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Chair: The Honourable Bardish Chagger



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• (1005)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.)): Good morning, everyone. I call the meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 111 of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. The committee is meeting today to continue its study of parliamentary protocol related to an incident in the Speaker's gallery on Friday, September 22.

I would like to remind everyone that care must be taken with the earpieces for interpretation. Please do not place the earpiece near the microphone or use it as a gadget tool.

As we know, all comments should be addressed through the chair. The clerk and I will maintain a consolidated speaking list.

Today we have with us, from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, Mr. Sébastien Carrière, chief of protocol of Canada and personal representative of the Prime Minister of Canada for la Francophonie. We also have Andrea Hudson, director, official visits. From the Privy Council Office, we have Christine Kennedy, acting assistant secretary, foreign and defence policy secretariat.

Is everybody providing an opening statement? Both of you are. That's perfect. Who would like to go first? We will give you up to five minutes for your opening statement, and then we'll proceed with questions after.

Welcome to PROC. Thank you.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Carrière (Chief of Protocol of Canada and Personal Representative of the Prime Minister of Canada for La Francophonie, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Honourable members, my name is Sébastien Carrière. As Chief of Protocol of Canada, I have the pleasure of meeting with you today to explain the role of the Office of Protocol of Canada in organizing official visits to Canada from heads of state or foreign governments.

The Office of Protocol of Canada is responsible for managing and coordinating state protocol international functions, which include a range of services to the diplomatic corps, high-level visits and official events hosted by the Prime Minister.

[English]

Receiving heads of state is an important expression and instrument of Canada's foreign policy. Some of the main goals in receiving international visits include promoting Canada, strengthening Canada's relationships with international partners and deepening people-to-people ties.

The office of protocol coordinates all visits to Canada by foreign dignitaries invited by the Prime Minister and serves as the channel of communication between the representatives of the visitor and federal partners such as the parliamentary protocol office, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Privy Council Office.

We establish and maintain a high-level diplomatic framework within which effective planning between the two governments can take place and issues can be resolved. We provide high-level advice on matters of diplomacy, protocol and logistics. We develop and implement the visit program in support of the mutual foreign policy objectives of the visitor and the host.

In the planning stages of the visit, we are the main interface with the visiting country's embassy or high commission. We develop the program and implement logistical arrangements together with the federal partners with whom we closely coordinate.

[Translation]

As for the aspects of the program implemented in the Parliamentary Precinct, we work closely with the Parliamentary Protocol Office on the coordination and logistics of activities held at Parliament.

When a potential or confirmed visit includes an activity taking place within the Parliamentary Precinct, we undertake discussions about the desired program elements and their consequences on Parliament's activities.

[English]

In the case of an address to Parliament taking place in the House of Commons, we act as the interface between parliamentary protocol and the foreign visitor on matters of logistics and program implementation.

On the day of the address itself, we work collaboratively with parliamentary counterparts to ensure the scenario unfolds as agreed to by all stakeholders, including the foreign visitor.

[Translation]

As the committee already heard, invitations to a parliamentary speech are sent through the Parliamentary Protocol Office. The Office of Protocol of Canada does not have access to the complete guest list. However, we contribute to the list of members for official delegations and the Ottawa diplomatic corps who must attend an event.

[English]

Thank you very much.

[Translation]

I would now be happy to answer questions from committee members.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Carrière.

[English]

Ms. Kennedy, go ahead, please.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Kennedy (Acting Assistant Secretary, Foreign and Defence Policy Secretariat, Privy Council Office): Madam Chair, honourable members, good morning.

[English]

Thank you for the opportunity to appear today. My name is Christine Kennedy. I am the acting assistant secretary to cabinet for operations with the foreign and defence policy secretariat at the Privy Council Office.

With respect to the issue being considered by this committee—the invitation and recognition of Yaroslav Hunka in Parliament on September 22, 2023—I wish to confirm that the Privy Council Office had no role in any invitation to him or in his recognition in Parliament.

[Translation]

I am pleased to join you today to explain the role of the Foreign and Defence Policy Secretariat in organizing official visits.

[English]

The Privy Council Office's foreign and defence policy secretariat is responsible for monitoring, coordinating and providing advice on various international issues spanning defence, diplomacy, trade and development assistance. A key function of the secretariat is providing support to the Prime Minister for international engagements, including interactions with foreign dignitaries. Notably, visits of international leaders serve as crucial platforms to advance Canada's international and domestic objectives and interests.

President Zelenskyy's visit to Canada in September 2023 was an opportunity to demonstrate Canada's solidarity with the people of Ukraine as they fight for their sovereignty and democracy. This particular visit had three strategic objectives: to reaffirm Canada's solidarity with the government and the people of Ukraine at a crucial moment in the war; to demonstrate resolve to provide unwavering support to Ukraine; and to emphasize Canada's commitment to Ukraine's immediate recovery and long-term reconstruction.

President Zelenskyy's visit yielded tangible results, including \$650 million in new military assistance for armoured vehicles built in Canada, and the signing of the modernized Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement. In addition, engagements with the private sector bolstered economic ties, while engagements with Canada's Ukrainian communities deepened strong people-to-people connections.

Each visit that we support has a unique context with specific objectives. We collaborate closely with Global Affairs Canada to prioritize and recognize visits by closely evaluating foreign policy goals and potential achievable outcomes for the engagements.

As part of the planning process, we convene interdepartmental meetings with Global Affairs and other implicated departments as appropriate, such as the Department of National Defence, Department of Finance and Public Safety Canada, as well as the Prime Minister's Office. During these meetings, we ensure that agreed-upon foreign policy objectives and desired outcomes, including advancement of domestic interests, are appropriately reflected in the program elements for the visit.

In line with the foreign and defence policy secretariat's primary role of providing policy advice, the secretariat also prepares comprehensive briefing material to support the Prime Minister. This includes overview scenario notes, issue briefs and meeting notes.

Logistics and security arrangements are handled by other entities, such as the Global Affairs office for protocol and the RCMP. The Privy Council Office is not responsible for vetting individuals or reviewing invitation lists for the House of Commons.

Thank you very much.

