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### Statement on Motion 103

This week, the House of Commons will debate Motion 103, which condemns Islamophobia and instructs the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage to study discrimination against Canadian Muslims, as well as other religious and racial groups.

I will be voting in favour of Motion 103.

In light of the mass shooting at the Quebec Islamic Cultural Centre in Quebec City last month, where six Muslims were killed and 19 injured while they prayed in their mosque, it is appropriate and important that Canadian Parliamentarians study the issue of anti-Muslim and anti-Islamic prejudice and discrimination.

Some have suggested Motion 103 singles out Canadian Muslims for special treatment. This is not true. The House of Commons has long had a tradition of passing motions denouncing discrimination and hatred against particular groups, especially religious minorities. For example, in recent years the House of Commons has adopted similar motions regarding Jews (February 22, 2016), Yazidis (October 25, 2016) and Egyptian Coptic Christians (October 17, 2011).

Others have said Motion 103 it will set us on a path toward sharia law. This is also not true. Motion 103 does not set us down the path of sharia law in any way, shape or form. I do not support sharia law and I would never vote in favour of anything that set us down that path.

Still others have suggested that the motion could restrict free speech in Canada. These arguments are based on the premise that, in denouncing Islamophobia, the motion also denounces criticism of radical Islamic terrorists and denounces criticism of Islam.

That is not what the motion says. In denouncing Islamophobia, the motion is simply denouncing discrimination and prejudice against Muslims and people of the Islamic faith. Nothing more or less. Motion 103 will not prevent anyone from criticizing Islam or radical Islamic terrorists.

However, there are laws in Canada that do restrict free speech. In particular, Section 319 of the Criminal Code restricts free speech by making it a criminal offence to incite or promote hatred against an identifiable group.

This, in my view, is too great a restriction on free speech in a free and democratic society. It is also creating fear among law abiding Canadians about their ability to voice legitimate criticism regarding terrorism and religion.

If elected leader of the Conservative Party, and as Prime Minister, my government will repeal Section 319 of the Criminal Code.

There has been a rise in hate speech in Canada, particularly on social media. However, the right way to combat hate speech is through free speech. Not through the Criminal Code. That is why I have spoken out strongly against speech that breeds hate and fear.

I believe that free speech is one of the fundamental rights on which our democracy is built. That's why I previously supported and spoke in favour of Bill C 304, which repealed the hate speech provisions of Section 13 of the Canadian Human Rights Act.

Free speech, while not an unlimited right, is a fundamental right in our free and democratic society. To the greatest extent possible, speech should not be restricted in order to ensure vigorous public debate and to ensure that this debate is not driven underground. That is why I am committed to the repeal of Section 319 of the Criminal Code.

**Chong.ca**