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Chair: The Honourable John McKay



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• (1605)

[*English*]

The Chair (Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order.

Greetings to all colleagues and to our witnesses.

This is the 23rd meeting of the public safety committee. Pursuant to an order dated October 8, 2020, we are doing a study on the Parole Board of Canada and the circumstances that led to a young woman's death.

I am sure that colleagues know by now the protocol with respect to hybrid meetings, so I won't repeat that.

We have two sets of witnesses today. In the first hour we're dealing with Michel Lafrenière and George Myette. Each has seven minutes to present.

I don't see any particular order here, so we'll just go with Mr. Lafrenière for seven minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Lafrenière (Retired Lawyer, As an Individual): Good afternoon, everyone.

Mr. Chair, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

The point of my appearance is clearly not to blame anyone concerning Mr. Gallese's case, but rather to suggest potential solutions to try to improve the system in order to better protect society—

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Lafrenière, we seem to be having audio difficulties.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Lafrenière: Okay.

[*English*]

The Chair: I need guidance from the interpreters.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Lafrenière: I cannot hear the interpreter.

Are you having trouble hearing me?

[*English*]

The Chair: It's warbly to the extent that we can't proceed with Mr. Lafrenière.

Should we maybe go to Mr. Myette, the next witness, and see whether in the meanwhile the technicians can help Mr. Lafrenière?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Lafrenière: Okay.

[*English*]

The Chair: Is that all right with you, Mr. Lafrenière?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Lafrenière: Yes. Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Myette. You have seven minutes, please.

Mr. George Myette (Executive Director, 7th Step Society of Canada): I'm going to read a prepared statement. Hopefully, I can keep it within the seven minutes.

I appear here today as a proponent of parole and its use as part of the reintegration process for incarcerated persons. I wish to acknowledge that the death of Marylène Levesque was an unfortunate and terrible tragedy. I wish to express my sincere condolences to her family and the community.

I have been a professional and a volunteer in the criminal justice system since 1973. I have personally counselled inmates in their parole preparations many times through my involvement with the 7th Step Society's self-help groups, which are designed to teach accountability and self-awareness as offenders work their way through the system.

Our institutional self-help groups use confrontation and support to assist inmates to develop realistic release plans. Once released, we provide community support groups composed of successful ex-inmates and community volunteers. These are groups to which parolees can return on a regular basis to discuss challenges and successes in their lives.

I am myself a former offender, having been convicted of several offences as a young man. Having successfully completed a parole, I continued my education, graduating in 1975 from Mount Royal College in Calgary with a diploma in criminal justice. I was subsequently involved with the development of community residential centres and contract parole supervision through the auspices of the Alberta 7th Step Society in conjunction with Alberta Correctional Services and the then national parole service. I received a pardon in 1980 after the appropriate eligibility period and considered this a positive milestone in my life.

I chose to leave employment in the criminal justice system in 1982 to pursue a career in the oil and gas business, but I continued as a volunteer board member and self-help group member thereafter. I assumed the role of volunteer executive director of the 7th Step Society of Canada in 2002 and continue in that role today. As well as sitting on the executive committee of the National Associations Active in Criminal Justice, I was fortunate to have a successful career in the oil and gas business and was able to dedicate my time and expertise within the criminal justice system with no need for compensation.

During the past five years, I've been an active volunteer at William Head Institution on Vancouver Island. Our 7th Step institutional self-help group there primarily consisted of inmates serving life sentences for murder. All of our members were actively working on release plans as they neared their parole eligibility dates. They were not always successful in their first or even second attempts. However, with perseverance and co-operation with their case management teams as well as their own personal development and accountability, our members were able to gain their releases to the community and are contributing members of society today. Of our eight original group members, our last active member was released on day parole to a community residential facility in Victoria this past September. We are planning for a new group to start once COVID restrictions allow. This tells me that a system of supervised release is an important and necessary part of the reintegration process.

I fully support the mandate of the Parole Board of Canada, and I do have some knowledge of their selection of board members, having acted as a reference for two people who had applied for part-time parole positions in the past. I understand the selection process to be quite rigorous, with extensive training once a person is selected. I know that the Parole Board members are charged with an onerous responsibility in administering decisions regarding release on passes, day parole and full parole. I do not interact directly with sitting parole board members, but I do have feedback from the inmates who appear before them and know that the hearings are intense, in depth and thorough.

