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Monday, March 4, 2024

Chair: Mr. John Brassard



Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics

Monday, March 4, 2024

• (1210)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC)): I'm going to call the meeting to order.

[Translation]

Welcome to meeting number 107 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

[English]

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format. Pursuant to the Standing Orders, members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(4), the committee is meeting at the request of four members of the committee to discuss a request to undertake a study on the topic of documents in relation to the National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg, tabled in the House on Wednesday, February 28, 2024.

I just want to remind all members who are here to make sure that their earpieces are not next to the microphones, because it does cause feedback and potential injury to the interpreters. Another reminder is that all comments are to be directed through the chair.

When I dropped the gavel, I saw Mr. Chong, Mr. Cooper, Mr. Ellis and Mr. Berthold, and then Ms. Khalid came up.

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): I'm so very sorry, Chair. I thought that I had requested to be second. I had given notice. I had my hand up. I would really appreciate that, Chair.

The Chair: I'm sorry, Ms. Khalid, but the meeting hadn't started, and I didn't hear your comments because I was talking to the analysts.

Go ahead, Mr. Housefather, on your point of order.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): On a point of order, Ms. Khalid clearly spoke before anybody else had their hand up, Mr. Chair.

You convened this meeting at a time without consulting anybody else on the committee, and to be honest I thought that was exceptionally unfair of you.

The Chair: Mr. Housefather—

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Ms. Khalid clearly demonstrated her request to speak before any of the other people had their hands up.

The Chair: The gavel had not dropped, Mr. Housefather.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: You were aware that she asked, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I was talking to the analyst at the time.

Mr. Housefather, I can assure you that this meeting has been convened in accordance with the Standing Orders and the rules of the House of Commons.

I am going to start with Mr. Chong. I'm going to keep the list and, Ms. Khalid, you will have the floor when you're recognized.

Mr. Chong, you have the floor.

Go ahead.

[Translation]

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to move a motion, and then I'm going to discuss it. It reads as follows:

[English]

That, in light of the February 28, 2024, tabling of the Winnipeg lab documents which contained the government's own findings concluding that the People's Republic of China and its entities infiltrated Canada's top microbiology lab, a national security breach representing a very serious and credible threat to Canada, and given that access to this information had been denied to Parliament and all Canadians by the government for several years, the committee undertake a study, pursuant to Standing Orders 108(3)(h)(vi) and (vii), of the collection and transmission of information and intelligence within the Government of Canada and the government's reliance on its over-classification to deny access to it by Parliament and Canadians, provided that the committee report its findings to the House and call the following witnesses to appear:

(a) the Departmental Security Officer, Executive Director of Security, Public Health Agency of Canada;

(b) the Deputy Minister of Health, Dr. Stephen Lucas;

(c) the Vice President, Infectious Diseases Branch, Public Health Agency of Canada, Dr. Donald Sheppard;

(d) the Vice President, National Microbiology Laboratory Branch, Public Health Agency of Canada, Dr. Guillaume Poliquin;

(e) the President of the Public Health Agency of Canada, Heather Jeffrey;

(f) the Minister of Health, the Honourable Mark Holland;

(g) the Director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, David Vigneault;

(h) the Deputy Clerk of the Privy Council and National Security and Intelligence Advisor to the Prime Minister, Nathalie G. Drouin; and

(i) the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, the Honourable Dominic LeBlanc.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to give a brief couple of minutes of remarks on this motion so that all members—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chong.

Before you go ahead, the motion is in order. My understanding is that the clerk has shared the motion, in both official languages, with all members of the committee.

Go ahead with your comment.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have just a couple of minutes of remarks. Then, all members can have a say on this motion, and we can get it to a vote in the time that we have.

Mr. Chair, we finally have the documents. In our view, this is the start of this matter and not the end. We are continuing where we left off three years ago, when the Canada-China committee asked for the Winnipeg lab documents.

I believe that this committee has to conduct this work. The government has indicated—Minister Holland specifically—that no one within PHAC is going to be held accountable and be terminated for these lapses at the Winnipeg lab. Therefore, I believe Parliament has a job to hold the government accountable. This is a grave and serious matter that requires a parliamentary investigation.

