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• (1600)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 129 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

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

I'd like to remind participants to please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. All comments should be addressed through the chair.

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

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted on September 19, 2024, the committee is resuming its study of Russian interference and disinformation campaigns in Canada.

I would like to welcome our witnesses.

As an individual, we have David Pugliese, a journalist from the Ottawa Citizen.

From the Canadian Association of Journalists, we have president Brent Jolly.

I would now like to invite both of you to make opening statements of up to five minutes.

We'll start with Mr. Pugliese,

Mr. Pugliese, take it away.

Mr. David Pugliese (Journalist, Ottawa Citizen, As an Individual): Thank you, Madam Chair, for granting me the opportunity to speak to you.

I had no intention of appearing before this committee, but when my reputation and profession were attacked, I felt compelled to offer some truth and balance to your discussion.

On October 24, 2024, former Conservative cabinet minister Chris Alexander came before this committee and accused me of being a traitor to my country. Hiding behind a cloak of parliamentary privilege, he falsely claimed that I had been recruited as a Russian spy in the 1980s and suggested that I am still working as a Russian agent. His preposterous claims were based on several pieces of paper he told you had been examined by experts around the world. Astonishingly, not one MP on the committee raised a single critical

question about these explosive allegations involving a veteran Canadian journalist with a 40-year track record. It is the height of irony that a committee studying disinformation would in fact propagate it.

The records presented to you by Mr. Alexander are replete with factual errors and falsehoods. The records claim I was a permanent resident of Ottawa when the Russians supposedly decided to examine my background. I was not even living in Ottawa at the time cited in the record tabled by Mr. Alexander. Mr. Alexander testified that the files show I was working at my first job at the Ottawa Citizen throughout the 1980s. That is also false.

Although Mr. Alexander claimed there are actual studies authenticating his assertions, nothing was provided to this committee, and no one asked for them.

Mr. Alexander's fabricated claims are not only outlandish, but dangerous to my family. There are now calls that I be executed or tortured and that my family be deported.

In short, this committee effectively played host to a character assassination without authenticating any of the allegations. In my line of work, no credible journalist in this country would ever publish such wild, damaging allegations based on flimsy assertions.

If Mr. Alexander's documents are real, at best, this suggests the Russians looked at my background, which was a common occurrence for journalists, academics and politicians during the Cold War. How many other Canadians are on this list?

Mr. Alexander, in his presentation to the committee, suggested that my journalism helps the Russians and divides Canadians, yet nothing is further from the truth. Over the last four decades, I've exposed financial wrongdoing at National Defence, sexual assault in the Canadian Armed Forces and bungled military procurements that put our troops at risk. My award-winning articles have helped countless Canadian veterans and military personnel, and I've pushed for accountability, transparency and truthfulness. However, I know that when journalists like me expose the wrongdoing of governments and institutions, it can be uncomfortable for decision-makers.

As we learned in the aftermath of this committee, the claim that I was a Russian asset has been circulated for several years by Canadian Forces leaders. That doesn't come as a surprise to me. Military public affairs officers have acknowledged that during my time at the Ottawa Citizen, there have been no fewer than three attempts by senior DND officials to convince my employer to remove me from the defence beat.

In 2013, the National Post reported that I was put under military police investigation after a senior official in the defence minister's office falsely claimed I published classified information. After a two-month investigation, military police concluded that the data I had published was actually taken from a U.S. Navy press release.

Once again, there are ridiculous claims being made by those who are uncomfortable with fact-based journalism, and my journalism in particular. The job of a journalist is to hold the powerful to account, and I will continue doing so. In my view, Canada appears to be entering a dangerous new era. Labelling people who don't follow the approved government narrative as an enemy of this country is slanderous and irresponsible.

Surely, a parliamentary committee should embrace higher standards when it comes to protecting the reputations of its citizens. While these allegations were made about me personally, there is little doubt that this was an attack on credible journalism at a time when we need it the most.

Journalism is a core pillar of our democracy, protecting public interest. I am a proud Canadian.

I am proud of my journalism career, and I intend to keep holding governments to account.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you for your remarks, Mr. Pugliese.

I now invite Mr. Jolly to make an opening statement of up to five minutes.

Mr. Brent Jolly (President, Canadian Association of Journalists): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you, all, for agreeing to hear me today and for the opportunity to address the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

While I wholeheartedly endorse the study this committee is undertaking to look into Russian disinformation and interference campaigns in Canada, that's not exclusively the reason I am here today.

I'm joining you here today as the president of the Canadian Association of Journalists, which is an organization that has existed since 1978—so, more than 45 years—to represent the interests of journalists, to undertake advocacy and to support the public's right to know.

I'm here because of the allegations that were levied against Mr. Pugliese in the October 24 meeting by Mr. Alexander. As David has noted, Mr. Alexander declared, under the guise of parliamentary privilege, I might add, that David has been a paid agent of the KGB since the 1980s. It is absolutely astonishing to me that no member of this committee posed questions about or challenged these patently absurd claims when they were tabled.

On the evening of October 24, the Canadian Association of Journalists issued a public statement to our more than 22,000 Twitter followers, and we also represent the interests of more than 1,000 journalists across the country. The CAJ statement read:

The CAJ wholeheartedly denounces the ridiculous accusations made against @davidpugliese today.

It's a sad irony these comments were made in a meeting examining disinformation campaigns. These claims are dangerous & designed to undermine the credibility of journalists. Period.

I'm happy to be here today sitting shoulder to shoulder with David to call out these accusations and allegations that are nothing more, in my view, than a McCarthyesque smear job. For over 40 years, David has built a reputation as a reporter who has exposed untold levels of corruption in Canada. He has won multiple awards, not just from the Canadian Association of Journalists but also from the National Newspaper Awards, where I also sit as a governor, and for his coverage on issues as diverse as defence issues and looking into and investigating the government and security agencies that are attempting to stifle free speech and legitimate protests.

The function of journalists is to make sure that taxpayers know how public dollars are being spent. Frankly, our Constitution upholds the role that journalists play in serving our democracy. However, Mr. Pugliese has been tarnished unnecessarily and is guilty of nothing more than being a journalist. He is a habitual thorn in the side of those in power, but that's just him doing his job.

The accusations you have heard from Mr. Alexander in this committee are dumbfounding and dangerous. They are, regrettably, becoming the new normal. Weaponized disinformation campaigns put journalists in the veritable crosshairs. Rather than question, for example, the accuracy of facts reported in a story, domestic and transnational interests now attack a journalist's credibility. That's because if you can't refute the truth, then the next best action is to attack the messenger.

These kinds of attacks are isolating and psychologically taxing. In a time when newsrooms have thinner and thinner resources or, worse, when you're a freelancer who doesn't have an affiliation to a newsroom, these kinds of statements and ridiculous allegations send a collective chill across the free expression landscape. I think our foreign adversaries, including Russia, will cheer in collective celebration when we begin to suspect each other.

Disinformation attacks the very foundations of our democracy and the individuals who serve in it, and that includes journalists. I hope that members of this committee will carefully reflect on how this close-to-home example of a disinformation campaign can strike.

Disinformation changes lives and damages reputations, all in the stroke of a pen. It's for that reason that I hope the mindless maligning of Mr. Pugliese will not go unnoticed in the final draft of this committee's report. We'll be watching, and we look forward to reading it in the near future.

Thank you.

● (1605)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you very much for your remarks.

We will now start our rounds of questions. Each member will have six minutes.

Mr. Shipley, you're up first.

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Thank you, Chair, and a sincere thank you to both witnesses for being here today. It's an honour and a pleasure to have you both here. I always believe that in any situation, everybody has the right to come and defend themselves and speak the truth, so thank you both.

I'm going to speak a bit before I get into a few questions. You brought up some very good points. I have been an MP for five years now, and I have sat on a few committees. Mainly I've been on public safety, but I've also sat on other ones. Witnesses come in to our meetings all the time, and they give us their sides of the stories, or the information they believe in.

This has put us in quite an interesting position, and it is always going to make me think, going forward, what's real and what's not real. It's very interesting—and please don't take this glibly—in a study about disinformation that this has taken place. I have obviously spent some time reflecting on that. I find that a little ironic.

Mr. Pugliese, before we get into some questions, if there's any good that can come from this—obviously, you've been through a tough time—it is that maybe our eyes will be a bit more open to disinformation, and that will be part of our study and our remarks going forward.

I do have some questions, though, and I'll start with Mr. Pugliese.

• (1610)

Obviously, this has been a very tough time for you. I listened to your words very intently. You did mention that this has had some effect on you and your family, and I want to say that my feelings go out to you and your family.

How have these allegations affected you and your family?

Mr. David Pugliese: I'm not going to get into too much of that, if that's okay. I mean, we have increased security around the house, so there has been a component of that just to protect the kids. As far as direct impact goes, there is that.

There has been a lot of support that I've received and, ironically, now my email inbox is full of tips from Canadian Forces personnel about wrongdoing that they want me to investigate, so I guess I've got my work cut out for many months to come.

However, I would prefer not to get into some of the security aspects, please.

Mr. Doug Shipley: I respect that. I wasn't looking for what you've done as much as I was looking for maybe how much it had affected your family. What I'm trying to do here is draw a picture. Our words are important, and the words that witnesses say are important. I was just trying to draw a picture of how much this has affected you and your family but not get into specifics as to security around your family. I understand that.

Mr. Pugliese, here's another question. Since we are studying Russian disinformation, do you have any thoughts on how the government can address Russia's use of disinformation and information manipulation? Obviously, you're living through it right now. Maybe you can give us your opinion on that.

Mr. David Pugliese: I think these committees have to be very careful about looking at the evidence that's being presented.

In December 2023, I covered a Senate fisheries committee meeting, and I watched a so-called disinformation expert who works for the Macdonald-Laurier Institute, which Mr. Alexander works for, and this individual made a link between the Russians and Vladimir Putin and Ryan Reynolds, the Canadian actor. Putin and the Russians have put out disinformation about the Canadian seal hunt. Ryan Reynolds is an animal activist, and he has put out a documentary about the Canadian seal hunt, which wasn't complimentary. I watched this committee as this disinformation expert linked Ryan Reynolds and Putin together.

I came away from that.... Words, as a committee member has mentioned, are very important. If Ryan Reynolds can be linked to the Russians and Russian disinformation, then no Canadian will be safe from any such smears.

Mr. Doug Shipley: Thank you for that.

Mr. Jolly, I would like to ask you a question.

You mentioned your organization was started in 1978, which was more than 45 years ago. Have you ever seen a case like this in journalism? How has your association reacted to it, or what have you done to prevent the disinformation side of it going forward for your journalists?

Mr. Brent Jolly: This is quite different in its own right, the fact that it was declared, that it was asserted by a former cabinet minister in a standing committee of a democratically operated organization. I think this is something that really takes the cake.

However, I think we also need to be really aware of the challenges that journalists are facing out in the field every day in covering protests and injunction zones. We've seen photojournalists who are having their access restricted when they're trying to go out and cover wildfires in B.C. or in Alberta. These are all part and parcel.... This is part of the shrinking press freedom environment that we're seeing. I think what Mr. Pugliese has experienced is certainly part and parcel of it, but it does give me a sense of exasperation, the degree to which these accusations were made, again, within the context of a committee. I think it was a really bad look.

• (1615)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you. The time is up.

Now we'll go to Ms. O'Connell for six minutes, please.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you both for being here today. I want to start out with my perspective. I think, Mr. Jolly, you said in your opening statement that it was dumbfounding and dangerous, and I don't disagree. What's important to know, however, is that we don't see in advance what a witness might say. In fact, speaking for myself, as the testimony was happening, Mr. Alexander was referring to documents. I know that we were turning to each other and saying, "What documents?" Then, when we looked, I noticed that, on the committee day, we had received them at around 12:30, I believe—I can clarify that. On a given sitting day, I'm sure you can appreciate that I had not, and I think a number of our colleagues had not.... In that testimony, Mr. Alexander kept referring to "Stuart", and I remember thinking that I needed to look at these documents.

I'm not downplaying anything, but I want you to know that I think we were equally confused and did not understand the connection. Mr. Bezan asked specific questions that then named you and that were eventually.... When I got home and was able to go through and read all of the documents, I saw that. This is not to make an excuse. It's just to outline the timeline from our perspective because I, too, was very confused about what was actually being alleged. From my perspective—and I can't speak for all colleagues—we had not seen it in advance.

I agree with the testimony of both of you with regard to a study on Russian disinformation. Our intention on this committee is certainly not to allow or purport the continuation of it. I just want to acknowledge that—again, not to dismiss the very real concerns but to paint a little bit of a picture of some of that same dumbfounding confusion that we were experiencing in real time. I certainly was experiencing it in real time, trying to get my eyes on those documents as we were also preparing questions while witnesses were sitting there.

Other colleagues can certainly speak to their experiences. However, just on that, you've mentioned, Mr. Pugliese, the extreme concern, the dangerous situation for your family and the increased security. I'm deeply sorry that you are experiencing that. That was one of my questions, but I want to ask another question.

In Mr. Alexander's opening remarks, he said, "Previous efforts to expose this journalist's long-running covert ties to Moscow have resulted in attempts to intimidate current and former Canadian parliamentarians, including my former colleague James Bezan as well as Canadian Army officials." Are you aware of any of those efforts? Again, this testimony.... I've served on a committee with Mr. Bezan, on the national defence committee. I have never heard these accusations. Do you have any idea where that is coming from or why this was presented that day?

Mr. David Pugliese: Madam Chair, when I heard that, I thought we were entering into a territory of unhinged testimony. I couldn't believe it. I don't know Mr. Bezan. He has used information from my articles and raised it in the House of Commons to hold the government to account, which is fine.

In 2018, I wrote an article, in fact, supporting Mr. Bezan when a senior Canadian Forces public affairs officer by the name of Colonel Jay Janzen was dictating to Mr. Bezan on social media what he should, as a parliamentarian, ask. I did an article quoting Mr. Bezan, that this isn't a proper, that parliamentarians shouldn't

be told what they can be asking in Parliament. When I heard that, I was just flabbergasted. It's crazy.

I don't want to get into too many details about where I live now, but I don't live in Ottawa. I live 5,000 miles away.

I've never intimidated Mr. Bezan or any Canadian Forces officer. I don't know what that is about.

• (1620)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you. I didn't understand, and like I said, most of the testimony referred to the journalist as "Stuart", and it wasn't until later that we were even putting those pieces together.

Just for the record, have you ever published a story where the Kremlin was your source?

I'm sorry, but I want the opportunity on the record.

Mr. David Pugliese: Madam Chair, no, I have never published a story where the Kremlin was my source. I have done one interview with the spokesman from the Russian embassy who was given the boot from Canada, and that was published.

Most of my sources are Canadian Forces records that I acquire through the access to information law, Canadian Forces statements and Canadian Forces personnel who usually come to me for help because they're getting, for want of a better word, jerked around by the chain of command. If you follow most of my stories, you'll see those are stories that I do a lot of.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, Mr. Pugliese.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you.

Again, in fairness, I wasn't saying it to promote that.

Mr. David Pugliese: Sure.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I wanted you to have the opportunity on the record to address that.

Mr. David Pugliese: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, Ms. O'Connell.

Thank you, Mr. Pugliese.

It's over to Ms. Michaud for six minutes, please.

Go ahead.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Pugliese, like Ms. O'Connell, I understand that you are confused by the fact that, when this happened on October 24, no committee member seemed to stand up for you or question Mr. Alexander's comments. I was trying to understand what was going on, and I may not have understood the seriousness of the allegations. I also didn't have access to the documents.

However, on our end, we were dealing with a former minister who now works for a credible organization, so he's a fairly credible individual who presented allegations and seemed to have proof. In short, it was something new. I even wondered, at the time it happened, if it was something already known that I didn't know about. I didn't know you.

So the situation is a bit unique.

I'm glad the committee is giving you the opportunity to tell your side of the story and set the record straight, because the accusations that have been levelled at you are indeed quite serious.

The Global News network seems to have been looking at this in consultation with experts. According to them, the documents that were presented by Mr. Alexander seem legitimate. However, that doesn't suggest that you would be a Russian spy or that you would work for Russia, but perhaps the KGB would simply have an eye on you, as it had an eye on a number of people a few years ago, likely journalists or persons of interest in Canada.

So when we see the analysis of these people, it doesn't show that he did anything, but perhaps the KGB had an interest in that person.

Could you tell us why you think the KGB would have been interested in you?

[*English*]

Mr. David Pugliese: First of all, when Global took a look at the documents, their experts pointed out they don't show anything. They don't show that I received any money or anything of the sort that Mr. Alexander claimed. What the Soviets did during the 1980s was look at all kinds of individuals: journalists, politicians, as I mentioned, academics.

I found it interesting that whoever wrote those documents up was not aware of me, because on a lot of the dates where I was supposed to be in Ottawa, I wasn't. They described me as a "leftist activist". Well, throughout the 1980s I was working for military publications. I was a correspondent for a Washington publication called the Armed Forces Journal, which is produced for the U.S. Army. We were writing stories about how to nuke the Soviets off the face of the earth, how to get more weapons, the need for NATO expansion, that type of thing. That wouldn't appear to me as someone who's a leftist activist.

