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Chair

Mr. Robert Oliphant

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• (1730)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.)): Welcome. I'm going to call to order the 32nd meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

My name is Rob Oliphant and I'm the member of Parliament for Don Valley West and the chair of this committee.

I want to particularly welcome to our committee those of you who have come as guests tonight.

I will outline the way this will work.

Our committee is travelling across the country. We're engaging in a study to look at the national security framework to address concerns that have been raised by Canadians about legislation over the last number of years and about how that legislation could be revisited.

There are two consultations going on right now. The government itself is having a consultation, and that is through the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. He has issued a green paper and has engaged Canadians to talk about this issue. We are running parallel to that. We are not government. We are Parliament and we have decided to undertake a study and advise Parliament on what Canadians are saying about the national security framework, and then offer that wisdom to the government should they decide to take it.

As a standing committee we will be reviewing legislation and amendments to legislation that come out over the next few years. These hearings will also help us as a sort of pre-study for legislation that's going to be given to our committee to review.

We represent the three parties that have official standing in the House of Commons. There are three of us from the Liberal Party of Canada, two from the Conservative Party of Canada, and one from the New Democratic Party, representing essentially the standings in the House of Commons as we go.

This afternoon we heard from people—I use the word “expert” loosely, because I think everybody has expertise—who spend their whole life on the issues of public safety and national security, as we did yesterday afternoon in Vancouver. Then last night in Vancouver we had a fairly large gathering of members of the public who wanted to talk about their concerns. Some of them focused on the green paper, because they had read it or had seen it online. Others talked particularly about former Bill C-51, which contains a new act and a

number of amendments to other acts. Others talked more generally about the concepts around national security.

We have no ground rules tonight, other than to stay on the general guidelines of national security and public safety. That's our general guideline. However, this meeting is your chance to talk to six parliamentarians who will be writing a report to Parliament about national security. We're interested in what you have to say.

As it's a small group, because I suspect that other things are going on, but also because of the relatively late notice, and people are not always organized to go to parliamentary committee hearings—it's not part of their life—I thought we would take the first half hour or so to have a meeting with those who are here. At that time, if other people haven't arrived, the committee may suspend for a short period of time and wait to see if other people come, because we've advertised the meeting from 5:30 to 7:30. I'm also of the opinion that the right people are in the right room at the right time, and so you are the right people and this is the right time.

Four of you have signed up to speak. However, I'm going to be fairly flexible on that, and if someone who is not on the list is moved to speak, we may ask you to sign up on the spot and we would be delighted to hear from you as well.

The speakers list that I have been given starts with Ian O'Sullivan. I'll give you three or four minutes to address our group.

If you're representing a group that's sometimes helpful for us, but if you're not, that's fine.

• (1735)

Mr. Ian O'Sullivan (As an Individual): No, I'm just speaking for myself here.

My name is Ian. I assume that most people here know the general contents of Bill C-51, and have heard many times about the rights that it takes away from us. To go into detail about the many ways this bill subverts our Constitution would take much more time than we have here today.

If you have not already done so, I encourage you to read the Bill C-51, document online, and to also refresh yourself on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to find exactly where this bill eliminates our rights.

Canadians had absolutely no say in Bill C-51 and it's charter-destroying legislation, nor in its very implementation. To have a public consultation on this draconian bill over a year after the fact on such short notice is disrespectful and insulting to Canadians.

Perhaps that is why there are not more people here today, because they believe the government is not really listening to them and that it does not actually care. This is being made more evident by its disregard for what the people actually want.

We'll see if this consultation was all just for show in the end, but I still have hope for our country.

A bill of this nature should have gone through a public consultation and approval process long before being passed as it affects all of our fundamental rights and freedoms.

This is not acceptable if we are still to consider our country a free democracy. This is, in fact, more reflective of a fascist dictatorship. The ramming through of this bill, and then asking about it later is equivalent to a thief breaking into your house, stealing all of your most personal belongings, and then asking you how you feel about it.

You claim that we are your bosses, but yet the majority of Canadians do not support Bill C-51 just as they do not support the stripping away of their guaranteed rights and freedoms. So why is it that this bill is not being repealed immediately?

You assume that Canadians should be paralyzed by the fear of terrorism when, in fact, we are more in danger of getting killed by a moose than by a terrorist. Maybe the fear is the point in order for the government to pass the legislation it wants to pass with as little interference as possible. What Canadians fear most is what is happening now, and that is this quiet governmental takeover of our country.

I demand the immediate repeal of Bill C-51.

The Chair: Stay there if you don't mind, as it gives the committee a chance to ask you a question.

I have a question.

This is a new Parliament, and Bill C-51 doesn't exist anymore, so we have a whole set of laws that have been enacted not just in Bill C-51 but in previous governments as well that meant to address a threat or a perceived threat of terrorism. There was a collective understanding in different governments that some Canadians at least wanted to restrict their rights or were allowing the government to restrict their rights for the sake of greater safety.

Are there particular issues you would like us to address first? We're going to be around for awhile, hopefully, as parliamentarians, and not everything is going to get done right away. Our committee is working on this in good faith, and I'm not asking you to trust us, as you'll trust us if we do our good work, but is there something in particular that irks you in Bill C-51?

Mr. Ian O'Sullivan: There are many specific things that would take awhile to talk about. The worst thing is the fact that spies can go in and search and seize, unreasonable search and seizure, and break the Constitution that way. They can take anything and remove anything.

Basically, if we had 100% trust in our security services, everything would be fine. We know mistakes get made. We know that power gets abused, and if this power falls into the wrong hands, anything goes. People could get framed for something they didn't do.

