is time for him to stand up to Beijing for once and do the right thing. He should send that diplomat packing today.

It is truly alarming that, under the Liberal government's watch, the Beijing regime has operated at least eight illegal police stations. These police stations have been set up by the Beijing regime to monitor, track, harass and intimidate Chinese Canadian citizens. They have facilitated the forced repatriation of persons to China. Violations of human rights are taking place at these black sites. Not only are these police stations illegal, but they are also a violation of our sovereignty and international law. Even though it has been months since the first police station was discovered, not a single diplomat has been expelled, no arrests have been made and no charges have been laid.

The Minister of Public Safety came before the procedure and House affairs committee last week. He repeatedly stated that the RCMP had shut down the illegal police stations. The Minister of Public Safety repeatedly told the committee something he knew, at the time, not to be true.

That is not the first time this has happened for the Minister of Public Safety. As it turns out, at least two of these illegal police stations are operating in Montreal, and the RCMP has taken no action to shut them down. Therefore, what we saw at the procedure and House affairs committee from the Minister of Public Safety is another example of the government failing to act. It is another example of a minister, on behalf of the government, seeking to mislead Canadians about the failures of the government. This is all to the detriment of the safety and security of Chinese Canadian citizens in particular.

Then there is the failure of the government to protect the sanctity of our elections from Beijing's interference. It is now well established that the Prime Minister has been repeatedly briefed about Beijing's vast campaign of interference in the 2019 and 2021 elections. The Prime Minister was briefed as early as February 2020 that Beijing's Toronto consulate coordinated a campaign involving 11 candidates and the clandestine transfer of funds.

The advice that CSIS provided the Prime Minister was that the policy of the government, when it comes to foreign interference, should be grounded in sunlight and transparency. However, the Prime Minister's response has been anything but transparent. He kept Canadians in the dark, and when this interference became known, he downplayed it. He used carefully crafted language, and he misled Canadians about what he knew. One can only conclude that it was because that interference benefited the Liberal Party; he was content to let it happen.

When it comes to standing up for our safety, security and democracy in the face of Beijing's interference, the Prime Minister and the government are completely unfit for office.

• (1015)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am shocked that the Leader of the Opposition, who is making such a big deal of this, or the member who is supposedly affected by this, is not the one leading off the discussion today. Nonetheless, my question for the member is this. I will start with a statement of fact—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Supposedly affected?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. It is not the proper time for the hon. member to be yelling across the way when I have not recognized him.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I will start with a statement of fact. The Prime Minister first heard about this incident earlier this week, when it was reported in the media, as did everybody else. The member for Wellington—Halton Hills had a defence briefing on this two years ago, so he knew about this when it actually happened.

My question for the member is this. When did he find out about it? Did the member for Wellington—Halton Hills bring it to his attention at any time prior to the media doing so?

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, yesterday in the House, I asked the Minister of Public Safety twice, as did other members, when his office learned of this, and he refused to answer.

I learned about it in *The Globe and Mail*, but CSIS told the committee that it most definitely briefs the government about instances when politicians are targeted by hostile foreign governments. Therefore, it is simply not credible for the government to claim that it found out about it from *The Globe and Mail*. The minister's office knew about it two years ago. That is why he will not say when his office learned of it, because it has been two years and the Liberals did nothing.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from St. Albert—Edmonton for his speech. Clearly we are in for quite a debate today. I encourage members to focus on the matter at hand, which is an extremely serious one, rather than trying to silence the member opposite.

Business of Supply

My colleague painted a clear picture of the crisis we are in and the importance of holding an independent public inquiry.

However, I would have liked to hear him say more about what the Prime Minister has done since the beginning of this crisis to protect his image. For example, he has dropped the names of various friends—people like Mr. Rosenberg and Mr. Johnston, who have close ties to the Trudeau Foundation—in an attempt to cool things down and convince us that someone is handling the problem. Because of that, people are wondering whether the Prime Minister is protecting Canadians and democracy or whether he is protecting the Trudeau Foundation.

I would like my colleague to tell us more about that.

• (1020)

[English]

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, it is no coincidence that the Prime Minister appointed Rosenberg, the past president of the Trudeau Foundation, to investigate the 2021 election, an election in which Beijing interfered to assist the Liberals in winning a re-election. It is no coincidence. As far as the appointment of a special rapporteur is concerned, it is no coincidence that he appointed a member of the Trudeau Foundation. A special rapporteur is nothing more than an attempt by the Prime Minister to appoint his friends to provide delays so he can cover up this interference in the hope that it goes away. Guess what? It is not. Canadians are demanding answers and in order to get them we need a public inquiry and we need it now.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, the NDP agrees. There is no question that there needs to be a public inquiry, one that is completely independent and transparent. To that end, my question for the member is this. What does he think is necessary in order to ensure the process is one that all parties could agree to? For example, would the commissioner be chosen with the participation of all leaders in the House to make sure that it is something that we believe will be completely independent?

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, if a public inquiry is to have any credibility, whoever leads that inquiry must not only be independent but also must be seen to be independent, which is why Conservatives, along with all of the opposition parties, have called on the Liberal government to establish a process whereby the House leaders of all the parties agree and consent to whoever is appointed to lead such an inquiry. First, however, we need an inquiry.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, in 2002, I accepted an invitation to join the Canadian foreign service. My motivation was to serve the country I loved and to promote the values of freedom, the rule of law and democracy. My guiding document was the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, a document revered by all nations, a universally codified agreement. The statutes within it allow the nations to conduct their diplomatic functions in a safe and mutually agreed-upon manner. To operate within it meant security, fidelity and continuity of business abroad. For me, to violate it was unthinkable. To honour it meant safe care of citizens, both at home and abroad.

Business of Supply

In 2018, I was asked to serve as shadow minister for democratic institutions. My pleas to the then minister of democratic institutions, now Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, to protect our democracy at all costs fell on deaf ears. I am particularly offended that our current leader is accused of having done nothing, when she held the pen leading up to the 2019 and subsequent 2021 elections.

In 2018, I questioned the Prime Minister in the House, and the minister responded. I asked:

Mr. Speaker, in response to a question in New York this week, the Prime Minister admitted to knowing that foreign money had influenced the 2015 federal election. Bill C-76 was supposed to close the loopholes in the election legislation, but it does nothing to stop foreign money from influencing our elections.

When is the Prime Minister going to take this issue seriously and stop foreign interests from influencing our elections?

The minister replied:

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. It is vital that everyone in the House work together to avoid and prevent foreign influence and interference in our elections.

I am excited to work with everyone in the House to make sure we pass Bill C-76. In Bill C-76 are tangible measures to ensure we can prevent foreign interference. I hope my colleagues on the other side will work with us to get this legislation passed quickly to ensure that our next elections are protected.

In addition to the toothless Bill C-76, the then minister gloated about the creation and implementation of the critical election incident protocol, a government body composed of five senior civil servants who all reported to the Liberal government. Be it incompetence or intention, the Liberal minister also failed, along with the Prime Minister, to keep Canadians safe and to protect our democratic institutions, but she refused to believe otherwise.

Nonetheless, here we are today, with revelations of significant interference in the 2019 and 2021 federal elections by the People's Republic of China, reports of money being funnelled to candidates and Canadians being intimidated. Canada's election law is very clear: "No person who does not reside in Canada shall, during an election period, in any way induce electors to vote or refrain from voting or vote or refrain from voting for a particular candidate".

The Prime Minister continues to avoid questions and dismisses concerns as ill-informed or even racist. When questioned by the official opposition in November, he stated that he was never briefed on election candidates receiving money from Beijing. This was even while Global News was reporting that intelligence memos had been given to the Prime Minister months before, outlining how Beijing's consulate directed the funnelling of a large sum of money to 11 candidates in the 2019 election. When the former head of CSIS called for a public inquiry into election interference, the Prime Minister labelled that suggestion as undermining democracy. As well, after Global News alleged, in late February, that the member for Don Valley North was aided in 2019 by the Chinese consulate in Toronto, the Prime Minister dismissed questions about the situation, coming close to accusing the media of racism for even daring to ask about it, and to accusing those who were trying to get to the truth of damaging confidence in Canada's democratic institutions.

• (1025)

Most recently, a report published by The Globe and Mail on May 1 made the claim that CSIS documents from 2021 state that China

sees Canada as a prime target for interference. It also states that the member of Parliament for Wellington—Halton Hills's family was targeted by Chinese diplomat Zhao Wei. The diplomat faced no repercussions, and the member was not made aware until the Globe and Mail story two years later. This is why Conservatives, the final defenders of freedom in this nation, have presented this motion here today.

I will now discuss each part in more detail. The motion states, "(a) create a foreign agent registry similar to Australia and the United States of America". We have had, on this side of the House, a member bring legislation to the House, only to have it defeated by the current government, and now we see why. In 2019, the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke brought similar legislation to the House, and it was voted down by the current government. The irony of other nations' having implemented such registries is that, in June 2018, the government announced, at the G7 Charlevoix summit, that it would lead on the commitment by G7 leaders with respect to the protection of democracy, by playing and coordinating a leadership function for the broader G7 network. Most recently, we have seen the Liberal member for Nepean refute the necessity of such a registry. Given the discoveries over the last few weeks, we can see why.

The motion continues with "(b) establish a national public inquiry on the matter of foreign election interference". All parties except the government, including its coalition partners from the NDP, are calling for this clause, yet we have learned that the government will kick and scream to avoid transparency, and, even when this is brought to pass by the House with opposition parties in agreement, will refuse to comply to provide information.

The motion then states, "(c) close down the People's Republic of China run police stations operating in Canada". I am sure that Canadians were in disbelief that police stations, not only from another nation but from a nation that has no regard for human rights or the rule of law, were operating within our borders, and that, in fact, the Minister of Public Safety gave us the assurance that all of these stations had been closed, yet we found out on May 1 that these continue to operate in Quebec.

Part (d) of the motion is to “expel all of the People's Republic of China diplomats responsible for and involved in these affronts to Canadian democracy.” The 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations is a cornerstone of modern international relations and international law. It states that the host nation at any time and for any reason can declare a diplomatic staff member to be *persona non grata*. It further states that the sending state, in that case, must recall this person within a reasonable period of time; otherwise, this person may lose their diplomatic immunity.

This is something that should have happened by now, yet the Prime Minister and the government have failed to do so for this individual. If the member for Wellington—Halton Hills is not safe, how do we know that all members of the House and their families are safe? The Vienna Convention is about honour, and so, I thought, is the House. However, in the words of the great author Lord Jeffrey Archer, there is no honour among thieves. The government should recognize the reprehensible violation of diplomatic immunity and declare Zhao Wei *persona non grata*.

As a former diplomat for Canada, my desire for freedom, democracy and the rule of law will never be hampered, not even by the current government. It is the *raison d'être* for my being here in the House of Commons and it is why I stand in support of the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. The Conservative Party will never back down from those who attempt to impede the fundamental freedoms of Canadians: truth, freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. If other members believe in those as well, they will support this legislation.

• (1030)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, unlike the Conservative Party, this government truly believes in doing what it can to combat foreign interference and intimidation. It is very interesting how the Conservatives, on the other hand, play politics with the issue. It is important that Canadians who follow the debate today realize that CSIS is the deciding authority as to when and how things are brought up.

The Prime Minister found out on Monday. The Prime Minister then followed up by saying that he wanted to have updates on the issue whenever MPs were brought to the attention of CSIS. The member for Wellington—Halton Hills has known for two years. The question is whether that member has brought it up with the member for Calgary Midnapore or any member of the Conservative caucus. Has he brought it up inside the chamber? Has he done anything on the issue? Why has the member—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I again want to remind members, especially those who have already had an opportunity to make a speech, to wait until it is questions and comments, if they wish to try to be recognized for input.

The hon. member for Calgary Midnapore.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, it is very clear that Canadians cannot have confidence in the government to protect democracy. They cannot have confidence in the government to protect our democratic institutions. They cannot have confidence in the

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government to protect the members in the House, their families and their loved ones abroad. We will take no lessons from the government. It had its opportunity leading up to 2019, and it failed.

• (1035)

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I like the subject of our Conservative colleagues' opposition day today. Their motion includes a number of the Bloc Québécois's concerns.

I listened carefully to my colleague's speech, and I heard her concerns. I would say that almost everyone on the opposition benches shares those concerns.

However, I am also concerned about the entire situation. I would like to hear the member's thoughts on Alexandre Trudeau's appearance before the committee yesterday. His arrogant attitude seems to be a family trait. He even accused the press of poor journalism. That is a big deal. He also accused the foundation's former CEO of spreading misinformation to sway the debate, no less. I am very confused and very concerned about this situation.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about that.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, the official opposition is also really confused, because we found out about the foreign interference and about what was happening to the member from Wellington—Halton Hills in the news.

We agree with what the member said. What has come out in the media is really important for our democracy and it affects all Canadians, members of the House and the government. It is really unbelievable. I am asking myself the same question as my colleague.

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, as a New Democrat, I am concerned about foreign election interference. We were the first party to suggest a public inquiry. However, I have two concerns, and the member's speech raises both of them for me.

One is that if we turn this into a bitter partisan issue, we actually will be doing the work of the foreign agents who seek to disrupt our democracy instead of working to solve the problem. The second one is that if we exclusively focus on China, we will miss other attempts to interfere in our democracy, including things like the convoy that the member supported, where a million dollars flowed from the U.S. to try to overthrow the government here.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: What a clown.

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Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I know it is the end of the season, but calling people “clowns” across the way and things like that, there needs to be limits here.

There is nobody in the House pretty much right now. We are on duty and in the middle of debate. What we are debating right now is really serious. We are talking about threats to democracy. When we behave like this in the House, when we are talking about protecting our democracy, protecting democratic institutions, it really troubles me, because I am concerned about the state of our democracy.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I appreciate the feedback that the hon. member has provided. I am not sure who may have called somebody that name, but I would remind members that we are to be respectful here. On a number of occasions, we have raised the issue that calling people names in the House of Commons is not acceptable, so I would ask individuals to be respectful.

The hon. member for Calgary Midnapore, a brief answer please.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, I simply have to refute the facts within that question. The truth of the matter is that the member stands in a coalition with the government that is impeding Canadians from their families, and that is giving it cover-up and not keeping members and their families safe. The member is complicit with that, and he should think about that.

• (1040)

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, given all of the conversations that have been happening this morning, I want to begin by being very clear. On this side of the House, our government has zero tolerance for foreign interference. We take any attempt to undermine our democracy seriously, and we will continue to take all the actions that are necessary to protect our institutions. This is not a partisan issue, and it should not be a partisan issue. It is a matter of upholding Canadians' confidence in our democracy.

Foreign interference, as we know, is not solely a Canadian issue. Hostile state actors are targeting western democracies, whether it is Australia, the United Kingdom, France, the United States or other allies. These hostile state actors continue to do so at a rate we have not seen since the Cold War. They are working to sow distrust in our institutions, and it is very important for Canadians to see that every single member of the House is united in our actions against hostile foreign actors.

Our government has already done more than any other government in the history of our country to put a stop to foreign interference. We are committed to working across the government and with all who are interested in working with us to bolster our institutions, to improve our systems and to create the tools that are required to fight and deter foreign interference.

The Leader of the Opposition has made it clear that he is not here to play a constructive role or to work across party lines to fight foreign interference, and that is his choice. If members opposite choose to polarize situations and score cheap political points on the back of a serious situation, that is their choice. That is not how we choose to do things.

Foreign interference is a topic that requires constant vigilance and the participation, collaboration and co-operation of governments around the world, but, most important, all members of the House. In today's uncertain and unstable global climate, I believe very strongly that it is an issue that demands the types of conversations we are having now, so long as those conversations are grounded in fact and that we choose to work toward solutions, and we know Canadians feel the same way. Canadians share this concern.

Let me be clear about one thing above all else. It is Canadians and Canadians alone who decide the outcome of our elections, and we will ensure it stays that way. We have the systems and processes, the checks and balances that protect the foundations of our democracy. As I said before, we are committed to working across the government to improve and create the tools that are required to fight and deter foreign interference.

Canadians want reassurance that they will not be targeted directly. That also means members of Parliament. We will do all that we can as parliamentarians, and we should do all we can, to stay ahead of the threats to our safety.

Malicious interference undermines Canada's democratic institutions and public discourse. It is also used to intimidate and coerce diaspora communities in our country.

Part of what hostile state actors are trying to do is to shift the narrative. By that I mean they are working to sow division to circumvent the rules-based international order. They are seeking to create confusion and mistrust, and when they look at the debate in this House and the comments that are coming from across the way, they are succeeding.

To achieve their objectives, these foreign-state actors engage in hostile activities. They actively engage in spreading misinformation and disinformation in an attempt to undermine confidence in the fundamental institutions of this country, including our electoral system. They do so by cultivating witting and unwitting individuals to assist them, which enables them to operate with plausible deniability on Canadian soil. That is why it—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am still getting some interruptions while the hon. member is speaking. There will be an opportunity for questions and answers and there will be opportunities for more speeches. I would remind members—

Mr. Warren Steinley: But he said—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order, please. That is really disrespectful. I am speaking to the hon. member. He should be paying attention, listening and abiding by the rules of the House. If he is not happy with that, then I would ask him to maybe leave the chamber.

The hon. member for Vancouver Granville.

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Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Madam Speaker, as I said, they do so by cultivating witting or unwitting individuals to assist them, which enables them to operate with plausible deniability on Canadian soil. That is why it constitutes a threat to Canada's social cohesion, sovereignty and, indeed, our national security. That is why it is so important for us to double down on protecting our democratic processes and the values that we hold dear.

That is why, over the past month, the Prime Minister has been showing Canadians exactly what we are doing to confront this problem. He has made important announcements on this topic over the past month.

I want to be clear that the Government of Canada is always seeking new and innovative measures and ways to enhance the measures we already have in place to counter foreign interference. As the threats evolve, so too must our response. That is what we have been doing. We continue to learn from the experience of our international partners to see what works and what may be applicable in Canada.

In keeping with this approach, on March 6, the Prime Minister announced further action to combat foreign interference and to uphold confidence in our democratic institutions.

Let us just be clear about what has been done. The Prime Minister announced the establishment of a new national counter foreign interference coordinator in Public Safety Canada, who will have the power to coordinate across government efforts to combat foreign interference. The government has actioned requested reviews from the National Security Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, NSICOP, and the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency, NSIRA, on the state of foreign interference in Canada and in our federal electoral process and how our national security agencies have responded to this threat.

It is also important to note that the Prime Minister announced that we were developing a plan to address outstanding recommendations from NSICOP, from the Rosenberg report and other reviews on this matter. I will note that the report "Countering an evolving threat: Update on recommendations to counter foreign interference in Canada's democratic institutions" was delivered on April 6.

We have made an investment of \$5.5 million to strengthen the capacity of civil society partners to counter disinformation, promote democratic resilience and improve public awareness of foreign interference.

The Prime Minister has also announced the launch of public consultations to guide the creation of a foreign influence transparency registry in our country. These consultations are currently open. I would encourage all Canadians and all members of the House to share their views on this registry through Public Safety Canada's website.

It is important that we have these consultations to ensure that the communities that are affected by this have the opportunity to have input into what that registry might look like, so we do not have unintended consequences of communities being adversely impacted.

The goal is to ensure transparency and accountability from the very people who advocate on behalf of a foreign government and

that the communities that are targeted by these attempts at foreign interference are protected.

While consultations on the foreign influence transparency registry are under way in round tables and bilateral formats, with dozens of stakeholders and interlocutors, I would be glad for all of us to get an update in the House once that process concludes, which we will have.

What I would note is that we are hearing overwhelmingly that there is support to bring forward the registry, and we are going to do it but we are going to do it in the right way. These consultations are going to help to ensure we get it right.

The Government of Canada is making substantial and significant investments in our counter foreign interference capabilities. The last budget includes \$13.5 million, and another \$3.1 million, to Public Safety Canada to establish a national counter foreign interference office, something that the opposition is voting against.

Budget 2023 also includes almost \$50 million for the RCMP so it has more resources to do its work to protect Canadians from harassment and intimidation by foreign actors, an investment that the opposition opposes. This investment will also increase the RCMP's investigative capacity and its capacity to proactively engage with communities that are at risk of being targeted. I know this is something that the opposition continues to oppose.

These investments build on the previous budget, in which we saw investments of almost \$15 million to renew and expand the G7 rapid response mechanism to address foreign threats to democracy, which the opposition opposed, as well as the almost \$13 million to establish a research security centre at Public Safety Canada to protect Canadian research, while also strengthening the security posture of universities and research institutions, which the Conservatives opposed.

These significant investments seek to increase the Government of Canada's capacity in its ongoing efforts to counter foreign interference. As I have noted, it is clear that these issues are very much part of what this government is doing and, given the current climate, they are going to continue to be on our agenda.

Our recent announcements build upon the foundation that has been provided by the authorities, and can assure Canadians they can have confidence in their institutions, including in their elections.

● (1045)

I would like to take a few moments to share a few quotes from testimony that House of Commons committees have heard over the past while, which really drive this point home.

David Vigneault, the head of CSIS, said:

CSIS continues to view hostile activities by foreign-state actors as the most significant threat to Canada's national security community.... Building resilience to foreign interference is one way to mitigate its corrosive effects....

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Therefore, we continue to invest significant efforts in building relationships with individuals, communities and community leaders to establish and sustain trust, and to offer our support and partnership in their protection.

I am now going to quote Jody Thomas, the national security intelligence adviser. She said:

Over the past few years, we have taken a number of steps to more effectively detect, deter and counter foreign interference in all its forms, including but not only during election periods. One effective way to do so is to talk about the threat and how we mitigate it without jeopardizing the sources and techniques used to gather intelligence and keep Canadians safe.... These mechanisms helped ensure that the 2019 and 2021 federal elections were indeed fair and legitimate, despite foreign interference attempts.... [W]e are clear-eyed in understanding the challenge posed by foreign interference. We are taking concrete steps to strengthen our counter-foreign interference approach, including by making sure that those who engage in such activities face consequences.

It is clear that the experts on this matter agree. The non-partisan experts in this country agree we are doing good work on a very solid foundation and we must remain vigilant.

With respect to the 2019 and 2021 federal elections, the Prime Minister asked NSIRA to undertake a review. He has spoken to the chair of that committee to ensure that the review captures the flow of information from national security agencies to decision-makers. Further, the Government of Canada's security and intelligence apparatus and community are combatting threats within their respective mandates. From a law enforcement perspective, for example, foreign interference activities can be investigated when criminal or illegal activity is involved.

The RCMP has a broad, multi-faceted mandate that allows it to investigate and prevent foreign interference by drawing upon legislation. As part of its mandate, as everyone in this House should know, CSIS provides the Government of Canada with timely and relevant intelligence on these threats, but it decides what information is provided up the food chain, and not political leaders.

The Communications Security Establishment, or CSE, works to monitor the cybersecurity environment and to use that understanding to identify, address and share knowledge about systemic threats, risks and vulnerabilities.

I should mention that this government has a particular reputation for being open and transparent in these matters, and I think we are moving in the right direction with the appointment of an exceptionally qualified independent special rapporteur. He is aware of how crucial it is to uphold transparency while also preserving the methods, the technology and the professionals who work in the field.

While the independent rapporteur has been appointed, we will carry out this task in collaboration with all lawmakers who choose to participate in the process so that Canadians can see our diligence and transparency. We have said time and time again that we will accept all of the recommendations of the special rapporteur.

We recognize the concerns that Canadians have, but we also want to reassure them that this government is taking every proactive measure—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1050)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I see there are members who either are trying to ask questions while

the hon. member is speaking or are thinking out loud. I would ask them to jot their questions down so that when it is the appropriate time to ask questions, they are able to do that. I am going to ask that the clock not be stopped when I have to interrupt and what will happen is that the official opposition will end up losing speeches.

I want to remind members to be respectful. I know this is a very delicate situation, a very serious one, and I would ask members to be respectful.

The hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, on that same point of order, we have members on the government side basically gaslighting the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. That is why we are doing what we are doing. They are not going to get away with it.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): This is a point of debate and the hon. member has been making a lot of comments while the other hon. member is speaking. I would ask members to please be respectful on both sides of the House as to any comments being made. If it is not the appropriate time to participate in the debate, then they should wait until it is.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Kevin, Kevin, Kevin.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I really do not appreciate the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan—

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: They do it all the time.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am speaking, and the hon. member was still making comments while I was speaking. Again I would ask members to please be respectful.

The hon. member for Vancouver Granville.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Madam Speaker, I want to go back to what I was saying. I think we all recognize on this side of the House the concerns Canadians have. I want to reassure them that our government is taking these concerns very seriously. We are taking the proactive measures that are required to thwart outside meddling in our institutions and in our democracy, and we are going to safeguard our democratic institutions.

We take seriously the introduction of new policies and powers within the national security community, but we also work within the legal requirements and constraints we have. The legal requirements that will allow us to implement them, as well as the transparent systems that will allow for accountability, must be carefully considered.

It is important that we are respectful when having these discussions across the country. We need a national picture. We need to understand the impact on communities and on individuals, and it is important for all of us in this House to show Canadians that we can put partisanship aside to deal with the very serious issues before us.

I want to thank all members of this House who have taken the time to share their serious concerns and points of view on this conversation so that we can move forward together.

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It is also important for us in this House to take a moment to thank our security and law enforcement agencies, which count among them great Canadians who are working on the front lines in our communities, at our borders and online in the cybersphere to keep us safe. They work tirelessly to keep us safe and to keep our democracy safe, and respect for the work they do is critical. There are experts in the field who are working hard to ensure we have the best possible recommendations on the path forward.

Regardless of our political stripe, election interference, foreign interference, is something we must take seriously. To turn this into a partisan cudgel to try to score political points does Canada no service and does our democracy no service. All it does is seek to validate what foreign actors seek to do. They seek to sow discontent, to disrupt, and to cause confusion. The antics in this House and the comments that have been made are an indication that they are succeeding. On this side of the House, we will not let them succeed, because we believe the work that needs to be done is often done quietly and with seriousness of purpose.

As a former public servant who had the privilege of serving this country in the Department of Public Safety and working with CSIS, the RCMP and our border agencies, I can tell members that our public servants take this work extremely seriously. They take this work as their life's work and they do not compromise when it comes to the safety of Canadians.

The type of work we need is work that is done quietly and in the service of this country and that keeps us safe. It is not comments and catcalls, criticism of fact or making things up that gets us to a safer democracy. What gets us to a safer democracy is showing Canadians that every single member of this House respects our democracy, respects its institutions, respects the way in which our Constitution governs us, but most importantly, respects the quiet work of our public service in keeping us safe and making sure those things work in tandem.

Our job as parliamentarians is to reflect the best of this country. Our job is to make sure Canadians see in us people who are prepared to protect their democracy and preserve it. I am confident that on this side of the House this is the work we are going to do. We invite every single parliamentarian in this House to cast partisanship aside and work together in this regard.

• (1055)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): On a point of order, the hon. member for Battlefords—Lloydminster.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, I would ask that you remind all members to be judicious in their language. Using the word “catcall” in something so serious is offensive. As a woman, I am offended that this language is being used in this form of debate.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members to be extremely careful with the words they use.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Madam Speaker, if the use of that word was offensive, I unreservedly apologize and withdraw the word. Instead, I would say that the name-calling from the opposition and the ongoing chirping do not help progress the conversation on working toward our democracy—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am going to again remind members to be very respectful toward each other, and when they do not have the floor, they should not be making comments or trying to pose questions. If this continues, those members who are continually doing this will not be recognized should they decide to get up for questions and comments.

The hon. member for Vancouver Granville has the floor.

• (1100)

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Madam Speaker, in the remaining time I have, I would just like to say a couple of things. CSIS has been reporting on the challenges to our democracy and foreign interference since 2013. That was a time when many of the members opposite were part of the government, and the prime minister of the day chose not to act. The minister for democratic reform, who is now the Leader of the Opposition, chose not to be involved. When he was asked why, he said it was because he did not feel the Chinese government was helping his party get elected, so it was not worth getting involved.

If all of us in this House believe that a threat to one of us is a threat to all of us, which I know we believe on this side of the House, then it is up to all of us to hold to account those who chose not to act when they had the opportunity. It is also incumbent upon all of us to act when we do have the opportunity, which is what our government has done since we took office. The processes that have been put in place, the tables that have been created and the committees that are doing the hard work, all of that work is going to help strengthen our democracy in the face of threats that evolve every single day.

I know that Canadians can look with confidence at this side of the House, at this government and at the actions we are taking, because they know we are doing it not to preserve our own interests, but to preserve the democracy that we cherish. It is to ensure that every single Canadian, regardless of their background, their faith, the colour of their skin or their sexual orientation, can feel proud to participate in our democratic process. That is something that comes by respecting the diversity of this country. It comes by working with communities to ensure that foreign actors do not have the opportunity to permeate and succeed.

That is the work we are doing. It is the work we will continue to do with our law enforcement agencies, with communities and with all Canadians who chose to be part of this conversation.

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Madam Speaker, that was quite a speech after we just sat and watched a group of Liberal members of Parliament mocking and laughing at the member for St. Albert—Edmonton as he was speaking earlier.

The member talks about taking these concerns very seriously, but earlier, in a question, the member for Kingston and the Islands referred to the member for Wellington—Halton Hills as “supposedly affected” by this situation. The Liberal parliamentary secretary to the House leader, in referring to the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, while heckling, said that the member is not credible. This is a quote.

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Will the hon. member—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, Hansard will clearly indicate the many words I said inside the chamber. I do not necessarily need the member opposite to pretend he is Hansard by trying to convey things that I said that are not recorded in Hansard. I honestly cannot recall and I do not believe the member knows either.

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, the hon. member is not saying that he did not say those words; he is just saying that they were not recorded. He absolutely said those words. I was sitting right here and I heard him say them.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): This is becoming a point of debate. As for what was said and what was not, I will endeavour to ask that we review Hansard to see if we can determine what was said and come back to the House if need be.

The hon. member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin can continue with his question, which I would ask that he wrap up. There are only 20 seconds left.

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, it will not take me 20 seconds. My question, given the gravity of the situation, is very straightforward: Will the hon. member who just spoke turn around and ask his two colleagues, who hold leadership positions in his party, to unreservedly apologize to the member for Wellington—Halton Hills?

• (1105)

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Madam Speaker, every single member in this House belongs to what I consider to be a parliamentary family. We may not agree on politics. We may not agree on policy. However, one thing that is important to me, as a Canadian and as somebody whose family left very difficult circumstances to come to this country because of the democracy we hold dear, is that I take threats to any member of this House very seriously. To me, it is very important that any member of this House feels safe in doing this job and that their families are not under threat. Every single member of this House has an opportunity and obligation to work together so we can find solutions to the problems that we want none of our families to face.

I think it has been very clear, by the actions the Prime Minister has taken since he found out about this on Monday, that we will engage with any members affected by this in a productive and thoughtful manner.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I was a little taken aback by something my colleague seemed to be implying in his speech at one point. He seemed to be saying that we could be encouraging foreign interference, emboldening other countries, merely by asking questions. Apparently, the opposition parties are somehow making us more vulnerable simply by asking questions in the House or on committees about interference. That kind of talk is really hard to bear.

What does my colleague think our work here is about anyway, if not exactly that, to ask questions about important issues like a for-

eign country's interference in our democratic process? Does he really think we should stop asking questions about it?

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Madam Speaker, allow me to clarify. That is not what I said.

Asking questions and getting answers to those questions is very important. However, the danger, or the issue, arises when our rhetoric or our words are meant to create mistrust in our institutions.

[English]

The act of asking questions in this chamber is critically important. I welcome, and we all welcome, these questions, but we should draw a fundamental difference between asking questions in the House, which is a critical responsibility of all of us, and going out there to misrepresent facts, score political points and, most importantly, sow discord.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a quick comment and then a question.

I want to begin by saying that New Democrats stand in solidarity with community members who have been the target of threats and intimidation in support of the Chinese government. Canadians deserve to feel safe, and Canada must not tolerate any type of intimidation, harassment or targeting of the diaspora communities. I want to stand, personally, as the member for Hamilton Centre to extend my solidarity with the member for Wellington—Halton Hills for what he and his family have had to go through.

For my question, there seems to be some discrepancies about who knew what and when, and exactly what it was they did about it. The public safety minister said that he did not hear about China targeting the member for Wellington—Halton Hills until this past Monday, but CSIS was aware two years ago.

The Prime Minister claims he does not know either, yet we have been presented with the CSIS report for 2022, where it states that “foreign intelligence may...be collected from within Canada at the request of the Minister of Foreign Affairs or the Minister of National Defence, and with the consent of the Minister of Public Safety.” If there were any involvement here in Canada, why was it that the Minister of Public Safety was not briefed on this, and what is he going to do about it?

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Madam Speaker, the way that the process works is that CSIS determines what the briefing should look like. If it rises to the level that it should reach the Prime Minister or the ministers, CSIS makes that determination. If that is not the case, and I am given to understand that it was not the case for the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, a defensive briefing is given to that particular member. It was my understanding that the member was briefed a couple of years ago.

If in fact that is true, if the member for Wellington—Halton Hills was briefed prior to Monday, the minister was informed on Monday. There is a material difference between a briefing given to a member and one given when the level rises such that somebody else, a minister or the Prime Minister, would be informed of the same.

• (1110)

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Madam Speaker, I want to start by expressing my support for my colleague, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. Like him, I am a proud Canadian of Chinese heritage, and it is leaders like him who made it easier for people like me to serve today.

My Liberal colleague talked about transparency and accountability. The fact has been that it is now confirmed, not only by CSIS but also by the Prime Minister, that a Chinese diplomat targeted my Conservative colleague.

Would my colleague not agree that this action is clearly in contravention of the Vienna Convention? Why does the government not exercise article 9 to declare this diplomat *persona non grata* and kick him out of the country?

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Madam Speaker, it is absolutely essential that every Canadian knows that we take very seriously the activity of foreign diplomats in this country.

Concerning the Vienna Convention, any time the Vienna Convention is invoked and diplomats are expelled, it is important that countries do the work required to understand, number one, the implications, and number two, what implications might be felt by Canadians at home and abroad.

As that assessment is done, in the context of whatever malfeasance may or may not have occurred, action is then taken. We know that our department of foreign affairs, Global Affairs Canada, takes this very seriously. Those recommendations are developed by security professionals, by the officials. Those recommendations are then made and decisions are taken.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, based on the public report that was tabled today from CSIS, a staggering 49 federal members of Parliament have received briefings from CSIS.

The member for Wellington—Halton Hills is just one of 49. As a matter of fact, I recall a discussion in the PROC committee when the member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon said that he had also received a briefing. I am going to assume that that was a defensive briefing from CSIS as well.

The reality is that CSIS provides these defensive briefings a lot. I am wondering if the member could inform the House as to whether or not he has received a defensive briefing from CSIS?

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Madam Speaker, I have not received a briefing of any kind from CSIS.

I would say, as somebody who has worked in the public service, and who had the privilege of working with the folks at CSIS and the RCMP, briefings, when given, are taken seriously. When people are called by CSIS, those briefings should be taken seriously.

What CSIS shares with one individual, when they are being briefed, is not necessarily the purview of others. Those briefings are, hopefully, supposedly held in confidence. It is important for us to recognize the way our security intelligence apparatus works in this country. It works in a way that seeks to not only keep Canadians safe but also ensure that the methods and sources they work

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with are also preserved and protected, so that the work they do can continue. It is important for all of us in the House to respect that work.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to start by saying that I will be splitting my time with my colleague, the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

I will not keep the members on tenterhooks any longer: The Bloc Québécois will be supporting today's motion from the Conservatives.

As we know, when things drag, they tend to pick up dirt, and right now everything is turning into a crisis. The longer this drags on, the more likely it is that we will have to face two risks that are coming our way.

First, as the public hears different information about allegations of foreign interference, there is a growing risk that the public will lose confidence in democracy, in its institutions and in the work of members of Parliament.