● (1010)

[Translation]

I'm happy to answer your questions.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now enter into our six-minute rounds, starting with Mr. Duncan, followed by Mr. Duguid.

[Translation]

We will then move on to Ms. Gaudreau, then Ms. Mathysen.

[English]

Mr. Duncan, you have six minutes, through the chair.

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for being here this morning.

In terms of your opening comments, one of the things here is that what happened in the House of Commons in having Mr. Hunka recognized that day was a complete embarrassment internationally for Canada and for our Prime Minister. One of the other key aspects, which neither of you have raised in your comments and was also another embarrassing factor, was the fact that Mr. Hunka was invited to the other official event that happened during that visit in Toronto.

One of the questions that I want to start off with, Ms. Kennedy, perhaps with you, is that, when we talk about the vetting of lists for the House of Commons, this could have been avoided by a vetting process for the Toronto event as well, where Mr. Hunka was also invited. Can you talk about that event that PCO is responsible for or a partner in or has lists for, and what vetting you do?

Mr. Carrière, I'm going to ask you the same question in terms of your office.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): I have a point of order.

Just for clarity, Madam Chair, my understanding is that we are studying the issue that happened in the House of Commons. Mr. Duncan is introducing something that happened at another event outside the House of Commons. Can you provide some clarity as to the direction we're going?

The Chair: I would have to agree that it is about what happened in the House of Commons. The last time, there was more leniency given because the House leader had come and brought in the other events. He brought in and expanded the scope, so it was only appropriate that we asked those questions when they expand the scope. However, I would say that our guests are here today to speak about what took place in the House of Commons. I did not hear any reference to anything outside of the House of Commons—

Mr. Eric Duncan: I didn't get my first question out, so I'm trying to make the connection.

The Chair: What we're doing, rather than going too far—and I'd have to agree with Mr. Gerretsen in this case—is remaining within the incident that took place in the House of Commons. Therefore, the witnesses will be allowed to answer as they please.

I think you heard the question. Do you want to see if they want to try to answer?

Mr. Eric Duncan: I'm going to appeal that if I may, Madam Chair, because I couldn't even get the first question answered here on the lack of vetting by the Prime Minister's Office, the PCO and the protocol office for other events during that same visit. I want to understand what they had for those events and the red flags that were raised about Mr. Hunka and his not being recognized. He should not have been invited. The Prime Minister's Office has acknowledged that the individual you're speaking about should not have been invited to their event. If they had had better protocols, perhaps this would not have happened on the floor of the House of Commons.

I'm trying to correlate that, very reasonably and very fairly, to the official visit. The chief of protocol is here. He's speaking about the entire official visit by President Zelenskyy. It is very relevant to do that, so I'm going to appeal that call and say that it is absolutely rel-

evant to try to show how, in many cases, there was a lack of proper vetting done. There were many opportunities to catch this, and it was not caught.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I have a point of order.

The Chair: No, I'm moving on. I've told you where I stand. We know what the motion was. You can reread the motion, which members decided to pass, if you're concerned with it. All of you are well aware of what we passed.

We spoke about the incident in the gallery of the House of Commons. That is why our guests are here today. You've heard the question.

I will now pass the floor back to our guests so we can hear their voices as well.

Thank you for coming to PROC.

• (1015)

Miss Christine Kennedy: Thank you for the question, Madam Chair.

I'll be clear right up front. PCO was not aware that Yaroslav Hunka was invited to the address or would be part of the Speaker's speech before the Speaker delivered his speech in Parliament. As you have heard, lists of guests invited to an address in Parliament are managed by the office of protocol at Parliament.

I would add that we were requested, by PCO, to provide a list of 25 government officials who could attend the address to Parliament, which we did in consultation with key departments such as Global Affairs Canada, Public Safety and the Department of National Defence.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Before that, my question was about the event in Toronto. Both offices here, your offices, were responsible for the guest list for that event. I want to know what vetting was done for the guest list through which the Prime Minister's Office provided an invitation to Mr. Hunka. For that event, what vetting and process were followed to vet guests from the list of those your office invited, including Mr. Hunka?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I have a point of order.

Mr. Duncan is deliberately and intentionally not heeding your ruling. You are the chair of this meeting. You have ruled on what is admissible in terms of questions, and they have to relate to the event that happened in the House of Commons.

You ruled on that. You made a decision on that. Mr. Duncan is deliberately ignoring your ruling and trying to continue to engage in that dialogue. Despite the fact that he might not agree with your ruling, I would encourage you to call him to order, Madam Chair.

Mr. Eric Duncan: I have appealed that.

The Chair: I have decided against it.

Back to the report that—

Mr. Eric Duncan: Could we put the question perhaps to the—

The Chair: No. I have told you that we are here—

Mr. Eric Duncan: But this—

The Chair: Anybody can throw a tantrum if they'd like. It's very simple.

Mr. Eric Duncan: I'm not throwing a tantrum.

The Chair: This is really simple. What is the reason we are here today? Let me remind us all. As I said at the beginning, the committee is meeting today to continue its study of parliamentary protocol related to an incident in the Speaker's gallery on Friday, September 22, 2023.

Is there a Speaker's gallery in Toronto? Yes, there is. Is it for a different level of government? It is. Are there elections at all levels of government? There are. If that's where the interests lie, go for it. However, right now we're in Ottawa, the nation's capital. The gallery we're referring to is in the House of Commons in Ottawa, and that's why our witnesses are here.

Mr. Duncan, please remain within the scope of why we're here. Thank you.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Chair, I'm going to say here that I appeal the ruling. Perhaps the committee should take a vote on this and challenge the chair's ruling on this because.... I'm going to go back and repeat where it is relevant to the questions—

The Chair: There is no debate. You challenged the chair.

I'll call the question.

Mr. Eric Duncan: I did the first time, and you didn't call the question, so now you're—

The Chair: We just called the question.

Let's go.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: You didn't ask for a challenge—

Mr. Eric Duncan: I did the first time and then she—

The Chair: You just said those words. I heard them clearly. The question has been called.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I thought you said you disagreed with her. You never challenged the ruling.

The Chair: Let's vote.

(Ruling of the chair sustained: yeas 7; nays 4)

The Chair: I'm not sure what's happening, but we have a three-hour meeting today, possibly, or up to.