These documents, I don't know where they came from. Maybe you should ask Mr. Alexander. He said they came from Ukraine. He didn't give specifics. Why would the Soviets look at me? If they did, I think that would just be standard operating procedure for most journalists during the Cold War, for most academics and for most politicians.

• (1625)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you.

As my colleagues have mentioned before me, it's quite ironic that these allegations are being made during a study on Russian disinformation in Canada.

What do you think Mr. Alexander has to gain by pointing a finger at you in this way and presenting so-called evidence? Why do you think he targeted you?

[*English*]

Mr. David Pugliese: I don't know what was going through Mr. Alexander's brain.

I covered Mr. Alexander before on the F-35 fighter jet file when he was on that. I covered the Afghan war, which he was kind of a lead on. I exposed a lot of stories about corruption in the Afghan National Army. I exposed the existence of a child sex ring among Afghan national security forces where they would sell children.

I have a reputation, and I'm proud of it, of being a journalist who does journalism.

Again, I can't speak to Mr. Alexander's motives. I have covered him in the past.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Alex Cosh published an open letter on November 5 to advocate on your behalf. It was signed by many journalists and people in the field. It asks Mr. Alexander to provide evidence of what he's alleging or to apologize publicly.

Have you had any contact with Mr. Alexander since—

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Madam Michaud, I apologize for interrupting. Perhaps you can ask that in the next round.

Your time is up. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Mr. MacGregor, you have six minutes, please.

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

I welcome both of you to our committee.

Wow. October 24 was quite the meeting for me to miss that day.

Honestly, like Ms. O'Connell said, we had no idea this kind of testimony was going to come forward. We actually received the documents from Mr. Alexander in an email at 12:21 p.m., and the committee started at 3:46 p.m. that day.

I have many years of experience at committee. In my experience, when a witness is both handing in documents and testifying, the documents can provide a good reference point, but I tend to put more weight on the testimony. My practice is that, if we are going to quote extensively or use a witness's particular information given at a committee during the drafting phase, those are always helpful to come back to.

My staff person was giving me updates from the committee and was describing in real terms how sideways it suddenly went with Mr. Alexander's testimony. We don't have much experience with someone coming before a committee where they are protected by parliamentary privilege and just going after someone in the way that he did.

Mr. Pugliese, we want to afford you the same parliamentary protection and give you the time and space here at this public committee that Mr. Alexander was afforded.

Mr. Alexander did say in his statements that he had shared these documents with national security authorities in Canada. Outside of October 24, was this the first time you had heard about this? Have you ever had someone in an official position in Canada contact you about these documents?

• (1630)

Mr. David Pugliese: Madam Chair, no. I have never been visited by any security personnel. I've never been visited by CSIS, RCMP, whatever agencies there are.

I've had a long association with the Canadian Forces. For instance, I have gone overseas on multiple occasions with Canadian special forces on an exclusive basis. You can be sure they have taken a close look at my background before they allow me access to some of the sensitive things they do, so to answer your question, no, no one has. I haven't heard anything.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: To borrow the line of questioning from my colleague Ms. Michaud, do you have any further thoughts on just what you think might have prompted Mr. Alexander to go down this road? Can you search your memory for any way that you might have crossed paths that affected him personally? I know that as parliamentarians it's the nature of the job to sometimes feel the rough edge of the press. That's a normal part of public service, but....

Mr. David Pugliese: Madam Chair, what struck me is that Mr. Alexander seemed very upset by my journalism. He's upset that I report about these procurements that go off-line. For me, that's just reporting on where our tax dollars are going, so I don't understand what that big issue is.

I'll give you an example of some of the things that people have accused me of doing—like Russian disinformation. Last year, Canadian Forces were training Ukrainian troops in Poland and the Canadian troops were not getting paid their allowances for their food. That was causing problems back home in the families, because there's less money. The spouses of these soldiers approached me, told me the story and asked me if I could write a story. I wrote a story. It was brought up in the House of Commons, and a week and a half later, these soldiers started getting their pay, but this appears to be.... Then I started getting emails saying, "You're embarrassing Canada. You're helping the Russians. This is Russian disinformation."

My response to this is in reporting on this type of thing. It's not Russian disinformation. If you don't want the Russians to use this information, then pay the soldiers properly. That is the issue here. Not everything is Russian disinformation because it might embarrass the Canadian Forces or the government of the day, and the

sense I got from him, he seemed very perturbed about my reporting.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: In speaking of Russian disinformation, you've probably heard that in our last meeting Ms. Lauren Chen was here as a witness. She, her husband and her company, Tenet Media, are named in a U.S. indictment as having been the recipients of several million dollars from Russia as of today. We asked her a lot of questions and she came back with the same standard answer.

For you, as a journalist who does all of this incredible investigative work, talk a bit about the challenges when you're dealing with social media companies that don't have journalistic standards and practices and no internal code of ethics that guides how they report on truthful events.

Mr. David Pugliese: Sure. Madam Chair, as much as people—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): We'll have just a brief response, please, a brief answer.

Mr. David Pugliese: —dislike my journalism, you have a place to go. At the Ottawa Citizen, you can complain to my editor. You can take me to the national press council and file a complaint.

With these other organizations, you can't. That is the difference between me and some of these other entities that you're running into.

• (1635)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, Mr. Pugliese—

Mr. David Pugliese: The one thing I pride myself on is—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): I'm so sorry to interrupt. Our time is up on this round. Perhaps Mr. Lloyd will allow you to finish your comments. I apologize for interrupting.

Mr. Lloyd, you have five minutes. Please go ahead.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I will say at the outset that the meeting where these allegations were made was very bizarre. Not having adequate time to review these documents beforehand really minimizes the opportunity to focus in on them. I'm going to take that opportunity right now to go into these documents and ask you some questions.

I assume you have read the documents, Mr. Pugliese. The documents first appear to be written in about August or September 1984, and say that the subject, "Stuart", was permanently residing in Ottawa at the time.

Were you residing in Ottawa in 1984?

Mr. David Pugliese: Madam Chair, no, I was not residing in Ottawa at that time.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Okay.

In a later document, it says that in 1989 and 1990, the subject, "Stuart", began active work at the Ottawa Citizen newspaper.

Is that the time when you began active work at the Ottawa Citizen?

Mr. David Pugliese: Madam Chair, that is correct, and that information is available online. I would just add that one of the other documents also stated that in 1988 I was permanently in Ottawa. That is false.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Another document says, “born and residing in Canada, student activist”.

Were you a student activist?

Mr. David Pugliese: Madam Chair, no, I wasn't a student activist.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: The reason I'm asking is that these are very specific things.

Mr. David Pugliese: Sure.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: If somebody is putting this together, they must have done some research on you. Wouldn't you agree that the best disinformation always has an element of truth in it?

Mr. David Pugliese: I would agree, except this time they didn't seem to do a very good job. You know—

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Yes.

Mr. David Pugliese: As I mentioned previously, student activist.... If you take a look at my writings, at one point in the 1980s I was writing for a Canadian Armed Forces journal or a Canadian Armed Forces publication, so—

Mr. Dane Lloyd: They're kind of hotbeds for communists, those armed forces journals...?

Mr. David Pugliese: No.

My work in the 1980s would not be described as an op-ed for communists. It would probably be described as pro-military, pro-NATO, anti-Russian and anti-Soviet.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Another part of the document says that the subject, “Stuart”, expressed a “loyal attitude” towards Soviet Union policy.

Have you had a loyal attitude towards Soviet Union policy?

Mr. David Pugliese: Madam Chair, no, I have not had any pro-Soviet attitudes.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Looking at Russia as it is today versus what Russia was in the time of the Soviet Union, do you think that it's even ideologically consistent for somebody who was loyal to the Soviet Union to necessarily be loyal to what the current iteration of the Russian state looks like?

Mr. David Pugliese: Madam Chair, that's a good question.

Obviously, the Soviet Union from the 1980s arguably could be described as far different from what's going on in Russia right now. I don't have the knowledge, but they're totally two different entities.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Given that you've had access to these documents, have you had an opportunity to send them off for verification or to be debunked by a third party?

Mr. David Pugliese: Madam Chair, no. I mean, the committee was given photocopies, I believe, so it's hard to send photocopies off and, quite frankly, I view the documents as ridiculous.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Yes, I just find it.... I don't think Mr. Alexander came up with these documents on his own, so obviously somebody put together these documents.

Do you have any idea who might have put together these documents and what their motivations might have been?

Mr. David Pugliese: Madam Chair, I can't get into details; however, I am in the midst of a civil lawsuit for \$7 million that.... You know what? I think our lawyer would prefer that I don't go further into that.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Okay.

How do you think we can improve resilience against foreign influence in a way that doesn't compromise press freedom?

• (1640)

Mr. David Pugliese: That's a good point.

I think you have to go through a prism of.... You have to carefully look at what's being presented. Just because I write an article about sexual assault in the Canadian Forces and that—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): I'm so sorry to cut you off. The time is up, but perhaps the Liberal member, Mr. Gaheer, may allow you to.... I'll leave that to him. He has five minutes.

Mr. Gaheer, go ahead.

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

Thank you, Mr. Pugliese, for appearing before committee.

I echo the comments by my colleagues that we were shocked by the testimony of Mr. Alexander that took place on the 24th, and I'm sure you were equally shocked. He made these allegations before a committee where parliamentary privilege obviously applies. Are you aware of Mr. Alexander making these allegations anywhere else?

Mr. David Pugliese: Madam Chair, no. He has not repeated these allegations outside your committee.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: If he were to make these allegations outside the security of privilege, would you sue?

Mr. David Pugliese: Madam Chair, at this point, I'm just trying to make sure that my family is safe, and then I just want to get back to journalism, which hopefully I can do next week, and I can't really go into that. Thank you.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Okay.

Earlier this week, our committee heard testimony from Lauren Chen, the founder of Tenet Media, the organization currently at the heart of the U.S. indictment on Russian interference and disinformation.

When accusations like that are thrown around against journalists and when obviously we live in an environment—thanks in part to our neighbour to the south—where legacy media, mainstream media, is constantly criticized and mistrusted, what do you think that's doing in terms of eroding the trust in actual journalists when those kinds of claims are made against legacy media?

Mr. David Pugliese: Madam Chair, yes, we're in a new world when it comes to social media and anyone can say anything.

For instance, that there was an individual who obviously had advance warning about what was going to go down in your committee and who was tweeting one hour before you even started that this explosive testimony about a prominent Canadian journalist would happen. The same individual, the minute your committee started, popped these documents up on social media. We're in a different world here.

In the 1990s, I was accused of being a CIA agent by peace groups. When I was covering the Afghan war, some parliamentarians said I was a Taliban sympathizer. Fast forward to 2024, and now I'm a Russian spy. I'm living this exciting life. The difference this time is that these allegations against journalists, because of social media, just rocket everywhere. That's the difference. In the 1990s when I'm a CIA agent, that's just coming from a bunch of disarmament groups, but now it's a whole different world.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: In your role as a journalist, have you ever spoken with representatives of the Russian embassy in Canada regarding a potential story?

Mr. David Pugliese: Madam Chair, in my role as a journalist, probably about eight years ago I received.... I've done three stories where the Russian embassy is quoted: two emailed statements, which were put in the story, and then the main story, which was a telephone conversation with the Russian embassy spokesman who was booted out of Canada by the Liberal government. That was a voice interview.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: That's great. Thank you.

We know now that Rachel Curran, Meta's lobbyist and former director of policy for Stephen Harper, when testifying before our committee, said that Meta had to remove news from Facebook and Instagram in Canada because, under the Online News Act, they would be forced "to pay approximately \$80 million a year for content that had no particular commercial value to us".

For those keeping track at home, last year Meta made \$134 billion in revenue, and \$80 million is 0.05% of Meta's annual revenue. Do you think that 0.05% of revenue, which is a rounding error, is too much to ask global tech giants to pay for Canadian news?

• (1645)

Mr. Brent Jolly: I can answer that.

Absolutely not. I think Meta's actions in the wake of the Online News Act were cowardly. I think they backed away as soon as possible because they understood there were going to be a lot of potential liabilities based on what was going on in the United States in the election that just took place and they didn't really want to be in that game.

It became a question of dollars and cents, and it just didn't matter to them. I think that reflects the public service mandate or their interest in serving the public. I mean, half a per cent, a rounding error...? I'm biased. I'm a journalist. I—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): That's all the time we have in this round.

Mr. Brent Jolly: Fair enough.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Gaheer.

We have two and a half minutes going to Ms. Michaud.

Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Pugliese, I talked earlier about the open letter that Alex Cosh published on November 5, which was signed by a number of journalists and people in the field, to defend you. He asks Mr. Alexander to provide evidence or offer a public apology.

Since then, have you had any contact with Mr. Alexander? To your knowledge, does he seem to want to continue this war against you and the Canadian Association of Journalists, since a number of journalists seem to support you? Or does he seem to want to apologize?

[*English*]

Mr. David Pugliese: Madam Chair, I don't expect an apology from him, from Mr. Alexander. It was a good boost for me to see those journalists and academics. I think 56 have come to my support, as well as Brent with the CAJ, and a number of other organizations. Yeah, I don't see that. I don't see him apologizing.

However, quite frankly, when I look back at the testimony, he was telling your committee that I was intimidating a member of Parliament. I guess that's what I found incredible. Essentially, he accused me of two criminal acts: of being a traitor and of threatening a member of Parliament, who I don't even know.

I've used the word "unhinged", and I'm going to use it again. I do not know his motives. I don't know what was going through his head. I'm sorry.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you.

In closing, Mr. Jolly, you described Mr. Alexander's remarks as dangerous at a time when we're trying to combat disinformation in all its forms.

Do you think that this type of statement can undermine the public's trust in the media and in journalists?

Mr. Brent Jolly: Yes.

[*English*]

Absolutely. I think it sows mistrust. It sows division. It makes people question what a journalist does and what their value is to society. I think undermining that is a dangerous principle that we can't tolerate.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you very much.

Mr. MacGregor, you have two and a half minutes.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Jolly, I'll direct this question to you.

We know that this committee has been heavily involved in the foreign interference file, and we know that several countries are actively working to sow discord here in Canada. We can obviously see the result of that in how our politics are playing out. We know that various platforms have been carrying those messages. There have been talks about how we hold platforms accountable and about how we hold the people who are generating the content accountable, people who are in Ms. Chen's position, social media giants like Meta, X, Instagram and so on.

However, if you want to add to this conversation.... Ultimately, we've been looking at representatives from the whole spectrum, including our national security and intelligence agencies. You are knee-deep in this every single day with your profession, so from your perspective, what kinds of recommendations would you like to see in our report to the federal government? What things could the federal government concretely do to stop our foreign adversaries from sowing this kind of discord?

Mr. Brent Jolly: I was watching some of the previous committee meetings to get a sense of where things were and to get up to speed. I particularly appreciate the idea behind some of the Scandinavian countries to ensure information resilience and public literacy on this.

I think something that I see every day is that people don't understand the difference between a news report and an opinion article. Those are two completely different things, you know, but for some reason, that all sort of gets lumped into one because it appeared in the Ottawa Citizen or whatever. It's all one and the same in people's view. I think that journalists are, by their nature, storytellers, and I think we do a pretty abysmal job of telling our own story. What do we do? Why are we here? What is the purpose of journalists in a functioning democratic society? I think if we can distill that, that's a real win.

As for what this committee can do.... I mean, it's provincial jurisdiction because—God bless Canada and federalism—information literacy, media literacy, news literacy curricula and opportunities for that are where it's at.

• (1650)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you very much.

We'll now go to the last round, which, colleagues, I will shorten by one minute just to keep us on time. We'll have two four-minute rounds.

Mr. Motz, go right ahead.

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

Thank you for being here, witnesses. I appreciate your coming here.

Given the information that you've shared with committee members and in your testimony, you have steps that you take to maintain journalistic integrity. Could both of you explain how you go about doing that to prevent unknowingly spreading potential disinformation from any foreign actor?

Mr. David Pugliese: Madam Chair, a lot of my journalism is records-based. When a Canadian Forces person comes to me and

says, "This is happening to me," the first thing I say is, "Please provide me with your records." Usually, they give me a lot of records, including personnel reports, access to information and privacy reports and official government documents. I then go to the Department of National Defence. There's a checks and balance issue here. I say, "This individual is saying this." The Department of National Defence will come back. Usually, it will say, "Yes, that's happening." I'll say, "Please comment," and away we go.

Mr. Glen Motz: Okay. Thank you. I appreciate that.

Basically, to summarize, you ask for documentation and then you source your sources.

Mr. David Pugliese: That's correct. Yes.

Mr. Glen Motz: Okay. Thank you.

From a broader Canadian perspective, based on both your experiences, what indicators should Canadians be looking for and watching out for to identify potential disinformation campaigns originating from any foreign hostile state?

Mr. Brent Jolly: A sense of critical thinking above all, I think, is the most foundational ingredient to be able to debunk ridiculousness like what we just saw here. It heartens me to hear that after the committee has had a chance to think through it or review the documents, they don't really pass muster.

Mr. Glen Motz: I'm going to ask you to repeat that. Your mic wasn't on at the front end, so it's not going to show up for Canadians to hear.