Second, the more time that goes by without meaningful action being taken, the greater the risk that an election will be called and that, for the third time running, there will be foreign interference in an election because the right legislative measures have not been put in place to fight it.

The motion before the House today has four main points calling on the government to create a foreign agent registry, establish a national public inquiry, close down the People's Republic of China run police stations, and expel all of the diplomats responsible for these affronts to Canadian democracy. I will address all of these points, but not necessarily in that order.

I will begin with the point that the Bloc Québécois sees as the most important. We were actually the first to recommend it. I am talking about establishing an independent public inquiry. We want to make one main point or one key request. The person in charge of this inquiry must be appointed by all parties represented in the House. We have been calling for an independent public inquiry since February 28.

That was two months ago. I cannot believe that, in two months' time, the four parties, representing the entire Canadian population, have not been able to agree on the right person to appoint to lead a public inquiry, someone who is not part of the Prime Minister's inner circle, family or friends.

We have been asking for this inquiry for a long time, and, above all, we want to ensure that the person leading this inquiry is non-partisan and impartial so that the public will have confidence in the recommendations resulting from this inquiry. We hope that this inquiry will be launched.

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If information is handled behind closed doors during this inquiry, the public must have confidence that this is being done for valid national security reasons, not for the benefit of a party that wants to hide certain information. That is why it is important to have a commissioner, judge, or commission chair who is impartial. If the information is not disclosed and must be handled behind closed doors, the public will have confidence that it is for non-partisan reasons.

It has been argued on a number of occasions that holding an independent public inquiry in an open and transparent manner could compromise the work of national security institutions by revealing sources or investigative techniques. We could trust this future commissioner to determine what needs to be done behind closed doors.

We in the Bloc Québécois are not alone in calling for an independent public inquiry. Jean-Pierre Kingsley, a former chief electoral officer for Elections Canada, said in March on Radio-Canada, “Canadians need to know what happened. Until there is a public inquiry, information will come out in dribs and drabs and people are going to pay the price for that”.

The fact that this is dragging on and no meaningful action is being taken is another problem. The information is being reported haphazardly, which could jeopardize some investigations and certain sources.

In addition to recommending an independent public inquiry and the appointment of an impartial chair to lead the inquiry, the Bloc Québécois recommended overhauling the Inquiries Act to ensure that future chairs of public inquiries are appointed by consensus in the House.

The motion also calls for the creation of a foreign agent registry. In our opinion, we need to go much further than the simple creation of a foreign agent registry. We need to bring in legislative measures to help address interference. That is something people have long been calling for. In November 2020, the House adopted a motion to implement mechanisms with a lot more teeth to tackle foreign interference.

Once again, unfortunately, it took a crisis and media attention for the government to start moving. About a month ago, the government finally announced that consultations would be held about creating a registry.

• (1115)

In addition to creating a registry, we need much broader legislation to tackle interference. One of the things we learned in the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs is that there are legislative gaps. Often, information comes in and it is clear there has been interference, but it cannot be addressed because there is no legislative leverage to do so.

Information is also coming in dribs and drabs. National campaign managers have said that information passed between intelligence agencies is a one-way street. Parties give information to the intelligence agencies but get little or nothing in return. Even if someone is given information, there is no avenue for a party to take action and address this interference.

As for a registry, both the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and the RCMP have been calling for one. Will it solve everything?

No. However, it is one of the tools that would, in conjunction with other tools, help us move in the right direction.

Some people are saying that this kind of registry could inadvertently target members of Canada's Chinese community, but I think such a claim is purely hypothetical. There is no definite indication that members of the Chinese Canadian community would be targeted. Besides, when it comes to foreign agents, members of the Chinese Canadian diaspora are the ones paying the price. They are the ones enduring threats and harassment from foreign agents. All things considered, setting up a registry is the best option, precisely to protect members of the Chinese Canadian diaspora.

The Conservatives also propose that we close down these police stations. The problem is that there seem to be some discrepancies concerning what is really going on. The Minister of Public Safety told us on April 27 that all the Chinese police stations operating in Canada had been shut down. However, the media reports that calls made to these offices and agencies, like the Service à la famille chinoise du Grand Montréal, suggest they are still operating.

All the elements presented today are interrelated. Any single recommendation in the Conservatives' motion would not have an impact in and of itself. It would only reach its full potential in conjunction with the other recommendations. If the police stations have not been closed, it is because the law does not allow it. That is why it is important to also create a foreign agent registry, which will allow us to have some control over these police stations.

I would also like to mention that the issue of police stations is somewhat limited. We must tackle other issues and appropriate legislation would make that possible. For example, there are all the issues with economic threats, threats to Chinese Canadians' families who are still in China or, for example, everything connected to honeytraps, an influence tactic whereby a woman seduces a member of the community and then threatens to inform the person's family.

With regard to the expulsion of diplomats, once again, something could have been done but was not. The Minister of Foreign Affairs said that it is difficult to expel foreign diplomats in the absence of sufficient evidence and that doing so would not be in keeping with the Vienna Convention. However, we know that the Vienna Convention allows for the expulsion of diplomats without any justification from the government, so this story about respecting or not respecting the Vienna Convention does not hold water. Former Canadian ambassador to China, Guy Saint-Jacques, and the former counsellor at the embassy, Charles Burton, both agree with the request and acknowledge that Canada does not have to provide an explanation for expelling diplomats, as the United States and Great Britain did when similar situations occurred there.

The fact that the government is saying that it will not expel diplomats sends the wrong message. It is as though the government is saying that they can continue with their threatening activities in Canada and that we will tolerate their intimidation.

Above all that, I would also like to reiterate the Bloc Québécois's suggestion, which could have perhaps been included in today's motion, and that is the creation of an independent office on interference. That office would not answer to the Prime Minister or the Minister of Public Safety. It would answer to the House, a bit like the Auditor General does. That office would also have the advantage of being able to work outside election periods because interference does not just happen during elections.

• (1120)

An office with the power to investigate, search and arrest and the ability to work with CSIS and the RCMP would cut down on foreign interference and restore public confidence. For all these reasons, the Bloc Québécois supports today's Conservative Party recommendation in addition to the recommendations we have already made.

[English]

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, so far this morning the members for Kingston and the Islands, Winnipeg North and Vancouver Granville all alleged that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills knew about the foreign interference and the threats to his family. The member for Wellington—Halton Hills has stated that the briefing he received from CSIS was general in nature and did not contain any specific threats concerning a person in Canada, Mr. Wei Zhao, who was targeting the member and his family.

Why is it that the government continues to push the narrative that somehow the member for Wellington—Halton Hills is guilty regarding what took place?

• (1125)

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, I do not claim to be inside the government's head, nor do I wish to be. That said, I—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am hearing conversations on both sides of the House.

[English]

I do not remember any questions being asked on the right side of the House, and I do not recall recognizing other members on the left side of the House to pose questions, aside from the member who has already spoken.

Therefore, I would ask members to be respectful while somebody else has the floor.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Saint-Jean.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, as I said, I do not claim to be inside the government's head, nor do I wish to be.

That said, I will reiterate what I said at the beginning of my speech: The longer this drags on, the dirtier it gets and the more it

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becomes a partisan issue, when that is not what democracy should be. The longer the House continues to refuse to hold an independent public inquiry, the longer we will be embroiled in he-said-she-said debates, instead of putting measures in place to prevent foreign interference in the future. Unfortunately, we are mired in secrecy and innuendo, and the longer we delay creating an independent public commission, the more likely we are to descend into partisan squabbling, which, unfortunately, will not get anyone anywhere.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I do not think there is anybody on this side of the House saying anybody is guilty of anything. What we are saying is that the only person who had actually been briefed on this matter, with a defensive briefing received from CSIS, was the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. What I also know is that the member who posed the last question also received a briefing from CSIS, as he indicated in a PROC committee once. I am just left to wonder who the other 47 MPs are who have received briefings, because a CSIS report that was tabled this morning said 49 MPs have been briefed.

I am wondering if the member for Saint-Jean could tell us if she is one of those 47 remaining MPs who received briefings.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, the answer is no but, in any case, I do not think the question is that relevant given the debate today.

The questions I am hearing from all sides concerning specific members just lead me to reiterate that this debate is becoming far too partisan, which serves no one, and certainly not democracy. That is why I urge all members to vote for the motion, because the main thing it is calling for is a transparent and independent public inquiry. That will allow us to move forward rather than get stuck in partisan politics and to address pressing problems that, if this continues, may not be resolved by the time the next election comes around.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's reasoned voice in this House where the hyperpartisanship has reached through the roof. The matter here is too important to get into that sort of back-and-forth hyperpartisanship. The issue around the significance and importance of an independent inquiry, along with measures that would send a clear message to any country that tries to interfere with our democracy and intimidate Canadians, needs to be taken seriously.

Aside from the public inquiry, which we absolutely agree with, as the NDP was the first to call on the government to put an independent inquiry in place, what is the measure that needs to be in place to send a clear message to all countries that try to undermine our democratic system? What does the member think we need to do to ensure that is put in place?

*Business of Supply**[Translation]*

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague's premise, except perhaps that I believe the Bloc Québécois was the first to point out the importance of an independent public inquiry.

There are several things that can be done and put in place, including the creation of a foreign agent registry, which has been called for since November 2020. We have been told that consultations to set up such a registry are about to begin, when this registry is a tool that would make it possible to make certain arrests and lay charges for the interference that is currently occurring.

We do not have the legislative tools we need. All actions must be taken together, in a concerted manner. Individually, they are not enough. The independent public inquiry is the main one, but there are many other things we can do right now.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, welcome to “Chinada”.

As Canada is perfectly fine with being a post-national laggard, as it settles into the comfortable position of “everyone gets along, everything is fine and dandy”, the People's Republic of China is taking advantage of western naivety to become a conquering empire.

The Beijing regime is applying the principles of revolutionary war, a war of influence, a war of subversion, developed by its founder, Mao Zedong. We all need to recognize that China has become a worrisome power in times of peace. While China is one of the greatest civilizations, that of Confucianism, that of Buddhism, that of Taoism, the conduct of its regime in stifling the truth, as was seen with the COVID-19 pandemic, leads at best to mistrust.

In 2013, the leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, who was not yet Prime Minister, said, “There is a level of admiration I actually have for China. Their basic dictatorship is actually allowing them to turn their economy around on a dime.” It would probably be easier for him. Whether he likes it or not, we are in a Parliament.

Ottawa should answer to the Chinese interference that has been revealed. The facts are overwhelming. When it became clear, known and documented that there had been Chinese interference in the Canadian electoral process, and not just in one way on one occasion, only one outcome was possible: a public, independent commission of inquiry. That idea was supported by the former chief electoral officer, Jean-Pierre Kingsley, and by the former director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, or CSIS, Richard Fadden.

What did Ottawa do? First, they dismissed the idea of an inquiry, saying that that posed a public safety risk because secret information could be revealed and sources compromised. However, the many meetings of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs concerning Chinese interference in elections have shown the need for a public and independent inquiry. The format is simply not the same. The committee format is not as suited as that of a public and independent inquiry. Witnesses are not questioned in the same way.

Since at some point the pressure became too great, following that initial refusal, Ottawa appointed Morris Rosenberg and David

Johnston, two former members of the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation, itself directly at the heart of the scandal due to its ties to Beijing, to shed light on the matter. That is promising. Who are they?

Morris Rosenberg was appointed to investigate and produce a report on the assessment of the critical election incident public protocol for the 2021 election. This is the same Mr. Rosenberg who was president of the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation when it accepted a \$200,000 donation, \$140,000 of which was paid out. It was a donation from Beijing, which CSIS believes was intended to influence the Prime Minister. The Chinese donor, Zhang Bin, a political adviser to the Chinese government, cut a cheque on behalf of a Chinese company. According to the foundation's former CEO, Pascale Fournier, China was issuing directives regarding that donation. That is huge. Unsurprisingly, Morris Rosenberg found that Ottawa did nothing wrong in the 2021 election.

According to an expression we have in Quebec, just because something is laughable it does not mean it is funny. Even more surprising is something Mr. Rosenberg said in committee. He said he accepted the Chinese donation to try to influence China. I find that quite rich.

David Johnston is a former governor general, member of the Trudeau Foundation, personal friend of the Prime Minister, with close ties to Beijing. Johnston was appointed special rapporteur by the Prime Minister to determine whether there should be an inquiry and what should be done. The Prime Minister himself has already publicly said that he was a close friend; his father and Johnston were friends and had neighbouring cottages. The Prime Minister grew up playing with Johnston's children, and Johnston has also called him a friend of the family. This same Johnston also has close ties to China. His three daughters studied in China and he himself was received by Xi Jinping in person. For his part, Johnston has said that he feels at home in China.

Did the Prime Minister do his due diligence before appointing Mr. Johnston? Did he put as much effort into it as he did for the interferences? Are the appointment and the interferences appropriate? Only a real public, independent inquiry could shed light on these questions and answer them.

● (1130)

In November 2020, the House adopted a motion demanding that the government table legislation similar to the Australian act, particularly with respect to the issue of a public registry of foreign agents. A country, a real country, might I say, normally takes the issue of national security seriously. The United States has had a foreign agent registry since 1930, nearly 100 years before us. We still do not have one, in fact. This kind of tool can have a real impact by making it easier to lay criminal charges against those who break the law. It was due to that registry that the United States was recently able to arrest two Chinese nationals who were operating illegal Chinese police stations on U.S. soil. In Canada, despite the mandate passed by the House, little has been done. Two Chinese police stations are still open in Quebec and in the Montreal area as we speak.

To top it all off, The Globe and Mail recently revealed a CSIS report from 2021 stating that threats had been made against the member for Wellington—Halton Hills and his family in Hong Kong by a Chinese diplomat who is still in Canada. What terrible crime had the member committed? He had simply sponsored a motion condemning the Uyghur genocide perpetrated by the Communist regime in China. The Prime Minister is boasting that he called him to reassure him. Well, that changes everything. The member can sleep soundly now. Does the fact that the Prime Minister called the member not show that he is taking it seriously? I think the member can rest easy now.

I want to make one thing clear. We would be opposed to expelling the Chinese ambassador. An act that extreme is valid in times of war. Of course, we must maintain international relations, and that requires dialogue and diplomacy. However, when it comes to diplomats implicated in interference attempts, in interference operations that include trying to intimidate and punish certain democratically debated opinions, that is another story.

Ottawa is ducking the issue by saying that it is respecting international conventions by not expelling the diplomat involved, yet the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations allows for the expulsion of diplomats. Of course, this should only be done when necessary, but it is necessary here.

The official opposition motion before us today comprises four points, namely, creating a registry of foreign agents, similar to those in Australia and the United States, establishing a national public inquiry on the matter of foreign election interference, closing down police stations run by the People's Republic of China here in Canada, and expelling all of the People's Republic of China diplomats involved in these affronts to democracy. The Bloc Québécois supports these four ideas. We will therefore vote in favour of the motion.

To conclude, in 1961, the Prime Minister's father published a book entitled *Two Innocents in Red China*. As a friend once said, an innocent is someone who is not smart enough to be guilty. That said, someone here is guilty, and feigning innocence as official policy is not going to help us figure out who it is.

• (1135)

[English]

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

There are really two tones that I have heard in my time in the House. One tone seeks to get to the bottom of this and have a legitimate inquiry. The other is what I would call a quarrelsome, pugnacious and victim-blaming tone coming from the other side with respect to the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, who is of the utmost integrity in my view.

Therefore, I would ask the hon. member to comment on where he stands on all of this. Does he stand with being quarrelsome or with the member for Wellington—Halton Hills?

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[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, that always depends on whom one wants to be quarrelsome with. I tend to be diplomatically inclined myself, but I do believe we need to seek the truth. I do not doubt the member's integrity in the least, but we need to seek the truth. We need to get to the bottom of this.

Based on what we know, on what came out in The Globe and Mail, the member knew nothing about it. Is that so? I do not know. I am not in his head, and I did not have a camera at the scene, but one thing I know for sure is that we need answers from the government. We cannot just grasp at diversionary tactics and pass the buck back to the member in question. It is not appropriate for the very parties implicated to react with righteous indignation. As we say, enough already.

• (1140)

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his fine speech.

I would like to take this opportunity to express solidarity with my neighbour from Wellington—Halton Hills. He is my friend and a good member who embodies all that is best about the House.

My colleague raised the issue of blame. He wonders who, in the circumstances, is to blame.

I would like to say that the conversation we are having today relates to the safety and security of all Canadians. Our goal is not to find someone to blame, but to come up with a good way to reassure all Canadians moving forward about the safety and security of our country.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to hear that question from my colleague. His tone is much more appropriate for today's debate than some of the language we heard earlier from that side of the House. I welcome that.

This matter relates to national security, and if interference has occurred, there must be human beings somewhere behind it. Someone is guilty of this. Yes, something happened, which is why this commission of inquiry is needed.

I would be very surprised to learn that there is no one, anywhere, who has done anything. That is simply what I meant. I am not suggesting for a second that I could identify them myself today. I am not the investigator. However, we need a real investigation, and friends of the government must not be appointed to key positions.

[English]

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am rising in support of the hon. member in his search for truth. I would like to have the hon. member reflect on what he believes would be a reasonable approach should his family have been the target of the same type of intimidation and harassment. As a member of Parliament, what would be his expectation with respect to having protection and information from the government, so as not to have his privileges breached in the House?

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[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, in this kind of situation, the bare minimum would have been to inform the member.

Based on the information we have today, the member was not informed, despite some speculation. The minimum would have been to inform the member and offer him all the supports needed in this kind of situation. I must say, I would not sleep well knowing that the diplomat behind this is still safely ensconced in his position.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the NDP House leader, the member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

This is such an important debate, and let me put this in some context for all members in the House.

A hundred years ago, the government of the day brought in the Chinese Exclusion Act to say that Chinese peoples were not welcome in this country, to make a very clear statement on that. After that, those who came to Canada to help build the railway connecting British Columbia to the east, from coast to coast, which allowed for Canada to exist today, after all their blood and sweat, they were also put in a position of extreme discrimination, with the most dangerous work and the least amount of pay. Many died in that process.

Let us be clear that this is Canada's history.

A hundred years later, we are in the House debating foreign interference. In the passing years, what has happened? Discrimination and hate have ebbed and flowed.

I immigrated to Canada as a little girl back in the 1970s. When I landed here with my family, I experienced discrimination right from the get-go. I looked different. I dressed differently. I did not speak very much English. I was mocked. I grew up denying, working so hard to do what? To belong. I worked to deny myself of my own natural heritage. I did not know any better as a little child how to belong, except to say that I was not Chinese.

Now I am smarter, thank goodness, than I was when I was just a little girl. Over the years I have come to realize what a gift my parents afforded me, to immigrate to Canada to give me the opportunities to thrive, to have access to education and to be me, free of pressures and to enjoy the freedoms that Canada affords me, and all of us. Let it be very clear that I am Canadian and I have a natural heritage.

The situation that is going on today is so distressing to me. Somehow members of the House, both on the Liberal and the Conservative sides, think that this is just about politics. It is not just about politics. It is about people and the lives of those people. It is about our collective future.

I cannot imagine what it is like for the member for Wellington—Halton Hills to find out that he and his family are being targeted by the Chinese regime. When I think about that, the dread washes over me. Let us be clear for the member that he has privileges too. He is a member of the House and he has afforded to him, and rightfully

so, various protections. However, many other Canadians are faced with these kinds of threats and they do not have access to any protection. They do not even have a voice, and their lives are in danger.

Why do I feel so strongly about this? Aside from having experienced discrimination growing up and all the way through, even now, I am receiving hate mail, but I will not bore members with that. My grandfather, who came before me, used to tell me stories when I was a little girl about how, when he went on the bus, he was thrown to the back of the bus and pushed off it. He has now passed. He shared horrific stories of the discrimination he experienced. We have had to fight so hard to make gains and get to where we are today.

• (1145)

What is happening? During COVID, people said to my face that it is the “Kwan virus”. That is what they said to me. Since that time, with all of this hyperpartisanship that has gone on, my teenaged daughter got on the bus to go to school. What happened to her? Someone spat on her and yelled racial slurs at her. This is what is happening on the ground and how it is impacting people. Let us just set aside partisan politics for just one minute.

Right from the get-go, when this issue came up, the NDP said that we should have a national inquiry into this foreign interference. The NDP moved the motion back in February in committee and gave notice. After much filibustering by some members of the House, the motion finally passed. After that, in March, the NDP brought that motion to the House of Commons to be voted on and got support from all the opposition members, as well as the independent members. That motion also passed. However, instead of doing the right thing, the government decided that it would have another process. Therefore, it escalated the situation, forcing dribs and drabs of information about the risks we face to be released through the media.

In the meantime, what are we doing? We are undermining our democratic system and continuing to cast that cloud over people who look like me. That is what is happening, and in that process, people get hurt.

Someone who is engaged in the pro-democracy movement for Hong Kong contacted me to say that they received a death threat. That is how serious it is. Now, I was born in Hong Kong, and it absolutely breaks my heart to see what is going on in Hong Kong right now. That person reported the death threat to the RCMP. Then what happened? Nothing happened. Who do we think will come forward to say that this is happening to them when there is no recourse? Who will dare to speak up when even a member of Parliament and his family could be threatened?

This is the situation we are faced with, so let us take a breath and stop this partisanship. We should stop this bickering and get on to doing what is right. Our lives depend on it. People who look like me get hurt every day because of it, and some people do not have a voice.

The worse thing of all is that the undermining of Canada's democracy; this democracy is something that I cherish and do not take for granted. Where my parents and grandparents came from, they did not have the right to democracy. Chinese people had to die and go to war to fight for that democracy here in Canada. That is our history. That is what has happened in Canada.

I think that the national inquiry also has to be completely independent and transparent. It has to meet the political tests of all parties. Maybe we can all just sit down and say, "Hey, let us sit together and get this inquiry under way, get the mandate under way and get a completely independent person to do this job so that we can stop this in its tracks." That is what we need to do.

Moreover, we need to send a clear message to those countries that attempt to meddle with our democratic process. China is definitely one of them, but there are others as well. It may be Russia, Saudi Arabia or even the United States, which we know also meddles in our democratic system. Let us just be honest about that and get to the bottom of it once and for all.

• (1150)

I implore all members of the House to set aside their partisanship and do what is right for people, for humanity and for democracy. If we say we are against discrimination, racism and hate, then we should take a breath and stop the gamesmanship that is being played right now. All that does is escalate the situation. This is not good for Canada, and it is not good for our democracy.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I ask my question, I want to apologize to the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke for an unparliamentary comment I made about his question. He is a gentleman, and I enjoy working with him. I apologize and withdraw the comment.

The member for Vancouver East gave a very passionate and strong speech. She brought up an amazing number of great points that we need to follow up on. I only have one question. How does the member think we should put together an inquiry process that is non-partisan and independent? What is the best way to make sure that it is truly non-partisan and independent?

• (1155)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, first, I want to thank the member for owning up to the fact that what he said was inappropriate and making that apology. I do appreciate it.

To the question about what would be a completely non-partisan public inquiry, which is absolutely essential, it would be for all the party leaders to come to an agreement on the mandate and who the commissioner is. It has to be completely above board and completely transparent. It needs to pass every single test, because so much rides on it.

If there is a shadow of a doubt being cast anywhere in that process, it undermines all the important work that needs to be done, and people like me will never get out from under it. It is too important for that. Too many people's lives have been put in danger, and too many people have died fighting for democracy for Canada.

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Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to express how much I appreciate the—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

I just arrived, so I do not know what transpired, but the hon. member has the floor.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I want to express that I appreciate the member sharing her personal story and recognize that, at the end of the day, it is important that we—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: A point of order from the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: You have made the point, Mr. Speaker, that the member has the floor. The member who gave the incredibly passionate speech has a right to hear what that question is.

The Deputy Speaker: I have a point of order from the hon. deputy whip of the Conservative Party.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Speaker, there have been ongoing demands today for the hon. members in the Liberal caucus to withdraw the comments they made about the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. They continually said that he was briefed about this two years ago and that he did not inform his family, the Conservative caucus or anybody about it. It is unconscionable, and the members across the way should be gentlemen, stand up and apologize.

The Deputy Speaker: I was just getting here so I did not know the context of what was going on, but the hon. member for Winnipeg North has the floor.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is important that we recognize a couple of facts. The first is that we are not just talking about China. The second issue is that many members of Parliament, and we are talking about 49 members of Parliament in 2022, and there were members of Parliament before—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is very hard to be able to think when I am being—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: We have a point of order from the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, this is the second time I have risen in the House today. We are talking about the state of democracy. My colleague just spoke about how what is going on is impacting her as a Chinese woman in this country and the importance of working together in a non-partisan way across party lines to deal with it.

In the midst of this, I have to listen to members across the way name-call each other. There are young people here. We are talking about democracy, about the fact that we have a right to have different opinions in this House. We still have an obligation to be respectful, including to this member, who shared personal stories.

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I am deeply offended, and I would like people in the House to remember this and to act like civilized beings, because we are all supposed to be here fighting for democracy together.

The Deputy Speaker: That was not a point of order. I appreciate the sentiment, of course, of making sure that our debate remains civil and calm. I know many of the debates that come before us are extremely important, as this debate is today. I just want to make sure that the debate continues in a respectful manner.

On a point of order, the hon. member for Foothills.

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, on the point of order from my colleague, I do agree that her colleague gave an excellent speech talking about the impact on Canada's Chinese community, as well as the impact that it is certainly having on her and her family.

The point of all this is that we have members across the floor who are victim-blaming the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, saying the information he has provided is not credible. What kind of message is that sending to Chinese Canadians when we should be standing up for them here, fighting on their behalf and saying that not only members of Parliament but also every Canadian should be protected?

It is clear that they are making a choice on the other side of the floor. I am not trying to be overly partisan, but that is what is happening. Rather than standing on the side of a Canadian and his family who have been obviously threatened, they are choosing to attack him as a victim by victim-blaming and gaslighting. That is not the message we should be sending to Chinese Canadians or any Canadians. The government should be standing up for them, rather than defending an agent of Beijing.

• (1200)

The Deputy Speaker: Again, we are descending into the debate that we are actually having here today.

Still on the same point of order, the hon. member for Battlefords—Lloydminster.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Mr. Speaker, on this point of order, the double standard is so frustrating. As members of Parliament, we are being told to stop being partisan and that we are hyperpartisan. What is happening on the other side? They are accusing the member for Wellington—Halton Hills for knowing about this for two years when that is not true.

Can we all put the partisanship aside, actually work together and stand for this democracy?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, I think the Conservative Party needs to review what has taken place in the last number of question periods and then look in the mirror. There has been a politicization of the issue.

If we were to stand up now and elaborate on those things, I think it is very disruptive to the member who just gave a speech. I would like to be able to start over and—

The Deputy Speaker: All right. We are still on the point of order. I had said this would be the last point of order, but I will allow another. We could do this all day and not debate the bill. That is what we are falling into, by the looks of it.

The hon. member for Battlefords—Lloydminster.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what I was referring to. If we rewind the tapes to earlier today, that specific member said that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills had known for two years and he has done nothing about the issue. That is not true. That is misleading Canadians, and it is misleading this House. It is unconscionable that he is doing that.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. That's enough.

We are going to have one more round of this, and then we will move on to the questions and comments that we originally planned to do.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, yes, the member from the NDP who spoke gave a very passionate speech about dialing back the partisanship on this. I would completely agree with her. I think that what we are trying to convey is that accusations that the Prime Minister has known about this for two years are completely false as well. If we listen to what is being said on both sides, in the interest of genuinely dialing back the partisanship on this, perhaps we can all start from a point of not making those assumptions.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Oshawa.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, I need to bring my point of order forward. The member for Vancouver East just gave probably one of the most important speeches we will hear today. She spoke from her heart. I have to say that, in this House, I have known the member for Wellington—Halton Hills since 2004. He is honourable.

Today, we are debating a government that has ignored this entire issue for two years. Chinese Canadians are being victimized and bullied by a government, and this member is blaming the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. Victim-blaming is totally unacceptable. We need to support our members, who are speaking from the heart. This is affecting them each and every day.

They need to apologize for that outrageous behaviour.

• (1205)

The Deputy Speaker: With the debate we are having today, I understand the passion.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North was making a comment and was going to be asking a question. I do not know if the hon. member had finished.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member for Vancouver East gave a very passionate speech, as we have all attested to. We very much value and appreciate her comments. It is not just about China. There are other countries.

An attack on one member is an attack on all members of the chamber. When death threats are made against members, all members universally acknowledge that we have to do what we can to fight for our democracy.

Does the member believe that the special rapporteur has any role at all in looking at this and reporting back to the government?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, the government should have initiated a completely independent public inquiry. It should have engaged all party leaders in the House to agree to a process and a commissioner, so there would be no question about who would be leading this work and the mandate related to it. There would need to be interim reporting of this work so we would put an end to it.

All this bickering about who knew what, when, where, how, etc., could be investigated under a national inquiry so there would be no blaming this way, that way and the other way. In the meantime, what is absolutely essential as well, is for other work to be under way, which is why New Democrats support this motion. As an example, we support a foreign agent registry. We support fully that the police stations operated by the Communist Chinese government should be shut down. Equally important, there should be absolute accountability by those countries that are interfering with our democracy.

There has to be accountability and measures taken to send a clear message that, no matter what country is attempting to do this, Canada will not tolerate it.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by paying tribute to the speech that we all just heard in the House. These are words that we need to live by, not only through the debate during the course of today, but also in the coming weeks as we work through these issues. I want to pay tribute to the member for Vancouver East for what she has told us on the floor of the House today. I hope that we all listened.

As members are well aware, last night I rose in the House on behalf of the NDP to reinforce the question of privilege that was raised by the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. To my mind and New Democrats' minds, there is absolutely no doubt that what he raised as a question of privilege is a question of privilege, which should be moved in the House as quickly as possible. That, of course, is the Speaker's decision and prerogative.

The NDP brought extensive additional material to the very eloquent question of privilege that was raised by the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, and I certainly hope the speakership will make a decision in a timely way in this regard. There is no doubt that this debate needs to be heard on the floor of the House. As I mentioned last night, there is no doubt that it meets the criteria for a question of privilege. That, of course, is in the Speaker's purview and the Speaker's decision. I hope the decision will be made soon.

[*Translation*]

As has already been said many times, the NDP supports today's motion. We support the four measures. The NDP has been pushing for such measures to be taken for a long time.

As the member for Vancouver East just told us, this is not about Chinese interference alone. We believe it is absolutely fundamental

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to implement measures to address all foreign interference, whether it is from China, Russia, India or Iran. It is important to implement those measures.

With respect to an independent public inquiry, the NDP moved a motion at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs that was debated. I will ask some questions about that a little later. The motion was debated and moved in the House. Members will recall that the NDP motion calling for an independent public inquiry to be launched immediately was adopted almost unanimously in the House. Only one party, the Liberal Party, did not vote in favour of the motion. I do not know why. The other opposition parties and the independent members all voted in favour of this important motion.

As the member for Vancouver East just said so eloquently, it is important that this be put in place with the agreement of all the recognized parties in the House. It is one thing we could do together to strengthen our democracy and prevent this foreign interference from having any impact.

If we stand together, if all members work together, if the government works with the opposition, if all the opposition parties work with the government, then we could come up with the answers that Canadians from all backgrounds are demanding. As the member for Vancouver East said very clearly, it is also important that these answers ensure that we can stand together as a country. It is important that we launch this inquiry.

Now, I have no doubt that the special rapporteur will come to same conclusion in a few weeks because we cannot ignore the will of the vast majority of members of the House. Democracy counts. The decisions we make together count. The fact that the independent members and the members from the Green Party, the Conservative Party, the Bloc Québécois and the NDP all voted the same way adds weight to the decision that should be made by the special rapporteur, as well as to the recommendations he will make in the next three weeks.

There is no doubt that, with these recommendations, the government will have to jump into action and quickly launch this public inquiry. That is extremely important.

● (1210)

[*English*]

I cannot add to the eloquence that the member for Vancouver East provided us with to reflect on in the House of Commons moving forward. We cannot be partisan about this. We cannot be pointing fingers. That is why the leader for the NDP, the member for Burnaby South, wrote to the Prime Minister this week asking the Prime Minister to bring together the four recognized party leaders to ensure we can put in place a strong foundation.

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The NDP has pushed for a national public inquiry. We believe it is vital at this point. We believe that all members of Parliament are operating with good faith on this issue. We understand that, if we start to snipe at each other, we are undermining our democratic systems and the values that are so dear to Canadians.

We have to work together. That is the essence of the letter from the member for Burnaby South to the Prime Minister. We hope that will be promptly followed up on in the coming days. This is something that should concern all of us. It does concern all Canadians.

By putting these measures in place, including a national public inquiry, we would end up providing the answers that Canadians need. As I mentioned, the question of privilege from the member for Wellington—Halton Hills is a part of the debate that we need to have in the House.

We have raised and supported the concerns about foreign interference from China. I do want to raise similar concerns, as CSIS has, about foreign interference coming from Russia. CSIS, in its latest report, states very clearly that Russian cyber-actors continue to pose a significant threat to Canada.

We remember that, just a little over a year ago the convoy took over downtown Ottawa. It deprived the freedoms of so many residents of this area. Families were deprived of being able to sleep at night. Seniors were deprived of the freedom to get groceries delivered. People with disabilities were deprived of their freedom to get essential medication. As we know now, from the series of articles published in the National Observer, as well as many other analysis that were done, there was substantial foreign interference in providing supports to that convoy with all the results we have seen.

It is clear that, when we talk about foreign interference, we need to be concerned about that too. We need to be concerned about the evidence of interference from the government of China. We need to be concerned about the evidence that points to interference from state actors with the Russian regime as well.

There have been disturbing reports from the diaspora from India and Iran that those governments may be participating in foreign interference and putting pressure on Canadians with origins in those countries. They are trying to have an impact in our democratic system as well.

These are profoundly disturbing allegations. We need to work together co-operatively with all members of the House of Commons and all parties. That starts with the meeting the member for Burnaby South has requested. It also starts with the government needing the recommendation to put in place a national, independent public inquiry into the issue of foreign interference.

It also starts with us having a debate in the House today that is in keeping with the words from the member for Vancouver East indicating that we work together, that we work in solidarity, that we work to enhance our democratic system and that we work in a way that makes Canadians proud of the debate we are having in the House of Commons.

• (1215)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after listening to the member's speech, I hope he will support this motion going forward.

The member for Winnipeg North and the member for Kingston and the Islands, in the House this morning, said that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills knew about the harassment toward his family and himself through a briefing two years ago.

I am a father of three kids. Do you think that anyone in the House who knew there were harassment allegations and foreign interference from a foreign country would not bring those allegations forward if they thought their family was in trouble or in danger? Do you agree that a member in the House would know about that and not bring it forward to the government after the CSIS briefing? Do you agree with the member for Winnipeg North and the member for Kingston and the Islands that the member did not take his family's security seriously? Do you believe they should be victim blaming our member for Wellington—Halton Hills?

The Deputy Speaker: I appreciate the question but please make sure it is directed through the Chair.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, yes, we are supporting the motion, in response to his first question.

In response to his second question, I was not in the House for this exchange. I am not going to impugn any members for anything they might have said, particularly if I have not been there to witness it.

I will say, as I stated at the outset, that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills is an honourable member who has served his country in a remarkably effective way. His question of privilege, I believe, should be upheld by the speakership, although that is not in my hands.

Any question of him being dishonourable I would strongly react to and say simply that this is not something that any member should be questioning in the House.

• (1220)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to correct the record, what I have been saying is that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills received a defensive briefing from CSIS. I do not know the content of what was said and I have not said that—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton—We-taskiwin is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, because the hon. member used the phrase “to correct the record”, to correct the record myself, the hon. member used the phrase “supposedly affected” in regard to the member for Wellington—Halton Hills today.