People could have something installed on their computer that they never put there. The limits are endless.

● (1740)

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Ian O'Sullivan: The other thing is, it says it restricts bodily harm and sexual harassment or sexual abuse of the target, but it doesn't say anything about psychological abuse, so to me that says anything besides bodily harm, death, and sexual abuse is permitted, which leaves all these other abuses open to them.

We still don't have appropriate oversight to even know what kind of people we're targeting. Now, it's been brought in to include not just terrorists, but just in general now, whoever the government deems is a threat, and we have no way of knowing what the criteria are.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Miller.

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Thank you for being here tonight. I want to touch on a number of things that you suggested could be sexual abuse—

Mr. Ian O'Sullivan: Violating the sexual integrity....

Mr. Larry Miller: Okay, and I'm not sure exactly what you mean by that or whether I agree with it.

Mr. Ian O'Sullivan: It's in the bill, so do you want this in the wording?

Mr. Larry Miller: I think you may or may not be misinterpreting that. I believe you, but what I'd like to say, as a legislator, is that I don't support abuse of any law by whomever. There seems to be a lot of hype over Bill C-51. Some people have said that we live in a different world today, ever since 9/11, and particularly in the last five to eight years, probably, in Canada.

It is a different world that we live in. I don't like it any better than you do and I have grandchildren coming up. A number of people have said things are going to have to be a little different. It's like airport security. I don't like it either. I travel a lot, as do all my colleagues. I hate it, but it's all part of keeping Canadians safe.

The old adage that I hear people say quite a bit is that if they're not doing anything wrong, they have nothing to worry about. I say that as a comment. Do you want to comment to that?

Mr. Ian O'Sullivan: That is not true. If you're not doing anything wrong, they can still paint you as a criminal. We see in the case of CSIS, I think his last name was Nuttall, and how they were funding this little terrorist cell and paying for it and coercing them and supporting them into doing this terrorist attack. Obviously, they caught them before they did it, but they were also helping to radicalize them.

We see that there is another branch going on—

Mr. Larry Miller: Who was helping to radicalize them?

Mr. Ian O'Sullivan: The RCMP and CSIS.

Mr. Larry Miller: Do you really believe that?

Mr. Ian O'Sullivan: That's what the papers say, unless everyone's lying. So you see there are these abuses, and it's not always the criminals that they're after. They might be people who might be just against government policy. They could be someone the government doesn't like it. They're speaking up too loudly and they want to silence them. Those are the types of abuses that can arise when you give them these broad powers over anyone the government deems a threat.

The Chair: Mr. Dubé.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Chair, may I respectfully reiterate what I mentioned yesterday about avoiding using our political views and debating with the members of the public. We have three different positions for the three parties, and if we do this with every person, it can get off the rails a little bit. Let's leave the floor to those folks.

• (1745)

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): For what it's worth, Mr. Chair, I didn't think there was anything that ran afoul of that principle in what I heard in Mr. Miller's comments.

The Chair: Okay, thank you very much, Mr. O'Sullivan.

Matthew McAdam, welcome.

Mr. Matthew McAdam (As an Individual): I came largely unprepared today, but I know for sure that the specific thing that bothers me about Bill C-51 would be on freedom of speech. I post a lot of things on social media. What I've been told about this legislation is that if I suggest that I don't like what government is doing, just in voicing my opinion, I can be suspected of terrorist activity. They can mess with my financial situation. They can put a hold on my banking information and stuff like that. At least, that's my understanding.

As a leader in democracy in the world, we should totally let everyone have whatever sort of say they want, even if they think the Prime Minister is a jerk. They should be allowed to say that, whether they're talking about Harper, Trudeau, or anybody. You should be allowed to say what you think. Maybe it's being said in a negative tone—and there could be something said about using the right sorts of words—but to send someone to jail for calling someone a jerk or being very negative seems extreme. Freedom of speech is incredibly important for transparency, for democracy, and for all these things to work as best they can. That is the main thing that really bothers me about it. It's the aspect of freedom of speech.

As for giving up some rights and freedoms for more protection, that's not interesting to me. I don't see a lot of people trying to carry out terrorist activities. We've just talked about the one in B.C., where the RCMP were trying to get two people radicalized. That stuff is totally scary. Whether it's true or not, it still puts up a red flag of something that's possible, even if it wasn't the case. That's another thing that bothers me about it.

Really, that's what I have.

The Chair: Mr. Mendicino.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Thanks for your comments, Matthew.

I would ask you, who told you that you can be suspected of anything that could be investigated simply by expressing free speech?

Mr. Matthew McAdam: I've read a number of articles about Bill C-51. Alarming, these articles suggest that being outspoken can lead to prosecution or being a suspect or something like that. I couldn't cite a specific place I heard it from. It's just that from doing the research that I've done, that's what has been suggested to me, and it's very worrying to hear.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Do you think there should be some reasonable limitations on certain kinds of speech that go beyond what is allowable by the charter?

Mr. Matthew McAdam: I think it largely depends on your role, essentially. As a citizen, you should pretty much be allowed to say dang near anything, I would think.