Dr. Qiu clandestinely collaborated with the government and the military of the People's Republic of China, and was paid by that same government and the military of the People's Republic of China without the Government of Canada knowing. These Winnipeg lab breaches are part of a broader pattern by this government of neglecting Canada's national security. We have not only the Winnipeg lab breaches but also the neglect of sensitive areas of research at Canadian universities in the theft of intellectual property and its threat to national security, which CSIS has now highlighted for almost a decade. We have the neglect of PRC's foreign interference threat activities directed at democratic institutions like Parliament and at our democratic processes like the general elections, which forced the government to call a public inquiry, which is ongoing.

In all of this, it's the Prime Minister as the head of government who's responsible. There's a PCO document titled "Open and Accountable Government". It is one of the founding documents of this current government. In that document, it is clear that the Prime Minister alone is responsible for the machinery of government. The Prime Minister alone is responsible for how information and intelligence flow within the different entities of the Government of Canada. They flow from services like the Canadian Security Intelligence Service to various departments and agencies of the government. That same document also makes it clear that the Prime Minister has a unique responsibility for national security. When we combine those two things together, we have a responsibility as parliamentarians to get to the bottom of this because, ultimately, the Prime Minister is accountable to Parliament, as is the ministry.

The motion in front of us today is a substantive motion focused on examining two things within the mandate of the committee. First, the purpose of the motion in front of us is to examine the flow of information and intelligence within the Government of Canada. It is to examine why this information and intelligence did not catch

the clandestine activities of Dr. Qiu before September 2018, when it was discovered that Dr. Qiu had improperly registered a patent in the People's Republic of China that was produced from work as a government scientist. It is to examine why Dr. Qiu had not been discovered, in the two previous years, 2017 and 2018, to have clandestinely met with entities within the People's Republic of China and to have clandestinely received payments from the government and from the military of the People's Republic of China for that travel.

The purpose of the motion, in respect of examining the flow of intelligence within the Government of Canada, is also to examine why it took 10 months for the government to secure the lab when it was discovered that a patent was improperly registered in the PRC and that government policy was violated. The patent violation was discovered in September 2018, yet it took 10 months, until July 5, 2019, for the government to secure the lab.

Despite the fact that in the early part of 2019, Dr. Qiu's computer was seized by government IT and despite the fact that Dr. Qiu, in the early part of 2019, was denied approval for a trip to the PRC, she was still allowed to ship lethal Ebola virus and henipavirus on March 31, 2019, from the Winnipeg National Microbiology Laboratory to the Wuhan Institute of Virology. We need to understand why information didn't flow more quickly to prevent that from happening.

• (1215)

The second substantive examination that the motion proposes is to examine why the documents originally requested in 2021 were overclassified. Minister Holland has indicated in the House of Commons that the classification of the documents was PHAC's responsibility alone. We need to understand why officials at the Public Health Agency of Canada incorrectly classified these documents and denied a parliamentary committee this information.

That's why, Mr. Chair, all of the witnesses, with the exception of three witnesses, are from PHAC. That is why we're asking for the departmental security officer to appear. It was that position that originally flagged the violation of government policy and the registration of a patent in the People's Republic of China. That is why we are calling other officials from PHAC—to understand what broke down in the transmission of information that a parliamentary committee had ordered four times to Parliament and its committees.

I'll finish, Mr. Chair, by saying this. I really truly believe we have a job to do as parliamentarians, in this committee, to hold the government accountable. The government defied four orders of the House of Commons and its committee for these documents. We called the president of the Public Health Agency in front of Canada in front of Canada to condemn him for the defiance of this order and for refusing to hand over the documents. The government, subsequently, took the Speaker of the House of Commons to court and, subsequently, called an early election, which had the effect of dissolving the four orders.

After three long years, we finally have access to the documents. We need to continue this examination in order to hold the government accountable. We cannot let the defiance of Parliament that took place three years ago to go unanswered and unexamined. We cannot allow these national security breaches to continue.

That's why it's so important, I think, that this committee adopts this motion, examines this matter and, I hope, produces a report with recommendations to improve the government's performance in these matters.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chong.

Next, we have Mr. Cooper on the motion.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I speak in support of the motion. Let me say at the outset that this national security breach is about as serious as it gets. It's a national security breach that occurred at Canada's highest security lab, which is responsible for handling and studying some of the most dangerous pathogens and viruses.

For three years, this Prime Minister has been anything but transparent. Instead of informing Canadians about this massive national security breach that took place under his watch, he covered it up.

