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Chair: The Honourable Bardish Chagger





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• (1120)

[English]

**The Chair (The Honourable Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.)):** I call the meeting to order.

Good morning, everyone. Welcome to meeting number 110 of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

We are meeting today for the first time with regard to the incident that took place in the gallery of the House of Commons.

I would like to welcome our guests who are here with us.

I also want to note that it is March 21, 2024, which is World Down Syndrome Day. It is a day that was created to raise public awareness, promote inclusivity, encourage advocacy and support the well-being of those living with Down syndrome.

I'm usually in my riding on this day, but I am not today, so Kaleb and I shared a pair of socks with each of you. We hope you rock your socks.

With that, we'd like to welcome Ihor Michalchyshyn, chief executive officer and executive director of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, and Jars Balan, director of the Kule Ukrainian Canadian studies centre at the Canadian institute of Ukrainian studies.

I believe there are opening comments from one of you, and you'll both be available for comments.

With that, I welcome you both to PROC. I thank you for taking the time to be here.

The floor is yours.

**Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn (Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director, Ukrainian Canadian Congress):** Good morning. Thank you.

We were just having some audio issues, but I hope you can hear me now.

I'll read the opening statement, and then we're available for questions.

On behalf of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, it's a pleasure to be here today virtually to speak with you. I'll read our opening statement on this matter at this point.

For many centuries, all of the inhabitants who lived on the territory of what is Ukraine today, including the Jewish people, suffered successive occupations by foreign empires and colonizers who sought to subjugate those for whom Ukraine was home. Some 30

years ago, with the declaration of Ukrainian independence and statehood, the difficult process of reaching mutual understanding and comity began—and it continues to this day.

The history of World War II in Ukraine is complex and difficult to easily summarize. Ukraine was caught between the two tyrannies of Hitler and Stalin. In the 20th century, Ukraine was the centre of what Yale historian Timothy Snyder has called the “Bloodlands”.

The Ukrainian people fought for their independence in WWI and WWII, and are now fighting for the freedom of Europe. Without their own state, Ukrainians fought in different military formations, but always in pursuit of a free and independent Ukraine and against Soviet, Bolshevik and Russian tyranny.

Following the incident in Canada's Parliament this fall, our community was once again subjected to a familiar disinformation narrative smearing Ukrainians, which originated from the Soviet Union and is now being used by the Russian Federation.

It is unfortunate and hurtful that many ill-informed politicians and members of the media chose to engage with simplistic and inaccurate narratives, instead of relying on the findings of a Canadian commission of inquiry. As one of Canada's pre-eminent scholars of Ukrainian history, Dr. Paul Robert Magocsi, chair of Ukrainian studies at the University of Toronto, stated, “There is simply no proof that the Galicia Division engaged in war crimes”. The characterization of former members of the Galicia Division collectively as Nazis, fascists, war criminals or monsters is inflammatory and unsupported by the historical record.

In the 1980s, the Government of Canada called a commission—the Deschênes commission—to investigate claims that thousands of Nazi war criminals were hiding in Canada. The commission found that:

Between 1971 and 1986, public statements by outside interveners concerning alleged war criminals residing in Canada have spread increasingly large and grossly exaggerated figures as to their estimated number.

The commission also found that:

Charges of war crimes against members of the Galicia Division have never been substantiated, neither in 1950 when they were first preferred, nor in 1984...nor before this Commission.

It has been the long-standing position of our community that, if there is evidence of any wrongdoing by any individual, regardless of who they are or when they committed a crime, this evidence should be brought to the attention of Canada's war crimes unit to be pursued in that forum and not in the court of public opinion.

As Dr. Magocsi stated, "It is not in the interest of Canada for politicians and the media to distort the historical past and besmirch the reputation of an individual in order to gain some ostensible advantage in the Canadian political arena."

The disinformation narrative smearing Ukrainians originates from the Soviet days and now is being used by the Russian Federation in an attempt to discredit an independent Ukrainian democracy. This is an effort to sow social division within Canada and other western democracies. It is an attempt by Russia to distract from the war of annihilation against Ukraine that it wages, which this Parliament has correctly and unanimously recognized as a genocide against the Ukrainian people.

Every day, including last night, Ukrainians cities are being bombed by Russian missiles. Every day, Russia is murdering Ukrainian civilians, abducting Ukrainian children and committing war crimes and crimes against humanity.

It is the defence of Ukraine and ensuring Ukraine's victory over Russia which the UCC and our community are seized with at this time. We invite all members of this committee, all parliamentarians and the Government of Canada to join us in this effort.

Thank you.

• (1125)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We will now enter into five-minute rounds, starting with Mr. Kmiec, followed by Mr. Duguid.

[*Translation*]

Then it will be Ms. Gaudreau's turn, and after her, Ms. Mathysen.

[*English*]

We'll go over a couple of points really quickly.

First, one person speaks at a time, because we do have two official languages. It's challenging, because you are virtual and we are in person, but I think you can see the room, so you'll see when a person has finished. We can try not to speak over top of each other.

Second, we know it's a tough topic and not an easy conversation. I would ask that we remember why we're here and to stay focused on the study. We do want to have a thorough discussion and conversation, but it needs to be respectful. I will do my best to ensure that happens, as I'm sure all members will.

Mr. Kmiec, five minutes go to you—through the chair.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Thank you, Chair.

My first question will be to Mr. Michalchyshyn. We've spoken many times before. You know I've been to large Ukrainian churches all across Canada for CUAET visa holders, and I've been meeting with lots of people in the evenings to talk to the Ukrainian commu-

nity. However, I was going to ask you how we move forward from here in order to avoid events and disagreements among the diaspora communities in Canada that are at stake here. Three of them have an interest in how history is interpreted, namely the Jewish community in Canada, the Ukrainian diaspora and the Polish diaspora—my last name gives it away.

How do we move forward from here so the events that happened here are not used by the Russian Federation to further its propaganda campaign in this war that's happening right now in the territory of Ukraine?

**Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn:** Thank you.

I appreciate the attention you've been giving to our Ukrainian displaced people and refugees at this difficult time.

I think there are two things.

We have historians. I referenced Dr. Magocsi. Mr. Balan is with us. Many historians from different communities are writing the history of these difficult chapters of history and are providing ways for us to speak to each other to interpret them.

I think the other is, as I've referenced, not to relitigate the past. We had the Deschênes commission, which was, I understand, a difficult time for communities in terms of the proceedings and tensions. I think that concluded in a way that people felt that every community had an opportunity to give its presentation, to hear and to participate. I think reopening these difficult chapters without the work of academics and reopening processes that have been concluded are not a helpful way forward.

**Mr. Jars Balan (Director, Kule Ukrainian Canadian Studies Centre, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta):** Can I add something?

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Go ahead.

**Mr. Jars Balan:** I want to point out that Ukrainians and the Poles struck a historical commission in Ukraine and Poland to discuss these painful issues, and that commission has met and tried to resolve these differences in their views of history and everything. I think that's the way to go—to have a calm discussion of it. The biggest concern, of course, is always knee-jerk reactions, emotional reactions to provocations. If there's some way to remain focused and calm and not overreact right away to situations as happened with the incident with Mr. Hunka, that would be appreciated by all.

• (1130)

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Chair, I'll get into my next question.

I'm glad we brought up these commissions because for the last few years President Duda of the Republic of Poland and President Zelenskyy have been doing these reconciliation meetings, masses, with the heads of the churches on both sides of the border, in Volhynia and Galicia, as well in recognition of the fact that you have to forgive in order to be forgiven. I think that's what the bishops on both sides have said; that's what both presidents have called for.

I'm going to reiterate the first question I asked. How can we help as Canadian politicians, as Canadians in Canada, to ensure events that happen here in Canada are not used by the Russian propaganda machine to undermine the legitimate right of Ukrainians to have their own country and to keep their own borders the way they want to keep them, and their own culture and language, so events here are not used to undermine their story in Europe and also internationally. That really does sap the strength of the Ukrainian people and the government to be able to find new allies and to continue having the same allies they have.

What can we do going forward?

**Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn:** Jars, would you like to go with that?

**Mr. Jars Balan:** Like I said, the first thing is to make sure that, when an incident like this arises, you don't overreact right away: Bide your time, say that you are investigating this, and bring the temperature down, because if you react in an emotional way, you're going to create all kinds of further complications with the issue. That, I suppose, is the first thing.