He now has a chance to stand up and apologize.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, the context in which he is suggesting that I said that was different. I certainly would ask that the record reflect that I did not intend to suggest that it was “supposed”. If the member says it, I take the member's word for it.

I do apologize if that is what the Conservatives have been hung up on.

I have been saying all along that he received a defensive briefing. I do not know the content of it. We do not know the content of it, but we will take his word when he says that he knew nothing about this.

My question is, if we should take his word that he knew nothing about it, and I do agree with that, should we not also take the word of the member for Papineau, who said that he was not briefed on this until last Monday?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, let us dial things down. I would say that I have had defensive briefings that have had no detail to them at all. I believe the member for Wellington—Halton Hills because I know him to be a very honourable person and I also believe that his question of privilege is a valid one. I hope that the House will be seized with the debate around that at some point, but that is up to the Speaker.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the elephant in the room that no one is talking about right now is that Canada is a bit of a fantasyland where people wear rose-coloured glasses. People do not realize that Canada is a bit of a small fry among the major nations and when it comes to big international issues. It is as though we just discovered that the major world powers are watching what is happening in other countries.

Over the past few months, we have been talking about interference in the electoral process and Chinese police stations. How can the government allow a foreign power to open outposts to keep tabs on residents of our country? Nevertheless, that is being done openly. No one said anything for months and then it happened.

Chinese balloons flew over Canada. We never really found out how that could have happened or why we do not have a system to protect us from that kind of thing. Huge balloons flew over the country, but we do not really know how the government reacted.

A spy was also arrested. He worked for Hydro-Québec and was taking photographs. We know that Hydro-Québec is conducting research on electric motors. One of its employees was working for the Chinese government, secretly taking photographs and telling the Chinese government all about the research being done in Canada.

Does my colleague not think that Canada is a total fantasyland?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I find that really sad. I have already said that we must be less hostile when we work together.

The Bloc Québécois member is using this issue to attack Canada. He has the right to be a sovereignist. He has a right to his beliefs, but I think it is extremely inappropriate for him to attack Canada in this context at a time when all of us, Quebecers and Canadians, should be working together. It really leaves a bad taste in my

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mouth. I find the Bloc Québécois's reaction really inappropriate at a time when everyone should be working together and be united in our efforts to protect our democracy.

• (1225)

[English]

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for New Westminster—Burnaby kind of touched on this as a long-serving member of the House. I want to also express my solidarity and my admiration for the Conservative member for Wellington—Halton Hills, whom we have been talking a lot about this morning. Perhaps members from all sides can recognize the important contributions that member has made over the years to this place and to our country.

I also want to recognize that the member of Parliament for Vancouver East gave a very heartfelt and personal speech as well today, which might have been a bit missed because of some of the chaos going on because of some of the comments made earlier by two Liberal members of Parliament, which I am going to get to in a second.

Quite honestly, I am astonished we are even here today. I am astonished, because when I take a look at the language in this motion, I just cannot believe that any of this at this point in time has not already been done. I cannot believe that we do not have a foreign agent registry. It is astonishing that we have not had a national public inquiry started on the matter of foreign election interference. I cannot believe that we have the People's Republic of China operating police stations right here in Canada. I certainly cannot believe that the diplomat in question and others have not been expelled from our country at this point in time, this far into this process.

However, even more so, I am astonished that, despite all of the things I was prepared to say, I will probably talk very little about them today because of the way this debate started.

When the hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton stood to open this debate today, immediately members from the Liberal Party started to heckle and mock, laughing about the situation. I will point out that both of the members I will refer to are parliamentary secretaries to the House leader of their party. They are both in their party's leadership. They have been around this House for a long time. To hear the member for Kingston and the Islands in a question refer to the member for Wellington—Halton Hills as “supposedly affected by” the situation, to me—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, on this point of order, I have since apologized for that and asked that it be removed from the record at that member's request.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order, but a good clarification.

The hon. member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin.

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Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, continuing my comments, if we actually listen to what the member for Kingston and the Islands said, he said, “if Conservatives were bothered by it”. That was the caveat he added when he mentioned that just a few minutes ago—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: That's not what I said. That's not what I said.

Hon. Mike Lake: That is what you said. I am not going to get into a heckling match, because that is how we got into this challenge in the first place.

There were about four members at the time, including those two members, who were laughing as the conversation was happening specifically related to the member for Wellington—Halton Hills and the—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I walked into this chamber 15 seconds before the member for St. Albert—Edmonton finished his speech. I was not here. The member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin was saying I was laughing and heckling. It is simply not the case.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order.

I was listening very attentively, and I was not laughing either.

The Deputy Speaker: Those are not points of order either, but clarifications.

The member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Speaker, those two members opposite have had the exact same talking points. They have been gaslighting and victim-blaming the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, which is pathetic.

By doing that, they are also undermining the member for Vancouver East, who gave a great speech about her personal situation and what is happening. Between the member for Wellington—Halton Hills and the member for Vancouver East, they speak very clearly on behalf of all the members of the Chinese diaspora who are experiencing the intimidation tactics by the People's Republic of China.

It is embarrassing, to this country, what those two members opposite are doing.

The Deputy Speaker: Again, we are descending back into debate, and I really do not want to have to descend into debate again. We do have a member who does have time and is on the schedule.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I was simply replying to the inaccuracies that the member is stating.

• (1230)

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I note that the member may seek the floor, when it is his turn. We want to hear from our colleague from Alberta here who has the floor now, reading his speech.

However, we all know what he said. We all know that both the member for Kingston and the Islands and the deputy House leader for the government were sent in here this morning to try to turn the victim into the villain; to try to somehow say that it was the member for Wellington—Halton Hills' fault that the Liberals sat on a report for two years, knowingly giving permission to a foreign diplomat and operative from the People's Republic of the regime in Beijing.

I would like to know if I could table the blues. This is what the member for Kingston and the Islands actually said, quote: “The member for Wellington—Halton Hills had a defensive briefing on this two years ago, so he knew about this when it actually happened.” This is shameful.

I call on the member right now to stand up and unequivocally apologize for that disgusting comment.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, it is true that I said that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills received multiple defensive briefings, actually.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: He did. He received multiple defensive briefings and it is absolutely true that I have absolutely no idea what he was told.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I am trying to address the point. Mr. Speaker, I—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Order. I am just going to sit down.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I do not know what the briefing was about.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Apologize, you joke.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I do apologize for saying that he—

The Deputy Speaker: We are done.

The hon. member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin has the floor.

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, I will point out that the hon. member, in his defence, mentioned coming in 15 seconds before the member for St. Albert—Edmonton stopped speaking. I will point out that it was the precise moment that chaos descended on this conversation. It was his question for the hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton that triggered the condescension and mockery among his colleagues over here. It was his question where he talked about the member's being “supposedly affected”, which he apologized for unreservedly but reservedly a few minutes ago, and that was what triggered the other parliamentary secretary to the House leader, though it is hard to keep track of the parliamentary secretaries to the House leader over there, the member for Winnipeg North, who then said to his laughing colleagues that the member is not credible, talking about the member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

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Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is highly irregular for a member to be able to stand up and then, an hour or two hours later, try to reflect what I might have said from my seat. I would suggest that the member needs to look at what the leader of the Conservative Party was heckling at the Speaker yesterday or at the Prime Minister the day before.

If they want to talk about behaviour and inappropriate language in Parliament, they can look at what the leader of the Conservative Party does on an ongoing basis. That is what one should be ashamed of. If anyone owes an apology, it is the leader of the Conservative Party who owes an apology to the Prime Minister of Canada.

The Deputy Speaker: I do not know what is going on here. We all have set times in opposition debates and we all have the opportunity to get our thoughts forward. There are members on the list.

[Translation]

All those who wish to speak should have an opportunity to speak and to present their thoughts about the motion being debated.

[English]

All members will get to speak if they do not interrupt each other or stand on these points of order for clarification. Maybe we can do that for a little while. Let us try with a few members and see how that goes in this opposition debate today.

The hon. member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin.

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, I am splitting my time with the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Let us look at the context of the conversations we are having right now. There is a member of the House of Commons, a colleague who is well respected by members on all sides, whose family has been threatened and who clearly did not know about the situation.

Earlier in the debate, the hon. member for Winnipeg North said that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills knew about it for two years. He then asked if the member had done anything on the issue. How is he supposed to do anything on the issue?

Here is the situation. There was a general briefing. The member for Kingston and the Islands said that dozens of members of Parliament received these general briefings, which highlights the fact it was a general briefing.

The member for Wellington—Halton Hills said that at no point was he ever informed that Wei Zhao was targeting he and his family. Meanwhile, to be clear, this individual, Wei Zhao, has not been expelled by the government even though it has known about this for two years. He was absolutely free to travel across the country and gather information that he could use against the member and his family, and the government has done absolutely nothing about it.

It is not a stretch for us to imagine what that would be like. This is not about any one specific person, because Canadians of Chinese origin across the country have been victims of this. Their families in the PRC have been victims of this. The government, despite the fact it has known about it for two years, has done absolutely nothing

about it. Then hon. members have had the absolute gall to stand in the House today and blame the member for Wellington—Halton Hills for this.

It is very rare for members of Parliament from the Conservative Party, the Bloc and the NDP to agree on anything, but it is very clear today that we are in vast agreement on this. I think it is mind-numbing for all of us to think that the government, the party in power that was elected by Canadians, as unfortunate as we might think that is, is not on the same page when it comes to defending Canadians. Rather, it has come into the House today with a very clear strategy of sowing chaos and blaming the member of Parliament for Wellington—Halton Hills.

I think most of us are probably going to change the talking points, notes and speeches we have come here with because of the tone set by the two parliamentary secretaries, two members of the Liberal Party in the Liberal leadership team, who have come into the House with a very deliberate strategy. They have apologized for some of it, but they continue to get up and continue in that same vein.

I hope, from this point on, that the tenor of the debate will change today. I hope I see it in the questions I will asked by the Liberal members during my Q and A. Hopefully, we can move forward, as an entire House of Commons, in solidarity with the Chinese Canadians living in every corner of our country, including several members of the House who have been targeted by the Communist dictatorship in Beijing, regardless of their political stripe, and support this very important motion.

• (1235)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, CSIS is the deciding authority that ultimately determines what is brought to a higher level. CSIS did not make the Prime Minister aware of this until Monday of this week, yet the Conservatives have been accusing the Prime Minister of hiding.

The member is asking for members of this side of the House to apologize. He should look in a mirror. Does he not see the hypocrisy that is oozing? Is the Prime Minister not owed an apology, a collective apology from members of the Conservative Party, for their behaviour on this issue?

• (1240)

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, that is one of the most ridiculous questions I have ever heard in the House of Commons. We are talking about a member of Parliament who is serving in the government.

We all wish we were serving in the government, but we are not. There is one government. There is one Prime Minister. All of this has happened under that Prime Minister's watch. The government has known for two years about this situation and it has done absolutely nothing.

That member should be ashamed to get up in the House and ask that question.

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Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I just rhetorically asked the question, “You only have to tell the truth when you are in government then.” To which the response, through a heckle, was “That’s right.”

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. It is not something I heard.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, on that point of order, the member said, “It’s when the government has to tell the truth” and I said, “You should try that.”

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: No, that’s not true. You know it, Warren.

The Deputy Speaker: I appreciate the clarifications. There are a lot of clarifications today.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Drummond.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start with a suggestion. Maybe we should reserve a room and shut the Conservatives and the Liberals in it with a bucket of water to slake their thirst until they resolve their issue so we can carry on debating like grown-ups here.

The member who spoke just now said that we all wish we were serving in the government. I beg to differ. The 32 Bloc members do not aspire to be in government. Nevertheless, we do like collaborating when doing so is in Quebec’s interest. My question for my colleague is about today’s debate on the Conservatives’ opposition day motion.

When people come to Parliament Hill to meet with MPs and government members, that is called lobbying. They have to register in a registry. People want to know who is here trying to influence politicians. Why does Canada not have a foreign agent registry like other countries? Our neighbour, the United States, has had one since 1938. Such registries enable officials to identify more quickly people who may engage in dubious tactics, such as opening Chinese police stations.

Why does Canada not have a foreign agent registry like the U.S. does?

[English]

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, I do not normally get this fired up in here. There is a lot of people who get very fired up in here, but usually I try to avoid my hockey side, in a sense.

However, to the hon. member’s point, I came in today expecting to discuss a motion that I thought would be unanimously supported. If we take a look at what is in the motion, including the measures on the registry and on closing communist China-run police stations in our country, I thought we would have common agreement here. I did not expect to come in and be heckled and mocked by Liberal members of Parliament, especially members of the Liberal leadership team.

I am hoping, again, that we can move forward with this conversation in a more constructive way and get to the heart of what is a very thoughtful motion that hopefully everybody in the House can support.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again, I am going to express my concern that the level that this debate has descended to in the House actually does much of the work of foreign powers that would like to disrupt our democracy.

Instead of focusing on the very good proposals put forward by the Conservatives in their motion today, which I do support, the debate has been of such a calibre that we lose sight of those things and how adopting those measures would help us counter foreign influence from China and other powers.

I would like to give the member a chance to talk about the content of the Conservative motion today, which I fully support.

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, there are four main elements of the motion. There is some preamble, which is really important, but the four main elements speak to things that should be universally supported. I think Canadians across the country will support them and I am glad to hear that the NDP and Bloc support them as well.

The four elements are: creating a foreign agent registry similar to Australia and the U.S.; having a national public inquiry, which seems like common sense given the circumstance that we are in right now; closing down foreign run police stations, which should be a pretty easy thing for us to agree on; and, finally, expelling the People’s Republic of China diplomats responsible for and involved in these affronts to Canadian democracy.

Hopefully, we can all agree on those things.

● (1245)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this gravely serious issue today, the threats to our beloved country’s sovereignty and security presented by foreign, state-backed interference, especially such interference originating in Beijing. This is the primary defining security threat of our country in this time. Foreign state-backed interference seeks to undermine our sovereignty by co-opting and dominating our institutions through a variety of means, both carrots and sticks.

People of all ethnocultural backgrounds can be impacted by foreign interference, but members of diaspora communities are particularly vulnerable to threats from foreign powers if they have close friends or family members living in the state that is seeking to influence or intimidate these Canadians. We should stand together, stand with all victims of foreign interference and implement the effective measures required.

The government has been profoundly weak in its response to foreign interference. It has been worse than weak. In certain cases, members of the government have been complicit. I recall the time John McCallum spoke publicly to say that, in his view, the Liberal Party was better for relations with the PRC. Therefore, the PRC should take certain actions, or not take certain actions, that would be useful to the Liberal Party in a lead-up to the election. Those were explicit comments made by the former ambassador to China, the former immigration minister, speaking on the record. The reality is that many of those conversations, I am sure, happened behind closed doors. We have heard so much about the frustration within our intelligence agencies about the weak response from the government.

This is not a new issue. When I was first elected in 2015, I started engaging with members of different communities in different parts of the country, and foreign, state-backed interference was top of the list of concerns. This was not just from one community, but from many communities. They were very concerned about threats within their communities coming from foreign governments and how they undermined their security. They often involved threats to family members in other countries.

The problem of foreign interference requires us to change the way we think about national security threats. There are many ways of framing the new understanding we need to have, but at this point, it is both honest and illuminating to describe the challenges we face in the world today as something of a new cold war. Although different in many respects, our current reality has many of the same features as the Cold War. We greet this reality with no relish, but this new era of global tensions and conflict is one we must, with sadness, recognize.

The world has now two clear blocs of nations that are engaged in both strategic and ideological conflict, each in hopes of creating a world that is more inclined to its own kind of political system, and we have varying degrees of non-alignment within those blocs.

If I were to describe those blocs, on the one hand we have the community of free democracies that believe in, though perhaps do not always perfectly practise, the ideas of freedom, human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The largest of these countries is of course the United States, but Canada is a key part of this community of free democracies, and this community includes other nations on various continents and of varying income levels.

On the other hand, we have a community of revisionist neo-imperial powers. This community of nations does not have the same ideological clarity around its objectives as the free democratic world does, or even what the old Communist bloc did, but what unites this revisionist neo-imperial community is its collective rejection of the core ideas championed by free democracies. The revisionist bloc challenges the idea that freedom, human rights, democracy and the rule of law are essential for political communities. It especially rejects the international rule of law, the idea that states should not be able to acquire territory through the force of arms and without the consent of the people affected.

Beijing's Communist Party is the primary player in this bloc, but it includes other players, most notably Moscow and Tehran. These other powers of course exercise individual agency and have distinct

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objectives, but they share a common antipathy to western democracy and oppose the idea of an international rule of law binding neo-imperial powers. They are also increasingly working together. Between these two blocs of nations, we see many of the dynamics of cold war competition have re-emerged.

While I want to focus on the issue of foreign interference, I want to parenthetically say that one key area of cold war-style competition is the area of international development and engagement with countries, more broadly, those in the global south. A sad reality of western engagement in Africa is that the memory of western colonization is still very fresh, and the claims of western nations to represent rule of law and respect for national sovereignty can sometimes sound very hollow in light of that reality.

This is one of the reasons Beijing and Moscow have had success building influence in Africa, but this is not the only reason. Many African nations face serious challenges that require immediate solutions. They desperately respond to the overtures of those who offer even short-term solutions in areas such as infrastructure and security.

● (1250)

In the long run, the neo-imperial powers have imperialist designs in the global south as well. They are, in fact, using the old imperial tool kit to establish their control, but those long-term considerations can end up taking a back seat to short-term needs, especially when elites in the global south are also subject to influence operations.

Western engagement with the global south needs to grow in this context, and it needs to emphasize collaboration on solutions to real-world problems that African nations and other nations in the global south identify with. Strengthening the hand of freedom and democracy in the world today requires us to win the hearts and minds of the in-between nations that are deciding whether to align with the community of free nations or to align with the revisionist neo-imperial ones.

Our efforts to win over the swing states of this new cold war must involve building substantial and mutually beneficial relationships based on mutual understanding. They must be based on a will to genuinely live out a commitment to freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. That policy will make us friends, if not with governments everywhere, then certainly with ordinary people everywhere.

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On the issue of foreign interference here in Canada, though, ideological influence operations have always been a part of warfare, but they escalated during the Cold War and have escalated since. During the last Cold War, nations which sought to represent certain ideas would seek to convince people elsewhere to buy into those ideas and then be helpful in the advancement of those ideals.

Today, the ideological competition and influence operation dynamics are different because of the lack of ideological clarity within the revisionist neo-imperial block. They have become both more sophisticated and more crude. They are more sophisticated in the sense that they try to use a variety of different, and even contradictory, arguments to try to advance their strategic objectives. However, they are also more crude in the sense that, without a unifying ideology, neo-imperial revisionist powers often resort to effective bribery and threats much more than persuasion.

We see the reality in this new global context. The multiplication of foreign interference operations here in Canada through the designs of revisionist neo-authoritarian powers are not geographically limited. They are not just limited to their so-called mere periphery. Indeed, the comprehensiveness of influence operations here in Canada underlines that the threat to free democracies is direct and existential.

The bottom line for Canada then is that we cannot put our head in the sand to pretend that these realities do not exist. We need a comprehensive and principled response to this new reality that includes military spending, strengthened engagement in the global south and, most crucially, a comprehensive plan to combat foreign, state-backed interference right here on our own soil.

Our motion puts forward concrete tools for doing this, such as creating a foreign agent registry, similar to the United States and Australia; establishing a national public inquiry on the matter of foreign election interference operations; closing down the police stations run by the People's Republic of China that are operating in Canada; and expelling all foreign diplomats, particularly those from the PRC, responsible for and involved in these affronts to Canadian democracy.

This has been a long-running issue, but since it has arisen in public discussion, we have seen no action by the government in expelling foreign diplomats who are involved in these threats. We know the names. In the case of the threats against the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, we know the name of the person involved in that interference.

We had the Minister of Foreign Affairs before the foreign affairs committee today. She was asked why she has not expelled the diplomat. Essentially, she said that they are still studying and considering this issue. She went on to say that they have to consider possible retaliation. The implication of that is that the government is cautious or reluctant to hold accountable the foreign diplomats who are threatening Canadians because they are afraid there might be some kind of response. To think that, to say that and to be so behind the eight ball in its response projects such weakness and increases our vulnerability.

The government has failed to act. It has failed to inform people who are being victimized, not just the member for Wellington—

Halton Hills, but others as well. It has failed to create the systems that allow victims to have the support they require. It has failed to expel diplomats. It has failed to establish the kinds of legal frameworks we need to protect the victims of this practice.

That leaves us wondering why. Why has the government failed to act? I think there are three possible explanations. One is naivety. It just does not know. Another is infiltration. The government is compromised, which prevents it from actually responding to a problem. The third is a philosophical weakness that makes it unwilling to confront the authoritarian threats we are facing in this emerging new cold war.

Naivety could have been an explanation for a lot of the lead-up time, but it is too late to plead naivety. It is too late to say it did not know. “You may choose to look the other way but you can never say again that you did not know”, as Wilberforce put it, because the facts are on the table now. The government was too naive for too long but it is too late for it to claim naivety. Now, it knows that it knew two years ago, in the case of the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, and it failed to act.

We know there have been issues of infiltration, but there is also a profound philosophical weakness, an unwillingness to project the kind of strength that is required to stand up to the threats we face in the world today. It is a refusal to take action that it knows is necessary by standing up to the PRC, expelling diplomats, expelling those involved in foreign interference and undertaking the measures that are required. The government needs to act, or the government needs to change.

● (1255)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I reflect on the motion the Conservatives have brought before the House today, the only one of the four demands I really see as problematic is that calling for the establishment of the national public inquiry.

When this was first being discussed in the PROC committee, of which I am a sitting member, I actually thought, yes, it made sense to have a national public inquiry to get to the bottom of it. The problem is that, witness after witness who are privy to this sensitive information and understand how information would be provided and where information should and should not be provided, kept telling the committee, time after time that, no, a public inquiry would not be successful because we would be trying to put information in the public domain that cannot be discussed there for national security issues.

Could the member explain why it is that Conservatives, and indeed, the Bloc and the NDP, cannot wrap their heads around the fact that the experts are advising against that course of action?

Business of Supply

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, one of the critical tools we have in the fight against foreign interference is sunlight. When we expose the efforts of foreign powers to influence this country, not in every case but in many cases, it undermines the ability of those efforts and that interference to be effective. This is well established. In fact, many other countries intentionally choose to declassify swaths of information with the objective of undermining that foreign interference. The problem here in Canada is that, we not only see the use of sunlight in this strategic way, but we also see the government using national security as an excuse to not share information, when in reality that information would be about holding it accountable.

We have a major crisis of public confidence in this country around the issue of foreign interference. We had the foreign affairs minister telling the committee today that she only found out about threats against the member for Wellington—Halton Hills through the news. Apparently, Bob Fife and Steven Chase are getting better information about our national security from our intelligence agencies than our ministers.

We clearly have a problem. This is why, from time to time, as a nation we have used the tool of national inquiries to get to the bottom of serious crises in public confidence to allow us to get to the bottom of issues and propel forward the kinds of solutions we need.

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my Conservative colleague for his speech. I did not have a problem with his speech, but I do have a problem with the fact that the members opposite are telling us that we, as an opposition party, understand nothing.

The government does not seem to understand that a public inquiry would be a transparent, democratic way of getting to the bottom of something that is having a serious impact on our democracy.

On this side of the House, we understand nothing, but the other side seems sworn to secrecy. Is it convenient for the Liberal government to keep secret all of the information that should be made public?

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, that is a great question.

Clearly, in areas of national security, not everything can be shared publicly, but that should not be a carte blanche for the government to be able to call anything “national security” when it might not actually pose a risk, or to keep secret whatever information it, for its political interests, wants to keep secret.

Again, we clearly have a problem here of foreign interference and a lack of government action. Let us have a public inquiry where we have a leadership structure that all parties can agree on and a competent outside person investigating what the government is doing. It could make public what it could, of course, not making everything public, but that would provide an accountability function that the government wants to avoid right now. The government wants to keep the sharing of any of this information out of the public eye, not just because of national security, but also, I think, primarily because the motivation is that it does not want to be accountable.

• (1300)

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the House today and in committee meetings, we have seen the Conservatives and the Liberals proving that a public inquiry is the best place for this investigation. We have seen committee filibusters and hyperpartisan attacks instead of discussing the issues that matter to Canadians. From the member for Vancouver East, we have heard of many of the impacts on Chinese Canadians from these hyperpartisan attacks. They need to stop.

My question to the member is this: When will we see the Conservatives finally stop the partisan games and start working together towards solutions?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, it will not surprise the member that I do not agree with her characterization of the Conservatives' role in this. We have been putting forward constructive solutions from the beginning. We have been proposing policy ideas that the government could take. Our motion is very clear in putting forward policy solutions. It does not contain any shots at the government in terms of the policy proposals that are being put forward. It proposes solutions. If the House could get behind these solutions, then I think we would have a clear road map for going forward. I am proud of the role we have played in holding the government accountable and also in being constructive in the approach we are taking.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been an interesting debate thus far. I hope to be able to contribute to it in a relatively positive way. At least that is my initial intent.

I reflect on what the New Democratic member put on the record regarding the impact it is having in one community. It is a good starting point, recognizing that international interference takes all sorts of different forms and comes from a wide variety of other countries. It is not just from one country. That is important for us to understand and appreciate as we continue the debate today.

It is also important for us to realize that Canada is not alone. It is not as if Canada is the only democracy in the world being looked at as a country that is vulnerable to foreign interference. We can talk about the U.S.A., Australia and France. We can talk about other democracies where the same sorts of attempts are being made in different ways by different countries. It is an intentional attack to try to undermine the things that Canadians value so much: our democracy, our freedoms. These are the things that are important to Canadians and to all members of the House. At the end of the day, it is important that we recognize those two facts.

Business of Supply

The other really important thing for all of us to recognize is that members of Parliament have been targeted in a very real and tangible way. It is not only members of Parliament, but also members of legislatures across Canada, councillors and others. A CSIS report gave some numbers for 2022. There were threats against 49 members of Parliament; 26 provincial threats, which I cannot say with certainty were against MLAs, but I am pretty sure they were MLAs; and threats against 17 municipal councillors. These were cases that CSIS was involved in. It affects all of us when one person, let alone dozens of elected officials, is being made vulnerable, being manipulated or threatened in any fashion.

In my political career, I have had one or two occasions when my life was threatened. I like to think, whether it is a minister, a prime minister, leaders of political parties or others in the chamber, that we would all get behind the member and their right to represent the constituents to whom they are assigned through our electoral process.

There are mechanisms in place. When members of the New Democratic Party stand and say that we need to dial it down and make it less political, there are mechanisms to make it less political. It is not the governing party that is bringing the issues up. In many ways, the governing party has been listening and has even been taking serious and significant verbal abuse on the issue. All one needs to do is look at the question periods from earlier this week.

• (1305)

However, the government continues to respect the work that CSIS has done. I think it is important to recognize the role that CSIS plays in this whole area. When we really get down to the nuts and bolts of it, it is a question of whether we have confidence and faith in CSIS. The Government of Canada does. That is why we have seen people, whether the Prime Minister, the minister responsible or others, reflect as much as possible on what they know through CSIS, as far as their participation in CSIS allows.

When the Prime Minister said that he was made aware of it on Monday, all the allegations, the heckling and the words being said on the record, by the Conservative Party primarily, I would suggest, did politicize the issue.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, as they continue to want to heckle, they can look and review.

The government, in a very real way, has been clear. An attack against one member of Parliament, in any form, is an attack on all members of Parliament. When the Prime Minister found out about it earlier this week, he ensured that CSIS would have meetings with the member in question, like the other 49 members in 2022. I do not know the content, but I understand that there have been numerous members to whom CSIS has provided a general briefing.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member who is heckling now does not know the content of those briefings, just as I do not know. I do not know, and the member should admit he does not know either.

It was on Monday that the Prime Minister found out about it, and he took immediate action. If we want to start to depoliticize, as some in the chamber are saying is so important for us to do, we need to look at what it is.

Do they support CSIS? Let us put it into perspective the work that CSIS does. Let me read from the CSIS report. It says:

In an increasingly dangerous and polarized world, Canada faces multiple threats to our security, sovereignty, national interests, and values. CSIS is committed to keeping Canada and Canadians safe from all threats to our national security.

In doing so, CSIS investigates activities that fall within the definition of threats to the security of Canada as outlined in the CSIS Act. Specifically, CSIS is authorized to investigate espionage and sabotage, foreign interference, terrorism and extremism, and subversion. Importantly, CSIS is prohibited from investigating lawful advocacy, protest or dissent—except when it is carried out in conjunction with activities that constitute a threat to the security of Canada.

This is what I really want to emphasize, just so that members have a sense of the reporting and how important it is that we have a protocol put in place. The report states, “In undertaking its work, CSIS reports on these threats by providing advice to the Government of Canada, including through the production of intelligence assessments and reports”, like the one I am citing right now. CSIS has produced over 2,500 intelligence reports. That is, I would argue, one of the reasons that it is CSIS's responsibility to recognize those issues that need to be elevated. It has a responsibility to all members of the House. If there are concerns in regard to their safety or something that it believes that a member should be aware of, it can have that consultation. I have never had that consultation. Maybe that is something that, as a standard rule, CSIS should provide in the future for all members of Parliament. I think it might be something worthwhile.

• (1310)

Every member has the opportunity to ensure that they have that discussion, and it is CSIS that determines what information it is prepared to release, whether to the individual in question or whether to someone higher up. Like the rest of the House, we just found out about the case regarding the particular member. The Prime Minister has now indicated that all cases, and I would assume that would include the 49 in 2022 that CSIS looked into, should be brought to the attention of the PMO. I see that as a tangible action, just like I see a tangible action where we have the Minister of Foreign Affairs now calling upon the ambassador to come before the government.

We constantly hear from the Conservatives, “Expel the diplomat, expel the diplomat.” They do not even know the content, yet they feel that they can be judge, jury and whatever else. They have made the determination. That could be the determination, but I do not know the facts. How could the opposition know the facts? Do they know something that we do not know? Maybe the members of the opposition should be a little more transparent. If they know something, they should tell us. All they are saying is that we must get rid of the diplomat. That could ultimately be the case, but I think we have to go through the process and have confidence in CSIS.

We can take a look at a government that has been proactive on the issue of political interference. In the days of Stephen Harper, not all of those days but a good number of them, I sat in opposition. What did Harper actually do? Let me tell members some of the things that the Government of Canada has done since we have been in government. We established a national security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians. When we were in opposition, we called, virtually begged, for prime minister Harper to bring in that committee. We attempted to get that committee. It was one of the big pushes that we made.

Shortly after getting elected, we instituted that committee. The Conservatives even protested it for a while. There was about a year during which they would not even participate in the committee. What does that committee actually do? It would address the issues we are talking about today. The committee could actually have CSIS come before it and obligate CSIS to share the information. The individuals who sit on that committee are Conservatives, Bloc members, Liberals, NDP members, I believe, and members of the Senate. That is something that we put into place shortly after the election.

What about the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency, again, bringing together an organization to ensure that there is a proper review in process to protect the integrity and the safety of our freedoms and our democracy? That is a substantial initiative by the government. We had a critical election incident public protocol put into place, with top civil servants, so if something does happen during an election, in terms of foreign interference, there is something tangible through the group that deals with security, intelligence and threats during elections.

We established the rapid response mechanism for sharing intelligence with our G7 partners. Because Canada has made significant progress, a lot of the knowledge that has been gathered to date is now being shared among our allied countries.

● (1315)

Those are some of the initiatives we have taken as a government, because we take the issue seriously. Let us compare that to Stephen Harper.

An hon. member: Oh, it is the ghost of Harper.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Yes, the ghost of Harper. He is haunting. He is kind of spooky, I agree.

Mr. Speaker, look at what Stephen Harper did. Let me think about what he did. I could not come up with anything because there was nothing that the former prime minister did. The ultimate irony is in who was responsible for democratic reform at the time, when CSIS first raised the issue of foreign interference. Let us think about who it was. It is almost like a Trivial Pursuit question. I think my colleague from Kingston and the Islands knows the answer.

What we find is that it was the Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada. That is why it is difficult, when we see the members of the political party opposite feeling they can be as political as they want. They can take all the cheap shots and say whatever they want, and there is no recourse. Heaven forbid they are called out on it. If I point out some of the obvious things, then I am the bad guy.

Business of Supply

In fact, I listened to Conservatives this week, and the language they were using this week—

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Going back to the Hansard, the member for Winnipeg North said earlier, “The member for Wellington—Halton Hills has known for two years.” That has already been proven to be false.

The member opposite has not apologized for misleading the House. The member for Wellington—Halton Hills has the utmost integrity, and all members of this House respect him. We all agree on that. He openly stated that there was a general briefing, and there were no specific details in it.

The member opposite has not yet apologized for misleading the House and impugning the integrity and honour of the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. He should apologize right now.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order.

On the same point of order, even though it is not a point of order, the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, a number of Conservatives who have actually stood up for the point of order all had a piece of paper in their hand. I suspect that might be the speaking notes they have been provided, and they should not be able to use it.

Some hon. members: It's the blues.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, they have all been provided the blues. They all wave the blues in front of me.

The Deputy Speaker: We are descending into debate. The member has a whole three minutes left in his time.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

● (1320)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, we have to admit, it is somewhat cute. I say that they have their speaking points and that they have been assigned the responsibility. I make reference to it, and they all start waving it. They all have the same clip. I think I saw three paragraphs on each piece of paper. They have been given their directions.

At the end of the day, let us be real here. I have tried to amplify exactly what the Conservative Party did, and it is not hard to imagine it. While the Conservatives were in government, they did zero.

I gave a lengthy list of the types of things we have done. I know we could do more. That is the reason we appointed former governor general Johnston as the special rapporteur. This is something that could ultimately lead to a public inquiry. The Prime Minister has been very clear on that. If Mr. Johnston comes back saying that a public inquiry is necessary, that is what is going to happen. However, we are hoping that there will be a number of things, and that could be a part of it.

When the Conservatives talk about the registry, that is now already in the works. We have a minister who has opened up the department to getting the feedback so we can ensure that we develop a registry that is going to be effective.

Business of Supply

Not only have we done things in the last number of years, but we are also looking forward to continuing to build on protecting Canada's democracy and rights and ensuring that whether a person is a member of Parliament or a Canadian citizen, we have a process in place to protect them. The person does not have to be an MP; they could be a Canadian citizen.

Not that long ago, I was meeting with some constituents who were fearful to have a picture taken with me. They could not afford to see it in any form on social media because of potential repercussions in another country. I do not need to be told how real it is. I will defend the rights of all members of Parliament on this issue. No one should be intimidated.

I am proud to be a part of a government that recognizes this and has actually taken tangible actions in the past and continues to do so today. In the future, we will continue to build a stronger and healthier system so that Canadians feel comfortable and know we have a democracy that works for all Canadians. We will continue to support CSIS.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, gaslighting and victim-blaming did not work. Now the member is saying that it happens in other countries too, so it does not matter as much. The member is trying to diminish the gravity of what is happening here.

However, what he fails to realize entirely is that this motion was not just brought forward on behalf of the member for Wellington—Halton Hills; rather, it has been brought forth for the millions of Canadians who have come to Canada from hostile countries and who have great fears about what is happening to their families back home and even to their families here in Canada. They have these fears because the Prime Minister has yet to close down the Chinese police stations set up by the Communists there to harass citizens living in Canada.

With the lack of importance given to securing our very own members in the House of Commons, what kind of confidence can new Canadians have in their security?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, members will recall that I actually said in my comments that in 2022, there were 49 members of Parliament; 26 MLAs; 17 councillors or reeves, those classified as municipal; and a huge number of Canadians affected. Some of them were really tangibly affected. I just made reference to, not that long ago, meeting with individuals who were nervous to have pictures taken for the simple reason that they were concerned about repercussions back home. That is the motivating factor for the Prime Minister, the Minister of Public Safety and, indeed, I would like to think, for all of us.