You said Canadians should employ critical thinking.

Mr. Brent Jolly: Absolutely. To be able to decipher truth from falsehood, critical thinking is foundational. I don't know where we're going to be able to do that. The point about the education system...we have every province and territory. We're not teaching that, and that's—

Mr. Glen Motz: Digital literacy is important.

Mr. Brent Jolly: Absolutely. It's a core principle, just like mathematics and an understanding of how biology works are.

People are on their smart phones right now. You are engaging in an environment where there is warfare going on right now. You need to have the tools to be able to fight back against that. If you don't, and you come with twigs and figs or something, you're going to lose. You're going to see misinformation and disinformation campaigns. You're going to see things like we saw down the street here a couple of years ago with the "freedom convoy" and all kinds of deleterious social things, so immunize.

• (1655)

Mr. Glen Motz: Thank you very much.

I appreciate both of your testimonies.

Madam Chair, if I could, in the seconds I have left, I would like to move a motion about this study.

I move:

That once the committee has conducted eight meetings on the study on Russian interference and disinformation campaigns in Canada, the committee proceed to the following matters in order:

1. The committee concurrently undertake, allotting alternating meetings of not fewer than six meetings each, its agreed-upon study on the rise in violent crime and a study examining how addressing gaps in community mental health and substance use health supports, including preventative and early intervention services can improve public safety in Canada; that both the Minister of Public Safety and Minister of Mental Health and Addictions be invited to testify separately for one hour each in this study; that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House; and that pursuant to Standing Order 109, the government table a comprehensive response to the report.

2. The committee invite the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Immigration to appear before the committee as soon as possible pursuant to the motion passed on September 19, 2024.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, Mr. Motz.

Mr. Shipley.

Are there any other hands up?

Mr. Doug Shipley: Thank you, Chair.

Very briefly, I appreciate the motion Mr. Motz has brought forward today. I would like to add to that one thing which he may have missed in his list, which is particularly relevant this week.

Back in December 2023, this committee undertook a very serious and very heartfelt study on Paul Bernardo, and we haven't finished that yet, Chair. I know you're not our normal chair, but I want to get that on the record. I really think we need to get back to that, especially when the issue of his parole is coming up again. I'm sure the French and Mahaffy families would like some closure on that document.

I'd like to put that on there too. Canadians want answers and we really need to finish that study.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, Mr. Shipley.

Are you moving an amendment, or is that just a point of addition?

Mr. Doug Shipley: It's just an addition.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Okay. We have a motion on the floor.

Madam Clerk, have you been able to distribute that?

Ms. Hilary Smyth (Committee Clerk): I'm working on it right now.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): We have hard copies for everyone in both languages.

Can we distribute those?

Colleagues, are there any further comments about the motion? We'll make sure we see it.

I just want to see if we need to let the witnesses go. I don't want to hold them here if there's going to be a lot of discussion. I just want to see. Did you guys want to talk about it?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: We need to be able to see the motion.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Yes.

Our hour is up.

We really do, as a committee, appreciate your coming to bring your perspective, Mr. Pugliese and Mr. Jolly. Thank you very much.

Very sincerely, I'm very sorry to hear about what you've been going through, Mr. Pugliese. Thank you for coming to share your side of the story. We appreciate it.

If there's anything further, please let the committee know.

We hope that all will be well with you.

Thank you very much for coming.

Mr. David Pugliese: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): You are dismissed for now.

We will suspend briefly so that the parties can review the motion.

Thank you.

• (1655) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1705)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Colleagues, we will resume the meeting.

We'll take a speaking order if anyone would like to speak to the motion.

Mr. MacGregor, I believe you wanted to speak to the motion.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Chair, may I speak to this?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): You'll be next, Ms. O'Connell.

Go ahead, Mr. MacGregor.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you, Madam Chair.

When I first read through this, my opinion on the motion was that I thought most of it was okay, but I would like, in the first part, to have a very clear reference to the two very important studies that are before this committee, because, let's face it, foreign interference is a very clear and present danger to Canada right now. I would like to have references to both the Russian interference and disinformation campaign in Canada and also the electoral interference and criminal activities in Canada by agents of the government in India.

I suppose how I would change that first paragraph would be by having it say, "That, once the committee has concluded the study on Russian interference and disinformation campaigns in Canada and the study on electoral interference and criminal activities in Canada by agents of the government in India, the committee proceed to the following matters in order". I'm fine with the rest of it.

I'm not sure if I want to specify the exact number of meetings at this point, because I think we as a committee need to figure out how many more we're going to need.

That would be my amendment to the motion.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Ms. O'Connell, go ahead on a point of order.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Chair, I wanted to hear Mr. MacGregor's amendment, but regardless of that, notice of this motion was not given, and we were not on the topic of violent crime or on the topic of immigration, so I would argue this motion is actually not in order.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, Ms. O'Connell. It is related to the Russian interference and disinformation campaign directly, so I would argue that it is in order.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Sorry, but where is that? Is it just because in the preamble it says what will happen once the meetings on Russia are concluded?

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Are you trying to challenge the chair?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Is that your ruling?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): It would appear that the motion looks to have eight meetings for Russia, so the opening is directly related to Russia. In my opinion, it is.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Well, then, I would challenge the chair.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Understood. We'll have a vote.

Mr. Doug Shipley: To clarify, if we vote yes, we're...it's confusing.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: You're sustaining her ruling if you vote yes.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): If you vote yes, you affirm my decision. If you vote no, you affirm Ms. O'Connell's position. Voting yes supports what I said, and voting no doesn't.

The Clerk: Shall the decision of the chair be sustained?

• (1710)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): We have a tie. I am the tiebreaker, and I vote yes.

(Ruling of the chair sustained: yeas 6; nays 5)

The Chair: Mr. Motz, go ahead.

Mr. Glen Motz: I'd just like to add, as the mover of this motion, that I will accept Mr. MacGregor's amendment as a friendly amendment.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: No.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): No. There's no such thing as a friendly amendment.

Mr. Glen Motz: It's okay, Hedy.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): I'm going to confirm with the clerk how we distribute this subamendment.

It's not required that it be provided in writing, but I will ask Mr. MacGregor to repeat it one more time, slowly, for the interpreters, and to provide it in writing, perhaps as the conversation continues.

Thank you.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: I'll read it very slowly.

I'm really only amending that first paragraph. It would read as follows:

That, once the committee has concluded both the study on Russian interference and disinformation campaigns in Canada and the study on electoral interference and criminal activities in Canada by agents of the Government of India, the committee proceed to the following matters in order:

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Chair, we need those in both official languages.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Ms. O'Connell, I did not call on you, but I don't see other hands, so you may go.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: It's a point of order, Madam Chair. We'd like that amendment in both official languages. That is the practice of this committee.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): The clerk will be providing it momentarily.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Well, then, we'll suspend until we have it in our email boxes and so that Dr. Fry also can receive it—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Ms. O'Connell, I am the chair and will decide if we suspend.

Is there anyone else who would like to speak to the amendment while we distribute it?

Go ahead, Ms. Damoff.

An hon. member: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): My apologies. Ms. O'Connell—

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): I'm confused here. Are we suspended while we get it or are we speaking to the amendment?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): We are speaking to the amendment while we wait to receive it. If you would like—

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I have a point of order.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Go ahead, Ms. O'Connell.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: That is not the practice of this committee.

We always suspend until we can receive amendments in writing in both official languages.

If you're choosing to ignore the official languages of this committee, that seems to be a pattern with the Conservative Party, but that is the practice of this committee.

We would like both official languages in writing and to not continue until we receive those amendments.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): On the four different committees I have been on, there are times when that is adhered to and times when it is not. We will ensure there's no vote on it until everyone receives it, but if others would like to speak to the motion, we will continue to speak. I will ensure there is not a vote until everyone has had a chance to review it. When the clerk sends it out, we will suspend momentarily for the review.

It doesn't look like anyone wants to speak anyway, so if we could, we're going to make sure everyone is fine to not speak to the amendment at this point until it is received.

I'm getting a nod from Ms. Michaud.

We will suspend for a few minutes until everyone receives it.

• (1710) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1715)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): We have received it in both official languages.

Are there any comments?

I have Ms. Damoff.

Hon. Hedy Fry: I have not received it in either official language.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Ms. Fry, the clerk is going to send it to you now.

Hon. Hedy Fry: I am not a P9, for the clerk's information. I'm an M1.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, Ms. Fry.

Go ahead, Ms. Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thanks, Chair.

It's a question mostly for my colleague who has moved the amendment that we're speaking to because, again, it's just in the preamble.

Quite frankly, I was shocked at the testimony we've heard so far on the India study. I think the last meeting was probably one of the most difficult meetings I've had to listen to when we had one of the witnesses talk about his experience.

I don't like limiting. I don't remember what we agreed to on India. I think it was six meetings, but we may find at the end of those six meetings that there's still more information that we want to hear. In fact, it was your party that brought a motion to set up a whole new committee on it.

If we pass this motion, we're going to be limited because we've only agreed to do a study of six meetings. How, if the committee chooses to, are we going to extend either the Russia or the India study if we pass this motion?

It's a concern I have about what we're doing. I just would like some clarity on that because it seems like we're committing.... You've said that once we finish the study on India.... Right now, fin-

ishing the study on India is actually six meetings, so it doesn't give us flexibility if we choose to extend either or both of these studies.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Mr. MacGregor, go ahead.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: I can answer Ms. Damoff's questions. Those are fair points.

I do believe that the motion I brought forward that started the investigation into India's interference in Canada stated "no fewer than six meetings", so it's open, and my amendment to the motion brought forward by Mr. Motz simply uses the word "concluded". It's totally up to this committee as to when we feel it's concluded. I agree with you. There may be more witnesses that we want to hear from. We always have the ability to extend our meetings for that, but I do think there are other things this committee needs to look at.

Foreign interference is absolutely important, which is why I have prioritized both the Russian study and the Indian study. I would disagree. It's not part of the preamble. Everything after the word "that" is part of the actual motion, so if we adopt this, that's not a preamble; it's actually a directive that we have to complete these two before we move on to everything else.

I am putting priority on those through the amendment. I do agree with you that they should have priority, and I will support that. I also cannot ignore the fact that, in many small communities right across Canada, there are serious concerns about mental health and its intersection with public safety. That's why I would also like to see us, in a motion, commit to studying those at some point in the future.

I'll leave it at that, Madam Chair.

• (1720)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, Mr. MacGregor.

Ms. Michaud.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I don't see a problem with this motion.

Indeed, as Mr. MacGregor just said, there is no indication that a specific number of meetings would be set for the India interference study. We haven't had any projections on the schedule of the committee's work for the last few months, so I think it's entirely reasonable to include it in a motion to ensure that we can undertake the studies proposed by the motions we passed previously.

However, I see that the clock is ticking. The second hour of that meeting was supposed to be for the study of the draft report on auto theft. If we don't get there because we're debating this motion, I might move that we add to the motion that the report must be completed before we start the other studies. However, if everyone agrees to adopt the motion quickly, I'm perfectly prepared to adopt it as is so that we can move on to the study of the draft report on car thefts.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, Ms. Michaud.

Dr. Fry.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I had my hand up.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): I did not see your hand. I apologize. I'll go to you next.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Sorry, I don't want to interfere, but I know that the rules would say that, basically, if this motion...and I know the chair ruled on it. This motion just uses Russia in the preamble. It is about two different things, and it should be given 48 hours' notice in both official languages before it is discussed by the committee.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, Ms. Fry.

Go ahead, Ms. O'Connell.

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

Well, it's incredibly disappointing. I understand that the amendments help make this motion a little better. We already acknowledged that there are serious issues and concerns around whether or not...and Dr. Fry also talked about the procedural elements of this. However, it's fine if the Conservatives want to take the chair today and completely shut down the ability to continue our study on India and to limit our study on Russia. I mean, it fits within the Conservatives' approach.

We had, as a committee, by majority vote determined our next steps, which was Mr. MacGregor's motion on foreign interference by India. We are just getting into some of that testimony.

The Russian study, the testimony we just heard today—with really compelling information, I think, about journalism and how journalists are being targeted—before we even concluded the full hour of that, we had Conservatives reprogramming the plan to try to avoid continuing that testimony or that study.

When it comes to the amendment itself, while I recognize Mr. MacGregor's attempts to, again, at least include it, I think the fact that the first version didn't make any mention of our studies around India should be very concerning. We saw that Conservatives, during our study on foreign interference by India, did not ask questions about India's involvement—

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

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Go ahead, Mr. Lloyd.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I just want to clarify. This committee had already agreed to the meetings about India, so it was viewed as needlessly repetitive to include that in there because we were going to be conducting these meetings on India. However, we did support

the friendly amendment brought forward by Mr. MacGregor, and we have no problems with continuing that study.

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

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): That is up to me, Ms. O'Connell.

Ms. O'Connell, you may resume your time to speak.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you.

We can clearly see how this is going to go. The committee can be just points of order and will now just be debate because they don't like my calling out the fact that Conservatives didn't ask about India's involvement, which was outlined by community members through testimony and the RCMP press conference, and instead, actually, it was Mr. Motz who asked about criminals in India, which seemed to be of higher importance than what Canadians were feeling in this country.

To add it as an amendment to this motion does a real disservice to the very compelling testimony we heard. It feels like a slapped-on saving face for a motion that, clearly, was drawn up by Conservatives who don't want to talk about India interfering with our democratic institutions and the allegations around violence in our communities being organized, deeply, with organized crime from India.

I don't think the fact that it was left out of this motion is a mistake. The fact that Conservatives would like to move away from that study is not surprising, given how—

• (1725)

Mr. Glen Motz: I have a point of order, Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Go ahead, Mr. Motz.

Mr. Glen Motz: Chair, I think there needs to be a limit on the amount of patently false information that an individual can give at any committee, and what we're hearing spewed at this current moment is certainly patently false.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: It wasn't a point of order.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Mr. Motz, thank you, but let's make sure that we are being specific with our complaints. Thank you.

Hon. Hedy Fry: My hand is up, Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Yes. Ms. O'Connell is still speaking, Ms. Fry, but I have you on the list after Mr. Chahal.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you.

Go ahead, Ms. O'Connell.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you.

Again, if we had rules on misinformation being spread by the Conservative Party, we would never be able to conduct any meetings. It's more of an uncomfortable situation. I think they also made the mistake of hoping to do this motion in camera but unfortunately forgot that we were still in public. Now Canadians are going to see that they put forward a motion without any mention of our study on foreign interference by India. It was Mr. MacGregor's amendment that at least acknowledged that, which I'm speaking to right now. However, the fact that this motion came prepared without mention of it should send shockwaves to our community, to the Sikh community, to several other communities that have been raising alarm bells about the violence that they have experienced.

Again, to see Conservatives put forward a motion completely ignoring the very damning testimony that we heard and the very concerning testimony.... Something that moved me was Mr. Moninder Singh's testimony in which he spoke about the fact that there were threats of violence made towards him and his family, and that, to him, security almost became difficult to imagine and understand anymore because of how serious these threats were.

The thought that you have to think about.... He mentioned being around other people, including us in this room, and what that meant to their safety and security, people who weren't even involved in some of the allegations and the things that he was being targeted for. The fact that he had to worry about his own personal safety in even coming in person to the public safety and national security committee, and then the suggestion here today was to move away from that study, to ignore those concerns....

Mr. Motz is shaking his head no, but the motion presented had no mention of India and foreign interference and the testimony we heard. Frankly, I feel that the testimony we heard was just getting started. We had just heard from our public safety and national security advisers. We had a few community members. I've mentioned already one, Mr. Moninder Singh, and there were others. However, we were really just getting started.

To program away from that, I find that deeply concerning. I know of community members myself, but certainly I think my colleagues from the GTA, Vancouver and elsewhere in British Columbia are seeing that first hand and have probably heard from their communities of the very real threats. Conservatives in the House often raise the issue of extortion, but they don't raise the issues and allegations laid out by the RCMP around extortion being used as a form of foreign interference by the Modi government and that it's been linked to organized crime. However, there's no mention of any of that at the public safety and national security committee until Mr. MacGregor brought forward this amendment.

I think we all should be deeply, deeply worried that Conservative members could hear that testimony and say that that's not enough and that we should move on. It makes me wonder because we also heard testimony, I think, from every single witness who was asked whether the Leader of the Opposition should receive his security clearance so that he can properly get the full briefing and the scope of the information around the foreign interference of India and the attempts against our democracy. Every single witness said yes—every single witness—so it shouldn't really be a surprise to anyone that the Conservatives now bring forward a motion completely ignoring that testimony.

• (1730)

There have been questions raised in the media around the Conservative—

Mr. Doug Shipley: On a point of order, Chair, I want to point out that obviously, there's a filibuster going on right now to prevent this committee from doing any work and studying some very serious issues that we're all discussing around this country right now. I think that's a shame on behalf of the Liberals.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, Mr. Shipley. That is not a point of order.

We will go to Ms. O'Connell.

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

I won't apologize for standing up for our communities, which have been threatened with violence. Conservatives want to change the channel.

