

Ottawa Journal by David tilson MP ? The Jaspal Atwal affair ? Still no answers from the PM

Most Canadians have surely now heard the name Jaspal Atwal, the convicted attempted murderer who was invited to dine with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau at an event hosted by the Canadian High Commissioner back in February, during the Prime Minister's disastrous trip to India.

In response to the negative reaction by Canadians to this serious lapse in judgement, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) trotted out a senior member of the civil service to suggest Atwal may have been invited by the Indian government in an effort to embarrass the Prime Minister. In the days and weeks following the India trip debacle, the Prime Minister has continued to maintain this conspiracy theory, despite the fact that the government of India, Liberal MP Randeep Sarai, Atwal, and Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland have all refuted this claim. It's now the end of March and Canadians are no closer to answers from the Prime Minister. Jokes have been made about the Prime Minister's embarrassing trip to India, but there is nothing funny about the serious implications resulting from the Prime Minister's continued support of a conspiracy theory which hasn't been substantiated by any proof and has been met only with denials by those said to be involved. Canadians are only left to conclude that the unsubstantiated claims of a conspiracy to humiliate the Prime Minister are intended to distract from the complete fiasco that the trip ended up being for him.

The disastrous trip to India became yet another example of how the Prime Minister has failed on the international stage, as he compromised Canada's relationship with what will soon be the most populous country in the world; utterly failed to promote Canada's interests; failed to resolve trade irritants and caused concerns about his commitment to fight Sikh extremism in Canada; and failed to move Canada towards tariff-free access to a market of more than a billion people.

If the Prime Minister and the government of Canada have evidence that a foreign government intentionally tried to sabotage Canada's reputation on the international stage or the reputation of the government, the Prime Minister must provide evidence for such a serious accusation. If that's the case, the Prime Minister must have his national security advisor outline the evidence that proves that the government of India had anything to do with Atwal's participation with the Canadian delegation. If it isn't the case, the Prime Minister must disavow this whisper campaign by his own officials. However, more than a month has passed since the Jaspal Atwal affair began and the Prime Minister is still failing to provide the answers Canadians deserve.

Since the Prime Minister has failed to provide answers to Canadians about the Atwal affair and the only other person who knows the truth is the Prime Minister's National Security Advisor, the Conservative Official Opposition debated the following Opposition Day Motion March 22:

?Given the prime minister has supported a claim that the invitation issued to a convicted attempted murderer was the work of a foreign government attempting to interfere in Canadian foreign relations, while others in the government, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs, claimed that the invitation was an 'honest mistake' on the part of the Canadian government, the House call upon the Prime Minister to instruct his National Security Advisor, Daniel Jean, to appear before the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security to provide the Committee the same briefing he gave to journalists on February 23, 2018, and that the briefing take place in public and no later than March 30, 2018.?

We believe it's imperative that the National Security Advisor provide Members of Parliament with the same information provided to journalists Feb. 23. This will help Canadians understand if the Prime Minister is telling the truth. Unfortunately, the Liberals voted against this motion, denying Canadians access to the truth.

We, the Official Opposition, will use every tool at our disposal to bring the National Security Advisor before the Public Safety Committee and will continue to call on the Prime Minister and the current Liberal government to be transparent with Canadians on these serious allegations.

Canadians deserve answers on the Jaspal Atwal affair. The Liberal government had a choice on our Opposition Day Motion ? they could've stood with the Conservative Official Opposition and voted once for transparency, but instead chose to stand with Prime Minister Trudeau to hide the truth from Canadians. This is shameful from a party who campaigned on transparency and would rather jeopardize Canada's relationship with India by proposing a baseless conspiracy theory than to acknowledge the Prime Minister's gaffes