No one inside this chamber, I would like to think, supports in any way whatsoever that a foreign country would try to interfere, directly or indirectly, with the lives of Canadians. This is the reason that the Prime Minister and the government take the issue seriously; this is why we have taken the actions we have taken to date. It is just the Conservatives who continue to want to politicize the issue.

• (1325)

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we learned a few months ago in the Journal de Montréal that there were two Chinese police stations in Brossard. However, when I asked an RCMP officer about that at a meeting of the Special Committee on the Canada–People's Republic of China Relationship at the beginning of February, he told me that there were none in Quebec. A few weeks later, we learned that there actually were.

We also learned that the woman who heads up those two Chinese police stations was a candidate in the Brossard municipal election. She was elected and we now know that the Chinese platform WeChat was sending messages in Mandarin to members of the Chinese community in Brossard. That is likely one of the reasons why she got elected.

How can we ensure that this type of interference does not occur in the federal process if we do not hold a truly independent public inquiry?

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, there is zero tolerance for international interference into Canadian society. I talked about the importance of Canadian values. I can say from a personal perspective that there is no appetite at all, as in zero tolerance, for any form of international police force being established that is not Canadian—

The Deputy Speaker: On a point of order, the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Mr. Speaker, there seems to be a problem with facts here. I would like the member to explain what he means by “zero tolerance”.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, “zero tolerance” is something that has been well established for many years at different levels of government. It means we do not tolerate it at all. If that helps the member, I am glad to be of assistance. I hope this did not come off my time.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to ask a question, but I just want to point out that I appreciate the quiet in here. I am really worried about the state of our democracy. The NDP first put forward the need for an independent public inquiry. The member for Vancouver East urged all parliamentarians not to be partisan and to bring the leaders to the table to pick somebody independent, chosen by all party leaders. The partisan bantering, including from the member for Winnipeg North, is a stage for all the foreign interference that is happening now.

In fact, I find it disturbing, particularly in the riding that he represents and my riding, which neighbours his, that there is all this anti-Asian hate happening. My colleague, the member for Vancouver East, spoke about how these kinds of debates impact people who look like her.

I appreciate the quiet and the decorum in the House right now. In terms of democracy, this is how it should be. I think this is good. Does the member across the way agree with the NDP that we need an independent public inquiry and that oversight by somebody who is agreed upon by all leaders of the political parties, the Conservative, Liberal, NDP, Bloc and Green parties, needs to happen?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure, in my speech, that I made reference to any single country. It is quite possible I might have, but I did start off by making it very clear that there is no single country that participates in political interference and interventions in Canadian society. Rather, there are a multitude of different countries doing this. Moreover, Canada is not alone; there are other countries, whether Australia, the United States, European countries or other democracies, that also get interfered with by a wide variety of other countries.

I am very sensitive to the issue. I would suggest to the member that she might want to give serious consideration to having confidence in the former governor general doing the work he needs to do, which could ultimately lead us to have a public inquiry. He was a Stephen Harper government appointment as governor general.

• (1330)

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, that is just it. After all we have learned in recent days and weeks, my question to the parliamentary secretary is this: At what point is it enough? At what point have we already learned enough information that we do not need to wait for recommendations from a rapporteur? When is the need for an independent public inquiry on foreign interference pretty clear? When do we say that enough is enough?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I have confidence in the former governor general, the hon. Mr. Johnston, in terms of his being able to look at what would be in Canada's best interest and how we can best proceed. If that means we have to be patient and wait an extra few weeks or a couple of months, I am quite prepared to be patient, knowing full well that at the end of the day, it could lead to a public inquiry, if it is deemed necessary.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today the 2022 public report by CSIS was tabled. In 2013, there was also a report tabled, and it was received by the then minister of democratic institutions, who happens to be the leader of the Conservative Party right now. That report said:

Canada, as an open, multicultural society, has traditionally been vulnerable to foreign interference activities. When diaspora groups in Canada are subjected to clandestine and deceptive manipulation by a foreign power in order for it to garner support for its policies and values, these activities constitute a threat to the security of Canada. As boundaries between foreign state and non-state actors become increasingly blurred, it is particularly challenging...to differentiate between legitimate and illegitimate activities. Foreign interference in Canadian society—as a residual aspect of global or regional political and social conflicts, or divergent strategic and economic objectives—will continue in the coming years.

Business of Supply

This was a report received by the member for Carleton. What did he do about it?

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It sounded like the member was making a speech; it was supposed to be a question, which is limited in time. I would just like him to stick closer to the time.

The Deputy Speaker: It is questions and comments, so it does not necessarily need to go into a question.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I just want to correct my hon. colleague, who was the chair of the committee I was formerly on, and who I do not like to normally cross. It is not that he was making a speech. It is that every time he speaks it sounds like it is a speech because it seems to go on for so long. Maybe if he were briefer in his comments, it would be easier on all of us and we would not get confused.

The Deputy Speaker: We are going to descend into another major debate. How about we give the member a whole 59 seconds to respond?

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I just wanted to say that I agree with the comments the member across the way made.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor for one more minute and then I will move on to the next speaker.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, what it does is it reminds us all that foreign interference is not new in Canada. It has been around for more than a decade. CSIS has made us aware of it.

What is important to recognize is that this government, since 2015, has taken concrete steps toward providing assurances. There are many other opportunities for us to not only improve this system, but ultimately to work in an apolitical fashion, hopefully, through standing committees and other mechanisms, so we can all get on-side and assure Canadians we have a democracy that is healthy, vibrant and that will be there for future generations.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. It is also always a pleasure and an honour to speak in the House, although today I feel dismayed that I am having to give this speech.

Obviously, people on this side of the House are quite angry. We are angry with what we have learned about the member for Wellington—Halton Hills and what he has been through. As many others have said, I stand in solidarity with him. We stand in solidarity with him. I will commit to stand in solidarity with all members of the House, regardless of their party, if they suffer the same fate, even if it is the parliamentary secretary from Winnipeg or the parliamentary secretary from Kingston and Islands, who have, in my view, with all due respect, belittled what that member has gone through with their comments today.

Business of Supply

I want to pick up where the member for Winnipeg North just left off. He said that the Prime Minister took this seriously. Let us delve into that just a little. I was not going to go down this path, but since he opened the door, let us step right through it.

The Prime Minister does take this seriously, he says. I know that we, as Conservatives, take it seriously. I take it so seriously that I will be sharing my time with the member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, who I am sure takes it seriously as well.

However, as the member just said, the Prime Minister took this seriously. Why then did nothing happen until a Globe and Mail story with various leaks occurred? Is that the action of a prime minister who takes this seriously, waiting for a leak, waiting for Bob Fife to report? That is what caused the government to act, and that is a government that takes it seriously.

Forgive me if I am incredulous and question what I would characterize as a dubious assertion based on the fact that the government only took it seriously when it came to light that it was occurring. That is a government that was supposed to be transparent by default. It knew and did nothing until a newspaper leak came out, which is unacceptable, and then waited for weeks and weeks. The government put it off for weeks.

The Liberals might ask why I am yelling. I am yelling because we should all be angry. We should all be angry by what the member for Vancouver East spoke about in her speech. We should all be angry about what the member for Wellington—Halton Hills is going through. We should all be angry that this came to light simply because of a leak. It is not proactive, not transparency by default, but self-serving politics, the precise thing that we were promised would not occur.

The member for Kingston and the Islands in his comments read from a 2013 memorandum or publication of some sort to point out what the Conservatives had not done. If it were such a big issue to the Liberals, why did they wait until 2023 to act? If they are going to trumpet what we did not do in 2013, and I do not recall a member of the House being threatened in the same way, if it was such a big deal then, why did they not act in the years between 2015 and 2023?

Kenny Chiu lost his seat. All of us have worked so hard to be here. All of us give up time with our families. The member for Wellington—Halton Hills has served this country in public service for 23 years in the House. I cannot imagine the sacrifices he has made. We have all made sacrifices to be here, because we believe in this, yet it is not honoured. Kenny Chiu, somebody who made sacrifices to sit in the House with the green carpet likely lost his seat, as did others, due to electoral interference, and it was not on the government's radar until a leak. The Liberals were prepared to look the other way until a leak happened, yet we are supposed to believe the government takes electoral interference seriously.

● (1335)

As my colleague from the Green Party just said, “When is enough enough? When do we get an inquiry? When and at what threshold? Does another member of the House have to be targeted with intimidation, or three members? Does it have to be a Liberal member? Do there have to be actual consequences? I say this as

somebody who, in a prior job and in this job, has seen criminal charges laid in respect of the work I do and the way people have dealt with me. When is enough enough?

If we want to talk about past Liberals, I believe it was Jean Chrétien who said that only 10 or 15 ridings were affected, that it was no big deal. Yes, it is a big deal because people have put their lives on the line to sit in the House. They have given up and sacrificed so much to be here. If it is one person who does not sit in the House because somebody prevented it, that is unacceptable, and I will stand with my Liberal colleagues, my Green Party colleagues, my Bloc colleagues, my NDP colleagues and my Conservative colleagues in saying that.

I touched on this very briefly, but I want to again recognize the member for Vancouver East for a very touching speech, speaking about racism. I have spoken about solidarity here. That is something on which we also have to stand in solidarity. I am a first-generation Canadian from a family that lived through fascism in Italy. We must all stand in solidarity.

I was told when I arrived here that there was partisanship and that we all would go back and forth in the House. As a lawyer, I understand that because it happens in court as well. However, at the end of the day, when somebody needs something, we are all going to be there. This is the time for all of us to be there.

What have we seen? We have seen a lack of action. The Conservative motion speaks for itself. What consequences have occurred as a result of something the government is not even denying happened? It is not even denying that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills went through this. Where are the consequences? I understand the foreign affairs minister appeared at committee this morning. I have not had a full briefing on what she said or reviewed her comments, but I really look forward to hearing from her, our highest diplomat, as to why nothing has occurred.

I want to deal with some of the fallacious and ridiculous arguments that have been made, one of which was by the member for Winnipeg North, who said, “The member for Wellington—Halton Hills has known for two years. The question is whether that member has brought it up with the member for Calgary Midnapore or any member of the Conservative caucus. Has he brought it up inside the chamber? Has he done anything on the issue?”

● (1340)

With all due respect, it is not for the member for Wellington—Halton Hills to do something. It is for the government to do something. It is for this chamber to do something. In fact, I will give the member my last 30 seconds if he is prepared to apologize for those comments. It does not look like he is prepared to apologize. They are shameful. It is absolutely shameful to say that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills should have done something.

Another argument was that 49 people were briefed. What a terrible argument. The fact that 49 people were briefed means that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills should have been aware, or whatever that means. It is a terrible argument.

Another argument was to blame Stephen Harper. That is one of my favourites. If we are to do that, we could go back to every prime minister, Liberal and Conservative, and ask why they did not do what we are doing in the House today. Things evolve. I do not recall this type of issue coming up with Prime Minister Harper.

The last argument is that there is no need for an inquiry. Again, I go back to the hon. member when he said, “When is enough enough?”

• (1345)

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo for his clear, accurate and glowing speech. What is happening right now with the Chinese interference is outrageous. The government is not telling us what is going on. The government is not being proactive. What is the government waiting for? When will it protect our democracy?

We also need to protect our citizens, our people, our elected officials and ourselves. I would like my colleague to further explain the situation, which is unclear to the government.

[English]

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, I do not know what is not clear for the government. It seems to me that it is abundantly clear that there is a problem. There is such a problem and this government has governed by obfuscation. That is part of the problem.

It would rather that we not know, and I bring this up again, that it said it will govern by transparency.

The parliamentary secretary said that they have been clear with Canadians. No, they were clear with Canadians when they had a leak.

For weeks, for instance, we also asked who stayed in that \$6,000-a-night hotel room and did not get an answer. Nothing is clear with the government.

To my hon. colleague, I do not know what it is waiting for. It certainly is not for transparency to knock on the door.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has been very clear. The Prime Minister found out on Monday. Maybe the member can share with us: do we have any sense in terms of—

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Speaker, when the member gave a speech, he asked the member to apologize. He made the point a few times. The member said some extremely egregious things about the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. He has impugned the integrity of the House and of that member. What has he done? He has—

The Deputy Speaker: That is a point of debate. That is not a point of order.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Business of Supply

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I will rephrase the question, in addressing the point of order, and ask the member this. Am I not accurate in saying that the member in question actually did get, I am told, not only one but multiple briefings? I suspect, like me, the member himself has no idea of what was actually the content of—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, he is referencing the point of order. The fact of the matter is that if we are looking at that particular point, and there is something else that you should apologize for but, on a technicality, said it was not on the record, on that particular point, you said the Prime Minister had a briefing on Monday and then you said that the member got the same briefing two years ago.

The member did not get the same briefing that the Prime Minister got, and then you put it on the member and asked—

The Deputy Speaker: I need to remind folks to run it through the Chair and to not speak directly to the members. There is a reason why we have the Chair here.

That is not a point of order but I know the member for Winnipeg North does want to respond to it.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it was never my intention to say that the Prime Minister and the member had the same briefing. If that is in fact what I said, I would apologize for saying that it was the same briefing.

The question that I posed to the member was: Can he please correct me if I am wrong? They are accusing me of saying misinformation.

Did I misquote, in any way, that the member did get a briefing?

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, I would say that the member did misstate. I will invite him, with my last 15 seconds, to apologize.

Here is what he said: “The member for Wellington—Halton Hills has known for two years”.

Let us see what the member for Wellington—Halton Hills said this morning. I am holding up a press conference here. The briefing was general in nature and did not contain any specific threats concerning a person in Canada.

I am paraphrasing next about the targeting of the hon. member and his family. He welcomed these briefings.

I am paraphrasing again. The government knew about this two years ago and it did nothing. It did not tell him about this particular individual and it did not expel this particular individual.

When the member says that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills has known for two years, that is inaccurate. He received a general briefing. It is wrong that he knew what was actually occurring for two years, that he and his family were targeted.

I invite the hon. member to apologize.

Business of Supply

• (1350)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with respect to what is happening, it is clear there is an ongoing tit-for-tat situation of she-said-he-said-they-said without getting into the central issue, which is to take partisanship out of this debate and for the Canadian government to make a course correction regarding the action that needs to be taken by putting in place an independent, public inquiry.

Aside from the points in the motion, the other piece I am wondering about is this. Does the member agree that what is also important is for Canada to work with its allied countries to come up with a common strategy to deal with the threat of foreign interference by any country?

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, I agree 100%, yes.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, some of the points I was going to make in my speech were just covered by the member from Kamloops.

With respect to the debate we just had, the point is that during the debate this morning the member for Kingston and the Islands, the member for Vancouver Granville and the member for Winnipeg North all alluded to the fact that it was the member for Wellington—Halton Hills who knew and did nothing. That is a form of victim abuse. That is not acceptable for this House and it pains me to see members of the government, parliamentary secretaries, building a narrative to discredit an hon. member of this chamber. It has to stop and they need to apologize today.

The government is defensive. It is defensive for a very good reason. It goes back to the 2020 report of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians covering their actions in 2019. Of particular interest is chapter 2 of this report, the government's response to foreign interference, which notes, I will add, that Canada's allies have identified interference as a significant threat and initiated various countermeasures. It reads, "foreign interference in Canada has received minimal media and academic coverage, and is not part of wider public discourse."

Things have changed since 2020. In their review of foreign interference activities, this non-partisan committee, which only issues reports if every member of the said committee agrees to them, had a number of findings. They read:

F8. Some foreign states conduct sophisticated and pervasive foreign interference activities against Canada. Those activities pose a significant risk to national security, principally by undermining Canada's fundamental institutions and eroding the rights and freedoms of Canadians. (Paragraphs 136-175)

F9. CSIS has consistently conducted investigations and provided advice to government on foreign interference. (Paragraphs 195-201)

F10. Throughout the period under review, the interdepartmental coordination and collaboration on foreign interference was case-specific and ad hoc. Canada's ability to address foreign interference is limited by the absence of a holistic approach to consider relevant risks, appropriate tools and possible implications of responses to state behaviours. (Paragraphs 219-227 and 280-285)

F11. Foreign interference has received historically less attention in Canada than other national security threats. This is beginning to change with the government's nascent focus on "hostile state activities." Nonetheless, the security and intelligence community's approach to addressing the threat is still marked by a number of conditions:

There are significant differences in how individual security and intelligence organizations interpret the gravity and prevalence of the threat, and prioritize their resources. (Paragraphs 276-279)

In determining the measures the government may use to address instances of foreign interference, responses address specific activities and not patterns of behaviour.

F12. Government engagement on foreign interference has been limited.

With the exception of CSIS outreach activities, the government's interaction with subnational levels of government and civil society on foreign interference is minimal. (Paragraphs 256-267)

Engagement is limited in part by the lack of security-cleared individuals at the subnational level. (Paragraph 261)

There is no public foreign interference strategy or public report similar to those developed for terrorism or cyber security. (Paragraphs 289-291)

I could go on but my time is limited today. The committee made a number of recommendations on actions that the government could take to combat foreign interference, and yet none of those have been taken today. We have still not seen a foreign registry tabled in this Parliament and we have still not seen real action by the government. The only reason we are seeing any action today is because of Robert Fife in *The Globe and Mail*.

Recommendation five in the committee's report reads:

R5. The Government of Canada develop a comprehensive strategy to counter foreign interference and build institutional and public resiliency. Drawing from the Committee's review and findings, such a strategy should:

a. identify the short- and long-term risks and harms to Canadian institutions and rights and freedoms posed by the threat of foreign interference;

b. examine and address the full range of institutional vulnerabilities targeted by hostile foreign states, including areas expressly omitted in the Committee's review;

• (1355)

c. assess the adequacy of existing legislation that deals with foreign interference, such as the Security of Information Act or the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act, and make proposals for changes if required;

d. develop practical, whole-of-government operational and policy mechanisms to identify and respond to the activities of hostile states;

e. establish regular mechanisms to work with sub-national levels of government...

f. include an approach for ministers and senior officials to engage with fundamental institutions and the public; and

g. guide cooperation with allies on foreign interference.

The next point is that the Government of Canada "support this comprehensive strategy through sustained central leadership" and review of legislation.

To conclude, the government has done nothing outlined in the 2020 report. The only reason we are here today and the only reason the Conservative Party has brought this motion forward is to establish a foreign agent registry, to establish a national public inquiry, and to close down the People's Republic of China's police offices in Canada.

What is happening to our sovereignty? I will state this emotional appeal.

The Deputy Speaker: We have a point of order from the hon. deputy House leader.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Mr. Speaker, I understand that the member opposite is passionate. However, for the sake of the interpreters, I would ask that he not scream.

Statements by Members

PUBLIC SAFETY

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Mission—Mat-squi—Fraser Canyon.

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, I will lower my voice, but the passion with which I speak today is because I am scared that our sovereignty is at stake, that the government has been negligent in its responsibilities to Canada and that the country I knew as a young man is not the country of today. I can remember that in the early 2000s it was big national news when members of the American government, the FBI, came to Canada. Canada was upset, yet we stand negligent today when a foreign dictatorship that does not have the interests of Canada at heart establishes a police office in our country.

The government has been defensive. We need to vote with the official opposition and take immediate actions to rectify the grave and serious problems the government has caused in our country.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

DUTCH HERITAGE DAY

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Dutch Heritage Day is celebrated annually in Canada on May 5 to recognize and honour the contributions made by the Dutch community to Canadian society. It coincides with the anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands by Canada during World War II, a day my own mother remembers well, as she and her family were there. They came to Canada on the first ship after the war: my grandmother and her six children, with the seventh on the way. They moved to Owen Sound, where they re-established the dairy farm they had left behind in Holland, maintaining the connection to agriculture that informs my own role on the agriculture committee today.

I was delighted to meet with the Dutch ambassador to Canada, Her Excellency Ines Coppoolse, on Tuesday at an event hosted by the Speaker of the House. She spoke passionately about the many areas of shared values and co-operation, from security and agriculture innovation to respect for freedom of the press and technological advancements.

I was also able to meet with members of the Liberal Party of Holland during the meetings of Liberal International in Ottawa over the last two days. It was a great opportunity to see so many of my colleagues celebrating Holland.

The Dutch community in Canada is one of the largest and most well-established immigrant communities in the country. I am proud to be of Dutch descent. I thank all Canadians of Dutch descent, especially my mother and her family and those of Dutch descent living in my riding of Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, for all they have done and for the Dutch treats like *stroomwafel*, *pannenkoek* and *oliebollen*.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago, seven people were attacked with bear spray in broad daylight on a Calgary LRT platform. Two of the victims were my daughters. The investigating officer said that it was the eighth such incident that week. Fortunately, they were not seriously injured, but, sadly, violent attacks are now a daily occurrence on Canada's transit systems. In April alone, there was an Edmonton bus stop stabbing, a sexual assault on a Toronto bus, a shooting on a Calgary bus, three separate stabbings on the SkyTrain in B.C. and a stabbing murder on a Surrey bus.

People need public transit. It is part of the solution for reducing traffic congestion and emissions. However, people will not take transit if the government will not do something about the chronic violent repeat offenders who make our communities and our transit systems unsafe.

* * *

AUDREY SOJONKY

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Liberals from across Canada gather in Ottawa this weekend, we will be missing a woman who left an indelible mark on our Vancouver Liberal family.

On April 25, Audrey Sojonky, a tireless advocate for women in politics, passed away peacefully at her home in West Vancouver. She dedicated her life to education and to giving back to her community. She believed deeply in a progressive, inclusive Canada and ran for the Liberal Party of Canada in the 1993 election. Hers was the first campaign I ever worked on. She made sure my voice and the voices of young volunteers on her campaign were included in every aspect of what she did, and she never forgot her volunteers. Every time I saw her, even after I was elected to this House, she reminded me of how grateful she was for the work I had done for her 30 years ago and how proud she was of all of us who had achieved great things from her campaign.

Among her many achievements, Audrey Sojonky was president of the United Way of the Lower Mainland and a board member of the Vancouver port and the Vancouver Art Gallery. She was also a proud Ukrainian Canadian and deeply involved in the Ukrainian Orthodox community. She leaves behind her loving son Toma and his partner Leigh, her grandchildren Alexa and Lukas, and countless other relatives and friends.

May she rest in peace. We will be thinking of her this weekend and always. *Vichnaya pamyat*, memory eternal.

*Statements by Members**[Translation]***MENTAL HEALTH OF FARMERS**

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are halfway through Mental Health Week, which this year is encouraging people to share their story.

On this occasion, I would like to hear the stories that we do not hear often enough, those of our farmers. Behind the beautiful landscapes of our regions lies a challenging life and far too often a life of solitude.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I want to acknowledge all of our proud farmers and I want to encourage them to share their story.

They do not need to bear an undue burden alone, no matter how broad their shoulders. They need to talk, ask for help if necessary whether from a loved one, an outreach worker from the *Au cœur des familles agricoles* organization or their regional UPA, or even from a health care professional. Mostly, they need to know that we see them working seven days a week, persevering through bad weather, labour problems, the uncertainty of succession planning and foreign competition. They need to know that Quebecers stand with them.

* * *

● (1405)

*[English]***WORLD PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE DAY**

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a Portuguese Canadian, I am honoured to rise today on behalf of the Portuguese diaspora in Canada and across the world.

Initially established as Portuguese language and culture day in 2009, in 2019 UNESCO officially proclaimed May 5 as World Portuguese Language Day, *Dia Mundial da Língua Portuguesa*. Since then, it is celebrated to honour the Portuguese language and its cultural significance worldwide.

Portuguese is spoken by more than 265 million people globally, making it the fifth most spoken language in the world. Primarily spoken in Portugal, Brazil, Mozambique, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde and Sao Tome and Principe, it is also spoken in India's Goa region and Macau, China.

My sincere thanks to the Portuguese ambassador in Canada, Antonio Rocha, and Mrs. Luisa Rocha, for their great service to our Portuguese-Canadian community.

[Member spoke in Portuguese]

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are completely out of touch when it comes to the future of energy production and electricity in Saskatchewan. The plan to completely shut down coal-fired power by 2030, and quite likely natural gas by 2035, is idealistic but entirely unrealistic.

These federal initiatives would mean the end of up to 86% of the power production in Saskatchewan by 2035.

Thankfully, our premier has stated that despite the federal Liberal's misguided policies, the province will not risk plunging our homes, schools, hospitals and businesses into a cold and dark evening. He is right. Soaring rhetoric cannot change the laws of thermodynamics, and the federal plan ignores the reality that Saskatchewan requires homegrown, reliable and affordable electricity that is available on demand.

The Conservatives understand that we cannot put the security of Saskatchewan's energy system in jeopardy for the sake of ineffective Liberal policies. It is time to make Canada proud, honoured and respected once again. It is time for a new Conservative government.

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SHRI GURU RAVIDASS SABHA VANCOUVER

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on March 18, the Shri Guru Ravidass Sabha Vancouver marked a momentous day by breaking ground at the site of its new gurdwara.

This wonderful organization was established in 1982 and provides both a place of worship for Sikhs and a centre for social, educational and cultural activities for the entire community. For over four decades, its congregants have shared and taught us all the values of equality, justice and compassion.

I congratulate Vancouver Kingsway resident and gurdwara president Bill Basra and his entire executive on their initiative and hard work to get to this exciting point. Mr. Basra is a pillar of the community, who helps people from all walks of life. He is a shining example of kindness, generosity, humility and true leadership.

I look forward to celebrating at the official opening of the new gurdwara with all who are contributing to its creation.

*[Member spoke in Punjabi]**[English]*

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DUTCH HERITAGE DAY

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, May 5 is Dutch Heritage Day in Canada. The bonds of history and friendship between Canada and the Netherlands are unbreakable.

Dutch immigrants have been coming to Canada for over 100 years, and today, over a million Canadians can proudly claim their Dutch heritage. This includes my dad Joe, our siblings and cousins, and over 2,000 Miltonians.

Even Princess Juliana, before she was Queen of the Netherlands, sought refuge in Ottawa during the dark days of the Nazi occupation. By 1943, she was expecting a daughter but could not return home, so Canada declared the Ottawa Civic Hospital outside of Canadian territory, allowing Princess Margriet to be born a Dutch citizen.

Seventy-eight years ago today, the Netherlands was liberated by a Canadian-led force, which they still celebrate and remember today. Dutch tulip farmers and the royal family send us tens of thousands of tulips for Ottawa's annual Tulip Festival. As people walk around Ottawa in the coming days and weeks as the tulips bloom, they can thank Holland.

Our two countries share so much, such as a commitment to fighting climate change and investing in science and innovation. We are also two of the first countries to legalize same-sex marriage. To this day, our mutual admiration for our two nations runs strong across the Atlantic Ocean.

Like over a million Dutch Canadians, I am proud of my Dutch heritage and proud of our truly diverse and multicultural Canada.

* * *

● (1410)

LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are out of money and the Prime Minister is out of touch and out of the country.

This is the Prime Minister's record in just the last five months: five lavish vacations, living it up in New York with celebrities and a \$162,000-vacation to Jamaica paid for by the Trudeau Foundation donors.

Under the Prime Minister, overdoses are up 300%, and 22 people a day are dying from overdoses. People do not feel safe in their community. Yesterday, I met a paramedic, who has to wear a bullet-proof vest to work every day. There are viral videos of people lining up down the street for food banks.

Leadership is taking responsibility, not observing. Leadership means we give people hope and opportunity. Leadership means pivoting and changing when things are not working.

Canada does not have a leader. Canada has a Prime Minister who deflects responsibility and is completely out of touch with the suffering he is causing.

Canadians are out of—

The Speaker: The hon. member for London West.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE MIDWIFE

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on May 5 we recognize the International Day of the Midwife, a day to recognize the essential contributions that midwives make to ensuring safe, quality reproductive and newborn care to pregnant people, mothers and babies everywhere.

The Canadian Association of Midwives not only supports midwives in Canada, but also works toward improving sexual and reproductive health, and rights of women and girls globally.

Canadian midwives are playing their part in providing capacity building, education and clinical expertise to midwives in countries such as South Sudan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Haiti.

Statements by Members

We have over 2,300 midwives who are providing primary health care, and about 120 indigenous midwives providing culturally appropriate care to their communities. Midwives are also well positioned to address the specific challenges still faced by rural, remote and Indigenous communities in Canada.

The world, including Canada, needs more midwives to ensure equitable access to primary care for all Canadians, regardless of where they live in this vast country.

I ask members to join me today in celebrating midwives across the country.

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DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is unconscionable that the Prime Minister is making the victim the villain. An agent of the Communist regime in China attacked a member of this House and his family. Period. Instead of defending every parliamentarian and all Canadians, members of the Liberal caucus have attacked the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills. They have falsely claimed that our colleague has no credibility. They have also claimed that he knew about the attacks on his family.

Do the Liberals really think that Canadians believe that the hon. member knew about threats against his family but did nothing, while at the same time the Minister of Public Safety, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and even the Prime Minister were oblivious to these attacks and threats against a member of Parliament?

Blaming the victim of these threats sends a very frightening message to Chinese Canadians and all Canadians who are being intimidated by Beijing and China that we will not defend democracy, we will not defend Canadians and we will not defend this House. The Liberals need to stand up and expel this member—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

* * *

LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are out of money, and the Prime Minister is out of touch and out of the country.

Many of my constituents can only dream of lavish foreign vacations, a trip to New York to hobnob with celebrities, or getting a “free” \$80,000 vacay in Jamaica, courtesy of Trudeau Foundation donors.

Statements by Members

I do not think the Prime Minister has any idea how difficult life is for a family in Kelowna struggling to pay over \$1,000 a month more for a mortgage, or how crippling his hike in the carbon tax is for a family in Hedley who have to drive to a different community to get their kids to school, to see a doctor or buy groceries.

In Merritt, drug houses and pushers are immune from prosecution because of the Liberal government's drug decriminalization "pilot project". While the Liberals and NDP pat themselves on the back for this pilot project, let us not forget that it set a new record for drug overdose deaths in B.C. for the first quarter. The police are powerless, but drug dealers are the ones who profit because of the Prime Minister's out-of-touch Liberal-NDP ideology.

Canadians are out of money, and the Prime Minister is out of touch and out of the country.

* * *

KING CHARLES III

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour the coronation of our sovereign, King Charles III, and the beginning of a new reign of service to his 15 realms and the Commonwealth.

Fulfilling a uniquely subliminal contract with the millions of citizens who rely on His Majesty to provide a continuity that is so difficult to define, I would like to offer King Charles III my sincerest wishes for a happy and productive reign.

• (1415)

[Translation]

For as long as I can remember, the principle of constitutional monarchies has attracted and engaged me. The state, as represented by the Crown, facilitates societal evolution in historical continuity.

The new King of Canada, His Majesty Charles III, will have to more tightly weave the bonds of affection and trust that he has developed over the years, and I am convinced that he will know how to do so.

[English]

"Long live the King."

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VANCOUVER ISLAND MENTAL HEALTH SOCIETY

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week is Mental Health Awareness Week and I wish to acknowledge the important work of the Vancouver Island Mental Health Society, VIMHS.

VIMHS first started providing essential psychiatric rehabilitation supports, and now also provides services that include housing programs, harm reduction services, psychosocial rehabilitation, community outreach and public education. VIMHS's programming has supported thousands of people over the years.

A resident of my riding shared a touching story of how they were struggling with intense and frightening delusions, marijuana withdrawal and lack of sleep, which took a tremendous toll on their life. VIMHS was there to provide necessary supports for this individual

to get back on track to living a life of dignity and joy. This resident is now focused on their health, well-being, sobriety, and learning skills, including cooking, yoga and attending university. This resident recently scored a 97.4% on their mid-term, and I congratulate this resident.

I want to thank all of the individuals who work in mental health. I also thank VIMHS and others in Nanaimo—Ladysmith. Their work matters to so many.

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[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL FIREFIGHTERS' DAY

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today, May 4 is International Firefighters' Day. People around the world are saluting the courage of those who fight fires and, more broadly, protect their citizens against the forces of nature that are unleashed. This day is marked around the world, but especially at home today, as Quebeckers are reeling from the ultimate sacrifice of two of our own. Two volunteer firefighters lost their lives in Saint-Urbain when they were carried away by the current while helping flood victims. On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I wish to offer my most sincere condolences to the grieving families, friends and communities of Christopher Lavoie and Régis Lavoie.

This tragedy raises questions that must be answered about the conditions under which our volunteer firefighters are deployed and their security. However, by its very nature, there will always be a fair amount of risk in this profession. For that reason, on this International Firefighters' Day, everyone will always be indebted towards those who are there for us.

To our firefighter brothers and sisters, thank you for your dedication.

* * *

[English]

FINANCE

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are struggling through the effects of inflation, high interest rates and slowing economic growth. Canadians need a finance minister who will stand up and explain to them why they can no longer afford a home, why families have had to cancel vacations and why millions are having to visit food banks. Instead, we have a finance minister who has spoken in the House only seven times all year. She has refused three separate invitations to the finance committee.

We are once again inviting her to speak at the finance committee to defend her record of high taxes, enormous deficits and slowing economic growth. The Minister of Finance is asking for Canadians to give her \$490 billion, \$60 billion in new spending and \$12 billion in unallocated spending. All we are asking for at the finance committee is two hours.

I am asking her today whether she really believes her time is worth more than \$8 billion per minute. Is there something more important to her than the Canadian public? It is time she stood up in the House and was accountable.

* * *

RED DRESS ALERT

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on May 5, the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Two-Spirit People, we must reckon with the nationwide emergency that is the horrible, continuous loss of these precious lives. I am devastated that, as time passes, we continue to lose mothers, sisters, aunties, daughters, cousins and friends. Just this week, we learned of yet another young woman in Alberta who was senselessly taken from those who knew and loved her.

This emergency demands immediate action and adequate investments. We need to implement the calls for justice. First and foremost, we must follow the lead of women and survivors on the path of healing and reconciliation. This is a systemic crisis that needs systemic solutions. We must ensure that women have access to all the resources they need in order to have their rights fully respected.

This is why I wish to echo the calls by the member for Winnipeg Centre, and many others, to implement a red dress alert system. I believe that this alert would raise awareness of this crisis and would save countless lives. The time for discussion is over, and the time for urgent action is now. Indigenous women and girls and gender-diverse people deserve love, safety and justice.

ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1420)

[English]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, members of the government said, earlier today in the House, that I had known for two years about the specific threat that a PRC diplomat in Toronto was gathering information to target my family. That is false. I will categorically state again for the record that the briefing of two years ago, in June 2021, was general in nature. It did not contain any information about the specific threat that a PRC diplomat in Toronto, Mr. Wei Zhao, was targeting my family.

Will the Prime Minister correct the record to stop the spread of this misinformation?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure my colleague opposite that we take the

concerns that he has expressed, and that have been expressed in public, with regard to foreign interference and the targeting of himself and his family extremely seriously, which is why we will continue to work with him and provide him with briefings.

I would also point out that, earlier today, we tabled the 2022 CSIS report, wherein it states, among things, that CSIS provided briefings to 49 federal parliamentarians. By working with everybody, we can protect our democratic institutions.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I want to remind hon. members—

Mr. Chris Warkentin: He's lying.

The Speaker: I am not going to say “honourable” member, but does the member want to withdraw that, please?

No.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order.

To the member for Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, if you do not respect the Chair, the Chair will not recognize you while you are in the House.

The hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills, please continue.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have just been informed by the—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Withdraw it and apologize to the Chair. The Chair will not recognize you until you do, indefinitely.

The hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, I have just been informed by the national security adviser that the CSIS intelligence assessment of July 20, 2021 was sent by CSIS to the relevant departments and to the national security adviser in the PCO. This report contained information that I and other MPs were being targeted by the PRC.

