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# Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

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Chair: Mr. Ben Carr





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• (1100)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.)):** Colleagues, welcome back to our clause-by-clause on Bill C-65.

As always, I'll give you a friendly reminder that when your ear-pieces are not in use, they should be on the stickers that are present in front of us on the table.

I know that Mr. Morrice is attempting to join us. We're not going to wait for him, but I'll just note that he will appear online shortly.

Colleagues, we're just going to get right into it, and we're going to pick up where we left off. Mr. Cooper had introduced a subamendment. You'll recall that we had a subamendment that we debated. It was defeated. Mr. Cooper introduced a new subamendment, and that is what we are currently on.

Do you have a question, Mr. Duncan?

**Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC):** I'd like to go on the speaking list after Mr. Cooper.

**The Chair:** You want to be on the speaking list. Okay. I also see Mr. Calkins and Mr. Berthold.

Everybody should have the subamendment.

Is everybody else clear on the subamendment? Okay.

Mr. Cooper, the floor is yours.

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

I will just read into the record the subamendment before us. It is that NDP-2, proposing to amend clause 5 of Bill C-65, be amended by adding the following after "tion.":

However, the first general election after this section comes into force is to be held on the later of

(a) Monday, February 24, 2025, and

(b) subject to subsection (3), the Monday following the 50th day after the day on which this section comes into force.

(3) For the purpose of paragraph (2)(b), if the Monday referred to in that paragraph is a holiday, polling day shall be held on the Tuesday after that Monday, and any time specified under this Act before or after polling day is to be calculated as if polling day were the Monday.

Mr. Chair, I want to provide, at the outset, some context on why we have put forward this subamendment. It goes back to the clause in this bill, Bill C-65, that secures the pensions of soon-to-be-defeated Liberal and NDP MPs. This government sold this bill as an

elections bill, but we now know that the real purpose of this bill is to protect the pensions of Liberal and NDP MPs.

We know that Canadians have had enough of this Prime Minister. He is the most unpopular prime minister in decades. The leader of the NDP is not much more popular, having propped up this government for more than two years—a government that has made life more expensive, that has increased taxes on Canadians, that has fuelled inflation, and that is riddled with corruption and conflict from top to bottom.

• (1105)

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.):** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I don't want to interrupt Mr. Cooper's little rage-farming clickbait tantrum, but I just want to ask for clarification around this.

It looks like it's substantively similar to the previous subamendment. I think we already had a ruling on that, if I'm not mistaken, at the last meeting.

**The Chair:** Yes, that's correct.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** I just wanted to understand the rationale behind the decision, because when I read this over in black and white in front of me, it just seems to be substantively the same. I would like to ask for clarification on it, so that I understand the rationale.

Thanks.

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

I think that for clarity, you know, sometimes the chair will provide their own explanation after seeking advice. In this case, I'm just going to go to the legislative clerks directly. I think it might be helpful for us to hear the rationale they provided to me, which was the basis of my judgment.

I'm going to turn it over to them for a moment.

**Ms. Alexie Labelle (Legislative Clerk):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

After reviewing both subamendments, we came to the conclusion that they were substantively different because of the fact that the second subamendment introduces different options—in this case, two options. That's why we felt it was sufficiently different to be considered admissible.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** The options are A and B. That is what you're saying.

**Ms. Alexie Labelle:** Yes, A and B.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Okay. Because it introduces options, that's what makes it substantively different.

**Ms. Alexie Labelle:** That's our opinion.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** That's your opinion. Okay.

All right. Then that was supported by the ruling of the chair.

Chair, you ruled that it was....

I'd like to challenge the chair, even though I know you're our chair, or one of the chairs. I would like to challenge that ruling of the chair.

I don't think it's substantively different enough, and I believe that this is a repeat debate. It's an opportunity for the Conservatives to filibuster and waste the committee's time once again, with officials here.

**Mr. Eric Duncan:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I'm questioning, maybe through the clerk, how somebody can challenge the chair two days later. If the ruling was made at the meeting the other day, Mr. Turnbull should have raised it at that point and had it dealt with. We're now in a meeting two days later, having been told and having not been challenged.

I believe it is too late and not reasonable that we now have a challenge to the chair because Mr. Turnbull doesn't like it. If he didn't like it, he should have done this at the meeting two days ago.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** To that point of order, Chair....

**Mr. Eric Duncan:** You're not recognized.

**The Chair:** Time out.

Thanks. We are suspended.

• (1105) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1110)

**The Chair:** Okay—

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Just a moment, Mr. Berthold. Mr. Turnbull had the floor on the same point of order before I suspended the meeting, so you'll be able to speak after him.

Go ahead, Mr. Turnbull.

[*English*]

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** I was just going to say that my understanding was that it came at the very last moment of the last meeting. This would be the earliest opportunity I've had to bring this up. The ruling was made right before you adjourned the last meeting. I did not have an opportunity in that last meeting to express my disappointment with the ruling of the chair on this particular matter.

**The Chair:** I've heard you, Mr. Turnbull. Thank you.

I have Mr. Berthold.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Mr. Chair, I would like to contribute to your reflection on the situation.

It wasn't until you allowed debate to start that your ruling could have been challenged. Once the debate begins on a decision you've made, it's too late to challenge it.

So Mr. Turnbull missed the opportunity to make his arguments.

**The Chair:** Thank you for your thoughts.

[*English*]

Is it on the same point of order, Mr. Cooper?

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** On the same point of order, I would cite Bosc and Gagnon, which states, "To appeal a decision by a Chair, a member must inform the committee of his or her intent immediately after the decision is announced."

Now, the decision was announced at the last meeting. Mr. Turnbull did not challenge your ruling then. The meeting was adjourned. The meeting reconvened moments ago, two days later. At no time in those two days did Mr. Turnbull indicate any intention to challenge the chair. Debate.... I read the motion, the subamendment, again—

**The Chair:** Mr. Cooper, not to cut you off, I think I've heard the arguments.

Mr. Turnbull, I think I've heard the arguments.

I've consulted with the legislative clerks here and there is agreement. I share the agreement that the amount of time that passes between meetings is not what's actually relevant. What's relevant is that there is time at a meeting.

I did adjourn immediately following the introduction of the subamendment by Mr. Cooper, which means that, in all fairness, it did not provide members of the committee an opportunity to speak to it or object to it. For that reason, in consultation with the experts I have beside me here, I am going to allow the challenge.

What we're going to do is go to a vote on this now.

**Mr. Eric Duncan:** I'm going to challenge the chair on the ruling about when it is permissible to challenge. I'm sorry.

Two days ago, the meeting was adjourned. Mr. Cooper clearly laid out that there was an opportunity. He had recommitted; he restarted, and he was in the debate. Mr. Turnbull said at that point that he didn't like this and thought it was already dealt with. He had the copy of the subamendment. He had all of it. He could have taken the floor and he did not. He did not follow the rules and challenge the chair at the first opportunity, whether it was in the other meeting or not.

I'm going to challenge the chair on the interpretation of being able to challenge the chair within a reasonable manner.

**The Chair:** That's fair enough, Mr. Duncan.

What I need to do now is figure out procedurally how we move forward in terms of dealing with these two challenges.

Hold on for one moment, please.

Colleagues, you cannot challenge a challenge. You can't have a challenge within a challenge. This is a dilatory decision, in the sense that we're going to go right to a vote. I'm going to explain what's happening here.

