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# **Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Joe Preston**



## Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

Thursday, October 2, 2014

•(1100)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC)):** I call to order the 50th meeting of the procedure and House affairs committee.

We have a special guest today from Westminster. Mr. Beamish, can you hear us?

**Mr. David Beamish (Clerk of the Parliaments, House of Lords of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland):** Mr. Chairman, I can hear you very well, thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you. It's great to have you with us today. We hope that you can help us with the motion that we're working on.

We'll go right to it since we have Mr. Beamish by teleconference.

Mr. Beamish, I understand that you have an opening statement you'd like to share with us, and then the members here will ask you some questions.

**Mr. David Beamish:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm sorry that we weren't able to have this discussion a week ago when I would have had with me Lord Tyler, who is a member of the House rather than an official and would have been free to express views more trenchantly than I can, but I'll do my best.

Perhaps at this stage I should briefly explain my own involvement with the election process we use in the House of Lords for our Lord Speaker.

Until 2006 the Lord Chancellor, who is a cabinet minister, was ex officio presiding officer in the House of Lords, albeit in a rather ceremonial role. In June 2003 proposals were announced for initially the abolition, and later the reform of the office of Lord Chancellor, and the House of Lords was invited to choose its own Speaker. In July 2003 a select committee was appointed. I was clerk of the journals at the time and therefore served as clerk of that committee, which in November 2003 recommended the system of election which we've now used twice. The election of a Lord Speaker was then put on hold for awhile because there was controversy about removing the Lord Chancellor as presiding officer until the future of his post had been resolved. Following the passage in 2005 of our Constitutional Reform Act, a similar committee was reappointed and reported again in December 2005, basically with the same recommendation in relation to the method of election. Once again I was the clerk of the committee.

The only reason the committee gave for adopting the alternative vote was the statement that it had been "successfully used in the first

by-election to elect a hereditary peer, in March 2003". As clerk of the journals I was the official mainly responsible for running that byelection and indeed for running the first eight byelections. When the first election came in 2006, again as clerk of the journals, I was the official principally responsible for running the election, and then we used it again in 2011. By then I was holding my present post of Clerk of the Parliaments, the equivalent of Clerk of the House, and was returning officer. I've been very closely involved in both elections and in the use of the alternative vote for electing hereditary peers.

I hope this is helpful to the committee. I put in a two-page note with some background, including a rather curious history of how we have come to elect hereditary peers, which I hope will provide a basis for your questions. I won't try to summarize what's in the note, but I'll be delighted to answer any questions the committee may have.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Beamish.

We will go to questions by members.

Mr. Lukiwski, are you going first?

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, CPC):** I think so.

Mr. Beamish, thank you very much for being with us. We apologize for not being able to meet with you last week, but I'm sure you understand how Parliament works. Sometimes Parliament gets in the way.

In any event, I appreciate your being here and I appreciate the fact you have a wealth of knowledge on the subject. You're probably well aware that there is a lot of discussion on whether or not we should change the current method of electing the Speaker and to go to the alternative vote system. That's what the private member's bill before us proposes that we do.

My first question for you would be, what has been the reaction of parliamentarians in the U.K. since you have changed to the alternative vote system? Are they in favour of this? Are there still some wishing that they would go back to the old system? Perhaps you could give me a sense of how the feeling is among your parliamentary body.

**Mr. David Beamish:** Well the old system didn't actually involve any form of election. The Lord Chancellor was a cabinet minister who, having been appointed as such, presided in the House of Lords, even on rare occasions when not a member of the House, though only briefly. So it wasn't so much a change of system as the introduction of a new system.

I suppose the first experience the House had of elections was in 1999, when most of the hereditary peers left. We had a very convoluted system then, which I won't try to describe and which I doubt anyone would want to go back to. In one election, for example, members were required to list 42 candidates in order of preference. So this was a novelty for the House of Lords.

I think the most useful thing I could say is that I have heard no suggestion at any stage that we should move to any other system. I should perhaps qualify that by saying that the exhaustive vote system, as I think you call it, in which you have a succession of elections, which you use at the moment and which indeed the House of Commons at Westminster has been using recently, is probably not one that would be acceptable in the House of Lords. But no complaint, either at the working of the system or at the outcome it has produced, has come to my ears.

• (1105)

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** You mentioned that, at least with respect to the House of Lords, there would probably be no appetite to go to the exhaustive voting system currently used in the other house. Have you any sense of what parliamentarians in the other house feel about the preferential ballot system or the alternative vote system? In other words, do you believe that the other place might be inclined to entertain a notion to switch to the alternative vote system, or are they quite happy with the current system they are utilizing?

**Mr. David Beamish:** I think you'd have to ask somebody from the House of Commons. I have no idea what the feeling is about it.

It's perhaps worth pointing out that they are in a different situation from ours. The membership of the House of Lords is relatively static, and when there's a general election, we don't have any sort of wholesale change in the membership, whereas in the Commons at the start of a new Parliament, if the former Speaker has stepped down, there are obviously a lot of new members. It might be thought that the exhaustive vote would have the advantage of giving those new members an opportunity of sorts to find their way around the place, which wouldn't apply in the House of Lords. So there are perhaps arguments in favour of the exhaustive vote system in a House, the membership of which is reconstituted at each general election, but that doesn't apply in the House of Lords.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** I think you've just put your finger on the main point of contention. There are many people here who believe that the exhaustive vote system is a good way to elect a Speaker, primarily because it starts at the beginning of each new Parliament when undoubtedly there's always a bunch of new members. I think in the last Parliament we had probably the highest level of new members of Parliament that we've seen in many years. Although it takes a number of hours to select and elect a new Speaker, it gives an opportunity for all of those new members to, in a sense, get their feet wet and to learn a little bit more about the parliamentary system. It's collegial. I think one of my colleagues opposite called it almost a bonding moment where everyone has a chance to get to know one another over a period of time. So that's the argument we have in front of us.

It's unfortunate that we don't have a member of the House of Commons from your side of the pond to be able to tell us his experiences. But since we don't, let me just then concentrate on the technical aspect of the alternative vote system. You mentioned, I

believe only a few moments ago, that you have had really no problems, no glitches, in the system. Can you confirm that? Has there been any technical difficulty whatsoever in utilizing the alternative vote system since you've incorporated it in the House of Lords?

