



House of Commons  
CANADA

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

---

ETHI • NUMBER 054 • 1st SESSION • 39th PARLIAMENT

---

**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, June 14, 2007**

—  
**Chair**

**Mr. Tom Wappel**

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:

**<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

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

Thursday, June 14, 2007

•(0900)

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC)):** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I think we'll start.

This is the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, meeting 54, Thursday, June 14, 2007, pursuant to Standing Orders 110 and 111, the certificate of nomination of Mary Elizabeth Dawson to the position of Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, referred to the committee on Tuesday, June 12, 2007.

Before I introduce our witness, I'd like to make it clear, of course, that the committee decided that we would normally not meet today because of not having witnesses on other topics that are before us. I'd just assume, notwithstanding the decision of the committee of Tuesday, June 12, that there's an all-party agreement to proceed today with the examination of the certificate of nomination of Ms. Dawson as Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

I assume I have all-party consent on that. I hear no opposition, so we will proceed. The committee will again meet on Tuesday, June 19, as agreed, but this is a special meeting.

Good morning, Ms. Dawson. We have your notes and we have your curriculum vitae. As I trust has been explained to you, if you could say a few words about what you think of all this, then the process will be that each caucus will ask some questions—they may or may not ask you questions—in rounds.

I welcome you to the committee. Thank you for coming and making your presentation to us.

**Ms. Mary Elizabeth Dawson (Nominee for the position of Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, As an Individual):** Thank you very much.

[Translation]

It is an honour for me to have been nominated by the Prime Minister for the position of Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and I am delighted to be here before you to discuss my nomination. This is an important and challenging position recently established by the Federal Accountability Act that builds on the existing position of Ethics Commissioner.

I understand members have already received a copy of my curriculum vitae.

[English]

Let me first briefly introduce myself. I was born in Halifax, Nova Scotia. My parents both came from the west. My father was born in

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and my mother in Neepawa, Manitoba. I studied philosophy and law at McGill in Montreal, and I was called to the bars of Quebec, Nova Scotia, and Ontario.

As you know, I spent virtually my entire professional career in Ottawa. As a result of having lived, studied, and worked in different parts of the country, I've always felt a strong attachment to Canada as a whole, never quite knowing where to say I was from when asked. This may have something to do with my abiding interest in the politics, art, and culture of Canada, and my interest in serving our country. It made working for the federal government a natural career choice.

As you've no doubt noted from my CV, I had the privilege of spending my public service career, in its entirety, with the Department of Justice, although I did work with a number of other departments—a wide variety of other departments, actually—in my work. I provided both legal and policy advice in public law areas, including constitutional law, international law, human rights, official languages, native law, access and privacy law, and administrative law.

I was particularly drawn to the area of constitutional law, and through the different positions I held, I supported the Minister of Justice and the government as a whole on the major constitutional files that have faced the country in the last decades.

In particular, I was personally responsible for drafting a number of key statutes, including the Constitution Act of 1982, with its charter, as well as the Meech Lake accord, and the Charlottetown accord. Also, in my capacity as associate deputy, I provided advice on a wide array of constitutional matters, including, among many others, the drafting of constitutional amendments relating to schools and minority language rights.

As a public servant, I've always considered it an honour to serve my country and my fellow Canadians. As parliamentarians, you also serve Canadians in a very direct way, representing their interests and the views of your constituents in the House of Commons, and legislating for the betterment of the country.

I've always had a great respect and appreciation for your fundamental role in our system of responsible government, and I've always found at a personal level that members have had as their primary motivation to advance what's good for Canada.

It's important that Canadians recognize the value and honour of the role you play, and it's in this context, I think, that one must understand the importance of the conflict of interest and accountability principles that have been developed. Public servants and parliamentarians alike must always be mindful that our actions must measure up to the closest scrutiny, so that Canadians continue to have confidence and trust in their public institutions.

● (0905)

To my mind, this is the most important contribution the new Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner can make, and I would be honoured to serve in that capacity.

As you know, the Parliament of Canada Act sets out the eligibility requirements for this position. One possible background is to have been a former judge. This doesn't apply to me. However, another possibility is to have been a former member of a federal board, commission, or tribunal and to have demonstrated expertise in either conflicts of interest, financial arrangements, professional regulation and discipline, or ethics. I'd like to draw your attention to some highlights from my career that perhaps, in my opinion, would qualify me for the position.

