

Tuesday, November 10, 2020

On Monday, November 9th, Michael Barrett, M.P. posted a video on his Twitter feed, with the description, “BREAKING at Ethics Committee we learn that legally ordered WE documents have been destroyed.”

In the video, Mr. Barrett states, “Speakers’ Spotlight has destroyed all the records of speaking engagements for the individuals named in the motion, the Prime Minister and his spouse, for any period outside seven years”.

This statement is patently false and misleading.

We believe what Mr. Barrett is referring to is a conversation we had with Ms. Miriam Burke, the Clerk of the Committee, a few weeks ago. Ms. Burke had reached out to let us know that the Committee was voting on a motion, and that an Order for documents may be forthcoming. She wanted to get a sense of the volume of documents that were to be produced, so she could make the necessary preparations, including arranging for translation services.

We let Ms. Burke know that because all of the speaking engagements took place more than 7 years ago, we did not have hard copies of the files, as these had been purged in the normal course of business. We also let Ms. Burke know that we do have some digital copies of documents that we would produce, along with records of all the speaking engagements dating back to 2008 that were legally required by the Order.

It is standard practice for companies to purge documents after 7 years, and we have always followed this practice. Furthermore, under Canadian privacy law, we are required to destroy all personal information as soon as it is no longer necessary. Therefore, it is not just good practice, but a legal requirement that we have been following.

To be clear, we have not destroyed any legally ordered documents. Any reports to the contrary are entirely false.

We encourage Mr. Barrett to consult on this matter the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada who, as an Agent of Parliament, would be in a position to fully explain the legal requirements to destroy personal information as soon as it is no longer necessary.

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