**Mr. David Beamish:** Before I answer that, I would like to pick up on the first part of your remarks. Although I have no expertise in relation to the House of Commons, it's perhaps worth pointing out that at Westminster the system is, I believe, a little bit different from yours in that the voting figures are announced. That might be something you'd want to look at, because it can have an impact in that candidates who are not doing very well have the opportunity to withdraw, which thereby speeds things up, whereas I understand that in your system nobody knows beyond the candidate who's being eliminated.

Coming to your question, in a technical sense I can confirm that the operation has been smooth and trouble-free. We use an organization called Electoral Reform Services that is widely respected in this country to help us run the elections.

The one aspect that I thought was disappointing is that some voters may have been under the impression that they could strengthen their preference for their preferred candidate by not using all their later preferences. At the time of the elections, I would say to anyone who would listen that you in no way hurt the chances of your favoured candidate by putting later preferences and that the danger with not putting them is that you may end up having no part in the final decision. As my note mentioned, in both elections the final margin of victory was actually rather smaller than the number of votes that had ceased to count because the voters hadn't put enough preferences. That's perhaps not a glitch but a factor. If you were going to decide to recommend the alternative vote, it might be advisable to try to educate members on the advantages of using all of their votes.

• (1110)

**The Chair:** Mr. Scott, you have seven minutes.

**Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Beamish, for being here.

I want to go back to the origins of the House of Lords system. You've emphasized both in your note, for which I thank you, and in your remarks that it's a very short recommendation in the report. It basically said, "We recommend the system" and it draws attention to one precedent. You weren't able to go behind that and say there were further reasons. You said they just did not give reasons beyond that.

Could I probe a little to ask are you indeed not in the position to elaborate on what the reasons were? Was it literally the fact of the example of that one byelection that triggered it?

**Mr. David Beamish:** I confess that in preparing for this session I scratched my head as to what had happened back in 2003 and couldn't honestly remember. Whether I would find something instructive in the minutes of the committee meeting, I'm not sure. But I think I'd say that the main rival that members would have been interested in would have been the first-past-the-post system, as used in elections to the House of Commons at Westminster. I think members would have recognized that it was likely that there'd be quite a few candidates. We had nine candidates in the first speakership election and six in the second. I mentioned one of the issues might have been that you could then have had a successful candidate with very many fewer than half the available votes. I think that's probably the main reason.

As I said or implied earlier, something like the exhaustive vote might not have been something that members would have had the stomach to engage in, sort of staying on for several hours while votes were counted and so forth.

**Mr. Craig Scott:** Thank you. I think that helps us a lot. It wasn't my impression from your note that only the first- past-the-post system was really considered as the alternative. The idea of electing somebody with a very low overall percentage didn't appeal. In your earlier remarks and now you have clarified that the successive elimination vote system just didn't quite suit the House of Lords.

I also wanted to point out and clarify that this is accurate. You mentioned that in the first hereditary peer election in March 2003, which became some sort of reference point, there were something like 81 candidates. Is that correct?

**Mr. David Beamish:** Yes. It was quite an interesting election. As I mentioned, just over 90 of the 750 hereditary peers stayed on, so that left well over 600 who had left the House. I guess quite a lot of those were hoping there would be an opportunity to come back, and perhaps none of them at that stage had any idea what the competition would be like. About half of the 81 got one or more first-preference votes, but you should see the chart we had to use as we eliminated candidates one by one to get to a result. It was quite complicated. But the system was at least workable.

Instead it's perhaps worth making a comment about the system arising from that. I guess many of those 81 had, so to speak, friends among the members who had indicated that they would vote for them, but of course with a preferential voting system, that doesn't necessarily mean they will give them their number one vote. A feature of this system is that it is only the first-preference votes that start until a candidate has been eliminated. You could be everybody's second-preference candidate, but you'd then stand no chance because you'd be eliminated at the very first stage. So one feature of this system is that although in some respects it might be thought to favour compromise candidates, it can only elect someone who has a decent amount of genuine support so that they get first-preference votes.

• (1115)

**Mr. Craig Scott:** Okay. That helps. Thank you.

To the extent that the only choice on offer in the Lords' heads was this system or the first-past-the-post system, and with a precedent of 81 candidates I can well imagine why those two combined really

didn't lead to a successive elimination ballot being in contention at all. Thank you for that.

You also spoke about how you would tell anybody who would listen that it was a waste not to go down the list and actually vote your extra preferences. You were describing how in the course of that, effectively some were thinking that a strategic way to vote would be to not do that and to just put their first and maybe their second preference, but not to actually go down the list. Did it seem to just come intuitively to the average Lord when they were voting that it was a strategic thing to do to simply put the first thing, and did you really have to make an effort to say that wasn't smart?

**Mr. David Beamish:** At the time, two or three members told me that the candidate they favoured had encouraged them not to use their later-preference vote because that would strengthen their support. I don't think it was so much intuitive as much as that one or two people had put it about. As I said, I used any opportunity I had to try to disabuse them of that idea.

**Mr. Craig Scott:** That's very interesting, because in fact in AV systems more generally candidates do actively encourage their voters to vote strategically and sometimes they will actively tell them who to put as second or third in order to increase their overall chances. They often tell them to do exactly what you said "put about" in the Lords election, which was just to put one. So combatting people's sense that they should and can vote strategically would be an issue, from my perspective.

The last thing I wanted to ask was if you could elaborate just a little bit on what you were saying about the Lords not really wanting to go for successive elimination ballots. You said they just wouldn't have the stomach for it. You mean, I assume, that a certain degree of cobbling and politicking might go on between the rounds and that it really wouldn't suit the temper of the Lords? Is that what you were referring to?

**Mr. David Beamish:** I wasn't actually thinking of that but more of the fact that members would feel it was not good to spend several hours going round and round a voting process when the time could be better spent. We rarely have more than two or three divisions on any one day, so that was all I meant, that it would seem like an inefficient process.

**Mr. Craig Scott:** Thank you for that clarification.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Scott.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** I have a point of order, Chair, if I may.

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** I don't want to take any time away from Kevin, so my apologies.