This contradicts what the Prime Minister said yesterday. He said that “CSIS made the determination that it wasn't something that needed be raised to a higher level because it wasn't a significant enough concern”.

Will the Prime Minister correct the record that this report and information was sent to the departments and to the Privy Council Office?

Oral Questions

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for sharing that update with the chamber. I can also assure him that, as the Prime Minister said and as I said earlier this week, we found out on Monday of this week, which is why we acted very quickly and decisively to reach out directly to the member for Wellington—Halton Hills to make sure that he was offered a briefing and had that briefing happen.

We will continue to work with him to address and mitigate any concerns around foreign interference, because every member in the chamber deserves to be able to do their work in representing their constituencies in a manner that is safe and secure.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, CSIS has been advising the government, the departments, the Privy Council Office, the national security adviser and deputy ministers that foreign agents in Canada, foreign diplomats in Canada, are presenting a threat to Canadian MPs in the House of Commons. In fact, the 2022 intelligence report from CSIS today says, “These threat actors must be held accountable for their clandestine activities.... We will also continue to inform national security stakeholders and all Canadians about foreign interference”.

Why is the government not listening to the advice of CSIS and not listening to the advice in the reports that are being distributed?

• (1425)

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are taking concrete action. In fact, as my colleague would know, I hope, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, earlier today, summoned the Chinese ambassador to ensure that we are clear about any consequences around hostile activities or foreign interference, and that is very much consistent with Canada's strong record in condemning this kind of behaviour. Moreover, we will continue to work with all parliamentarians to protect the people who work in the chamber so that we can uphold our democracy.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a sad day for democracy. Rarely have we seen a political party sink so low.

A member of the House is being threatened by a bully diplomat from Beijing. The member for Winnipeg North and the member for Kingston and the Islands, on behalf of this government and this Prime Minister, have taken over and are now conspiring against our Conservative colleague. They are spreading disinformation. They should be ashamed of themselves.

Why are they siding with Beijing rather than a Canadian MP?

When will the Prime Minister apologize for the offensive attitude shown by members of his political party?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure my colleague. We share the concerns of the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, which is why we offered him a briefing.

We will continue to offer him support, as well as all members who work in the House, to protect our democratic institutions.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is disinformation.

The member for Wellington—Halton Hills learned today that the CSIS memo indicating that he was obviously being bullied by a diplomat from the Beijing consulate in Toronto was passed on to anyone and everyone on the Liberal side of the House.

However, the Liberals are denying the truth. They did absolutely nothing. They have not expelled any diplomats and they continue to spread disinformation.

When will they apologize? Will they be ashamed to go before their membership with such lies?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I fully understand the frustration and fear that our colleague felt knowing that he and his family could be targeted by the government in Beijing.

That is why we have always said and will always say that any form of foreign interference is unacceptable. That is why my deputy minister summoned the Chinese ambassador earlier today.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Mr. Speaker, if I could continue to speak without my colleague interrupting me, which we also said—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saint-Jean.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a new development has surfaced.

The Prime Minister claims that CSIS made the decision not to inform the opposition member that he was the target of threats from China.

Richard Fadden, a former CSIS director, demolished this excuse in *The Globe and Mail*. Mr. Fadden explained that not only would the memo that the media found have been sent to the Prime Minister's office, but it would also have been sent to the departments of foreign affairs and public safety. This means that, at the very least, the Prime Minister and two ministers had the memo.

Why did he keep it a secret?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us be very clear: It was only on Monday of this week that the Prime Minister, the government members and I were informed about concerns regarding the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. Once we found out, we dealt with the situation. We provided a briefing to the opposition member.

We are going to keep working with all members to protect our democratic institutions.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is blaming CSIS, but he has been ignoring their warnings for years.

Even before the 2019 election, CSIS warned him that a Liberal candidate was possibly being supported by China. He ignored that. CSIS later warned him that the same Liberal member was discussing the two Michaels with Beijing. He ignored that. In 2021, CSIS warned him that China was threatening an opposition MP. He ignored that. He is only showing an interest in all this today because the information was leaked to the media.

Is it worthy of a member of the Five Eyes alliance to blame its intelligence service for its own willful blindness?

• (1430)

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is working closely with our allies, including the Five Eyes and the G7. That is why we created a protocol to combat disinformation. That is why we will continue to work with all parliamentarians to combat foreign interference with tools and resources.

This is not a partisan issue. It is a Canadian issue. We need all members to stand together to protect our democratic institutions.

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has been the leader of the Liberal Party for 10 years. In those 10 years, there has been a lot of broken promises and empty words, particularly when it comes to housing.

The Prime Minister promised to make housing more affordable, and it has been the opposite. It has become more expensive than ever before. At the same time, profiteers have been making more than ever before.

When will the Prime Minister take the housing crisis seriously and acknowledge that we are in an emergency situation that needs urgent action to fix?

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. We share the same objective, which is to increase the housing supply for all Canadians in this country.

This is exactly why we created the national housing strategy. We invested more money, and we also invested in the right to housing. We are going to keep working on behalf of all Canadians.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, despite all that, housing is more expensive than ever.

The Prime Minister has been the leader of the Liberal Party for 10 years. In those 10 years, his record when it comes to solving the housing crisis adds up to a whole lot of nothing. He is all talk, no action.

Clearly, we are in a housing crisis. When is this government going to take the housing crisis seriously and solve the problem?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing),

Oral Questions

Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. Where I come from, when someone uses the “all talk, no action” line, it is because they have run out of arguments.

This national housing strategy has gotten 36,000 people off the streets. It has helped 68,000 people stay off the streets. In the last budget, we earmarked \$4 billion for an indigenous strategy. On this side of the House, we are all action.

* * *

[English]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a massive hole has been blown through the Prime Minister's story about the foreign interference campaign and harassment of the family of a member of Parliament.

We now have confirmation that CSIS informed the national security adviser to the Prime Minister that families of members of Parliament were being targeted by an operative from the Communist regime in Beijing to intimidate that member's family because of a vote in the House of Commons. The Prime Minister claims that he only found out about it on Monday. We now know they have known about this for two years. Why have the Liberals allowed this operative to continue this interference campaign?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague heard earlier in this question period, my colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs has summoned the Chinese ambassador to make it abundantly clear what is legitimate and what is not. This is consistent with Canada's strong position when it comes to hostile activities, especially with regard to foreign interference.

Every single member in this chamber has a right to represent their constituents in complete and total safety. We will continue to work across the aisle with all parliamentarians to make sure that objective is secure.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it sounds like the Minister of Public Safety is saying that the Chinese consular office had to be told what is allowed and what is not allowed in Canada when it comes to foreign interference. Is that the excuse for letting this operative stay?

This operative from the communist regime has been conducting an interference campaign and a harassment campaign, targeting the family of a member of Parliament because of a vote in the House of Commons. We now know they have known about this for two years. Why is this operative still in Canada?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is one thing I will agree on, and that is that Canada will always be clear about what the boundaries are, and what is right, legitimate and lawful, and what is not.

Oral Questions

I will tell the House that that is a far better approach than the one the Conservatives proposed when we were getting the two Michaels back, which would have been to capitulate to the People's Republic of China. We will never do that. We will always stand up for human rights. We got the two Michaels back. We will make sure we protect all members in this chamber, so we can uphold our democracy.

• (1435)

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, two high-ranking senior Liberals entered the House claiming the member for Wellington—Halton Hills was briefed two years ago about the threatening allegations and simply ignored it, not talking to colleagues or his family in Canada and abroad. This is outrageous and inexcusable but, most importantly, unbelievable.

To the public safety minister, Canadians are watching you, sir, and they demand an answer. When were you first briefed?

The Speaker: I would remind hon. members to please, when asking a question, not ask or speak directly to each other, but through the Chair.

The hon. public safety minister.

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to reiterate that we do take the concerns that have been expressed by the member for Wellington—Halton Hills very seriously. That is why, as soon as we were informed about this issue, which was Monday earlier this week, we reached out to him directly. We offered a briefing to him. We made sure that briefing happened, and we will continue to work with him and all members to make sure that we can uphold our democracy.

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is enough of the political spin. An attack on one member is an attack on the entire House. Canadians have questions. It is time for the public safety minister to start answering them honestly and directly.

When was the minister made aware that an agent of Beijing's Toronto office was intimidating a sitting member of the House?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, might I suggest that my colleague across the way listen carefully to the answer I have given now on multiple occasions.

As I said, I was informed on Monday of this week of the specific issue pertaining to the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, and shortly thereafter, I reached out to that member. I wanted to make sure that he knew he would have my support and the government's support because we, in fact, do care for his security, for his family's security.

This is not a partisan issue, and making scandalous allegations does not advance the debate around national security. We need to work together to protect our democracy. That is what we are committed to doing.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister just said that this is not a partisan issue. Unfortunately, this morning, this government made it a partisan issue.

This morning, two senior parliamentary secretaries stated in the House that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills has known for two years that the Beijing government had an agent here in Canada who was harassing him and his family. Earlier, the member said that was not true.

I know there are members and ministers in this government who have a sense of honour and dignity. Which minister is going to stand up and apologize?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government did reach out to the member for Wellington—Halton Hills to express our support for him and his family.

We are concerned about the situation, not only for the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, but also for all members of the House.

It is important to do this work in good faith to protect our democratic institutions.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is happening right now is ridiculous. The victim here is the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, and the aggressor this morning is the Liberal government.

Instead of defending the member, they attack him. That is what happened this morning. The parliamentary secretaries attacked him not once, but twice.

I once again appeal to all the ministers of this government. I know them. I know that there are people of honour and dignity in this government. Who will stand up and apologize to the member?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government will always defend the right of all members to be safe when carrying out their duties without the threat of foreign interference.

That is why we granted powers to new authorities. That is why we enhanced the level of transparency by creating the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians to work across party lines. We must work together to protect our democratic institutions.

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this morning CSIS released its annual report.

The report confirms the existence of Chinese police stations on Canadian and Quebec soil. It also confirms that China uses officers of its public safety ministry to intimidate the diaspora. Finally, it confirms that Beijing “may seek to influence electoral nomination processes...or influence policy positions of elected officials using covert tactics.”

When such information is in a public report, it means that the Prime Minister has known about it for a long time.

Why was nothing done while this issue only concerned the opposition and was not making headlines?

Oral Questions

● (1440)

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for acknowledging the good word done by CSIS, whose report was tabled in the House earlier today.

The report indicates that CSIS offered 49 briefings to members here, in the House of Commons. This is a tangible example of how we can work on protecting our democratic institutions.

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, speaking of newspapers, on Tuesday the Prime Minister accused The Globe and Mail of reporting false information when it said the government had been informed that an opposition member was the target of threats by China. Today, he is changing his story and confirming that the information exists and that CSIS had not shared it with the member. The information exists. The briefing note uncovered by The Globe and Mail clearly states that China could be targeting several MPs. It said, “Canadian MPs” with an “s”. Are there other MPs? Who are they and have they been warned?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, foreign interference is not a new problem. It has been going on for years. That is why, as soon as this government took office, we gave CSIS new powers, we invested new resources and we enhanced the level of transparency with the help of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians and the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency. That is how we can better protect our democratic institutions.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was informed, as early as 2021, that a member of the opposition was being targeted by threats from China. He did nothing. Today, he is refusing to either confirm or deny the information obtained by The Globe and Mail that China could be targeting other members of Parliament. We are simply asking him to tell us whether there are others and whether they are aware of the situation. That is why the Prime Minister is not to be trusted in the matter of Chinese interference. He has no desire to get to the bottom of things. When will there be an independent commission of public inquiry?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have made investments and we trust our national security agencies to do the job of protecting all members who work in the House. It is not easy. There are challenges, but if we work together, we can better protect our democratic institutions.

[English]

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier in today's debate, two members of the Liberal government claimed that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills had known for two years that his family was being targeted by Beijing operatives on Canadian soil. That is categorically false. Those members should be ashamed for their victim blaming and trying to shift responsibility away from the Prime Minister, who has not stood up for Canada and Canadians.

If the Prime Minister will not expel these Liberals from his own caucus for promoting conspiracy theories and disinformation, will he at the very least expel these Communist operatives who are still in Canada?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have to rise in my place because I think it is important for us to take a step back to recognize that, as Russia and China target this House and all democratic places everywhere, there is absolutely no question that the government, and any government in the history of Canada, would see a threat against any parliamentarian as anything other than a threat against every single person in the House. The assertion that anything else is the case is ridiculous.

All of us stand firm and resolute against the threat to democracy. It is absolutely a threat against us all, and we will rise to the hour every time.

● (1445)

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have not only failed to do anything about the fact that a diplomat from Beijing has targeted a member of Parliament and his family because of how he voted in the House of Commons, but they have also stooped to a disgusting new low today. The Liberal MPs for Kingston and the Islands and Winnipeg North have both stood in the House to imply that it is the MP from Wellington—Halton Hills himself who is to blame for the government's inaction.

Will the Prime Minister rise in this place to apologize for these despicable false claims coming from these Liberal MPs?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we can agree on unequivocally is that it is disgusting—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. government House leader may continue.

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, what we can agree on unequivocally is that a target of a member of Parliament's family is an act beyond anything we can imagine. Every single one of us have dedicated our lives to democracy. We have seen ourselves—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I have gotten up twice already. The third time I get up, whoever is next from that party is going to go to the end and we are going to start exchanging places. They are going to go to the back of the line and we will let the person who is last come in their place. I am going to ask everyone to be quiet and be respectful, and ask questions quietly.

The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, I do not know how many members of the chamber have been named and targeted by Russia; the number is high. I do not know how many members have been targeted by other foreign powers, but I do know this: There are forces right now that would see democracy piled under the dirt and that would attack our democracy, and we need to stand shoulder to shoulder, as we do with the member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

Oral Questions

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal MP for Winnipeg North said that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills has known about the threats against him for two years; that is categorically false. The Liberal MP for Kingston and the Islands said that the MP for Wellington—Halton Hills was briefed on these specific threats two years ago. This is categorically false. Liberals are now targeting the MP who, himself, has been targeted by Beijing.

When will the Prime Minister get up and apologize for the Liberal MPs spreading these outright lies?

The Speaker: Will the hon. member for Chilliwack—Hope withdraw his statement?

Okay. Let me consult with the Table and see what we can do about that.

That is not allowed in the House; it is not parliamentary. I am going to give the hon. member one more chance and then we will move on. We are not going to have many people left to ask questions.

Will the hon. member for Chilliwack—Hope withdraw his statement?

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, I stand by what I said.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Chilliwack—Hope will not be recognized by the Chair until he withdraws the statement.

The hon. member for Vancouver East.

* * *

HOUSING

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals abandoned their responsibility to build social housing, and Canadians are paying the price. Under this Prime Minister, the cost of a home has nearly doubled. Successive Liberal and Conservative governments allowed corporate landlords to buy up affordable housing stock and jack up the cost of housing for renters and homeowners alike.

Will the Liberals stop treating housing as a commodity and commit to building at least 500,000 units of social housing and co-op housing so that families can find a home that they can afford?

• (1450)

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while we agree on the current housing supply challenges across the country, my colleague knows full well that this government has made historic investments since it came to office, starting with the first-ever national housing strategy.

We have built or renovated 480,000 housing units. We have kept 62,000 people off the street, and we have taken more than 32,000 people off the street.

Yes, I agree with my colleague, there is still a lot of work to be done.

[English]

PHARMACARE

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals promised universal public pharmacare in 1997. Since then, countless committees and commissions, including this government's own Hoskins report, have advised that single-payer pharmacare is the only way to go, but Canadians are still waiting for the Liberal government to keep its promise. While the Liberals protect big pharma's profits, the NDP is fighting to deliver public pharmacare so Canadians get the medicine they need.

After a quarter-century of delay, will the minister finally commit to implementing universal, public pharmacare?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful for the opportunity to speak of what we are doing to increase the accessibility, affordability and appropriateness of drug use in Canada. I will mention the launch, just a few weeks ago, of the strategy for drugs for rare diseases, a half-billion-dollar investment every year for the next three years to make sure that children, in particular, and other people in need of drugs for rare diseases have access to those very important drugs.

The Canada drug agency is going to be set up quickly to set up a national formulary to reduce—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine.

* * *

[Translation]

DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week, several regions in Quebec were hit hard by flooding. We were saddened to learn that two firefighters from the Charlevoix region lost their lives when they came to the rescue of residents in danger. My heart goes out to the families of these firefighters, Christopher Lavoie and Régis Lavoie, at this difficult time.

Can the Minister of Emergency Preparedness inform the House of the measures the federal government is taking to help the communities that are affected by these floods?

[English]

Hon. Bill Blair (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine for sharing her condolences.

Our deepest condolences go out to the families of firefighters Christopher and Régis Lavoie. They went out in the middle of serious flooding to do their jobs and to save lives, and we mourn their loss as we recognize their sacrifice. As Charlevoix and the Quebec region begin to recover from these floods, I have reached out to Minister Bonnardel to offer both our condolences and our support.

We are monitoring the flooding conditions very carefully across the province. We will continue to stand ready to ensure that the province has the assistance it needs in response and in recovery.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Foreign Affairs has said that she is assessing interests in determining whether to expel the Beijing diplomat who arranged to punish the family of the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. The minister has a choice to make, because the number one priority of the government ought to be the safety and security of Canadians, and by allowing this Beijing thug to remain in Canada, it is putting Chinese Canadians at risk.

When will the government get its priorities straight and send him packing today?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course, when it comes to foreign interference, we will never tolerate it, and that is exactly what I said to my counterpart when I met with him a month ago. That is also why we summoned the Chinese ambassador a bit earlier today. Now, we are also, as a thoughtful government, assessing all the interests that are at stake, because we know, based on the two Michaels' experience, that when it comes to the PRC, it will take action that will have an impact on our diplomatic, consular and economic interests.

That being said, all options are on the table, including the expulsion of diplomats.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton will now be last.

We'll now go to the hon. member for Kitchener Centre.

* * *

• (1455)

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, the Ontario government is actively looking to go backwards in the climate fight by building and expanding natural gas-fired electricity plants. Natural gas is no climate solution. The federal government must step in to ensure that Ontario does not undo hard-fought gains in the midst of a climate crisis. Its upcoming clean electricity regulations must deter provinces from this kind of climate backsliding.

Will the minister commit to making these regulations stringent enough to stop natural gas expansion in Ontario?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we made a commitment during the last election campaign to have a net-zero grid by 2035. Canada already has a grid that is more than 80% non-emitting, and there are a number of provinces doing amazing things when it comes to renewable energy. Let us talk about Alberta, which in 2016 committed to eliminating coal by 2030. Alberta will have eliminated coal this year.

This is what we are aiming to do across the country.

Oral Questions

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Beijing operative Zhao Wei sought information on the whereabouts of the family of the member of Parliament for Wellington—Halton Hills so that Beijing could make an example of him. This is a direct threat against a sitting member of this House and his family. Zhao Wei is still in this country. The response from the Liberals today is to blame a sitting member of Parliament, victim blaming.

When will the Prime Minister do his job, stop blaming victims, send a message to Beijing and send Zhao Wei home?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, any suggestion that we do not have care or concern for the member for Wellington—Halton Hills is absolutely absurd. I have reached out to that member. We made sure that we got a briefing. We will continue to support him and all members in the chamber, because every member of Parliament, every parliamentarian, has a right to represent their constituencies. We need to do this work together so that we can push back against the forces of foreign interference and uphold our democracy.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the Vienna Convention, we do not have to ask for permission to expel a diplomat. The Prime Minister really should let his caucus know.

While the Minister of Foreign Affairs is dithering, Liberal parliamentary secretaries are busy blaming the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, a man who is really well liked in the House. What is the world coming to?

Instead of looking away, will the Prime Minister expel this diplomat, this persona non grata?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have already said, my hon. colleague the Minister of Foreign Affairs summoned the Chinese ambassador to firmly set the boundaries for activities that are legitimate and others that fall under the category of foreign interference.

We will continue to condemn activities in this category to protect our democratic institutions.

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CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, from listening to the Prime Minister, one would think that everyone is going to be glued to their television sets this weekend watching the latest soap, the coronation of Charles III. According to the Prime Minister, “Canadians are looking forward to celebrating the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III”.

I do not know who he is talking about, but it is certainly not Quebeckers. It would have been a little more accurate if he had said that Canadians are looking forward to getting rid of the monarchy. It is not too late to get it right.

What is the government waiting for? When will it free us from this outdated, undemocratic institution?

Oral Questions

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Quebecers are currently dealing with floods and climate change. They are worried about affordability issues, the housing crisis and our health care system, which is at risk, and yet the Bloc Québécois spends its time in the House talking about the monarchy.

Our Liberal government is squarely focused on the real priorities of Quebecers and all Canadians.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister is the one who told us that the monarchy is not a priority and that the Bloc Québécois should change the subject.

Why is the Prime Minister trying to make it sound like the coronation is the most popular media event since the Quebec cult TV series *La petite vie*? His government is the one that decided to issue and give away 30,000 coronation medals. His government is the one that is about to land in London with 20 or so representatives, not counting staffers, for yet another eye-wateringly expensive event.

If the monarchy is not a priority for the government, can the minister explain the reason for this circus?

• (1500)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I must be dreaming. For viewers at home watching us, it must seem like the world has gone mad.

Here we have before us the Bloc Québécois using its time in the House of Commons to talk about the coronation and the monarchy. What must viewers be thinking? While we Liberals discuss the floods and the cost of living in Quebec, cell phone charges and health care, the Bloc Québécois suddenly wakes up and starts talking about the monarchy.

Our side of the House will keep working for Quebecers and for the things that matter to them.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, crime, chaos, drugs and disorder. That is the legacy this Liberal Prime Minister is leaving to Canadian society after eight years in office.

Releasing repeat violent offenders and decriminalizing hard drugs has resulted in more violent crime and drug overdoses in our communities.

Why does the Prime Minister insist on leading us down a dead-end street?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve to feel safe and to be safe.

That is precisely why we have been working with the provinces and territories to strengthen the bail system, among other things. We will take action in our areas of jurisdiction, but we will come up with solutions by working together, because these are complex

problems. We are working together, and that is exactly what we will do.

I hope to have more news soon.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at a time when everything costs more and Canadians are suffering and struggling to make ends meet, the Prime Minister has taken not one but five luxury trips abroad to get a nice tan and have some fun in New York. It is scandalous. Housing costs have doubled.

Instead of wasting our money, what will our Prime Minister do to reduce inflation across Canada?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is scandalous to the people listening to us today is that the Conservatives are going to vote against the budget. It is a budget made for Canadians across the country.

We listened to Canadians. They talked to us about the cost of living and the cost of groceries. That is why we created a grocery rebate for millions of Canadians; in fact 11 million Canadians will benefit from that measure. They asked us to help with health care and dental care. They asked us to invest in the economy of tomorrow. We even brought Volkswagen to Canada to build this country.

That is a responsible government.

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while Beijing agents strike at the heart of Canadian democracy, imperilling our freedoms by threatening our democratically elected members and their families, the Prime Minister is off on lavish Jamaican junkets and footing Canadians with the bill.

After eight years of ineffective and inept governance, Canadians are out of money and the Prime Minister is not only out of touch, but also, often, out of the country. When will the government finally start taking its responsibilities seriously, or get out of the way so we can start tackling the crises that are paralyzing Canadian society?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said to this House on many occasions, the member is right: The Prime Minister took a vacation with his family over Christmas. He did so, staying at a friend's house. Is the member asserting that the Prime Minister should not be able to take a vacation with his family at Christmas, or is the member asserting that if he does so he does not have security, which was the vast preponderance of the cost? It seems that the Conservatives want to torque and play partisan games with a family vacation that the Prime Minister took. That is inappropriate.

[Translation]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every person in Canada deserves to be safe. Tomorrow is Red Dress Day, a time to commemorate the tragedy of these missing and murdered women and girls. We all need to do more.

Would the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations please tell us more about the work our government is doing to protect indigenous women and girls?

• (1505)

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all have a duty to fix the systemic issues that continue to fuel this national crisis and to act on the calls for justice identified by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

That is why budget 2023 includes a \$125-million investment to implement the national action plan, support the family and survivors circle and launch a red dress alert.

We remain committed to doing this very important work with survivors, families and their communities.

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while this Prime Minister is living it up and taking international celebrity selfies, a generation of Canadians are giving up on home ownership. Down payments have doubled, rents have doubled, mortgage payments have doubled and builders cannot build because it takes years just to get permits in Canada's large cities. When will the government do something about the big-city gatekeepers who are choking Canadians out of access to a home?

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am a former municipal councillor. Never before has a party leader denigrated and insulted a duly elected municipal government in this House. Insults and denigration are not going to get more houses built. I am astounded that Conservative members who are themselves former mayors did not call their own leader on that.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will always stand up for Canadians who cannot access homes.

The Prime Minister has been on five lavish trips already this year, including a vacation worth \$80,000, paid for by Trudeau Foundation donors. He is out of touch and Canadians are out of money. The cost of government is driving up the cost of living, a 41¢-a-litre tax on gas, groceries and home heating and endless

Oral Questions

deficits that drive up interest rates, pushing access to housing even further out of reach.

When will he get to work and stop making life more expensive?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand that Canadians are struggling right now and that there is a high cost of living, but, unlike the Conservatives, we are actually acting. We have put measures in place, like the Canada child benefit, like the climate action incentive, like increasing the guaranteed income supplement, like the new grocery rebate. We are actually acting to help Canadian families at this time of struggle.

We know what the Conservative playbook was: send cheques to millionaires and make seniors work longer.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is the policies of the government are the very ones that are driving up inflation and making everything more expensive for Canadians. Now grocery prices are rising to the point where people have to turn to food banks, housing prices have doubled and many young people are worried they will never be able to afford a home. The clawbacks on paycheques are making it so that people who are working harder are falling further behind. While all that is happening, the Prime Minister continues to take lavish vacations, like his \$80,000 trip to Jamaica.

When will the Prime Minister finally take responsibility for what he has broken and fix this inflationary crisis?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will take no lessons from these Conservatives who have let the town of St. Thomas in southwestern Ontario down, who have let 8,000 workers down, who have let the auto sector down.

We will do what we do best, which is to build a future for Canadians. We will attract investment at Volkswagen, we will create thousands of jobs, we will build our auto sector. We will build Canada for the 21st century. That is what we will do.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Halifax West, we know that search and rescue capabilities are critical to those in our fishing industry and tourism, and for the safety of Atlantic Canadians. Canadians need to know that no matter where they are, the Canadian Armed Forces will always answer the call.

Points of Order

Could the Minister of National Defence please provide an update on the Cormorant helicopter fleet announcement she made in Halifax last week?

• (1510)

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, search and rescue capabilities are at the very heart of the expertise of the Canadian Armed Forces. That is why last week I was pleased to announce the expansion and upgrade of our Cormorant helicopter fleet, which is projected to add 650 jobs annually and \$79 million to our economy annually. Most importantly, it will ensure that our Canadian Armed Forces are always prepared to answer the call.

* * *

ELECTORAL REFORM

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian voting system promises 100% of the power to political parties that get less than 40% of the vote at election time. That is a problem the Prime Minister seemed to have understood in 2015 when he promised to change the voting system. Since then, opposition parties laid out a path forward and he threw that in the bin in the last Parliament. The procedure and House affairs committee passed a motion to study this and he ended it by calling an election. Now at the Liberal convention, there is a motion on the floor to look again at proportional representation.

Will the Prime Minister respect the decisions of these democratic decision-making forums or is he going to put his personal agenda ahead of that once again?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Elmwood—Transcona and I share a number of objectives that he and I have discussed on numerous occasions in terms of increasing the ability of Canadians to access voting, ensuring, for example, that campus voting is prioritized by Elections Canada. We are always looking at ways to ensure that our electoral system is accessible and is reflective of the choices Canadians make in their governments.

I will continue to work with my colleague from Elmwood—Transcona and others in ensuring that we have the best electoral system that we could possibly have.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, by allowing Zhao Wei to stay, the Liberals have given Beijing the green light to attack the safety and security of Chinese Canadians with impunity.

Article 9 of the Vienna Convention gives the Minister of Foreign Affairs the unfettered discretion to expel any diplomat at any time for any reason. There is no excuse for delay.

What is she waiting for? Will she expel this Beijing thug today?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the minister for global affairs, has been abundantly clear that she has convened the Chinese ambassador to

make it clear where the boundaries are, and obviously we will continue to condemn any foreign or hostile activities here in Canada.

What we have seen today has been shameful. We have seen unparliamentary language from the Conservatives. Why? Because they would rather highlight the problem than be part of the solution. How do we know that? Instead of supporting this government and giving CSIS the tools it needs, they opposed it, and instead of supporting the committee of parliamentarians, they continue to play Jekyll and Hyde with that committee. They need to stop politicizing this issue and get behind the cause of the government to defend our institutions.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I wish to draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of Her Excellency Meritxell Batet Lamana, President of the Congress of Deputies of the Kingdom of Spain.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

• (1515)

The Speaker: I would also like to draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of His Excellency Vlado Mirosevic, President of the Chamber of Deputies of the Republic of Chile.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: Lastly, I would like to draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of Mr. Karim Khan, Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

SAINT-URBAIN FIREFIGHTERS

The Speaker: Following discussions among representatives of all parties in the House, I understand there is an agreement to observe a moment of silence in memory of the two firefighters who lost their lives in Saint-Urbain, Quebec.

[*Translation*]

I invite hon. members to rise.

[*A moment of silence observed*]

* * *

[*English*]

POINTS OF ORDER

DECORUM

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We are looking for some consistency in the Speaker's rulings.

On March 31, 2023, in this House, the Liberal Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities said:

Madam Speaker, I am absolutely disgusted that the member opposite would outright lie, and yes, I am saying "outright lie".

Points of Order

Later on, when asked by the Speaker to withdraw that statement, the same parliamentary secretary said:

Madam Speaker, I will withdraw the word but the sentiment remains, that it absolutely did not—

She was then cut off because of the noise in the room.

The point is that there should be consistency in rulings from the Chair. That member was not sanctioned, nor was time taken away from the Liberal Party. That person was not threatened with being kicked out of this House or any similar type of sanction. We want consistency in the rulings from the Chair so that we understand how we can and are able to conduct ourselves in this place.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will clarify, and perhaps this would help the members opposite. The Speaker's office asked me to withdraw and apologize. I respect the rules and decorum of this place, so I did just that. I would suggest that the members opposite follow the same suggestions and rulings.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, we have heard many times in this place that one cannot do indirectly what one cannot do directly. By saying that she withdrew the word but not the sentiment, she doubled down on what she was saying and on the remark she had made.

I need no lessons from the parliamentary secretary—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I am trying to hear what the opposition whip is saying. There is a discussion going back and forth.

Please start from the top so that I can hear everything.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, I am conflicted as to whether the parliamentary secretary was saying that I do not know my job or do not know how to address the Speaker. I am talking to the Speaker, the Chair of these proceedings. My statement is that one cannot do indirectly what one should not do directly. Saying “I withdraw the word but not the sentiment” is doubling down on those words.

We all know it. However, this member was in no way sanctioned for the comments made on March 31, 2023.

• (1520)

The Speaker: The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby wants to rise on this point.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we empower you to ensure that there is order in this House and that there is a respect for all members at all times, including the speakership. I have said this before. I think it is appropriate for every member now to understand that if there is disorder and they do not heed the Speaker, they may end up losing a question. That applies to all parties, and that is a fair and appropriate way to proceed.

When you ask for members to withdraw their remarks and apologize, Mr. Speaker, they should do so. You have asked this quite rightfully. This is appropriate, this is right and these are the powers that we have granted to you as Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me clarify that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities was actually informed by the Speaker that if she was not to apologize, then she would not be able to speak in the House. She did then go the next week and apologize, unequivocally, in the House.

I understand that the opposition whip may not have been present when the member was in the House and did apologize, but the Speaker was very clear that if the member did not apologize, she would not be able to speak. Subsequent to what the member quoted, many days later, she rose in her place at the first opportunity, and she clearly and unequivocally apologized. I believe this was after we returned from a time in our constituencies.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as to the matter of consistency, I would like to bring something to your attention for consideration.

On Tuesday, I had to start a question again twice, so a total of three times. I appreciate having the opportunity to be able to do that, but it was due to a vocal uproar from NDP and Liberal members. However, I want to note that at the time, the Speaker did not insinuate to the NDP or Liberals that their questions could be taken because of their excessive disruptions.

I would just like you to take that as part of your consideration as well.

The Speaker: I want to thank the hon. member for her input. I will be coming back to the House. I will look at what was done and what was asked. I know we have a record of everything. I want to make sure that I come back with the appropriate response to what happened in the past.

As of right now, I can speak for today. If someone uses unparliamentary language, I will ask them to withdraw it. If they do not withdraw it, I will not recognize them, because they are not recognizing the Chair's authority. I think that is fair. That is from now on. I am escalating this because the insanity in this place has been escalating since we got back from the break. I do not want to go into June with a “nuthouse”. I am sorry if “nuthouse” is not a parliamentary word, but that is exactly what it looks like.

As far as the questions go, it is really unfortunate—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Points of Order

The Speaker: Order. If you want to speak to each other, please just cross over and go see each other. Do not shout back and forth.

Now, let me finish. As far as the questions go, if one group is getting rowdy or trying to drown out the other side, it is no better than bullying in a schoolyard where a group is picking on one or another group. That is not acceptable in the House.

I will continue to do what I have done today. It is unfortunate that it was the member for St. Albert—Edmonton, because he was not a part of the problem. He just happened to be the victim of exchanging his question with a member at the back.

What will happen is that we will be using that as a tool to calm things down in the chamber. I hope people take it to heart and start respecting each other.

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean, on the same point of order.

• (1525)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I think everyone needs to calm down and, above all, trust the Speaker that the House elected. We need to keep things civil.

While you were speaking, Mr. Speaker, I heard the House leader of the New Democratic Party yelling at a female member in an improper tone, telling her to sit down. I encourage everyone to calm down. We have a Speaker who is capable of making decisions. We must be polite.

[English]

The Speaker: On the same point of order, the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think that part of the issue today is the inconsistency with which this type of behaviour has been handled in the House across party lines, as well as inconsistencies in how it is handled by whoever happens to be in the chair. I would ask for consistency.

It is really important that we do not escalate responses to a particular behaviour in the House in a way that looks to be very partisan. The member across was allowed incredible latitude for a long time before she was required to do what you instituted in a second in this place. I am just asking for consistency.

The Speaker: Actually, it was instituted instantly for her part. I do not want to start an argument, but it takes a while for people to come around. That is human nature, and we have to deal with human nature in this House.

The hon. opposition whip.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, just for clarity, we do respect your authority. I agree that you are here in this place to bring order, sometimes from chaos, and we respect those decisions. The issue was about consistency, so I leave it at that.

This point of order that I rise on is another serious point of order to address two incidents that took place during the course of debate on the opposition day motion earlier today. As the Chair knows, the House is debating a Conservative motion that addresses the serious

threats made against the family of the member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

The statements I am about to bring to your attention, Mr. Speaker, centre around one defensive briefing provided by CSIS to the member for Wellington—Halton Hills about foreign interference two years ago. The member was actually in the House today during question period. It is important to note that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills has been clear in his public comments that the threats made to his family were never made known to him in the briefing two years ago. The only specific briefing he received happened this week and only after the matter became news reported by The Globe and Mail. However, during the debate, both parliamentary secretaries to the government House leader engaged in misinformation and disinformation in a blatant attack on the reputation of the member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

The member for Kingston and the Islands said about the threats, and I quote, “The member for Wellington—Halton Hills had a defensive briefing on this two years ago, so he knew about this when it actually happened.” This same member went on to say, “it is true that I said that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills received multiple defensive briefings.... He did. He received multiple defensive briefings and it is absolutely true that I have absolutely no idea what he was told.”