They moved a motion. They want to fight with me now because—

Mr. Dane Lloyd: On a point of order, picking up on something that Ms. O'Connell said, she said there's no mention of India in the motion. I'm a bit confused because there is. The motion talks about India.

Can the chair clarify for the committee that we are talking about India in this motion?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): It's a point of clarification. It does refer to India. Technically, you are correct, Mr. Lloyd.

Ms. O'Connell, go ahead.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: The amendment brought forward by Mr. MacGregor prioritized—

Mr. Dane Lloyd: It was opposed by you guys. Why did you oppose the inclusion of India?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: We have not voted, have we?

Mr. Doug Shipley: Let's get to it.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Of course the Conservatives would like to get to that.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: They don't want the vote to include it.

Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Madam Chair—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Give me just a moment, please.

Committee members, talk through the chair, please. Thank you.

On a point of order, I have Mr. Chahal.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you, Madam Chair.

My colleague Ms. O'Connell was trying to give a speech. I find it quite disrespectful that a number of colleagues turned on their mics at the same time. It's hard for the interpreters to interpret when a number of members are speaking.

I would just ask that one member speak at a time so the member can be heard. Members can express their points of order individually if required.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, Mr. Chahal. It is an important suggestion, but I don't believe that's a point of order either.

Ms. O'Connell, go ahead.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you.

Like I said, I'm not surprised. It's going to continue to happen. I'm going to be interrupted quite a lot because that was the intention of the original motion. It's not for the fact that Mr. MacGregor moved an amendment. The original motion made no mention of our study on foreign interference in India.

I believe Mr. MacGregor is very sincere in wanting to continue that study. Unfortunately, the Conservatives have brought forward a motion with zero mention of it. They then want to say that they care too, until the writing is here in front of us in black and white. Their intentions are very clear.

It is a huge disservice to the testimony we've heard, along with the serious nature of the allegations. The fact is that the Conservatives have yet to ask a question about the allegations of India's involvement in extortion, a murder and other violence, while undermining our democratic institutions by purporting disinformation and misinformation. The Conservatives have yet to ask a single question in this study, so it should be of no surprise to any Canadian that they would like to program away from this.

The other component, which I was speaking to before I was interrupted, again, shouldn't be any surprise. The fact is that witness after witness actually confirmed what I think we all knew and felt, which is that if a leader of an opposition party wants to be prime minister one day and wants to stand up for the safety and security of Canadians, they should also want to get security clearance so they can be properly briefed. I think we had CSIS and others confirm that in order to get a proper briefing on the full extent of the foreign interference by the Indian government, security clearance was the best way to get it.

It's incredibly cynical of politics and politicians that as soon as the Conservatives start being criticized, instead of diving into these allegations, they want to change the channel, change the subject. Then they raise points of order suggesting a filibuster.

Again, I am not going to apologize for standing up for our communities.

I think Conservatives should be made to feel very uncomfortable for their actions today, and I'm sure their constituents will let them know, but that's on them.

An hon. member: Point of order.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: There we go.

• (1735)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Mr. Shipley, go ahead.

Mr. Doug Shipley: Madam Chair, I have a quick point of order.

I'm very, very comfortable here today.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, Mr. Shipley.

Ms. O'Connell, are you done, or do you want me to go to Mr. Chahal, who is next?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: That's great. I'm not done.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): That's why I'm asking you, Ms. O'Connell.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: That's not a problem. They can keep interrupting.

Again, we will continue to speak and stand up for our communities because this is what's deeply important. We've just started that testimony. Given the fact of Mr. MacGregor's amendment, the Conservatives have shown very clearly to all Canadians their intentions. I think that was an accident. I think they meant to do this in camera, but unfortunately they've been able to show Canadians just exactly who they want to stand up for.

I will stop here and allow my other colleagues to speak, but I'd like to be added to the list on the amendment.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, Ms. O'Connell.

Mr. Chahal.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have a few questions that came to mind right away when this motion was dropped by my Conservative colleagues. The first thought was why we would want to avoid having this important conversation that this committee has been studying. For me and my community members in Calgary Skyview, right now this is the most important issue affecting them, their families, their lives, their safety and their well-being.

I find it quite insulting after we heard the testimony the other day at this committee, which I had the opportunity to sub in on. We heard Mr. Moninder Singh's really impactful testimony. We also heard from Balpreet Singh from the World Sikh Organization. They both provided testimony that members of this committee should take to heart.

I'm glad Mr. MacGregor brought in the amendment to clarify what I think the Conservatives were trying to do to get away from studying foreign interference in our elections. Even the study today, in which Mr. Pugliese talked about the impact on him of the disinformation or the attempts to discredit his work to bring accountability and transparency to the Canadian public, was an important conversation on the impact of Russian disinformation.

However, to just skip over, in this motion, prior to the amendment the Conservatives brought forward, and not include India.... In the study that the public safety committee is doing on the electoral interference and criminal activities in Canada by the agents of the Government of India, it's my understanding we've only had two of six meetings. For Conservative members to avoid studying that important issue is quite insulting to Indo Canadians, South Asians of Indian descent or those from the South Asian subcontinent who have experienced foreign interference not just over the last number of weeks but for decades.

Conservative members must know that we, as members of the Sikh community, faced a Sikh genocide that occurred 40 years ago. This was an important conversation that we had last evening about men being murdered and women being raped, killed and burned alive. Our community lived these horrific actions that took place 40 years ago, which are still something members of the community are asking to get justice for.

I was at an event last night with Mr. Singh, the leader of the NDP, who very clearly stated how he intends to bring this forward to the House of Commons. Personally, as a member of the Sikh community, I stated that I think this is something that should be brought forward and that members of our Parliament should consider supporting, and I hope they unanimously do support it once we see the motion he brings forward in the House of Commons.

However, the intent of it is extremely important and it directly ties into the study we are conducting on electoral interference and criminal activities in Canada by the agents of the Government of India. At the last committee meeting I sat in on, I was astonished that Conservative members could not even utter those words and that they focused on duties to warn of potentially dangerous situations. That is what I heard. They did not talk about the impact on communities—on South Asian communities—here in Canada, and they did not utter one question to any of our witnesses about the impact of that foreign interference on them.

I'm proud to say my colleagues from all other parties, the Bloc, the NDP and the Liberal Party, did ask those tough questions and did hear the testimony provided.

● (1740)

I heard last night that Mr. Genuis stated at the World Sikh Organization event how the Conservative Party is taking this issue very seriously. If folks were there, they would have seen the crowd and its response to those comments.

Members of the community are asking why the Conservative leader, Mr. Poilievre, will not get a security clearance. Why has he avoided getting a security clearance? The Conservative member said publicly last night that they take the issue of Indian interference in Canada seriously, and today we see the complete opposite. We see Conservative members trying to find a clever way, which wasn't very clever in my opinion, of trying to avoid studying one of the most important studies, I would say, that this committee is studying.

I say "one of" because of the study on auto theft, which I think we're in the process of concluding. I know that this is a very important study for the folks in the GTA. I know that members in the

GTA want that study completed so the report can be brought back to the House. It is an issue that I hear about from many friends and family members who live in the GTA, in terms of the importance of how to deal with auto theft.

Also, then, the issue we've seen this committee study as to Russian election interference and disinformation is also a very important study. For me personally, we need to take election interference seriously, foreign interference in our elections. If members of the Conservative Party want to avoid it, they need to be clear on why they want to avoid studying foreign interference in Canadian elections. Is it what was stated last meeting? For members from the Conservative Party who weren't here on that day, our witnesses clearly said that they have concerns about interference in the nomination races of the Conservative Party of Canada and in the leadership campaign. Those are the words of the witnesses who attended and provided important testimony at our last meeting.

The impact on community members and communities was also raised at the last meeting. The suspension of security agreements was a concern brought forward. I think we really need to dive a bit deeper at this committee on how information is shared between our government and other governments. One of the members at the last meeting mentioned that they want a public inquiry into the assassination of Bhai Hardeep Singh Nijjar. For folks who don't know, that was the president of the Surrey gurdwara who was assassinated on the gurdwara premises last year.

Recently, the RCMP brought forward information showing that they've arrested a number of individuals, but also showing that the Government of India has had interference and has targeted many other Canadians, one being the witness who came to testify at this committee the other day. Why do Conservative members not want to have a conversation and not hear from witnesses who will shed light on what's happening here in Canada on how Canadians are being targeted? This targeting is not something that has just started happening over the last few weeks or in the last year or the last few years. This has been going on for decades.

This is very important. One of the members there, Mr. Balpreet Singh did mention this, and Mr. Moninder Singh mentioned this as well: anti-Sikh hate and what's occurring in Canada today with members of the Sikh community being targeted or labelled as terrorists.

● (1745)

A Conservative MP called me a terrorist because I'm from the Sikh community. Maybe it was because I support Calgarians who are asking for justice when their families are being killed in Gaza. Yes, I support those family members and those communities; of course I do, but to target an individual...that's me as a member of Parliament who's being targeted by Mr. Majumdar. I find that shocking. Is that individual targeting other members of communities as well and calling them terrorists? That is promoting disinformation and misinformation, but that's also promoting hate toward members of our community. As a member of the Sikh community, I find that quite offensive.

The issue of anti-Sikh hate is one example I can share from my own perspective, but when community members are threatened over going to their place of worship, as we've seen over the last number of days, whether you're from the Sikh community or the Hindu community, there is fear within those communities.

For Conservative members to try to cover this up by not doing the study is shameful. I would love to hear from the leader of the Conservative Party about why he has asked members of this committee to cover this up and why he won't get his security clearance. Why does he want to cover up this study that's being done here at this committee? It's the job of this committee to bring forward studies, and this study was agreed upon to study the impacts, as this committee has done, of electoral interference and criminal activities in Canada by the agents of the Government of India.

Mr. Balpreet Singh left me some important information from the event I attended. I want to go into the importance of why the World Sikh Organization is one advocacy organization that has wanted to have a further conversation and provide information at this committee. I'm lucky that I have this information leaflet that really goes into detail about their advocacy efforts and why this disinformation campaign and the promotion by foreign governments of anti-Sikh rhetoric and hate is something we have to combat. Canadians, and I think maybe even with our study that we're having right now, should really seriously look into the impact on the members of the Sikh community.

There are a number of issues that come to mind. I could look in here and bring forward the RCMP case of the freedom to wear a dastar. Many of you may not know what a dastar is. It's a turban. My colleague Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer, who is next to me, proudly wears his dastar. In the 1990s, the first member of the RCMP to wear a dastar was Baltej Singh Dhillon.

Let me tell you, at that time, there was a big debate across this country on whether Mr. Dhillon should be allowed to wear his dastar in the RCMP. I can tell you who was trying to make sure he could not wear his dastar: members of the Conservative Party and the Reform movement. They brought forward petitions to ensure the member could not wear a turban in the RCMP.

I think, for committee members, it's important to know that our former prime minister, Mr. Harper, wrote a letter asking Canadians that—

● (1750)

Mr. Dane Lloyd: On a point of order, Madam Chair, I just want to remind the committee that the House had the opportunity to set up a special committee on India so that we could discuss these important issues, and it was the Liberals who opposed that happening.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, Mr. Lloyd.

Mr. Chahal, go ahead.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Yes, Mr. Lloyd. It wasn't actually the reason why, I think, we are studying it here at this committee, and if you want to avoid having the conversation of Mr. Harper's involvement—

Mr. Dane Lloyd: We could have had a whole committee on this.

Ms. Pam Damoff:—publicly stating that he opposed a member of the Sikh community wearing the dastar in the RCMP. That's a conversation we should have. That's how hate toward the Sikh community is brought forward. I can tell you that members of the community were threatened for wearing turbans at that time. I can tell you that a member of the Conservative Party brought forward a petition which many Canadians signed, unfortunately. That's our history. Many Canadians signed and opposed a member wearing a turban in the RCMP.

I'm proud to say that the RCMP allowed the member to wear it. If you go to the RCMP Heritage Centre in Regina, you will have the opportunity to see that dastar showcased and the uniform of Mr. Baltej Singh Dhillon there.

Why did members of the Conservative Party not want that individual to wear the dastar?

Mr. Dane Lloyd: On a point of order, Madam Chair, I just want it on the record that in 1990 it was a Conservative government that lifted the ban on turbans for the RCMP.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, Mr. Lloyd. That's not a point of order.

Go ahead, Mr. Chahal.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I would ask Mr. Lloyd why Mr. Harper publicly stated that he was against that. I would ask other members to do the same. I would ask why Mr. Poilievre was a part of the Reform Party, which was actively engaging to target the individual from being a member of the RCMP. Why were members wearing pins that crossed out a member of the Sikh community who had a turban on? They were proudly wearing pins with a line through them.

We think about the importance of the turban for that member but also the history of Sikhs fighting for this nation, fighting in World War I and World War II wearing a turban, fighting on the front lines, putting their lives at risk for freedom, for freedom of the Commonwealth, for freedom for them to be able to practise their faith.

● (1755)

Mr. Dane Lloyd: On a point of order, Madam Chair, I just want to say that I'm very proud that my colleague Tim Uppal, a member from Edmonton, was the first turbaned Sikh to sit in a cabinet in Canada, and it was under Stephen Harper.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, Mr. Lloyd.

I recognize that emotions are running a bit high.

Colleagues, this is a sensitive topic. Obviously it's been a number of weeks since our last constituency break. Let's please take a breath, and we will resume.

Go ahead, Ms. Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Chair, it's not a point of order. I have a question.

Until what time do we have resources?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): We are checking, but it sounds, from the response other committees are getting, like a hard stop at six.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): That was not a point of order; you're correct. It was a point of clarification, which is sometimes allowed.

Mr. Chahal, please resume your debate.

Ms. Pam Damoff: As I speak with members of my community, particularly over the next number of days as we honour our veterans.... For me, as a member of the Sikh community, whose members have fought for freedom in northern India and in India to be able to practice their religion and have freedom of speech.... Many of them fought for the Commonwealth in World War I and World War II to have that ability and to proudly come to this nation and be Canadian citizens. They have had the opportunity to fight for this nation and also to serve, whether it's as members Parliament, as members of the police services across the country or as members of our armed forces, and proudly do so while wearing their turbans.

It's important to also acknowledge, when I think about the important conversation we had last night and reflect with many community members, that many of the concerns that are arising today with misinformation and disinformation.... That's why the Russian misinformation and disinformation study that's occurring in this committee, along with the study on electoral interference and criminal activity in Canada by the agents of the government of India.... An important part of what we have not studied yet and have not gotten into is exactly that. Who is pushing this information into the Canadian public to incite violence? Is it coming from domestic sources or is it coming from international sources?

I've been watching the news over the last number of days and I've been on social media. It's concerning for me when I see members of the Sikh community or the Hindu community having concerns about going to their place of worship. That is something we need to think about on this committee. It's about how they are getting information or how other members of the community are being sent to target community members and prevent them from being able to go to their place of worship.

I remember, as a child in Calgary, when the Sikh Society of Calgary, the first gurdwara, was built in 1978. I was three years old. Over the years afterward, that Sikh temple was targeted regularly.

Who was it targeted by at that time? There was targeting by members of our society who felt that people who looked a little different, like my parents and many of my relatives, were not welcome, unfortunately. The Sikh temple in southwest Calgary was targeted a number of times.

When I was a child, my dad would go there and sleep overnight with many others to protect our place of worship. In northeast Calgary, when the Dashmesh Culture Centre in my constituency was being built, it was also targeted on numerous occasions. What the Sikh communities tried to do over the years was help Canadians who live in our city understand who we are as Sikh Canadians and build interfaith bridges with other communities.

I have fond memories of collaboration that we've had with the Jewish community. I have fond memories of the collaboration that the Sikh community had with the Hindu community in Calgary. I get to represent, I would say, the most diverse riding in the country in Calgary Skyview. I'd like to challenge anybody who thinks otherwise.

The important collaboration, when we saw what happened—

• (1800)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Mr. Chahal, I'm sorry. Could you just wrap up your last thought? Then we'll move on.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I still have lots of thoughts.

I want to talk about the collaboration with the Sikh and Muslim communities.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): I appreciate that. I just wanted to provide you a bit of a courtesy rather than cutting you off.

Unfortunately, we are way over time and out of resources, so at this point I will suspend, and we will resume this discussion on the Tuesday when we return from break.

The meeting is suspended.

[*The meeting was suspended at 6:05 p.m., Thursday, November 7*]

[*The meeting resumed at 11:04 a.m., Tuesday, November 19*]

• (29900)

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Simon Larouche): Good morning. I call this meeting to order.

[*Translation*]

I see a quorum.

I need to inform committee members that the chair has resigned. We must now proceed to the election of a new chair.

As clerk of the committee, I can only receive motions for the election of the chair. The clerk cannot receive other types of motions and cannot entertain points of order. Also, I can't participate in the debates.

• (29905)

[*English*]

We can now proceed to the election of the chair.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the chair must be a member of the government.

I'm now ready to receive motions for the chair.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I move that the chair be Iqwinder Gaheer.

[*Translation*]

The Clerk: It has been moved by Jennifer O'Connell that Iqwinder Gaheer be elected as chair of the committee.

[English]

Are there other motions?

[Translation]

It doesn't look like it.