Very quickly, I wonder if we could have agreement, if possible, around the table. Mr. Reid had originally thought he would not question our witness, only because he is the sponsor of the motion. I think it might be helpful if Mr. Reid could ask some questions. He might have some information that we would find useful to us in our deliberations.

I'm just wondering if any member has any difficulty with Mr. Reid participating in the question and answer process.

**The Chair:** Mr. Beamish, hang on just a second while we get this straightened out.

Mr. Christopherson.

**Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** In the instant case, no. However, I think we do have to think in terms of long-term fairness. Nobody else gets the opportunity to support their own bill from the position of the committee that triggers the recommendation.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** This wouldn't be during anything else but the question period, David. Mr. Reid will be excusing himself from deliberations and voting and everything else.

**Mr. David Christopherson:** No, I hear you, and that helps. That mitigates it. Nonetheless, it's an advantage that Mr. Reid has that all the other sponsors of bills do not have, and we can only do our work if we're seen to be fair-minded by our colleagues.

However, I am a big believer, notwithstanding the abuse that Mike Harris made of the term, in common sense. I think in this case certainly I would be prepared, without prejudice but without setting a precedent...and only in the questions and only because it came up late. In future, we should make it clear that there is no role for the sponsor other than coming in as a witness at any time.

Since we didn't do that ahead of time and it would just disrupt everything, I'm making the case that we'll go along with it this time. But it's a one-off and without prejudice. We should be reaffirming somewhere, if I might leave it with the clerk, that in future, if a member wants to play a role at all, they have to disconnect themselves entirely.

But for the purposes of today, we can live with it without prejudice.

• (1120)

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** I appreciate that.

I'm not sure, Kevin, if you have an opinion as well.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** I'm somewhat indifferent to it. If it's set questions that Scott has, it might even be better off for you, Tom, to read them. But I'm somewhat indifferent at this point.

**The Chair:** With the provisos that Mr. Christopherson has made—I agree with you on this one-off situation—let's have someone, who may know more about what we're trying to talk about than the rest of us, be here to ask questions.

I'll go to Mr. Lamoureux for seven minutes. Then we'll go to where Mr. Reid would be asking questions.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Beamish, welcome.

I'd like to be really clear in my own mind in terms of the process of how it would actually transpire. After the elections occur, when the House reconvenes for the first time, is that when it really begins? Or when does it begin? Can you walk me through it from the day after the election?

**Mr. David Beamish:** As I mentioned earlier, because the composition of the House of Lords doesn't change after a general

election, the election of the Lord Speaker is not tied to the parliamentary timetable. The first election took place basically when the House was ready, when the arrangements had all been agreed.

What the committee recommended, and was agreed to by the House, was that the election should be for a five-year period and, rather like the President of the U.S.A., there should be a maximum of two terms per Lord Speaker. In fact the first Lord Speaker, Baroness Hayman, decided to stand down after five years. But it's basically on a five-year cycle.

What I would expect to happen is that the next election would take place in July 2016, with the successful candidate taking over probably in September. In fact in 2006 the Lord Chancellor left the woolsack immediately after the results had been announced, and the successful candidate took her seat immediately. But in future we would do it on a five-year cycle with the election in July, taking effect after the summer break.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** In terms of just the time involved, does everyone take their seats? Are they provided a ballot? How does that work?

**Mr. David Beamish:** I thank you for that question. It's something I didn't cover in my notes.

Basically we ran a polling station for the day. A room near the chamber was available for members to cast their votes. Members who thought they might not be present on the day were able to apply for a postal vote. By 2011, the second election, postal votes had become more popular. Quite a large proportion of the votes would have been sent in in advance.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Do potential candidates have to identify themselves to the clerk that they want to be put on the ballot? How does that work?

**Mr. David Beamish:** Yes, under the arrangement recommended by the committee, each candidate had to have a nomination form signed by two supporters, and the names of the supporters were published in the information about the candidates.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** So if I wanted to take on that particular position, I would get a couple of my colleagues to sign up. I would then submit the form to the clerk's office and then the clerk's office would develop a ballot. That ballot can get fairly lengthy, as you mentioned.

How much time do they have to place their vote? When you say there are postal votes, it's almost as if it's this particular day and you have  $x$  number of hours or  $x$  number of days to cast your vote.

How does that work?

**Mr. David Beamish:** I'm just trying to find the list of candidates we put out in 2011. We circulated it about two weeks before the polling day. It was a little booklet with a full record of parliamentary service of each candidate and a 75-word statement by each. People basically had two weeks either to cast their postal vote or to decide.

I appreciate that this sort of system would not really be relevant to an election you were holding immediately after the start of a new Parliament, but because we're not in that situation, it's relatively straightforward to allow candidates plenty of time. Indeed, an innovation in 2011 was that we had a hustings meeting run by the Hansard Society, a highly respected organization promoting parliamentary democracy and interest in Parliament in the UK, and all but one of the candidates attended and asked questions. It was filmed and then broadcast on the BBC Parliament channel.

• (1125)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** So for all intents and purposes it's almost like a campaign within itself, because you're talking about multi-day occurrence from receiving the ballot to being able to vote. Correct?

**Mr. David Beamish:** I think that's essentially right. I think a reason for the 75-word statement recommended by our procedure committee was perhaps to try to reduce the amount of individual campaigning that members would be subjected to, and to make it more structured. But, essentially, you're right.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** What percentage of people actually participated in the actual vote?

**Mr. David Beamish:** It's quite high, but not everybody did. In 2011, the most recent one, there were 770 members eligible to vote, of whom 644 did vote. The percentage was somewhere the high 80's.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** You briefly commented on this before. Was the general feeling from going through that process quite positive? Did people feel quite happy with the results at the end of the day? Were minority thoughts or opinions expressed on the issue, or are there discussions today about the possibility of reforming it in any way? Are people content?

**Mr. David Beamish:** As far as I'm aware, I have not had any negative feedback. It may have been helpful—and I think this is something Mr. Reid has drawn attention to in your deliberations—that in both cases the candidate who was finally successful was ahead at every stage of the count. Nobody overtook anybody else. That perhaps meant that whatever your views, the process was seen to be fair.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Lamoureux.

We'll go to Mr. Reid for four-minute rounds.

**Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC):** Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Beamish, for being able to appear with us today, particularly as we changed the timing of this with essentially no notice.

Before I ask you any questions, I want to mention that there was one thing you said that provoked at least one set of raised eyebrows, and that was the term “left the woosack”. Am I right that the woosack refers to the Speaker's chair in your country?

**Mr. David Beamish:** That's correct. Our Speaker, and, before her, the Lord Chancellor, sits on a woosack rather than a wooden chair, as in almost every other Westminster-style Parliament.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** That's not a metaphor. It's actually a woosack.

**Mr. David Beamish:** That's correct, and indeed nowadays, for symbolic reasons, I think it's said to be stuffed with wool from all the wool-producing countries of the Commonwealth.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** That's good to hear. We produce wool in my riding. I'll want to follow up on that.

I just wanted to ask something. One of the concerns some people have had here is that if we get rid of the multiple stages of balloting we would lose the opportunity to interact with each other and to get a sense of where the various candidates stand on whatever the issues might be. Has the hustings, in the view of the participants, the various candidates, or maybe more broadly the electorate, the members of the House of Lords, served as an adequate way of allowing them to get a sense of who the candidates are and what they stand for, as far as you can tell from the buzz you've heard?

• (1130)

**Mr. David Beamish:** That was certainly my impression. I mentioned it was a first for us in 2011. It's perhaps worth adding that the Hansard Society was following an innovation in 2009, when Michael Martin stepped down as Speaker of the House of Commons and there was a mid-parliament process, when they held a hustings for the candidates to succeed Michael Martin. I think that again was broadcast and was widely regarded as very successful. It has been done for the House of Commons as well, but we haven't yet, I think, had a contested election in recent times at the start of a new parliament in the House of Commons.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Your system involves an open vote tally. I just went to Wikipedia. There's a Wikipedia article on everything, including separate articles on each of the two House of Lords Speaker elections. In Canada we've always kept our results confidential. My proposal would continue to keep the results confidential, and in fact it tries to put an extra measure in to make it harder to see when people are eliminated with essentially no support at all, in order to avoid any embarrassment to them, but I'm not sure that's necessarily the right way to do things. I'm simply following through on the spirit of what we already had.

What is your view on using the open model you have versus keeping the results confidential and known only to the clerks?

**Mr. David Beamish:** I can see why you might prefer to go for a non-open model. I think in the House of Lords that would be a non-starter. There would be suspicions about the process. I think the openness of it is probably essential to retaining the confidence of members in the system. I can speak for only us in the House of Lords.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** That's fair enough.

That actually covers the main things I wanted to mention, so maybe I'll stop here.

I just would mention to colleagues that there was a question about comparisons between the two systems as they apply in the U.K., and that was the purpose of inviting Lord Tyler. He has served as a member of Parliament and also as a member of the House of Lords, and he had participated in both elections. He initially had blogged on the subject, and his written submission to us, which you'll be considering after I leave the room—which is why I'm mentioning it now—actually addresses the relative merits of the two from the point of view of someone who's experienced both.

Thank you very much, Mr. Beamish.

Colleagues, thank you for indulging me in this case.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Reid.

We'll go to Madam Latendresse for four minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

I'm really glad we have you here today.

I'm going to ask my questions in French. I understand you have access to translation and that you also understand French a bit, as I've heard.

**Mr. David Beamish:** Yes. I believe I've been connected to the interpreters' translation, but if not, provided that you speak

[*Translation*]

slowly enough, I hope I will be able to understand.

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse:** Thank you very much.

I'm going to continue on the same topic as my colleague Mr. Reid, that is the confidentiality of votes.

According to our current system, the vote is secret, except for the fact that with successive eliminations, we can know in what order people obtained the most votes. We have an unwritten rule according to which the Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons—even though the person in that position is appointed—is often the person who arrived second in the results. One of the difficulties of our great bilingual country is that there has to be a sort of parity between French and English with regard to our Speaker and Deputy Speaker.

Both systems, both the secret vote and the open vote, have their advantages. Do you think there would be some way of remedying this?

[*English*]

**Mr. David Beamish:** Let me start by saying that it turns out that I had the English translation feed, so I hope that captured your question correctly.

This isn't an issue for the House of Lords, because the deputy Speaker is appointed separately by a simple motion in the House. There's typically an understanding between the main parties, and they sort of take turns filling the posts.

Although we don't have the language issue, I know that in the House of Commons they've now introduced a slightly complicated system for trying to get a balance of parties and a mix of sexes in the panel of the Speaker and the three deputies, so you might well find some useful help from them on how they operate that. But in the House of Lords it's done informally and the deputy Speaker, and indeed the second deputy, who are the only salaried deputies, are appointed by a simple motion in the House on the basis, in effect, of arrangements agreed to behind the scenes, or, as we put it, "through the usual channels".

• (1135)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse:** I'm glad you mentioned the British House of Commons. If I understand correctly, there were two big reforms in both Houses.

Are there any particular reasons that explain why the House of Commons kept the elimination system rather than choosing the alternative vote?

[*English*]

**Mr. David Beamish:** I don't know whether they gave any consideration to going to the alternative vote system. Historically, it was always done in the Commons by having someone propose the name of a candidate and debating that in the usual way and voting on that, so I guess to move to the Lords system would have been a bigger departure from the traditional system, which stuck with the usual format of parliamentary proceedings in which a motion is proposed and then voted on.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse:** Thank you. That covers the questions I had today quite well.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** You're at four minutes, so thank you. That's perfect.

We'll go to Mr. MacKenzie, please, for four minutes.

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC):** Thank you, Chair. If I have time left I'll give it to Mr. Richards.

Thank you for being with us, Mr. Beamish.

I'm curious about a couple of things. Number one is obviously that the House of Lords has little or no turnover when you're going to change Speakers. Would that be right?

**Mr. David Beamish:** The thinking is that five years is a suitable term for a Speaker, and actually in five years we'd have a fair amount of turnover in the sense that we've had a lot of new members in the last five years.

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie:** Going forward though, when the next election comes around, I'm thinking that most of your Lords will be familiar with the people who are going to stand for election of Speaker. That's what some of us here see as a problem for us. Frequently we have a whole bunch of new people coming in, and it's the opportunity for people who are brand new to the House to get to know one another and also to learn some of the systems, and we would lose some of that. If I understood correctly, you said that you had 81 members stand for election. We typically would have five or six, so it's a much smaller pool.