I'm a big fan of shows like *South Park* and *Family Guy*. They talk about everything and they say horrible, terrible things about just about everybody, but that's freedom of speech. That's the world we live in. That's what we should be doing.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Right, but if you were threatening somebody with your words—

Mr. Matthew McAdam: If I'm on the train and threatening someone there.... Usually you'd want to see citizens stand up in unity and have people essentially self-policing. If you see something's wrong, stand up and do something about it. I think that's what we're taught in school to do. Maybe it's not so prevalent in our modern society, where we get more compartmentalized away from each other, but I would think that people would just stand up and—

Mr. Marco Mendicino: What if the other guy's a bully and it's likely going to escalate? Does it make sense to you that this is why we have police and law enforcement de-escalate and take some of the—

• (1750)

Mr. Matthew McAdam: Yes, in general, it can be a very positive thing. It's just worrying, this letting these enforcement bodies run rampant with their power, right? I'm not saying that we're at that stage now. I'm saying that I'm worried about getting there. I don't want to head in that direction too much. I prefer being on the more free side of things rather than too much law and order.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Okay, but I think, if I'm hearing you correctly, you recognize that there are some limitations, even to freedom of speech, if it goes beyond the realm of what's acceptable and permitted by the charter into threatening or encouraging people to commit terrorist activities. You wouldn't say that this is right either, right?

Mr. Matthew McAdam: It honestly depends on how you're speaking about it. Tone means a lot—where you're coming from, what is being said—so you'd have to get into some very specific situations, I feel.

I think in general you should be allowed to say what you want, even if it's super negative. I think people should be open-minded enough to know that you're either upset or have some sort of issue that just gets under your skin or something like that. You can approach a situation with a calm mindset. It's just one of those things where everyone chooses how they react.

I feel like people can personally choose to react well to a situation. I feel like freedom can work, essentially.

The Chair: I'll turn to Mr. Miller now.

Mr. Larry Miller: Matthew, I want to continue on what Mr. Mendicino was asking about.

You started out on freedom speech. I'm 100% with you on that, but I started to feel very uncomfortable toward the end of your remarks.

We all want freedom. Freedom works very well in Canada. That's a very good thing and a positive thing. But you said something about too much law and order and being super negative. I'm wondering if you think it's okay if somebody goes beyond criticizing somebody for something...which politicians deal with all the time, and that's fair game.

Mr. Matthew McAdam: Right. It's part of the job.

Mr. Larry Miller: Yes, it's part of the job, as long as it's respectful.

Do you think it's okay, as far as freedom of speech goes, that you can say, just because you're—pardon my French—pissed off about something that you're going to kill that guy or whatever? Do you think that's okay?

Mr. Matthew McAdam: I don't necessarily know that you need to go to jail for it immediately.

Mr. Larry Miller: I'm not asking you that.

Mr. Matthew McAdam: Okay. I understand what you're saying now. You're talking about people saying something horrible to someone, and that they shouldn't do that, that it's morally objective. I get that. Honestly, in a perfect world, people wouldn't do that sort of thing, but obviously it's going to happen. People are going to be really nice and people are going to be really bad.

Mr. Larry Miller: I have one other question, but before I go to that, in our society—it's been like this for a long time—if you say you're going to kill somebody or harm them in some other way, if you don't think you're going to have a cop or some other person of authority knocking at your door, there's something wrong. I'll just leave it at that.

The next question I want to ask you about is this. You can criticize the Prime Minister, or a former prime minister, or me, or whomever on Twitter or Facebook. That's fine as long as you're respectful. But do you think it's okay for somebody to go on Twitter, for example, and criticize and say derogatory things about people under an anonymous name, without showing who they are? Any time any of us in this room makes a comment about any issue, we are held accountable for that, because our name stands behind it. What are your thoughts on that question about anybody else in society?

Mr. Matthew McAdam: It's definitely not the sort of thing I think we need to aspire to. You do have Internet trolls.

You're familiar with the term “trolls”, right?

Mr. Larry Miller: Yes, of course. There are way too many of them.

Mr. Matthew McAdam: They say the most horrible things just to say them. You can't get rid of that. I don't know what you can do to

get rid of that. Are we going to send these people to jail just for being nasty?

I understand that it can be really tough to be in the spotlight and everything. It's not something I have to deal with. I get it. We shouldn't encourage people to make these comments. I feel that's true. Through our education system, morality and stuff like that, we can teach people that this is not ideal, but you're always going to have people go against what's going to happen. There are going to be rebels in any situation. Freedom of speech allows us to at least talk about it. It can bring up some very irresponsible things as well, even in horrible ways.

• (1755)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McAdam.

Ms. Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): First of all, Matthew, thank you for coming today.

I also sit on the status of women committee, and we're looking at cyber-violence against young women and girls. In what we're looking at here with the national security framework, one of the headings is “Investigative Capabilities in a Digital World”. You talk about terrorists, and you're talking about freedom of speech, but there are also women who have been harassed online.

Mr. Matthew McAdam: You can't even go on certain forums if you're a woman, right?

Ms. Pam Damoff: There was a woman who sued Twitter and lost.

Where do you draw that line when you want freedom of speech? We've all had trolls who have harassed us on Twitter, which is different from someone systematically harassing someone else. They might consider that freedom of speech.

How do you propose that we, as a government, deal with that fine line? Sometimes it's easier in your mind to see it when you're talking about a terrorist threat, but if you're talking about a young girl who is being harassed, when is it okay to have the police investigate these things and get involved?

Mr. Matthew McAdam: That's a difficult question for sure.

I would definitely say you need to look at it on a case-by-case basis. Most of the time we're talking about sexual harassment. I think most people would agree that is not acceptable, and you should definitely look into it.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Just think about it though, because we have a police force.... We have to create laws around this. Maybe you can take it away and give it some thought, but I always find when I put it in that context, people say we shouldn't be allowing that.