I was appointed by the Minister of Justice in 1980 as a member, and then in 1987 as the chairperson, of the Statute Revision Commission, a legislative body responsible for revising and consolidating the public general statutes of Canada. I served in that capacity until 1993.

Before my retirement in 2005, I held senior management positions in the Department of Justice and was responsible for handling all administrative, financial, and human resources issues in my area of responsibility. I also contributed at a corporate level, of course, to the management of the department, and in particular, I served for several years as the final level of adjudication for grievances in the department.

Also, I oversaw the drafting of numerous statutes relating to ethics, professional regulation and discipline, and judicial and quasi-judicial bodies, including, just for example, the Canada Labour Code, the Canadian Human Rights Act, the Federal Court Act, the Judges Act, and the Competition Tribunal Act, to name but a few. You'll see at the back of my CV an appendix that lists all the acts I either drafted or supervised.

Should this committee and the House of Commons express their trust in my ability to perform the duties and functions of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, my first priority will be to ensure a smooth transition from the existing conflict of interest regime for public office holders to the new Conflict of Interest Act. Parliament has chosen to legislate for the first time in this area, and it has established some new rules. It will be critical to bring as much clarity as possible to the new rules and to ensure that those carried forward are equally clear.

As well, it will be important to see that those rules are well communicated and, perhaps more importantly, are well understood by those who are subject to them. In addition, we've witnessed a multiplication of new agents of Parliament and ombudsmen in the recent past, and I'll want to understand well myself the roles and responsibilities of the various players who have an interest in

ensuring the accountability and ethical behaviour of those for whom they have responsibility.

[*Translation*]

I very much hope and expect that I can make an important contribution to this institution and I would welcome the opportunity to serve as Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

Thank you.

[*English*]

I'd be pleased to answer your questions.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. David Tilson):** Thank you, Ms. Dawson.

As you know, and I assume you've been around enough to know the process, each caucus for the first round will have up to seven minutes, and that includes questions and answers.

Mr. Peterson, for the Liberals, is first.

● (0910)

**Hon. Jim Peterson (Willowdale, Lib.):** Thank you for being with us, Ms. Dawson.

I notice from your CV that from 2003 through 2005 you served on the Canadian program steering committee overseeing advice to Russia on public administration. I'd be interested in what you were doing then and in what type of advice it was.

**Ms. Mary Elizabeth Dawson:** It was called PAR, public administration reform. It was a study of how one could improve the mechanisms of public administration in Russia. It was a commitment made by Prime Minister Chrétien at a meeting with Putin some years earlier, I guess in the early 2000s. The intention was to work public servant to public servant and give the public servants in Russia some direct contact and understanding of how the public service works in Canada.

**Hon. Jim Peterson:** Was it perceived at the time that there were deficiencies in public administration in Russia?

**Ms. Mary Elizabeth Dawson:** That there were inefficiencies?

**Hon. Jim Peterson:** That there were deficiencies, or inefficiencies, or whatever?

**Ms. Mary Elizabeth Dawson:** Oh yes. Perceived by us or by the Russians?

**Hon. Jim Peterson:** Both.

**Ms. Mary Elizabeth Dawson:** Oh yes.

In my experience over the past 10 years I've met with a number of Russian delegations not connected with this particular enterprise as well. They've sent their judges over many times and their public servants just to get a sense of how a good democratic country works and to understand our systems. So I think there's that perception on both sides.

**Hon. Jim Peterson:** Were there any reforms made in Russia as a result of your work?

**Ms. Mary Elizabeth Dawson:** I'm not aware that there were. When I retired, I left the project, and it was still in mid-stream. It took a year or two to get the thing up and running, because there was a tendency on the Russian side to hire academics with the money that was funding them rather than facilitate the public service connector, and it took a couple of years to iron that out. So there was a slow start-up for the project, and as I say, I left in mid-stream.

**Hon. Jim Peterson:** I notice that you did work in South Africa as well. Would you like to elaborate on what you did there?

**Ms. Mary Elizabeth Dawson:** That work was connected with a project that the Department of Justice had to assist the judges in South Africa to get up to speed quickly. Of course, with the end of apartheid there was a desire to advance a number of black judges quickly. So it was recognized it was very important that they be exposed to people with a good experience in judicial systems. That was really the thrust of the project.

The Department of Justice funded a training school for judges in South Africa.

**Hon. Jim Peterson:** Let me say this, I've had recourse to using the services of the ethics commissioner or counsellor in the past, and as a member of Parliament I found it was very useful to be able to consult in advance and find out exactly what one could do or could not do, and if so, how one was going to do it.