I'm going to ask members if you need a break. I'll give you guys a five-minute break, but this is not the tone and temperament I'm going to continue with when we've asked witnesses to come.

Mr. Duncan, are we okay to proceed with why we're here? Now that you've had everything done that you needed, can we at least focus and let the guests or witnesses provide the information that they're here to provide?

• (1020)

Mr. Eric Duncan: I'm just stunned at this, Madam Chair, about how it's absolutely....

Mr. Carrière, in your office as chief of protocol for official visits, if there are other parts or other events that you host, how do you vet a guest list for other things that you might have within your office for the events that you have?

Mr. Sébastien Carrière: Thank you for the question.

Indeed, there are completely separate processes depending on where the event is. I like to say just half-jokingly that I'm the chief of protocol of Canada everywhere except here, with the possible exception of the PM's corridor upstairs.

The parliamentary guest list was completely separate from us.

Sometimes we feed into those. They'll ask us who to invite from the diplomatic corps to one address or another or to liaise with the visiting delegation on who from the delegation should be invited if not everybody can be invited. However, at no point—

Mr. Eric Duncan: Can I ask this? In general, for an event that you're responsible for and would have a guest list where you sent invitations out.... Apparently, in theory, without saying something specific, for another event where you'd be responsible for the guest list, can you tell me what your office does, then, to vet a guest list that you're responsible for?

Mr. Sébastien Carrière: We don't vet guest lists, Madam Chair. What we do is we get them from the client.

The client would be, in this case, either the PMO or one of the ministers' offices. They send us a list. Often it's in waves. If you're having a reception or a state dinner, you'll do a first wave of invitations. Then, depending on the response rate, a second wave, a third wave, a fourth wave....

We don't vet the guests—

Mr. Eric Duncan: For any of the events that you do, for any events you host and would be primarily responsible for, somebody—an organization—provides names. You would automatically—through the Prime Minister's Office or through both, the director of protocol through the Prime Minister—just invite them no matter what.

Mr. Sébastien Carrière: We get the list from the PMO. We wouldn't accept lists from—

Mr. Eric Duncan: Ms. Kennedy, in the example there, in your office, what do you do for vetting on any events or lists that come out from the Prime Minister's Office?

Miss Christine Kennedy: I would just say that the foreign and defence policy secretariat very much focuses on policy support to our Prime Minister as he does his international engagements. In the event that we receive invitations and lists for events, what we normally do is just a cursory review of that list. Our lens is very much on the gender representation of those who would be in attendance. We also ensure that the organizations, if they are on that list, are appropriately invited.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Again, if the Prime Minister is sending an invitation to a Canadian—to anybody—for any event, you're telling me that if some organization provided a list of 15 names for who should attend event X, Y or Z as an official visit or in the diplomatic community, you just take those names and automatically send them out, in the Prime Minister's name, inviting them to a special event. There's no vetting that's done from a security perspective.

Mr. Carrière, you've said that you're just provided a list and you send it out, but the list comes from the Prime Minister's Office.

I'm asking the Prime Minister's office, PCO, what you do for the vetting of those lists before you provide them to be sent out. They're in the Prime Minister's name on behalf of the Prime Minister, and you're telling me that if some group says, "Here are 15 people we want to invite", you just copy and paste it to be sent out and don't do any vetting of the list?

Miss Christine Kennedy: The PCO does not play a role in sending out invitations. At the request of the Prime Minister's Office, we sometimes request that Global Affairs Canada pull together and collate a list. When it is returned to us, we do that cursory review. However, we do not have the responsibility to issue invitations.

The Chair: Thank you for that clear, concise answer.

Mr. Duguid, you have six minutes.

Mr. Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank our witnesses for appearing today, for their service to our country and for the important functions that they carry out.

I believe this meeting is televised, so it's an opportunity for Canadians to learn about the protocol process and an opportunity to shed light on this unfortunate incident, which I think has wide agreement around the table.

Just so it sinks in to all listening, can you please outline—and this is probably to our GAC friends—in the context of an official visit to Canada by a foreign head of state or other senior dignitary, how your office engages with a myriad of players? There are a lot of fingers in this pie, such as the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General, the Prime Minister's Office, the Privy Council Office and, very importantly, the Speaker of the House of Commons. In this case, it was his office because my understanding is that Mr. Hunka was invited by the Speaker. It's my understanding that you played no role in vetting names coming from the Speaker's office.

Can you describe how those players interact with your good offices—particularly that reference to the Speaker's office, which issued the invitation to Mr. Hunka for which the Speaker has taken responsibility?

• (1025)

Mr. Sébastien Carrière: Madam Chair, it's a pretty fluid process in terms of organizing visits. There are several categories of visits. We have state visits, official visits, working visits and private visits. I can get into the details of those if you're interested.

Essentially, a state visit would be hosted by the Governor General. Official and working visits would be invited by the Prime Minister. A private visit is just a head of state visiting family or a private visit to Canada with no interaction with our leadership.

Visits are often initiated through the course of bilateral meetings, a summit, an incoming visit or diplomatic exchanges. The visit itself, the dates of the visit and the type of visit will be confirmed through extensive consultations, as appropriate, with Rideau Hall, the Prime Minister's Office, the PCO, geographic divisions within Global Affairs, and the two embassies or high commissions.

My bureau has three divisions. One does visits, one does events and the other manages the diplomatic corps. The visits and the events divisions are the two key implicated divisions. They will start providing logistical and protocol coordination in close collaboration with Rideau Hall, the PMO, the PCO, GAC, the RCMP and so on. This is where the Parliament piece comes in. If there's a parliamentary component to it, we will liaise with parliamentary protocol.

To be clear on the Speaker's office, we have no direct relationship with the Speaker's office. If there are any issues regarding an address to Parliament, it would be dealt with by us through parliamentary protocol. We'll define the standards of treatment, what we do, the arrival, who's going to be greeting and every little detail with the visiting delegation. We'll have an advance visit to go through all the sites with them, including here. We would come here, and then parliamentary protocol would host us and the visiting advance delegation. We would go around and walk through all the sites and so on.