These comments are outright disinformation. The member for Kingston and the Islands ought to know that there was only one briefing two years ago and that it was a general defensive briefing. It did not contain information about specific threats. However, he has allowed his false statements to stand on the record, although he has been given many opportunities to withdraw.

To make matters worse, the member for Winnipeg North said, “The member for Wellington—Halton Hills has known for two years.” He went on to accuse the member of doing nothing about these threats.

The accusations made by the members for Kingston and the Islands and for Winnipeg North are false; worse, they amount to victim blaming. I demand that these members rise to correct the misinformation and disinformation they provided to the House and that they apologize for their attempts to impugn the reputation of the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands is rising on this point of order.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, with respect to what I had indicated previously when I said that the member was aware of this, I apologize for the choice of words. What I was trying to imply was that he was aware that there were some threats that were out there, which was the reason he received the defensive briefing. I apologize unreservedly for my choice of words because I have led people to believe that he knew about what was being talked about today specifically.

I have a ton of respect for that member. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, through you, to that member, to all Conservatives, to you, to the Chair and to this House, I apologize.

• (1530)

The Speaker: Okay, we can put that to rest.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Yes, Mr. Speaker, again, for those who are here or not here when members stand up, just for clarification purposes, I will quote what I had indicated. Earlier today, I said this: “Mr. Speaker, it was never my intention to say that the Prime Minister and the member had the same briefing. If that is in fact what I said, I would apologize for saying that it was the same briefing.”

[Translation]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean, on the same point of order.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, this is only my second term and I have not even been here four years yet, so I would like to ask you a question.

Throughout question period, the Conservative Party rightly asked members who had just spoken to apologize. Question period is now over and those members, who did not stand up once during question period, are suddenly apologizing now that everyone else has left.

I want to know how this works. Should the members have answered those questions during question period rather than waiting for all the reporters to leave before answering them?

The Speaker: That is getting into debate.

I would like to remind the member that the House is always full of people who are working.

[English]

The hon. opposition whip is rising on the same point of order.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, to clarify, I have the quotation from earlier today by the member for Winnipeg North, and he said, “The member for Wellington—Halton Hills has known for two years.” Then he went on to accuse the member of doing nothing about these threats.

We are not talking about the briefing this week, the one the Prime Minister and the member had. We are talking about not just a suggestion but an assertion that the member has had information about the threats to his family for two years, which is false, and has done nothing about them.

He was blaming the victim. There should be a proper apology, and that was not it.

The Speaker: I was not here; there was another person in the chair. We will take a look and see what the scripts are, because this is turning into a “he said, she said”. I want to make sure we have everything down and that Hansard is in place, and I will come back to the chamber should I see fit.

Business of Supply

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it being Thursday afternoon after question period, and as part of the routine aspects of things, the Conservatives are looking forward to the rest of the week, which is actually just this afternoon as the House is adjourned tomorrow. We are anxious to know what legislation and what details will be brought forward by the government so we can be ready to hold it to account.

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague on the other side for the question and the opportunity to illuminate the government's agenda for the coming week.

On Monday, we will resume report stage debate of Bill S-5, which would amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

On Tuesday morning, we will call Bill C-42 regarding the Canada Business Corporations Act and then return to debate on Bill S-5 in the afternoon.

On Wednesday and Friday, we will call Bill C-13, an act for substantive equity of Canada's official languages.

Finally, I would like to inform the House that Thursday, May 11, shall be an allotted day.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—INTERFERENCE BY THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is great to rise today to speak to this motion. I want to say from the outset that I have the utmost respect for the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. As a matter of fact, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills is the only Conservative member of the House, over the last eight years, whom I have had the pleasure of going out to dinner with alone to talk about issues that we are both passionate about. I have always regarded the member for Wellington—Halton Hills as one of the most progressive voices on the other side of the House. In fairness, the bar has been set pretty low, but nonetheless, I have always had the utmost respect for him.

I sincerely apologize for the manner in which this debate got kicked off this morning. I should have perhaps chosen my words a little more closely. I have since apologized for that, but I think it is very important to reflect on what we are actually experiencing here.

We see the Conservatives, routinely, day after day, get up and directly and indirectly accuse the Prime Minister of Canada of lying. They have said so many times in this debate alone that the Prime Minister of Canada and the government have known about this particular incident with the member for Wellington—Halton Hills for two years. They are saying it now. They are heckling about it now.

Business of Supply

Why I find this to be so incredibly amazing is that, on the one hand, we all believe the member for Wellington—Halton Hills when he says he was not briefed on this specific matter, yet we will not afford that same luxury of belief to the member for Papineau, the Prime Minister of Canada, when he says the same thing. I cannot help but wonder where all the outrage is in the House when the Prime Minister of Canada says he did not know until Monday and, time after time, the Conservatives will get up and say, well, yes, he did know and he is lying to us.

That is the double standard around here that I am having such an incredible time wrapping my head around. I believe the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. I will get to my previous comments, but I also believe the member for Papineau, because they are both honourable members who come before the House. I think anybody who comes in here and cries bloody foul over the idea that we have to trust every member at their word, as they are honourable, but then chooses who exactly they are going to accept that from is disingenuous at best.

I think it is important to go back and reflect. What I said earlier in this debate is that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, along with 47 other members of Parliament, in 2022 alone, although for him it may have been in 2021, received defensive briefings from CSIS. Of course, we do not know what the content of those briefings was. We do not know exactly what was said, but we do know generally speaking what a defensive briefing is.

A defensive briefing is basically CSIS coming to a member of Parliament and saying that it wants to give the heads-up that they are person of interest who should be watching out for certain things. They are given some tips on how to handle this and on the things they should be looking out for, and are asked to inform CSIS when things happen. We know the member for Wellington—Halton Hills and 48 other members in 2022 alone received that particular briefing.

When the member for Wellington—Halton Hills says that he did not learn about these specific threats, I believe that. All I am trying to say is that we have to understand that these particular briefings occur on an ongoing basis. To come to the conclusion that they are one-offs is not the reality, because the CSIS report indicated that in the 2022 report.

The other thing that I am having a very hard time with is the general assertion from the other side of the House that the government has done nothing as it relates to foreign interference. That is completely and utterly untrue.

● (1535)

I will read the second half of what I read earlier in a question, because I think it is the most important part. It is from a 2013 CSIS report, the same one as the 2022 version from CSIS, the public report. The Leader of the Opposition, the member for Carleton, who at the time was the minister of democratic reform, received that briefing, which said:

As boundaries between foreign state and non-state actors become increasingly blurred, it is particularly challenging for intelligence services to differentiate between legitimate and illegitimate activities. Foreign interference in Canadian society—as a residual aspect of global or regional political and social conflicts, or divergent strategic and economic objectives—will continue in the coming years.

The member for Carleton, when he was minister of democratic reform, received this briefing in 2013 and did absolutely nothing about it. For the two more years the Conservatives remained in government, they did not act on this. As a matter of fact, shortly after we came along in 2015, we brought in a bill to tighten up the rules around funding with respect to foreign interference. Do members know who voted against it? It was the Conservatives. The Conservatives voted against Bill C-76, a bill that would specifically strengthen our ability to control foreign interference.

We have done a whole host of things in addition to that.

We established NSICOP, the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians. There are Liberal, Bloc and NDP members, as well as Conservative members when they choose to show up and not boycott the committee, who sit on this committee. They are sworn to secrecy and receive the most sensitive information, not only for this country but indeed for our allies around the world. They have the political oversight and accountability to assess information and make recommendations to CSIS and the government on how to act on it. By the way, it is a credible tool that the United Kingdom and other Westminster parliamentary systems have, and we adopted it.

What else did we do? We brought in a special advisory panel that is activated during the writ process of an election, while everybody in this House and other candidates are running around the country trying to sell themselves and their political parties as the best choice. We do not have the time or capacity in those circumstances to act as a caretaker to watch over our democracy at that most important time, the time when an election is happening. That committee is made up of experts who are charged with reacting in real time to what is happening. It is something the Conservatives have criticized as being an almost useless tool. These people are watching our elections in real time to make sure they are not being interfered with by foreign state or non-state actors.

The Conservatives have come here and said we have done nothing, when the record clearly shows they knew about this from CSIS in 2013 and did nothing about it for two years. We came along in 2015 and have implemented policies and legislation time after time since then to strengthen our ability to control foreign interference as it relates to our democracy. It is completely unfair for the Conservatives to be making their assertions and they should know better.

I will now get to the motion we are talking about today. I will be honest with members. Of the four asks in this motion, there are three I do not see a problem with.

One is to create a foreign agent registry, similar to those in Australia and the United States. We announced months ago that this is already in process; it is already happening.

I will get to the public inquiry in a second.

Another one is to close down the police stations run by the People's Republic of China and operating in Canada. Of course, the RCMP is going to be seized with that and will do everything it can there. There is only one respected police authority in each jurisdiction in this country: the RCMP federally; the provincial police, where applicable, or the RCMP as charged by the provincial governments; and the local police. Those are the only police authorities the government or any member of Parliament, regardless of the rhetoric, will ever accept, and we of course will do whatever necessary to ensure that illegal police stations and operations like these are shut down immediately.

• (1540)

Of course, the motion would expel all of the People's Republic of China's diplomats responsible for and involved in the affronts to Canadian democracy. As indicated today by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, she is absolutely willing to do that where it is deemed necessary. There is obviously a process in place to do that. She has already summoned the ambassador of China regarding this issue, so I do not have an issue with that either. I think, as appropriate, that absolutely has to happen.

The part I have a problem with, which I feel is the most political, is the call for the public inquiry. I will be honest. I am on the PROC committee, and when this first came before the committee, I thought to myself that it made sense. A public inquiry would shine sunlight on this issue. Why would we not do that?

Unfortunately, this is not what we heard from the experts who came before the committee, whether it was those from CSIS, the national security experts, or the head of the RCMP. Everybody told us that we were dealing with extremely classified information. There was no way we could release that information to the public, and not just because of the effect it would have domestically. Can members imagine how our Five Eyes partners would feel if they realized we were sharing this sensitive information? We would be the laughing stock of the international community. They could never trust us with that information. We would be ostracized from the international community if we were to try to release that information.

It became very clear to those who were sitting on the committee, and those who were interested in hearing the expert advice, that a public inquiry is not the place for this sensitive information to be discussed. Rather, we were told it should be discussed in NSICOP, which is the parliamentary committee that is established for this.

What I found to be the most interesting out of all of that, when this discussion was happening, was that the member for Carleton, the Leader of the Opposition, was told by the media that the government offered to give him a briefing, but he would have to be sworn into secrecy. He was asked if he would be willing to take that briefing. He said he did not want to know the information if he could not go talk about it. All that matters to the member for Carleton, the Leader of the Opposition, is to grandstand and get out there to politicize every single issue he can get his hands on.

As such, the member for Carleton is not interested in receiving highly classified information, even if it is for the betterment of the country. He is not interested in that because it would serve absolutely zero political gain for him. That, I think, is what Canadians should be reflecting on.

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As I come to the conclusion of my speech, I want to say that there is great opportunity here for the House to work together. I understand there is a difference of opinion, when it comes to the public inquiry. I am going to respect whatever David Johnston, the former governor general, recommends to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister already said that we would accept his advice. If David Johnston says a public inquiry is the best way to go, we will do that.

However, I find it very troubling that members, primarily Conservatives, are railing against a former governor general who is so highly respected throughout this country. They talk about him as though he is a Liberal insider or something. He was a governor general who was appointed by Stephen Harper. The Conservatives should think about that.

They will stop at nothing. They are on a crusade to take down absolutely everybody, as long as it gives them a tiny bit of political gain. They would take an ounce of political gain at the expense of ruining somebody's reputation, if the opportunity presents itself to them, and they do it time after time after time.

We have an opportunity to work together to do something about foreign interference. I respect the debate between a public inquiry versus an inquiry that is not public. It is a debate that I respect. It is an issue I have found myself on both sides of, at times, and I hope we can have meaningful debates about how we can genuinely affect the security of our democracy. It is absolutely imperative. It is not something we should be playing politics with.

I will take responsibility for the way this debate started off today. I feel as though I contributed to that manner, and I apologize for that, but I really hope that, when this settles down, we can all focus on what is really important, and that is protecting the democracy we all hold so dearly.

• (1545)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the apology from my colleague across the way. Blaming the member on this side for the harassment he received at the hands of a diplomat was wrong, and I appreciate that very much.

I listened to the member's speech intently, and there is something we agree on, as I want to find some common ground, which is that the foreign, Chinese-run police stations should be shut down. There are still two in operation, as we heard from the public safety minister, and the member said they should be shut down immediately. My definition of "immediately" is as soon as—

An hon. member: Right now.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Yes, it is right now.

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Madam Speaker, will the member stand with me to ask the minister to shut these down before the weekend? They should be shut down before the weekend. Will he stand with me, talk to his minister and put his name on the line to say that they should be shut down this weekend?

● (1550)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I am not aware of the details of the operations that are apparently still ongoing, but I have great confidence in the RCMP to do its job. The RCMP has been charged by the government and, indeed, all Canadians. The RCMP walks the hall of Parliament. That is a pretty big deal. Only about five years ago, it did not. The RCMP was not even allowed in this building, if we remember correctly.

We have great faith in the RCMP and its ability to protect Canadians, and I have no doubt that the RCMP is doing and will do whatever is necessary to combat not just this, but all illegal activity, in particular, as it comes from foreign actors.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I was really pleased to hear our colleague indicate that he supports three of the four points dealing with foreign interference, particularly the idea of expelling diplomats involved in interference. Kudos to him.

After the crazy week we have had, considering all the revelations and information we have heard, does he really believe that there was no interference by a Chinese diplomat?

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I did not say that I do not believe that. I did not say that, but I respect the rule of law and the manner in which we take information, assess it and then determine how to act on it. I respect the agencies that are charged with the ability and the requirement to exercise that.

It is interesting how the Speaker, at the end of question period, said this was turning into a “nuthouse”. Politicians are not the police. Politicians do not investigate issues. We charge our agencies with the responsibility to do that, and if necessary, they will act on that, but it is certainly not going to come, in my opinion, from one or two reports put out by the Globe and Mail.

This is all information. There is a difference between an accusation and evidence, and it is very important for members of the House to wrap their heads around the difference between the two because they are not the same.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I want to put on the record that both my colleague from Kitchener Centre and I will be voting for the motion before the House today, and we would wish for Liberal members do so too.

I want to make it very clear that, in voting for the motion before us, I am not saying in any way, shape or form that I do not believe the Prime Minister. Without evidence to the contrary, I absolutely take the Prime Minister at his word that CSIS did not brief him.

When I am asked if I trust the RCMP or CSIS, I say that I would be a fool to do so. The RCMP, we know, is the only agency proven to have interfered in a Canadian election and changed the result

from a Liberal win to a Conservative win in 2005. We also know that CSIS is not exactly reliable. It allowed trumped-up charges against Maher Arar and continued to defend them past the point that it knew the charges were a lie and that they were covering up for the false arrest, imprisonment and torture of a Canadian citizen.

I will never blindly trust any agency. I want civilian oversight all the time, and that is why I support an inquiry into this matter. We need to make sure that we know that we do not have vulnerability as Canadians to any form of interference, whether the state police, CSIS or China.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, we do have that oversight. It is through NSIRA and NSICOP. We have a committee of parliamentarians that has been specifically given the responsibility to have that oversight.

However, when it comes to executing the laws that we have, parliamentarians do not execute laws. We make the laws. We create the laws that we then charge our agencies to deliver. Do we need to have oversight on that? We absolutely do, and that is what we do. We have oversight on what goes on, and we do that through the two organizations I just mentioned: NSIRA and NSICOP.

● (1555)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, I do not want to preach to anyone, but when I look at question period over the past two weeks, when I hear my colleague say that he agrees with expelling diplomats, and considering that we have reached the point where we are talking about CSIS leaking information, I think the Chinese must be laughing at us. It seems to me that this whole mess could have been avoided if the government had done its due diligence. This whole scenario that has been going on for the past two weeks in the House of Commons and which I do not find particularly edifying could have been avoided.

Why did the government not make a decision faster, and why do we need a motion to make it happen?

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, that is what we did right after we were elected. We established NSICOP to have that oversight. The member is suggesting, just based on question period alone over the last two weeks, that we should start expelling people. We are not going to expel people based on the questions asked and answers given in the House.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member spoke in his speech about the partisan nature of the leader of the official opposition.

He talked about when the leader of the official opposition was the democratic reform minister, and when he received briefings about foreign interference, he did nothing. The member spoke about how the leader of the official opposition is refusing to have a national security briefing now. In addition to that, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs also raised the point that the Leader of the Opposition, as minister, did nothing to deal with foreign interference, saying that it was not in their partisan interest to do so.

Does the member think that brings confidence to the non-partisan nature that we need to have when it involves foreign interference?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, it does not. It is not about one individual or one political party. It is about the fundamental idea and the fundamental role of democracy in our country.

We will all be gone from here one day, but we have a responsibility to make sure that we protect democracy while we are here so that it can benefit generations of politicians and Canadians to come in the future. When we start making comments, just like the Leader of the Opposition did when he said that he was not interested because it had nothing to do with the Conservatives' political party, it is just completely offside. It is a complete misunderstanding of why democracy is so important to uphold and protect. It is not for any one individual but for the collective of all of us.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, what I do not understand about this member's speech and the actions of the government is that we do have this information now. This information should have gone to the member for Wellington—Halton Hills sooner, certainly, but we have this information now.

Why on earth would the government not expel the diplomat responsible for this? It is so easy to do. It does not even require the government to provide a reason. It can just do it, so why will it not do it?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, what we have are accusations and information. CSIS gathers that information, and its officials determine at what point it reaches a certain threshold to involve and advise different levels of government. They advise what to do in certain circumstances based on meeting or not meeting various thresholds.

If we have a problem with that, then our job as lawmakers is to change the law to make modifications, just as the Prime Minister did when he learned about this. The Prime Minister was shocked about it. He said that, from now on, he wants to know about anything that has to do with any MP.

• (1600)

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is not new information that the PRC is targeting the families of Canadians in the PRC to coerce and intimidate Canadians here on Canadian soil. That is not new information. We have known for years that the PRC uses these coercive tactics, in democracies like Canada, to intimidate citizens in these democracies into silence or into other actions in order to mould the debate in democracies, in order to threaten democracies and in order to get their version of an authoritarian world promulgated around the world. That is not new. We have known this for years, through in-

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vestigative reports by journalists at reputable publications, through committees of the House, both in the current Parliament and in the previous Parliament, and through reports of government agencies and services.

We have known about this for years, and not just in Canada. We have known about this taking place in other democracies. We have known, for example, that Canadians here in Canada who are advocating for democracy and civil rights in Hong Kong, who are advocating for free expression, for the freedom to associate and for freedom of the press have been targeted by the PRC, and that their families back home have been threatened. We have known that those advocating here in Canada for the human rights of Uyghurs, Tibetans and other minorities in the People's Republic of China have had their families in the PRC threatened by the PRC.

What is new is that, two years ago, the government did nothing when it came to its attention that a diplomat working in Canada, with the approval of the Canadian government, was targeting me and other members of the House in an attempt to change the course of the debate, to attempt to intimidate MPs into voting a certain way on the floor of the House. That is what is new here. That is the issue here.

Madam Speaker, I would like to split my time with the opposition whip.

That is the new information at play here. When the government knew, it did nothing. It was not until the information became public several days ago that the government started to treat this seriously. That is shocking. What else is going on that is threatening the national security of this country that is threatening the safety and security of Canadians here on Canadian soil that we do not know about and that the government is doing nothing about? The Prime Minister and the public safety minister say they did not know until this past Monday that a PRC diplomat was targeting me and other members of the House. That is astounding. That is unbelievable. That should shake everyone in Ottawa to the core.

The Prime Minister is responsible for the machinery of government. I want to quote from “Open and Accountable Government”, which says that “the Prime Minister forms a team, decides on the process for collective decision making, and builds and adapts the machinery of government in which the team will operate.” The Prime Minister is responsible for the machinery of government. The Prime Minister is also responsible for “the broad organization and structure of the government.”

I would like to quote again from “Open and Accountable Government”, which is a document of the Privy Council Office:

The Prime Minister determines the broad organization and structure of the government in order to meet its objectives. The Prime Minister is responsible for allocating Ministers' portfolios, establishing their mandates, clarifying the relationships among them and identifying the priorities for their portfolios through mandate letters. The Prime Minister's approval is required for the creation of new institutions and the elimination of existing organizations, some of which may also be subject to parliamentary decisions. Any proposals made by Ministers for significant organizational change or for altering their own mandates or those of other Ministers must first be approved by the Prime Minister.

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• (1605)

Here is the most astounding part: The Prime Minister is responsible for national security. I will quote from “Open and Accountable Government”, which says, “As head of government, the Prime Minister has special responsibilities for national security, federal-provincial-territorial relations and the conduct of international [relations].” The Prime Minister is responsible not only for the machinery of government, how information flows and how the Canadian Security Intelligence Service transmits information to the other parts of the Government of Canada. He is responsible not only for the broad organizational structure of the government. The Prime Minister is also responsible for national security. For him to be the head of a government he has set up in such a way that he does not even know what national security threats are being directed towards members of the House and their families is a complete abdication of his responsibility

It really calls into question how safe and secure we are in this country. We know that the Prime Minister privately told NATO officials that Canada was never going to meet its 2% commitment. Despite the war in Ukraine having begun over a year ago, Canada's defence spending remains stuck at 1.3%, well below the Wales Summit Declaration commitment made in 2014. Despite the threats that we have been facing in the form of foreign interference threat activities, nothing has been done. We have not seen a single diplomat expelled. We have not seen the introduction of a foreign agents registry. We have not had a single prosecution that has led to an arrest of individuals in this country who are intimidating and coercing Canadians here on Canadian soil on the part of a foreign government. We have had no action from the government.

Other countries have taken action. In recent weeks, we have heard about the FBI arresting individuals in the United States for setting up illegal police stations. One of those individuals happens to be the same individual who helped set up an illegal police station here in Canada. We have had other democratic allies expel diplomats for coercive and clandestine behaviour. In fact, Germany just expelled dozens of diplomats of the Russian Federation in order to protect its citizens, because those diplomats were engaged in subversive activities. Since the war began in Ukraine, over 400 Russian diplomats have been expelled by American and European governments. Not one has been expelled from Canada. Not one diplomat from the People's Republic of China has been expelled for their intimidation and coercion here on Canadian soil.

This is happening not just to me and to other members of the House. This foreign interference is also happening to Canadians across the land who suffer in silence, as their government cannot even be bothered to learn about national security threats that PRC diplomats are conducting across the land. It is absolutely, gobs-mackingly astounding that the Prime Minister did not know about what was going on. What else does the Prime Minister not know concerning what is going on with the safety and security of this country? He clearly does not care about properly funding our Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces. Now, it is quite clear he does not care about learning about serious national security threats to the members of the House and their families and the threats that are being presented to Canadians across the land.

I close by saying that thousands of Canadians across this land suffer in silence, and have been suffering in silence for years, because their families are being intimidated by authoritarian states back home, whether it is in the People's Republic of China, the Islamic Republic of Iran or other authoritarian states. People have been suffering in silence, and the government has not even had the interest to follow what is going on with these threat activities.

• (1610)

The Prime Minister did not know and the public safety minister did not know, because they did not care to set up the machinery of government, the broad organizational structure, in order to ensure that they did know so they could take action to protect Canadians.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as the government—

An hon. member: You had better open with an apology, Kevin.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Can we have some order, please?

The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, as the government has recognized and said, an offence on one member of Parliament is an offence on all members of Parliament. We should all be concerned. It is one of the reasons we have seen literally hundreds of thousands of dollars of government investment in places like the Board of Internal Economy to ensure that MPs have things such as panic buttons and cameras around homes. We have seen all sorts of actions, such as legislative initiatives, to deal with the issue of election interference and foreign interference.

At the end of the day, I would suggest to the member that, when we take a look at the—

An hon. member: Apologize.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Can we let the hon. member ask his question without interruptions, please?

An hon. member: After he apologizes.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Can we let the hon. member ask his question?

The Speaker made a ruling, and we will wait until the Speaker comes back to the House.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, to imply in any way that the Prime Minister did nothing, when the Conservatives know, first-hand, that he found out earlier this week, is highly irresponsible. If the member believes that all members are honourable members, would he not agree that the Prime Minister found out for the first time this week?

Hon. Michael Chong: Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister is responsible for ensuring that he sets up the machinery of government and the broad organizational structure of the government to ensure that he is informed about national security issues. The Prime Minister is responsible for the government's relationship to this place, Parliament.

The fact that the Prime Minister set things up in such a way that he did not know is shocking. It is like the head of a government of a G7 country saying to the chief of the defence staff for the armed forces that he does not actually want to know if there is an intrusion into our airspace. It is like saying, "I don't want to know when that happens; don't bother telling me." That is essentially what has happened here, with the Prime Minister setting things up in such a way that he was not informed about these things.

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, my heart goes out to the member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

I would like to ask him this. The government's blunders are piling up. Just consider the Trudeau Foundation, the appointment of an independent rapporteur who is not independent, or the failure to notify the member in a case like this or to formally crack down on foreign interference.

Is this not the very essence of what it means to undermine public trust in the government?

Hon. Michael Chong: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his very important question.

It is beyond belief that the Prime Minister would structure the government in a way that prevents the Prime Minister from knowing what is going on with national security.

[English]

It is absolutely incredible that the Prime Minister set things up this way. It really shakes me to the core, and should shake Canadians to the core, that, clearly, the national security of this country is not a concern of the Prime Minister or the government.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I again want to express my sympathy to my colleague from Wellington—Halton Hills for what he and his family have had to endure. I appreciate the fact that he brought up that this is something Chinese Canadians have dealt with for a very long time, as have Iranian Canadians and also a number of Canadians across this country who have been telling us in this place for many years, for decades in fact, that this is real and that these threats against them are real.

We have called for a public inquiry. We support the call for a foreign registry. We find ourselves in this situation, and clearly mistakes were made. Clearly, the government acted completely inappropriately. I would like to hear from the member for Wellington—Halton Hills what the most urgent thing we need to do, right now, is. What is the thing we could do right now that would help fix this problem?

• (1615)

Hon. Michael Chong: Madam Speaker, one of the immediate things that need to happen is that the government needs to immedi-

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ately introduce a foreign agents registry so that we can debate it here in the House and get it adopted as quickly as possible. The government also needs to expel Mr. Wei Zhao, a diplomat located at the consulate on St. George Street in Toronto.

Now that this information is public, the government, in my view, has no option but to expel this diplomat. Otherwise, we are putting up a massive billboard for the world to see that we are open for foreign interference threat activities and that there will be little or no consequence, other than a day march, to be chewed out by the deputy minister, for these authoritarian states. Those are just two measures that should be immediately undertaken.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canada's democracy is under threat. Its citizens and its institutions of governance are under threat, and this is a serious moment in our history as a nation. Canada has been under threat before and fought for its place among the family of nations that believe in peace, stability, the rule of law and protection of the citizens from adversaries within and without.

Canada, as it exists today, would not have been possible without the sacrifices, deprivations and evolution of many peoples, both indigenous and those who arrived later, coming together over time to fight alongside one another to forge a nation whose citizens pride themselves on upholding individual freedom, human dignity and enthusiasm for a way of life that is envied around the world. As Winston Churchill famously said, "No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed it has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time".

This Conservative opposition day motion recognizes that we have to fight and protect our citizens again. As chief opposition whip, I have the added duty to stand up for the members of Parliament who comprise His Majesty's loyal opposition in this special place, this House of Commons, the House that represents the common people of Canada, elected from ridings from coast to coast to coast.

We have a green carpet, representing the grass beneath our feet, the colour of the pasture in the greenwood, of the village green used by all: in other words, the colour of the common men and women. We have a common home and we should protect it. There are no titles of distinction in this place that give one person's vote more weight than another's. I have the "Honourable" designation before my name as a former minister and privy councillor, but my vote in Parliament remains one, as is the privilege of every other member of Parliament. That vote counts for something. That vote represents a whole district of Canadians who voted to give me and each person the honour of being in this chamber, their voices to be put forward and amplified often into law after debate.

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Those laws govern Canadians equally, and we believe in equality before the law. Where there is injustice or unfairness, we have mechanisms to deal with those human failings: an imperfectly, entirely human system, yes; a flawless system, no. However, our Canadian system is as good as any in the world and strives to uphold its founding principles of peace, order and good government. We are a welcoming place for new Canadians to come and make it their home. No matter the date of their arrival into the Canadian family, they should have the protection of this nation's government. That any member of this House would find themselves under threat for a vote taken in this place for any reason, but particularly to uphold human rights in this country or any other country in this world, is an affront to our democracy.

Let us speak some truth in this House today. Political interference and intimidation of Canadian citizens was rampant and pervasive in the last election and, as we now know, the previous elections as well. In my province and riding, we have a sizable community of citizens of Chinese ancestry. They love their country of origin, its beauty, its art and culture, its language, its prominence in all areas of endeavour. They have enriched Canada in all aspects of life: the arts, literature, music, academia, business and, yes, even politics. We are all better for their contributions to this land and their leadership, historically under the harshest of conditions as labourers building a national railway that united us. Excluded from many aspects of citizenship, they were among our World War I and World War II soldiers, and they are today valued.

These are the Canadian citizens who took my volunteers and me aside during the last election and, with tears in their eyes, asked us to turn off our phones so we could speak in their backyards because they believed they were under surveillance by Beijing and if seen talking to a Conservative, they would be punished by Beijing, either directly or through their family members still living in China. They were told through WeChat and similar online groups, which I have seen, that China had people in every polling booth in Canada who would scan their voting cards and know if they voted Conservative.

• (1620)

They were told that Conservatives wanted a foreign registry to register every person of Chinese ethnicity in Canada so that they could later be rounded up, like the Japanese were during World War II, and have their assets confiscated. Therefore, they stayed home and their absence affected who sits in this House now.

Today, many of these same spokespersons are publicly saying that the call for a foreign agent registry, similar to the ones in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States, is Chinese exclusion 2.0: false, false, false. It is completely false.

There was and is an orchestrated campaign by a foreign country publicly admired by the Prime Minister, with books of praise written about it by his brother Alexandre Trudeau, and his father Pierre Trudeau many years ago, to interfere with and campaign against votes in this House and the votes in a democratic election.

As I stated earlier, it is my duty as chief opposition whip to stand in defence of the rights and privileges of every member of the House, not just my caucus colleague from Wellington—Halton Hills. After all, and I heard this repeated from the government side

today, a threat made against one of us is a threat against all of us. This House must demonstrate a collaborative, non-partisan response, yet we see that both parliamentary secretaries have repeatedly engaged in victim blaming today.

Let us be very clear: CSIS did not make known to the member for Wellington—Halton Hills that threats were being made against his family. He was given only a general briefing. I had the same briefing, very general, about how foreign governments, and several foreign governments were highlighted, seek to influence Canadian politics and politicians, and how they might go about doing so: they might infiltrate an office or volunteer in a campaign. We were told about these things. There was nothing specific and nothing personal whatsoever.

The member for Wellington—Halton Hills has been clear in public statements and before the press that he never had “numerous” briefings from CSIS, as the Minister of Public Safety repeatedly declared in the House yesterday.

The assertions from the government benches today that he, the victim, has known details for two years and that he, the victim, did nothing about it are irresponsible, completely false and meant to deflect from the government's past and ongoing failure to protect its citizens of Chinese descent from intimidation, coercion or manipulation that we know is real and is playing itself out across this country on a daily basis.

However, CSIS did advise the Liberal government about these threats. This information would have been brought to the attention of the public safety minister, the foreign minister and the Prime Minister. Those ministers need to be clear about what they learned and what they did about it.

To say nothing, as the Minister of Public Safety and the foreign minister did previously in this House, or for the Prime Minister to tell a scrum yesterday that he just learned about it through the news, is a dereliction of the duty to protect the citizens of this country writ large and the privileges of the members of this House. As the member just stated, it is a dereliction of the duty to put into place the mechanisms that would make sure that those people knew. Who else are Canadians to turn to?

This is another abject failure and another “I am just an observer” Prime Minister answer. No wonder CSIS members are frustrated and talking to the press. No wonder Canadians have lost faith in the government. They cannot trust their safety or protection to the Prime Minister anymore.

I ask all members to support our calls to action: the creation of a foreign agent registry; the establishment of a public inquiry; the closing down of Beijing-run police stations operating in Canada, including some in B.C.; and the expulsion of Beijing's diplomats responsible.

We call on the government and the Prime Minister to show up, stand up and do the hard work of governing this nation.

• (1625)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I believe the Prime Minister and the government will continue to build upon the work that we have already been able to do. We have put in place—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to interrupt the hon. member.

The hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands has a point of order.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, no less than five times today I have stood up in the House and I have asked the member across to apologize to the member for Wellington—Halton Hills for impugning his integrity—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The Speaker has made a statement on this matter, and the Speaker will come back to the House.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, as I have indicated, the government has been building and will continue to build upon the work that we have done over the last number of years dealing with election interference and the issues that we have before us today.

We have commissioned a special rapporteur, a former Stephen Harper appointment, the hon. Mr. Johnston, to conduct a report, which could ultimately bring in a request for a public inquiry. Will the Conservative Party of Canada support what the former governor general brings back to Parliament?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, it is true that David Johnston served honourably as our Governor General, but that was before he was chosen by this government to be the overseer of the election debates, and it was before he was named to the Trudeau Foundation as a director, a position he finally stepped down from after there were complaints that it put him in a rank conflict of interest, because the Trudeau Foundation had received \$140,000 to \$200,000, depending on the reports, from someone attempting to influence the government. That is why we said that it should be someone completely independent of this government, completely independent of the Trudeau Foundation, who would look into any of these matters.

We are calling for a public inquiry now, and they should vote for it.

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics recently heard from the chair of the EU Parliament's committee on

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foreign interference and disinformation. Raphaël Glucksmann told the committee that China's strategy was to sow chaos in the countries it targets. He also told us that the Chinese ideogram for writing “chaos” is the same as that for writing “opportunity”.

Can my hon. colleague believe that this chaos that has prevailed in this place since the beginning of this week is due to the actions of the Chinese government, which are paralyzing the House and forcing us to react to an extremely serious subject, but which is blocking the work of Parliament on foreign interference?

[English]

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, because it was so long ago, most people might not know this, but I took my undergrad studies on Communism, so I am quite familiar with how Communism works. The member is absolutely right that it is often a matter of creating chaos and disorganization in a foreign government or in a foreign place that the Communist government wishes to either influence or take over, for that matter. This has nothing to do with it being China; it has everything to do with it being a Communist government that is acting in its own interest and not in the interest of Canada, and the chaos continues.

• (1630)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, the member talked about trust, and I think we all know in the House that Canadians need to trust their democratic institutions. However, this trust is being broken by foreign actors. That this trust is being broken down is evident in the House, and it is unfortunate that all of this stuff related to foreign interference is causing so much separation and segregation among Canadians.

I wonder if the member agrees that Canadians want us to build trust in our democracy and not tear each other apart.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, I always find the member very thoughtful in the House with her remarks.

Yes, I think trust is lacking. I think there is a lack of trust in this government for the very reasons that we have outlined here today: that it has not taken the steps necessary to create trust and give confidence to Canadians that it is protecting them. It does not matter what category of citizen a person is; we do not have categories in Canada. Whether a person is a newly arrived citizen or has been here for generations or since time immemorial, this government is tasked with our national security and safety, and needs to take it seriously.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, Labour; the hon. member for Spadina—Fort York, Democratic Institutions; the hon. member for Nunavut, Justice.

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[English]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, before I begin, I just want to make a quick remark to the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. Obviously every member of Parliament, every person who has the privilege of representing their constituents and who was elected here to come do the good work that Canadians expect, is in solidarity with him. Of course, what is transpiring or has transpired is unacceptable.