**Mr. David Beamish:** The election in which there were 81 candidates wasn't a speakership election. That was the first of our byelections when one of the hereditary peers.... Basically 10% of the hereditary peers stayed on after the reform of the House in 1999, so these were candidates from outside the House. In our two speakership elections, the number of candidates has been nine in the first case and six in the second.

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie:** That explains it. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Richards, you can take the rest of the time.



**Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC):** Thank you.

There have been a lot of questions with regard to the advantages and the relative merits of the new system you have. Do you have any thoughts on things that you see as disadvantages in the new system? When you were considering this, were there other potential alternatives considered? If other things were considered, what are some of the reasons those alternatives were not proceeded with?

**Mr. David Beamish:** I don't see any disadvantages in the sense that I could think of another system that might be preferable in some way. As I mentioned, I think it could be improved if members better understood the importance of casting all their votes. As far as I'm aware, the first-past-the-post system was the only one that got serious consideration and, indeed, other than your exhaustive [*Inaudible—Editor*], it's difficult to think of an alternative that could be pursued.

• (1140)

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Okay, fair enough.

Was there any analysis done of the ballots to determine the problem you believe exists? I certainly think that it would exist. With any new type of electoral system, people have to get their heads around it and learn to understand all of its implications. Was any analysis done of the ballots to determine if most put one or two choices or how far down the list were many people actually making choices, so we can determine whether what you're suggesting would in fact be true?

**Mr. David Beamish:** Obviously, because of the need to respect the secrecy of the ballot we didn't let any students look at them to do that sort of analysis. What was made public was a chart showing the progress of the count as candidates were eliminated. As Mr. Reid implied, I suspect most of that is in the Wikipedia article, but I'd be happy to send your clerk PDF copies of the charts so that it would be possible to tell how many votes were dropped out because preferences had run out at every stage.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Thank you. It would be quite interesting if you could do that. I suspect you're probably right that it certainly would be an issue that would require some education. I think most people when they move to something new like that do have some trouble understanding its implications, so it would be interesting to know how many were dropping off. Then we would know how many places people were choosing.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Richards.

Mr. Beamish, we thank you. We've run out of questions. We're happy that you were able to share with us today. I know Mr. Reid's very happy to get that information. We will now deliberate on what we'll do next. We thank you, first of all, for your patience with the inconvenience of the other day and for all the information you were able to share with us today.

**Mr. David Beamish:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There was no problem coming back a week later. Should you think of any more factual information that would be helpful to the committee, if your clerk lets me know I'll do my best to help.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. Enjoy your evening.

**Mr. David Beamish:** And you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Members, we have some time now and since we were denied the extension on this motion, I think we probably should get to it and work on it. I know we have Monsieur Godin next, and let's hope we can get one done before the other.

Yes?

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Chair, are we going in camera if we're discussing the committee report?

**The Chair:** Yes. I was just about to do that. We will go into camera to discuss what we're going to do with Mr. Reid's motion. I believe Mr. Reid will be also excusing himself.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** That's right.

Do I get to say something before I excuse myself?

**The Chair:** Sure. Your last meal, your last statement, all of that stuff.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** I hadn't anticipated that this would come to be discussed at this point today.

**The Chair:** Nor had I.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** So my office had been in the process of getting a translation done of Lord Tyler's blogging on the subject, which won't be available to us now. I think the clerk circulated his written submission to everybody.

**The Clerk:** Yes.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Obviously, it tends to favour this kind of approach and I'm hoping that everyone will have a chance to look at it. It does deal with at least one of the pertinent questions and a direct comparison between the two systems. That's all I wanted to say. I will now excuse myself.

**The Chair:** Super.

I will suspend just for two minutes while we go in camera, please.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

• \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

•

• (1205)

**The Chair:** All right. We'll call the meeting back to order.

We have a witness. Yvon Godin is here on a question of privilege. He rose in the House and it was accepted.

Yvon, you have a bit of an opening statement to tell us the facts and figures around it. I'd then like the members to be able to ask you a few questions, but we're on a really tight timetable today so we're going to try for about a half an hour's worth at best. Okay?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I agree with that. I think I won't need much time to relate what happened.

First of all, I would like to thank you, Mr. Chair, as well as the members of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, for hearing me today, so that I can speak about this incident which occurred on September 25, 2014.

I was in my office in the morning between 10:00 and 10:30 a.m. As all members know, a bell was heard in our offices and the lights went on. It was as though the police had turned on their headlights. This reminds us to go and vote. It reminds us of our responsibility as parliamentarians, which is to go to the House of Commons and vote.

And so I left my office and the Justice Building. I took the little green shuttle bus that brings the members to the House of Commons and back to their offices. When we arrived at the back of the Confederation Building, the green bus stopped. The driver told us that it would be better for us to get off since the cars had been stopped for a while. Indeed, the line went from the rear of the Confederation Building right up to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police post inside the gates. The line was already quite long, and the bus driver told us that we would not be able to get through.

So I got off the bus with my other colleagues who were also on board. We walked up to the entrance which is at the front or on the side of the Confederation Building. If you are on Bank Street and you look south, it is to your right, just in the entrance.

I arrived there and there was an RCMP officer on Bank Street. I told him that I had to go up to Parliament. He answered me in English: "Get on the sidewalk".

I saw that he did not speak French. And so I replied to him in English, as follows:

[English]

"Well, I am a member of Parliament and I have to go up."

He answered in a very serious manner. He said, "I don't care, and get on the sidewalk". I had just moved off the sidewalk in coming up. My colleagues behind me were from all parties. There were members from the Conservative Party and the NDP. I said, "Well, there's a vote up there and I need to go."

The invited guest was not in yet. They were waiting for the invited guest to come in. I think it was the president of Germany who was coming in. I said that I really needed to go in, that there was a vote. He said, "I just don't care if you have a vote." I pushed it a little more. I said, "In your view, in your attitude, you don't care, but it could be a vote that could bring the government down, a vote like that."

You know and we know how votes go. It could be a vote like that.