The vote is to determine whether or not my previous ruling, which was that the subamendment was admissible, is in fact worthy of being upheld or not. That's what we're voting on.

I call the question to the clerk.

Clerk, perhaps you can also explain in your own language, so we're very clear here.

• (1115)

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Christine Holke):** The question is whether the chair's decision shall be sustained.

**The Chair:** Can you explain what the decision was on, please?

**The Clerk:** It's the decision on the admissibility of the subamendment. The chair ruled that the subamendment is in order.

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

**The Chair:** Mr. Duncan, I'll come to your point of order in just a moment, once I explain to committee members what's happened here.

What happened was the chair's decision has been overruled, which means that we fall back to debate on NDP-2.

We'll go to Mr. Duncan on a point of order. Then, I see Ms. Barron and Mr. Cooper.

**Mr. Eric Duncan:** On challenging the chair, my understanding is that I could not challenge the chair regarding a challenge to the chair, but now that it has been dealt with and there's not one on the table, I would like to challenge your decision now to see if it is possible to do so.

I do not believe it's appropriate. We've clearly laid out what the rules were, and Mr. Turnbull did not take the opportunity—

**The Chair:** Mr. Duncan, I don't mean to cut you off, but we can't have a challenge on something that's been dealt with already. The committee has, through its will with a majority vote, determined what it would like to do on this, so we are back on NDP-2 at this point.

I have Ms. Barron, Mr. Cooper and then Mr. Turnbull.

To be clear, colleagues, we are back on NDP-2.

Go ahead, Ms. Barron. The floor is yours.

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP):** Thank you, Chair.

First and foremost, I'm happy that we're back on track and actually putting forward a resolution to the problem that continues to be brought forward by my Conservative colleagues. Again, we have a solution to the problem, and instead of voting in favour of the solution, the Conservatives are finding every way to filibuster this committee and get the clips they want to be able to fundraise immediately, even during this committee. This is another example.

I can guarantee that as soon as I stop talking, there's going to be another subamendment brought forward and another subamendment brought forward, each one as illegitimate as the one before it. I can guarantee that each subamendment is going to be talking about the pensions of members of Parliament.

The thing is, we actually know that those who would benefit the most from this clause in the bill are the Conservative members of Parliament. I find it very convenient that the Conservative members of Parliament are sitting here, fundraising and saying this is a bill that benefits only members of Parliament pensions, yet they're doing absolutely nothing to actually resolve the issue. As a matter of fact, they're doing the opposite of resolving the issue; they are purposely sabotaging our ability to resolve this issue.

Mr. Chair, I never, ever like to attach intentions to any one of my colleagues. However, I would like to point out the facts.

The majority of Conservative members of Parliament are those who would benefit from this remaining in this bill. Today—just like at the last meeting, the meeting before that and probably the meeting that comes up next—we see members of Parliament from the Conservative Party sabotaging the ability of this committee to resolve the issue. It seems a little convenient to me, Mr. Chair.

Today, again, I'm so happy that we're back at clause 5 and the motion that my NDP colleagues and I put forward together to resolve this issue. I will reiterate that around this table, the Bloc Québécois have said they are in support and the Liberals have said that they are in support. The ironic part of this is that the Conservatives have also said they are in support of our making these changes.

What is happening here? How can you say one thing and do the opposite? Apparently, that's what the Conservatives can do over and over again. Here we are again.

I would love to be able to read out all the subamendments that we already have handy, because we know they're coming. I would love to be able to tear apart the fact that there is actually no difference between any of those subamendments, so I hope the Conservatives can bring them forward. My hope is that we can, as a committee, look at those subamendments and figure out whether there actually are differences among these subamendments. I can guarantee that there is not.

At the root of each one of these subamendments is how to sabotage a bill that is looking at improving our electoral system, ensuring that we have elections that are strong and barrier-free and putting into place the solutions that so many who showed up as witnesses here at this committee told us about.

There are issues of barriers preventing those living with disabilities from being able to cast a ballot. There are issues surrounding seniors being able to vote in long-term care homes. We have issues where the dates are too narrowly.... We need to see it extended to have more dates so that people can show up at the ballots to cast their vote. We know people are busy. We know people are working. We know people have schedules with so many moving pieces in this busy world we're in. We need to have that flexibility so that people can show up at the ballots.

We need to have clear repercussions when there's false information being spread to deter people from showing up at the ballots, so that we don't have another Conservative robocall scandal. We need to make sure that we have the processes in place to protect our electoral system.

Again, I will agree with the Conservatives on the frustration about this component of the bill that speaks to the MPs' pensions. Do you know what I did as a result of those frustrations? I found a solution, Mr. Chair. Immediately upon this being brought to my attention, I found a solution.

● (1120)

I stood up in the House. I clearly articulated the fact that I would not be supporting this component of the bill. Right after I stood up in the House of Commons, suddenly we had a Conservative member, who's here today, standing up, reacting to the fact that I stood up in the House of Commons and talking about burning the entire bill and this entire House down.

This Conservative Party does not want to see anything being done in the House of Commons. They just want to see the place being burnt down. It makes sense that they would not want to see a bill move forward that improves our electoral systems.

Do you know what? If we had barriers reduced and had voters who were engaged and felt that their votes were counted and that they were making a difference, and if we had the systems in place to give Canadians the confidence that we are strengthening our electoral system, and people showed up at the polls with the numbers that we should be having, do you know who wouldn't win? The Conservatives wouldn't. We know that, if we had an opportunity to increase and have everyday people showing up at the polls, not just those who have profits at stake, the Conservative Party would be at a loss.

Mr. Chair, there is so much that we could be talking about right now. I cannot begin to express how frustrated I am that we are just sitting here listening to the Conservatives doing their fundraising pitches on division and hate, disengaging Canadians from our electoral system. I don't want to be sitting here and talking about all these things over and over again. We've heard all of them.

The way that we move together on a path forward is by putting forward a solution and supporting the solution to remedy the problem that has been identified in the bill. This particular amendment that I put forward does exactly that.

I don't know what else we can do other than sit here. The Conservatives are basically holding us all hostage, and holding taxpayers' money.... Our being here is publicly funded, including the translators who are being used, the time and the space. The Conservatives are costing taxpayers money in order to waste our time.

I am frustrated. I'm frustrated for Canadians. I'm frustrated for all of us. We could have put forward a solution that could have been quick. It could have been done by now, and we could be talking about how we improve this bill. There are other issues with this bill. Let's talk about them. Let's go through it piece by piece and see if we can come together with some solutions on moving forward to strengthen our democratic systems.

Our job as elected officials is to come together. We can have different perspectives. That's okay. We can have different ways of looking at how to strengthen our electoral system. That's okay, but we need to lean on the experts in the field to get their recommendations. We need to lean on those who have lived experience of having challenges reaching the polls. We need to come together, share our concerns, share the positive solutions that we know are out there and put together a bill that will benefit Canadians. This doesn't seem like all that big of an ask. You would think that it would be a very foundational piece of our work to be doing exactly this.

Mr. Chair, I hesitate. I hesitate to give up the floor, because I'm really tired of listening to the Conservatives' hate, division and disengagement of Canadians across the country. The second I give up this floor, another subamendment is going to be put forward.

● (1125)

**The Chair:** Colleagues, there's been a lot of chatter, which leads me to believe that maybe everyone has to take a deep breath. I'm just going to suspend here for a moment and let everybody get a glass of water. We'll go from there, okay?