I will be splitting my time with the member for Scarborough—Guildwood, a very learned and honourable member. It is a pleasure to split my time with him. I always look forward to his remarks, but he will have to listen to my remarks first.

[Translation]

Foreign interference is a matter of crucial importance. No country is immune to the threat of foreign interference. A country like Canada, which invests in democracy and is proud of the integrity of its electoral system, is liable to be considered an attractive target by bad actors, including individuals, organizations and even foreign governments, that may attempt to create tension or arouse suspicion about our government and our institutions.

However, I want to reassure Canadians. Our security and intelligence organizations keep close tabs on these threats and advise us on how to keep our citizens safe. We are continuously working on strengthening our safeguards.

The Government of Canada is always looking for new and innovative ways to improve the robust measures we have implemented to fight foreign interference. We look to the experience of our international partners to see what can and should be done in Canada. Accordingly, on March 6, 2023, the Prime Minister announced new measures to fight interference. I would like to go over some of those initiatives.

First is the creation of a new national counter foreign interference coordinator in Public Safety Canada to coordinate efforts to combat foreign interference.

Second are the applications for review by the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, or NSICP, and by the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency, or NSIRA, on the state of foreign interference in Canada's federal electoral process and the way our national security organizations have reacted to this threat.

Third is the development of a plan to follow up on the outstanding recommendations by the NSICP, the Rosenberg report and other reviews on these matters. The report entitled “Countering an evolving threat: Update on recommendations to counter foreign interference in Canada’s democratic institutions”, was presented on April 6.

Finally, there is the \$5.5-million investment to strengthen the capacity of civil society partners to prevent disinformation, promote democratic resilience and raise public awareness about foreign interference.

The Prime Minister also said that Public Safety Canada would launch public consultations. These consultations would help guide

the creation of a foreign influence transparency registry in Canada to ensure transparency and accountability from people who advocate on behalf of a foreign government and that communities who are often targeted by attempts at foreign interference are protected.

The Minister of Public Safety launched those consultations on March 10, 2023. They will continue until May 9, 2023. The Government of Canada has also invested significantly in our ability to fight foreign interference.

● (1635)

The Government of Canada has also significantly in our ability to fight foreign interference. Budget 2023 allocates \$13.5 million, starting in 2023-24, and \$3.1 million ongoing to Public Safety Canada to establish a national counter-foreign interference office. Budget 2023 also allocates \$48.9 million to the RCMP to protect Canadians from harassment and intimidation by foreign actors, increase its investigative capacity, and more proactively engage with communities at greater risk of being targeted.

These investments build on budget 2022, in which the government committed to providing \$13.4 million to renew and expand the G7 rapid response mechanisms over five years in order to counter foreign threats to democracy.

What is more, \$12.9 million will be invested to establish a research security centre of excellence at Public Safety Canada in order to protect Canadian research while strengthening the security posture of universities and research institutions.

These major investments will help build the Government of Canada's capacity and strengthen its ongoing efforts to fight foreign interference. As I said, we announced the launch of public consultations to guide the creation of a foreign influence transparency registry in Canada. Although protecting our country is the top priority, we also have to make sure we protect communities that are often targeted by attempts at foreign interference. These consultations with key stakeholders and the Canadian public will inform the path forward, including new measures to strengthen national security.

In addition to these consultations, the government is always working to ensure that our democratic institutions are protected from malign foreign influence. For example, before the 2021 federal election, we implemented the critical election incident public protocol, a mechanism to notify the public of a threat to the integrity of a general election. We also renewed the G7 rapid response mechanism to strengthen and share best international practices to address foreign threats to democracy in G7 countries.

Ahead of the 2019 election, we created the security and intelligence threats to elections task force. This task force coordinates the sharing of intelligence and information among the Communications Security Establishment, Global Affairs Canada, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service. During the 2019 and 2021 federal elections, CSIS and the RCMP worked in close collaboration with task force members on coordinating efforts to fight foreign interference by raising awareness, assessing threats and preparing a government response to these threats. The task force remains active outside election periods as well, in light of persisting threats to democratic institutions, including foreign interference and disinformation.

However, protecting our institutions goes even farther. We are fortunate to be able to rely on the Canadian Security Intelligence Service. It investigates threats, advises the government and takes every measure necessary to mitigate threats to our national security. This includes threats from foreign actors.

● (1640)

[English]

I look forward to questions and comments.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, there is a very important point that needs to be clarified today.

Earlier today, the member for Winnipeg North and the member for Kingston and the Islands implied that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills was aware that threats had been made against his family two years ago.

Could the member clarify who was correct, the member for Winnipeg North or the member for Wellington—Halton Hills?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): May I remind the hon. member that the Speaker addressed that issue right after question period. We will resume—

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I was not aware of that. Could we reset the time and I will ask another question?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Yes, please, from the top.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, earlier today in my speech, I referenced the report that was tabled on March 12, 2020, from NSI-COP. It said that the Government of Canada should have established a comprehensive strategy to counter foreign interference.

Why, after three years, have we seen no action from the government to take these critical steps to uphold Canadian sovereignty? Why do the Liberals continue to allow an illegal police station to operate in a Canadian city?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague from Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, in beautiful British Columbia, for the very important question and for his participation in the debate today.

I am very happy that our government has launched consultations to set up a foreign agent registry. We need to be judicious and diligent on the foreign agent registry.

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As I have said before in this House and publicly, I am in favour of a foreign agent registry modelled after those of other countries. We should obviously undertake to adopt best practices. That is what we are doing. We are consulting with our partners and with various parties, and that is the direction we should be going in.

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, after hearing about Chinese police stations, interference attempts at universities and everything else, I wonder if my colleague is prepared to understand or actually accept the fact that there are regimes in this world that are ideologically and philosophically opposed to democracy and that the current Chinese regime is one of those regimes.

Does my colleague agree with me that the Chinese regime is hostile to democracy?

● (1645)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, which is very important.

[English]

We must always stand for and uphold our Canadian values of human rights, minority rights and democracy. We must also always stand against any foreign actors that go against the values of democracy, human rights and minority rights.

As for our relationship with countries around the world, we must co-operate with many countries, we must challenge them when they do not fit our values and we must compete against them. That is what we have said in the past with regard to the relationship with the People's Republic of China and the Chinese government. We must compete with them and co-operate with them, but we must also challenge them when their values do not align with Canadian values.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am going to paraphrase an expression to avoid using unparliamentary language. If it looks like a duck, swims like a duck, and quacks like a duck, then it probably is a duck.

There is something here that looks a lot like foreign interference, and the facts are piling up. After everything we have learned in the last few weeks, should there not be an independent, transparent inquiry to shed light on foreign interference? We need to restore the public's confidence in democracy, our institutions, the Prime Minister's Office and our security services.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, which is very important.

[English]

As to whether there should be a public inquiry or not, an individual who is held in very high esteem will be making that determination and the determination on a number of recommendations the government will follow. I look forward to seeing those recommendations.

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What we need to ensure is that all Canadians, the almost 40 million of us, have confidence in our electoral system, that there is no election interference and that we understand that in the world we live in, we must deal with foreign actors who do not have the best intentions here in Canada and in other parts of the world.

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Madam Speaker, I want to read article 9 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations into the record. It states:

The receiving State may at any time and without having to explain its decision, notify the sending State that the head of the mission or any member of the diplomatic staff of the mission is *persona non grata* or that any other member of the staff of the mission is not acceptable.

I would ask my colleague who sits on the government benches this: If setting up illegal police stations on Canadian soil or attacking or targeting a member of this House does not meet the threshold, what does meet the threshold to be able to kick someone out of our country?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, the issues and matters in front of the government and all members of this House are of very important, even critically important consideration. Obviously, whatever decisions are made will meet the proper threshold. I am not privy to all the information regarding what has transpired, so for me to opine on that would be—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge for setting me up. I can hardly wait to hear what I have to say.

I was literally sitting here wondering what I could contribute to this debate. One of the hon. members talked about the chaos in this chamber. It is true. Question period was chaotic, and I have never seen the Speaker quite so animated or so angry. We have all contributed to the chaos that is here.

I actually wonder what Beijing thinks. In some respects, Beijing is having a good day, because we are fighting among ourselves. However, I have some confidence in colleagues that we can actually come to some point of resolution not only on the motion but also on the way in which we face the existential threat to the nation of Canada that is the government of China.

I think it is a fair observation that, as a nation, we have never faced such a threat from another nation. Another government wishes to turn us into a vassal, subservient state, a state where the belt and road literally apply to us. All roads lead to Beijing, and the belt is for our neck. That is the ultimate goal of the government of Beijing; stirring up chaos in our country is the technique. Part of me regrets participating in this debate, because in some manner, I am contributing to that chaos. As I said, I am rather hoping that by the end of the day, we may have some resolution or may at least be starting to move toward some resolution on how to deal with this existential threat.

I had the privilege of travelling to Taiwan with the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills a couple of weeks ago. I regard that member as a friend. I think that may be one of the first things that we could deal with. We are a little too partisan here. There are not many on that side who can say they have friends on this side, and

there are not many on this side who can say that they have friends on that side. However, I do regard the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills as a friend. As a consequence of travelling with him in a delegation of 10 to Taiwan, all senior members of four parties, we had what I regard as an exemplary way in which Canadian parliamentarians can do good diplomacy and actually move the yardsticks in a serious area of diplomacy.

The hon. member and I, and other members of the delegation, I am sure, discussed the last election. Obviously, we did not get as far as some of the material that has come out in the last little while, but he was aware at the time that there were people who, strangely, were part of public events for him. We all live in a political environment. There are times when I do not know who is supporting me. I do not even know who is not supporting me. Sometimes, there are a lot of people who are not supporting me. That does not happen to anybody else, of course.

• (1650)

The point I want to make about the unanimity that is required in order to face this existential threat and to move our diplomatic interests forward is that we based part of our time in Taiwan on a unanimous report generated by the Canada-China committee. There are times when reports of committees hit the floor of the House and that is it. We never hear about them again. Interestingly, we took this report to Taiwan, and it was literally presented to the president by the chair of the committee. I will not say that she clutched it, but it was not too far from that. It was a show of unanimity by this Parliament and these parliamentarians, as well as a friendship to a government that is literally under an existential threat.

When we arrived, there were warplanes overhead, and there were warships surrounding the island. We all concluded that, frankly, one could learn a lot from the Taiwanese government and the Taiwanese people in terms of how to respond to existential threats by the People's Republic of China. That is the first point I want to make. We do, for the sake of our nation, need to come to ground on the way in which we respond to misinformation, disinformation, interference and intimidation.

One of the points that comes up in the motion is the issue of police stations. There is one in my community. From all reports that we can gather in the public domain, it is an intimidation operation run from local Chinese diplomatic authorities, and it affects the diaspora community in ways that we probably cannot even imagine.

In that respect, I think the motion has merit. However, I would just point out to colleagues that if we are to have integrity ourselves, then we also need to let the police move as police move, which is basically on the basis of evidence. As much as I would like to light a fire under police authorities in my community, or the RCMP, as the case may be, using the rule of law is the way we operate in this country. I do not think that we should deviate from the rule of law and the way in which we prosecute, even if we are virtually unanimous in our view that these police stations need to be shut down.

The other area in which I agree is the foreign agent registry. I think we are moving forward on that. The minister is moving forward. I do not know if it is the be-all and end-all, but I think it is a useful thing to do. Other nations have adopted it. I just take note that the same Canada-China committee has adopted a motion that calls for the Government of Canada to prioritize the introduction of legislation to establish a foreign agent registry. Interestingly, that was a Liberal motion.

I hope that I have contributed to the conversation here today.

• (1655)

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the hon. member mentioned that there is an illegal Beijing police station operating in his riding. I presume that he has brought that to the attention of the Minister of Public Safety.

Last week, when the minister appeared before the procedure and House affairs committee, he repeatedly claimed that the RCMP had shut down all illegal police stations. That is not true. Either the minister does not know what is going on or he intentionally misled the committee.

Does the hon. member have concerns about that, and did he alert the minister to the illegal police station in his riding?

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, it was not in my riding; it was in my community. Having said that, I had received assurances from the minister, as it is of concern, that the one in Scarborough has been dealt with. As far as I know, that is true.

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is not every day that we hear members waxing existential or philosophical. Unfortunately, that does not happen often enough in the House.

All of that raises the question of why. Why are we here? Why are we taking action? Rather than reducing the question to a vague “how-to”, I want to ask the member the following. Does he not believe that today's Conservative motion is an excellent opportunity to think about the reason for our action and to turn the chaos that I was talking about earlier when I mentioned the Chinese ideogram into an opportunity to reclaim control over our destiny?

• (1700)

[English]

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's question, which is a good one: Why are we here?

The larger answer is that we as a nation, we as parliamentarians and even we as a government are flummoxed by how to deal with the way in which China intervenes routinely, regularly and massively in the fabric of our society. We have never, ever in the history of our nation faced such a threat. That is why we are here. I want to stress how important this motion is and it is symptomatic of our somewhat chaotic response to the threat to our democracy.

Again, I thank the hon. member for his question. I have asked myself “why?” a few times myself.

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Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was one of the members who travelled with my colleague to Taiwan on that recent trip.

My concern now as we go forward is, how we deal with this perception by Canadians, and real perception, that our democracy is at risk, that our institutions are under attack and that Canadians are being threatened. When we hear things like the member just said, that there was a police station in his riding and he does not know what happened but he has been told it has been dealt with, it does not seem like that is the way that we are going to give Canadians confidence that this has actually been accurately taken care of. From my understanding, no one has been charged, there have been no arrests and nothing has been done.

I wonder what the member would suggest we do in order to rebuild confidence in our institutions, in order to rebuild confidence in our democracy and in order for Canadians of backgrounds from a variety of different countries to feel safe in our country again.

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, I appreciated the hon. member's contribution to our delegation in Taiwan.

The short answer is that I do not know how to answer the question. I know that is strange in this place. Everybody answers the questions and even answers questions that are not asked.

It is kind of trite, but true. We are at a bit of an inflection point on how to move forward democratically. I was asked by the press yesterday how I would conduct a future election and I now have to think about that. I now have to think about who is supporting me, who is contributing—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We will leave it at those questions.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am rising today in my role as the shadow minister for national defence for the official opposition. I agree with my colleague who just spoke that this is an issue that all members in this House should be engaged with. It is an issue that is definitely impacting each and everyone of us and our ability to represent our constituents without the fear of a foreign entity trying to intimidate us by threatening our families abroad.

As everyone knows, I have been an incredibly outspoken critic of Vladimir Putin and the Russian Federation. I was in the original tranche of 13 members of Parliament and parliamentary Canadians who were sanctioned by Russia back in 2013. We are now witnessing a situation where one of our fellow colleagues, my friend, the member of Parliament for Wellington—Halton Hills, has been targeted by the Communist regime in Beijing and its foreign agents here in Canada, threatening him and his family back in Hong Kong. Unfortunately, what we see from the government is just dithering and delaying in the typical Liberal way when it comes down to doing things that are important to each and every Canadian.

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National security and national defence responsibilities are paramount to the Government of Canada, yet we see a government that has not taken this issue seriously. It knew for two years that there was a legitimate threat made against the family of the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. We knew that the Communist regime in Beijing did not like the way he brought forward a motion to call out its activities against the Uyghur population in China as genocide, for which it decided to intimidate and sanction his family in Hong Kong.

The motion we have before us today lays out a path for our House and the government to finally act. It would create a foreign agent registry, similar to what we see in the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom. I would say, with respect to all the comments coming from the other side during the debate earlier today claiming that as Conservatives we did not do anything, that it only became an issue toward the end of our time in government, and that our platform for the 2015 election campaign called for the need to establish a foreign agent registry.

The second part of the motion calls for the establishment of a national public independent inquiry on the matter of foreign election interference, which we have been dealing with here now for several months once we found out that the Prime Minister had been briefed that seven MPs and their ridings had been targeted for foreign interference by the Communist regime in Beijing. Instead of having that independent public inquiry that the majority of members in this House have been asking for, the government went with a Liberal insider, someone who is a family friend of the Prime Minister's, with direct ties to the Trudeau Foundation, who is the former governor general David Johnston. Everyone is questioning the independent advice that will come from that process. That is why we need to move forward with a public inquiry to establish public confidence.

The motion also calls for the government to shut down all of the People's Republic of China's police stations that are operating in Canada. We know there are a couple in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal that are still open to this day. They may be observed by the RCMP, but we know for a fact that operatives of the Communist Party of China are using their diplomatic immunity in those stations to intimidate Chinese Canadians. That has to stop now.

Yesterday, the Falun Dafa, who are Falun Gong practitioners, were on the Hill standing for their rights and liberties that are being denied to them in mainland China, to stop the genocide against Falun Gong practitioners, and the illicit harvesting and trafficking of organs across the planet. Of course, the source of those organs is persecuted, executed and butchered Falun Gong practitioners.

• (1705)

Why have they been targeted by the regime in Beijing? It is because they had the right to assembly, which was denied them. They had their faith, which was denied them. They could not even come together to practise a faith that promotes tolerance, truthfulness and compassion, which are the founding principles of the Falun Gong doctrine.

The fourth and final part of this motion calls for the expulsion of all diplomats from the PRC who are responsible for the affront to all Canadians, including the member of Wellington—Halton Hills,

for their attack on democracy and foreign interference right here Canada. Again, the government has made the argument that it cannot do it.

However, I can tell members for a fact that, under Stephen Harper when the Conservatives were in government, we had a similar situation with the Iranian regime here in Canada where it was using its diplomats to target and intimidate the Iranian diaspora right here in Canada. What did we do? We expelled every single diplomat. They were declared *persona non grata*. We shut down its embassy here in Ottawa. We shut down its consulates in Toronto and Vancouver. Now we have its properties that we will hopefully be able to use to actually compensate the Iranian families here in Canada who lost loved ones on the Ukrainian International Airline Flight PS752, which was shot down as a terrorist act by the Iranian regime. Of course, we continue to fight in here on having the government honour the motion that was passed in 2018 to call the IRGC a terrorist organization and that this entity should not be allowed to operate in any way, shape or form in Canada.

What we are living through right now is an affront to our democracy. It is an attack not just on the member for Wellington—Halton Hills but an attack on every single minister, every single member of Parliament and every single Canadian. If we are going to protect our democratic institutions, then we have to act now. Enough is enough. Yet, we have not seen a single diplomat from Beijing expelled by this government. We have not seen the government carry through on its promise to shut down the police stations that the PRC has opened across Canada. The government has not taken a single step forward in establishing a foreign agent registry.

What we saw earlier today was disgusting when the member for Winnipeg North played the victim blame game and tried to blame the member for Wellington—Halton Hills for not doing anything on information that he never received two years ago. We know that this government received information from CSIS, and we know that the government did not act upon that intelligence. CSIS said that the family of the member for Wellington—Halton Hills was being threatened through information that it had gathered through signals intelligence, and yet the member for Winnipeg North stooped to a new low by trying to say that it was the fault of the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. That is ridiculous.

• (1710)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): On a point of order, the member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, that is just outright and absolutely wrong.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The Speaker has ruled on the issue right after question period and will come back to the House if necessary.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, I can quote the parliamentary secretary to the House leader for the government—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I remind the member that this issue was dealt with right after question period.

The hon. member has the floor.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, it is important to lay out what the national security adviser to the Prime Minister, Jody Thomas, said at committee back in December of 2022.

She said, “The Prime Minister is briefed regularly. He’s very interested in this subject and has directed work for agencies to do... We are briefing regularly, and those briefings are received and acted upon.” This is in relation to the Prime Minister getting briefed. Jody Thomas also went on to say that there are constant briefings to the Prime Minister. She said, “He’s briefed on foreign interference when we have issues to raise to his attention. He has a daily foreign intelligence brief, and he has a weekly Prime Minister’s intelligence brief.”

I am not saying Jody Thomas was involved in this, because Jody Thomas was not the national security adviser at the time, and I know that before her, there was a revolving door of national security advisers in the PCO.

The Prime Minister does get briefed. If he did not get this briefing, that is a shame. If he did not act upon it, he has responsibilities under our parliamentary process to make sure he gets that information as part of accountable government. He has not acted. He has failed Canadians, and he has not kept us safe.

• (1715)

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

The question is on the motion.

[English]

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division or wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the division stands deferred until Monday, May 8, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

POINTS OF ORDER

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS—SPEAKER’S RULING

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised on April 19, by the deputy House leader of the government regarding Bill C-318, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act and the Canada Labour Code, adoptive and intended parents.

On March 30, in a statement on the management of private members’ business, the Chair pointed out that Bill C-318, standing in the name of the member for Battlefords—Lloydminster, may infringe on the financial prerogative of the Crown. The Speaker then

Privilege

invited members to make arguments regarding the need for the bill to be accompanied by a royal recommendation.

In her point of order, the deputy House leader of the government noted that Bill C-318 would add a new employment insurance benefit for adoptive parents and parents of children conceived through surrogacy. This benefit is not currently contemplated in the act and would result in a new and distinct charge on the consolidated revenue fund.

[Translation]

As *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, states on page 838, and I quote, “Without a royal recommendation, a bill that either increases the amount of an appropriation or extends its objects, purposes, conditions and qualifications is inadmissible on the grounds that it infringes on the Crown’s financial initiative.”

The Chair has reviewed Bill C-318 and found that clause 5 adds new section 22.1 to the Employment Insurance Act to create a new type of special benefit, namely, a 15-week attachment benefit for adoptive parents and parents of children conceived through surrogacy. The bill also provides for the duration of this new benefit to be extended for various reasons.

[English]

Implementing Bill C-318 would create a new type of benefit, and therefore, lead to increasing public expenditures for purposes not currently authorized by the act. As a result, a new royal recommendation is required for the bill to receive a final vote in the House at third reading.

In the meantime, the House is about to start debate on the second reading motion of the bill. This motion will be allowed to be put to a vote at the conclusion of that debate.

I thank all members for their attention.

[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

FOREIGN INTERFERENCE AND ALLEGED INTIMIDATION OF MEMBER

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question of privilege raised Tuesday by the member for Wellington—Halton Hills concerning the alleged foreign intimidation.

Before beginning my remarks, I want to make some things very clear. When a foreign government attacks one of us, it attacks all of us. We must remain united against it.

I want to reiterate what my colleague, the Minister of Public Safety, said on May 2 in the House to the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. We express our solidarity to him and his family and we will continue to work with him and all parliamentarians to make sure he and all parliamentarians get the support they need.

Privilege

● (1720)

[English]

As the Minister of Public Safety has said, since we formed government, we have been vigilant in fighting against foreign interference and ensuring we have in place the people, resources, tools and oversight to defend our institutions, Parliament and Canadians. We will continue to do that work together.

On the specifics of what the member for Wellington—Halton Hills raised, I cannot comment, of course, on an intelligence leak that was the basis of the *Globe and Mail*'s reporting on the alleged allegations by the Chinese government. However, I will raise a few points.

I will use an example of the situation of the question of privilege raised by the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent respecting the alleged premature disclosure of Bill C-7 on medical assistance in dying from a previous session. The member raised his question of privilege the day after the other members had raised other questions of privilege the day earlier. The Speaker at that time ruled that the member did not raise the question of privilege at the earliest opportunity and, therefore, declined to find a *prima facie* case due to this fact.

The member for Wellington—Halton Hills, in his intervention, stated that he had not raised the matter at the earliest opportunity and stated:

Our authorities refer to the need for questions of privilege to be raised at the earliest opportunity in the House. While the *Globe and Mail* report was published yesterday morning, this afternoon is the first opportunity I have had to raise this point of privilege. In fact, this afternoon is the first time I have been up in the House since the report was published in *The Globe and Mail*.

I would like to examine whether, in fact, the member was not able to raise this matter earlier. The day the *Globe and Mail* story broke, in the morning of May 1, the leader of the Conservative Party was able to ask at least 10 questions in Oral Questions on this matter. During Routine Proceedings on the morning of May 2, the House leader from the Conservative Party requested an emergency debate on the matter respecting foreign intimidation, which had been raised in question period earlier. The leader of the Conservative Party then ostensibly challenged the Speaker on his ruling to not allow the emergency debate to proceed. That afternoon, after the matter was raised repeatedly during question period, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills then finally, at 3:30 p.m., raised his question of privilege.

Given these facts, the statement that the member made that the afternoon of May 2 was the earliest opportunity to raise his question of privilege clearly stretches the limit of credulity. I take all members in this place at their word, but the sequence of events over Monday, May 1, and the morning May 2 raises serious questions about the veracity of the statement that 3:30 p.m. was, indeed, the earliest that this question could have been raised.

[Translation]

Although I cannot refer to the presence or absence of members in the House, I would note that, now that we are in hybrid mode, there is no reason the member could not have raised the matter at the earliest opportunity, which would have been Monday morning, particularly as he stated that this matter is serious and grave.

[English]

If a member believes an issue is serious enough to constitute a *prima facie* case of privilege, he or she has an obligation to raise it at the earliest opportunity. The delay cannot be justified by a member wishing to conduct research to supplant his or her argument with various precedents to support, or to consult legal counsel.

The Speaker has, at his disposal, all relevant procedural precedents and access to procedural authorities to deal with this matter. The precedents are crystal clear. A member must raise the issue at the earliest opportunity. This did not occur in this instance.

The actions that allegedly took place, according to a leaked document as it relates to the member's family abroad, outside of Canada, beyond the jurisdiction of Parliament to deal with.

Finally, since these are uncorroborated statements that were allegedly leaked by a member of Canada's security services, it is impossible for the House to confirm the facts in this instance. As the *Globe and Mail* story stated, the individual would not disclose their identity so as to not breach the Security of Information Act. Allegations that the House cannot corroborate can never serve as a determinative means to establish a *prima facie* case of privilege.

● (1725)

[Translation]

Moreover, on Monday, May 1, the Prime Minister asked senior officials to consider the matter immediately.

[English]

I therefore conclude that this matter was not raised at the earliest opportunity, and uncorroborated allegations should not be seen as meeting the high threshold for a Speaker to find a *prima facie* case of privilege.

[Translation]

Before I conclude, I would also like to set the record straight about the member for Wellington—Halton Hills' assertion that the government did not tell him about the Chinese government's alleged actions.

[English]

The Minister of Public Safety and the Prime Minister became aware of the matter following the story that appeared in *The Globe and Mail* on May 1. On May 2, security officials also briefed the member on all the information that could be provided.

Additionally, the member has received briefings from CSIS on a number of occasions regarding the fact that his work makes him a target of foreign governments. Unfortunately, we live in a time when many foreign governments are targeting democratically elected members of the House. Going forward, we have made it clear to CSIS that, in cases of threats to an MP or their family, regardless of a level of concern, the MP should be briefed quickly and thoroughly.

This is not a partisan issue. We must all work together to defend our institutions, the communities and, most importantly, the parliamentarians who serve on behalf of their communities to protect our democracy.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I appreciate the added information, which will be included with the other information previously provided to be considered for the upcoming response.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I request that the ordinary time of daily adjournment for the next sitting be 12 o'clock midnight pursuant to order made Tuesday, November 15, 2022.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to order made Tuesday, November 15, 2022, the minister's request to extend the said sitting is deemed adopted.

* * *

[English]

STRENGTHENING ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FOR A HEALTHIER CANADA ACT

BILL S-5—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would further put forward that an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the report stage and third reading of Bill S-5, an act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, to make related amendments to the Food and Drugs Act and to repeal the Perfluorooctane Sulfonate Virtual Elimination Act.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of the proceedings at the respective stages of said bill.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I suspect if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent to call it 5:30 so we could begin private members' hour.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Do we have unanimous consent to see the clock at 5:30?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Private Members' Business

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): moved that Bill C-318, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act and the Canada Labour Code (adoptive and intended parents), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Madam Speaker, the arrival of a new child into one's family is a precious and exciting time for parents. As a mom of four, I know first-hand how important, demanding and wonderful that time truly is. For adoptive and intended parents, that time is equally meaningful and critical for the well-being of their new child, yet Canada's parental benefit system does not treat families who grow their families through surrogacy and adoption equally.

Canada's employment insurance program provides critical financial supports to new parents through maternal and parental benefits while they care and bond with their new child. However, adoptive and intended parents are entitled to 15 fewer weeks of leave. That is because they cannot access maternity leave benefits. It is about time that all parents have access to the time they deserve and need with their children.

It is for that reason that I introduced my private member's bill, Bill C-318. This bill delivers parity through the creation of a new 15-week employment insurance benefit for adoptive and intended parents. It also makes necessary adjustments to the Canada Labour Code's leave entitlement provisions. Mirroring the maternity benefit in terms of the dollar amount and weeks of leave, this benefit will deliver parity while supporting attachment and bonding for families formed through adoption and surrogacy. At its core, this legislation is about the well-being of the child.

Attachment and healthy child development go hand in hand. Healthy attachments form over time as a parent bonds and cares for their child. As parents respond to the needs of their child, their child feels safe, protected and loved. That foundation of security is critical to the long-term health and development of a child.

When a child has healthy attachments, there are countless benefits. They help build their confidence and self-esteem and contribute to their self-control and self-regulation. Healthy attachments help a child build relationships with others and have trust in those relationships. They encourage exploration and learning. When a child experiences failures or challenges, healthy attachments help build resiliency and stability.

These attachments are formed between a child and their parent in the early stages of life, including in utero, but also throughout their childhood and adolescent years. The benefits of healthy attachments are lifelong. The quality of the relationship between a child and their parent or caregiver will significantly impact their social, emotional and cognitive developments.

Private Members' Business

Bill C-318 recognizes the complexities of attachment for families formed through adoption and surrogacy. Adopted children have experienced an attachment disruption in some form. When they are placed with their new families, they are building new attachments, and that process is informed by a child's life experiences, including possible past traumas.

An absence of healthy attachments in their life prior to their placement can present unique challenges. Time is so critical for adoptive parents and their children to form healthy attachments. For families formed through surrogacy, time to bond is also critical for the successful emotional transfer from a surrogate to the parents. Allowing parents to be present for 15 more weeks with their child will help them form healthy attachments, and ultimately, it will have a positive impact on the long-term outcomes of the family.

Every child is valuable and deserving of the safety and security that come with healthy attachments. This legislation will ensure that our system of parental benefits in Canada does not discriminate against certain families. We owe that to the children impacted by this policy. They all deserve time to attach.

● (1730)

Shortly after I was first elected, I met with a group that was advocating for a time to attach for adoptive families. Kyla was among that group. She sat in my office and shared her adoption story. She shared the challenges she experienced in connecting with her new parents. Adopted as a sibling set when she was 11 years old, Kyla highlighted the unique challenges and pressures that her mom faced in balancing the care of her and her siblings. Kyla made a compelling case for more time to attach.

Since that first meeting, I have had the opportunity to hear from many more adoptive families about how meaningful 15 more weeks together would have been for them, how 15 more weeks would have eased the pressure and how it would have better supported their families. I have also had the opportunity to hear from intended parents about how much it would mean to them to spend a full year with their newborn. They have talked to me about the challenges of having 15 fewer weeks of leave when it comes to finding child care. They have also expressed the heartbreak and concern about potentially missing some of their child's firsts when they are forced to go back to work earlier than other parents.

Simply put, having equality in our benefits landscape and a time to attach benefit is good policy. It is why it has been in the last two Conservative election platforms. However, let me be clear: This is a non-partisan issue. In fact, we have seen some form of support from all sides of the aisle.

The NDP member for Winnipeg Centre sponsored a petition last fall for a time to attach benefit that garnered over 3,000 signatures. The Conservative member for Calgary Shepard previously sponsored a petition for parity in parental benefits that garnered thousands of signatures. The human resources, skills and social development and the status of persons with disabilities committee recommended that the government explore the attachment benefit in a 2021 report entitled "Modernizing the Employment Insurance Program". The Liberals have also introduced this attachment benefit for adoptive parents in their last two election platforms, and it was included in the 2019 and 2021 mandate letters for the minister.

Despite all of this support, the Liberal government has failed to bring it home for adoptive parents. The Liberals have not prioritized delivering this benefit to them. Most recently, the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion publicly alluded that a benefit for adoptive and intended parents would be included in her government's budget, yet when the budget was delivered it was nowhere to be found.

It has already been years since the government first promised this benefit. Adoptive and intended parents should not have to keep waiting. There are families today who need and deserve this benefit. There are children today whose development would be better supported. The longer this common-sense policy is delayed, the more families will miss out on precious time together.

Beyond the undeniable developmental benefits of additional time together, these families deserve to have an additional 15-week benefit. Like the existing maternity and parental benefits, only parents who have contributed to the employment insurance program would be eligible to receive the proposed benefit. The adoptive and intended parents are already contributing equally to our employment insurance program, as are their employers, but other families are receiving more in return for the same level of contribution.

Adoptive and intended parents should be treated fairly, but the reality is that our current system discriminates against them. Bill C-318 addresses that discrimination. In terms of dollars and weeks of leave, it would deliver parity to them.

It is also worth noting that the Parliamentary Budget Officer has costed the implementation of this bill. The impact of this proposed benefit on the employment insurance fund would be very minimal. In fact, it would be so minimal that it would not require an increase to employer or employee premiums.

● (1735)

While the cost of this proposed benefit in the context of the employment insurance program may not be immense, the impact of the proposed benefit for the families who would have access to it is truly priceless. It would afford them more time together as a family. It would foster healthy attachments. It would ease some of the pressures faced in the critical first year of a child's life or placement with family. It is difficult to fully measure what it would mean to each of the families impacted by this policy.

Private Members' Business

While I am proud and honoured to have introduced this bill, I would like to recognize and thank Julie Despaties, Cathy Murphy and the countless other Canadians who have tirelessly advocated for a time to attach benefit. I offer my thanks to each and every Canadian who has added their voice to the call for parity in our parental benefits landscape, and thank those who have signed the many petitions, shared their personal stories and championed this issue for the sake of the thousands of Canadians and all the families who would be directly impacted by this proposed benefit.

I truly hope that not only does Bill C-318 find support from all sides of this House, but the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion provide the royal recommendation needed for this legislation to pass. Together, let us give adoptive and intended parents the time they need and deserve with their children.

● (1740)

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in this House to participate in this important debate.

On March 8, 2023, the member for Battlefords—Lloydminster introduced the bill before us, Bill C-318, to amend the Employment Insurance Act and the Canada Labour Code. We understand that EI maternity—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry, but this is questions and comments.

There is five minutes of questions and comments, so does the hon. parliamentary secretary have a question for the member?

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Madam Speaker, I want to simply ask what impact introducing these changes or amendments would have on families across Canada.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, the benefits are countless. We cannot measure what children would gain by having the time to attach with their parents.

I really hope the parliamentary secretary across the way is encouraging his minister to provide a royal recommendation for this bill so that the Liberals can follow through on their 2019 and 2021 campaign promise.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I would like to thank the hon. member for her important intervention and for introducing this bill.

I am not too sure if the member knows this, but for indigenous communities, first nations, Métis and Inuit, kinship, customary care and adoption are important cultural practices. I wonder if the member would agree that ensuring these forms of adoption, as well as care, would be an important improvement to her bill?

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, absolutely I think that is imperative, especially in 2023. Families all look different. Cultures are different. Canada has been a very welcoming country that has people from different cultures and different ethnic backgrounds, and sometimes families look different from our own families. I think this is very important, and it would do very well for the children of those families.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I just want to say how proud I am of my colleague for bringing this forward. It is an issue that is so important to valuing families and to letting our nation and other nations know how important the family is to the foundation of Canada.

I am wondering if she would like to speak a little more to how important those first few months, right up until the age of five, are. Personal bonding within a family is so key to a child's growing up with a sense of value and ability.

● (1745)

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, attachment is so important any time a child is placed, and it is more and more common, actually, for children to be placed with families when they are older, especially with adoption. That time is so critical.