As a citizen and a member of the community, it gives me a sense of comfort to know that in addition to the professionals and volunteers working with offenders in the system, there's an oversight body that makes the final decision on an inmate's suitability for release into the community. Once the decision to release an inmate has been made, the responsibility for supervision in the community then rests with the Parole Board or the Correctional Service of Canada. Although the final responsibility still rests with the Parole Board, the direct supervision is handled at a community level.

I have read the board of investigation's report regarding the release of Eustachio Gallese and his supervision in the community. I believe that the tragic death of Marylène Levesque was an anomaly but cannot judge if it could have been predicted since I'm not a psychiatric expert and know nothing of the offender's personality. If warning signs were overlooked or ignored, this is obviously very concerning and needs to be addressed.

• (1610)

I can only say that in my previous experience as a contract parole supervisor, albeit many years ago, there was very good communication and accountability between our agency and the parole service with regard to each case that we supervised, as they had the ultimate responsibility for the offender in the community.

I do not believe that contracted parole supervision presents an undue risk to the community, if proper protocols are followed and there is clear communication in all directions.

In this specific case and gauging from the board of inquiry report, there is some ambiguity as to how the direct supervision of Mr. Gallese was administered. Hopefully, if there were gaps, they will be closed in the future.

It is not for me to assign blame in this case, since I have only a peripheral understanding of it. I can only state that predicting human behaviour is not an exact science in many respects, but with adequate assessment and preparation, proper supervision, and follow-up with clear communication, the chance of this happening again is unlikely.

My recommendation—

The Chair: You have one minute, Mr. Myette.

Mr. George Myette: Thank you.

My recommendation is that this one tragedy not become an event that unduly affects a highly effective parole release system but instead serves as an opportunity for improvement and increased security for the community.

Thank you for your time. I welcome any questions.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Lafrenière, I understand your Internet connection has been restored.

[Translation]

Go ahead for seven minutes.

Mr. Michel Lafrenière: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chair, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before the committee today.

The point of my appearance is not to blame anyone, but rather to suggest potential solutions to improve the system in order to better protect society.

I am testifying today as an individual. I am a retired lawyer and a former board member of the Parole Board of Canada. I began my career in 1979 as a private practice lawyer, in Drummondville. In 1986, I was appointed as a part-time board member, and I continued to practice law part time. In 1991, I was appointed as a full-time board member—

• (1615)

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Lafrenière, apparently we have more difficulties. I'm not quite sure what to do here, given that this is an unstable connection.

Mr. Kurek, did you have a point of order?

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Yes, it's a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Maybe the witness could turn off his video for the statement. We have secured his identity. That might allow for sufficient bandwidth so that we can make sure we hear his statement in both of Canada's official languages.

The Chair: That's worth trying, certainly.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Lafrenière: I will try to turn off the video.

It's done. Does it work better now?

[English]

The Chair: Yes. Proceed. Thank you.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Lafrenière: I am testifying today as an individual, not only as a retired lawyer, but also as a former board member of the Parole Board of Canada. I started my private practice in 1979, in Drummondville. While continuing with my practice, I was a part-time board member starting in 1986. Five years later, in 1991, I was appointed as a full-time board member for a five-year term, which ended in 1996.

During the first part of my career, I spent 10 years with the Parole Board of Canada, from 1986 to 1996. My term was unfortunately not renewed in 1996, despite evaluations indicating superior performance. I then continued my career at Correctional Service Canada, including at the national correctional staff college as the person in charge of legal training for correctional officers, parole officers, correctional supervisors, emergency teams and new employees. I remained there for 11 years, until 2008. I once again applied for the position of board member at the Parole Board of Canada. My term was renewed in 2013 for five years, and it came to an end in 2018.

So I have 20 years of experience at the Parole Board of Canada and 11 years at Correctional Service Canada, in addition to my years in private practice. At the end of my term in 2018, I asked that the term be renewed on a part-time basis. I was then 66 years old and felt that I could, as a board member, share my knowledge with new board members and act as a mentor. I applied and passed a written test, but I have unfortunately never heard back. I then understood that my term would not be renewed. The Parole Board of Canada is a formidable organization, which has very worthwhile re-

sults. Yet it is almost the only organization that is incapable of keeping its most experienced members and is constantly being imposed new board members, as if it had a revolving door or positions with ejection seats.