In terms of avoiding a situation like this, the whole question of vetting comes up. How do you vet these invitations or whatever? That's a complicated issue, and that's on Parliament to figure out. I'm not sure how you try to vet this, given all the people who come from all over the world with all kinds of backgrounds, bringing all kinds of issues with them. It's not such an easy thing to resolve.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you very much for saying that. That's exactly why we're having this committee study. The whole purpose of this is to look back on how we can improve the vetting.

**Mr. Jars Balan:** Yes.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Do you think there's an opportunity perhaps for organizations like yours to participate in such vetting in the future when there are leaders of countries with a diaspora connected to them?

Wouldn't you think that, in such situations where there is perhaps sensitivity, individuals who are invited not be recognized necessarily from the floor of the House of Commons and that it be reserved expressly for unique situations where there are national heads of state and national heads of government?

**Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn:** I think we have a number of experts and historians in the community who could contribute to those conversations and participate in reviews of whatever kinds of proposed plans there are.

Jars, do you have anything to add to that?

**Mr. Jars Balan:** Yes, I think that it is possible to approach communities for some input in advance—and not just the Ukrainian community. There are other issues I'm sure with other communities.

I think that's what you would want to do, so they don't get caught off guard with this.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Just in the nature of transparency, that did end up being a six-minute round. Mr. Kmiec did offer to interrupt, which I asked him not to, but I appreciated. I said I would give you that time.

That means that I would offer Mr. Duguid a six-minute round, but I'm going to stick to where I was and say it's a five-minute round. If you negotiate as nicely as Mr. Kmiec did, I'll consider it.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** But I'm hoping you don't.

You have five minutes, Mr. Duguid—through the chair.

**Mr. Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair, for the time.

I particularly thank our witnesses, two people I know well and who I have had many conversations with over the years.

Madam Chair, I have a quick question with a short answer, hopefully.

It's been clear that Mr. Hunka was invited by the Speaker to sit in the gallery and recognized him.

On the issue of the rally that was held that same evening with President Zelenskyy, I wonder if Mr. Michalchyshyn could describe the process that happened. My understanding is that the UCC put Mr. Hunka on a list and that the Prime Minister then invited Mr. Hunka.

Is that exactly what happened, that it was at your invitation?

• (1135)

**Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn:** Yes. We were contacted to do a broad invitation to thousands of people in Toronto. We provided a list of every past donor, volunteer, community organization and boards of directors that we had to receive an invitation. I don't know who was or wasn't invited in the end, but his name appeared on a list that we had forwarded, yes.

**Mr. Terry Duguid:** Mr. Michalchyshyn, I think you know that Winnipeg is proudly the home of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress. There's another major office in Toronto, as you know. The UCC hosted a major commemorative event on the second anniversary of the illegal invasion. Over 800 people attended.

I can tell you two gentlemen on Zoom today that the Ukrainian community expressed to me feeling absolutely betrayed at the lack of unity of Parliament, particularly directed at the Conservative Party and their vote against the Ukrainian free trade agreement as well as other supports for Ukraine.

I just wonder if you would comment on how this incident has further fostered this sense of betrayal, particularly as the flames have been fanned on this particular issue. I know, up close and personal, that the community is in pain.

**Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn:** I guess I could say, as I said in my opening statement, that there was surprise and hurt that this is coming back again as a disinformation narrative, which we've seen over decades and we're facing again.

In terms of Parliament and legislation, I think everyone knows that we strive for unanimity. We strive to speak with all parties to urge everyone to support the Ukrainian community and the Ukrainian cause at this point in terms of what they're asking of us in weapons, trade and other things that will help Ukraine win Russia's war of aggression.

For people like me, this is one of the first times we've been dealing with this narrative. I think Mr. Balan and others have seen this repeat itself over time. Our surprise is that we haven't been able to educate people enough to not go down these paths of disinformation.

**Mr. Jars Balan:** Could I just say...?

**Mr. Terry Duguid:** Go ahead, Mr. Balan.

**Mr. Jars Balan:** I was just going to say that, in connection with the free trade agreement, one of the things that I always took great pride in as a Canadian was that we had such bipartisan support for Ukraine. I was involved right at the beginning in the initial negotiations. This was under Prime Minister Harper's tenure, when the initial negotiations took place to sign a free trade agreement with Ukraine. It's very important for Ukraine. To see it mixed into this discussion here is concerning. It's a little bit disappointing.

I'll just leave my remarks at that.

**Mr. Terry Duguid:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm finished.

**The Chair:** Excellent. That was four minutes and 29 seconds.

There is some commentary being offered with regard to what's relevant and what's not relevant. I think we know this is a greater issue, and leniency has always been provided.

What I will say to members is that, if you like leniency when you're making comments and asking questions, then you're going to have to offer that same courtesy to others. It can't just be when it's convenient for you and not for others. If it's good for the goose, it's good for the gander. That's kind of how it works around here. If you want to raise a point, then do it. Otherwise, as long as we have decorum and respectful dialogue, I am going to let the meeting function.

Mr. Duguid came in at four minutes and 29 seconds. I appreciate that.

[*Translation*]

You have five minutes, Ms. Gaudreau.

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

I want to thank the witnesses.

I also want to say that today's meeting, it must be said, deals with a sensitive subject. For the purposes of the study, we want to get to the bottom of this situation, we want to know the background, so that we can then—and this is our hope—produce what we need to ensure that situations like this never happen again.

I have some very factual questions for the witnesses. Earlier, my colleague mentioned that the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, when he was here on February 13, said that it was the Ukrainian Canadian Congress that provided the list. Earlier, we heard a little bit about who was on the list.

My question is for the executive director of the congress: Was Mr. Hunka's name on that list? I just want to make sure that across all donors and what you said—

• (1140)

[*English*]

**Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn:** The question I was answering earlier was about the event that took place in Toronto on Friday night. The UCC was asked to provide a large number of people to attend a rally as part of that event.

We had no involvement. We have never spoken to the Speaker's office or to the Hunka family about his invitation to Parliament.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** When the Prime Minister's Office asked for a list, in essence, did that list have to meet certain criteria?

[*English*]

**Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn:** For the Toronto rally—which was not Parliament—we were just asked to identify community organizations, leaders and people who had been involved in various positions. I have no insight into who was invited to Parliament or not.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Okay.

So, if I were to ask you whether the government chose to invite all the people on your list, you would answer that you don't know. Am I correct?

[*English*]

**Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn:** That's right. We provided a list of potential invitees. I don't know which of those people were sent an invitation or not.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Okay.

Following Mr. Hunka's presentation in the gallery and the tributes paid to him, did any contact take place with the Prime Minister's Office or the Office of the Speaker of the House?

[English]

**Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn:** I'm sorry. Were there contacts with UCC and the Prime Minister's Office? We were only talking to them about the Friday night event.

[Translation]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** After the event, there was no interaction or contact. Is that correct?

[English]

**Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn:** The UCC, we have never interacted with the Speaker's office. We received a letter from him apologizing a week after, but we never spoke to the Speaker's office before or after the Zelensky visit.

[Translation]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** That's enough for me, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** That's fine. Thank you, Ms. Gaudreau. Your intervention was four minutes and ten seconds.

[English]

Madam Mathysen, you have five minutes—through the chair.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

To clarify again, Mr. Michalchyshyn, you said the list was very general and you provided it when requested on that sort of generality. There was never any specific drilling down of names, and you don't know who was invited.

Can you also let us know about any background checks or any filters that you, the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, had in terms of any of those lists? There was nothing on your end that was requested by PMO or that you do on a regular basis. There was nothing like that done.

• (1145)

**Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn:** Regarding the list, we're a small, non-profit organization. We have lists of donors, volunteers and member organizations, and those are the kinds of lists that I have at hand and that I was able to provide.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** What kind of timeline did you have to provide that kind of list? What turnaround time did you have?

**Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn:** I'm trying to remember. I think we had three or four days to compile from our folks in the Toronto area and Ontario who was potentially to be invited.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Okay. I wanted to drill down a little bit on what Mr. Balan said.

You commented that it's important for us to not overreact or follow with that knee-jerk reaction when we hear about and deal with these major incidents. I liked hearing about that reconciliation effort you were discussing with Mr. Kmiec.

Have there been similar efforts here in Canada to reconcile or go through these reconciliation efforts in terms of the difficult histories we deal with?

**Mr. Jars Balan:** Not on a formal basis...if you're talking about with the Jewish community. We, of course, interact with the Jewish community and the subject is still fraught. The whole subject of the Second World War is still fraught. I should say that, in Ukraine, there's been a lot of progress within Ukrainian society. The discussion of these sensitive issues is taking place, especially with the younger generation. They're a little bit removed from the immediate situation and see things more objectively and calmly.