Mr. Matthew McAdam: Fair enough, but sexual harassment has lifetime effects on people. If you call someone doo-doo on Twitter, or something like that, it's totally different than sexual harassment. You would treat them completely different is what I would say to that. It deserves to be looked at in its more serious tones than political arguments, essentially, which is how I was framing my argument.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Okay, thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McAdam.

I'm going to ask the committee to be careful that we don't get into debating with our guests who are here to present their opinions and to whom we're going to ask questions.

You did very well. You had the disadvantage of having a small crowd, so we took longer with you—

Mr. Matthew McAdam: I have all night.

The Chair: You did that well, thank you.

James Lloyd is next.

Mr. James Lloyd (As an Individual): I apologize in advance. I didn't know I was going to be speaking. I'm enormously unprepared. I just have a few notes.

I know a lot of excellent work has been done already by various organizations, a lot of stuff that can be read on the Internet. A lot of organizations, business, journalists, are opposing this legislation. It affects a lot of people, regular people too, so I feel I still have a say in this. I'd like to focus on a few key parts that I disagree with.

You talked a lot about free speech, so I'll just touch on that a bit. I'm not convinced that further taking away people's freedom of speech is going to necessarily help prevent terrorism. We already have laws around a lot of what we were discussing, and that's fine. I think there is some sort of middle ground when it comes to free speech.

The problem with this new law is the vague terminology, how vague the term "terrorism" is. There's the fact that you don't need to have any intent of creating terrorism, no action on your own part. You could inadvertently say something, something can happen, and you could be connected to that. It's very vague and a lot of the terminology, such as "in the public interest" is very arbitrary. I don't think it's worth the marginal increase to public safety.

If you are a terrorist and you know these laws exist, you're not going to be talking about your plots over text messages. You're not going to be sharing this stuff on Facebook. So which kind of terrorists are we trying to catch here? The ones who are talking about this, the dumb ones? I don't see it helping, and it's certainly creating a chilling effect on all of us.

If you think about the word "terrorism", not the definition and how it's described in legalese, but just the word "terror", it means fear. Fear is a way to control people, and the chilling effect is creating fear. That in itself is a kind of terrorism, a terrorism inflicted on the entire population.

The sharing of intelligence. I understand CSIS wants information and that it makes sense to share with different agencies. The more that information is shared, the less secure it will be. There are always going to be governments and institutions and private people and hackers and so on who want information. If all these institutions have access to all the information, it's going to be harder to protect, and it's more likely to be breached, and if it is breached the breach will be vaster. There are a lot of privacy and security concerns with trying to increase security in the first place. It's a bit of a catch-22.

More powers for CSIS.... I like to remind people that CSIS was created in 1984 as a result of the RCMP gaining spy powers, abusing them, and people being very mad about it. The government created CSIS so there would be two separate bodies, one for information and one for enforcement. These proposed extra powers for CSIS are undoing a lesson we should have learned by now.

No public consultation.... No one consulted the public about giving up our privacy. No one polled people about whether it was worth trading our freedoms for the illusion of security or empowering spies against us or how we would want it all to be overseen. It was rammed through Parliament in an omnibus package, typical of shady government. Ironically, Harper himself once gave a speech against omnibus bills, but I digress, as plenty of you already know that politicians sometimes lack integrity and continuity.

I have a few more things.

• (1800)

The Chair: Do you want to make a closing statement?

Mr. James Lloyd: I have a few things.

The appeal process for getting off the no-fly list is secret. It's very hard to mount a defence. I think there are legal problems with that.

The very tiny amount of public oversight for CSIS, a very large agency with a very small oversight committee, and they have even more powers. I think there needs to be a balance.

That's all I can say.

The Chair: Thank you. You didn't sound unprepared.

Are there any questions for Mr. Lloyd?

Thank you very much.

Tavis Ford.

Mr. Tavis Ford (As an Individual): I, too, apologize. Thank you, first of all, for putting this on. You're outnumbering us [*Inaudible—Editor*].

Thank you for coming. I only heard about this yesterday, although I decided to meet the Prime Minister on this when he was coming to Calgary. I met him with the banner and asked him not to side with Harper on this one. We had a three-minute conversation, which is lovely. It felt like democracy for the first time.

I come to this as an activist in human rights. I'm an environmental activist. I've done work with Green Peace. I've gotten myself arrested up in the tar sands. I come at this as someone who follows human rights and upholds them, and advocates for them wherever possible.

My arguments are usually emotional arguments, and I can't debate the pieces of the legislation because I have not seen all the legislation, which itself is interesting. If a citizen who is as engaged as I am in this has not seen the pieces of legislation, and yet I am subject to it, that is a curious thing indeed.

What kind of democracy are we in when this legislation which was passed by a government, the Harper government—which is not the Canadian government, apparently—which is known for its authoritarian manner in passing legislation, whether it was through omnibus bills or hurried debate.... This legislation was one of those things that was not widely debated by the public, and it should have been.

Even in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the idea is that if there's going to be an infringement of our charter rights, it will be the least possible infringement.

Here in Calgary I took part in Occupy.... Hello, I'm an activist. One of the things that shortened our free speech, our act of civil disobedience, as it were, was the idea that we should keep off the grass. We had a talk about this in Calgary. Some people from the law society and so on had a talk about what it is to keep off the grass while maintaining your free speech. The city used this smallest law to infringe on our charter rights. Perhaps we need to leave our encampments for various reasons. I don't want to get into that. But here they infringe on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms for the slightest misdemeanour.