[English]

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Mr. Gaheer the duly elected chair of the committee.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Clerk: I invite him to come to the chair.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Hi, everyone.

I hope the committee resumes as blissfully as my election to chair, but I would like to ask for a brief pause so I can consult the clerk as to the next steps.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: We should just move right into the meeting.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Chair, you are the chair, so it's up to you.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting 129, part 2, of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

We are resuming our meeting of Thursday, November 7, 2024.

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

Before we begin, I'd like to ask all in-person participants to read the guidelines written on the updated cards on the table. These measures are in place to help prevent audio and feedback incidents and to protect the health and safety of all participants, including the interpreters. You will also notice a QR code on the card, which links to a short awareness video.

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

I know there is a 106(4) motion, but we are going to start with resuming debate on the amendment by Mr. MacGregor to the motion by Mr. Motz which was moved on November 7.

I recognize Ms. Dancho.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you.

I have a point of order on a procedural matter that I'd just like you to confirm, Chair.

We are continuing after the suspension, but we have that 106(4) request, as you've outlined. It is my understanding that, once those issues of the matters in the suspension are resolved, we would go into the 106(4) matter, which is, of course, about the ISIS terrorist

plot to bomb Parliament Hill and a Jewish gathering that had MPs and others there. Of course, we sent a letter to the chair.

Can you just confirm that, if the matter at hand is resolved and the Liberals end the filibuster, we would go into the 106(4) if we deal with that motion first?

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: We are going to resume debate on the amendment by Mr. MacGregor to the motion that was brought forward by Mr. Motz on November 7, and then we will move to the Standing Order 106(4) matter after that debate.

● (29910)

Ms. Pam Damoff: I'd like to be added to the speaking list, sir.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Sure.

When we suspended the last time, Mr. Chahal had the floor, so he will be speaking first.

Ms. Dancho, you will be next.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I have a point of order, Chair.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: I recognize Ms. Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you.

My hand was up before Ms. Dancho raised her point of order and asked to speak.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Do you have a point of order?

Ms. Pam Damoff: It's up right now.

I should be next on the speaking order, after Mr. Chahal. My hand was up as soon as you took the chair.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: I apologize, Ms. Damoff. I'll keep better track of the screen in front of me.

I did see Ms. Dancho's hand first, so I'll list her first.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Except, it was up... I can't help that the clerk or you didn't see it, but I had it up long before she raised her point of order, Chair.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: You can challenge the ruling of the chair, but I've been told by the clerk that there is no challenge to the speaking list, that it is my decision.

I apologize that I did not see the screen. There's a chance that your hand was up before Ms. Dancho's, but the list so far is Mr. Chahal resuming, then Ms. Dancho, then Ms. Damoff and then Ms. O'Connell.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Chair, congratulations, on becoming chair of this committee.

Before I begin, perhaps the clerk could you provide a recap.

We did have a motion that was brought to the floor by Mr. Motz. We had a subsequent amendment brought forward by Mr. MacGregor. I see there are a few other members who have joined us today, who may not have been present on November 7, when the meeting was suspended.

I think it would be beneficial for all committee members to have a clear understanding of where we are in debate. I have an understanding of where we are, but I think just for clarity, as members raise their hands, they'll be able to appropriately debate the amendment we're on.

I'm wondering if the clerk could provide a quick update on the original motion brought forward by Mr. Motz and then the amendment that was placed by Mr. MacGregor.

The Clerk: The original motion reads:

That once the committee has conducted eight meetings on the study on Russian interference and disinformation campaigns in Canada, the committee proceed to the following matters in order:

1. The committee concurrently undertake, allotting alternating meetings of not fewer than six meetings each, its agreed-upon study on the rise in violent crime and a study examining how addressing gaps in community mental health and substance use health supports, including preventative and early intervention services can improve public safety in Canada; that both the Minister of Public Safety and Minister of Mental Health and Addictions be invited to testify separately for one hour each in this study; that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House; and that pursuant to Standing Order 109, the government table a comprehensive response to the report.

2. The committee invite the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Immigration to appear before the committee as soon as possible pursuant to the motion passed on September 19, 2024.

The amendment was to the first part of the motion and reads:

That, once the committee has conducted both the study on Russian interference and disinformation campaigns in Canada and the study on electoral interference and criminal activities in Canada by agents of the Government of India, the committee proceed to the following matters in order:

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: I'm sorry. I have a point of order.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: What is your point of order, Mr. MacGregor?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Clerk, it was "concluded", not "conducted". That was the key word there.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Chair, I have a question on clarity for the clerk.

As he was reading that, I heard "six meetings each," and then Mr. MacGregor's motion was when they're concluded.

Is the motion that the Russia and India studies be six meetings each? Is that what's before us? I'm a little confused.

● (29915)

The Clerk: The original motion says, "That once the committee has conducted eight meetings". This part is removed by the amendment by Mr. MacGregor. The six meetings reference is just in the first part, which is, "The committee concurrently undertake allotting alternating meetings of not fewer than six meetings each".

Ms. Pam Damoff: Okay.

The Clerk: That's the same six meetings in the original motion.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Is his amendment for eight meetings for Russia and eight meetings for India, or simply when they're concluded?

The Clerk: Yes, it's to take out any reference to a number of meetings.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Okay, thanks.

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

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Mr. Lloyd, go ahead on a point of order.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I'm wondering, as I believe Mr. Chahal has given up the floor, shouldn't we move to the next speaker, Mr. Chair?

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: No, he hasn't given up the floor.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: He's given it up. There have been three speakers since he's given it up.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: There have been points of order, but Mr. Chahal still has the floor, and I think he's eager to speak, actually.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I am.

Thank you, Mr. Chair and Mr. Clerk, for providing this committee a brief update on where we're at. That's where I'll begin today.

I came to the meeting on November 7. It was a very interesting meeting on Russian disinformation, which was being studied by this committee. I understand this committee has a significant amount of work under way. I previously discussed the auto theft report, which I know is also in the queue to be worked upon. I know that's a critical piece of work for members in the GTA, but also those all across Canada. It's critical that that work, that report, be finished, be reviewed, so this committee can also submit that to the House of Commons, and make important recommendations to deal with this significant issue.

I'm somewhat shocked that the Conservatives want to avoid doing that work, but what I'm really shocked about, upon sitting in this meeting, is when I saw my colleague from across, Mr. Motz, bring forward a programming motion that tried to get rid of the study on India. I'm a member of the Sikh community. I'm a proud, born and raised, Sikh Canadian. For me to see this behaviour from members across, I was flabbergasted. That's why I'm here today, so that I continue to hear from members, but also have this important debate.

I'm glad Mr. MacGregor brought in an amendment to reinsert the India study as a priority, as well as the study on Russian disinformation. Our witnesses provided important testimony on November 7. The one journalist from the Ottawa Citizen and the other individual who represented journalists from across Canada voiced their concerns on how Conservative members and former Conservative members have targeted them, and particularly that individual from the Ottawa Citizen on his reporting over the years.

I think that study on Russian disinformation is extremely important. We know that disinformation is conducted through various forms. I haven't had the opportunity to sit through a number of the meetings and important testimony that's been provided with the Russian disinformation study that this committee has brought forward, but that day I was alarmed by some of the tactics used with Russian disinformation, and the impact on public safety and on national security across Canada.

The Russian interference and disinformation campaigns which this committee is studying is extremely important work that we must finish, and then we need to continue on with the work of the study of electoral interference and criminal activities in Canada by agents of the Government of India.

It's my understanding—and Mr. Clerk, you can advise me if I'm wrong—that we have conducted two meetings of that study, and there are several meetings to go.

Over the last constituency week, I had the opportunity on Sunday and last Friday.... Last Friday was, in the Sikh faith, a very important day. It was the 554th anniversary of the birth of Guru Nanak Dev Ji. Members in the Sikh community, when I was at the Dashmesh Cultural Centre last Friday, raised this important question. They said, "With what we've seen occur recently with the murder of Bhai Hardeep Singh Nijar, what is the government doing? What is Parliament doing?" I proudly said, as the member for Calgary Skyview, that we were conducting a study at the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security on this very issue, supported by colleagues.

● (29920)

I also had to tell them that members of the Conservative Party have tried, once again, to avoid having this important conversation. They asked why the Conservatives would want to avoid having a conversation of public safety issues in Canada about the targeting of members of our community. They are Canadians.

When a Canadian citizen on Canadian soil at the Surrey gurdwara was murdered.... Think of it. Many of you go to your faith community, a place of worship that's important for you. Maybe it's where you've gone your whole life to go to religious school or language school with your siblings, with your parents, with your children, with your grandparents. At that same place, the president of the Sikh gurdwara was assassinated. What fear does that put into people? What fear does that put into those children? What about the trauma?

I've heard fear expressed by my constituents. I've received hundreds of emails expressing that people are scared. They are worried with these ongoing threats. We saw several weeks ago, as well, incidents in Brampton, where at the gurdwara in Malton there were threats of violence. We've seen in the streets of Brampton large protests on this very issue.

I told members of my community in Calgary last Friday.... I had the opportunity to speak from the stage at the Dashmesh Culture Centre as well. I had the opportunity to participate in an important radiothon with Red FM in Calgary, the Dashmesh Culture Centre and many communities, an interfaith event. A number of communi-

ties came together at the gurdwara to raise funds to build a permanent food bank at the Dashmesh Culture Centre.

That initiative is to ensure that Canadians in our community with concerns of food security have the opportunity to get culturally appropriate food, and to ensure that Calgarians in my part of the city and all Calgarians who have needs through some of the challenges and difficult times they face are able to have food for their families.

The biggest concern for those members was Indian interference in our country and the criminal activities that we've seen. We've heard issues of extortion. We've heard of electoral interference. Journalists have reported that, potentially, in Conservative party nomination races and also in the leadership race of the Conservative Party of Canada, there was electoral interference by foreign governments.

We need to make sure that we hear from witnesses as we move forward with the important testimony from community members, their concerns about our democracy being interfered with.

A concern that I'm hearing, as there are nominations happening for all various parties currently, is that there's ongoing potential interference in some Conservative Party races. Members are concerned that the impact of those will continue unless we have this important discussion and uncover it through testimony, and bring forward recommendations to protect our democracy and protect this important institution that protects Canadians.

● (29925)

I heard the important testimony from Mr. Moninder Singh and Balpreet Singh. I also heard from community members last week that they would like to speak at this committee. They asked when they could do so. I had to alert them once again that this study potentially, if the Conservatives have their way, may not continue because of the Conservatives' avoidance of these public safety concerns in Canada.

I do want to go back to Mr. Balpreet Singh and Moninder Singh. I did reference these important comments they made last week. One was that it was clearly identified by Mr. Moninder Singh that Conservative members will not ask a question on foreign interference and that their questions continue to focus on duties to warn and avoid directly dealing with the issue at hand. Mr. Moninder Singh brought forward four recommendations and concerns. I think this committee should take these recommendations quite seriously. I'm hoping to see them in the report.

The first was a suspension of security agreements. Public Safety Canada put out the "2018 Public Report on the Terrorism Threat to Canada", which had included Sikh-Khalistan extremism. I'm proud that the government at the time, in 2018, took steps to remove the targeting of members of the Sikh community, members who are in our nation speaking on their beliefs of what a democracy should look like and their beliefs in human rights protections but did not want to be singled out. Many of these community members are advocating for peaceful objection to interference by foreign states.

Mr. Moninder Singh provided a second recommendation requesting a public inquiry into the assassination of Hardeep Singh Nijjar. That's what I heard as well: There are a number of community members who are looking for that. That's why we need to hear further testimony from witnesses to see if that is something this committee and our Parliament should embark upon.

The third recommendation that Mr. Singh brought forward was prosecution of the conspirators, the folks who may have been involved in what's happened here in foreign interference in Canada. Other nations have taken various steps; maybe we can learn from some of those other countries how they look to prosecute individuals from foreign nations who have used similar techniques in targeting their citizens. What can Canada learn?

The fourth recommendation had to do with anti-Sikh hate. This is an important issue. This is what I'm going to actually spend a lot of my time on today, Mr. Chair. I will get into the details of the anti-Sikh hate we're seeing and how misinformation and disinformation campaigns and foreign interference have led to anti-Sikh hate across Canada. I would also mention, as a member of the Sikh community and as the member for Calgary Skyview, the anti-Muslim hate that I've seen in my constituency as well.

● (29930)

I have a large community of members of the Punjabi Sikh community and members of the Muslim community and have an opportunity to proudly represent one of the most diverse ridings in the country. I frequently attend the gurdwara, but I also frequently attend the masjids in my constituency to hear from community members, and also the mandirs. I'm embarking on making sure we can continue the harmony we have in our community in northeast Calgary to bring communities together and not further divide them.

Before I get into the concerns that our witnesses have on anti-Sikh hate, I do want to talk about what members raised to me last Friday at the Gurdwara Sahib Dashmesh Culture Centre, and last Sunday at the Sikh Society of Calgary, in southwest Calgary, where I attended the Gurdwara. They talked about security clearances, and asked why parliamentarians and leaders of political parties are not getting security clearances. Now, I informed them that all party leaders have or are embarking on getting their security clearance so they could see the information provided by our protective agencies—except one, and that's the Conservative Party of Canada, Mr. Pierre Poilievre, who has avoided getting a security clearance.

Naturally, folks would ask why. If you want to be a leader of a political party and you want to lead this nation moving forward, why would you avoid getting a security clearance? I asked them why they think one would avoid getting a security clearance. They said it's obvious: to avoid knowing the truth. I further probed and asked, "What truth? What do you think the member for Carleton, Mr. Pierre Poilievre, has to hide? What does he not want to know?" They said that it's obvious there would be information provided by our government security agencies that would implicate members of his party in foreign interference. I probed a bit further and said, "Do you believe there's foreign interference that's occurred in the Conservative Party?" Everybody I asked said yes.

I found it quite surprising, too, that members of my constituency pay such close attention to what's happening, and I'm proud that

they're invested in understanding what's happening in our government and in Parliament, that Mr. Poilievre's avoiding getting a security clearance, whereas other leaders such as Ms. May and Mr. Singh have acknowledged that they have reviewed...and Mr. Blanchet has proceeded in getting his security clearance so he could have the appropriate information to make decisions. That's why getting a security clearance is so important. If there's nothing to hide, Mr. Poilievre would get it. However, if he has something to hide or does not want to see the truth, then he would not get his security clearance.

Before getting back to the anti-Sikh hate concerns, I have one other item. At a recent event, the World Sikh Organization of Canada provided me with a pamphlet on the history of the Sikh community and the World Sikh Organization, which I'll reference in today's debate as well. However, at this event, Mr. Genuis, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, on Wednesday evening of last week—I believe it was November 6—clearly said that the Conservative Party is taking seriously threats to Canadians regarding foreign interference, and that their leader—he read—will continue to ensure the safety of Canadians, but will take this issue, and foreign interference and the threats to Canadians seriously. There's a transcript, if members want to see what he said that day.

● (29935)

If the member has publicly stated that and read a letter from Mr. Poilievre, why has the leader avoided getting a security clearance? Why is Mr. Genuis not here today to defend the statement he made that day to the Sikh community?

It is because he did two things. Either he was put up to read a statement on behalf of his leader that he did not believe. I don't want to use the word, because I think that might be unparliamentary to call somebody.... I will say that if he read a letter and he believes in it, he spoke his truth, so I'll take him at his word, but once again, he is not here. If he represents his party and leader and the Conservative members across, then they should know this issue of foreign interference, electoral interference and criminal activities in Canada by the agents of the Government of India is a serious issue, which he agreed with.

Let's talk about some of the issues and concerns I want to get to.

I know Mr. Singh raised this that day. Mr. Genuis did not talk about it, from what I recall. Mr. Singh said he intended to bring forward to our Parliament the Sikh genocide that occurred and the brutal assault on the Sri Darbar Sahib in June 1984. This is a time in our history of Sikhs globally and as Sikh Canadians when, every year, members of our community are retraumatized and are taken back to when men, women and children were murdered, burned alive and raped because of their faith, for being of the Sikh faith. Every year, we commemorate what occurred in 1984 globally here in Canada within our communities.

At the same time, in 1984, Sardar Gian Singh Sandhu was selected as the first national president of the World Sikh Organization so they could be a voice for the Sikh community in Canada. That organization has provided voices for the Sikh community, and they still do today. That was the event I had attended where they highlighted the important work they've done for over 40 years.

Members will ask me why that history has such an important resonance with community membership. Why is that history so important to this discussion today? I'm going to tell you why, and you will really want to pay attention to some of the reference points through history that I'm going to go through and tell members of this community.

Unfortunately, this is part of our history. Some of our political parties try to forget, or hope to forget, that some of our party leaders should provide public apologies about it. It's my understanding they have not, unless a Conservative member wants to tell me otherwise. I might be wrong, and I'm willing to accept if I am wrong.

● (29940)

In 1989, Stephen Harper, who is a former prime minister of this nation, was the Reform Party policy chief. He was a failed Reform Party candidate at the time and became the Reform Party policy chief.

For folks watching at home and for members across who do not remember, the Reform Party is essentially the Conservative Party of Canada today. They merged with the Progressive Conservative Party and formed the new Conservative Party of today.