However, I think this is something that we can work towards going forward: conducting these discussions in a respectful manner based on scholarly research and shared information to arrive at some kind of improvement in our dealings with this whole issue. There's always room for improvement; there's no doubt.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** We can always do better—that's true.

In terms of those reconciliation efforts, then.... I'm trying to combine a couple of questions that I have. I wanted to hear a bit more because, after all of this occurred and as we go forward, the Ukrainian community in Canada are dealing with a lot. What are the overall sentiments? What happened after and how are we moving past that now?

Also, I would like to know in terms of those reconciliation efforts, who do you think would be best to lead that? Within this committee, as we move forward with recommendations, how could we as the Government of Canada support those reconciliation efforts?

**Mr. Jars Balan:** I could answer that. Our Canadian institute of Ukrainian studies is in discussions, obviously, with the university administration, and they are in discussion with the Jewish community. We are working towards some kind of a series of research initiatives, discussions, on these topics. Nothing final has been decided yet, but there are signs that there is progress on that and I'm sure that things will move forward.

What we need to do is take this off the media front pages, because it's impossible to discuss complicated and sensitive issues like this in the daily media. It simply is impossible. We need to take down the temperature. We need to move it off to the side where calm discussions can take place. The academic arena is probably the best place for this.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** In terms of both initial reactions and the reactions now from the greater community...?

**Mr. Jars Balan:** The community is frustrated. Ukraine is in an existential struggle at this moment, as we speak, and this is a distraction.

This is, as Mr. Michalchyshyn pointed out, an issue that has come back repeatedly because the Soviet government, and now the Russian government, have invested heavily in continuing to open these wounds and drive wedges. They've been doing this for decades and decades, since the end of the war.

It's very disappointing to see a situation arise again where this has blown up and is being continually fed, even to this day. Articles keep appearing in the paper, rehashing the same issues. They're not providing anything new but are just keeping the issue in the public because it serves Russian interests to create this narrative that the Ukrainian government is a Nazi regime, which is absurd and white-washes the past. All of this sort of stuff is simply untrue, but it keeps coming up again and again.

• (1150)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Mathysen comes in at six minutes and one second.

We're going to do a quick second round. Please stay within it so that we can move on to our second panel. They will be five-minute rounds.

I will start with Mr. Kmiec, followed by Mrs. Romanado.

Mr. Kmiec, you have five minutes.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

This is for both the witnesses.

Would you say it's accurate that the reason this is making front page news and is still being talked about today is that the office of the Speaker and the Prime Minister's Office screwed up by not vetting people and by allowing a process that is not followed, that is not the usual practice, and had someone recognized in that manner during a state visit by a close ally of Canada?

**Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn:** Vladimir Putin is raising it over and over again. We see certain media raising it, as Jars has said.

We think that the whole way that the Speaker proceeded on this needs to be reviewed as you are reviewing it. Unfortunately, we're being pulled, along with other communities, into something that is harmful to all of us.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** I'm sorry, Mr. Michalchyshyn.

Would you say that the Speaker was at fault and that it is his fault that the story is still public?

**Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn:** He's written us a letter to apologize for it, so I believe, from what he's written to us, that he's taking responsibility for it.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** What about the Office of the Prime Minister? Have they written to apologize to you?

**Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn:** No, I have not received that kind of letter from them.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Okay.

Has there been any effort made by either the current Speaker's office or the Prime Minister's Office in the last few weeks or months to reach out to you, or do you know if they have reached out to the Polish Congress and to Jewish communities across Canada, to do that act of reconciliation to fix this and fix the reputation of Canada, and also fix the reputation of Ukrainians across Canada, the reputation of the Polish Congress and the reputation of Jewish people? We've all been drawn into the propaganda war being waged by the Russian Federation.

Would you say that the blame lies with the Speaker's office and also with the Prime Minister's Office?

**Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn:** There are a lot of questions in there.

I want to go back to something that Jars was speaking about, the Ukrainian Jewish Encounter, which is another community function, another community group, that's working on it.

I think that with the politicization of Ukraine, we really want unanimity. We want the Speaker's letter to stand in terms of what his actions were and weren't, and I think that our community is looking to move forward in partnership with other communities to build a narrative of dialogue, as we always have.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Mr. Michalchyshyn, is it fair to say, then, that the Prime Minister's Office has not reached out to you and has not communicated with you, and that the Speaker's office has not communicated with you since the incident—apart from the apology of the Speaker's office—to try to perhaps do an act of reconciliation in Canada, like the Polish government and the Ukrainian government at the very highest levels have done, including church leaders on both sides, to reconcile with the past, to forgive and ask for forgiveness, and then to use that as a good news story going forward?

This would be a non-story if the Prime Minister's Office had done its job and if the Speaker had done his job. Is that fair?

**Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn:** There are a lot of questions in there that you've asked me.

I think that what has happened, as we said after the incident, is that our community faced a barrage of accusations and questions in the media. We saw politicians from various sides, but particularly from one perspective, calling this man and our community names, which has upset us a great deal.

We're here to share with you our opinion, to share with you our experience and to say that we are working with communities. I can't speak on behalf of the government and what their strategy is or isn't, but through the Ukrainian Jewish Encounter and through the centre for Ukrainian studies that Mr. Balan works for, we are doing what we can to work through these issues.

What we're here to say is that this narrative keeps coming up, and it is upsetting to us that politicians and media have bought into it, have not questioned it and have sort of gone—

• (1155)

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** I'm sorry, Mr. Michalchyshyn. You'll forgive me for interrupting. Next time we meet, you can interrupt me more often.

Chair, I'm going to take that as a no—that the Prime Minister's Office has not reached out and that the new Speaker's office has not reached out to the Ukrainian Canadian Congress to attempt to reconcile with what happened.

Those two offices both bear final responsibility for putting your community in Canada in the crosshairs of a Russian propaganda machine, which is waging war on the diaspora community in Canada as part of the war that they're waging against the people of Ukraine.

**The Chair:** Is there a brief response from anyone?

**Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn:** I have outlined who has reached out to us. We've had a letter from the Speaker apologizing for his role.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

That was five minutes and 20 seconds.

Mrs. Romanado, you have five minutes, through the chair.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Through you, I'd like to thank the witnesses for being with us today. While I haven't had a chance to meet you in person, it's a pleasure to meet you in committee.

You may or may not know that my oldest son deployed to Ukraine in 2018 as part of Operation Unifier. He helped train Ukrainian forces to defend themselves. It's a real pleasure to be with you today.

With respect to questions on procedure internally, obviously the people best placed to answer those questions are the internal people you've also been meeting with as part of this study.

I wanted to connect with you with respect to your comments about knee-jerk reactions.

I'll walk you through how things happen in the House. As my colleague, Mr. Kmiec, mentioned, this was not a regular sitting of the House. This was a special event for which a dignitary was here. Based on previous testimony from the Clerk, we heard that normally in these kinds of instances, a member of the visitors gallery would not be recognized by the Speaker. This was something that normally is not done, and obviously is something that we're going to look at going forward in terms of protocol.

When that does happen in a regular sitting, the Speaker will recognize someone in the gallery and invite members to stand. We assume that the Speaker has done the proper vetting and the person or people being recognized are worthy. We're talking about moments or seconds. We stand, we recognize whoever's being recognized by the Speaker and we applaud.

Then, going through the weekend, we heard the reports coming and the media headlines. Even coming to the meeting today I saw some of the media headlines referencing Mr. Hunka in a different term.

I wanted to get feedback from you. How has this hurt the Ukrainian community?

I want to give you an opportunity to help because we all want to learn from this. There's also an opportunity to learn about the history of Ukraine's fight during World War II. I wanted to give you a little bit of an opportunity to share that with Canadians watching today, if you'd like to share anything with us.

**Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn:** Jars, do you want to start?

**Mr. Jars Balan:** Obviously, there's a long-standing Russian imperial narrative and a Soviet narrative about Ukraine and Ukrainians that we're struggling against. Our institute, for instance, studies the history of Ukraine, which is a battlefield from beginning to end. We're small in number and we have limited resources, but we do what we can.

One thing we would certainly welcome is the federal government wanting to provide some financing to bring together the Ukrainian, Jewish and Polish communities that were affected, in order to undertake some kind of reconciliation process. That would be very welcome within the community. Right now, as Ihor mentioned, the Ukrainian Jewish Encounter is doing their job as best they can with their resources.

We are tasked with studying the entirety of Ukrainian history. Ukraine also has to deal with rewriting its own history or telling its own story, because these narratives have been written over Ukrainians for centuries, and they're struggling with gradually challenging and correcting this colonial legacy. It's a slow and complicated process. We should remember that World War II is just one part of it.