You have a stellar background, a very rich background of achievement, and I'm very pleased that you've been nominated for this position. I welcome you enthusiastically into the job and look forward to dealing with you in the future.

**Ms. Mary Elizabeth Dawson:** Thank you very much.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. David Tilson):** Madam Lavallée.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Good day, Ms. Dawson. I am pleased to meet you for the very first time. When Bloc Québécois members first read your resume, they were rather surprised to see that you had been nominated by the Prime Minister, first, because of your close involvement in several federal government projects that ran counter to Quebec's deepest aspirations. You say that you have provided legal and legal policy advice on all matters related to Canadian unity and to the Quebec government's secessionist policy and that you led a team of lawyers and other Justice Department employees.

Judging from your resume, you have been associated with every major anti-Quebec offensive. As for Option Canada, the least we can say is that it did not prove to be an appropriate model for managing public funds. The program in fact was marked by considerable laxness and complacency.

Minister Jacques Brassard had this to say about the Constitution Act, 1982: "To achieve its objectives, the federal government has no qualms about changing the rules of democracy [...]"

Mr. Brassard was referring to the Supreme Court reference, but it is all the same, in any event. The inalienable right of Quebecers to decide their future continues to be disregarded.

On the subject of the Clarity Act, a prominent lawyer and constitutional expert, Henri Brun, was quoted as follows in *Le Devoir*:

Canada's federal Parliament is poised to adopt a very unusual piece of legislation, the sole purpose of which is to impede the right of a people to exercise freely their most fundamental right, namely the right to decide their political future.

Mr. Brun goes on to say this:

By attempting to consign this notion of clarity to a perfectly abstract legal framework, the federal Parliament is in fact acting in a thoroughly unconstitutional manner.

According to what you are telling us, Ms. Dawson, you advised the government on this matter. These are not the words of the Bloc Québécois or of the Parti Québécois, but of a constitutional law professor. It does not bother me if this amuses you. He also had this to say:

[...] it represents an effective way of preventing Quebecers from getting another opportunity to decide their political future [...] Through intimidation [...]

Ms. Dawson, you have been associated with Option Canada, with the Constitution Act, 1982, with the Clarity Act and with the Supreme Court reference. Surely you can understand that the Bloc Québécois, which defends the interests of Quebec—and dare I say those of the Quebec nation—in Ottawa, cannot possibly endorse the candidacy of an individual who has been directly associated with the activities and laws of this government that have disregarded the rights and privileges of a people, or entrust to that individual the mandate of ethics standard bearer.

Thank you.

• (0915)

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. David Tilson):** Ms. Dawson, she has made a statement. I guess you're free to respond to that or not.

[Translation]

**Ms. Mary Elizabeth Dawson:** All I can say is that this is a major political issue. I never felt that I was against Quebec. I love Quebec a lot and I hope that it will remain a part of Canada. That is my personal opinion. I was working for the government at the time and it was not up to me to decide what to do for this government. Regardless, I was never against Quebec or Quebecers. I just wanted to state that for the record.

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. David Tilson):** Mr. Dewar.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I guess semi-congratulations are in order, because of this first step. Hopefully you'll be moving on to the second step of going to Parliament to have your appointment approved. I think you're eminently qualified for the job, according to your CV.

A little aside joke: there is a conflict of interest, as you're one of my constituents. I see from your CV you've done a lot of work in the community as well, but you didn't talk about that. I think that should be noted. It shows how well rounded you are.

The job that you might have is to enforce and provide oversight over the Conflict of Interest Code. I think anyone looking at your CV could see that you're eminently qualified. You also have to have oversight and give advice in terms of the ethics. I see you have a background in philosophy, and I think that's critical and important. We won't get into a discussion on the merits of Aquinas.

Talk to me a little bit about how you see the part of your role on ethics. That's certainly something that has had a lot of discussion of late in this town, and not just in Canada but around the world, in terms of how we balance off providing independent oversight on ethics. How do you see that part of your role?

● (0920)

**Ms. Mary Elizabeth Dawson:** I'm going to have to think carefully about how to fulfill that particular role. This is new for me, and I'm going to have to very carefully read the statutory underpinnings and the parliamentary code, which I've done, but it's going to require more reading, thinking, and getting some advice, as I haven't really been briefed on what's happened in the past. I've seen a few things from the past. I noted that the act is really fairly narrow. It's primarily focused on conflict of interest and not on broader ethical matters, although there's an underpinning of ethics.