I was pushing it right to what it could be and to our responsibility, and I said, "It could be a vote of confidence." He said: "I don't care about the Parliament. I don't care about your vote. Just stay there and you don't move." I said to the officer, "Well, I can tell you this: you are wrong." I made the decision at that time to back off.

At the same time there was an officer from the city of Ottawa there, a woman with a motorcycle. She was off her motorcycle. She said, "Sir, get on the sidewalk." I remember what I said to her. I said, "Don't get mixed up in this one here; I'm dealing with the RCMP." But then I stayed. After that, he walked across with me and he

walked across the road. He said, "I'm just doing that for your safety." I said, "No, it's not right what you've done, and I don't agree."

One of my colleagues, Kennedy Stewart, was there as a witness. He heard the officer doing it. Just this morning I spoke to Ruth Ellen Brosseau, and they had another incident on the bus at the same time. The bus chauffeur didn't even want her to get off the bus. They had to argue with the bus chauffeur and say that they had to get out, but it didn't work out, because they could not go through either. I also hear—and you could check—that the immigration minister, Chris Alexander, was stopped from going through.

● (1210)

[Translation]

I spoke to the Speaker of the House of Commons. He was stopped as well. I don't remember if it was Thursday or Friday morning. His car was even searched by the police. He was in a hurry to go and open the sitting at the House of Commons. He told the police he was the Speaker and that if he could not get up there, the House of Commons could not begin its work. Once again, the attitude displayed could be summarized in the following way: "That's just too bad, not our concern; you can't go up there."

Mr. Chair, members of the committee, I think this was totally unacceptable. For the record, I want to remind all members of the committee of one definition of parliamentary privilege, which is as follows: "Pursuant to parliamentary privilege, the holder has full access at all times, without obstacle or interference, to the Chamber of the House of Commons the holder is a member of." That is what constitutes our privilege.

I will go even further. The police are supposed to ensure the security of members, but if they don't recognize us and if something happens involving the public at large, we may wind up being the victims. This is a very important matter.

When Bill Blaikie sat in Parliament a similar situation occurred. The Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs studied the issue at the time. As you know, I was the NDP Whip at the time. The committee agreed that it was time for this to stop. Two years ago, in 2012, another incident occurred. Once again, we said that this had to stop. And yet, it happened again.

Mr. Chair, I have this privilege. I was elected by the citizens of the riding of Acadie-Bathurst to represent them. Parliament has its reasons to grant us a privilege which excludes interference. This implies the responsibility of letting us get in at all times.

I will simply add to that, openly, that the next time, I'm going to go through. They can deal with their problems. I'm going to take my privilege seriously.

[English]

**The Chair:** Monsieur Godin, thank you, merci for your comments today. You've done a good job of sharing with us, and I know that you and I sat on the procedure and House affairs committee one of the last times we looked at this privilege issue of members not being allowed to come to the House.

I'll take some questions from members, but let's try to keep it to the facts of the incident and not what we're going to do going forward. We have some reports and some other witnesses we'll likely call also.

Mr. Lukiwski, you're starting us.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Yes, and I won't be very long, because I don't think anybody here disagrees with Yvon. We all know this shouldn't have happened. It should not happen in the future. Unfortunately, I think this was the third incident I can recall in the last six or seven years. What we need to do is to get right into calling witnesses.

As I mentioned in my intervention, Yvon, when you raised this in the House of Commons—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Is the translation only not working for me?

**The Chair:** I was getting translation from you very well.

•(1215)

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Can you hear me now, Yvon?

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Lukiwski.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** As I mentioned during my intervention after Yvon raised the question of privilege in the House, I too was a member of the procedure and House affairs committee with Yvon, and with you, chair, and we brought three witnesses forward at that time. We brought the Clerk of the House, the Sergeant at Arms, and the assistant commissioner of the RCMP. I can't remember his name, but I believe he was the assistant commissioner in charge of policing and protective services. At that point in time the RCMP assistant commissioner apologized and said it shouldn't have happened. He undertook to change or to strengthen the protocols within the RCMP to make sure that this type of thing didn't happen again, including consulting with the House of Commons and Senate security staff when a visiting dignitary came in, and to better review the member's handbook so they could visually identify a member of Parliament coming forward and have the handbook with them at all times. He also undertook to have, if possible, their most senior and experienced RCMP officers at the various checkpoints so they would know that members of Parliament do have the privilege of unfettered access to the House. Somewhere down the line something broke down. I suspect that the officer you ran into was either new, or certainly wasn't trained properly and wasn't aware what was going on—but it doesn't matter to me.

There's probably a reason why he did what he did. In all good conscience, he probably thought he was doing his job. That's okay, but it doesn't change the fact that they didn't do what they were supposed to do, and that's to let you through. So I think what we need to do once again, even though it perhaps seem repetitive, is to go through the witness list. Perhaps we should bring in additional MPs who experienced the same thing, but I think they're all essentially going to say the same thing that Yvon did, right? The messaging or language that some of the officers used might have been a little different, but the end result was the same, in that they prevented MPs from going forward.

I think once we get Yvon excused from here, we can talk about which witnesses we want. Without question, my recommendation this time is that we invite the commissioner to come here, and perhaps the chief of the municipal forces and whatever. We

somehow have to come up with a protocol so this doesn't happen again. That's the bottom line here.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Lukiwski.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** May I answer?

**The Chair:** Sure, give us a quick one.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I mean, we're having a meeting and I want to participate in it, with all due respect, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** I agree.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Looking at this case here, for example. The same person who dealt with me last Thursday is today at the gate. It's not a new person. I want you people to know that. I saw him today. He's there, okay?

That's one thing. The other thing is that the attitude of “I don't care” is one that we don't need around here. We care as the Parliament of Canada.

I heard you in the House, my dear colleague Mr. Lukiwski, talking about how maybe we have to show our card. But at that point he didn't care. I already told him I was a member of Parliament, and he didn't care.

I'm wondering, in their offices up there, if they have the privilege of the member and they see it every day, what is the privilege? That's something they could do about it. What is our privilege? Many of them don't know what it is, and they're around.

So I just want to bring to light what he said.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Monsieur Godin, we know we're in public right now, but if you know the name of the officer, could you supply it to the clerk?

