

## **Parliamentary Precinct Security**

### **Member of Parliament Dennis Bevington's speech on government Motion 14; RCMP leading operational security on the Hill**

**February 16, 2015**

Mr. Speaker, I am rising to debate the motion before us and the amendments that have been made to it.

Of course, the NDP is not opposed to the idea of an integrated security force operating in the parliamentary precinct. That is an idea that most of us have a good feeling about and think would improve the general security of the place. However, the problem is what has happened here to start with and then looking at the details of the motion.

To start with, when we have an opportunity for parliamentarians to make the rules for Parliament, there should be a process that engages parliamentarians and not a process that comes from the Prime Minister's Office. That is not appropriate for dealing with the rules that govern us as parliamentarians. We all understand that, but the Conservatives seem to be willing to go along with the idea that a party of one gets to make the choices in this House of Commons for all of us.

What we have before us is a motion that calls on the Speaker to "invite without delay, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police..."

Therefore, once the motion is passed, the Speaker has his orders. He is going to invite, without delay, without discussion, the RCMP to lead operational security. That is the essence of what is happening here. Everything else around it is on qualifications that may or may not come into play. However, that is what will happen from this motion, which is what we are here for today.

We talk about the privilege of the House and the continued employment of our existing parliamentary security staff, but those are things that can or may be put into place, or they may continue in one way or another. However, it is that the RCMP would take over and lead operational security for this parliamentary precinct. That is what is going to happen.

How do we feel about the actions of the security team in October, which is what has driven the party of one, the Prime Minister, to put forward this motion?

We all saw what happened. We all have our ideas about what went wrong or right on that day. We can look back and ask ourselves if the people in our security service within this House, many whom have worked here for many years and recognize every one of us, were the most important element in what happened on that day. I think we can say yes. We saw what happened outside of the grounds.

We could say that there are technical issues outside of the grounds. Why do we not have electronic locks on the main doors in this place? Why do we not have secondary barriers on the roads leading up to this place? What are we doing about the people on two-wheeled vehicles who roar up the Hill? Nothing. We do have some technical issues on the grounds around Parliament that we need to deal with. We obviously have problems with access to the buildings when someone can walk in without anyone stopping them.

There are issues that need to be dealt with, but they are not issues that need to change the way that Parliament is run and the way parliamentarians take care of themselves. These are technical issues. They are issues that should be worked on by security experts who can put them in place, who can make sure that procedures outside the grounds and inside the House are adequate for our protection and respect the nature of Parliament. We do not need to change the relationship to do that.

My concern about the grounds goes back to an incident in September 2011, when members of the RCMP, in response to the Keystone pipeline protest, put up massive barricades. They shut down the main stairs leading up to the middle of the parliamentary grounds. They positioned people on tops of buildings. There was a crowd of 1,000 people, and they were very concerned about controlling it.

As a member of Parliament, I wanted to access the stairs. I told the RCMP that I wanted to stand on the stairs and talk to people in the crowd. The officers told me I could not do that. When I asked the officers under what authority were they doing this, they said the authority was in a book in the House of Commons. I told them to get the book. When they opened it, they apologized and told me to stand where I wished.

Those RCMP officers did not understand the relationship of parliamentarians to Parliament. Some of them are here for a year or two; some are here maybe a bit longer. They are not like our security staff. They do not understand the nature of Parliament and the parliamentarians who work here and represent Canadians within this building.

We do not want to see that change. We do not want to see the relationship we have with this building change over technical issues that should be fixed and can be fixed.

When I was transport critic in the last Parliament, I spent time on aviation security. It was clear that once security rules are put in place, they stay in place, whether they become rather insignificant and meaningless later on.

We went through a process in transport committee and we heard from many witnesses. When we begin locking the cockpit door of an airplane so that no one can enter it, it changes the nature of what can go into the cabin. An individual cannot open a properly locked cockpit door with a pair of scissors. Threatening someone in the cabin is then like threatening somebody anywhere else. Threats were made, so rules were finally changed.

The Israelis laugh at some of the things that we do here. They have the best security system in the world, but we get into a fixed position about what we think security is and we are then not adaptable to the changes that can take place.

We do need to adapt, but we cannot throw out the baby with the bath water. We cannot make this Parliament less than it is. This is our watch. We are standing this watch. This is the watch that all of us in this Parliament represent at this time. What we do here to change the rules for how our Parliament behaves is important. It cannot be done simply at the whim of the party of one. The party of one does not have the right to do that to us in this Parliament. We all know what the party of one means here, and no one could deny that.

The differences between the RCMP and the security people in the House are really quite apparent. The security people here look on this as their career. They learn to work with us. They know each other and all of us personally. They understand how this place works when we are here and when we are somewhere else.

What is the likelihood of the RCMP understanding that? RCMP officers have a couple of years on the Hill and then move on. Some rookies from Regina might be brought in and put to work on the Hill. What kind of guarantee is that of the total understanding of the relationship of parliamentarians to Parliament, of respect for the people who work in here, of understanding our job and our authority within the House? There is no guarantee.

This is a dangerous place to go. We do not need to go there. We should go back and put this in front of a group of parliamentarians. We should come together and make an agreement among ourselves. We are not far away. Two amendments have been made to the government's motion, one from the opposition and one from the third party. We are not far apart. Let us bring them together. Let us put this together in a good fashion.