I do recognize that the Ethics Commissioner has played the role of being a consultant. I think that's a very important role. My hope would be to develop very good relationships with parliamentarians and the relevant committees. I think it's a work in progress.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** I would concur. In fact, my predecessor, Mr. Broadbent, had a lot to say, as you are probably aware, on this issue. I think one thing that is helpful is that we have a clear statute now. I would argue from a partisan position that we've decoupled, if you will, the position from the government. That's really important. We supported that in Bill C-2. In fact, my predecessor, Mr. Broadbent, had called for that. I agree with you: the position is evolving. It is a balance, I would submit, between enforcing the conflict of interest rules and carrying out the functions of your title as the ethics adviser as well.

I might take issue with my friends in the Bloc who suggest that because you were around at the time of some of the more interesting periods in our most recent history, this would somehow be a reason or argument for you not to have the job. I would actually flip that and say that I think this is why you'd probably be eminently qualified. You saw what was going on from the perspective of a public servant. I would underline—and say this to my friends in the Bloc and to Canadians—that it wasn't the public servants who were on the wrong side of the street in terms of ethics, it was some of the people who were in positions of power. I think that needs to be highlighted. In fact, what I'm happy to see here is that you had some perspective in terms of what most recently happened, and I'm thinking back to issues around the sponsorship and to issues of how we deal with government programs. I would argue that you could easily invert that argument to say this is why you're qualified.

You mentioned you had a quick read of things. What is the most challenging, from your perspective, right now? We could talk in a year and you might have a different perspective, but what do you see as the most challenging issue in this role right now?

**Ms. Mary Elizabeth Dawson:** I think the one that worries me the most, or is the most important right up front, is to get it properly staffed. There are a lot of holes in the organization, I'm told, and it's important to get the right people on staff and get it up and moving. I think it will take some months to actually get it properly functioning for that reason. That's a concern in my mind.

Then I will be very interested in satisfying myself that I understand the scope of the job and what's possible and what shouldn't be done under the job. That I will do by reading, consulting, and hopefully talking to the appropriate people on the Hill as well.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Have you had a chance to look at other jurisdictions in terms of models, or is that something you want to look at?

**Ms. Mary Elizabeth Dawson:** Not really, no. I've really had no briefings on this material.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** I have just one final question, Chair.

You mentioned that you'd like to see more resources to staff further. Are you talking in general or are there specific ideas you have in mind in terms of what kinds of staff complements you would need?

**Ms. Mary Elizabeth Dawson:** I'm not sure if I'm asking for more at this point. I haven't even gotten into it that deeply. But I do recognize that there's more of a legal overlay now. There are some legal proceedings, and it would be important to have adequate legal advice.

I'm going to have to assess.... I don't even know exactly what the breadth of the staff is at this point, but I know there are a number of vacancies, and I know that the mandate has changed somewhat. So I think we'll have to look very carefully at the organization and the number of staff.

● (0925)

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** I just want to sum up, Chair.

From our perspective, we believe you're eminently qualified and wish you good luck. A friend of mine, Mr. Broadbent, commented on your stellar work in the past, and if it's good enough for him, it's good enough for me.

Thank you very much.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. David Tilson):** Thank you.

Mr. Stanton.

**Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, Ms. Dawson. It's great to have you here this morning, as I said in our greeting on the way in.

I concur, and I'm sure other members from this side of the committee table will concur, that there's no doubt you're certainly bringing the qualifications and experience that are needed to this role.

In reviewing your resumé and background I couldn't help but notice that you were actually very involved in the drafting of two pieces of legislation that hit quite close to home with this committee—the Privacy Act and the Access to Information Act. As you may know, they are two of the pieces of legislation—but not the only two—that we deal with on a regular basis.

It did actually bring up the question as to whether, in the course of your work at the Department of Justice and in your dealings in the public offices that you have held over the last few years, there was at any time any involvement with the drafting or amending of the conflict of interest codes for members or public office holders.

**Ms. Mary Elizabeth Dawson:** No, I've never been involved in that particular aspect.

**Mr. Bruce Stanton:** Of course, the work that you've done for the Department of Justice over the years reaches back a ways. No doubt the country has had an experience over the last few years in dealing with constitutional questions, and without the benefit of that good advice from the office it would be very difficult for elected officials to plot the kind of course that they need to.