We are suspended.

● (1125)

(Pause)

● (1135)

**The Chair:** Colleagues, before I give the floor back to Ms. Barron, I want to say that there was a fair amount of crosstalk. I know that this is affectionately referred to as "silly season", because members are tired. We've been working night and day, and therefore the tensions can increase.

I would just ask that we do our best to perhaps mumble our comments a bit more quietly and allow for a more respectful flow of conversation.

With that, Ms. Barron, I will turn the floor back over to you.

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To go back to this amendment, there are so many things for us to go over. I could spend the next week just explaining facts that are completely contradictory to almost everything the Conservatives have said since we started debating this, but I'm really trying not to stoop to their level. Was it Michelle Obama who said that when they go low, you go high? I don't remember the saying. I'm just really trying not to follow in the footsteps of a poor example as to how we use taxpayers' money and how we best move forward.

I also think it's important that we have some facts. We're going to sit here and have all of these filibuster.... You know, any chance that the Conservatives have to filibuster in order to be able to talk about ways in which they can increase division, they will certainly do that.

I'm not going to speak for too long, but I will share a few things that I think are important for us to consider as a committee. The first thing I want to reiterate is this. I know that the Conservatives aren't big on paying attention to media that has any legitimacy to it whatsoever, but this is a public article from CTV News. It was published on May 30, 2024. I think there are some interesting facts in here. It states:

The federal New Democrats want to amend the Liberal government's electoral reform legislation to scrap the proposal to push back the vote by a week and consequently secure pensions for dozens of MPs, CTV News has learned.

This is interesting, because it contradicts what we are hearing from the Conservative members.

The article then quotes me:

It is a perk of the date change NDP MP and the party's democratic institutions critic Lisa Marie Barron says "doesn't look good," in the broader context of Canadians' cost of living concerns.

I haven't actually read this since May, so I'm as surprised as you are. Let's see what else I said:

"I've had constituents and Canadians bring this to my attention, and I just want to make very clear that right now is not the time for members of Parliament to be thinking about their own financial gain," she said in an interview. "We want to make sure that we're very clear from the onset around the necessary amendments for us to move forward on this."

That coincides with everything I've been saying, and it's proposing some solutions.

The article states, "80 MPs stand to benefit". I find this interesting. I think it's good for us to really talk about what this means for members around this table.

The article says:

The Conservative party has the highest number of MPs who would benefit by being able to qualify for a pension should they lose their seats in the next election, with 32 of their MPs first elected in 2019.

Oh, this is an interesting point:

There are 22 Liberal MPs, 19 Bloc Québécois MPs—more than half their caucus—and six NDP MPs elected in 2019 who would be among those standing to secure pensions if they were defeated in 2025.

I think this part is important:

Barron, elected in 2021, is not one of them.

That's interesting. That contradicts as well, but wait. It goes on:

Neither is NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh as he secured his seat in a 2019 federal by-election months before the general election.

Huh. That's interesting. That also contradicts.

Let's see if there's anything else here. This comes from the Canadian Press: "NDP MP Lisa Marie Barron rises during Question Period in the House of Commons on Parliament Hill".

I could go on. There's information here that clearly shows that the decision to remedy this problem and to stand in the House of Commons to get all members of Parliament on board with this....

Again, I can reiterate that immediately upon this problem being identified, I spoke with members of the Bloc Québécois, I spoke with members of the Liberal Party, and I spoke with members of the Conservative Party, who all agreed that this was a problem. I was putting forward a solution that we could have already resolved

by now. It could be, at this point in time, an issue that's already been resolved.

• (1140)

Canadians could have the peace of mind right now of knowing that this issue is resolved, and that this particular piece of legislation would not benefit the pensions of members of Parliament. Instead, we could be having a conversation about the components of the bill that move us in the right direction. However, we can't, because the Conservatives—

**The Chair:** Ms. Barron, I'm going to interrupt for one second.

I see that Mr. Morrice has his hand up. I want to make sure it's not on a point of order.

Mr. Morrice, for future reference, should you have a point of order, feel free to interject on your audio.

You have a hand up, however. Is that because you want to be added to the list, or is it a mistake?

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:** I think he's waiting.

**Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP):** I would like to be added to the list.

**The Chair:** Okay. You're added to the list. That's not a problem, Mr. Morrice. I can do that.

Ms. Barron, continue.

Oh, is that a point of order?

**Mr. Eric Duncan:** Yes, I have a point of order.

Can we get an update on the speaking order?

**The Chair:** Yes. The speaking goes Ms. Barron, Mr. Cooper, Mr. Turnbull and Mr. Morrice. I had you on there for the subamendment. I do not have you on here on the main motion.

**Mr. Eric Duncan:** I'm glad I raised the point of order.

I'd like to get on there, please.

**The Chair:** I will add you to the list.

Who would like to go first, Mr. Calkins or Mr. Duncan?

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC):** It's Eric, then me.

**The Chair:** Wonderful.

Ms. Barron, the floor is yours.

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Seeing my colleague MP Morrice here, I also want to reiterate and clarify a point that I had not thought of until this moment. This is the fact that I'm pretty sure the Greens are also on board with us in having this issue resolved. I'm seeing his head nodding. I don't like to put words in anybody else's mouth. I recognize that he's probably never going to get an opportunity to speak, because the Conservatives will continue to filibuster once I stop speaking. I want to reiterate that the Green Party have also made it very clear they are not in support of this. I know my colleague Mr. Morrice was elected at the same time I was, in 2021, and would also not stand to benefit from this. However, he is also making the decision to not put MP pensions at the forefront at a time when Canadians are struggling to make ends meet. I will allow him the space to speak, hopefully, and support him in doing so at his turn.

Seeing MP Morrice here reinforces to me how united we are in seeing this issue resolved, and it reminds me of how frustrating it is. I don't know whether my colleague here has been watching the series of events unfolding in this committee, where the Conservatives have used every possible opportunity to sabotage any movement in a positive direction on this bill. In fact, they are instead using this as an opportunity to divide Canadians, provide the clips they need to fill their bank account in time for the next election, and spread more misinformation. There's a vicious cycle of misinformation being spread by the Conservatives about this bill. Calling it nothing but an "MP pension bill" sure does benefit them. I would love to hear from the Conservatives about how much money they have fundraised off this misinformation from the very onset. I would love for them to explain to Canadians across the country, who are providing them with funds based on misinformation, why in fact they are providing false information.

There are no facts behind this, because we have an amendment in front of us that clearly articulates a solution to the problem. I'm offering an opportunity for all of us to come together and resolve this issue once and for all. As a matter of fact, Mr. Chair, I brought forward a unanimous consent motion prior to our moving to this amendment. It called on all members of Parliament to bring this amendment to a vote. It was not even about debating it, in the beginning. At first, it was just about calling it to a vote, because we'd already made our stance clear on this: "Why not use this as an opportunity for us to bring it to a vote and have this remedied once and for all?"

Of course, as expected, the Conservatives voted against it. They voted against our resolving the issue of MP pensions. Again, that CTV article.... How many Conservative members of Parliament benefit from pensions remaining in this bill? Well, it's quite a few. It's pretty interesting that they don't want to move forward on this.