There are people all over the world fighting for their rights, fighting for the basic rights that we now take for granted. We certainly do, and the parliamentarians who passed this bill take them for granted, or perhaps they don't. Perhaps they understood full well what this bill meant.

We use ISIS and ISIL right now. We talk about them. They are the bogeyman. By the way, look up what bogeymen are. They're actually indigenous Indonesians who were opposing English rule, which is curious.

What happens when we have a government in power that isn't so benevolent, that doesn't have a prime minister with fantastic hair and a good rapport with everybody? What happens when terrorism becomes stopping a pipeline because you have a moral imperative to act for the future, to preserve an environment for future generations?

Let's say that we're polluting a source of water here with sewage, and somebody decides that it's more important now to break the minor law in order to uphold the greater law. That, under this legislation, can be considered an act of terrorism, and the RCMP and CSIS can investigate us. They can monitor us. They can tap us, and they can arrest us pre-emptively, without a warrant for an act of civil disobedience.

• (1805)

This applies to indigenous rights, the indigenous people of this country upholding their rights. This applies there. I would say that this legislation was in fact implemented in a finicky manner to pre-empt and co-opt, subvert, that kind of activity. It's to prevent civil disobedience and disagreement with the state.

Chris Hedges said.... Now I've lost it. Oh, here it is.

The Chair: You have five minutes.

Mr. Tavis Ford: Chris Hedges said:

There will, if this law is not blocked, be no checks left on state power. State Security will operate outside the law. Citizens will be convicted on secret evidence in secret courts. Citizens will be subject to arbitrary searches and arrests. Due process will be eradicated. Internal security organs will serve as judge, jury and executioner. The outward forms of democratic participation — voting, competing political parties, judicial oversight and legislation — will remain, but become meaningless forms of political theater. Once the security services become omnipotent those who challenge the abuses of power, those who expose the crimes carried out by government are treated as criminals. Totalitarian states always invert the moral order. The evil rule.

I'll wind up there.

Again, the least possible infringement of our rights.... When we talk about bullying online, I don't think that requires pre-emptive redress. I don't think it means giving CSIS more powers at a time when we should corral CSIS' powers. Nobody says, "We're being spied on wholesale." Instead of controlling that and reining that in, we actually expanded that. It's absurd. Instead of reining in security services, instead of reining in our foreign activities where we are promoting foreign wars and promoting terrorism in some sense, it's a much greater argument, not to be had here, perhaps. Instead of expanding our rights and corralling the rights of the services—the police, the RCMP, CSIS, and so on—we actually expanded them. This is not the least possible infringement of our rights.

• (1810)

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Ford.

Are there any questions?

Ms. Watts.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Thank you for your passionate statements.

When you talk about expanding the powers, I want to talk about NATO, our alliances with NATO, and our alliances with our allies. Are you saying that we should withdraw from all global activity, live within our borders, and have those rights and freedoms without looking outside and assisting anybody else?

Mr. Tavis Ford: I'm glad you asked that. No, that's certainly expansion of this discussion. No, absolutely not. We should not just look internally, but when we go abroad, what are we sending abroad? Are we sending doctors, humanitarian aid? Does our humanitarian aid come with the golden straitjacket? Does it mean we only give you mining if you open up your markets to our businesses? In fact, that's what we do. We say, "We will give you this as long as you allow"—give me a name...Gold Inc., or whatever they're called, I forget—"access to your environment without any regulations." That's what we do. This promotes antagonism towards Canada.

When we go into Iraq, what are we doing in Iraq? What are we doing in Syria? Did we have a debate about this publicly? No, we did not. In fact, the Canadians said in the last election and the election before that one, and the election before that one, "We don't want to go there", and the Harper government decided we were going to go there anyway.

Mr. Larry Miller: That's not true.

Mr. Tavis Ford: Is that not true?

Mr. Larry Miller: No, we're not in—

Mr. Tavis Ford: Which government decided that we were going to go?

Well, anyway, we can save that for another day.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts: We're not going to get into political....

My question was just in the context of your statement, because there are atrocities and genocides being committed all over the world. If we just shut our eyes to it and not go in to assist these people—and I'm going to speak about the Yazidi people and the young women and children who are being slaughtered—we have a moral obligation to do something to help those children, those women, and those families. It's going to take a little more than just sending over doctors.

Mr. Tavis Ford: Yes, although the time to act isn't when things have gotten so far out of hand. The time for us to intervene in Syria and Iraq wasn't 15 years into a war on terrorism, which is an illegal war, but that's another issue. The time to act was before that. The time was—

Ms. Dianne L. Watts: The government of the day didn't, though.

Mr. Tavis Ford: There used to be a time when Canada was an honest middle power that punched above its weight and that sent peacekeepers, genuine peacekeepers, in blue helmets with UN mandates. In fact, we were the ones who came up with that concept. There was a time when we didn't tacitly condone torture.

•(1815)

Ms. Dianne L. Watts: We still don't.

Mr. Tavis Ford: In fact, the last government was going to be brought.... There were reasonable grounds for people in that government to be tried for war crimes for bringing people—

Ms. Dianne L. Watts: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Mr. Tavis Ford: No, hear me out here. For bringing people in Afghanistan and allowing them to be sent into incarceration where there was a credible risk of torture.... Even that is a war crime. Knowing that torture is possible and still sending people to be incarcerated there is a war crime. Rather than having that information brought forward, and rather than having that debated, they prorogued Parliament—not just for that, obviously, on the part of the government.