That's sort of what we do. We oversee the budgets and approve the expenses, and then report on them at a later date. The events team will be in charge of organizing any events that are related to the visit.

Mr. Terry Duguid: Thank you for that protocol 101, which I think we've all benefited from.

Ms. Kennedy, the PCO is essentially the public service that serves the Prime Minister. I'll just repeat, in order to make it clear to our viewers, that the PCO, serving the Prime Minister, has no role in vetting or dealing with lists of invitees coming from the Speaker's office. Is that correct?

Miss Christine Kennedy: Yes, that's correct. We do not have any direct relationship or engagement with the Speaker's office when it comes to addresses to Parliament.

Mr. Terry Duguid: Okay.

I would and I think the committee would appreciate your thoughts—because we want our international visits to go well in the future—and your recommendations on how we can prevent unfortunate incidents like this from happening in the future. We would appreciate any thoughts you have.

My time is up. I have 20 seconds, Madam Chair, but I will give them back to you.

Thank you.

• (1030)

The Chair: Good. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Gaudreau, you have the floor for six minutes. Please address the chair.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

As we just saw, my colleague set the stage.

Many thanks to the witnesses for being here, even though they are attending the visit by the French Prime Minister, who is arriving tomorrow.

In my opinion, there are two important aspects. On the one hand, we must shed light on the consequences of an event like this and, on the other hand, ask questions about what we should do from now on.

I am not a diplomat, but I understand that it required seriously mobilizing Canadian diplomats. What were the consequences of this incident?

Mr. Sébastien Carrière: Madam Chair, I thank the member for her question.

In terms of the consequences, I would say the event certainly led to an embarrassing moment. The incident made headlines around the world, and for all the wrong reasons. However, I do not think it led to conclusions about Canada's support for Ukraine. I do not have the impression it had lasting consequences in that respect. That's my opinion; I am not an expert on relations between Canada and Ukraine.

I accompanied the Prime Minister to Poland when his delegation was travelling to Ukraine. During the planning for this visit, as well as during the visit to Poland and afterwards, no one raised the incident in question. It may be a sign that this story has somewhat run out of steam.

I must say that we are something like implementers. In my opinion, the thinking around what must be done now should focus on two aspects. First, there's the issue of parliamentary independence, meaning the legislative branch relative to the executive branch.

For my part, I represent the executive branch. As I have always said, I am the Chief of Protocol of Canada everywhere except here. If I had requested the Speaker's office guest list, I would have been told it was none of my business, probably rightfully so. I trained as a political scientist. That's what I learned at university. I do not

know how we could avoid another similar incident, since I'm on the outside.

Based on my understanding of the statements by the previous Speaker of the House following the event, something went wrong within his office. It is also my understanding that the Speaker's office undertook a revision of the process in terms of establishing guest lists and recognizing guests.

The solution probably resides in the revision process, rather than creating a political crisis by trying to ask a member of the executive branch to verify the list of the Speaker of the House of Commons. That would be rather excessive, in my humble opinion.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Based on what I understand, the work we are doing will improve the aforementioned measures. In the end, we want to avoid a recurrence of this situation in the future. Above all, we understand that these situations are extremely sensitive.

I understand the witness when he says that he is an implementer and that it is difficult to see from the outside what could be done better.

I would nonetheless like a few hints about the path to follow. Mr. Carrière may tell me that a protocol must be extremely sophisticated and maintained, but I would like him to tell us more about that.

Mr. Sébastien Carrière: In my view, committee proceedings are useful in the sense that members of this committee will develop recommendations on the way to avoid a recurrence of this kind of situation.

However, when a visit is organized secretly, it is extremely difficult to talk to people. I do not know how the Speaker's office could have avoided what happened. I had no role to play in the decision to invite anyone whatsoever. We must consider two aspects: the invitation and guest recognition. Personally, I am under the impression that if this person had only been invited, we would not have heard about it. However, the Speaker of the House of Commons rose and called attention to his presence in the gallery, which is quite important.

I have worked at the department for 24 years. Throughout my career, I invited delegations to attend question period, for example. I have also asked for the Speaker of the House to call attention to the presence of another country's minister of foreign affairs. Sometimes the request is accepted, sometimes it's rejected. I have to explain why it is important to highlight the presence of that person and note which other people will be present. There is definitely a process to follow.

In the case before us, there was a mistake during the process in question. Perhaps the Speaker's office should review it based on the committee's recommendations.

• (1035)

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: I gather that our work is useful. We have covered everything. We see that, when people want to act quickly and secretively and when communication gaps arise, inviting someone and recognizing them in the House can be two different things. In my opinion, the situation could very well have been avoided.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

[Translation]

Thank you, Ms. Gaudreau.

[English]

Ms. Mathysen.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you to all of the witnesses for providing time out of your busy schedules.

I think a lot of my questions on this have already been answered, but considering there were a lot of people hurt by this serious incident, I want to be clear.

Mr. Carrière, you said, and understandably so, that the division between the parliamentary and executive sides is very clear, and there are clear benefits to keeping it that way. There are no changes you can see within that that we could recommend here. There's nothing whatsoever in your roles, an expansion or anything that we've learned from this, that you could provide as a recommendation.

Is that right? You've been pretty clear, but I want to just double-check.

Mr. Sébastien Carrière: Madam Chair, I thank the honourable member for her question.

I really don't think it's my place to tell a parliamentary committee what to put in the report. However, I can state the facts and how things work now.

It's hard for me to imagine the executive branch having oversight on something that—

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Even as a double-check...? It's not as a directive, but what about as a double-check of the system?

Mr. Sébastien Carrière: It then leads back to the question of capacity. Do we have vetting capacity? There would have to be a conversation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs about enhancing our team and adding a vetting unit of some sort, and getting the lists weeks in advance so that people will have time to do that.

What do we do? Is it just a Google search? It takes some time, but not too much. Would a Google search have revealed the past of this individual? I wish we could go back in time and google him before the address to see what pops up.

You can then go further and turn to our security agencies to do the vetting. They would say, "Are you crazy? We're not going to vet 1,000 people." The RCMP does, with police databases and the like, but reputational vetting is a whole different ball of wax.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: The Sergeant-at-Arms of our protective services was quite clear on that as well in previous testimony. They had that under control. It was a matter of resources, and if that's the will, we'll change things. You're basically saying the same thing as a spectator of all this, and I understand that.