In an unprecedented campaign of obstruction, the Prime Minister defied four orders of Parliament, and for the first time in Canadian history, he took the Speaker of the House of Commons to court to block the documents—600 pages of documents that have finally been produced to this committee. He called a snap election in an effort to avoid producing those documents, an election in which, incidentally, the Beijing regime interfered on his behalf to the benefit of the Liberal Party.

Now, after three years of cover-up and obstruction, we finally have the documents. What is evident upon reviewing these documents is that there was a massive breakdown with respect to the flow of intelligence and information within the Government of Canada. That is one of the central matters that this motion seeks to get to the bottom of.

I'll underscore the degree to which there was a breakdown with respect to information and intelligence. The head of special pathogens, scientist one of two, who was a central figure in collaborating with the Beijing regime.... By the time a preliminary investigation was launched in the fall of 2018, that scientist, Dr. Qiu, had travelled to the PRC on at least five occasions and had collaborated with PRC officials, including officials within the People's Libera-

tion Army. Among those Dr. Qiu collaborated with was none other than Beijing's foremost expert in biodefence and bioterrorism, and Dr. Qiu was paid for her travels to Beijing, all apparently unknown to PHAC.

An investigation finally was launched in September 2018, but Dr. Qiu continued to work in the lab until July 5, 2019—10 months later. During that 10-month window, Dr. Qiu continued to have unfettered access to the lab.

By March 2019, a report had been issued in which PHAC had determined that Dr. Qiu had clandestinely been actively collaborating with the Beijing regime, with the PLA, without the knowledge of PHAC, and that she had shipped antibodies to the Wuhan Institute of Virology. However, while PHAC knew that, Dr. Qiu was the central figure in facilitating the transfer of Ebola, one of the most dangerous and most deadly viruses in the world, to the Wuhan Institute of Virology. How did that happen? How was that allowed to take place?

• (1220)

This breakdown in national security has had serious consequences. In fact, CSIS and PHAC have determined that this breach represents a very serious and credible danger to the Government of Canada as a whole and constitutes a credible threat to Canada's economic security.

As Mr. Chong noted, the Prime Minister is singularly responsible for the machinery of government, with special responsibilities for national security. The buck stops with the Prime Minister, and we have questions we need answers to. When did the Prime Minister know about this massive national security breach? Did he learn about it in 2019, in January 2021 or sometime in between? We don't know.

Let me conclude by saying very simply that the national security culture of the Government of Canada starts at the top. It starts with the Prime Minister, who has special responsibilities when it comes to national security. This Prime Minister set the tone for the national security culture when he said famously that he admired Beijing's basic dictatorship. In other words, he admires a brutal authoritarian genocidal regime.

We have seen, over the past eight years of Justin Trudeau, interference on the part of Beijing in our post-secondary institutions, interference in our elections, interference in the targeting of sitting members of Parliament, interference in terms of setting up illegal police stations and the intimidation of Chinese Canadians. Now we have learned that Beijing was given unfettered access to some of Canada's most sensitive biological secrets.

After eight years of Justin Trudeau, Canada's national security culture is broken, and an incident on the scale of what happened in Winnipeg is a direct result of that.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

● (1225)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: The floor is now yours, Mr. Ellis.

[*English*]

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, colleagues.

It's a very significant day in Canadian history. This is, perhaps, the most significant security breach in the history of Canada. As CSIS would say, this is a serious and credible threat to Canada and to Canada's economy.

Why is that? When we look at many things involved in this terrible sequence of events, let's be clear so that Canadians understand that this is the only containment level 4 lab in Canada. It is not like we expect the Prime Minister—as my colleague Mr. Cooper outlined—who's responsible for national security, to have to look after 20 such labs. There is only one level 4 containment lab in Canada.

Secondly, we know the result of this terrible breach is that China now has a level 4 containment lab as well, albeit with what appears to be sloppy workmanship at the hands of scientists who were working here at the National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg.

Why is this important? When you look at documents from the U.S. Department of State, as early as 2005, they identified the Academy of Military Medical Sciences as a threat, having links to a biological weapons program.

When we begin to understand this, why is the Academy of Military Medical Sciences important? It's because scientists from that particular academy were able to gain access, as my colleague said, in an unfettered and unsupervised fashion to the National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg. Once again, we need to understand that the Academy of Military Medical Sciences is the scientific arm of the People's Liberation Army, which is partly tasked with biology-enabled weapons and bioterrorism.

