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ABSTRACT:

The Speaker of the House of Commons has a special role in defending the authority of MPs to hold the government to account. Despite the Speaker's theoretical power to uphold the rights of MPs, the ability to exercise these powers in practice is constrained by factors both internal and external to the position. Specifically, the federal government is able to sidestep the Speaker's authority and the Speaker's commitment to impartiality, while central to his role, prevents him from making timely rulings. Combined, these factors create a significant impediment on the ability of the House to exercise its constitutional duties. In this article, the author reviews the powers and role of the Speaker. Then, using the battle between the government and the House over the firing of two scientists from the National Microbiology Laboratory in early 2021 as a case study, she suggests possible reforms that could increase the Speaker's power and improve the transparency of government, as well as its accountability to the House of Commons. *This article is a slightly modified version of the winning entry in the 2022 Canadian Study of Parliament Group Koester Essay Competition.

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