I will now talk to you about what happened a bit more recently. From 2015 to 2017, no board member's term was renewed, which led to a shortage of board members and a significant workload overload, to the point where public safety was sometimes jeopardized. After that, 2017–2018 saw an influx of new board members. The Parole Board of Canada has, of course, a good training plan for new board members: two weeks in Ottawa and three weeks in the regions. However, that is still basic training, with the rest being acquired through ongoing training over the years and through daily experience. I know from experience that it takes from 18 to 24 months for a board member to feel comfortable with the system and become independent. During that period, new board members are usually provided with support, paired with board members with five, 10, 15 and even 20 years of experience.

When the tragic event that brings us here today occurred, there were not enough experienced board members at the Parole Board of Canada, forcing it to have board members with little experience hear complicated cases, like that of Mr. Gallese. I noted that, in the first ruling, the board members had eight months of experience and, in the second ruling, 14 months. That is little experience for such complex cases.

• (1620)

When I arrived at the Parole Board of Canada, in 1986, we had five board members handling cases similar to that of Mr. Gallese. Over the years, that number dropped to four, then three, and they are now two. I think the work can be done by two board members, as long as—

The Chair: Mr. Lafrenière, you have one minute left.

Mr. Michel Lafrenière: The work can be done by two board members, as long as they have the experience.

I am not saying today that the decisions made in Mr. Gallese's case are not good. They are decisions that, overall, comply with the board's legislation and policies. However, I think that somewhat different decisions could have been made and that the members did not really have all the experience needed to see the entire range of decisions available to them, as decision-makers, at that time.

I saw that revocation was considered, but that Mr. Gallese's progress was used as a justification not to proceed in that way. I think this is a decision that—

The Chair: Mr. Lafrenière, your time is unfortunately up.

Mr. Michel Lafrenière: Okay.

[English]

The Chair: With that, we're going to turn to the six-minute rounds of questions. We have Madam Stubbs for six minutes, Mr. Lightbound for six minutes, Madame Michaud for six minutes and Mr. Harris for six minutes.

Madam Stubbs, please go ahead.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Thanks, Mr. Chair, and thank you to both the witnesses for being here today.

Mr. Lafrenière, I would invite you to continue to expand on the point you were making about the importance of having experienced parole board members making decisions. In this case, do you want to comment about the impacts, which I think you were beginning to expand on, and whether you think the people making those decisions knew all the options available to them at the time?

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Lafrenière: When they decided not to revoke the inmate's day parole, the board members could have extended it, but not for six months. They could have extended it for one or two months, scheduled a new hearing and requested a new release plan and a new, updated psychological evaluation. The evaluation that the board members had done in 2017, although our policy dictates that these evaluations are valid for two years. They could have requested a new evaluation for a new hearing and, in the meantime, kept the offender on day parole and taken away certain release privileges or certain types of access in the community, so that he could only be released to go to work.

Moreover, in the first decision, I noted that the board members had imposed a special condition for psychological monitoring on Mr. Gallese. However, six months after the decision, the monitoring had not yet begun. So I feel a new risk assessment was necessary, especially since they had learned at the hearing that Mr. Gallese had been authorized to frequent massage parlours.

I also feel that the board members should have imposed a special condition specifically prohibiting Mr. Gallese from going to massage parlours. I know that this point was raised at the hearing, but on the parole officer's recommendation, the board members preferred to give him only a verbal prohibition. The disadvantage of a verbal prohibition, as opposed to strict imposition of a special condition, is that, should the inmate fail to comply, the parole officer has no other choice but to suspend the inmate and inform the Parole Board. A simple verbal instruction gives a great deal of leeway to the parole officer, who can take various types of action and decide not to suspend the inmate. In such cases, they have no obligation to inform the board.

Another benefit of imposing a special condition is that it appears on the certificate of release that the inmate must carry at all times. In addition, if police officers stop the inmate, they have access to the system, which allows them to know which prohibitions have been imposed. They can therefore proceed with the suspension and notify the Correctional Service of Canada.

Also, if a special condition had been imposed, the Correctional Service would have automatically been informed, and it would have been aware of Mr. Gallese's situation. However, none of that information was included in the written decision, which meant the

service was not aware of the actual situation. It also kept the information from any future board members called upon to make decisions, as well as future parole officers, since multiple officers are known to take turns on a single case.

I also noted a significant disparity between the decision expressed verbally to the inmate and the written version. As a result, much was lost. In my opinion, experienced board members would be unlikely to have proceeded in this manner. Instead, they would have imposed a special condition prohibiting Mr. Gallese from frequenting massage parlours. The board members probably could have requested a new psychological evaluation, since the one on file was out of date.

● (1625)

Does that answer your question?