Now, another thing I want to bring up, which is completely interconnected with the amendment I brought forward, is an interesting piece. Again, I can't even begin to pretend I know what's going on in the Conservatives' minds. I'm going to acknowledge that there are a lot more of them than there is of me, and they have a well-oiled machine, with people behind the scenes who are in the process of figuring out ways to silence me and make sure this does not come forward. There was a motion that came forward by my colleague Mr. Cooper, talking about the transparency of documents, making sure information about how this bill was constructed is

brought forward. The interesting thing is that this was, again, a huge fundraising opportunity for the Conservatives. They get to talk about the corruption and everything happening behind the scenes. However, as soon as I mentioned to the Conservatives that I am in support of this bill, it was crickets. Hm. There's nothing happening on this particular bill anymore, now that the Conservatives know I agree.

I'm perfectly okay with providing all the information I have. Do you want to know why? If they would like an actual copy of the report by the Chief Electoral Officer, well, all the information is right in there.

• (1145)

All the points that we talk about in Bill C-65.... You can actually look right in the recommendation of the report from the Chief Electoral Officer, and you can see them directly coinciding with one another. I know we had some success in getting the Conservatives to agree for us to move to this particular amendment the last time I read through the Chief Electoral Officer's report, so I'd be happy to perhaps do some more reading through there to see if the Conservatives would be willing to change their minds again on it.

I just want to reiterate the ways in which there are things coming forward based on opportunistic ways of fundraising. This motion here around transparency just sits on the side now. Nothing's happening with it. If they'd like to bring it forward, I'd be happy to provide them with the information that I'm, apparently, keeping secret.

With regard to the unanimous consent motion for us to bring this to a vote so that we can finally have the issue around the MP pensions resolved, well, the Conservatives voted against that. Now we're on an amendment to, once again, resolve this issue, but instead, the Conservatives are filibustering. I hope that Canadians are paying attention and that they are noticing the pattern of behaviour when the Conservatives are the ones who benefit the most from keeping this MP pensions portion in the bill. I would love to also get a list of names, actually, to find out if there are any Conservative MPs at this table who benefit directly. I don't know. That's something I'll definitely have to look into; maybe Canadians can also look into that.

On that note, Mr. Chair, there are many reasons that I feel that it is vitally important for us to move forward with this bill. I have the honour of being in this position because I was elected by people in Nanaimo—Ladysmith to represent them, to keep my values intact and to ensure that our electoral system is strong for future elections. I can't determine the outcome of the next election; that'll be up to constituents in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith. I can assure you that my job is to make sure I'm doing the work to have our electoral system be as strong as possible for whatever the outcome of the next election is.

Many of the components of this bill that have been brought forward, that we heard from witnesses about.... There's adding two additional days of advanced polling. I talked about this, about the barriers and about people being able to cast their ballots based on their busy schedules. There's often weather. We have extreme weather because of the climate crisis, which the Conservatives, of course, don't believe in. It's good to have additional options.



The mail-in ballots, Mr. Chair, are another component of this bill that is also a component that is being improved upon. We know there are delays that occur in the mail-in ballots. Having a system that's more effective at being able to count those ballots and for people to be able to use those ballots is important. One barrier that was identified to us—actually, it was identified to me by constituents in my riding prior to our starting this study—is that if you make the decision to use a mail-in ballot and, for some reason, change your mind on that, you can't then show up at the polls. This is a component of that. It's talking about that problem and how to remedy that so that people can still have their ballot count if they don't get in their mail-in ballots in the timeline that's provided to them.

Another piece in here is enshrining in legislation the vote on campus program for post-secondary students. We heard from many witnesses, including witnesses from Apathy is Boring, about how important it is that we have the vote on campus program. It was so unfortunate to see that not being offered in the last election. We heard about how students are more engaged when they are able to access the ballot more readily on campus, and how it's also an opportunity for people in the community to be able to come on campus and participate in the democratic systems.

Mr. Chair, there are parts in here around requiring a report to Parliament by the Chief Electoral Officer on steps needed to give electors the ability to vote at any polling station in their riding by 2029.

Again, there are some components in here, and I really wish that we could have an opportunity to talk about them. I'd like to see things being done in a more timely manner. I'd like to see some of those “should”s turned into “must”s in this legislation. There are amendments that we've put in. I think there are over 100 amendments related to this bill that we could be talking about to see the improvements required for us to move forward.

● (1150)

They're all very much doable amendments. We could come together and say that, yes, we want to make that change, and we want to move forward with strengthening our electoral system.

The requirement of a report to Parliament by the Chief Electoral Officer on steps needed to give electors the ability to vote at any polling station is one piece we saw in the provincial election that just happened in British Columbia. People talked about how much they appreciated being able to go to any polling station to cast their ballot. I myself went out the door, and all I had to do was look for a sign basically just letting me know that I could vote at that spot. Wherever I was in my community at that time, I just pulled over and voted in the one that suited me. It was very convenient to be able to do so.

The bill introduces new protections against people knowingly making false or misleading statements related to an election or the voting process. Again we talked about the Conservative robocall scandal already. We talked about the former Conservative member of Parliament who knowingly put forward false information in order to have constituents and Canadians go to the wrong polls in order to see an intended outcome of the election. This bill has new protections against that, because I am not optimistic, unfortunately,

It's a sad situation, but I am not optimistic that we are not going to continue to see Conservatives pushing out misinformation to see an intended outcome of an election.

Now, I'm just looking through all the witnesses that we had here. I want to also acknowledge the witnesses that we have in front of us today, and I thank them for their patience and for the expert information that they provided to us today and in previous meetings. I want to empathize with their frustration at our not fully utilizing their skill set and their very valuable time while they are here. I want to reassure the witnesses, both those who are here and those who have been here in previous meetings, that my goal is actually to see the vital information that has been provided to us by them being used to improve this bill, to see this bill move forward rather than to see all of that valuable information just be lost because the Conservatives would rather filibuster and use this as an opportunity to fundraise.

I want to reiterate how many incredible witnesses we had here today in addition to the people who are here right now. We had witnesses from the Canadian Labour Congress who talked about the positive aspects of this bill, specifically the flexibility for workers to be able to get to the polls and to be able to cast their ballots. They also talked about some issues and concerns that they had with the bill. Of course, I have put forward amendments to remedy those concerns. Again, this is important information to enable us to both recognize the strengths of this bill and make the necessary improvements to it.

We heard from the Public Service Alliance of Canada, who also reiterated how important it is that we see Canadians feeling engaged by our democratic systems and fully participating in our elections, and how important it is that we are reducing barriers to full participation.

We had a witness from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation who talked about the concerns of Canadians across the country around this particular part of the bill that speaks to MPs' pensions. I want to reiterate that I asked Mr. Terrazzano whether he would have any problem with the bill if this particular clause of the bill—providing MPs with pensions they would not have otherwise received—were to be removed. He made it very clear that he did not have any problems with the bill. As a matter of fact, he said that he wouldn't be appearing if it weren't for that piece. I hope I'm not misquoting him, but he said something along those lines. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation made it very clear. I'm so surprised that the Conservatives are not listening to the federal director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation when he is saying that there is no issue if we resolve this particular component of the bill.

● (1155)

Well, we have the opportunity to do so today if there is agreement among members to bring this to a vote. I'm pretty sure we can all do that today.