If the federal government wanted to provide a push in this direction, I think it would be welcomed by all the communities, not just the Ukrainian community.

● (1200)

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** That's an excellent recommendation. Thank you for that.

Mr. Michalchyshyn, do you have anything you would like to add with respect to how we can learn from this mistake? Also, is there any message you would like to share with Canadians?

**Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn:** To back up what Jars was saying, the communities have used the Ukrainian Jewish Encounter and other academic mechanisms to try to work together. Certainly, we have a good working relationship with those communities. There's only so much communities can do at a certain level. As I said, in terms of our desire to work together for April—genocide remembrance month—we've had much co-operation in the past with all sorts of partners involved in that. We look forward to continuing to work with them.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

You're coming in at five minutes and 15 seconds.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Gaudreau, you have the floor.

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

Since I don't have much time, I have just one question.

Mr. Balan, we've heard the desire to rehabilitate Ukrainian history, and we've also heard that there's misinformation. I'm not a historian, but I'd like to understand a little more about the myth surrounding the "Galicia" division, which has been so persistent for 70 years. I'd like to hear your opinion.

[English]

**Mr. Jars Balan:** Could I answer that quickly?

I have a box somewhere in my office—it's kind of messy, as you can see—of Soviet propaganda leaflets put out in the fifties, sixties, seventies and into the eighties. They're booklets cheaply printed and mass-produced on a whole variety of issues, but World War II is a big one. Many of them have sensational titles like “Nazi Werewolves of the SS” or whatever. All propaganda contains a mixture of facts, half-truths and out-and-out fabrications and lies. It's hard to sort anything out from them. Money has been invested in this process for decades by the Soviet government and now by the Russian government. It's something we have to deal with.

Again, it's not easy, because the nuances are complicated and the history is complicated. There is also moral ambiguity. Some Ukrainians point out that the allies signed an agreement with the Soviets to fight against the Germans. This was after they knew that Stalin was a mass murderer—after the Soviets and Nazis started the Second World War—but it was in our interest to do that. You can question the morality of it, or whatever, but it was done. Why is that okay and other things aren't?

These are issues that need to be looked at in a serious way. I think we can move ahead in partnership with the communities that were affected—the Polish and Jewish communities, and other eastern European communities. There's the Roma community that also suffered terribly. I'm optimistic that, even through this process, things will turn the corner.

[Translation]

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

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[English]

Ms. Mathysen.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to drill down a little bit on those lists one more time. Can I get final clarification on whether there were any qualifiers or conditions placed by the PMO on the lists you provided in terms of who could be an invitee?

**Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn:** We were asked to provide community members for an event in Toronto, which we did. There was no reason that anybody who would be a donor or a community volunteer or a participant would be excluded from that kind of list.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Okay. Great.

In terms of that larger disinformation, which we're seeing across the United States in terms of funding for humanitarian aid, we're worried about that here in Canada, absolutely. Can you provide us with any further recommendations? I was really glad to get into that on the funds requested for reconciliation. Do you have any further recommendations you can provide to us today on that broader question of disinformation as we go forward and as part of this study?

• (1205)

**Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn:** Go ahead, Jars.

**Mr. Jars Balan:** My understanding is that there is a commission investigating interference in Canadian elections. I think that's a useful discussion to have, because it is going on.

Could you refresh my memory on the first part of your question?

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** It was about what we're seeing unfold in the United States and even here in terms of misinformation and disinformation. I'm glad you brought up the commission on foreign interference as well. I appreciate that.

**Mr. Jars Balan:** I would just say that the Jewish community has its hands full right now too with what's going on in the Middle East. I'm sure that this is a distraction in some ways for them too. We all have an interest in making progress on it.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Thank you, Chair.

**The Chair:** Excellent.

With that, I would like to thank you both for taking the time to join us today at the procedure and House affairs committee. Should something come up that you would like members to consider, please do not hesitate to send it to the clerk. We'll have it translated in both official languages and circulate it around.

Your time and attention means a lot to us. We wish you a good rest of the day.

With that, colleagues, I will suspend the meeting. We'll start back up in less than five minutes with the second panel.

• (1205)

(Pause)

• (1210)

**The Chair:** Welcome back to meeting number 110 of the procedure and House affairs committee.

I had mentioned earlier that this was the first time we were studying this matter, but it is actually the second time. I was mistaken.

With that, we're really excited to have our next panel. Appearing as an individual is Professor Lubomyr Luciuk, department of political science, Royal Military College of Canada. We also have with us Richard Marceau, vice-president, external affairs and general counsel, Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs.

As we've been working out the calendar, we've had some changes. You have my apologies that we have had to reschedule you a couple of times, which means the opening comments time has varied and changed. Because we have done that, I will be providing some leniency. I will let you for the most part go on with your comments. When you see me starting to wave, I would like them to come to an end, but at the same time, you are our guests and we really appreciate your taking the time to be here with us today.

With that, Professor, we'll start with you. The floor is yours. Welcome to PROC.

**Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk (Professor, Department of Political Science and Economics, Royal Military College of Canada, As an Individual):** Thank you.

Thank you for inviting me, and thank you for your time.

The title of my presentation is *Cui bono?* or “Who benefits?” I'm not going to read it. I'm going to simply speak to some of the points, but I believe you've all received it in both official languages.

At the invitation of the Speaker of the House of Commons, Yaroslav Hunka was present in the House during the visit to Canada of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. When it was subsequently reported on left-wing blogs that Mr. Hunka had served in the 14th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS, more commonly referred to as the Galicia Division, a controversy erupted that has continued to fester to this day.

Now, there are a few things I want to point out right at the start.

I don't know Mr. Hunka. I've never met him.

Second, my mother was kidnapped as a teenager and brought to the Third Reich as a slave labourer during the Second World War, so I have absolutely no interest in defending any Nazi who may still be alive. Let's be very clear about that.

I was, however, also a member of the Civil Liberties Commission representing the Ukrainian Canadian community during the commission inquiry on war criminals, so I think I'm one of the only people in this room who was there and was part of the investigation that examined the allegations that thousands of Nazi war criminals had somehow managed to get into Canada.

I was present in the lockdown with the Minister of Justice, Ramon Hnatyshyn, when he revealed the commission's findings to the Baltic, Jewish and Ukrainian communities. Along with a representative of the Canadian Jewish Congress, Irwin Cotler, whom you all know, I appeared on the CBC program *The Journal* with Barbara Frum on March 12, 1987, and welcomed the findings of the Deschênes commission.

At that time, our community had a suspicion that Soviet agents and their fellow travellers in the west had provoked this controversy over the alleged presence of thousands of Nazi war criminals in North America. Only recently, we have come up with documentary evidence. There was a 1985 KGB document describing something called “operation payback”, which was a disinformation campaign started in the 1970s intended to stoke tensions between the Jewish, Baltic and Ukrainian diasporas. That subterfuge worked very well at the time, and it works well to this day. In fact, it is now being deployed to distract attention from Russia's genocidal war against Ukraine and Ukrainians.

I'm not going to go into the position of the Ukrainian Canadian community on bringing war criminals to justice. That's already been explained. Unfortunately, Canada has never properly investigated how alleged Soviet and Communist war criminals and collaborators managed to get into this country. Some did, even individuals who openly boasted of what they had done on behalf of the Stalinist regime in the ranks of the NKVD, Smersh and KGB. Government records about all those persons should also now be made available.

Now let's look at the evidence with respect to Mr. Hunka.

First of all, Mr. Hunka was never a Nazi. He was never a former Nazi. No Ukrainian could ever be a member of the National Socialist German Workers' Party, the Nazis, because Ukrainians, like all other Slavs, were considered to be subhumans. They weren't Aryans. They were subhumans, *Untermenschen*, so they could never be Nazis.

Every individual who served in the armed forces of the Third Reich during the Second World War, and that's millions of people in total, was obliged to swear an oath to Adolf Hitler. That, obviously, did not make them all into Nazis, including about a quarter of a million Germans who immigrated to Canada in the 1950s.

Indisputably, Mr. Hunka served with the Galicia Division. Why? Why did he enlist? I found a letter in my research that he wrote on September 22, 2015, years before there was any controversy about him. In that, he provides an explanation about why he joined. He volunteered as a young man, as a teenager, in western Ukraine after the first Soviet occupation of that region. Between mid-September 1939 and late June 1941, Mr. Hunka witnessed massacres perpetrated by the Soviets against innocent civilians. He witnessed the deportation of family members to Siberia, where some of them died, so, as he wrote, “I hated everything Russian”. That's what he wrote years ago.