Ms. Kennedy, you talked about the PCO not doing that vetting. You referred to it as a cursory review, which is fine. I understand that. You specifically said you might look at those outside lists to ensure that there was gender representation and that rules of protocol were abided by.

To be clear on that, is there anything else that you would look at in any way, shape or form?

Miss Christine Kennedy: For the foreign and defence policy secretariat, it's not within our mandate to conduct the vetting of invitees. We very much rely on other entities within our system to do that.

However, before forwarding it on, we do give the list a cursory review. Often we don't have a lot of time to do that. We're simply looking for any errors, including grammatical errors, within the list, ensuring that appropriate organizations are there and scanning it from a gender representation perspective, which is important for us, for example, during business round tables. I would say we rely heavily on our Global Affairs experts, as well as our PCO experts, who take that extra lens.

I would just add that, with respect to the list of invitees for the address in Parliament, neither the foreign and defence policy secretariat nor anyone in PCO received that list.

• (1040)

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: It's only gender representation? It's not a GBA+ look at things?

Miss Christine Kennedy: It certainly is. It's the whole gamut of what's important for us.

For the foreign and defence policy secretariat, we're responsible for providing policy advice. When we're supporting incoming and outgoing visits, we're very much focused on where we can advance our foreign policy objectives and support our domestic interests. That's the kind of cursory lens we take.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: To be perfectly honest, I don't think I have any further questions.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go to the second round, starting with five minutes for Mr. Duncan, followed by Mr. Lauzon.

Mr. Duncan, go ahead.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Again, thank you to our witnesses.

When we talked about this visit and what the goals for this were, we mentioned strengthening relationships between Canadians and Ukrainians in their time of need right now.

Would you also agree with me that, in order for this to be considered a success, one of the goals would be to not provide any opportunity for the Russians, given their typical misinformation and disinformation campaigns, to latch onto something to try to distract from the visit and take away from its success? Would you agree that not providing Russian misinformation campaigns with fodder would help this trip to be deemed successful?

Mr. Sébastien Carrière: That's more a policy question, but I think we can all agree that not providing Russia with material for disinformation is always a goal for every visit.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Great.

Sadly that's what came out of this international embarrassment back in September. When we're talking about the overarching goals and what happened and what was covered in the media, what Canadians and people around the world saw was exactly this incident. We're trying to figure out how it could have been avoided, should have been avoided and can be avoided in the future.

Ms. Kennedy, with respect to vetting, maybe this is an opportunity for lessons learned and what we've learned from past mistakes, perhaps, that the Liberal government has made.

Can you confirm that whenever there are visits to Canada by a foreign head of state or dignitary or a diplomatic mission comes, you work on the protocol, events, lists and so forth? Also, conversely, when the Prime Minister travels around the world and brings guests with him, do you have a process or do you have a role in preparing those itineraries, agendas and logistics?

Miss Christine Kennedy: Madam Chair, I would just like to confirm that the question is about the Prime Minister's outgoing visits, in which he is....

Mr. Eric Duncan: Yes.

Miss Christine Kennedy: For both incoming and outgoing visits, we provide the Prime Minister with the appropriate policy support. We work closely with Global Affairs to develop a recommendation to undertake the visit to begin with.

When we go through that process, we look at how our foreign policy objectives could be advanced but also at tangible outcomes that could be derived from such an engagement. From time to time, depending on time constraints, we do provide some ideas for program elements that could be considered in the context of an outgoing visit.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Let me use the example of the Prime Minister's trip to India a few years ago in his first term in office. We can recall that trip being a disaster diplomatically for many reasons, one of which was that we found out afterwards that the Prime Minister's Office invited a known terrorist to be part of the Canadian delegation that visited India.

Is it correct that it happened back in the Prime Minister's first term in office?

Miss Christine Kennedy: I was not in my current position at that time.

Mr. Eric Duncan: I can confirm that it did happen.

In terms of lessons learned, at that point we learned about the importance of guest lists—who the Prime Minister invites to attend an event when foreign dignitaries are visiting Canada and having official events in the office of protocol domestically. As well, we found out about the international embarrassment caused by not vetting guests properly when diplomatic missions are involved in international relationship building around the world.

Ms. Kennedy, in your work and in any of the things leading up to this visit, in the office and the work you do, from that visit in 2017, during which a terrorist was found to be on the Prime Minister's guest list for an official visit to India—

• (1045)

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): I have a point of order.

The Chair: I was actually going to let Mr. Duncan finish his train of thought, because I think it's very disrespectful when I have stated why we are here today.

You have challenged the chair. We've had a vote, and you're choosing not only to ask questions but to answer them for the witnesses.

I have Mrs. Romanado on a point of order.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Madam Chair, I was just about to say that we've already established that the purpose of this meeting is to discuss what happened in the House. As you said, that was challenged and was voted down.

We have witnesses before us to discuss what happens in the House, and I would like us to remain on that subject.

Thank you.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): On that point of order, Chair, I think the most important thing that we're supposed to do here today is to ensure that this type of thing doesn't happen and embarrass our Prime Minister over and over again, whether it's due to circumstances within his office or somewhere else. We're talking about Canada's reputation and our Prime Minister's reputation and the two are linked, because we're talking about Canadians who travelled with the Prime Minister and who were presented in the House.

The Chair: Mrs. Wagantall, thank you. You've made your point. I don't think it's actually a point of order.

I would encourage you, perhaps next time when negotiations are being done as to what the committee will be doing, that somebody.... I know you weren't here, but perhaps they have briefed you. The wording is basically exactly what was offered by the Conservative Party. The witnesses who were invited are basically exactly.... It was not a smooth process as to what was passed in this committee—

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Thank you, Chair—

The Chair: Members are very well aware as to what took place here—

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: I understand the motion and how particular it is, but—

The Chair: We're not having a back-and-forth. Thank you.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: —it requires feedback from other dynamics to make sure that is done.

The Chair: I am going to go back to Mr. Duncan, reminding you of the purpose of the meeting.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I have a point of order.