Let me see. Who else did we have here today, Mr. Chair? We had members from the Privy Council Office. We had witnesses from Apathy Is Boring. I spoke about them already. We had Samantha Reusch here, talking about how important it is to have youth engaged in democracy. I believe she also talked about some of her concerns around foreign interference and how important it is we address that as well. We had Daniel Mulroy, a lawyer, speaking on behalf of Dean Steacy, a visually impaired disability rights advocate who provided incredible information to the committee. I believe it was through Mr. Mulroy that he provided everybody on this committee with a letter about how important it is to move forward with telephone voting—how much of a difference it would make for his ability to fully participate in our democratic systems, and for others who may have visual impairments or other barriers to casting their ballot.

Instead of moving forward with these amendments to see this work happen, we are seeing filibusters by Conservatives to secure their own pensions. There you have it.

We had the Indo-Caribbean Educators Network here. I want to speak about the fact that the Indo-Caribbean Educators Network talked about the importance of our acknowledging Diwali. Again—I believe I said this at this committee before—I completely understand how important it is to look at implications for religious holidays. That is a component for us to look at. I hear the frustrations around that. It's a situation where we see challenges with every proposed date around that time. Anyway, I agree it is something we need to talk about. The frustrating thing is that the Conservatives have now attached MP pensions to the conversation that I think we definitely need to be having, as a committee, about how religious holidays play into decisions like this. How do they coincide with one another, and what are the best steps for us in moving forward on that?

We had the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer here. We had Michael Pal from the faculty of law. I could go on, Mr. Chair, about how many people we had come to this committee. They have busy lives. They are doing important work, and they took the time to provide us with expert witness testimony based on lived experiences and expert opinion. They provided us with important information that reinforces the important parts of this bill. They provided us with an opportunity to strengthen the parts where the mark may have been missed. This is, Mr. Chair, part of the process of how we pass legislation. This is a government bill that has now come to committee so that members can provide input based on witness testimony. This is the time for us to express....

I really hope we get to a place where we can consider Conservative amendments—if there are any, outside of their playing filibuster games—around the pension piece, so they can maintain their pensions. I hope we can dig into this. I appreciate the important debates we have, even when we have differing opinions.

I know the NDP and Bloc don't see eye to eye on everything, and that we do see eye to eye on other things. I want to hear from the Bloc. I want to hear what those concerns are and about where we can come together.

• (1200)

I want to hear from the Liberals about the concerns they have, and I do want to hear from the Conservatives about the concerns they have.

What I am definitely tired of, to be honest, is the record player going over and over again with the exact same narrative, which adds no value to this committee whatsoever, and the only intention is to filibuster, to fundraise and to divide Canadians with misinformation. It's not the way I would hope members of Parliament would act in these committees.

It appears that I've really nailed the disappointed mom. I've had many years to work on the disappointed mom, because I am very disappointed, Mr. Chair. My 21-year-old and 17-year-old would tell you that they've heard me go on this way and that they've seen this face before, and they would probably make fun of me for it, but what else are we left to do but be disappointed when we're being held hostage by a party that is refusing to do the work to resolve an issue that could be so easily resolved?

The solution is right in front of us. If the Conservatives hadn't voted against the unanimous consent motion that I put forward to see this issue resolved once and for all, it would be solved already. We could be giving the gift to Canadians across the country of the peace of mind of knowing that this is no longer part of this bill and that the issue is resolved because we, as members of Parliament, believe in resolving issues and we're not going to play politics. We're not going to look at the best interests of members of Parliament but we're going to do what is right for Canadians.

Again, I will reiterate that I actually think that talking about MP pensions could be an important discussion for us to have. Do I think it's an important discussion for us to have right now? No. Canadians are struggling to make ends meet. The cost of groceries is increasing. Housing is unaffordable. It is not the time for us to be talking about our own MP pensions, but I can assure you, if we are going to talk about our pensions, that I am going to push for it to be done in a transparent way so that Canadians know what we are talking about, so that the debate happens publicly, so that Canadians understand the rationale behind decisions being made and, again, so that it is not being added into an existing bill.

It is a really unfortunate situation that this has been added on here, because it has completely detracted from all of the important work and from all of the important witness testimony that we have received. Instead, the Conservatives continue to say over and over that this is nothing but an MP pension bill. My gosh, if I hear that one more time.... I don't understand how saying something over and over again suddenly makes it fact. I have pages upon pages in front of me, Mr. Chair, that show all of the different components of this bill. To oversimplify and say that this is only an MP pension bill—I don't know what possible explanation there could be for that. Have they not seen the entire bill? Has nobody presented it to them? I know it's available to all of us, as members of Parliament. Have they not sat down to actually read through the bill? If they have read through the bill, I don't understand how the Conservatives can say that this is only a pension bill.

Also, if they have read through the bill, I would love to talk about some of the other concerns they might have around the bill. Perhaps there are more, but I haven't had a chance to hear any of them. I haven't had a chance to hear any concerns that they have or to use the experts we have in the room today to be able to come together with a solution.

Maybe it will mean our taking a piece out of the bill. Maybe it will mean editing the bill. Maybe it will mean adding something to the bill to further clarify it. There are lots of things that we could do in this bill if the Conservatives have concerns.

Once again, I am open to that discussion, not just because it's the right thing to do but because it's my job. It's my job to sit at this table and talk about the bill and to come forward with solutions.

I wish there was a way I could force this to a vote right now, but there is not. It's very unfortunate that I can't. I will say that I put forward the unanimous consent motion calling on the Conservatives to resolve this issue once and for all, and they voted against it. I can assure you that if this were to go to a vote, we would see the exact same outcome again.

• (1205)

With that, as soon as I stop talking, I will hear another subamendment that'll probably have another proposed paragraph 56.1(3)(b) or (c) or (d) that specifies some random language that not a single Canadian—maybe some lawyers; I don't know.... If they're going to put forward another subamendment, I would appreciate hearing how it's different from the previous subamendments.

I appreciate my colleague MP Turnbull bringing that forward, because I had that same question. I'd like to understand what the actual intention is, other than to filibuster and to get good clips for fundraising. I would like to have a clear understanding of what it is that they're proposing, and why. I can assure the Conservatives that every step of the way their intentions now are being watched.

I want them to be aware that they're not fooling anybody with what they're doing. Canadians know that they are trying to waste our time, to fundraise for themselves and to pad their own pockets with their own MP pensions.

I'm sorry, but it's the truth. Sometimes the truth hurts. When the evidence and the facts are in front of me, what else am I left to conclude?

I can feel the responses behind me. I'm sorry if that's hurting somebody's feelings, but right now members of Parliament from the Conservative Party are refusing to resolve this issue when they are the ones who stand to benefit the most. What am I left to conclude? Canadians can decide for themselves.

With that, I look forward to hearing their next subamendment that will waste our time.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Barron.

I was having flashbacks to many moments of a disappointed mom in my childhood. I appreciate your drawing reference to that.

Mr. Cooper, the floor is yours.

• (1210)

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Barron really has difficulty following the facts and basic logic when she asserts one of the most absurd things I think I've heard in nine years of sitting in the House of Commons: that somehow Conservatives are determined to pad their pockets with pensions with respect to this bill. She acts as though she and the NDP are bystanders in all of this.

However, with regard to her point, how is it possible that she can assert that when this very week, the House of Commons voted on a Conservative non-confidence motion in this government to call an immediate election? The motion incorporated, in fact, the very words of her leader, who said, among other things, that “the Liberals are too weak, too selfish and too beholden to corporate interests to fight for people.”