I wonder, and this is perhaps in reference to Madam Lavallée's question, if you could describe briefly the context of how that works. Elected officials set the policy agenda. You're working in the public service. You're an expert in your field. You draft legislation. Describe briefly how you're in a position of taking that direction and how that works at a practical level in your department.

**Ms. Mary Elizabeth Dawson:** In the Department of Justice, for example?

**Mr. Bruce Stanton:** Yes.

**Ms. Mary Elizabeth Dawson:** Well, there are different roles. There are many different inputs to the political desires. There's the policy advice, the legal advice. I've worked in a number of different roles, as you noted.

In drafting legislation, one starts, of course, with a memorandum to cabinet and a record of cabinet decision that gives you very detailed instructions. You have a minister instructing you, but you also have to keep an eye on the cabinet decision, so already there's a balance there. Very frequently there are matters that aren't covered in the decision that have to be dealt with in the legislation. You would bring them forward and discuss them and suggest what might be done. But of course it's always the minister's decision and ultimately the government's decision as to what goes into the legislation.

**Mr. Bruce Stanton:** Thank you, Ms. Dawson.

Mr. Chair, I don't really have any further questions, and I wonder if it would be appropriate at this point to at least put a motion to the committee to affirm the nomination of Ms. Dawson.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. David Tilson):** I suppose it's in order, but I'm going to ask your indulgence, Mr. Stanton. There are three members of the committee who have not spoken, and I think it's fair that we hear from them first. If you could wait until after at least those three people have spoken, then we could consider a motion.

Mr. Pearson.

**Mr. Glen Pearson (London North Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome, Ms. Dawson. It's nice to have you with us this morning.

You mentioned in your presentation this morning this transition you're hoping to manage well between the previous commissioner and you. And you talked about the fact that for the first time in this area some new rules have been established.

**Ms. Mary Elizabeth Dawson:** Legislated rules, yes.

**Mr. Glen Pearson:** Legislated rules.

I'm sure you've had a chance to go over some of it, but what do you think are some of the key ones?

**Ms. Mary Elizabeth Dawson:** You know what? I went over quite a bit of material and I'm not very good on the specific details at this point.

The main part of the legislation is the enforcement of conflict of interest issues themselves, such as gifts or financial holdings and that sort of thing. The sense I get is that there's more breadth in the House of Commons code than in the legislation, although there's an overlap in application of the two of them. But these are things I really want to study carefully and get a good briefing on. I want to understand how what existed before relates to what exists now. And I think there's quite a bit of work to be done to sort it all out.

In the course of sorting it out, I'm hoping I'll even be able to establish some sort of teaching instruments and also be in a position to provide a little bit of education as to what's in there. I know it's misunderstood and it's a complex area, but I wouldn't know quite what to point to right now.

• (0930)

**Mr. Glen Pearson:** Happy reading, Ms. Dawson.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. David Tilson):** Thank you.

Monsieur Vincent.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Dawson, on reading your resume and the notes that you have supplied to the committee today, I see that you have a strong attachment to Canadian politics and culture and an abiding interest in and desire to serve your country. I have no problem with that. You claim that as a public servant, you have always felt honoured to have an opportunity to serve your country and your fellow citizens.

According to your resume, one of your responsibilities was to provide legal and legal policy advice. That means you were responsible for the legal team, for dispensing advice on matters related to Canadian unity and the Quebec government's secessionist policy, and for heading up a team of lawyers and other Justice Department employees. You also led a legal team and managed all aspects of the Supreme Court Reference on Quebec Unilateral Secession, as well as briefed ministers and media. If I understand correctly, you headed up the department's legal team in the case of Option Canada and took the lead on the files mentioned earlier. Even though you did so at the minister's or Prime Minister's request, given the possibility of a conflict of interest or because of your personal ethics, you were aware of what the Prime Minister or minister was asking of you where Quebec was concerned.

I realize that we are talking about past responsibilities that you were instructed to carry out. However, in light of your personal ethical beliefs, have you ever asked yourself if you were acting ethically by casting Quebec aside and trying to find ways to silence its voice? That is where my question is leading. Have you ever asked yourself any questions, or did you simply close your eyes and throw yourself into your mandate, focusing solely on Canada's interests at the expense of Quebec's interests? That is where a conflict of interest comes into play. If a problem should arise, which way are you going to lean?

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. David Tilson):** Monsieur Vincent, you're probably bordering on solicitor-client privilege, but she's a lawyer and can answer for herself.

[Translation]

**Ms. Mary Elizabeth Dawson:** I would like to answer the question in English, if you don't mind. It would be easier for me.

