

Ottawa Journal by David tilson MP ? Government?s national security legislation a setback for public safety

Canadians want to be reassured that their government has taken the appropriate steps to ensure we are as safe and secure within our own borders as possible, especially given the recent attacks in Europe and other parts of the world.

Our previous Conservative government made safety and security a priority by taking decisive action. However, the current Liberal government recently tabled Bill C-59, an act respecting national security matters in the House of Commons, which considerably weakens the ability of national security agencies to help ensure the safety and security of Canadians. It's a step in the wrong direction for Canada that only serves the purpose of maintaining an ill-advised campaign promise.

Bill C-59, which was introduced in the House of Commons June 20, replaces the Security Intelligence Review Committee and the Commissioner of the Communications Security Establishment with a new National Security and Intelligence Review Agency. It creates the position of the Intelligence Commissioner to provide day-to-day oversight of national security activities. It limits the Canadian Security Intelligence Service's ability to reduce terrorist threats. It limits the ability of government departments to share data amongst themselves to protect national security. It removes the offence of advocating and promoting terrorism offences in general and raises the threshold for obtaining a terrorism peace bond and recognizance with conditions.

The introduction of this national security legislation by the current Liberal government weakens Canada's national security agencies and their ability to keep Canadians safe. It demonstrates the current government does not take public safety seriously. In the days after horrific terror attacks in Europe and the day after a Canadian was convicted of attempting to leave Canada to join ISIS, the current government is watering down provisions that help law enforcement keep Canadians safe. In taking this action, they are making it more difficult for law enforcement and security agencies to prevent attacks on Canadian soil. In fact, these changes set our laws back from the sad lessons learned from the murder of Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent in Quebec.

The actions by the current Liberal government are incomprehensible. Instead of cracking down on radicalization, the current government is actually creating loopholes that those who seek to radicalize our youth can exploit. Moreover, in the last Parliament, both Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Minister Ralph Goodale voted in favour of Bill C-51, the Anti-terrorism Act, 2015. This recent move toward weakening public safety can only be explained as the current government attempting to keep an ill-advised campaign promise.

The Conservative Official Opposition takes ensuring the safety of Canadians seriously. This is why our previous government brought Canada's national security laws into the 21st century and in line with our allies. While our allies are all taking measures to strengthen national security, this legislation actually removes the ability of Canada's intelligence service to reduce terrorist threats. Sadly, in the last six months, Canadians have witnessed acts of terrorism on our soil with the brutal killing at a mosque in Quebec, as well as a number of attacks in recent weeks in Europe and other parts of the world. The threat of terrorism is real and Bill C-59 is naïve and irresponsible. The current Liberal government's misguided approach to national security will put the safety and security of Canadians at risk. Canadians deserve better from their government.