Those words were put right in the Conservative non-confidence motion.

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

I'm sorry, Mr. Chair, but we are talking about NDP-2, and this is in relation to the election date, so I would just ask that we stay on topic of that.

Thank you.

**M. Luc Berthold:** That is exactly what she is talking about.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** No, a confidence motion is not on the amendment.

**The Chair:** I hear your feedback, Ms. O'Connell, and I'm going to just keep an ear open.

Mr. Cooper, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Mr. Chair, Ms. Barron was allowed a fair bit of leeway. I respected that leeway, and I think it's appropriate that I should be able to respond to the absurd points that she made.

She made the assertion that Conservatives somehow secretly want this pensions clause to be maintained in the bill, but there is the fact that we moved a motion of non-confidence in this government that would have had the effect of dissolving Parliament and going to an immediate election. The motion incorporated the very words of her leader. Her leader demonstrated, once again, that he's a total sellout, that his words mean absolutely nothing and that he has no principles. We know why, and that is because he wants his \$2.3-million pension.

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:** I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Ms. Barron, go ahead on a point of order.

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:** I'm sorry, Mr. Chair, but again I think the member may need some facts provided. I think he's flipped the pensions of his leader of the Conservative party and the leader of the NDP. Clearly, those numbers don't add up, so I would love it if somebody could provide my Conservative colleague with some facts and some numbers.

**The Chair:** Thank you for your input, Ms. Barron. That is wading into debate, but I appreciate your intervention.

Mr. Cooper, go ahead.

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** We then moved a subamendment at the last meeting of this committee to see that there is a fixed election date that is moved up, not back, to February 24, 2025. That is hardly consistent with some sort of a plan for Conservatives to secure their pensions. It's quite the opposite of that; we brought another subamendment forward to provide for an election on February 24, 2025, or within 50 days of the legislation coming into force. Again, that is hardly consistent with her claim that Conservatives somehow want their pensions and want to delay the election.

No, we don't want to delay the election; we want an election, and we want an election now, or, at the very least, as soon as possible. We want one now, but of course she voted in the House of Commons to vote confidence in this government and to backtrack on her leader's words. She voted against our subamendment to move the date of the election to February 24, 2025, which happens to be the day before her leader, Jagmeet Singh, qualifies for his \$2.3-million pension.

I presume she was taking his orders to vote against that subamendment, because Jagmeet Singh, on the one hand, professes to lack confidence in these Liberals, but on the other hand, at every opportunity, votes with them to prop them up. Why? Very conveniently, it seems it's because he wants his \$2.3-million pension, and a fixed election date on February 24 would have gotten in the way of that. Today, once again, Ms. Barron was directed by her coalition masters to vote against the Conservative amendment to also see that there be an election at the earliest opportunity.

I underscore that the position of the Conservative Party is that the time is up for this NDP-Liberal government. We want this government to just stop the inflationary spending, stop the tax hikes, stop the crime—stop it all. Get on with it and put it to the people of this country and see what they have to say. I have a feeling they're not going to be very kind to the Prime Minister or to the sellout leader of the NDP.

Ms. Barron acts as though she and the NDP are bystanders in all of this, except for the fact.... She cited CTV as an accurate source of news, and I have a CTV article in front of me from January 27, 2024, in which the then-NDP democratic reform critic Daniel Blaikie is quoted as saying that there had been “a fair amount of work done” towards what is, or what became, Bill C-65. The headline from CTV in January was that Trudeau's and Singh's teams were “quietly planning” this legislation.

We know that there were secret meetings between Daniel Blaikie, officials within the NDP, the NDP executive director, Minister LeBlanc, parliamentary secretary Jennifer O'Connell and members of the PMO and PCO, etc. We of course saw Daniel Blaikie standing behind Dominic LeBlanc at the press conference announcing this bill that, very conveniently, would move the date of the next election back to secure the pensions of soon-to-be-defeated NDP and Liberal MPs. Ms. Barron asserts that this was all inadvertent and it was just by happenstance that this particular date was selected.

• (1215)

Well, give me a break. Give Canadians a break. It's patently absurd. It took me all of a few moments upon opening up the bill to see what the effect of the change in the election date is. Within min-

utes, it was apparent to me that the date had been moved back by a week, which suddenly ensured that soon-to-be-defeated Liberal and NDP MPs who don't qualify for their pensions on the current fixed date would now qualify for their pensions. It's hardly rocket science. It was there right upon looking at the bill. For the NDP to pretend that their co-author of the bill had no idea—that it didn't even cross his mind—is absurd.

That absurdity is underscored by the excuses that have been offered by the Liberals and the NDP. The first justification was that the date had been pushed back so as not to conflict with Diwali and the municipal election scheduled in my province of Alberta. Then, when the Chief Electoral Officer came here, he was asked, because he had meetings with the minister, along with the NDP—

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:** Did you want the information?

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** I'm going to get to that.

The NDP and the Liberals met with the Chief Electoral Officer. We asked the Chief Electoral Officer whether the question of Diwali came up in conversation at any of those meetings, and he answered in the negative. Now, if this was such a pressing issue, you would think that it would be part of the discussion with the Chief Electoral Officer, but it wasn't. Well, I guess I understand why: It's because it has nothing to do with Diwali, nothing to do with the Alberta municipal election, and everything to do with Liberal and NDP MPs padding their pockets on their way out the door—when they're shown the door by their voters—whenever the Prime Minister has the guts to call an election or whenever the sellout leader of the NDP has the fortitude to vote non-confidence in this costly and corrupt government that he has been complicit in propping up and supporting every step of the way, now including three times after he ripped up his coalition agreement on the eve of a by-election in Winnipeg, before he taped it back together and continued to sell out everyone.

So, they said Diwali. They said Diwali, but it never came up. They were asked about, instead of moving the election back, moving the election ahead a week, and they said that that's problematic because it conflicts with Thanksgiving. Okay, I get that. I don't want an election during Thanksgiving weekend. What's to say that we can't move it ahead by another week? Well, the excuse they offered was that it would conflict with Labour Day and the end of summer—except for the fact that it was perfectly fine for the Prime Minister to have an election that was called in the middle of August, that conflicted with Labour Day, in 2021, when he called an election to cover up the national security breach that occurred under his government's watch at the Winnipeg lab.

So, every excuse that they have offered doesn't add up. They speak about conflicting with a municipal election. Well, the date that they selected happened to conflict with a territorial election. That is what the NDP and Dominic LeBlanc cooked up—a date that conflicts with the territorial election in Nunavut. Now, if, in fact, one of the key issues, one of the key reasons, is to avoid a conflict with an election in another province, then wouldn't you think that one of the first things that would be done in selecting another date would be to see whether that date conflicts with any other election?

• (1220)

Of course, that's what would be done, but that wasn't the intent and that wasn't the reason the date was moved back. They thought they could just sneak this in so that Liberal and NDP MPs could succeed in securing their pensions. For them to be acting and speaking in a sanctimonious fashion in the face of this and saying they're offering solutions.... Well, they're the problem. They created this mess. They created this problem, and our position, very clearly, is that time's up, so let's get on with it.