He joined and he served to the end of the war. He was interned in Rimini in northeastern Italy after the war, and we'll come back to that in a moment.

When the Deschênes commission in 1985 through 1987 investigated the issue of alleged Nazi war criminals in Canada, it came to a number of specific conclusions about the Galicia Division that everyone seems to have forgotten. One was that the division, the Galicia Division, should not be indicted as a group. Two was that members of the division had been screened. Indeed, they were screened by the British, by the Americans and by the Canadians, including people I personally knew, and even by the Soviets.

- (1215)

Charges of war crimes against members of the division were never substantiated. In the absence of knowledge or evidence of specific war crimes, Mr. Justice Deschênes said, “mere membership in the Galicia Division is insufficient to justify prosecution.”

He also concluded that, because these people had come to Canada after 1950 with the full knowledge of the Government of Canada and Canadian authorities were aware of who these men were, they could not have their citizenship revoked because it had been granted to them normally through the naturalization process.

What does all that mean with respect to Mr. Hunka? It means simply that he came to Canada legally in 1954. His wartime record with the Galicia Division was well known, and no one complained.

Now, I'm going to underscore that there were, understandably, concerns raised by the Canadian Jewish Congress in the autumn of 1950: Who are these people? Why are they being allowed to come to Canada? In fact, the government, at the cabinet level, asked the High Commissioner of Canada in the United Kingdom, L. Dana Wilgress, to investigate this. He did, and he dismissed those allegations about the Galicia Division as being nothing but Communist propaganda. As he also added in his report to cabinet, "it is interesting to note that no specific charges of war crimes have been made" by the Soviet or any other government "against any member of this group". That rather astute assessment seems to have been forgotten.

What am I here to do today? As I said, I don't know Mr. Hunka, but when I look at the facts of his life, here's what I find.

As a teenager, he fought in defence of Ukraine because of what he had witnessed the Soviets do to Ukrainians between 1939 and 1941. He had nothing to do with the persecution of any minority group. At the war's end, he became a prisoner of war. Later, he became an immigrant and, finally, a naturalized Canadian citizen. He served in the Canadian Army, in the militia, from 1963 to 1965, and he swore an oath to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. He worked hard, he raised a family, he paid his taxes, he broke no laws that I'm aware of in Canada and he contributed for 70 years to the general welfare of his adopted country. However, disregarding the principles of natural justice, many members of Parliament from all parties denounced Yaroslav Hunka for being something he never was—a Nazi.

The fundamental principle of our justice system, ladies and gentlemen, is that a person is innocent until proven guilty. Given that there is no evidence of any kind of any wartime criminality on the part of Mr. Hunka, I'd like to say that the House of Commons owes an innocent man, and our fellow Canadian, a public apology.

Thank you.

• (1220)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marceau, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Richard Marceau (Vice-President, External Affairs and General Counsel, Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the members for inviting me.

Allow me to provide a bit of context for the discussion we're having today, because it's important. The context is a significant increase in anti-Semitism in Canada. Just this week, La Presse published an anti-Semitic cartoon that it had to withdraw, and it apologized for publishing it.

[*English*]

A theatre in Hamilton, the Playhouse Cinema, cancelled the Hamilton Jewish Film Festival under pressure. One of your colleagues, NDP MP Brian Masse, had to apologize for his comment in the House linking a ceasefire in Gaza with tackling anti-Semitism here.

The Toronto police released their numbers regarding hate and saw a 93% rise in hate crimes in Toronto since October 7, the majority of which targeted the Jewish community. I could add that the Jewish community had to get an injunction in Montreal to protect its institutions, including a community centre, a school and a synagogue. I could talk about the demonstrations against synagogues in Thornhill, Montreal and other places.

This is the context and it is important to know this.

[*Translation*]

Now, what are we talking about? We're talking here about the invitation extended to Yaroslav Hunka, a veteran of the 14th grenadier division of the Waffen-SS during the Second World War. Let's be clear: This was a volunteer unit of the Waffen-SS, which the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg said was, as a whole, a criminal organization that organized the mass murder of Jews during the Second World War. So we're not talking about an organization like the Knights of Columbus or the Club Riche-lieu.

This man was officially recognized and introduced in the House of Commons by the Speaker of the House and was given a standing ovation. It made headlines around the world. The House of Commons, the heart of Canadian democracy, was sullied by this event, not only by the presence of this man but also by the standing ovation he received. Also, of course, it served the Russian propaganda of Vladimir Putin, who is in the middle of an illegal war against our Ukrainian allies. That's important to note as well. So it was an embarrassment for Canada on the international stage.

[*English*]

Inviting Hunka hurt deeply Holocaust survivors, their families and Jewish Canadians, and I would say that it hurt all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

We know that the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons didn't deliberately invite a former member of the Waffen-SS to be applauded in the House of Commons, but rather that it was an oversight.

[*English*]

This was a failure of vetting and a failure of due diligence. However, this is not an isolated incident.

In December 2022, a reception was held here in Parliament by the Canada-Palestine Parliamentary Friendship Group. Among the attendees was a man named Nazih Khatatba.

Who is this Mr. Khatatba?

He was—at the time at least—the editor of a publication that called the Holocaust a hoax and referred to Judaism as a terrorist religion. His publication spoke approvingly in 2014 of the synagogue massacre in Jerusalem in which Canadian citizen Chaim Rotman was murdered with an axe while at prayer. This man, Khatatba, no more than Hunka, shouldn't have been invited to Parliament.

• (1225)

[Translation]

I repeat: Parliament, as the institution at the heart of Canadian democracy, must do better to prevent such people from being invited.

[English]

Think about it. We sent a man to the moon 50 years ago. I'm sure we can do a better job of vetting people who are welcomed into Parliament.

I know that time flies, Madam Speaker.

[Translation]

We ask you, Madam Chair and committee members, to implement effective controls to ensure that such incidents never happen again. You can't just react to the most recent incident.

[English]

Having people like Hunka in Parliament sends a terrible message to the Jews of Canada. He was a member of the Waffen-SS. Having people like Khatatba in Parliament is also unacceptable.

Members of Parliament, what you say in this place matters. What you do in this place matters. Who you let into this place matters. Please ensure that similar incidents don't happen again.

[Translation]

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[English]

Once again, as per the previous panel, I'm going to ask that one person speak at a time and ask that we have a respectful dialogue with our guests and between members.

We will do five-minute rounds again, starting with Mr. Kmiec, followed by Ms. O'Connell,

[Translation]

Then we have Ms. Gaudreau and Ms. Mathysen.

[English]

It will be five minutes through the chair, Mr. Kmiec.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I think this is the first time that I've been at a panel where I have actually read books by both panellists.

Professor Luciuk, I've read *Operation Payback* and a series of articles you've written on the subject.

[Translation]

Mr. Marceau, I've also read your book, *Juif: une histoire québécoise*, which recounts your conversion to Judaism and your story as a former Bloc Québécois MP.

Thank you both for being here.

[English]

Obviously, you bring very different perspectives to the issue. I bring a different perspective as well. The whole incident that happened in September, I'm sure, was as difficult for your families as it was for mine. I had a lot of explaining to do to my family about exactly what I knew, when I knew it and how I knew it. We're not here to relitigate World War II and what happened to different communities that were given very few choices. Larger forces were at play and people were deciding for our communities what was to happen and what wasn't to happen. I'm sure you and your families.... I have family who didn't survive the war. I have family members who spent time in camps.

What I want to understand is how we can reconcile the communities here. President Zelensky and President Duda have, for years, been doing reconciliation work on war crimes committed in what Poland calls the "borderlands", which would be the regions around Lviv, Volhynia and Galicia in Ukraine.

What can we do now, going forward, to reconcile three diaspora communities in Canada? That's so, one, we never embarrass one of our allies again and, most importantly, we never provide the Russian Federation a propaganda win, which they can keep using against our ally Ukraine and against the diaspora communities in Canada. It's so this "operation payback" doesn't continue.

Perhaps Professor Luciuk could go first.

[Translation]

Mr. Marceau, you can go second.

[English]

**Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk:** The kinds of efforts that have been made between the presidents of Poland and Ukraine are commendable. They will continue. I know there are colleagues of mine in Ukraine who are working on these very issues. As was stated earlier, having academics and scholars take a second look and think about things based on archival evidence, not emotion, is a very good and welcome thing. That's happening in Ukraine and eastern Europe, more generally. Today, one of Ukraine's greatest friends, as we all know, is Poland—as well as Canada—in terms of supplying Ukraine with the kind of support it needs to fend off the invading Russians.