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I do not have the name of the officer, but I spoke to the Sergeant-at-Arms and he said that they have the whole movie: he has Yvon Godin talking to the officer, and they know who the officer is.

**The Chair:** Super. This committee will want to know that after.

Mr. Christopherson, you have a question?

**Mr. David Christopherson:** Yes. Thank you very much.

I agree with Mr. Lukiwski. I can't imagine that anyone would be opposed. This is one of those issues where it's quite possible a whole lot of the public goes, “Oh, there they go again with their egos and everything”, and you know what? We're just going to have to suck that one up, because this is really not about us as individuals. This is about the rights and privileges of whoever is elected by the Canadian people to serve as a member of Parliament. That's what matters.

I notice from the previous report, Chair, that they can trace this back to April 12, 1733, where they said:

That the assaulting, or insulting, or menacing of any Member of this House in his coming to, or going from the House...is a high infringement of the Privileges of this House, a most outrageous and dangerous violation of the rights of Parliament, and a high crime and misdemeanour.

Interestingly, zoom ahead a few hundred years, and in 2004—lest anyone think this is just some archaic notional thought—the House said again: “Members are entitled to go about their parliamentary business undisturbed.” It further stated that the breach of this privilege was not only unacceptable but a contempt of Parliament, which is one of our highest crimes in this place.

The fact remains that when a member is denied access anywhere on the Hill or anywhere that they're entitled to as a member of Parliament, every one of their constituents is disenfranchised at that moment, because under our system we are the voice and representatives of all those people. If we're denied our opportunity to do our full job, then they've been denied—let alone the fact that there was a vote going on, which just heightens it that much more.

So I'm like my colleagues: we don't want to turn this into a total federal case, if you will. We have an awful lot of big issues. But I do think it does warrant going through the steps and then finding one more level of getting it across.

My thought was the same as Tom's, Chair, that this time, no assistant commissioners; the commissioner comes in. I think the Ottawa police play a role, so bring the Chief of Police in here. That's how you're really going to change it. Once it becomes known that this is a big deal, it will stop.

I agree; I can't imagine that the officer thought to themselves, “I've got my hands on an MP here. Now I'm going to show them who's got the power.” That's not what happened. But it's also unacceptable what happened to our colleague under any circumstance, especially during a vote.

If someone says, “Yes, it's security”, then our response is that those who are organizing it—i.e., the PMO and others—have an obligation to organize the visitors in such a way that it doesn't trample on the rights of members of Parliament. It's that simple and it's that important.

So to Yvon, I don't really have a question other than wondering if he has a recommendation or two that he specifically would like us to look at. Having been a whip, he certainly understands the functioning of this place better than most members.

That would be my question to you, Yvon; your thoughts on steps that we should or could take.

● (1220)

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** This has nothing to do with ego. It's the Parliament of Canada. This is our democracy. We have a responsibility. We have been elected as members of Parliament, all of us, and this is our privilege. I will speak for the people of Acadie—Bathurst. I'm here to represent them. It's not about Yvon Godin; it's about representation.

It's not only the votes in the House. If we have committees going on and there is a vote that could happen at committees, we don't get bells for that. If we get called by our whip and told, “I want you in that committee”, I have the right to vote in committee. I have the right to make speeches in committee. I have the right to my voice. We all have that. It's our privilege. That's why it is so strict.

This is the place for making the laws of this country, and it's our responsibility to educate the public. It has nothing to do with us. It

has something to do with them, because we are representing them, and that's what it's all about.

One recommendation that Mr. Lukiwski was talking about, and I took it really seriously, was that when visitors come in and they intend to block the place he'd maybe have a meeting with the people who are going to be on the site doing the security and tell them how they should proceed. It could be done in the morning. If the *convoi* is coming in at 10:30, maybe at 9 o'clock they'd get the people in and say, “Okay, here are the rules”. Remind them, because this is just—I'm sorry, but one day something is going to happen, and we'll say, “Look, it's because of what is happening in the yard”, and the member was not just refused access onto the Hill, but he lost his privileges on the committee. He lost his privileges in the House of Commons. He lost his turn to speak. That's why I am emphasizing that privilege be respected.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Yvon.

Mr. Lamoureux, go ahead, please.

We're going to try to stay around for five minutes so we can finish and do our other work.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** You know, Yvon, I do appreciate the sensitivity of this particularly issue. There's virtually not a week that goes by when I don't really get an appreciation for the privilege I have, as an individual, even to be here, to be a member of Parliament.

Having said that, I do know if I were to put myself in your shoes, or those of anyone who was being denied the opportunity to be where he's supposed to be to fulfill his responsibilities, it would be very upsetting. I'm trying to think of what we could do to improve the system. The thing that came across my mind as I listened to others provide comment was that if I were trying to get onto the Hill and someone were preventing me from getting onto the Hill, I would like to be able to contact someone, maybe pick up the phone. We have 24-7 RCMP officers at the gate so maybe there's a phone number that you can just call and state your name and say you are having a problem, and ask if someone can come. Do you know what I mean?

Is there an answer? It seems to me that this comes up periodically, and no matter how many times we have briefings and so forth, maybe the real answer is that we need to have someone inside who we can just contact to say we're having a problem, and that would initiate a call to the Speaker's office so nothing would take place inside the Chamber because they would realize that there was a problem with a member getting access, and that would heighten the importance of this.

I am looking for solutions, as you are, because I know if I were in your shoes, I would be upset because I had a right to be there and I would wonder how I was going to get there and what I should do. We all have phones nowadays. If there were a phone number I could call to get the Sergeant-at-Arms and the Sergeant-at-Arms could then get it straightened out, it would take two minutes and then at least I would have access.

Can you think of some ideas?

•(1225)

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Certain aspects do concern me. First of all, the responsibility of the people who guard the House should be to let us go by. We should not have to use the phone. It could happen that the phone doesn't work, or some other such thing. It is up to them to see that this doesn't happen. When it comes to security, there are chiefs, people who are responsible, supervisors.

The officer said this:

[English]

"I'm following strict orders". That's going further than just him. He said, "I'm following strict orders that nobody goes through".

[Translation]

We have to solve this problem.