Mr. Eric Duncan: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Mr. Gerretsen, do you have a point of order?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I was going to follow up on that, but there's no need.

The Chair: I'm sorry. I didn't even hear you. Thank you. I'm glad Mr. Patzer was concerned about your points of order.

Thank you for all of this assistance that I'm getting here today.

Mr. Duncan.

Mr. Eric Duncan: My point of order is about the continued reference to the motion that was passed by PROC on November 21. I had unsuccessfully attempted—and had been blocked—from talking about an access to information request that was provided in the media on February 5. We passed this motion on November 21; the information was not revealed.

I'm trying to raise new information that is very relevant to the individual named in this study that we are looking at, and I'm being refused. If we're going to reference this November 21 date by PROC, then we should also acknowledge that new information has come in since that motion was passed on November 21, and I have every right to raise that and ask questions.

The Chair: Mr. Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: On that point of order, I would respectfully disagree. Mr. Duncan doesn't have the right to do that. What Mr. Duncan has the right to do is to keep within the scope of the motion.

He certainly had the right to try to amend the study. The Conservatives could have come forward and said, "We would like to now broaden the scope of the study." The committee could have debated that before inviting witnesses, but when we invite witnesses here who think the meeting and the study are about one thing and then try to introduce new topics when they arrive, it's unfair to the witnesses.

You've ruled on this many times. You keep getting push-back from Mr. Duncan on this. He's not respecting your role as a chair, Madam Chair. I would strongly encourage you to ask him to come to order, or perhaps he would like to not participate in the meeting if he is not capable of staying within the rules that you have very clearly laid out.

The Chair: I am going to ask—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I have another point of order.

The Chair: Do we really have to?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Yes.

Mr. Duncan should tread lightly on the fact that the November 21 meeting was actually in camera. He might want to be careful about what he says in terms of that particular meeting and what may or may not have happened within it.

The Chair: I'm going to bring us back. I offered you a five-minute break earlier. It feels like perhaps we need more than a five-minute break.

I am going to remind us of why we're here today. I am going to remind us, to Mr. Duncan's point of order, that the dates and timelines that were provided within it were satisfied. The work that the clerk and I do on this side of the room had been satisfied. If there were concerns at that time, they should have been raised at that time. November was quite a bit of time ago. It's actually last year.

Right now, we have a little more time with Ms. Kennedy, and then we have a lot more time with Mr. Carrière and Ms. Hudson.

I'm going to ask you, Mr. Duncan, to complete your time within the scope of the study.

• (1050)

Mr. Eric Duncan: I'll do a quick point of order on Mr. Gerretsen's.

So that there are no issues with my conduct here, the minutes of what happens are public, and they're published, so I'm not disclosing anything. Look at the minutes.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Part of the meeting was in camera—

Mr. Eric Duncan: The motion that was passed is in the minutes.

The Chair: Gentlemen, what's going on here today?

Mr. Eric Duncan: Good question.

The Chair: Let's stay focused. We have company joining us at PROC. People love coming to procedure and House affairs. We love it when guests come, as you can tell, so we're going to stay focused on the scope of the study.

Mr. Duncan has a minute and 10 seconds left.

Please complete your round, Mr. Duncan.

Mr. Eric Duncan: I was not able to raise information about Mr. Hunka and their relationship with and knowledge of Mr. Hunka through the protocol office, the PCO and PMO in the first round. Now, when I'm about to ask my second question, a point of order is called again.

I'm going to ask the question of Ms. Kennedy. There was international embarrassment with the Prime Minister's visit to India after not properly vetting a guest list. A terrorist was brought along by the Prime Minister on that diplomatic visit. It was a disaster for that entire trip in many ways.

What lessons were learned and incorporated into this visit? Yet again, guest lists that were provided by the PMO and PCO were not properly vetted, and it created international embarrassment. What was done by the PCO and the Prime Minister's Office between that India incident and this one to try to avoid this happening?

Mr. Carrière, if you want to address that as well, I'll be happy with that. What new steps have been taken since that 2017 incident with the guest list? What have you tried to rectify since?

Miss Christine Kennedy: Thank you for the question, Madam Chair.

With regard to the address in Parliament, the PCO was not aware that this individual was going to be invited to the address to Parliament, nor that he was going to be recognized there. We had no visibility on that.

I would also add that, given the need to respect the role of parliamentarians and the operations of the House of Commons, there was no other role for the Privy Council Office in this situation.

Mr. Sébastien Carrière: I have no information on 2017. I was not in protocol or on the India desk.

What I do know is that there are steps that could be taken to avoid another incident like this, here in the House of Commons, with the Speaker's office. My understanding is that the procedure has been reviewed. I'm pretty certain that the committee can find new recommendations to make sure that it doesn't happen again, because that's the incident that made the news, not the Toronto event.

An hon. member: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

The Chair: It is. The commentary that's coming from the member is also very inappropriate.

Mr. Eric Duncan: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

The Chair: Thank you.

That was six minutes and six seconds, so I'll take that minute off Mr. Duncan's next round.

We're going over to Monsieur Lauzon for five minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): I want to thank the witnesses for joining us today. I would also like to thank them for their service to our country.

Mr. Carrière and Ms. Kennedy, in your opening remarks, you provided information on protocol and on your respective roles. You also talked about drawing up guest lists. However, you piqued my interest when you spoke about your ability to act.

I'm in solution mode. I would like you to elaborate on this topic so that the committee can make recommendations.

First, Mr. Carrière, can you describe your ability to manage your workload in general and, in particular, when an event of this nature happens?

Could improving your ability to act factor into a recommendation from this committee? I'm thinking, for example, of your physical or staffing capacity, or in terms of logistics, information technology, research, collaboration with other jurisdictions or access to information.

• (1055)

Mr. Sébastien Carrière: I want to thank the member for the question.

For official visits in particular, we sometimes need extra help at peak times.

The office of protocol isn't mandated to check guest lists. When we receive a list from a client, such as the Prime Minister's Office, Rideau Hall or the office of any of our three ministers, we assume that this work has already been done.

When it comes to the ability to act, every public service manager will say that they would like to have more resources. However, if we were to look at the possibility of checking lists...