This is Canada losing its way. Instead of being an honest broker, we are now supporting imperialist interventions. We are now the lapdog of the U.S. We do have requirements under NATO, and so on, but there are ways to go about doing that to uphold the highest rights, to uphold the highest laws, and to not cave at the first opportunity, not to commit to bombing because it's convenient and not to commit to sending fighter bombers because that's the least we can do.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts: I hear you.

The Chair: Mr. Mendicino.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Tavis, thanks for your remarks. I picked up on a central theme, which I think ran through as a thread in most of your comments, in that there need to be some checks and balances

to state power. I think everybody on this committee would agree with that proposition.

You said that you hadn't had a chance to read all of the legislation that is part of the national security file, and that's one of the reasons we're having this public consultation: to have a dialogue about that with people like you and everyone else who's here.

I'm wondering if you're aware of some of the limitations that are already in the legislation. For example, when terrorist activity is defined, the legislation says, "For greater certainty, it does not include advocacy, protest, dissent".

Are you aware of that?

Mr. Tavis Ford: I am not completely aware of that.

Who defines "protest"? Who defines "lawful protest"? Does the government define that? Because that is an inalienable right.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Obviously there can be a discussion about that between law enforcement actors, the courts, and government actors, but I was just wondering whether or not you were aware that some of the limitations you're interested in or concerned about are already in the legislation.

The other example I picked up on in your comments was a concern about torture or a threat to somebody's physical integrity. I'm not making any assertions about the state of perfection of Bill C-51. Again, one of the reasons we're having this consultation is to promote discussion about it. Were you aware that there are provisions within the legislation, as it exists today, that would limit any measures taken by CSIS, for example, and prohibit any harm or torture along the lines that you've discussed? What are your thoughts about that?

Mr. Tavis Ford: I'm aware that some amendments were made prior to its being passed, some minor amendments. I'm happy that it wasn't quite passed *carte blanche*.

I feel that there was not nearly enough public debate, and there was not nearly a robust enough process to review this. Indeed, 150 judges and lawyers wrote an open letter and talked about some of the problems with Bill C-51.

Why is it that people involved in the justice system and civil society were not consulted on this? Why did they take issue with this? Why is the legislation being done on behalf of CSIS and the RCMP rather than with everybody at the table, especially when we're talking about things that are very hard won? They were very hard won: over hundreds of years did we win these rights.

I'm not sure if I'm answering the question, but the fact that I don't know all those amendments.... Again, it feels like an omnibus security bill in itself. The better way to go forward, considering the last government's approach to this, which was problematic, would be to annul this bill and start fresh, with consultations from all sectors of civil society and not just the wish list of a security state that wants everything all the time.

The Chair: I'm going to move to Mr. Miller and then Mr. Dubé. We'll try to keep it a little short.

Mr. Larry Miller: I don't have a question for you, Travis, so you can sit down, but I have to correct a couple things that you said.

First, Jean Chrétien's government refused to go into Iraq. Stephen Harper's government was very clear that we would not go into Iraq. Chrétien sent Canadians into Afghanistan in 2002, and I believe, as a Canadian, that was not what we wanted but it was the right thing to do at the time. After 10 years, the previous government pulled soldiers out of there. There was a boy from my hometown who was killed over there.

When I challenged you on that, you said, "Oh, was that not right?" My point here is that while you're passionate about C-51 and other things—you're a very intelligent man—when you say stuff that isn't true on any issue like this as if it were, you lose a lot of credibility. I'm just passing that along as some advice.

Also, you talked about proroguing government to allow torture in Afghanistan. No politician of any stripe okayed or had any knowledge of torture. Unfortunately, sometimes people in the military...circumstances, whatever, I'm not going to make excuses for it, but that kind of stuff happens. We all know the history on it. So don't accuse any government of that kind of thing because no decent politician—and I believe that most are—would ever knowingly allow that.

I'll turn it over to you, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

• (1820)

The Chair: Monsieur Dubé.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Since we've decided to fall into debate, I do hear you on the Afghan detainees. It's an unresolved issue, contrary to what we're hearing, and we're continuing to raise it. I appreciate that.

Also, if we're going to defend legislation, I was in the last Parliament and voted against Bill C-51. I'm proud to have seconded a bill to repeal it. I appreciate your also bringing up the issue of torture because there is a ministerial directive that's still on the books, which we've asked about. It opens the door to the use of information obtained under torture, and I think that's an important part of this, so I'm glad you brought it up.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Tavis Ford: Thank you.

The Chair: I'm just going to suggest that if anyone in the room wants to submit anything to the committee, you can also submit it directly online to the Parliament of Canada website for this committee. We'll be receiving written submissions. You're welcome to do that for things you didn't think of.

Thank you very much, Mr. Ford.

TR Duncan is next.

Ms. Tammy Rose Duncan (As an Individual): I didn't actually register to speak when I came in, because I just wanted to come and observe. I feel quite passionately that the way Bill C-51 was put into place was against the way I understand the Canada that I grew up in to exist.

We have the opportunity to put our feet on the ground and operate from abundance and not fear. We had lost our way. When we start operating from fear and from dominance and without inclusion of everyone, it's not my understanding of Canada.

I realize the world has changed a lot and that perhaps I am naive. My master's degree was on enlivening democracy. I used Jefferson's ideas that a little disruption is actually how you keep a democracy in balance. I really fully believe that if we're not open enough to allow disruption to arise, it will get more complex, and we've all seen that in the world today. I don't think there's any question that when you suppress people, it will come out another way.

The reason I chose to stand and speak is that there are a few items that are very near and close to my heart on systemic violence. We're quite unaware of how our structural violence has an impact on everyone. At this point, I'm going to take it to the micro level. I'm going to take it to being a woman. I'm going to take it to how we don't have balance because of our innate lack of being able to be present and have full dialogue from an open and safe place.