Ms. Barron spoke about the motion that we put forward on November 26 to see that all of the communications between the Prime Minister's Office; the Prime Minister's department; the Chief Electoral Officer; the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs; and NDP representatives be produced so that we can determine whose idea it was to push back the date of the next election. It's very interesting that when that motion was put forward on November 26, the Liberals, along with Ms. Barron, following the wishes or demands of her coalition masters, the Liberals, prevented that motion from going to a vote. She says she's very supportive of that motion, so—

• (1225)

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:** I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Mr. Cooper, but there is a point of order.

Ms. Barron, go ahead.

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:** Thank you, Chair.

As much as I don't want to give my colleague a break, because he's clearly on a rant here, can I get clarification around the facts of what was just said? I believe I made it quite clear that I was in support of the motion, and then the motion suddenly was no longer on the table, so I'm not sure what that's based on. It's just for clarification.

**The Chair:** Ms. Barron, it's up to Mr. Cooper to decide if he'd like to speak to that. It isn't something we can do based on a point of order.

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** I'd be very happy to remind Ms. Barron that she ran out the clock to prevent that motion from going to a vote.

**The Chair:** Mr. Cooper, just to be a stickler for the rules, please make sure I have returned the floor to you before you continue.

The floor is yours, Mr. Cooper.

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Maybe Ms. Barron needs to be reminded that she ran out the clock to prevent that motion from going to a vote, but I'll give her another opportunity. I'll give her an opportunity right now.

Therefore, I move that the committee proceed to consideration of the motion considered on November 26.

**The Chair:** Colleagues, just to clarify for everybody what's happened here, Mr. Cooper has moved to resume debate on his previous motion. This is a dilatory item. The reason for that is that it seeks to move us to a new order of business, so there's no debate that can ensue.

I'm going to ask the clerk to call the vote.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

**The Chair:** Mr. Turnbull, go ahead.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Do I have the floor after the vote?

**The Chair:** Because we have moved to a new item, there is a new list that becomes established as a result of that.

I had Mr. Turnbull, who indicated that he would like to speak.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Thank you very much.

This is a motion that Mr. Cooper has asked us to resume debate on, which we agreed with. I think what's interesting about this motion is that it brings up an important topic that the Conservatives seem to want to get documents on.

For us, we're interested as well in terms of adding to this motion, so I want to move and then speak to an amendment to this motion. I would add the following:

d) given that Bill C-65 is intended to strengthen the Canada Elections Act from attempts of foreign interference in Canada's elections, and given the recent allegations that agents of the Indian government interfered in the 2022 leadership race of the Conservative Party of Canada, the committee invite the following individuals to appear before the committee on its study of Bill C-65:

- 1) Patrick Brown, Mayor of Brampton;
- 2) Dan Muys, MP for Flamborough—

• (1230)

**The Chair:** Mr. Turnbull, I'm sorry to interrupt. You're welcome to start again, but while you're in the process of reading the motion, it would be very helpful to the committee if you could send that to the clerk in both official languages so that it can be distributed.

Feel free to begin where you'd like, but the clerk has informed me that she doesn't have that yet. If you could instruct your staff to get that sent as soon as possible so that members can follow it, I would appreciate it.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** They've heard you. It will be sent momentarily.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Turnbull. The floor is yours.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Thank you.

I'll start from the top in terms of the witnesses we would like to have included here:

- 1) Patrick Brown, Mayor of Brampton;
- 2) Dan Muys, MP for Flamborough—Glanbrook;
- 3) the Honourable Michelle Rempel Garner, MP for Calgary Nose Hill;

- 4) Kyle Seeback, MP for Dufferin—Caledon;
- 5) Doug Shipley, MP for Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte;
- 6) Jaskaran Sandhu, one of the campaign managers for Patrick Brown; and
- 7) Harkirat Singh, the other campaign manager for Patrick Brown.

I want to speak to this for a few moments, just to motivate committee members on why I think they should vote for this amendment.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Mr. Turnbull. I have a point of order.

Mr. Duncan, go ahead.

**Mr. Eric Duncan:** As a very basic decency—this is not Mr. Turnbull's first meeting—we need to wait to get the motion. Can we suspend until we get that and speak to it, please?

**The Chair:** In fairness to the committee, I don't disagree with Mr. Duncan. It has been my practice, when members have read motions that have not yet been distributed, to suspend in order to allow an opportunity for review.

I will now suspend.

- (1230) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_
- (1240)

**The Chair:** Colleagues, everybody now has a copy in both official languages, so we will resume debate.

Just for clarity, we are debating an amendment to Mr. Cooper's motion.

Mr. Turnbull, the floor is yours.

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

[*Translation*]

Go ahead.

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Mr. Chair, I just received my colleague Mr. Turnbull's amendment. I'm reading it as I speak.

It seems clear to me that this amendment can't be deemed in order, given the motion of November 26 relating to Bill C-65 and specifically relating to the documents discussed and produced as part of the discussions on Bill C-65.

In the amendment proposed by my colleague, I don't see anything relevant in this regard, nor do I see any connection with the November 26 motion.

Honestly, I think you have to rule this amendment inadmissible for all the reasons I've just mentioned.

- (1245)
- [*English*]

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** On the same point of order, Chair, if you look at the Conservative motion, the language is identical in the amendment. This is a motion on Bill C-65. Within Bill C-65 there are provisions and amendments dealing with foreign interference. While the Conservatives might be asking questions about documents, within their requests for documents on Bill C-65—which is broad—on the entire bill, there could be conversations around the development of Bill C-65 dealing with foreign interfer-

ence. They do not target their questioning or their document production specifically at the date of the election. They ask for everything, which means it includes foreign interference, a key component of this bill. The language of the amendment is the exact same in terms of the calling of witnesses as their first clauses.

Unfortunately, they didn't limit the scope to the election date. They have the scope as the entire Bill C-65, which includes foreign interference.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. O'Connell.

On the same point of order, I have Ms. Barron.

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:** Thank you, Chair.

I appreciate my colleagues' comments.

First of all, I appreciate that this is an example of how we bring forward strengthened amendments that are more holistic in nature. I agree with the first amendment that was brought forward. I think this addition makes the motion even stronger. I think these are all very relevant points if we're talking about the transparency of documents and the transparency of information—

**The Chair:** Ms. Barron, not to cut you off, but if I may, I feel prepared to rule on this. I've heard the arguments made. I see no reason why this is not admissible, which I think is what you're getting at. For the benefit of the committee, I would like to keep going.

Did you have something else to add, Ms. Barron?

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:** I was just going to ask to be added to the speaking list on the next—

**The Chair:** I have you on the speaking list.

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:** Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** Colleagues, my ruling on this is that it is admissible.

Mr. Duncan.

**Mr. Eric Duncan:** I'm sorry. [*Inaudible—Editor*] the speaking list.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. I didn't understand what you said. Is it admissible or inadmissible?

**The Chair:** It is admissible.

Mr. Duncan asked me to confirm the speaking order. The speaking order—

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** I'm challenging your decision, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Okay.

I have a challenge of my decision, colleagues, so this goes right to a vote.

Just as a reminder, we are voting on whether or not my decision from a moment ago, which rules the amendment to Mr. Cooper's motion admissible, should be overturned. I've ruled that it's admissible. Monsieur Berthold has chosen to challenge the chair.

Clerk, we will go right to a vote on that.

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

**The Chair:** Colleagues, I think the vote there was clear, so we're resuming debate.

Mr. Duncan did ask for a confirmation of the speaking order. The speaking order changes, of course, because we are on the amendment.