[*English*]

The Chair: You have a point of order, Mrs. Wagantall.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: This question is a question that has no relation to the scope of the study, because these things don't deal with these lists. Why is the member allowed to ask a question about—respectfully—things that the witnesses probably need within their departments but that in no way impact the scope of the study?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Madam Chair, I have a point of order.

My question specifically seeks to find solutions in order to make recommendations for improving services, from the guest lists to the management method. I have addressed every facet of the issue, including the logistics of these events. The question is particularly relevant to the current study.

[*English*]

Mr. Eric Duncan: No, it's not. I asked the same one and the chair's ruling was sustained.

The Chair: Were you finished answering the question, or do you want to continue?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Carrière: I'll finish by saying that, in our office and in any other government office, we need to increase our ability to act without incurring excessive costs. Artificial intelligence may be an avenue worth exploring. People say that it's the solution of the future. I don't think that an artificial intelligence tool could do our protocol work. However, it might be used to check lists faster than a human being could. That's my only answer right now.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Ms. Kennedy, can you tell us a bit more about everything to do with managing events such as this one?

[English]

Miss Christine Kennedy: The foreign and defence policy secretariat is incredibly lean, which means that we very much have to focus on the mandate that we are given—support to the Prime Minister's international engagements—and that very much focuses on policy and substantive support. We do rely heavily on other entities to do appropriate processes so that we can stay very much focused on the issues at hand.

Given that my time is almost up, I would just mention that we very much welcome the outcome of this committee. We're very happy to work with all of the stakeholders involved to ensure that this does not happen again.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you.

We spoke about many things, including security and criminal records. You clearly summed up the risk posed by this type of event on the international stage. We would also like to thank you for sharing your experience with the Prime Minister.

That said, we have heard very little about risk management when it comes to the country's image. As a committee, what recommendations could we make for a risk management protocol that would uphold Canada's image?

My question is for Mr. Carrière.

Mr. Sébastien Carrière: Thank you for the question.

Again, I want to go back to my earlier point about the level of risk. One guest out of 1,000 at a given event carries a level of risk. Having a person recognized by the Speaker of the House constitutes a risk, as does inviting a foreign head of state to address Parliament.

In my opinion, our method for checking a person's non-criminal background should directly relate to the significance or level of attention to give to that person.

• (1100)

The Chair: Ms. Gaudreau, you have the floor.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Thank you, Madam Chair.

What happened in the past hour is totally unacceptable. We must work responsibly. I'll act like an adult and start by thanking the witnesses.

Second, Madam Chair, when our witnesses start repeating themselves, it means that we have received the maximum amount of information from them. Could our committee receive some suggestions from our witnesses, who are experts in their field, so that we can continue our work? I had about 30 questions. I received answers to most of them.

Given tomorrow's events, we don't want to waste the witnesses' time. They nodded in agreement when I said that they had work to do.

I have no further questions. I'm sure that our other witnesses will provide even more detailed information. We don't want to create a big round table and end up not getting the job done. The witnesses

shared their expertise. In my opinion, this could wrap up our very valuable hour with them.

The Chair: Thank you.

We're meeting with the official from the Privy Council Office for one hour, and with the officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development for two hours.

If you agree, Ms. Gaudreau, I'll now give the floor to Ms. Mathysen.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: It was a suggestion to ensure that the committee operates efficiently and respectfully. We must avoid using deliberation time to play politics.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Mathysen, you have the floor.

[English]

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: I would certainly be in agreement with Madame Gaudreau. However, just in terms of the independence that is supposed to be shown between both branches, there was correspondence, after the incident occurred, between government offices—some of your offices—about this affair and the Speaker's office. Again, it's all supposed to be independent.

Do you have any comments about how—if any—there was a disconnect in terms of that rule of independence between offices after the issue came forward?

Mr. Sébastien Carrière: You're looking ahead. That's the point of this study. Therefore, again, I would come back to the different levels. At some point down the road, there will be another visit with another address to Parliament, and if I'm still in this job, I might get very nervous at the thought of that.

Without impeding on the independence of the legislative branch, is there a way for a conversation to be had—perhaps the Speaker to parliamentary protocol to us—on what the intention of that office is for the address to Parliament? That would be great.

Our responsibility is to look after the visiting guests. We take that responsibility very seriously. I was shattered when that happened. It came out after President Zelenskyy had left. It had been an excellent visit on all fronts. Then this came out and shattered everything, and I felt extremely bad for President Zelenskyy.

Perhaps finding a way, while respecting everybody's prerogatives, to include any additional elements in the Speaker's gallery to our conversations with all the various federal partners that we deal with on a visit is something that we can look at going forward.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: I know this may be difficult to estimate, but give me your best guesses. How many visits do you arrange, say, in a given year? How many have incidents, and how many do not have incidents?

Mr. Sébastien Carrière: I, fortunately, have numbers. This question comes up often.

It varies from year to year. Sometimes there could be an election. Sometimes there could be a pandemic. I have the 2023 numbers just to give you a sense. We had 33 incoming visits. Those were state, working, ministerial, official, private and guests of government visits. There were 33 incoming visits and 116 outgoing visits last year.

Last year was a big year for outgoing visits because folks had basically not travelled in two years. Those were by the Governor General, the Prime Minister, our three ministers at GAC and our parliamentary secretaries as well, and there were a couple of inaugurations and funerals. Those are the numbers for last year.

• (1105)

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Part of the question was how many had incidents like this and how many didn't.

Mr. Sébastien Carrière: On the scale of that incident, it was zero.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Kennedy, I'm not sure if you're able to stay. I know that you were invited for one hour, so your time has come to an end with us, but if you would like to stay, you're welcome to.

I can see that you need to go.

Miss Christine Kennedy: I do, Madam Chair.

Thank you for the opportunity.

The Chair: Thank you for coming. We appreciate it.

Unless the witnesses need a break, we will continue. Is that okay?

That's perfect. We will continue with our list, and we will keep moving forward without one witness.

We will go to Mr. Berthold.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Carrière and Ms. Hudson, I'm sorry to have missed your appearance in the first hour. I'm told that it was rather eventful.