The question came up when I entered the room about how to protect youth on the Internet. I was attacked by a repeat sex offender with a knife. The police were shocked that I was alive at the end of it. I used simple, non-violent communication and I connected with him as a person.

What was worse than being attacked by him was being put through our judicial system, but what was worse than that was actually getting my master's degree. On a day-to-day basis in our offices, in our academic institutions, having to stay logical and grounded and clear when a person who's in authority is emotional does not get us what we need to hear. It does not get us to clarity and it doesn't create an equal environment.

Today I wasn't planning on talking. Today I was triggered by an event. I am very aware through my healing process, and there's all kinds of research on this, that when we're afraid, we can't think. So that whole question of how we define "online" was the concern. I'm very concerned for our female politicians. I'm very concerned about, in Alberta, the number of threats that our MLAs and our premier get.

It is hard to stay grounded and do a good job when you are constantly bombarded. It is hard to stay in that place of open abundance to hear the other side of the conversation when you're constantly bombarded. Perhaps men—some of them, but not all of them—just haven't had the opportunity to allow their nervous systems to evolve from that healthy place where we can hear someone's need instead of their argument and be inclusive.

I know this is probably not the level of dialogue you wanted to have today, but I would encourage you when we're looking at taking this forward. I would support Tavis's idea that we take the old one off the table because I'm kind of attached to the Charter of Rights, given how women got involved. There's a certain amount of history and courage and Canadian pride in how it got there. Let's look at maybe going back to that, before the dominance model came in and dismissed most people and operated in a manner that said, "I'm not willing to hear you. We are the experts, and we'll act on your behalf."

Let's get inclusive again and let's get that research. Let's look at what happens with an emotional charge. Let's understand the structure of the brain and the brain stem and why people can't get into clarity and dialogue because they are emotionally charged. Let's take it that deep and let's do something really profound and really Canadian, because we need to lead on the world stage. It's a really ugly place right now.

• (1825)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Duncan.

Are there any questions?

Ms. Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff: May I make a comment?

Our Minister of Status of Women is doing consultations right now on violence against women and girls and I would encourage you to make a submission to that committee.

Ms. Tammy Rose Duncan (As an Individual): Okay.

When I was in Europe, after being attacked by a repeat sex offender with a knife—I have a European husband— I did everything I could. I went to every department. I have a list on a piece of paper of how hard I worked with the Canadian government to get the right to bring my partner to support me, so that we could properly process this person. I was more devastated and re-traumatized by our legal process and lack of any response from our governments, federal, provincial and civic, than I was by actually having a knife to my throat and being able to [*Inaudible—Editor*], and that is a pretty horrific event.

Ms. Pam Damoff: We've heard that from—

Ms. Tammy Rose Duncan: So note that there is some structural violence and it needs to be addressed. I would like to see it addressed in academic environments, in civic institutions. The assumption here that we can't talk about brain structure and emotion and the difference between a charge and who shuts down unconsciously in a dialogue when the person gets charged is really a problem.

The Chair: Thank you for your courage and for being with us tonight.

Are there any other questions?

Ms. Tammy Rose Duncan: I would actually invite people to calm down, because I might have charged you with my statement. I would really like you to breathe deeply and not take offence and ask me questions, because right now it feels quite dismissive because I've wandered into this territory.

The Chair: Don't mistake our respect for your story as being dismissive. I think what you're hearing right now is respect for your story. We may need to take some time to process it, but we will do that.

• (1830)

Ms. Tammy Rose Duncan: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

That is the end of our list of people who have requested to speak tonight.

I suggest we suspend for 15 minutes. If we have new people, or you have new ideas, come back in 15 minutes. We'll do a check-in, and then if we haven't anyone else, we'll adjourn the meeting.

Thank you for engaging with us. We are politicians, so we like dialogue and debate. We enjoy that. It's our bread and butter. We put you through that tonight and you handled us very well.

We will suspend for 15 minutes now, and then we'll come back.

• (1830)

(Pause)

• (1845)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

We have one more person who has asked to speak, Selene Granton.

I will, however, relinquish the chair to Mr. Miller to carry on this part of the meeting.

I will sit on that side.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Miller): Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. That was a little bit of a surprise.

Please go ahead, Ms. Granton, for three to four minutes.

Ms. Selene Granton (As an Individual): Thank you.

I [*Inaudible—Editor*] talking in public and sometimes it's hard to get my ideas across. At any rate, from what I can gather, it just seems that bills such as Bill C-51, the increase in national security, and other events like that are more related to some of what we've seen happening in the world. I'm just curious to know what the government is doing to treat the roots of the problem, to be proactive rather than just reactive in their actions.

I was born and raised in Mexico. I know that sometimes when the government increases security, the power can get a little out of hand. Then people start rebelling more. It just creates this vicious cycle that keeps getting worse and worse.

I am curious to know what the government is planning to do to address these root causes. Are they planning to change the schooling system so that people can become better Canadians, where they know what is good and bad, and can become better citizens in the future?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Miller): Mr. Mendicino.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: At the risk of engaging in debate, I would just turn your attention to one of the initiatives being discussed in the broader context of this public consultation, namely, the creation of an office of community outreach and counter-radicalization, where I think some of the underlying issues that do tend to give rise to radicalization or violence would be addressed.

Again, there are places where you can educate and inform yourself about those specific initiatives, but that's one thing that this committee is charged with looking at.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Miller): Does that answer your question?