In Canada, what we all need to do is, as was stated earlier, take a second look. What happened to Mr. Hunka? Where's the evidence that he was guilty of anything other than membership in the Galicia Division? He explained how, as a teenager, watching his family members being deported to Siberia, where some were murdered, going into prisons in western Ukraine and Berezany in the latter part of June 1941, and seeing mutilated women.... I'm not going to go into the descriptions. They're in my brief and they're pretty grotesque.

How can we, in 2024, say that what a teenager saw and then did out of hatred for the people who did it is wrong, particularly when there's no evidence that he himself was involved in any kind of war crime or crime against humanity?

● (1230)

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** I'm sorry, Professor Luciuk. I have limited time. Mr. Marceau can jump in, so I can get a response. I'll ask you the next question.

**Mr. Richard Marceau:** Thank you very much for the question.

My late wife was of Jewish Polish origin. A few years ago, I got a call from the Polish embassy. They wanted to award me the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland for work I did regarding the maintenance of the Auschwitz camp so that it stays as a monument to man's inhumanity to man. I asked my wife, "Should I accept it?" She said, "Absolutely", because that is one step towards reconciliation. "Do this and continue the work of reconciliation with the Polish community and Poland." Then I did it. Those little gestures, I think, matter.

In Canada, I would say the relationship between the Ukrainian and Jewish communities, despite the troubled past, is actually quite good. Both the Ukrainian and Jewish communities are facing crises now. I'll make this very short. I can tell you that, when Russia started its war, the Jewish community mobilized to help welcome refugees from Ukraine, and we're grateful for the support the community has given to the Jewish community now. I think this is the kind of work we should build on.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

Our time is very limited, and we like the substance, but I would just ask that we try to be—

[Translation]

**Mr. Richard Marceau:** I'm doing my best, Madam Chair.

[English]

**The Chair:** Madam O'Connell, you have five minutes—through the chair.

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

Through you, Madam Chair, Professor Luciuk, my colleague Mr. Kmiec just said, we will never provide a propaganda win for Russia again. However, if we think back to what transpired after Mr. Hunka's gallery appearance and the conduct in the House by Conservatives—and by all parties, to be fair—for Conservative members to now suggest that we can't provide Russian propaganda a win, when in fact some of their own tweets and responses were actually used by Russia to further propaganda, I can only imagine how hurtful and harmful this is to the Jewish community and certainly to Holocaust survivors to see that heightened.

Could you speak to the propaganda that was actually perpetrated by the House reaction, by some members more than others, and actually used by Russia?

**Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk:** I can say that I had a friend, Stefan Petelycky, whose Auschwitz tattoo number was 154922. I helped him prepare his memoirs for publication, and they're now available, so I heard a great deal about what happened at Auschwitz and by who and to whom.

From people like that and the people I interviewed for my doctoral dissertation, I learned not to pick sides, so I'm not going to pick sides on that question.

I will say that I, as a Canadian of Ukrainian heritage, was disappointed by the reaction of many members in the House of Commons, from all parties. I have a list of quotations here from every party; I made sure. I'm not going to read those into the record, but the point is that it was a knee-jerk reaction. You were all on a high because President Zelenskyy had come here, and we all recognize him as Ukraine's Moses. This is a man who is leading his people, his nation, the Ukrainian nation out of Russian Soviet bondage. He himself is of Jewish heritage. This is what he is doing, and this is why Putin is pushing back so hard. Putin is the pharaoh. He has just made himself immortal in terms of the "election". He is going to be there longer than Stalin was.

We had a Ukrainian president here. You all welcomed him. You all applauded him, and in that euphoria, a man from North Bay, in a wheelchair, wearing an embroidered Ukrainian shirt was introduced. He just wanted to see his president, for whom he fought in the sense that he fought for Ukraine's independence.

Then the next day the left-wing press got onto it and said, "Oh, he's an SS man", and then people ran with it. There wasn't a single media report that I could find that took a different position, not one. There wasn't a single member of Parliament who paused and thought and said, "Maybe I should read a book. Maybe I should think about this."

Most of you are a lot younger than I am, and the reality of it is that you might not know these things, but everyone rushed to condemn because it's so easy to say, "SS man, Nazi" and someone even elevated him to being an SS officer. He got promoted by the MP who said that.

Mr. Hunka was never a Nazi. There is no evidence that he did anything wrong. He's an innocent Canadian, yet he was condemned. He was condemned by people in every party, so, please, drop the partisan part of this.

How do you get beyond this? That was one of the questions from both of you. You get beyond this by thinking before you speak. You get beyond this by not falling prey to Soviet disinformation regurgitated by the Russian Federation and their operatives in Canada and their fellow travellers, of whom there are more than a few. They're very good at this, and they suckered you.

● (1235)

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** I have a question following along that line. We're seeing the propaganda increase. We're starting to see now a campaign on Facebook and from others who are starting to say, "Just got my taxes done in Canada. I owe Ukraine \$14,000."

Professor Luciuk, just following on your last comment, do you see that the harmful rhetoric is increasing in this country through Russian propaganda?

**Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk:** Yes. Both in the United States and in Canada, these kinds of reactions are occurring, and they're very harmful.

Ukraine is, literally, fighting against the genocidal legend of the KGB man in the Kremlin. We need to do everything we can to support Ukraine now, because Ukraine is fighting for the free world. I think we all know that—Conservatives, Liberals, New Democrats and the Green Party. We all know that, so support Ukraine. Don't fall for Soviet Russian disinformation.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay.

[*Translation*]

There are five seconds left.

[*English*]

**Mr. Richard Marceau:** Two things can be true at the same time. Yes, there's Russian propaganda. Yes, Ukraine is fighting for its life. A man was also honoured in Parliament who was a member of the Waffen-SS.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Gaudreau, you have the floor.

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

As I said earlier, our committee would like to understand what happened. We want to get to the bottom of this because in no case do we want this to happen again.

I can't ignore the entire parliamentary experience of our witness. In light of what he said, I would really like to have some suggestions. I'm sure the witness has some suggestions.

Mr. Marceau, what do we need to do?

**Mr. Richard Marceau:** First, we have to assume our responsibilities. As an institution, the House of Commons must assume its responsibilities, and I include in that the members themselves, as well as the administration. When invitations are issued to people, there must be a process to check the list of people who are invited. It's essential to do so.

Second, when members invite people from their riding to a reception, for example, members must take some responsibility to ensure that the people who are invited aren't people who will harm the parliamentary institution. We have the example of Mr. Hunka and the reception I was talking about earlier, which caused a lot of embarrassment to the House of Commons.

There's a way to check someone's history on the Internet to make sure that person doesn't have a past or even a present that poses a problem, because when this kind of problem occurs, Parliament as a whole is tarnished.

As you said, after spending about nine years here, I hold this House in very high esteem. As people who believe in democracy and politics, we don't need this kind of incident.

• (1240)

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Thank you very much.

I'm going to make an observation about my thinking. So far, today, we're seeing that there's no historical consensus on the issue. How do we get a handle on this? As I said earlier, I'm not a historian. How can we reconcile these two tragic stories? I'd like to hear your comments on that.

[*English*]

**Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk:** History, like any other discipline, has schools of thought and different opinions. You need to base yourself on evidence.

Mere membership in the Galicia Division, as Justice Deschênes concluded back in 1987, is insufficient for prosecution. Membership in the Galicia Division is not a crime, according to Justice Deschênes.

These people were screened. There's been no evidence put forward that Mr. Hunka, whom we're talking about, committed any crimes. However, my colleague has suggested this man shouldn't have been in Parliament. Why? Why not? It's because he was a member of the Galicia Division. Okay, so there's a difference of opinion there.

The fact is that we had a commission of inquiry established by the Government of Canada, which continued for nearly two years. It was a very difficult period of time, I can assure you. The Canadian Jewish Congress, B'nai Brith and the Ukrainian Canadian Congress were all represented there. They had standing before that commission, and we welcomed the results.

Thirty-seven years later, you can't say that you don't like the results. You can't say that this Canadian can't come to Parliament because I disagree with his opinions or this Canadian can't come to Parliament because I find him disagreeable.

Just going on Google or Wikipedia and searching for information is pretty fraught, I would think. I'm not sure you'd invite me.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** I don't have much time left, Madam Chair, and I'd really like to hear the comments of the witness, Mr. Marceau.

**Mr. Richard Marceau:** Just a few days ago, I would remind you that there was talk of a monument honouring this division of the Waffen-SS and located in a Ukrainian cemetery in Oakville. St. Volodymyr Cemetery has confirmed that this monument has been removed, in agreement with the Jewish community and the Ukrainian community. Even within the two communities, there's a realization that there's a historical problem surrounding this division.