I have Mr. Turnbull, who maintains the floor, followed by Ms. Barron. Should any other members wish to add their names to this list, they can at any moment indicate that.

Mr. Duncan, I see that you wish to be added. You would be third in that order.

Mr. Turnbull, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Thank you, Chair.

I was on this committee for about four years of my political life here on the Hill. We studied foreign interference at length. I'm very proud of the work our government has done to prevent against foreign interference. I think Bill C-65 actually tries to do more in this area.

What really concerns me is that the Conservative Party of Canada know full well that there was foreign interference in their leadership race. The current committee for parliamentarians, NSICOP, which was formed by our government, has at least one member from the Conservative Party on it. We had Alex Ruff at this committee, speaking to his private member's bill, not so long ago. He actually said that all members of Parliament should be required to get a security clearance. That is really interesting and slightly ironic, if not hypocritical, given the fact that the Conservative leader is the only federal party leader to not get a top secret security clearance while knowing full well that within his party and within his leadership race there was foreign interference.

The NSICOP report alleges that there was Indian government interference in the Conservative Party leadership race. I've cited this report and tweeted about it numerous times, because I'm deeply concerned, as the Conservatives were concerned back when Han Dong.... There were intelligence leaks that the Conservatives quickly jumped on to have Mr. Dong questioned in committee and to undertake studies on foreign interference here. They took that matter very seriously at that time because it was a Liberal member of Parliament whose name was in question, yet they show zero concern and zero interest in undertaking the same kind of scrutinizing study and in looking at it deeply.

They have lectured us time and time and time again on this quote that "sunlight is the best disinfectant". Transparency and sunlight are the best disinfectants, but this only applies to everybody else, not to themselves. They do not want this. They scrambled in this committee room. We watched them all scramble and huddle up, because they were scared like little rats on a ship.

Do you know what? I watched that happen. Why would they be so concerned about their party finally being exposed for the actual foreign interference that's been within their party? It's interesting, because they show this deep interest. For partisan gain, they will

fake their interest in almost anything. That's what we've seen in the House of Commons for many, many months.

We know that the NSICOP report has allegations of Indian government interference in the Conservative Party leadership race. Just recently, we actually confirmed this. We've actually now confirmed this. Media reports have confirmed that within Patrick Brown's campaign....

It's interesting, because there are things that are connected here. I can't quite figure out what the connections are, but I think Canadians should be deeply concerned. On the one hand, we know that the current leader of the Conservative Party's campaign actually paid the legal fees for the person who reported allegations against Patrick Brown. What's interesting is that they paid the legal fees. That seems kind of strange. Why would one campaign pay the legal fees of the person who took down the opponent, right? That's been out there for a long time.

On the one hand, that's the case. On the other hand, we hear that the Indian government was actually pressuring MP Rempel Garner to step down from the campaign of Patrick Brown. Why? It was because it wasn't in her interest to stay connected with Patrick Brown. It's almost as if the Indian government knew that Patrick Brown wasn't going to be in the running for much longer. They were encouraging her to abandon ship, because it wasn't good for her political career, which is really interesting.

Just recently, when Patrick Brown finally came to the SECU committee—I know that my colleague Ms. O'Connell was there and questioned Patrick Brown—we heard a number of things. The media headlines were clear: Patrick Brown actually confirmed that there were "angry" calls from consular officials.

● (1250)

This was confirmed by not just one person. Actually, five people—sources in Patrick Brown's campaign—confirmed that there was pressure, that it was well known that there was pressure, from the Indian government or Indian consular officials and the consul general, for Ms. Rempel Garner to basically abandon ship and remove herself from Patrick Brown's campaign.

It's interesting, because she actually did remove herself. She subsequently said that she was considering running in Alberta to replace Jason Kenney shortly after. Funnily enough, she decided not to do that, but she never actually went back to Patrick Brown's campaign. That is highly suspicious, if you ask me. It really piqued my interest, certainly.

I think all Canadians should be interested, just as they were interested before, when in a nomination contest there were questions and allegations made about a Liberal member and whether there was any foreign interference in that nomination contest. I've never seen the Conservatives so excited and so interested in jumping on this issue.

● (1255)

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Mr. Turnbull.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** That was at that time—

**The Chair:** Mr. Turnbull.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** —yet they show no interest when it comes to their own party.

**The Chair:** Mr. Turnbull.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Oh, I'm just getting warmed up, Chair.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** Mr. Turnbull, the floor certainly is yours, but as you very well know, on a point of order I do need you to respect my intervention so that I can hear the honourable colleague.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Absolutely, Chair. I respect you—very much.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** Mr. Cooper, go ahead on your point of order.

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Mr. Chair, I just would seek clarification as to whether it would be in order, since we have officials from the Prime Minister's department, the PCO, to ask questions about the NSICOP report, Han Dong's nomination—

**The Chair:** Mr. Cooper, I think you're—

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** —and issues around the Prime Minister—

**The Chair:** Mr. Cooper, I need you to—

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** —being briefed and hiding that—

**The Chair:** Mr. Cooper, just as I scorned Mr. Turnbull with a little bit of disappointed dad—

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** —on not listening to me when I took the floor, I'm going to have to do the same with you, my friend. I have to intervene. This is not—

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** I'm just asking if that's in order.

**The Chair:** You are wading into debate. I don't see anything out of order about what I've heard.

Mr. Turnbull, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Thank you, Chair. I respect your ruling once again.

I think what's also pertinent for Canadians to be aware of is that when Patrick Brown came for his recent committee appearance, he also indicated that the Poilievre leadership campaign had an “incomprehensible” number of memberships. That's the word he used—“incomprehensible”. I thought that was interesting, especial-

ly when some of their members had put out tweets of images of these vast numbers of membership forms that they were collecting. I thought that was kind of interesting too.

When you start to look at this picture holistically, you start to connect the dots here. It's deeply concerning to me. As I said, we spent many, many months on this. I have five binders of material on foreign interference that are about as thick as binders could possibly be. I remember sitting through hundreds and hundreds of witnesses.

Mr. Cooper was there. I remember him adamantly going on and on about how sunlight was the best disinfectant, which is interesting. Again, when it comes to the Conservative Party of Canada, is sunlight still the best disinfectant?

• (1300)

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Great. Well, that's wonderful. I say we study it and call all the witnesses, then. I'm sure Mr. Cooper and his colleagues on the Conservative benches will support this amendment to the motion.

I also wanted to talk about the fact that there's a difference here. When Han Dong's reputation was in question...

Oh, maybe I'll just remind everybody of this, before we run out of time. When you look at Han Dong's nomination contest, I would say that a leadership candidate race is exponentially greater. It's not that any amount at all of foreign interference is acceptable in this country, and I'm not suggesting otherwise, but it's the severity of the impact and the gravity of the situation that Canadians should be deeply concerned about when it comes to the leadership race of the leader of the official opposition.

The fact that instances of foreign interference have now been confirmed in an NSICOP report should be deeply concerning to all Canadians.

**The Chair:** Mr. Turnbull, I'll stop you there.

With that, colleagues, we are at one o'clock. Although we do have the possibility of extra resources, I'm not going to seek them.

We're going to suspend the meeting. When we return, just for clarity, so that there's no disagreement about this, Mr. Turnbull will maintain the floor, followed by Ms. Barron and Mr. Duncan.

[*The meeting was adjourned at 4:40 p.m., Monday, January 6, 2025. See Minutes of Proceedings*]









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