In that same time period in 1990—and I have an article here that I'm going to reference—Baltej Singh Dhillon, who I referenced at our last meeting, wanted to become an RCMP officer. He was accepted into the RCMP, but he faced a choice after being accepted: serve his country or wear his turban. He wanted to serve his country like his forefathers had done, fighting for freedom and fighting for the Commonwealth while wearing their turbans on the front lines. On Remembrance Day, I had the opportunity to meet with many of our veterans and members from my community who have proudly served. For Mr. Dhillon to be faced with this choice of wearing his turban or serving his country, I can't imagine what he went through.

Why do I reference this? In this particular incident, the WSO intervened to support Mr. Dhillon and his ability to practice his religion and serve in the RCMP, because we know that religious freedom is protected under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

After multiple legal challenges, the Canadian Human Rights Commission and the Supreme Court of Canada upheld Mr. Dhillon's right to practice his faith and serve. He was a trailblazer for the Sikh community in Canada and for many other members of the Sikh faith who proudly wear their turbans not only in the RCMP but also in police services across the country. I see many proud police officers in the city of Calgary and in the Calgary Police Service proudly wearing their turbans while representing their service, keeping Canadians safe in the important and great work they do to protect us while putting their lives at risk every day.

Why did Mr. Harper at that time, as a Reform Party policy chief, embark on an anti-turban crusade against this individual? The Reform Party deemed allowing the right to wear a turban unnecessary and went so far as to pass a resolution at its 1989 convention banning such religious attire for the RCMP.

I did reference that, at the time, Mr. Stephen Harper was a defeated Reform Party candidate and was appointed as the Reform Party's policy chief. That targeted hate towards this member has led to numerous cases of anti-Sikh hate over the years.

You'll ask, "What numerous cases?" Well, I can tell you. Conservative MP Bobbie Sparrow brought forward a petition and protest in the city of Calgary—my city.

● (29945)

I remember this issue as a child in Calgary, when, one, you had the Reform Party, two, you had the Conservative Party, and this member, an elected member of the House of Commons, bringing forward and endorsing a petition rallying community members so that we don't allow members of the Sikh community to participate, to work, to provide for their families and to serve our country, a petition against, an anti-Sikh petition.

That petition, with the Reform Party's 1989 decision, caused a significant amount of hate during that time for members of the Sikh community. That's when the rhetoric began. I think this committee should continue to study this, because those were the seeds of hate. I'm not saying that was the start of that hate, but those are clear instances where leaders of political parties, members of Parliament and aspiring political leaders engaged in targeted hate towards Sikhs in Canada.

One would ask, what was Mr. Poilievre's role? I think that's something we should uncover. Was he a member of the Reform Party of Canada at the time? Yes, he was. It's my understanding that he was. What was his role? Was he a young Reformer? He was. I think it's in his bio.

If Conservative members want to tell me I'm wrong, I'm willing to hear their debate. They can engage if he has made comments denouncing Mr. Harper or the actions of the Reform conservative movement in targeting Sikh community members. I've never seen Mr. Poilievre make any apologies on his role, or Mr. Harper make any apologies on his role in targeting the Sikh community, but what was Mr. Poilievre's in 1989? Was he a youth leader in the Reform movement? Oh, he was. He was a University of Calgary proud reformer. I remember seeing him also with MP Shuv Majumdar, rallying the Reformers on their populist crusade targeting immigrants.

I remember. I was a student at the University of Calgary in the early 1990s. I remember. Their advocacy promoted me to step forward as well to fight racism and hate in this country.

I know members across the table are wondering where I'm going with this. I can tell you where I'm going. When Mr. Harper became the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, he resorted to, went back to, the old playbook. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, it was targeting the Sikh community. Well, he found a new target in the elections that came forward.

Now I'm going to tell members what exactly I'm referring to. There was an article in the paper, "Beware Stephen Harper's crusade against unfamiliar clothing". You might ask me, what was that about? That's an article from 2015. He targeted the Muslim community. Members may recall that Mr. Harper brought forward...was it the 2015 election? Well, let's see. He targeted Muslim women in Canada in 2015 with his niqab ban. He labelled and targeted all Muslim women with a niqab ban.

As a member of the Sikh community, I recall that in 2015. The first thing I thought was that this is Mr. Harper's attempt to resurrect his campaign of anti-Sikh hate and now has moved on to target the Muslim community.

● (29950)

I know many members of the Muslim community.

I see my colleague sitting next to me, MP Zahid, who proudly wears a hijab, and I thank her for doing so and for practising her faith.

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

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: I'll recognize Mr. Lloyd on his point of order.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I'll be very quick. Mr. Chahal asked what Mr. Poilievre was doing in 1989, and Mr. Poilievre was a 10-year-old.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Mr. Lloyd, that's not a point of order. That's a point of debate.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: He was a 10-year-old in 1989. I'm just clarifying for him. He asked a question. Mr. Poilievre was 10 years old at the time.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: That's not a point of order.

Continue, Mr. Chahal.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I'm glad Mr. Lloyd has brought that important information forward, which is not a point of order—a point of debate.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: It's a fact.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I would hope that he would continue to debate that when he gets the floor.

I would let Mr. Lloyd know that when Mr. Poilievre was at university he was involved in the Reform Party, which I did reference clearly, and for Mr. Harper in 1989, you may want to reference how old he was in 1989 and confirm—when you do have the floor, Mr. Lloyd—his role in targeting the Sikh community by bringing this motion forward. That's a question I ask you to note and to clearly take responsibility for now, for Mr. Harper's actions and Mr. Poilievre's silence on this issue. I'm waiting for an apology, as a member of the Sikh community, as a Canadian, from Mr. Harper and leaders of the Conservative Party.

I could move forward if they gave a sincere apology to Mr. Dhillon and to members of the Sikh community for their actions of that day. He may have been misinformed. He was misinformed. He may have been misguided, but a politically motivated attack to win a few extra votes at the expense of targeting Sikh community members and, in 2015, targeting Muslim community members...? That's something we need to continue to think about as we move forward.

Now, how does that tie into anti-Sikh hate? Well, I talked about the 40 years since 1984. I've talked about incidents, particular incidents over the years, that contribute to hate towards community members, but continued misinformation and disinformation campaigns, as this committee has been studying, target—influence—Canadians across this country. That also brings out the bots, the global bots from various nations.

I don't know if they're real or not, but those bots are real because they flood our social media accounts with misinformation and disinformation in calling people terrorists, calling people hate-mongers and calling people lots of things that are very inappropriate, but that's a tactic that's used. That is a tactic that's been identified, I believe, in this study of Russian disinformation. It might be a tactic used in the study that we're studying right now. Now, I'm not pointing fingers to any...with the government, members of the Government of India, I don't know, but we do need to study this to see what's actually happening.

I had the opportunity over a number of years to travel to India and I did not see.... In my travels, I saw peace and harmony amongst members of our community when I travelled to India. People treated me with lots of kindness, love and respect as I went to the Akshardham in Delhi, a beautiful place. If you have not gone, it's a place you may want to visit in the heart of Delhi.

I'm proud that members of my community here recommended that I go there to see and to get insights on the history and to learn more about the Hindu religion. I spent a number of hours and had a lovely meal with community members there. I went to the Jama Masjid in New Delhi, a very special place in the heart of Delhi, with beautiful views over the skylines of New Delhi and many worshippers coming to see a historic site of hundreds of years in the city of Delhi, in the old city of Delhi, and to see worshippers from the Muslim community come and worship, and, of course, as a member of the Sikh community, I went to the Golden Temple.

● (29955)

When I went to the Golden Temple, members of the community raised concerns with me, legitimate concerns of making sure that I do my duty in Canada as a parliamentarian to bring forward important issues that affect the Sikh faith, and not just the Sikh faith, but all faiths, concerns of having the ability to practise the religion, the language that's so important to protect—their faith and religion—in countries abroad without fear. That's something I heard, whether I was at the Hindu mandir, the Akshardham in New Delhi or the masjid in Delhi, or whether I was at the Golden Temple, the Harmandir Sahib.

When I was there, I saw remnants of the targeted attack on the Golden Temple. That brought forward some memories for me, because, as a child, I did go in the early 1980s to India and Pakistan. I went to Nankana Sahib in Pakistan. I had the opportunity to go to the beautiful city of Lahore. Folks may not know that the city of Lahore is the traditional capital of Punjab. Before Punjab was partitioned by the British, Lahore had been the cultural and traditional capital of Punjab historically.

On that long history, if you want a real understanding of how we got to where we are today, we need to understand how our nations were formed: when India's democracy, which is the world's largest democracy, was formed and how Pakistan was formed and the trauma that occurred for members on both sides of this border the British drew across that land. Much of that history brings us forward into the challenges we face today.

We do need to understand that history. I'm not looking to do a study on history of India and Pakistan. It might be an important study to have at the foreign affairs committee. It may be something that I and my colleague, MP Zahid, can think about and work on, but I think that we do need to study this study that the Conservatives are avoiding: electoral interference in criminal activities in Canada by the agents of the Government of India.

Was there interference? If so, where? Who was involved? How were community members targeted? Are they still being targeted? I hope not. When I saw Hardeep Singh Nijjar was murdered, I was really hoping that this was not what I thought it was going to be and that other members of the community also wouldn't be targeted and attacked. Unfortunately, the RCMP has brought forward evidence to show that this was a targeted attack.

Now members of the community feel unsafe, Members of the Sikh community, members of the Muslim community, members of the Hindu community and members of the Christian community, all these faith groups are concerned if they have ties to India. Should they be concerned? Yes, they should be concerned, because we've seen an individual get murdered. Should they be concerned moving forward? Well, if we don't continue this study, we won't know. We are on meeting two of a study that the Conservatives are trying to avoid.

An hon. member: Who's filibustering?

Mr. George Chahal: A Conservative member is heckling me, but the truth of the matter is that Conservatives brought forward a motion that deleted "India" in all future studies.

● (30000)

If that motion had India included as the main focus of the first study that we finished with Russian disinformation, I thought I could say that they want to make a longer-term plan of programming this committee. That wasn't the intent. They can't pull the wool over the eyes of Canadians as much as they want to try to. The intent was to deliberately avoid studying this issue, because Conservative Party politicians are involved in electoral interference by a foreign government or governments. In this case, it's government, as witnesses have said. Could it be governments? I don't know if Conservative members....

Mr. Glen Motz: Careful.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Let's not heckle.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Mr. Chahal has the floor.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: We'll get ready. I guarantee my heckling will be far worse than yours.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Order.

That's my first order.

We're going to stop the cross-talk, and we're going to let Mr. Chahal speak, because he does have the floor.

Thank you.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Well, of course I expected to be heckled by members across the floor for speaking the truth here. I was told to be "careful". What should I be careful of?

An hon. member: It sounds like a threat.

Mr. George Chahal: It sounds like a threat.

You know what? I've been threatened my whole life by folks. I'm not going to back down from a threat.

What I am going to do is that I'm just stating here what our two witnesses stated at the one meeting I attended. We have another four meetings, and I don't even know if four meetings will get to where we're going, but I want to get to four at least.

I do appreciate Mr. MacGregor for realizing that the Conservative motion was a complete avoidance of studying India and for bringing forward an amendment, which we're discussing right now. I think that's what we need to do. I don't think this committee should be programming a motion when we have the study of Russian interference and disinformation, the study of electoral interference, which is in meeting two, and the criminal activities of agents of the Government of India under way, with the important auto theft study that we have also and needs to be completed.

I will take time to further reflect on this amendment, but on the amendments that may be brought forward, what are some proposed amendments that I would personally, without talking to my colleagues across the floor—and I'd love to collaboratively have a moment to speak with them to see if they're actually interested in moving the important work of this committee forward and what amendments could I support.

Now, six meetings, that's what we need to focus on. Could it be eight? Possibly, but I think we need to do our six before we think about maybe future meetings. That's what I'm thinking. I am open to other opportunities to hear from members in their debate on whether—and I hope Conservative members will provide a rationale on why—they believe excluding India was important for them in their motion, because that is what we're studying here today.

Will they provide that rationale or will they go down a different path? I don't know. However, as I conclude my remarks in a few minutes here, this is an issue of accountability and transparency, which members of the Conservative Party so often talk about in election campaigns: "We stand for accountability. We stand for transparency. The public should know." The public should know. Where's the accountability when this committee had an approved motion that members agreed on? Where's the transparency to the public? Where's the honesty? I don't see their leader showing or displaying any of that, and I'm referring to Mr. Poilievre because he has not had a security clearance.

We are accountable to the electorate. I will be looking forward to going to the next election and standing and fighting on this issue and many others that are important to my community. I look forward to the Conservative Party candidates who are going to run against me, if one ever gets a nominator or if their leader appoints somebody, which probably is what will happen. That's their belief in democracy: picking and choosing who the candidates are across the country to avoid nomination battles. Because of interference...? I don't know. What are they worried about? Having a nomination meeting where people can debate issues publicly on the important foreign policy issues or important domestic issues...?

• (30005)

Conservatives never show up to debates as well. Yes, I remember that. In my last campaign, we had several debates, and the Conservative Party member opposite never showed up to a debate. I would love to debate, in my riding, my next opponent. I've also challenged certain Conservative Party members to run against me, if they believe that I'm not worthy of being the elected representative of the future riding of Calgary McKnight. I haven't heard from that member yet.

I'm also saying to members that I'm looking for competition. I thrive on it. I'm used to hearing Conservative members talking a big game, but I'm also looking for one to take the nomination and to run against me in a public open nomination fight that they will have in their own party. That's democracy. Hand-picking a candidate to run against someone, which we've seen in a number of ridings, or disqualifying candidates for having a difference of opinion is not democracy.

I want to thank members of this committee. I know I took a bit of time in the last meeting, and I am taking a few minutes in this meeting as well to collect my thoughts. I do have a lot more to say, Mr. Chair, and I thank you for taking the time to listen.

I know that as you're a member of the Sikh community, you will understand the deep concerns that I have and the concerns of the communities that we represent across Canada. I really hope that the Indian government takes action within its own country, in its own judicial system, against members of its country who have been involved in any sort of interference in Canada so that we can bring justice to the families who have lost loved ones, whether it was from the Sikh genocide in 1984 or whether it is to the family of Bhai Hardeep Singh Nijjar, who is asking for justice so that they could take action according to their democracy.

We as parliamentarians should take the appropriate action at this committee and in Parliament to ensure that we continue to protect

Canadians and that we continue to bring forward recommendations and to bring improvements through the work of this study so that Canadians of all faiths, in all communities in this great nation of Canada, can feel safe. That can only be done if we go through these important studies. I look forward to supporting, potentially, the amendment.

I am going to reflect on some of the issues the clerk raised when he read out the original motion that Conservative members brought forward to exclude India in the study, and Mr. MacGregor brought forward the amendment to include it. I think I do have some further reflections, and Mr. Chair, I will want to be put back on the speaking list at some point. I will reflect in the meantime and will collect my thoughts to engage in further debate.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and congratulations on your first day as chair of this committee. I look forward to working with you and committee members as we move forward.

• (30010)

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Thank you, Mr. Chahal, for your remarks.

Next on the speaking list is Ms. Dancho.

Go ahead, please.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and congratulations to you on your first day as chair of this committee. It's certainly a significant role, and we wish you the best of luck.

Also, on behalf of Conservative members, I wish Mr. McKinnon very well in his next chapter and appreciate his efforts on this committee.

I'm glad to speak to our Conservative motion. We really haven't had the opportunity to put any words on the record, I think, since we first moved it, so I appreciate being able to speak, Mr. Chair. Certainly, I worked diligently to craft that motion with my colleagues. Mr. Chair, you would have heard before you were in the role of chair that Conservatives have concerns that we don't have a schedule in this committee.

Previous iterations of this committee have had an agreed-upon schedule where we ensure that the motions are debated. Then we agree on what we're going to study and in what order. We have a situation at this committee that's been noted by a number of different parties: that there hasn't been consistency. For example, we don't officially know what we're studying on Thursday, or next Tuesday, or the Thursday after. That has been in discussion for a number of weeks, and we've been asking the chair, the former chair of this committee, to bring forward a calendar of events to anticipate things regarding what we've already passed. That was not done. Our thought process on this motion was to put forward sort of an order that we can agree to as a committee and have that debated to formalize what we're going to study.

As you'll recall, Mr. Chair, all parties agreed to a minimum of six meetings for the India study. The Russia study does not have any number of meetings, which is a bit unusual. It's not unprecedented, but it's a bit unusual certainly in my experience to have a study with no agreed-upon number of meetings. It's odd, and it doesn't allow us to make any definitive plans for future studies or issues. When we put together the motion in its original form, our aim was certainly to have a number of meetings, eight, on the Russia study. We thought that would make sense. That's a pretty standard, respectable, long study. Since we agreed to six on India and since I know the Liberals want to bring back the social media platforms... They also want to summon—we, as a committee, want to summon, in fact—a number of other witnesses who have refused to come willingly on the Russia study. That's two more meetings; that's fair enough.