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

[*English*]

**Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk:** May I speak to that, Madam Chair?

**The Chair:** Please make it short.

**Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk:** A cemetery monument on private property in Oakville was removed a few days ago because it had been vandalized repeatedly by unknown individuals. The cemetery board, unfortunately, capitulated to criminal vandalism.

I'm sorry. That's not an agreement.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Mathysen.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Thank you.

Mr. Marceau, you talked about that vetting process in terms of who's allowed into Parliament and so on.

In the first meeting we had on this study, it was made very clear by all those involved with security, protocol and so on that this was not done. The Speaker did his own thing. It didn't go through the proper channels. Obviously, we need to determine that this needs to be corrected as a protocol, despite who was involved. You also talked about that meeting of the Palestinian friendship group and letting somebody in. I, too, was very upset that this occurred—not wanting to allow that kind of access.

My question is this. There are a lot of events on the Hill. They are held by members of Parliament. They are held by groups. They are held by organizations such as CJA itself. How do we truly do a good job of vetting when there are so many things happening? Is that solely upon the government? Is that solely upon our own security personnel? Is that to be a responsibility of the groups that are running these events as well?

How do you think that should play out?

• (1245)

**Mr. Richard Marceau:** No group can hold a reception here without being sponsored by a member of Parliament. Therefore, the member of Parliament who's sponsoring a reception holds part of the responsibility for who comes in. That is why, with this event you referred to, the fact that you had a Holocaust denier invited was very problematic.

With all due respect to this committee and to every member of Parliament, what I said earlier, I really meant. What you do in this place matters. What you say in this place matters.

Ms. Mathysen, I have to say that when you stand in the House with a pendant of Palestine that erases the state of Israel, it is felt by the Jewish community—

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Madam Chair, that is not—

**The Chair:** I am going to pause.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** You were very specific.

**The Chair:** I am going to pause, once again, for the third time today.

It's a very tough conversation. It's a very difficult conversation. I provide a lot of leniency. However, it's very clear why we are here.

Mr. Marceau, respectfully, I've provided leniency within your comments. I do hear it when people say, "How is this relevant?", but for guests, I do provide some leniency. However, the way this

place works—and that's why we're trying to make it better—is that it is the member's time. The member will ask questions and guests who are invited to come answer those questions to the best of their ability. That's how it works here.

We can try to improve this institution. We are all for it. However, the member's question was what needs to be addressed. That's why we're here. That's the invitation that was received and that's the invitation we're acting upon.

Therefore, please, I ask all of you.... I know we want to finish this round in its completion, which means the Conservatives and the Liberals will get another few minutes at the end. I would like to not interrupt again.

I'm giving the floor back to Ms. Mathysen.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** I did ask a very specific question in terms of how we make that vetting process better in relation to your specific testimony, so I ask that you respectfully limit your comments to that vetting process.

**Mr. Richard Marceau:** I have nothing to add.

**Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk:** Perhaps I can add something to that. I think using open sources is a very difficult way of adjudicating who might be allowed into Parliament. We all know people we disagree with or who we find disagreeable. Using open sources, which are polluted with misinformation, is not a good way of keeping someone in or out. I would be very upset if.... I mean, I could see people looking me up and saying, "No, we don't want him." Some people disagree with the opinions I've taken on a number of issues, so am I acceptable?

Again I say, could Mr. Hunka, who has never been charged with anything, come back tomorrow as one of your guests? You're suggesting that he can't. Why not? What has he done? The vetting process....

My colleague just whispered in my ear "Waffen-SS". Read the Deschênes commission report. I think you were a teenager when I was standing in front of Deschênes. If you read the report, he addresses the issue of the Waffen-SS in Nuremberg, which did not mention the Galicia Division—not specifically, at any rate.

I think we need to understand that Parliament has to hear disagreeable opinions. It has to hear from people you may find disagreeable. That's your job. Then you make your decisions. I agree with my colleague: What is said matters, and what you decide matters, but you have to hear and you have to read.

• (1250)

**The Chair:** You have 10 seconds left.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Does Mr. Marceau have anything further to add?

**Mr. Richard Marceau:** No. I mentioned the importance of properly vetting.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I will say that when it comes to these kinds of conversations, whether it's whispering in our guests' ears or whatever else, if we could just go through the chair, that would be the best. I would appreciate that being the case. It would help maintain the decorum in what we need to do here today.

With that, we'll go to Mr. Kmiec.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** How much time do I have, Madam Chair?

**The Chair:** You have five minutes.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Okay. I will try to be judicious with my time.

I think the question is about who should get recognized in Parliament and who should not. You can invite all types of people. I think the second part of the issue that this committee has been tasked with is to figure out how we go about fixing the reputation of Canada—fixing the reputation that we damaged. As a group, as a collective, because of the actions of the Speaker and the lack of action by the Office of the Prime Minister, we damaged President Zelenskyy's reputation. We allowed it to then be used by Russian propaganda to go after him.

We've talked about sources. The Polish Institute of National Remembrance—Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation found that in the village of Huta Pieniacka, a massacre was indeed committed. The 14th was involved. Ethnic cleansing was done against 100,000 Polish people. That is why the Polish community is so sensitive about this.

The national commission was found to have had the right facts. The findings were confirmed by the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in 2005. We can talk about Wikipedia. That's one thing. We can Google things. These are national commissions.

What we do here in Canada, in our sources, it's our particular context. We should look to the two nations closest to a country that they are now fighting—directly, in the case of Ukraine, and indirectly, in the case of Poland—to ensure that both remain free. As I've said before, you cannot have a free Ukraine without a free Poland. You cannot have a free Poland without a free Ukraine. You will never have a home safe enough for the Jewish people in that region without both of those countries being free, where you are free to be a Jew who speaks Hebrew or Yiddish—including Yiddish proverbs, which I loved very much from my grandmother.

How do we move beyond this to fix the reputation of Canada and our Parliament so that we can be of benefit to our ally in Ukraine? I've asked that question of others as well. What are the specific actions we can take to fix the Prime Minister's Office's mistake and the Speaker's mistake for reconciliation?

Perhaps you can keep it short, because I have one more thing to ask. I'll cut you off in a minute and a half.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marceau, if you want to answer first, go ahead.

**Mr. Richard Marceau:** Thank you.

[*English*]

This part is not only on politicians. This part is not only on members of Parliament. It is the duty of Canadians, be they of Ukrainian descent or Polish descent or Jewish descent, to work together. We cannot relitigate the past. We obviously have deep differences of opinion here around this table. That said, there is already work being done between the Polish community, the Ukrainian community and the Jewish community. This work has to be encouraged by members of Parliament, but it has to be *sui generis*. It has to be from the communities themselves.

I would put it to you, Mr. Kmiec, that this is work that the respective communities want to do.

Now, in terms of repairing the damage that has been done, it's ensuring that something like this does not happen again. That part is actually on this institution, on members of Parliament and on the administration of this place.

**Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk:** I would simply add to that that you in this committee are doing just that. You are restoring the reputation of Canada by examining these questions and allowing us to disagree with each other on some points, to do it in front of you. You listen to us, you'll go away and you'll think about it. I've suggested that you might want to apologize to Mr. Hunka. I have no expectation that you will, but the reality of it is that's now part of the record as well.

As for Ukraine, I can fairly much assure you that President Zelenskyy is not worrying about the Hunka incident right now. He has far more important things to do with his time. Thanks to all of you in all the parties who have been supporting Ukraine. That's the key thing right now: to support Ukraine.

Who benefits from this distraction? The Soviets or Russian Federation now. They're the ones who benefited from all of this. They're the ones who have run with this and perpetuated it for months.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Thank you, Professor Luciuk. I see the chair about to return.

I have a motion to move, Madam Chair. I want to thank the two witnesses who have been here and shared their wisdom with us, but this is the last meeting before April 1, and my dear colleague, the member of Parliament Michael Cooper, had put forward a motion so I'm moving it.

I move:

That the committee, pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(c)(iii), report to the House that, in its opinion, the unelected Senate has unacceptably amended Bill C-234, An Act to amend the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act, which would provide carbon tax relief for Canadian farmers and, by extension, all Canadians, given the ancient financial privileges of the House of Commons which are rooted in the Constitution of Canada and, with particular relevance to Bill C-234, are expressed, in part, in Standing Order 80: "...it is the undoubted right of the House to direct, limit, and appoint in all such [money] bills, the ends, purposes, considerations, conditions, limitations, and qualifications of such grants, which are not alterable by the Senate"; and that the committee:

- a. recommend that a message be sent to the Senate to acquaint Their Honours accordingly; and
- b. call on the House to reject the Senate Amendments to Bill C-234.