Some people may think that 15 weeks does not matter, but it does matter. These children are sometimes coming from trauma and, as I said, from some form of disrupted attachment. Attachment is crucial for the cognitive, emotional and social development of kids of any age, whenever the brain is developing. We know, especially for boys, that this does not finish until about the age of 24, so attachment time is critical.

Mrs. Rechie Valdez (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as the member mentioned, our government has supported providing adoptive parents with an additional 15 weeks of leave to make sure that they get the same level of support to care for children as other parents do. We have also made many important investments for the well-being of children and families across Canada.

I would like to ask the member opposite this. What steps does she propose to take to monitor the effectiveness of these new policies, or, if needed, how does she intend to make the necessary adjustments for the future?

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, it would be great to see if the member could talk to the minister and urge her to provide the royal recommendation so that the Liberals can follow through with their campaign promises from 2019 and 2021.

As I said, this is a non-partisan issue. I really think this is something that can be discussed, especially when the bill gets to committee and when it comes back to the House. I plead for this to be a non-partisan issue. There are so many kids who are being robbed of the time to attach with their parents, so I urge the government to provide the royal recommendation for this bill.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise a second time on this issue, because it gives me another opportunity to thank my colleague across the way for raising this important issue in the House. On March 8, 2023, the member for Battlefords—Lloydminster introduced the bill before us, Bill C-318, to amend the Employment Insurance Act and the Canada Labour Code.

We understand that EI maternity and parental benefits need to be fair for all workers, and that is why we are committed to providing adoptive parents with an additional 15 weeks of leave, to ensure that they receive the same level of support to care for their children as all parents do. We know that adoptive parents have advocated for this. They have rightly noted that all new parents need time with their children to help them grow and to create a meaningful and lasting bond. There is no question that the arrival of a new child is a precious time for all parents, and that is why we remain committed to providing adoptive parents and intended parents with the time that they need to bring their children home and create a sense of attachment with their children. The question is not whether we do this, but how we do this. Simply put, what is the best way to get it done?

We know that EI is a critical program that serves millions of Canadians each year. Canadians rely on it when they find themselves out of work, when they want to start a family or when they need to take time to care for a loved one or to get better themselves. We can all agree that EI benefits need to be fair, more responsive and more adaptable to the needs of Canada's evolving workforce.

Work is already under way to modernize the program. Our intent is to build a simpler EI program that meets the needs of Canadians for decades to come. The hon. Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion has led more than 35 national and regional round tables with stakeholders representing workers, employers, unions, industry groups and academics. The minister also heard from individuals, including parents and soon-to-be parents, through an online survey that had more than 1,900 respondents. Furthermore, we received over 160 written submissions and held three technical workshops.

During these consultations, we considered the needs of parents who create their families through adoption and surrogacy. We talked about making EI maternity and parental benefits more inclusive of the way families are formed. The consultations found enthusiastic support for providing adoptive parents with an additional 15 weeks of leave. Canada's current EI program provides parental benefits to parents who need to take time away from work to care for a newborn or a newly adopted child. When parents share benefits, they can receive up to 40 weeks of standard parental benefits, or 69 weeks under extended parental benefits. Workers who are pregnant or have recently given birth, including surrogates, can receive 15 weeks of maternity benefits to support their recovery from pregnancy and childbirth.

I am pleased to say that budget 2023 proposes continued prudent investments in Canada's EI program, including and extending financial supports for workers in seasonal industries. Budget 2023 also proposes establishing a new, independent board of appeal to hear cases regarding EI claims. As a tripartite organization, the new

board of appeal would put first-level EI appeal decisions back into the hands of those who pay into the system.

Since 2015, our government has promised we would have the backs of Canadians, and we have kept that promise every step of the way. From the middle-class tax cut to the Canada child benefit, affordable child care, and incentivizing shared leave, our government has delivered real results for Canadians. Canadians and parliamentarians have expressed the strong need to reform the employment insurance program. As the minister has said, EI reform is a priority for our government, and we will get it done. We look forward to delivering on our commitment to provide adoptive parents with an additional 15 weeks of leave to ensure that they receive the same level of support to care for their children as other parents receive.

● (1750)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I am pleased to represent Nunavut regarding Bill C-318, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act, as introduced by the hon. member of Parliament for Battlefords—Lloydminster. *Qujannamiik* to the member for introducing this bill.

New Democrats support this bill. It would create a 15-week attachment leave benefit for adoptive and intended parents, through the employment insurance system. During my speech, I will describe benefits for children, parents and overall Canadian society. I will describe troubling realities substantiating the need for Bill C-318 to be passed.

It is unfortunate that it has reached the House as a private member's bill, given that in 2019, and again in the last election, the Liberals promised to introduce legislation in this area. Regardless, we will continue to hold the Liberal government accountable to its promises brought by this bill. The NDP is committed to ensuring that all parents and caregivers, whether biological, adoptive, intended, customary or kinship, can spend time at home with their children in the critical first year.

Research shows that the quality of a child's attachment impacts the overall health and development of the child. The benefits of passing this bill will be most prominent for children. Children with strong attachments are more likely to form strong relationships with peers, be better able to regulate their emotions and be less dependent on their caregivers.

I have personal experience. I strongly believe that, because of the strong bonds that were created in the early years of my life, I have been able to cope with the adversity I was forced to experience later in my life. Parents adopting and those intending to be parents need to receive the same benefits, so that adopted children can have the same sense of coping for their future. I have seen the benefits of ensuring those strong bonds early in life, through watching my grandchildren bonding with their parents in the time spent together early in their lives.

Adoption is an important practice in Nunavut, and providing this benefit will help many of my constituents. Unfortunately, Bill C-318 does not reflect our customary adoption practices. While the bill is an important step in the right direction, it does not include kinship and customary caregivers, which are particularly important for Métis, first nations and Inuit.

Kinship and customary care reflect indigenous culture and traditions, and are an alternative to foster care or group home placements. We want to ensure that an attachment leave benefit is inclusive of kinship and customary caregivers, as well as adoptive and intended parents.

Providing parents or caregivers with an additional attachment leave benefit so that they can develop these stronger attachments is crucial for children's well-being. This benefit would provide adoptive and intended parents with much-needed financial security and improve outcomes for children, many of whom are over the age of 10 at the time of placement and have a history of trauma and loss.

Providing a 15-week paid attachment leave would ease the burden being placed on women who are adoptive or intended parents or kinship and customary caregivers. Providing them with the financial support they need would help ensure stronger attachments with their adopted or intended children.

The societal benefits would be seen with a healthier Canada, in children who are able to enter the school system prepared and ready to adjust to a world where they can learn to have friendships and learn to realize the importance of becoming contributing members of society.

• (1755)

The need to pass Bill C-318 is evident in the disproportionate amount of unpaid caregiving work that takes place in this country, mostly on the part of women. Indeed, more than half of women in Canada give care to children and dependent adults, and almost one-third give unpaid care to children.

New Democrats will support this bill, work to improve it so that it includes kinship and customary caregivers, and hold the Liberals accountable to deliver on their promises to ensure that adoptive and intended parents get the benefits they deserve.

I would like to conclude by sharing what we as New Democrats have heard from important agencies across Canada. The Child and Youth Permanency Council and Adopt4Life are calling for the creation of a new, paid, 15-week attachment leave benefit to adoptive and intended parents and kinship and customary caregivers. I very much appreciate their Time to Attach campaign, which has been effective in building public support for this change.

Private Members' Business

I thank my NDP colleague, the member for Winnipeg Centre, who had a petition on the 15-week attachment leave benefit. It garnered so much support by many.

Julie Despaties, from Adopt4Life, has said:

Canada's current parental leave program does not recognize the unique attachment needs of children and youth joining adoptive families and is creating avoidable harms. We need this change, so families are no longer disadvantaged because they are formed through adoption.

Finally, Cathy Murphy, the chairperson of the Child and Youth Permanency Council of Canada, said:

The Child and Youth Permanency Council of Canada is pleased to see Private Member's Bill C-318 from [the member of Parliament for Battlefords—Lloydminster] brought to first reading. Equitable attachment leave for adoptive parents, customary and kinship caregivers is long overdue, and we look forward to seeing these EI revisions.

• (1800)

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to speak on Bill C-318, which basically gives adoptive parents the same rights as biological parents by providing adoptive parents with the same 15 weeks of benefits that biological parents get. The Bloc Québécois is very much in favour of this bill, which will ensure fairness for all parents.

I can think of many arguments to support this cause. One is the importance of having time to bond with the child. This bond is important from the beginning. Adoptive parents also need time to prepare for the child's arrival. Children from newborn to six months old bond as strongly with adoptive parents as with biological parents. After the age of six months, it is more complex.

The average age of children waiting to be adopted is now six years. How effectively that bond develops will depend very much on the past experiences and traumas that adopted children may have had. If the bond does not develop properly, it can lead to many behavioural problems. On average, adopted children have more problems in this area. In many cases, adoption can also be seen as a healing and recovery process for the child.

We also know that children may need professional services, and adoptive parents must have time to arrange that. There are legal standards and international standards. I believe that all levels of government must fight discrimination against adoptive parents.

Private Members' Business

The important thing is that children's rights be at the centre of this debate. We know that in many other countries, adoptive parents get the same rights, services and benefits as biological parents. The government side has already announced that this private member's bill will need a royal recommendation. I will come back to that.

With respect to the right to equal and equitable treatment of both biological and adoptive parents in relation to bonding time, the Government of Quebec announced in December 2019 that the amount of parental leave granted to adoptive parents would be brought in line with the amount granted to biological parents, and that measure came into force in 2020.

I sincerely want to commend those responsible for the Time to Attach campaign, as well as Ms. Despaties, founder and executive director of Adopt4Life, for their determination. I also salute Mrs. Falk of the Conservative Party for introducing this bill. Finally, a petition sponsored by Ms. Gazan that collected more than 3,000 signatures was tabled on January 30, 2023.

As stated earlier, this is an issue that goes beyond partisanship. I would like to recall for members, and Mrs. Falk will remember—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I must remind the hon. member that we do not refer to members by name in the House. We only refer to them by their riding name.

● (1805)

Ms. Louise Chabot: Madam Speaker, I apologize to you and to my Conservative Party colleague. I really want to commend her for this initiative.

I would even remind her that the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities conducted a study in 2021 on a comprehensive EI reform. I think everyone remembers that.

At the time, the government committed to building a stronger, more inclusive and modern EI system that covers all workers, including adoptive parents. I will read recommendation 12 from the committee's report on modernizing the employment insurance program. It states: "That Employment and Social Development Canada explore the option of creating 'attachment benefits' modeled after Employment Insurance maternity benefits, to ensure equitable treatment of adoptive, kinship, customary and biological parents in the amount of time and benefits provided to bond with their children."

In December 2021, the mandate letter of the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion asked her to create a new 15-week benefit for adoptive parents.

My critique about this debate is that, once again, we have to rely on private members' bills. That was what we had to do when we wanted to increase EI sickness benefits to 52 weeks. Now we have to do it again if we want biological and adoptive parents to be treated equally. Despite the government's pretty words, and despite its repeated commitment to EI reform and all its other commitments, nothing is happening. Absolutely nothing is happening because the government seems to have reneged on its 2021, 2019, and even 2015 promise to strengthen the EI system and provide the rights that should be provided. That is not what is happening.

For example, pregnant women who lose their jobs during pregnancy are not entitled to regular EI benefits because the program's eligibility criteria currently discriminate against them. The government committed to correcting this inequity for women and committed to revising the program to ensure that the eligibility criteria do not penalize them if they lose their jobs. The tribunal ruled in favour of the women, finding that the eligibility criteria were discriminatory. The government decided to appeal the ruling rather than fix the situation. Reforming EI is the way to fix it.

Right now, seasonal workers in many parts of Canada, including western Canada, eastern Canada and Quebec, are sounding the alarm and demanding EI eligibility requirements that do not penalize their socio-economic regions. While waiting for their work to start up again, these people have to get by with no income during the EI seasonal gap, even though seasonal industries are what keep these regions alive.

The minister was asked to respond to this again recently. Regions represented by my colleagues from the north shore, Gaspé and Charlevoix depend on seasonal industries to survive. None of this will get any better without political will.

Today the Liberals will say this needs a royal recommendation, or they will claim they do not know what to do about it.

● (1810)

There is only one way to go about it: All the injustices, all the EI eligibility requirements need to be changed. The government needs to stop asking questions about how it should be done and just do it. It needs to seize this opportunity and correct these inequities, just as the measures proposed in this bill would do by providing adoptive parents and biological parents with equal treatment when it comes to fundamental bonding time. I invite the minister to present a royal recommendation, but I urge her for once and for all to introduce a bill to reform EI. Workers, women and parents deserve it.

[English]

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a privilege to rise on behalf of the residents of Kelowna—Lake Country and an honour to speak in favour of the legislation brought forward by my colleague, the member for Battlefords—Lloydminster.

Bill C-318 is an essential piece of legislation because it would allow this House to ensure equity in our laws for every Canadian family, especially and specifically for adoptive and intended parents. Just to be clear, intended parents are parents who, for varying reasons, may need to engage with a surrogate in order to have a child, and there may be various scenarios around this. They often go to great lengths to have a child and welcome a child into their home.

Private Members' Business

The challenges all new parents face are too many to count. That is why it is our responsibility as parliamentarians to do all we can to ensure fairness and equity for all parents in the employment insurance program and the Canada Labour Code.

Today, any new parent will receive parental benefits, but adoptive and intended parents do not receive maternity benefits and, therefore, fewer weeks of benefits. We rightfully recognize that time for attachment is vital, and it is just as needed for intended and adoptive parents. Forming a loving bond can come with extra challenges, especially when it has been estimated that most children adopted in Canada are over the age of 10 at the time of placement.

The lack of a specific benefit to provide parents the time to attach with a child adds extra burden on the ability of these children in need of love to bond with the family they can make a home with. Intended parents need just as much time to care for and bond with a child as well. Any time there can be an opportunity for a parent and child to bond, we should embrace it, and any time we can support adoptive parents or intended parents and their children, we should embrace it.

I recall someone saying to me almost 10 years ago, "Find your voice," and I did not know what that meant at the time, but with an opportunity like this today, on this legislation, I can be a voice not only for my life's journey, but for others.

I am going to talk about something extremely personal right now, and I feel the context of this legislation warrants me bringing some of my life's experience, through my voice, into this conversation and into the discussion around this legislation.

I was adopted at birth. I was born in Edmonton, and my parents drove to Edmonton from Lethbridge to pick me up and bring me back to their home in Lethbridge, Alberta, which is where I grew up. I tell part of my life story in this place today with the utmost honour, respect and love for my mom and dad.

My dad passed away in 2014 and my mom passed away in the middle of the pandemic lockdowns in 2020. My dad was a firefighter and my mom was a teacher. Choosing to adopt when they found out as a newly married couple that they could not have kids must have been a big decision for my parents. When my parents started building their family, my mom had to step back from teaching for many years.

I knew from as early as I could remember that I was adopted. My parents never hid this within the family, but they also never, ever, called me their adopted child, and I never saw my parents as my adoptive parents. They chose to adopt. They chose to devote their lives to having a family, to mentor and raise. They chose to be parents, and they are my parents. I say this at the same time with respect also for my birth parents, who, as a young unwed couple, chose to give me up for adoption.

This legislation would make equal the ability for parents, whatever that looks like, to be on equal footing and receive equal benefits. I am proudly supporting, and am actually the official legislative seconder of, this legislation, Bill C-318. It would support and be inclusive for all those who choose to be intended or adoptive parents. It would treat everyone equally.

• (1815)

Whether someone is part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, whether they have children from other partners that they are bringing together under one roof as a family, whether they had to have a child through a surrogate, whether they adopt domestically or internationally, or whether they have a combination of the above or different family scenarios that I have not mentioned, all family dynamics and scenarios are embraced in this legislation. If we truly want to be inclusive, that means equity. Currently, if someone is an adoptive or intended parent, they do not have equity in the benefits they may receive in order to allow them time to bond with their child.

Let us talk about circumstances with some adopted children who may require extra levels of attention, care and compassion. Some children can come from places of trauma, loss or grief. Some children have complex medical or mental health challenges. Without that early care and attachment, these issues can alter their lives into adulthood. It is important to provide the time for the parent and child not only to bond but also to work on the needs of the child. For parents who adopt internationally or are caring for a child within Canada from a different linguistic background, that additional time can be used to help bridge linguistic or cultural barriers. For a family that adopts a child with special needs, the extra time for attachment will provide not just the chance to connect with their new child but also the time they need to learn more about the resources and services that may be available to manage their child's unique needs.

Parents of adopted children, or intended parents, already take this time today. However, they often take unpaid leave to do it. That is simply not fair. Government policy must treat all new families fairly and equitably. Supporting the benefits that Bill C-318 would extend to all families will make Canada a better place.

According to a report from the Adoption Council of Canada, in the 2017-18 fiscal year, 2,336 children were adopted. However, the council admits that these numbers do not reflect customary care placements. Even if we assume that those placements would double this number, it would pale in comparison to the 30,000 Canadians eligible for permanent adoption, a number given in a 2021 report from the Children's Aid Foundation of Canada. These children are waiting for good homes. Benefits like the ones Bill C-318 seeks to create will ensure that we fully respect all families.

In closing, I would like to refer back to the report from the Adoption Council of Canada. Specifically, there is a quote that provides context to this debate from the point of view of an anonymous adoptive parent. The life experience it refers to is very similar to mine. It says, "It is incredibly important for not just the federal government but society in general to recognize all parents". It goes on to say, "My daughter is my daughter. She is not my 'adopted' daughter. I am her mother. I am not her 'adoptive' mother. There is still much that needs to change."

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These families are Canadian heroes, providing loving homes to children, regardless of the circumstances of their birth. We should erase any dividing lines in our laws or support systems by which they are not entirely recognized as the families they truly are.

I sincerely hope that all members of the House can put their partisanship aside to support this wonderfully positive and family-focused bill, which was put together by a caring mom and seconded by a mom who was adopted at birth and who has an incredible son. Let us ensure equitability for adoptive and intended parents and pass this bill.

● (1820)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always encouraging when we get members standing up speaking on legislation who share their personal story. I do want to thank the member. I know I speak on behalf of all members. When members explain a very personal story, such as she has done in such an elegant way, it really brings the importance of the issue to the floor of the House.

The deputy House leader and I did get a chance to talk about the issue. I think there is a great deal of sympathy in regards to why the government should do what it needs to do in order to enhance EI. I am sure that the member is aware that we, as a government, have talked about the importance of EI generally speaking. However, when we think in terms of the specifics of what this legislation would do, we talked about during an election and post election. We saw a very passionate minister who is actually very keen on looking at ways in which we can improve the employment insurance regime.

A considerable amount of consultation needs to take place, but I will bring a bit of a different perspective.

There is absolutely no doubt of how an adoptive parent and adopted child love and care, which is reciprocated between them such that, in essence, we could drop the word “adopted”. The adoptive parent will raise the child as his or her own, and we will see the multitude of sacrifices that are made by the parent for the child with a very happy heart, because it is their child. As the child grows, we will see that it is most often reciprocated where the child sees the adoptive parent as their parent. There is no denying the strength of that bond, which is equal, I would suggest, in many ways to a natural birth parent in terms of the care and love connection.

I would like to add something to that. Last year, I was at an event in Winnipeg North with my daughter. We were sitting beside this wonderful lady, Myrna, who is a foster parent, which we just found out that evening. We knew she had a wonderful family, as I had met Myrna in the past, and I had seen her children, who are older, but I did not know that she was a foster parent. I was so impressed with the discussion that we had that we were inspired to do something with respect to foster parents, because the connection that foster parents have with children is strong. In fact, we will find that there is a very direct link when a person gets a child virtually from birth, and this happens quite often, until adulthood.

● (1825)

I do not know if it was in March or April, but there was a debate inside the Manitoba legislature about the connection between non-biological parents and children who are adopted or provided foster care. I have seen the connection. It is very tangible. In fact, what we ended up doing in that particular situation, and the same principles could be applied elsewhere, is recognize them with the jubilee pins we were given for honouring foster children. Based on the discussion we are having here this evening, I suspect we could have just as easily, and I wish we had, given some recognition to adoptive parents, because we should never take this for granted.

When we look at what the government has been talking about, I am sure the member is aware that the minister has a mandate letter. Within that mandate letter, as I understand, there is direction with respect to adoptive parents. We have to take a look at what has been taking place over the last couple of years.

One thing we have seen is that the whole EI area can be very effective at responding to the needs of Canadians in a very real and tangible way. We saw that during the pandemic. We might have had to put some limitations on some of the things we wanted to do as a result of the pandemic and the crisis that all Canadians had to deal with at that time. However, let us not let that discourage individuals following this debate from trying to push forward the idea and principle that we need to recognize adoptive parents through EI reform.

The minister herself has indicated that she genuinely wants to see changes to the EI system. The Prime Minister himself has recognized the importance of the issue. The Prime Minister not only came up with the mandate letters, which all prime ministers have done in the past, but also singled this issue out to this particular minister—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry, but I do have to cut the hon. member off. The next time this matter is before the House, he will have two minutes left for his speech.

[Translation]

The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

LABOUR

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am here to follow up on a question I asked the government last week that is tied to a number of issues. It was tied mainly to the ongoing strike, but highlighted a key concern that I and many Canadians have right across this country in a number of areas.

The current government has increased the public service by, I believe, 53% over the last few years, to the tune of over \$21 billion, and unfortunately, service has declined. The strike that just happened is the largest strike in Canadian history. While I will acknowledge it has tentatively come to a conclusion, it does not really get to the point of my main question, which is why it has taken the government two years to get this situation resolved.

That strike, and just the general lack of service support across federal government departments, has impacted, for example, Afghans, who helped Canada, get here because the IRCC has been proven incapable of processing the necessary paperwork. In particular, in the last month, the strike has had an impact on Canadians trying to get their tax returns done on time and, with the challenges many of them are facing due to pandemic benefits that were paid out and now, in some cases, being clawed back, trying to get clarity to understand what they owe and how fast they have to pay it back or work out an appropriate level of support. I personally took issue with the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development having the audacity to tell Canadians, while the strike was going on, that their passports were not essential and not to bother applying.

There is another issue that specifically impacted my riding. Georgian College runs a marine program and Transport Canada reassured the college, and the 40 students in the process of finishing the program, ahead of time that they would still have the ability to write their exams and they would be administered on time. Unfortunately, there was a change in tune by Transport Canada while the strike was going on, and those students, who are to become much needed navigators or marine experts in our labour force, were not able to be qualified and get out there as quickly as possible. I am hopeful that will be resolved in a very short time frame.

The fact of the matter is that the strike had a huge impact, and I really just want to understand better why it took the government two years to resolve this situation with the unions when it could have been resolved before a strike even needed to occur.

• (1830)

[Translation]

Hon. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I very much appreciate the question from my colleague from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound. Before I answer his fundamental question, I would first like to provide an update to all my colleagues in the House of Commons and to Canadians.

As I am sure everyone is aware, we have reached a tentative agreement with the Public Service Alliance of Canada, or PSAC, for the four bargaining units in the core public administration. This is great news for employees and for Canadians.

It was not easy. We negotiated, we compromised and we found creative solutions. After long days, nights and weekends of hard work, we reached fair and competitive agreements for employees, with wage increases of 11.5% over four years, consistent with the recommendations made by the Public Interest Commission. These agreements are also reasonable for taxpayers and provide an additional year of stability and certainty.

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The Government of Canada values the important role that public service employees play in providing services to Canadians. PSAC members play an essential role in this work, and these agreements will provide them with important benefits and improvements that recognize their vital contribution.

Now I would like to address the issue of services raised by the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

[English]

There are a couple of things I will do.

First, I would like to directly answer why it took this long to have negotiations.

I would like to inform the hon. member that the Government of Canada tabled its negotiations just over a year ago. Unfortunately, PSAC chose not to negotiate with us. It walked away from the table. We were always there and ready at the table to start the negotiations so we could have avoided what we experienced over the last two weeks, but it was not to be. It was not until after the publication of the public interest report, as well the public interest commission's report, and some other processes related to the strike mandate before the unions returned to the table. We then negotiated night and day with the bargaining units at the table and came up with a deal that is not only fair and reasonable for public service employees, but also competitive, fair and reasonable for Canadians.

Therefore, I would be happy to talk to the member about the consequences of what has happened and the effects that this two-week strike has had on various services, but I see that I am running close to time, so I will wrap up here. I hope my colleague will allow me to continue providing him the response that he has sought.

• (1835)

Mr. Alex Ruff: Madam Speaker, I will definitely give the parliamentary secretary a chance to follow up in his remaining minute to really address the issue. I would like him, as well as the government, to acknowledge the terrible impact the strike has had in general, and on the lack of services to Canadians over the last number of months or years in some cases.

Also, I would ask for his advice with respect to what they have learned so that future governments, regardless of political stripe, can get to a resolution prior to a strike reoccurring. Does the parliamentary secretary have anything to offer so that in the future we do not have to get to the same point where our hard-working federal employees have to go on strike?

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Hon. Greg Fergus: Madam Speaker, the advice I would have is to start the negotiations as early as we can. There are times where it would be unreasonable to expect any future government to start negotiations years in advance of the ending of a contract because conditions will change over time. If we go back three years, I do not think people would have predicted that we would have seen interest rates rise to 5% or 6% as they have. At the time, we were staying at historically low rates for almost a decade, so it would be unreasonable to expect that. However, as soon as they can, say a year out, it makes a lot of sense for governments to do that. I would encourage all future governments to ensure they sit down and negotiate an offer in good faith, and I hope the bargaining units will do the same, because it takes two to tango.

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Madam Speaker, my question to the government on February 9 quoted the government House leader's statement in the January 25 edition of *The Hill Times* that “protecting Canada’s economy and infrastructure from foreign interference and from the rise of despotism” would be the government's third priority in the upcoming session. Today, we can also add the government's repeated promise to protect all members of this House from foreign interference and threats. One hopes that protecting democracy, upholding Canadian laws and ensuring the safety of MPs would ordinarily be a priority for any government.

Therefore, I would again ask the government how its stated priority is coming along, especially in light of the matter involving the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills. For some unknown reason, the government is incapable of taking immediate action and kicking out a Chinese diplomat, irrespective of the fact that the individual is a poster child for *persona non grata* under article 9 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, 1961. The section says, “The receiving State [Canada] may at any time and without having to explain its decision, notify the sending State [China] that the head of the mission or any member of the diplomatic staff of the mission is *persona non grata* or that any other member of the staff of the mission is not acceptable.” It is pretty straightforward. Is there any ambiguity here? A threshold appears to have been met several times. Why, then, has there been such a delay?

Also, why is there no movement on creating a foreign agent registry similar to those in the United States and Australia? In fact, speaking about Australia, I want to read into the record something that Vice-Admiral Paul Maddison, now retired, former commander of the Royal Canadian Navy and Canada's high commissioner to Australia, has said. He points out that relative to Australia, Canada's “[e]xposure to economic coercion is much less than in [Australia], yet Australia has stood up to the CCP [the Chinese Communist Party], absorbed the costs, diversified trade, and made it clear that no foreign power will be permitted to undermine its democracy and values.”

Is it the government's intention to send a clear signal to Beijing that Canada is a doormat? How difficult is it to create a registry? Did the PSAC strike set it back a few weeks? Moreover, how beneficial is it to place an RCMP car outside two illegal Chinese police stations in Quebec? Why can the federal government not shut down these stations? How long would it take the Americans or the Chi-

nese to eradicate illegal police stations in their country? It would not take very long.

How has the government stood up and confronted, head-on, Chinese interference in Canada? Given its feeble record, I am sure its action is not on a sound foundation. With such an abysmal record, how safe should any member feel about the government working to guarantee their safety? Can the parliamentary secretary inform Canadians if we can expect the creation of a foreign agent registry in our lifetime?

● (1840)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak about our government's record when dealing with foreign interference. However, I want to start with where the member seemingly left off.

He asked how long it would take for the U.S. or China to react to these things. I am surprised that he would suggest in the House that we should follow the lead of the Chinese government in how it handles things, whether it is foreign interference or the rules of law and order in its country. We will not take lessons from the Chinese government on that. Instead, we will follow the rule of law in this country as parliamentarians.

As we have heard throughout the debate today, when it comes to illegal police stations, it is absolutely unequivocal that they need to be shut down. However, the suggestion that it is the federal government that polices them in this country shows how naive the member opposite is in terms of the role of the RCMP. I have every bit of faith and trust that the RCMP will do the right things to ensure not only that any illegal police stations that are open will be shut down, but that any additional police stations would be shut down as well. The suggestion that the police require this House to tell them to enforce the law is frankly insulting to our very capable RCMP members.

When it comes to foreign interference, it is not a new phenomenon. It is not unique to Canada. In fact, we have seen many examples of it around the world. The member opposite raised the issue of Australia. We also saw very public cases in the U.S. in the 2016 presidential election, as well as in France, Australia and New Zealand. We hear often of incidents in Estonia of foreign interference by the Russian government.

This is not new. In fact, it was the 2019 NSICOP report in this very House that raised issues of foreign interference and the targeting of MPs. As I have said in the House time and time again, reports are tabled in the House, and even though the suggestion is made that the government somehow never took this seriously and never addressed it, it was in those very reports that all members of the House had access to. It was actually our government, right from the beginning, that took serious action on foreign interference by creating NSICOP and the oversight body NSIRA. We are also moving ahead with a foreign agent registry.

We continue to take serious action on this. If the member opposite thinks there is a silver bullet to solve foreign interference, I would like to inform him that foreign interference is always going to be a threat that all governments must take incredibly seriously. We must be diligent. The forms that foreign interference takes may be changing. All governments and all parliamentarians need to be very aware of that, and all Canadians need to be able to trust the democratic institutions in this country. All governments must take this extremely seriously and continue to combat it.

• (1845)

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Madam Speaker, the issue of foreign interference touches all Canadians in Canada, and over the last year, I have closely examined circumstances and events involving my situation in Spadina—Fort York. I have reached the conclusion, which is certainly within the realm of possibility, that I may have been subjected to Chinese interference in 2021 such that it destroyed my name and worked to prevent my election in 2021.

I have had a substantial meeting with CSIS of over two hours to discuss my thoughts and concerns. I also plan to meet the Hon. David Johnston to provide him with my information and things that I had shared with CSIS.

I want to assure the government and anyone else that, having put up with racist comments, innuendos, false accusations, threats and sketchy political machinations, I will go forward to determine what and who was behind the despicable takedown effort against me, my name and my reputation, whether they be of Chinese origin or otherwise.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, I think that, if any members feel they are subject to foreign interference or are in any way being intimidated, then that absolutely should be raised.

I also want to caution that the threats around foreign interference are extremely serious, and that using instances without being able to provide credible evidence is also not a way to simply rebuild a reputation. I read the article in the National Post from May 3, wherein the member opposite makes some of these allegations as to what he believes. I will just point out that, if what was reported in the article was, in fact, true, then it would mean that a foreign entity would have had to have known that he might be potentially a candidate in Spadina—Fort York over three years in advance of the sitting member ever deciding he was not going to run again.

JUSTICE

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, before colonization, Inuit, first nations and Métis were self-governing nations that each had their own forms of keeping well with each other. They had their own laws governing behaviours. They had their own laws

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governing land and wildlife management. Indigenous peoples were independent nations.

Since about 150 years ago, the ravages of colonialism and the genocide against indigenous peoples have resulted in too many examples, such as what we saw in the tragic story of Dale Arthur Culver. To his family and friends, some of whom I had the privilege of meeting, I again send my sincerest condolences.

For those who may have forgotten, Dale Arthur Culver was a first nations young man from British Columbia. He was racially profiled, which led to his untimely death. I still find it appalling that it took six years to have charges laid against the five RCMP officers who were responsible for his death. Dale and his family deserve justice.

One hundred fifty years later, even after the ravages of colonialism, we are seeing indigenous self-determination. Most nations are starting to be self-governing again, which I am so proud of.

When I first asked the government when it would finally introduce an indigenous policing bill, which it promised it would introduce years ago, instead of answering the question, the government responded by saying it has provided funding. As such, I will repeat my question: When will the current government pass legislation so indigenous peoples can keep themselves safe?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her strong advocacy.

Indigenous communities, like all communities in Canada, should be places where people and families feel safe and secure. Culturally sensitive, respectful and properly funded police services are essential for community safety and well-being.

The Minister of Public Safety has been mandated to co-develop first nations police services legislation. This legislation is an opportunity to recognize first nations police services as an essential service and provide funding that is adequate, stable, predictable and responsive to first nations police services needs.

We recognize the federal government cannot do this alone, especially given provincial and territorial jurisdiction over the administration of justice, including policing, and the role of first nations in managing their first nations police services.

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Over the past several months, department officials, the minister and the parliamentary secretary have continued to work with the Assembly of First Nations, provinces and territories, the First Nations Chiefs of Police Association, the First Nations Police Governance Council, first nations police services, and modern treaty and self-government agreement holders on the first nations police services legislation.

I also want to note the legislation would be focused exclusively on first nations policing services. However, we know there are needs from coast to coast to coast.

Everyone on this land deserves to live in safe and healthy communities. Without safety, we know people cannot thrive. Police services that are professional, effective, culturally appropriate, responsive and accountable are critical to building safe and healthy communities.

For this reason, in budget 2021, the Government of Canada invested \$540 million over five years, and over \$126 million ongoing, to support communities currently served by the first nations and Inuit policing program, and to expand the program to new communities. As part of this expansion, I am pleased to note that, for the first time, Nunavut would be receiving dedicated RCMP resources under the program, filling a long-standing gap given Nunavut's majority Inuit population.

In addition, funding was announced as part of indigenous policing investments in budget 2021 for Public Safety Canada's crime prevention and community safety planning programs, and Indigenous Services Canada's pathways to safe indigenous communities program. They continue to provide options to Inuit communities and populations to address their community safety needs.

We also continue to dialogue with Inuit partners on their distinct policing and community safety priorities consistent with the Minister of Public Safety's commitment to continue to engage with Inuit and Métis on policing matters. This comes with support from the Minister of Indigenous Services and the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations so that we can continue to meet the diverse needs of Inuit into the future.

Financial investments are one step toward increasing the equity of indigenous police services across Canada. Though the work is not done, we continue to work closely with Inuit partners to identify and explore the policing and community safety solutions that they need.

• (1850)

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Uqaqtittiji*, I appreciate the response, but I still consider the response to be quite piecemeal.

The government has had years to be guided by important works led by indigenous peoples. Two of the major works include the calls for justice and the calls to action. Both of these reports provided comprehensive frameworks that can lead to positive change and can lead to the overall improvement of indigenous well-being. Meeting these calls would ensure systemic changes so that Inuit, first nations and Métis can finally experience the reconciliation they deserve and so they can finally experience the justice they deserve. Despite these great works, the government continues to take incremental steps. These incremental forms of justice only perpetuate Canada's genocide against indigenous peoples.

When will the government finally implement what it touts will be its whole-of-government approach, rather than the incremental steps it—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, I understand the need for an all-of-government approach. Again, I appreciate the comments made by the hon. member and will certainly continue to work with her on ways we can improve this.

This is also why the Minister of Public Safety has mandated to co-develop first nations police services legislation. In addition to this, the government is funding the first nations and Inuit policing program, including expanding the program to new communities. As part of this expansion, I am pleased to note that Nunavut will be receiving dedicated RCMP resources for the first time under the program. Given Nunavut's majority Inuit population, this will fill a long-standing gap.

In addition to other programs, such as crime prevention, community safety and planning, we will be working with Indigenous Services Canada's pathways to safe indigenous communities program to continue to build—

• (1855)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

[Translation]

Pursuant to order made on Thursday, April 20, the House stands adjourned until Monday at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:56 p.m.)

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