Further to that, as we said, we know very easily that a PLA scientist not only had access to the lab to do scientific work and create papers in conjunction with Dr. Qiu; she was also in photos, wearing a PLA uniform. She had, again, terrible and astonishing contact with a major general of the PLA, who also wrote papers with Dr. Qiu.

Understanding all of these things really points to the fact that there is a serious and credible threat to democracy here in Canada, to our economy and to our safety.

Finally, Mr. Chair, I would also say the U.S. Centers for Disease Control states that Ebola is a category A bioterrorism weapon.

We know that on March 31, 2019, Ebola was sent to the Wuhan Institute of Virology at the behest—first, on October 18, 2018—of the Wuhan Institute of Virology, supervised by Dr. Qiu here in Canada. Oddly enough, on October 19, 2018, Dr. Qiu made a visit to the Wuhan Institute of Virology. It was one of many visits. There were at least five visits in 2017 and 2018. Dr. Qiu was not entirely open with the Public Health Agency of Canada about knowing she was visiting the Wuhan Institute of Virology. Of course, it actually paid for her trip as well.

Is this a serious and credible threat to Canada? Yes, it is.

Were there significant security breaches at Canada's only level 4 laboratory? Yes.

Is the Prime Minister of Canada singularly and uniquely responsible for the national security of Canada? The answer to that is yes.

We need to get to the bottom of this scandal, Mr. Chair, and that is exactly why I intend to support this motion, as we have an opportunity and an obligation to hold this government to account as the official opposition.

Thank you, Chair.

● (1230)

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Ellis.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Berthold, you have the floor on the motion.

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

Given the importance of the issue that the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics has before it today, I will take the liberty of rereading, for the benefit of Canadians, the motion that will be put to a vote. It sums up the situation very well and explains why we are here today, which is to move forward on this issue after so many years of waiting. The motion reads as follows:

That, in light of the February 28, 2024, tabling of the Winnipeg lab documents which contained the government's own findings concluding that the People's Republic of China and its entities infiltrated Canada's top microbiology lab, a national security breach representing a very serious and credible threat to Canada, and given that access to this information had been denied to Parliament and all Canadians by the government for several years, the committee undertake a study, pursuant to Standing Orders 108(3)(h)(vi) and (vii), of the collection and transmission of information and intelligence within the Government of Canada and the government's reliance on its over-classification to deny access to it by Parliament and Canadians, provided that the committee report its findings to the House and call the following witnesses to appear:

- (a) the Departmental Security Officer, Executive Director of Security, Public Health Agency of Canada;
- (b) the Deputy Minister of Health, Dr. Stephen Lucas;
- (c) the Vice President, Infectious Diseases Branch, Public Health Agency of Canada, Dr. Donald Sheppard;
- (d) the Vice President, National Microbiology Laboratory Branch, Public Health Agency of Canada, Dr. Guillaume Poliquin;
- (e) the President of the Public Health Agency of Canada, Heather Jeffrey;
- (f) the Minister of Health, the Honourable Mark Holland;
- (g) the Director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, David Vigneault;
- (h) the Deputy Clerk of the Privy Council and National Security and Intelligence Advisor to the Prime Minister, Nathalie G. Drouin; and
- (i) the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, the Honourable Dominic LeBlanc.

This is a motion that I hope will have the support of members from all parties this afternoon, given the importance of this issue. That way, we can quickly shed light on the matter before us, which involves two scandals, simply put.

The first scandal concerns everything that happened regarding the leak of sensitive information from the Winnipeg lab to the Communist regime in Beijing. I will come back to that.

The second scandal concerns the cover-up by this government to avoid making public the documents that were finally released last week, leading to all these revelations. This is a government that has refused to comply with four parliamentary orders to produce documents, and a government that has taken the Speaker of the House of Commons to court—unprecedented in Canadian history—to avoid releasing these documents. It is also a government where the Prime Minister, who is ultimately responsible for national security in our system, chose to call a snap election in 2021 to keep his government from having to comply with these orders of Parliament.

Here we have two scandals, and we need to shed light on everything surrounding both the Winnipeg lab leaks and the Liberal government's cover-up.