Notice was given of this motion on Friday, March 15, 2024, Madam Chair.

• (1255)

**The Chair:** Okay. I hear you. I know what the rules are. Thank you, all.

However, we have guests I would like to dismiss. There are other people who had questions. I've been quite clear that you were going to have another round in which you could have let other members have their questions, and then you could have moved it. I was going to give you the floor again. I stated that you would get another round.

I feel like that would have been courteous because we did not only have guests come, but we bumped them multiple times.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Madam Chair, I ended my speech. I am not speaking any more. I'd be happy if you want to proceed to whoever is on the list and call the question afterwards.

**The Chair:** Are you just giving notice of it, or are you...?

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** I moved the motion, but I'm not going to be speaking to it further.

**The Chair:** If you're done speaking to it, we'll go to Ms. O'Connell.

Can I just release our witnesses, or do we think...? I just want to say, are we doing this, because I'd like to release the witnesses.

**Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC):** No, this will be short.

**The Chair:** You guys get to watch the show. Welcome to procedure and house affairs.

Ms. O'Connell.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Madam Chair, I move to adjourn debate, and I'll ask for a recorded vote.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

**The Chair:** The debate is adjourned.

Your time is up, so I'll go to Ms. Fortier.

You have five minutes through the chair.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for being here, and I'd like to come back to the themes I prepared for.

We highlighted the fact that the situation is very complex. Obviously, we don't want this to happen again.

Mr. Marceau, you said that there was a lack of control and diligence. I'd like to know a little bit more about that, because we're trying to figure out how we can proceed in the future using the current procedures.

I wonder if it was the invitation that was the issue or the fact that the individual was introduced in the House. I'm not sure that, with the current procedures, we would have known that he had been invited and that he was in the gallery. I think we knew he was there because the Speaker recognized him.

I'd like to know how we can make sure that this type of situation doesn't happen again. I'm talking not only about introducing people in the gallery, but also about having a better understanding of the situation at the time of the invitation. Do you have any screening and due diligence measures for us?

I'd also like to give Mr. Luciuk an opportunity to share his opinion on the procedure.

• (1300)

**Mr. Richard Marceau:** Thank you for your question, Ms. Fortier.

There are several levels. First, there's the presence of these guests in the House, and then there are the tributes paid to them. As for their presence, it's the responsibility of the House, but also of each of you and your offices, to ensure that the people invited to the parliamentary precinct won't cause this kind of problem. Having said that, I know you're all busy and your staff are overworked and underpaid for their hours. They would appreciate it if I said so.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** We know that as well. Can you talk about tributes as well?

**Mr. Richard Marceau:** First of all, members of Parliament have to do part of the verification. Second, the names must be submitted to the House Administration, and the House security services must have the means to ensure that the people who are invited won't cause this kind of problem.

Then, when the intention is to pay tribute to a guest, the verification should be even more thorough. As a former parliamentarian, I think there is no greater tribute to be received in the House of Commons than to be recognized and introduced by the Speaker. In that respect, the Speaker of the House must ensure that the person being introduced and honoured isn't the type of person we're talking about today.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** Thank you.

Mr. Luciuk, do you have any comments on that?

[English]

**Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk:** Mr. Hunka appeared nowhere on the Internet until after the incident, so I'm not sure how anyone googling him or looking for him online would have found anything. When the controversy erupted, suddenly a very sophisticated Wikipedia page appeared about the Hunka scandal—or whatever they called it—which I think originated in Qatar, which we know, of course, is a hotbed of historical studies on Ukraine and World War II. Clearly, it's a fabricated page, made to continue the controversy.

How could anyone vet someone like Yaroslav Hunka? He's a completely innocent Canadian who has committed no crimes. If you had looked at police records, security records or RCMP records, what would you have found? Nothing. He's a 98-year-old man in a wheelchair, a taxpayer, a family man and man who served in the Canadian military for two years in the militia. He has a perfect record in Canada, 70 years of it. What would you have vetted?

Now, the fact is that, as I say, some people, for physical security, of course.... If someone has threatened Parliament or has threatened a member of Parliament, that person should not be allowed into the House, absolutely, but this is the people's House. You can't just suddenly have your staffers decide who gets in because they found something on the Internet. Are you kidding? If you go on the Internet, I'm sure.... Well, you all do. I know you all do. There's so much garbage there. Are you going to use that to vet Canadians?

[Translation]

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** I'd like to clarify what you said, since I intend to make recommendations later.

Ultimately, in your opinion, the Speaker of the House, as part of his or her work, must have better tools to check the backgrounds of guests, especially those who are recognized and introduced in the House. That's what I understand from your comments as far as the screening or diligence measures are concerned.

**Mr. Richard Marceau:** That's exactly it, Ms. Fortier. They must also be given the resources to do so.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** I understand. Thank you very much.

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

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** We want to make recommendations, so we're thinking. Given the challenge that arises with regard to the quest for information, would it be worthwhile to recommend that a committee be established that combines the House Administration, the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons and the protocol, among others? A member from each party would also sit on the committee to avoid situations like this occurring during events as important as the visit of a head of state.

**Mr. Richard Marceau:** It's a worthwhile proposal, as long as the people around the table have the resources to do their job properly. Once again, you are overwhelmed, running from committee to committee, sitting in the House, your constituents are calling you, and so on. So I understand the constraints you have as human beings. To that group of people, I would add, if I may, Ms. Gaudreau, people from the Parliamentary Protective Service.

• (1305)

[English]

**Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk:** Again, I'll say that, for physical security, you're already capably protected by people like the Sergeant-at-Arms and his staff. I think vetting people by a star chamber composed of members of Parliament and others.... Again, it's just too easy to see this working against the interests of Canadians. It's adding another layer of bureaucracy and another layer of staff. This comes with costs.

I've said it before and I'll say it again: You have to listen to people you find disagreeable and with whom you disagree. You disagree around this table. I've just watched it. That's part of your job. You may find there will be people coming to the House of Commons whom some people find objectionable. However, you invite them because they have a point of view you want to hear. Unless there is a physical threat to a member of Parliament, a senator or the House more generally, I don't think you should keep anyone out.

However—

[Translation]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Thank you—

[English]

**Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk:** —should you acknowledge them? That's a different thing.

[Translation]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Thank you very much.

Madam Chair, in light of all the information we have, we'll be able to make recommendations. We're dealing with such a sensitive subject and we don't want this to happen again.

Thank you to the witnesses.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Mathysen, you have the floor.

[English]

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** I know this is a bit of a provincial issue, because provinces determine the educational components of what they teach. However, clearly, there's no comprehensive education about World War II in many different ways.

What do you believe we need to do better to create an awareness and have better education within our schools? What can our federal government help do in terms of that? I know there's a commissioner on anti-Semitism. There are things in the works in terms of providing those greater educational components. However, if you could add your thoughts on this, that would be great.

**Mr. Richard Marceau:** It goes further than school. I think the vast majority of Canadians, before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, had no idea about the Holodomor—the systemic creation of famine to kill millions of Ukrainians. Canadians did not know about that or about how the Ukrainian community here was impacted by this. Similarly, a number of people, especially young people, have no idea about the Holocaust, how it came about and what flew out from the Holocaust: the creation of all the international infrastructure, the protection of human rights and all of that stuff.

Yes, schools have to do a better job. The Province of Ontario, for example, made Holocaust education mandatory. That is good. I think different genocides that happened—the Holodomor, the Rwandan genocide, the Armenian genocide and others—have to be better taught not only to kids but to all Canadians. That is why the executive director of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress mentioned the work that's been done.

Since the House adopted April as Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation and Prevention Month, there's been a lot of work done between the Ukrainian and Jewish communities, and other communities as well. This is the type of, I guess, public awareness where

you, as members of Parliament and the federal government, have a role to play.

**Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk:** As an old professor, all I can say is that, unfortunately, people don't read anymore. Not reading and depending only on the Internet for your information gives us nothing but grief. I'm seeing that in my classes at the Royal Military College. I saw it at Queen's. I saw it at U of T. I've seen it around the world when I've lectured. People don't read. Because they don't read, they go to the Internet. They get their information from that and it's usually polluted. I'm afraid no amount of money is going to change that at this point.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I'm glad you were able to experience our procedure and House affairs committee. I'm very glad you were able to take the time. If you think of anything else, send it to the clerk. We'll have it translated in both official languages and shared around.

With that, have a great day.

This meeting is adjourned.

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