On India, we've had two meetings already, meaning we have four left. Because we've already agreed to six meetings on India, we didn't feel it was necessary to include it. Russia is specifically mentioned so that we can put a number on how long we want that study to be. Again, eight seems very reasonable. The India is six; that seems reasonable. Those are lengthy robust studies. That is the objective, first and foremost, of the first paragraph in the original motion.

I showed that original motion to my NDP and Bloc colleagues, and we had a good discussion about that. It was verbally implied and explicitly talked about that, of course, we'd finish India in the six we agreed to and that we'll do eight on Russia.

I do appreciate Mr. MacGregor's moving an amendment just to clarify on the India study. That has been a very robust study. I really appreciate the opportunity to hear from the CSIS director, the national security adviser and others, and we look forward to doing those six meetings, as agreed upon. If we want more, then, of course, we can do that. However, it certainly was not left out as a purposeful manoeuvre of some kind. It was just that we've already agreed to six, so that doesn't need to be explicitly said in the motion. Russia does not have an agreed-upon number of meetings, so we have suggested eight.

Then, of course, we agreed as a committee.... Actually, the NDP brought forward a motion in essence about mental health and the impact of substance abuse and other things. We agree that's obviously a very important issue. There have been 40,000 people killed in Canada because of that, and it's really causing a lot of chaos, mayhem, crime and pain in vulnerable communities and to other innocent people in our cities and elsewhere. We agree very much that we should study that. He hadn't formally moved that motion, but he put it on notice a number of weeks ago. We do think that's something we can all agree to study as a committee. Really, the NDP wanted to move it for him because we know it was important to him.

Then, of course, the other motion mentioned in there to be included is the study that I brought forward to review and bring an expert testimony on violence against women and children, including sexual violence. For example, I'm sure everyone in this committee is aware—we all read the news—that just a few weeks ago a mother was murdered in front of her kids in broad daylight in a park not too far from here in Ottawa. It was presumably by her inti-

mate partner, who just jumped out of a car, stabbed her repeatedly and slit her throat in front of her kids. Unfortunately, there's a lot of that going on in this country.

● (30015)

In fact, certain jurisdictions in Ontario specifically have declared femicide to be at a crisis level. I think one woman is murdered every two days in Canada. In some areas, it's even more. Obviously, that's a critical issue of public safety. We need to hear from police services across the country and others involved in that violence on how to prevent it and how to deal with the perpetrators to ensure that justice is brought to them.

In essence, that was the thought process behind this, Mr. Chair. It was an effort to bring forward a schedule and a recognition that we have agreed, as a committee, to study India for at least six meetings. We had not agreed on a number of meetings for Russia. We proposed eight and a number of other issues.

Oh, there's also the last one. My apologies. I forgot. The last part of that amendment was to bring back the ministers of public safety and immigration, which we'd agreed to as a committee, to answer on their investigation of that father-son duo who had come in through the immigration stream and were planning to do a terrorist attack in Toronto. Many have had concerns that it was on the Jewish community. As well, there was the Pakistani gentleman on a student visa here in Canada who was on his way to Brooklyn, New York, to murder Jews on the first anniversary of October 7.

We had agreed, again as a committee, to a lot of the things in this motion. The objective of this, which I wrote—unless other members want to call me a liar, which I welcome them to do and would be happy to address—was to set a calendar. We welcome debate on that and competing priorities and what have you, but certainly Conservatives have agreed to the India study. We've agreed to the Russia study. We've a lot to learn in those studies.

There are many members from particularly the Sikh community in my riding. I've consulted with them at length. I am very aware of how critical this issue is to that community, and frankly to all Canadians. The idea that a foreign government is looking to murder people on Canadian soil is just such an affront to our safety as Canadians but also our sovereignty. We've all put words on the record on that. To suggest that we don't want to study India is just patently false. There's a lot that's been said that I don't think really needs to be addressed from the Liberals, but that's certainly our intention with this motion. We hope we can get a real calendar together so that we can actually have a functioning committee.

I will say that it's been over a meeting and a half, Mr. Chair, that all of our work has been stopped because of this filibuster. I just find it odd that when an argument is being made about “we need to study this issue, we need to study that issue, but there's a filibuster going on”, from those making that claim, it just doesn't really hold water, obviously. If they want to study it, let's get to work. That's what we're trying to do. We very much support Mr. MacGregor's amendment in that regard.

I would also say that you are aware, Mr. Chair, that we had put forward a Standing Order 106(4) letter. It was recently just revealed in the news—it's shocking that we didn't learn about this sooner—that just under a year ago, there was an ISIS plot to bomb Parliament Hill, particularly a Jewish—

• (30020)

Ms. Pam Damoff: I have a point of order, Chair.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Go ahead, Ms. Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you, Chair.

The 106(4) has nothing to do with the debate we're having right now.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I'll get to the point of why I mentioned it.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Sure. Thank you.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, if I'm able to finish what I was saying, I'm talking about the 106(4) to make the point that we're not able to discuss any other issue at this committee if there's a filibuster going on and there are important issues. One of those is the news that there was a bombing plot on Parliament Hill. The leader of the Conservative Party was there. Our deputy leader was there. There were two Liberal members of Parliament. In fact, the former minister of public safety was at that gathering. A whole host of other innocent Canadians, particularly from the Jewish community, were there. It is shocking that it took parliamentarians 10 months to learn about what happened there. Why weren't we informed sooner?

With that, Mr. Chair, I would like to move a subamendment to the motion regarding this issue. If we look at the motion and the proposed amendment by the member from the NDP... I'll read it out, and then I'll read out the subamendment, if that works. We'll ensure everybody has a copy of that, as well.

If the amendment by Mr. MacGregor passes, the motion would read as follows:

That, once the committee has concluded both the study on Russian interference and disinformation campaigns in Canada and the study on electoral interference and criminal activities in Canada by agents of the Government of India, the committee proceed to the following matters in order:

This is where the subamendment would come in, Mr. Chair. A new number 1 would be added. It would read as follows:

1) Given that recent court filings have revealed disturbing details about a thwarted ISIS linked bomb plot targeting Jewish Canadians on Parliament Hill, and given that hate crimes have increased 251% over the past nine years,

The committee immediately prioritize a study to investigate the dramatic rise in terrorist plots and acts of violence targeting Canada's Jewish community, including the thwarted terror attack on Parliament Hill; that the study be comprised of no less than six meetings; that the Minister of Public Safety, the Special Advisor on Jewish Community Relations and Antisemitism to the Prime Minister, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Commissioner, the Director of the Parliamen-

tary Protective Service, the Director of Canadian Security Intelligence Service and other law enforcement officials, and civil society and academic organizations, including the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs and B'nai B'rith, be invited to testify as part of this study; and that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House.

The purpose of moving this subamendment, Mr. Chair—

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I'm sorry, but I have a point of order.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Ms. O'Connell, go ahead on your point of order.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I question whether that is actually a subamendment. It is a completely different topic from the motion itself. It is not in any part of the topic. There was no notice.

I would argue that it's not a subamendment.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Before that, Ms. Dancho, the clerk informs me that you can't bring this motion forward because you're in debate.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I believe I can bring forward a subamendment to an amendment.

If I may respond, as I have just outlined, as the writer of the original motion.... Perhaps others weren't listening. The purpose of the original motion is to set a schedule for this committee regarding its priorities. This is a priority for the Conservative Party. If it's not a priority for the Liberal Party, I welcome them to put that on the record. It certainly seems so, given they've been filibustering and trying to avoid the 106(4) about the potential.... The idea that there was almost a bombing on Parliament Hill...the Leader of the Opposition, many Jewish Canadians and others.... This is a series of thwarted terrorist attacks on the Jewish community, Mr. Chair.

• (30025)

Ms. Pam Damoff: I have a point of order, Chair.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Ms. Damoff, go ahead on your point of order.

Ms. Pam Damoff: We keep going back to the contents of the 106(4). It's not a subamendment. We're currently debating adding the India study. This is not a subamendment to the amendment we have, so I really question its validity as a subamendment.

Ms. Pam Damoff: May I respond, Mr. Chair?

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

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Mr. Gerretsen, go ahead on your point of order.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I think Ms. Damoff is correct.

What Ms. Dancho should be doing is moving this amendment after the existing amendment is voted on. This is not attempting to amend the amendment currently being debated. As a matter of fact, that stays in its existing form.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Thank you to Ms. Damoff and Mr. Gerretsen.

I tend to agree, and so does the clerk, that the subamendment has to deal with the contours of the motion and the amendment itself. When it goes outside of those bounds, it's out of order.

Ms. Pam Damoff: May I respond?

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Sure.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I didn't mean to cut you off. I just wanted to respond.

I would say, again, the purpose, in my understanding of the NDP amendment, is again—

Ms. Pam Damoff: I'm sorry. I have a point of order, Chair.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

You've ruled. There's no debate on your ruling, unless she'd like to challenge you.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I believe I have the floor. I didn't give up the floor, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I have a point of order.

The chair has made a ruling that the subamendment is out of order.

There's no debating that.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Chair, I believe I have the floor.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Ms. Dancho still has the floor.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, I appreciate that you've ruled. Are you officially ruling this out of order?

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: It's out of order, but you still have the floor.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, the purpose of moving the subamendment to Mr. MacGregor's amendment—

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I have a point of order.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I have a point of order.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Ms. O'Connell, go ahead on a point of order, first.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I recognize what Ms. Dancho is trying to do, but she can't speak to a subamendment that's been ruled out of order.

She could get back to the amendment, which is the topic we're on, and she would still have the floor.

Ms. Pam Damoff: If I could get a sentence out, I believe I could make my point, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Excuse me, but it is my turn.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Go ahead.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I was recognized by the chair.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I think you started the heckling, so—

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: She can't speak to a subamendment that was ruled out of order.

Ms. Pam Damoff: —again, if I continue to get cut off, Mr. Chair—

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: She can go back to the amendment that we are debating.

That's how the rules work.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I believe I have the floor.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I get that she wants them rewritten for herself when they're not convenient, but that is how the rules work.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Ms. Damoff, you also had a point of order.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I actually have two things, Chair.

It is so disrespectful to the interpreters when Ms. Dancho is talking over Ms. O'Connell. We can't possibly expect our interpreters to be able to make any sense of what's being said. Given the injuries that interpreters have had, I would hope that all members would be respectful and would wait to be recognized by the chair.

My point of order was the same as Ms. O'Connell's, Chair, that you've ruled on the subamendment that Ms. Dancho wanted to speak to. If she wants to speak to the amendment that Mr. MacGregor has brought forward, she still has the floor. However, she can't keep returning to the subamendment that she wants to speak to, unless she wants to challenge your decision, Chair.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Thank you, Ms. Damoff.

I do agree. We know there have been incidents with the interpreters, with crosstalk. I would ask all members to respect the interpreters and all the great work they do, and to not engage in crosstalk. If you're recognized by the chair, then you can speak.

Ms. Dancho, you have the floor.

Again, the subamendment is out of order, and I ask you to return to what we're discussing on the floor.

Thank you.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think if I was allowed to speak more than a few words without being cut off by Liberal members who are trying to silence members of the opposition, then I would be able to make my point.

I would remind you, Mr. Chair, that they were Liberal members, over the past year, who caused such disarray. In fact, it was Ms. O'Connell who caused such disarray that the Chair had to adjourn the meeting. I can't imagine the impact that had on the interpreters, given how unprofessional the conduct was by Liberal members that day.

On the amendment by Mr. MacGregor, again, the motion is about trying to have a schedule. That is the point of bringing this forward. That is why Mr. Motz brought this forward. The NDP's amendment is to further clarify that schedule. We agree with their amendment, in fact. Again, I think that if Liberal, NDP, Conservative or Bloc members would like to have other things added to the schedule—again, the objective of this motion is to create a schedule for this committee, of some kind—then they're welcome to do so.

That's why I tried to bring in the latest issue that I was just talking about. I think it's quite shocking, actually, that Liberal members don't want to talk about a bomb threat on Parliament Hill plotted by ISIS terrorists. I actually did not anticipate that. I thought this would be roundly supported, in fact.

• (30030)

Ms. Pam Damoff: I have a point of order, Chair.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Ms. Damoff, go ahead on a point of order.

Ms. Pam Damoff: We keep returning to a subamendment that's been ruled out of order. This was not the Liberals voting down an amendment.

I think we need to be clear that Ms. Dancho keeps returning to a subamendment that's been ruled out of order, and she is now putting misinformation out there about us not supporting it, which is not part of the record.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Mr. Gerretsen, go ahead on a point of order.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: For your benefit, Mr. Chair, I want to make sure that it is understood where we are right now.

We are on an amendment to the original motion. The problem with Ms. Dancho's rationale, as to why she was proposing it and wanted to put it forward, is that it is premised on the notion that the amendment will pass. That's why you can't bring forward a subamendment that assumes the amendment will pass when it's not related to it.

I don't think there's anything wrong with what she's bringing forward; it's just not at the right time.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Thank you, Mr. Gerretsen.

I've made the point already that I asked Ms. Dancho to stay within the confines of the motion itself. I understand that this is more of a scheduling motion.

I just want to say at the outset that as the new clerk, I hope to—

A voice: You're the new chair.

The Chair: What did I say—clerk?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: I'll get used to this.

As the new chair, I will see the lay of the land and work with the clerk to present potentially some sort of outlook on what meetings we're going to have. When I look at the meetings on Russia and India, these are obviously very dynamic and robust topics. I think that's why it was built into the motions that we can seek further

meetings, depending on what witnesses say and depending on how the committee feels about those.

Ms. Dancho, you still have the floor.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that. Thank you for committing to attempt to bring forward a calendar. We very much hope to have a chair who resumes that practice. It was quite helpful. It actually ensured that we were an efficient committee who really got into a lot of issues.

Again, we support the motion. We really have no reason to put additional remarks on the floor. We've addressed why this motion was brought forward. That's why we support the amendment from the NDP. In our minds, it was implied that we were going to continue India. We had agreed to six meetings. But we appreciate the clarification, which is why we agree with Mr. MacGregor's amendment. We are happy to proceed.

Again, unless there are more efforts to filibuster this from Liberal members, unless they're saying that they don't agree with this motion, then I hope we can go to a vote, set this schedule and get to the reason for today's meeting, which is the Standing Order 106(4) letter, as you well know, Mr. Chair.

I do hope we can come to an agreement on this motion. In terms of how it was framed, I've certainly seen far more partisan motions in my life. It was an effort to get everybody to agree to something. Certainly, I very much hope we can do that. Hopefully, we can finish the Bloc Québécois study, because that was an excellent study and certainly an important issue. I recognize that this has sort of derailed a little bit of the time we would have had. I think we'll need a little bit more time than what was scheduled, but hopefully we can get a study across the finish line. That would be great.

I will conclude my remarks, Mr. Chair. I do hope we can come together and agree on a plan forward. That's certainly the object or the goal that we had in mind here. I hope we can proceed to that goal and vote soon, hopefully.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Thank you, Ms. Dancho.

Ms. Damoff is next in the speaking order.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you, Chair.

I'm actually happy to weigh in on this, having just spent last week in Poland, Estonia and Latvia on a parliamentary delegation led by a Conservative senator, Senator Wells.

It's pertinent to what we're talking about today, because I was really disheartened that the Conservatives wanted to limit this study on Russia and have twice brought forward motions when we were doing this study that interrupted expert witnesses who we had in front of us.

One of the things that struck me when I was there was how seriously people in those countries take Russian interference and Russian misinformation and disinformation, far more seriously than we do, even though as a country that's an Arctic nation we are at threat by Russia. We are at threat by the way they conduct misinformation and disinformation. It's something that's far more extensive than what we've heard thus far at committee.

To be very honest with you, I left that trip, which focused primarily on what's going on in Ukraine and the fight that Ukrainians are putting on, and I... We heard from Jānis Sārts, director of the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence. He talked to us about what they call cognitive warfare. Right now, in Europe, Canada and the United States, Russia is conducting cognitive warfare against us. They've been at it for 10 years—over 10 years.

What I found disturbing was the fact that they told us that China is starting to piggyback on that Russian interference, that the Russian strategy is to target the west, and that China is not nearly as capable as Russia, but what they do is they push the Russian narrative. They push the Russian narrative primarily on TikTok and Telegram.

What we heard about TikTok was quite disturbing. It was in the context of Russian misinformation and disinformation and how China is using TikTok to amplify what Russia is putting out there and how TikTok has the best targeting algorithm of all the social media companies. To be honest, that's why I'm looking forward to having TikTok return to the committee to talk to us and being able to ask some questions about this algorithm. What we heard—what I heard and the delegation heard—is that prebunking is far more effective.

As I listen to the Conservative member talk about programming and how important doing a study on gender-based violence is, I couldn't agree with her more. It is really important to study that. I know that the committee agreed to it, but I think the public needs to know that it is being studied right now at the status of women committee. We are hearing from witnesses. Just this week, we'll be hearing from more witnesses on that exact issue. It's not that the issue is going unattended to.

I feel strongly that we need to be looking at not limiting that Russia study to eight meetings, which is what the Conservatives did when they brought forward their motion. I appreciate my friend and colleague Mr. MacGregor's amendment and not putting time limits on these studies.