We finally have the documents. We are at the beginning of the process for getting to the bottom of this. Three years ago, the Special Committee on the Canada-People's Republic of China Relationship asked for the documents from the Winnipeg lab, and we just got them.

We know that it is up to the committee to do this work, because the government will not do it. How do we know that? We know it because the Minister of Health, Mr. Holland, said himself that he would not hold anyone accountable and that he would not fire anyone for these failures at the Winnipeg lab. Why? We don't know.

• (1235)

The committee's role is clear: We must study this grave and serious matter of Dr. Qiu's clandestine collaboration with the government and the military of the Communist regime in Beijing. This person was paid by the government and the army of the People's Republic of China without the Government of Canada knowing.

In all of this, the Winnipeg lab is part of a much broader pattern by this government of neglecting Canada's national security. There were the breaches at the Winnipeg lab, but for years, the government also neglected to secure sensitive areas of research at Canadian universities. There was also foreign interference by the Communist regime in Beijing in our democratic institutions and elections, which, as we know, led to the establishment of the independent public inquiry that is currently ongoing.

During all these investigations, all these scandals and serious problems of foreign interference in this country, the Prime Minister has sadly been missing in action. This is despite the fact that, in a document put out by this Prime Minister and this government entitled "Open and Accountable Government", the Prime Minister acknowledges that he has a unique responsibility for national security. That same document also specifies that he is solely responsible for the machinery of government, meaning the flow of information and intelligence within the various agencies, departments and entities of the Government of Canada.

The purpose of the motion before us today is to look at the flow of intelligence within the Government of Canada. We want to know why the situation was not detected before September 2018, when a red flag was raised by a lab security officer. What happened?

Dr. Qiu visited the People's Republic of China at least five times in the two years between 2017 and 2019. During those trips, she made unauthorized visits, and she was paid by the government and military of the People's Republic of China to make those trips.

The motion also seeks to find out why it took the government 10 months after the red flag was raised to revoke the security clearance of those responsible for the leaks, including Dr. Qiu. It was discovered in September 2018 that she had filed a patent in the People's Republic of China. It took 10 months to secure the lab after she was escorted out by the RCMP in July 2019. This is totally unacceptable.

We are also calling for an examination into why the documents that were originally requested in 2021 were overclassified, so that parliamentarians could not read them and could not access them. The Minister of Health, Mr. Holland, said that it was the Public Health Agency of Canada's fault that these documents were overclassified. That is why our motion calls for the appearance of officials from the Public Health Agency of Canada. It is our duty and our role as members of Parliament to hold this government to account.

I remind you that this government challenged four orders of the House, took the Speaker of the House to court and called a snap election to prevent the public and parliamentarians from finally having access to these documents.

All those in favour of uncovering the truth and who are truly looking for real action on national security this afternoon, whether they are Conservative, Bloc, NDP or even Liberal members, must vote in favour of this motion for the sake, as I mentioned, of our national security and the truth.

● (1240)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Berthold.

You may go ahead, Ms. Khalid.

[*English*]

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Thank you for your indulgence and for the privilege of being able to speak in this committee on this very important issue.

As many members would know, I served on the ad hoc committee on Winnipeg labs. I want to thank MPs René Villemure, Heather McPherson and John Williamson, all from different parties. The four of us worked very tirelessly to go through these documents and to ensure that we were able to be open and transparent. It was a great process.

This committee, this ad hoc committee, was something that the Liberal government put into place. It was difficult to get it going because the Conservatives dragged their feet for so long. When we got through these months and months of work that we did collectively, in a non-partisan way, to find out and to understand what happened here, I think we came to a good conclusion. I really want to congratulate my three other colleagues on that really good work.

We proposed this ad hoc committee of parliamentarians to balance parliamentary accountability with protecting national security.

Chair and colleagues, as you may know, I've sat on National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians. I know how important it is for us to balance that relationship of accountability with also protecting our national security. My four Conservative colleagues—none of whom are permanent members of this committee, I may add—have all alluded that there was apparently some kind of cover-up. There was no cover-up.

We are supportive of taking the unprecedented step of creating these ad hoc committees, going through the documents, having arbiters and then releasing documents. This has been a non-partisan process. This is all about the public interest, and all parliamentarians from all parties came together to make sure that we got there.