[English]

I'm not 100% sure I have all the thrust of your question, but I have never had difficulty in following the instructions of my ministers or the government in trying to achieve what it was that the policy of the government was to achieve.

Now, my interest and advice has always been on the legal plane, so there has never been, that I can think of, an instance where I've done anything that I have thought was in any way either unethical or illegal. I don't know how else to answer that question. The government believes strongly in the unity of Canada, and the secession reference was taken to the Supreme Court in a desire to get the rules of secession clear. That was not a difficult task for me, as a lawyer, to follow through on, because it's a good thing to get the law clear on these matters.

I never felt a conflict of interest in any of those jobs.

• (0935)

[Translation]

**Mr. Robert Vincent:** The question is as follows: at some point, as Commissioner, you will receive instructions from the minister. What will take precedence then? Will it be the minister's decision, or will your ethical consideration for other individuals or potential conflict of interest situations prevail? That is the main issue. There is a difference. As Commissioner, you will be the one to decide. Once again, will you abide by the minister's rules and apply them, setting aside all the while your own personal convictions?

[English]

**Ms. Mary Elizabeth Dawson:** No, no—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. David Tilson):** Mr. Vincent, the question can be asked and answered, but just to clarify, no minister of the Crown gives directives to officers of Parliament.

You're free to comment on that.

**Ms. Mary Elizabeth Dawson:** I've never had difficulty in my career expressing my advice to anybody, including the minister for whom I worked, when I thought what he was about to do was not a good idea, either for legal reasons or for ethical reasons or for policy

reasons of any sort. That is part of the function of a public servant, to give the best advice to a minister.

I was never a yes man to a minister, but in the final analysis one always, if it was legal and if there was no ethical problem, complied with whatever it was the government wanted to do.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. David Tilson):** Thank you.

Mr. Dhaliwal.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Congratulations, Ms. Dawson, on this new portfolio that you have. I was going through your resumé, and it's very impressive. Particularly I would like to point out one piece of the most important document in Canadian history, and that is the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, on which you were the leader. Congratulations. When I look at this Canada, the Canada that enshrines the diversity, the equality, the individual rights, in fact this is why I chose it to be my Canada 22 years ago.

Congratulations on that. I know the person who believes in those principles is very fair and can think and can analyze situations. Even though the government never acknowledged the 25th anniversary, it's good to have a person of your calibre in this position. That's a very positive step forward.

When you were speaking, you talked about bringing a clarity to the Conflict of Interest Act. Could you outline some of the ideas that you might have to bring that clarity?

**Ms. Mary Elizabeth Dawson:** I'm very reluctant to outline any specific ideas at this stage, because I don't feel adequately briefed. I don't feel that I've studied it sufficiently to make any particular proposals. I also would want to develop any proposals I would have with consulting with a variety of different people, including parliamentarians.

I just have not come up with a platform of exactly what my position is on different parts of this act at this stage. But I do say that there isn't a huge amount of breadth in the act itself; it's rules that have to be complied with. Around the edges, I'm just not 100% sure where one needs to go, and I need to consider that very carefully.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Thank you. Congratulations and good luck. I look forward to working with you in the future.

Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. David Tilson):** Mr. Stanton.

**Mr. Bruce Stanton:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move that the nomination of Mary Elizabeth Dawson as Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner of Canada be concurred in, and that the chair report this to the House.

(Motion agreed to)

• (0940)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. David Tilson):** That concludes our discussion.

Ms. Dawson, there is one more hurdle for you to cover, and that is in Parliament. I wish you well. I thank you very much on behalf of



the committee for coming and listening to our questions and making your presentation. I wish you well.

**Ms. Mary Elizabeth Dawson:** Thank you very much.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. David Tilson):** Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned until Tuesday at 9 o'clock.

---





**Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons**

**Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes**

**Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:  
Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante :  
<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

---

**The Speaker of the House hereby grants permission to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, for use in schools and for other purposes such as private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary. Any commercial or other use or reproduction of this publication requires the express prior written authorization of the Speaker of the House of Commons.**

**Le Président de la Chambre des communes accorde, par la présente, l'autorisation de reproduire la totalité ou une partie de ce document à des fins éducatives et à des fins d'étude privée, de recherche, de critique, de compte rendu ou en vue d'en préparer un résumé de journal. Toute reproduction de ce document à des fins commerciales ou autres nécessite l'obtention au préalable d'une autorisation écrite du Président.**