Ms. Selene Granton: A little bit.

You said that there are places where I can go to educate myself. Oftentimes we don't know where to go to educate ourselves. I work for a non-profit, and we deal with educating people on how to break from poverty [*Inaudible—Editor*] because they don't even know where to go in the first place to educate themselves.

I'm hoping the initiative is more than just expecting that people will say, "Hey, I'm going to go educate myself", especially [*Inaudible—Editor*].

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Chair, perhaps you'll permit just a little bit of latitude, since there does seem to be a pretty direct request for some additional information.

I don't want to leave you with the impression that we're not interested in having a discussion about this. It's just that we're trying to hear more about points of view and perspectives on where the public is with national security and Bill C-51. But it's not restricted to those two subjects. For example, we heard evidence earlier today from a witness who has studied a lot about counter-radicalization. The evidence he offered the committee was that we should be looking at underlying social issues, that we should be looking at how we can further engage our youth and women in understanding where threats to radicalization stem from. Those are two big categories within the broader community, or public, that have not been fully empowered.

I asked him about that and for any strategies he might offer this committee in our study and consultation about how we can be more effective in pursuing those strategies. One suggestion he offered was to work with community leaders, and how we need to directly engage them so that we can build trust and goodwill, so that we can understand what communities' perspectives are as we try to address radicalization and try to keep our communities safe, but also respect people's individual cultures and their values and their rights under the charter.

I think you will be very interested to read what we've heard in the way of the testimony and our study. In the meantime, you can go online and you can see the evidence probably within the next 48 hours. I would encourage you to read some of what we heard today and yesterday.

•(1850)

Ms. Selene Granton: Thank you, I will.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Miller): Thank you, Mr. Mendicino.

Ms. Watts.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts: I'd like to carry on with the conversation having to do with getting information from the general public and some of the witnesses that have come forward. We saw another professor who said that radicalization is a very small component of the overall issue. We have one witness saying one thing and the other saying something else. I would suggest that we will never get anywhere unless we deal with the root causes, the root causes of everything that is occurring. Whether it's violence against women, violence against boys, or radicalization, we have to get at the root causes. That's the only way these cycles will be broken. It's going to take a community, and it's going to take all three levels of government to come together and really work together.

One government, or one level of government, will never solve all of these issues in anyone's lifetime. It's incumbent upon all of us. Sitting here for the last couple of days, I've come to feel that as these discussions continue, we will get to a point where we have all the engagement we need. I hope this will occur, because, as I said, unless we start dealing with the root causes of these matters, nothing is going to change. It takes each and every one of us exercising a sense of our responsibility as citizens of this country to do that.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Miller): Okay, thank you.

Ms. Granton, may I ask how long you've been in Canada?

Ms. Selene Granton: Twelve years, but my dad was Canadian, so all the family's here. I spent holidays here when I was growing up.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Miller): Very good. Well, welcome to Canada, anyway.

Is there anyone else in the room who hasn't had a chance to speak and would like to? Is there anyone who has spoken and has a point they wanted to raise and forgot, which we can all do?

Tavis.

Mr. Tavis Ford: I have a friend here in Calgary, and her son—I believe he was 15 or 16 at the time—was sent to prison in Edmonton because he had been radicalized by ISIS. There was concern that he was going to leave the country. The mother is white and non-Muslim, and he had been radicalized. She reached out to the RCMP, and as part of the process, the RCMP asked her about her political views and about her being a single mother. Some things went in the wrong direction.

The RCMP, rather than helping her with this issue and helping to de-escalate the situation, instead arrested her son. What this said to anybody bringing this forward in the future was that if you bring up the idea that your own child is being radicalized, that child will go to prison. He spent a year in prison and was only recently released. Thank heavens the Liberals are in power now. I'm trying not to be partisan here, but under the previous regime—

•(1855)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Miller): You're having trouble with it.

Mr. Tavis Ford: Right. The point is, under the previous government, I think that he would have gone to trial and the charges wouldn't have been dropped.

Under Bill C-51 I think we go in the direction of...as legal experts have pointed out, Bill C-51 actually prevents people from coming forward; it criminalizes the ability to come forward. So that's a thought.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Miller): Okay, thank you for that.

Is there anyone else?

Mr. Ian O'Sullivan: Do we know, officially, how much is being spent on these types of programs, like CSIS' disruption programs? Is this all covert and secret? If so, why is it secret from the public?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Miller): I don't know that figure offhand. Obviously, there will be a budget for CSIS, the same as there's a budget for the RCMP or any other security agency. I don't know whether it's totally public with a breakdown. I can't honestly answer that, but anybody with a computer...

Mr. Chair.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I'm just going to say that if you wanted to suggest that this committee look at the cost of the implementation of that act, we can't guarantee it's going to get done. It's the kind of thing where instead of asking or wondering, you could say, "I'm suggesting that", and then that goes into our testimony, and we look at that. I think I've heard you say you would like to know that information. You probably think the committee should know that.

Mr. Ian O'Sullivan: Yes.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Miller): That's a good point, Mr. Oliphant, and I think it would be good if you would send that in as well. We heard it here today, but send it in writing, and it will get passed on by the committee.

Mr. Ian O'Sullivan: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Miller): With that, I want to thank all of you. You were a small crowd, but I think from a participant level, very good. Some of you said that you didn't come very well prepared, but it didn't appear like that up here, as Mr. Oliphant said earlier. Thank you again for participating.

With that, we're going to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Thank you to the vice-chair. This is clearly not your first rodeo.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Miller): The meeting is adjourned.

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