The second point I want to raise, Chair, is that the redactions that are done by PHAC, the Public Health Agency of Canada, and CSIS are not done by politicians. It should stay that way. There are very good reasons why politicians should not be involved in determining what should be redacted on the basis of national security. I think that the role of this ad hoc committee proved how important it is for us to have that oversight and that accountability but not to be part of that redaction process. The ad hoc process was an opportunity for Parliament to really weigh in on how these redactions happened and, in this instance, what was redacted, without endangering national security or privacy. This is a process that I think my colleagues, including Mr. Villemure, would agree works.

The third point I want to raise, Chair, on this motion and on this emergency meeting is that we share the outrage on foreign interference. We know that this is an issue and a challenge that we have to address. We can't let partisan politics get into the middle of it. We have to come together as a Parliament to ensure that we are protecting Canadians and that we are protecting ourselves in the work that we do to hold government to account, for sure, and to make sure that our democratic institutions are stable, well established and protected from a lot of this. Foreign interference is an attack against democracy and every member in the House of Commons. We share that concern. We have to be united in ensuring that we're working to combat foreign interference for the sake of our democracy and for sake of Canadians who live here day by day.

● (1245)

It is unacceptable that two Canadian citizens who were eminent and well-known scientists in Canada lied to the Public Health Agency of Canada about their work in China. There is currently an RCMP investigation into these individuals. I hope that we trust and respect the RCMP to conduct that investigation while we carry out our role as parliamentarians in the general oversight of that process.

The motion that has been brought to this committee is not in our committee's mandate. Mr. Villemure and I have worked really hard on the ad hoc committee for this Winnipeg lab issue to ensure that Canadians got access to that document. We released all of those documents. We put out a letter stating our position. We had arbiters come in to look over the work we did. This was an amazing way of showing how non-partisan politics can work to protect the safety and security of Canadians while also ensuring parliamentary accountability for and oversight of the work we do.

Chair, I have to say that this process of calling a meeting under Standing Order 106(4) is supposed to be reserved for emergencies and not for political gain. In my opinion, the original letter we received about this 106(4) meeting really spreads disinformation by saying that it was the Trudeau government that withheld all of these documents, that there's something nefarious and that there is a scandal going on here. The reality of the matter is that we have worked very hard with all parties to ensure that there is accountability.

Every single Conservative member who signed this 106(4) letter has been substituted for by another member. Those who signed are not here in this room. Clearly this is not the emergency that these permanent members signed off on. They're not here. Clearly they don't care about what is supposed to be the mandate and the expectation of the ethics committee if all of these people have been substituted for.

While the events that are the subject of these documents are incredibly important and our government has taken action by creating this ad hoc committee and releasing those documents publicly, what transpired five years ago does not constitute an emergency. Many actions have been taken over the past five years to ensure that these issues have been dealt with and that they won't happen again. That's literally our purpose as we go about ensuring that there is accountability and fairness in the process. The ad hoc committee, of which I was a part, did important work over the course of many months to get to the bottom of this.

• (1250)

This 106(4) is not necessary. It's not urgent. It is not in the mandate of this ethics committee.

Chair, for that reason, I move that we adjourn this meeting.

Mr. Michael Cooper: A point of order...?

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, I request a recorded vote on this.

The Chair: That's fine, Mr. Chong.

Mr. Michael Cooper: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: On a point of order, it's not debatable what Ms. Khalid just—

Mr. Michael Cooper: I just want clarification. The effect of what Ms. Khalid has moved is to shut down debate—

The Chair: That's debate, Mr. Cooper.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I'm so sorry, Chair, but no, I refuse to let this 106(4)—

The Chair: That's debate.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: —become political gander for my wonderful Conservative colleagues.

The Chair: Ms. Khalid, I've already addressed that with Mr. Cooper.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you.

The Chair: For those who are watching at home, this is a dilatory motion to stop the meeting before a decision is rendered. It is non-debatable.

Mr. Chong has asked for a recorded division, and I'm going to ask the clerk—

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I'm sorry, Chair, it sounds like you're debating a little bit there on this.

The Chair: No, I'm explaining. I'm explaining, Ms. Khalid.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Okay.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'm explaining exactly what's going on here and that there's no further debate. You've asked that this meeting be adjourned without a decision of the committee being made. I'm explaining—

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Because this is not the mandate of the committee, Chair.

The Chair: That's your opinion.

Go ahead with the vote, Madam Clerk.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 4)

The Chair: This meeting is now adjourned.

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