That's why, Chair, at the very start of this meeting, I asked for clarification on that: because the intent of the original Conservative motion was to limit the number of meetings. Given what I've just heard over the last week... In Estonia, we heard from the director general of police and border services and elected representatives. In Latvia, we heard from three experts on Russia and misinformation and disinformation.

It's not just about the war. As I said, it's cognitive warfare that's being conducted by Russia. I want to stress that there's a lot more we haven't heard or even thought about as a committee in terms of the Russia study and that I think is important to get in front of us.

• (30035)

With that, I've put my thoughts on the record.

Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Thank you, Ms. Damoff.

Ms. O'Connell is next in the speaking order.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thanks.

I'll pass it to the next speaker, but I ask to be added to the end again.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Thank you, Ms. O'Connell.

The next speaker on the list is Mr. Lloyd.

Does anyone know where Mr. Lloyd is?

We're going to the next speaker, then. It is Mr. Baker.

• (30040)

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Thanks very much, Chair and colleagues, for welcoming me to the committee.

I thought it was very important that I have a chance to participate in the discussion today—especially today. Today is 1,000 days since Russia's further invasion of Ukraine. That is many more days than Vladimir Putin thought it would take to conquer Ukraine, but it is 1,000 days too many, in my view. This should have never happened, and the world should have given Ukraine the help it needs to win this war a long time ago.

That said, I think there are a number of reasons why that assistance hasn't been there for the people of Ukraine—the assistance necessary for them to win. I think a big part of why that assistance hasn't been there is what is being discussed at this very committee. Specifically, what I'm talking about are Russian interference, misinformation and disinformation. This affects Canadians. It affects Americans. It affects Europeans and people around the world, as the members of this committee well know. It is impacting the decisions of key allied nations and the degree to which, and ways in which, they support Ukraine.

As I've said before in the House—I know many colleagues have spoken about this in the House of Commons—the fight in Ukraine isn't just about the Ukrainian people. Supporting the Ukrainian people is the right thing to do, but it's also the right thing to do for Canada. Ukraine's victory is very essential to Canada's security. If Russia wins, they won't stop at Ukraine. We know this because Vladimir Putin has said so. If Russia retains the approximately 25% of Ukraine it holds today, that's a victory for Russia, and it means we're all under more threat. Canadians will be facing Russian aggression, whether it's in Europe with our NATO partners, in the Arctic or somewhere else around the world.

I'll come back to the topic we're discussing with the committee. It's why I think this subject of Russian misinformation and disinformation—the way they are being used to manipulate people and influence governments around the world—is at the core of what needs to be understood and researched, in order to make sure we help the Ukrainians win.

This committee has heard from a number of experts and witnesses on this topic. Some have been more forthcoming than others, as I understand. Some folks have done a lot of excellent work on the impact of Russian disinformation and what I was talking about a moment ago. One of those groups is an organization called DisinfoWatch. Some of you may know the folks involved with DisinfoWatch. Marcus Kolga is the one I know best. He co-authored a study on this very issue. I want to share with you some of the findings from this.

Again, the reason I'm sharing this is that I think the attempt to shorten the component of the study on Russian interference is a very bad thing. I talk to members, a lot of Canadians, people who support Ukraine and members of the Ukrainian Canadian community. They want us doing more studies and more investigation, and to raise a greater profile of the role of Russian misinformation and disinformation in Canada and around the world—not less. I think the attempt to shorten or limit that aspect of the study is a dangerous thing.

I'd like to share with you a few reasons why I feel this way. I'm going to read segments of a report by DisinfoWatch:

- (30045)

In Spring 2024, DisinfoWatch and Canadian Digital Media Research Network conducted a survey of 2,127 Canadians to assess their exposure to several leading Kremlin narratives about Russia's war against Ukraine and to understand the vulnerability of Canadians to these narratives. We found that:

Most Canadians have been exposed to Russian [foreign misinformation] narratives, with 71% of Canadians having heard at least one of the narratives, with an average exposure of 2.1 narratives.

A substantial portion of Canadians exposed to Kremlin narratives believe them to be true or are unsure of their falsehood. For example, 70% of those exposed to the narrative about financial aid being misappropriated either believe it or are unsure.

Let me just replay that. Seventy per cent of Canadians who were surveyed by DisinfoWatch who were “exposed to the narrative” that financial aid to Ukraine is “being misappropriated either believe it or are unsure” whether it is true. Think about what impact that has on Canadians as they think about whether Canada should be continuing to support the Ukrainian people, if 70% of them are thinking that maybe that aid is being misappropriated. That's all coming through a Kremlin narrative.

I'll continue to read:

We found a marked difference in susceptibility to Russian disinformation along political lines. Conservative supporters, who report the highest exposure levels to Kremlin narratives, are also more likely to believe in them compared to their Liberal and NDP counterparts. For instance, only 55% of Conservatives exposed to the “Ukrainian Nazis” narrative believe it is false, compared to a higher rejection rate among other political groups.

I'll get into what I mean by that. This is a summary of some of their findings:

Since Russia's initial invasion of Ukraine in 2014, the Kremlin has steadily intensified its information warfare targeting Ukraine, NATO, and the Western democratic world, both inside and outside of Russia using foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI).

Over the past decade, the primary objectives of Russian FIMI—

That's foreign information manipulation and interference, but I'll just call that FIMI for short in the future:

—are to:

Erode public support for Ukraine and NATO;

Undermine unity among NATO allies;

Discredit and intimidate governments, communities, journalists and activists that are critical of the Kremlin;

Exploit existing divisions within democratic societies in order to undermine social cohesion and trust in our governments, media and civil society.

Let me pause there for a second. These four things that they've talked about, these are the objectives. This is what Russia is trying to do in Canada every day:

Erode public support for Ukraine and NATO;

Undermine unity amongst NATO allies;

It wants to basically pit us against other NATO allies, and we've seen that play out in the world over the last number of years in a number of ways.

Number three is “Discredit and intimidate governments, communities, journalists and activists that are critical of the Kremlin”. There are many examples of this. I'll speak from the perspective of a member of the Ukrainian Canadian community. I know many members of the Ukrainian Canadian community, especially leading members—those who are the strongest and most vocal advocates of support for Ukraine—who've talked about the fact that they have been intimidated or that there have been attempts to intimidate them because they've been critical of Putin, the Kremlin, or Russia's invasion and further invasion of Ukraine. We've seen that play out in a number of ways.

The fourth thing is “Exploit...divisions within democratic societies in order to undermine social cohesion”. Even if you step back, take the perspective away from the war in Ukraine, and just focus more on domestic matters, even if that's your focus and your priority, which is understandable for many folks, this is designed.... DisinfoWatch has concluded that this is designed to undermine our trust in each other and our willingness to work together and to come to common understanding as to how we can work together to solve problems, no matter what those problems are, whether that's housing, the rise in the cost of living, climate change, or disinformation just like we're discussing here today.

I'll continue reading from the report:

The Kremlin narratives that we tested are those that regularly feature on Russian state controlled media platforms like RT, Sputnik and in statements by the Russian government, officials and diplomats.

They include:

“Financial aid sent to Ukraine is being pocketed by corrupt officials within the Ukrainian government.”

“Weapons we send to help Ukraine defend itself are just being sold on the black market instead.”

“Ukraine and NATO are the ones who started the war with Russia.”

“Russia is at war because it is trying to defend itself from Ukrainian Nazis.”

“Russia is going to win eventually, so sending aid to Ukraine is only delaying the inevitable.”

- (30050)

“Ukraine should give up their eastern territory for peace since the people living there are Russian anyway.”

We've all heard this stuff. We've heard this, right? We've heard it from the Kremlin and we've heard it from Putin. But what worries me is that we are hearing it here in Canada, because Kremlin disinformation and misinformation is so pervasive and so powerful and so sophisticated.

I'll continue to read from the report:

Research has demonstrated that these narratives are amplified inside western societies, including Canada, by regime aligned influencers, who may or may not receive benefit from doing so, targeting audiences on both ends of the political spectrum. The reach of these influencers on social media is not limited by borders. Canadian audiences are exposed to content posted by influencers in Canada, the US and beyond.

I think that's one of the important things for us to take note of. There's been a lot of discussion—I know this has been discussed at this committee and even publicly in the media—about the indictment of folks related to Tenet Media and that sort of thing. The focus has been, to a great extent, at least in the media coverage of it, about the impact this is having on how the information propelled by Tenet Media, allegedly on behalf of the Kremlin, has been used to influence American audiences.

The reality is that it's not just American audiences who consume the media that Tenet is putting out there. It's Canadians as well, probably in quantities proportional to our population. It's affecting Canadians as well. These are just the examples that we know of. Tenet is an example that we know of, but there undoubtedly are many others.

I'll continue to read from the report:

Polling of Americans who identify as conservatives, has demonstrated a likely vulnerability to Russian government narratives which may correlate with a dramatic decrease in support for Ukraine among right leaning Republican voters.

A May 2024 Pew Research report about US public support for Ukraine found a growing partisan gap between Republican and Democrat voters over the course of the war. Polling during the first months of the war found that just 9% of Republican voters believed that the United States was providing too much aid to Ukraine. That number increased to 49% in April 2024.

That is really important. It went from 9% to 49% in over two years.

In the same timeframe, Democrats who believed that the US is giving too much aid to Ukraine increased from 7% to 31%. The same Pew report also found that 55% of Republicans lacked confidence in President Zelenskyy, in contrast to 65% of Democrats who said they are confident in Ukraine's president.

Similar trends have been observed in Canada. A February 2024 Angus Reid poll found that the number of Conservative voters who believed that Canada is giving too much to Ukraine doubled from 19% in May 2022 to 43%.

While multiple domestic and geopolitical factors may have influenced these results, the impact of Russian information and influence operations on public opinion should also be considered.

Our analysis aims to assess Canadian public vulnerabilities to each of the key Russian...narratives above, across the Canadian political spectrum.

Who is exposed?

In March 2024, the Media Ecosystem Observatory, on behalf of the Canadian Digital Media Research Network, surveyed a nationally representative sample of Canadians (n = 2,127) about their exposure to six leading Kremlin Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference...narratives regarding Russia's war against Ukraine. If respondents had heard of these narratives, they were asked if they believed them to be true or not.

Nearly half of those surveyed had heard the Kremlin's false claim that "Russia is at war because it is trying to defend itself from Ukrainian Nazis," while only 26% of Canadians had heard the Russian narrative that falsely claims, "Weapons

we send to help Ukraine defend itself are just being sold on the black market instead."

A disproportionately high number of Canadians who identified as Conservative Party voters (54%) reported being exposed to the Kremlin narrative that falsely claims, "Financial aid sent to Ukraine is being pocketed by corrupt officials within the Ukrainian government." Out of the six Kremlin...narratives tested, Conservative Party voters reported the most exposure to five of them.

The report has a chart that I encourage all members to take a look at. It demonstrates to what extent Canadians are exposed to these different false narratives by the Kremlin. It also shows it across party lines. It shows to what degree Conservative, Liberal and NDP supporters or voters have been exposed to these things.

I will continue with the report:

- (30055)

The Kremlin has regularly accused Ukraine's government and people—as well as the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian governments and people—of being neo-Nazis to justify its invasion of Ukraine in 2014 and its latest full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Vladimir Putin claimed in February 2022, that he had ordered Russian forces to invade Ukraine to "de-Nazify" the country. Ukraine's president is Jewish and unlike Russia and many European nations, not a single far-right party holds a seat in Ukraine's parliament.

False claims about the presence of neo-Nazis in Ukraine have been repeated by Kremlin aligned influencers in the democratic world, including Canada. For example, populist US Congresswoman and conspiracy theorist, Marjorie Taylor Greene has amplified this narrative to her millions of followers on social media.

This narrative has been identified by both Erik Møse, Chair of the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine and leading human rights legal scholar, Yonah Diamond as an incitement to hate.

70% of Canadians exposed to the narrative believe that it is either definitely or probably false. However significantly fewer Canadians exposed to the narrative who identify as Conservatives believe this narrative is false, with just 55% rejecting this false Kremlin narrative.

There's a chart in the report. Just to recap for those watching at home and trying to follow along with what I'm saying, the false narrative Russia's put out is that Russia is at war because it is trying to defend itself from Ukrainian Nazis.

What DisinfoWatch points out in its report is to what degree people believe this statement is true or false. For example, of Conservative voters, 25% believe it's true, 20% are unsure and 55% believe it's false. Of Liberal voters, 18% believe it's true, 12% are unsure and 70% believe it's false. Of NDP voters, 4% believe it's true, 9% are unsure and 87% believe it's false.

I think what we can take away from this is that these false narratives and disinformation are obviously being targeted at Canadians across the political spectrum, but they're having a greater effect on supporters of certain political parties than they are on others. In this particular case, most voters who believe it's true are those who tend to vote Conservative.

The report continues:

The Kremlin and its allies have regularly blamed Ukraine and NATO for starting the war with Russia., This narrative is a central component of the Kremlin's information war against Russians, the Western world and Ukraine.

By portraying Ukraine as a “puppet” of NATO and alleging Western responsibility for the war, Russia seeks to frame its invasion as a defensive measure rather than an act of aggression. This narrative aims to legitimize Russia’s actions on the international stage and deflect blame. It also exploits existing anti-Western sentiments and skepticism about NATO’s role as a defensive alliance in Canada and other western societies. This narrative also aims to fracture alliance cohesion and unity.

Inside of Russia, this narrative is deployed to bolster domestic support for the war by fostering a sense of external threat and nationalistic fervor. State-controlled media in Russia amplifies these themes, portraying the conflict as a struggle against Western encroachment and the defense of Russian-speaking populations.

Just as I mentioned earlier, they have a chart in which they repeat the false narrative the Kremlin is putting out there—that Ukraine and NATO are the ones who started the war with Russia—and they break down to what degree folks who support different political parties tend to believe this to be true or false.

I’ll start with the NDP this time. Of NDP voters, 72% believe it’s false. Of Liberal voters, 66% believe it’s false. Among Conservative voters, only 38% believe it’s false. Clearly, this narrative, like the previous one, has had greater traction with and is deemed more credible by Conservative voters.

The report continues:

False narratives about western support for Ukraine being misappropriated by Ukraine officials are deployed by the Kremlin to undermine support for Ukraine and weaken Western resolve. Both international and domestic audiences are targeted by this narrative.

Internationally, the Kremlin seeks to erode trust and unity among countries providing aid to Ukraine. By casting doubt on the integrity of the Ukrainian government, Russia hopes to undermine the willingness of these countries to continue their financial and military support. It is intended to foster skepticism and hesitation among Western voters and policymakers, potentially leading to a reduction in aid. It exploits existing concerns about corruption in Ukraine, amplifying these worries to create a perception that assistance is futile and misused.

● (30100)

Domestically, the narrative serves to justify Russia’s actions and distract from its own endemic corruption. By portraying Ukraine as inherently corrupt, the Kremlin shifts the focus away from its own governance problems and frames the conflict as a moral crusade against a corrupt neighbor. This serves to consolidate support among Russians by reinforcing negative stereotypes about Ukraine and justifying the invasion as a necessary intervention.

Ultimately, the Kremlin’s goal is to weaken Ukraine’s position by reducing international support, thereby making it more vulnerable and easier to influence or control.

I want to stop there for a second.

Anybody who looks at Russia’s governance.... There are few countries in the world that are more corrupt than Russia. Vladimir Putin has complete control of not just the political apparatus in

Russia but also the judicial system and the media. Anyone who has done business in Russia knows corruption is rampant. This point the report is making.... Accusing the Ukrainians of being corrupt, while making it out as though Russia is therefore justified in invading Ukraine, is taking attention away from Russia’s corruption and Vladimir Putin’s control of everything.

I’m reading from the report here, regarding the narrative that financial aid sent to Ukraine is being pocketed by corrupt officials in the Ukraine government.

It says:

70% of Canadians [which is significant] exposed to this narrative either believe or are unsure if this narrative is false—indicating a significant failure to raise awareness of the facts about this issue. Over half of Conservative supporters believe this narrative to be true, compared to 29% of Liberal voters. Among the various Russian narratives included in this poll, this particular narrative was the second most believed among Conservative supporters.

I continue to read from the report:

According to the BBC, the Kremlin has created fake listings for the sale of Western weapons on dark web sites to give the false impression that Western weapons being donated to Ukraine are being sold off on the black market by corrupt members of Ukraine’s military. There is no evidence of this. This narrative targets both international and domestic audiences, aiming to provoke doubt and reduce public support for Ukraine.

Internationally, the Kremlin seeks to erode trust and solidarity among nations that are providing military assistance to Ukraine. By falsely claiming that weapons that are donated to Ukraine are being misused and sold illegally, Russia hopes to foster skepticism and hesitation among Western policymakers and citizens. The narrative exploits existing concerns about accountability and the potential for the proliferation of arms and it aims to decrease the willingness of these countries to continue their support.

Wait one moment, please.

I would like to move to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Is it a motion to adjourn debate or adjourn the meeting?

Mr. Yvan Baker: It’s to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: There’s a motion on the floor to adjourn the meeting.

Do we have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Ms. Jennifer O’Connell: Can we just vote?

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: It looks like we have unanimous consent.

The meeting is adjourned.

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