I have many questions about the process that led to Mr. Hunka's invitation and mainly about the seating arrangements in the gallery. When we saw Mr. Hunka in the gallery, he was clearly in the seat reserved for people who are normally recognized by the Speaker of the House.

Who makes this type of decision?

Mr. Sébastien Carrière: Madam Chair, I want to thank the member for his question.

As said earlier, the office of protocol has no oversight over the list of guests invited to addresses to Parliament.

The office helps process requests submitted to the parliamentary protocol office and contributes to two sections of this list, including the section listing the members of the delegation visiting Ottawa

who are taking part in the event. Not all members of the delegation always take part. Sometimes, there isn't enough room.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Sorry to interrupt.

Usually, when diplomatic staff are included among the guests, the office of protocol is directly involved in the event. It reserves seats in the front rows so that these people can be recognized by the Speaker.

Is that right?

Mr. Sébastien Carrière: Yes. This is true for members of a diplomatic corps visiting Ottawa.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Were you told that some seats weren't available because the Speaker had reserved seats for someone?

Mr. Sébastien Carrière: We simply respond to the request from the parliamentary protocol office, which provides the name of the ambassador or high commissioner being invited. We aren't involved in the details of the seating arrangements.

Mr. Luc Berthold: You aren't involved in the seating arrangements in the House of Commons.

Mr. Sébastien Carrière: Not at all.

Mr. Luc Berthold: You tell the parliamentary protocol office that you need a certain number of seats, and they take care of the rest.

Is that right?

Mr. Sébastien Carrière: That's right.

The parliamentary protocol office can also tell us the names of the people being invited. It then arranges the invitations. We don't invite the people.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Okay.

Mr. Sébastien Carrière: It consults us with regard to the invitation.

Mr. Luc Berthold: From what I hear, you were neither consulted about Mr. Hunka's invitation nor about his presence.

In other circumstances, have you had any dealings with Mr. Hunka's family or with Mr. Hunka himself?

Mr. Sébastien Carrière: We sent Mr. Hunka the invitation to the Toronto event.

I think that you have seen it. It was subject to an access to information request.

Basically, it was an email sent to his personal address. No one replied.

We had no contact other than sending this invitation.

Mr. Luc Berthold: When you have this type of invitation to send out to people other than diplomatic staff, who asks you to invite these people?

Mr. Sébastien Carrière: The requests come from the client, such as Rideau Hall, the Prime Minister's Office, or any of the offices of our ministers, our three ministers at Global Affairs.

In this case, I think that the Prime Minister's Office sent us the name based on a suggestion from the public. I think that the Ukrainian Canadian Congress suggested it.

Mr. Luc Berthold: How can a person who failed to respond to a protocol request have participated in an event?

It's a fair question. I know that the process is usually complicated. You need to have a name and to submit it.

How did this person manage to take part in the Toronto event?

• (1110)

Mr. Sébastien Carrière: As I explained, these are two totally separate processes.

[English]

The Chair: I have a point of order from Mr. Gerretsen.

[Translation]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Chair, Mr. Berthold is repeating in French what Mr. Duncan said.

[English]

Mr. Berthold is doing exactly what Mr. Duncan was doing. He's just doing it in French now. I think that it would be.... Perhaps he has just arrived back at the meeting and you will want to update him on the previous rulings you made at this committee meeting.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, I'm just following up on what Mr. Carrière said. I didn't raise the issue of the Toronto event at all.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: In response to your question—

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: I'm only asking questions to follow up on Mr. Carrière's response. He's the one who started telling us about the Toronto event.

Since he brought up the topic, I think that I'm allowed to continue asking questions about it.

[English]

The Chair: I'm going to say in this situation, just to bring you up to speed, Monsieur Berthold, we did have a conversation at the beginning about staying focused on the motion.

I do have to agree with Mr. Berthold, because it's a little different when it's a line of questioning. When there's a line of questioning and there are some doors being opened, you sometimes have to walk through them.

I will just say that we have had a very tense meeting already. It is nice to see you. I'm really happy that you're here. Thank you for coming. I would just ask that we try to...but I agree with you.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: I'll just wrap this up, Madam Chair.

[English]

The Chair: Perfect.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: My time is up anyway.

[English]

The Chair: Yes. You're almost done.

Thank you.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Carrière, can you explain why things happened this way?

I know that, if I want to bring someone to a protocol event and I don't have the invitation, the person doesn't get into Parliament.

Can you elaborate on this?

Mr. Sébastien Carrière: I want to thank the member for his question, Madam Chair.

I referred to the Toronto event because the member asked whether my office had any contact with Mr. Hunka. These are two completely separate processes. As I explained, the invitation for Toronto came from our office, at the request of the Prime Minister's Office and based on the recommendation of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress. No one responded to the email.

Regarding Mr. Hunka's invitation to come to the House of Commons and the subsequent introduction, I don't have any information about this. We were neither directly nor indirectly involved in the process.

As I explained earlier, we are asked questions about the diplomatic staff and the visiting delegation. That's all. We never see the full list.

The Chair: Thank you again, Mr. Berthold.

[English]

Mr. Gerretsen, you have five minutes through the chair.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much for being here.

If I understood you correctly in your opening statement, you said that your role for protocol is everything outside of this building, with the exception of maybe a hallway or something. Is that true?

Mr. Sébastien Carrière: Parliamentary protocol is in charge here on the Hill, but we do upstairs—they call it the “PM's corridor”—where the PMO and the cabinet room—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: You certainly don't have jurisdiction, for lack of a better term, over the chamber.

Mr. Sébastien Carrière: No, absolutely not.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: However, you're here as a witness on a study that we're doing on something that happened in the chamber.

I want to echo the comments of Madame Gaudreau. I greatly appreciate the work you do. I found it very interesting, even if the purpose this served was nothing less than understanding exactly what it is you do in developing and maintaining those relationships between Canada and other countries. The work you do is incredible.

However, I agree with Ms. Gaudreau. I think we have kept you here long enough. We are starting to ask the same questions and get

the same answers. I appreciate your time here and everything you do.

Madam Chair, with that, I move that we adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Luc Berthold: It's another cover-up.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

Have a great rest of the day. Thank you, everyone.

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