Mr. Lukiwski said that the person should perhaps have their identity card or their PIN. But what happens when a member does not have it, and he or she misses the vote and the vote goes the other way? I don't think that is the solution.

They have to be able to recognize the members. They even refused entry to the Speaker of the House of Commons. This is no longer a small problem. Some mechanism has to be put in place and it can't consist in phoning someone and reaching the wrong person. The member shouldn't have to start calling all over the place. Some mechanism has to be put in place for the persons who work at the House of Commons. There is no problem regarding the security guards at the House of Commons. At the door of the House of Commons, there is no problem. We don't have time to discuss it now, but even that should be examined. That day, because the red carpet had been put out, some members had to go through the basement in order to cross to the other side and go up the stairs to go to vote in the House. Perhaps the issue of the circulation of members within the House should be examined as well.

Those are the orders they had received. They told us that they would not stop us from going to the chamber, but that we had to use the basement. Some people use wheelchairs. Our privilege has been violated in the course of the last years.

That is what I had to say on this matter.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Opitz, four minutes please.

One other after that.

**Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC):** I'm not taking that long.

I know how this works. The RCMP is very much like the military and there are SOPs. This is a failure of leadership. They are normally supposed to be briefing their people. If they have new people on the Hill, then they're supposed to get briefed and know who is who. To Mr. Lukiwski's point, they should have a handbook on hand in case they don't recognize an MP. In this day of security threats, you can understand why the average cop on the street is trying to be vigilant. Nobody wants to let the bad guy through. But the fault lies with the

leadership. There are standard operating procedures, SOPs, that they follow in coordination with the Ottawa police. Clearly that fell apart.

I don't expect the Ottawa police to recognize all MPs. When you are off the parliamentary precinct, whether you are wearing this pin or not, you are subject to the laws of all of Canada, for speeding tickets and things like this. In the parliamentary precinct where the RCMP have primacy, they are supposed to understand the standard operating procedures and what is supposed to happen. In the military, the leadership was responsible for periodic safety briefings, for example. Kevin may remember this.

Safety briefings are an annual thing, but probably on the Hill you would want to do them more frequently. You would have your briefing, go through the checklist and say, "These are the things you have to do, this is a privilege the MPs have, this is how they do it. If you can't recognize them, here is a book with a current list of MPs." In fairness, anybody could locate a pin like this, right?

I understand some of the challenges the guy in the street would have. I don't disagree with having the commissioner in here. This was agreed to once; a course of action was laid out. It has been forgotten and not followed through. He needs to be hauled up on a carpet.

The way they work is also with written statements, as in the military. The witness gives a written statement saying, "here it is, this is what happened, such and such a date, this person, that person, that action". It just helps corroborate the entire scene.

I think you are absolutely right that we have to address this issue, but at the end of the day I don't think we have to spend an exhaustive amount of time on it. This is something that I think lies with the leadership. When the leadership is called in.... I'll tell you, when the commissioner is here I don't think this is going to happen a third time. I think they will get a grip on it and put procedures in place. They should be mandated to have a quarterly briefing as to what happens in different scenarios: MP on the Hill, MP on the Hill with an entourage, MP on the Hill with a world leader, whatever. It's pretty simple stuff to put together. They've been through all these scenarios. They know them.

When they get new people on the Hill, somebody has to show him the ropes and give him that briefing. If that doesn't happen, you can't fault that one constable, he is trying to do his job, he just didn't understand the ramifications of what he stopped you from doing.

In fairness to them, I think we should all carry our ID cards and our pins, ideally.

If they don't they need to be briefed ahead of time on the rules, especially if somebody assumes a new post on the Hill, they should be briefed immediately when they arrive. That's it. That's all.

•(1230)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Monsieur Godin.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** On some of the stuff I could agree with you, and on some, I don't. Their job is to protect us. When the pages come here to work on the Hill, they already have to know 75% of the members before they come into the House of Commons. When we do our first vote, the Clerk of the House knows the 308 members of Parliament on the first call of the vote. If they have responsibility for security on the Hill, then they should know who they're dealing with.

The attitude of the officer was that he was not just doing his job, but he said he didn't care about the member of Parliament. He didn't care about Parliament. He didn't care about the vote. That attitude has to be looked at by the force, that you don't deal with people in that way. Okay? We're not 9-1-1. We're not terrorists. We're the members of Parliament who have been elected by the people and the citizens of this country to be in the House of Commons and to make laws for our country, and to keep our democracy at its best.

I'll stop here.

I hope you do the right thing and do a good job on it, because even if you bring the leader of the RCMP in, I am sure that when we dealt with it in 2012 the leader knew what was happening, and he didn't have to come here to do his job. When it was done during Bill Blaikie's time, he knew what was happening, and he didn't have to be brought in. I hope he's brought in and he knows what the responsibilities are, and when they take responsibility for coming onto the site of Parliament, they know that they have a job to do.

My privilege and the privilege of all the members who have to go through was violated that day, and that was wrong. This is our privilege.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Lukiwski, go ahead very quickly and then we'll wrap up, because I have to get a witness list from you all.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** It should take less than 60 seconds. I was going to say it in my first intervention, but I forgot. Thankfully,

David reminded me when he gave some historical perspective on this.

While it's true that the member of Parliament's privilege has been impugned here, more importantly—and David referred to that—the privilege of the House was impugned, and that is more important. I think when we write the report, that has to be in there. People think it's our egos at work; it's not. The privilege of Parliament, the privilege of the House, has been impugned, and that's really the issue here.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Thank you, Monsieur Godin, for coming in.

Look, this committee will get to this. You and I both know we've done it before. It's not about fixing the blame; it's about fixing the problem. We cannot have it that members cannot come to the Hill to do their job, whether for committee or for votes or for whatever it is. We have that privilege, and we need to find a way to make it universal, to have unfettered access to the Hill by members of Parliament at any time. I'll give you the assurance that this committee will throw everything it can at making sure that happens.

Thank you for coming here today.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Chair, for me it's not to blame; it's to fix. It has not been fixed for the 17 years I've been here. There has to be a solution.

• (1235)

**The Chair:** We'll give it our absolute effort to make sure it happens.

We will go in camera to talk about that witness list and our other motion from this morning.

*[Proceedings continue in camera]*









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