[English]

The Chair: You have about 10 seconds, Madam Stubbs.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: I would just say that it is extremely insightful and indeed answers a number of questions. Thank you very much.

Thanks, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Lightbound, you have six minutes, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

First of all, what happened to Marylène Levesque in Sainte-Foy is certainly incredibly sad. I feel it's vitally important that we learn from it. However, it's important to know that cases involving repeat violent offenders are extremely rare in Canada. So the fact remains that the system works most of the time, even if it failed in this particular case.

Mr. Myette, in your experience, what are the best practices for reintegrating a repeat offender? What is most effective?

● (1630)

[English]

Mr. George Myette: Thank you, Mr. Lightbound.

I think preparation in the institution is one of the most important parts of reintegration.

I just want to say one thing as well, in case it doesn't get picked up somewhere else. As in this particular case, I think any case in which there is intimate partner violence has to be looked at even more closely than in other forms of murder.

As I mentioned in my statement, I've worked with people who have committed murder and who are doing life sentences. The 7th Step Society tends to work with recidivists, people who have been in and out of the system in the past and haven't responded well to other treatment or forms of reintegration. The most important part—it's our first step, in fact—is trying to get that individual to really face the truth about themselves and the world around and decide that they need to change. Realistically, in any case, preparation during the person's sentence, before the person ever leaves the institution, is probably the foundation, because we're talking about corrections, rehabilitation and reintegration.

Quite frankly, I have to agree with a lot of what Mr. Lafrenière said in his assessment of the situation, although not necessarily all of it.

To answer your question about preparing people, in terms of developing positive and healthy relationships with individuals who come in to the institution, especially the community members who are able to come in to the institution.... Don't forget that people in an institution, especially if they're serving a life sentence, do become institutionalized. Their reference points are within the institution. It doesn't matter what kind of programming they're getting if they have no contact with the outside world. It doesn't mean that their initial problems were fixed just because they spent 10, 15 or even 20 years, in some cases, in an institution. The real preparation comes as the person is cascaded from maximum—which most life sentences start as—down to minimum security. The last period, especially in minimum security, is exposure to the community and to people who come in as volunteers and help that individual to be able to start to develop. That is a primary issue, especially if the person's had issues in the past with interpersonal relationships. Then of course, if you have addiction issues, the person has to deal with that, so the process has to start well before the person is ever released.

In Mr. Gallese's case, I have no idea if he was getting escorted or unescorted passes, or if he had come out of a minimum security institution. I didn't see that, necessarily, in the board of inquiry report. I'm not sure of that part and can't really speak to it in this case.

Certainly once someone—and especially in the case of someone with that sort of a violent incident in their background—is released into the community, they've already spent...I think in his case it was 13 years.

I notice, for example, that he was given liberty from the halfway house within one day to be out in the community unsupervised. To me, there are some safeguards that can be built in there, and a more gradual release.

I speak from my own experience, having been in an institution and thinking that the minute I walked out the door, my problems were solved. That's a pretty common misconception that a lot of offenders have, because their problems aren't solved. Life suddenly hits you squarely in the face, and a lot of the issues that you might have dealt with beforehand are still there.

To try to answer your question—I'm not sure I'll give you the total specific answer you're looking for—I think that preparation before release is really important. It's not just from the CSC programs

that are delivered in the institution; I think exposure to community influences is really the key factor.

• (1635)

The Chair: Mr. Lightbound, you have 30 seconds.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound: I believe I won't have time for another question.

Thank you, Mr. Myette. In my opinion, the services you provide make for a solution that must be prioritized.

In the Board of Investigation report, the Parole Board's decision is not faulted, it's the supervision provided by the parole case management team, the officers themselves. That's where the shortcomings were.

Thank you for your very helpful testimony, Mr. Myette.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lightbound.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Michaud, you have the floor for six minutes.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Gentlemen, thank you for being with us and for your testimony. We are extremely grateful.

Mr. Lafrenière, at the beginning of your speech, you stated that you were not here to blame anyone, but rather to help improve the system. That's what we want to do as well.

As Mr. Lightbound said, repeat violent offender cases like this are very rare, but it's still one too many. We need to try to understand how and why this happened. We need to look for solutions so that it doesn't happen again.

You mentioned that overwork and lack of experience on the part of the board members may have prevented them from properly assessing the risks in this case. Could you elaborate on that? Do you feel those factors had a direct impact on the case?

Mr. Michel Lafrenière: It's hard to determine whether those factors had a direct impact. After all, the person responsible for these events is the offender himself. Still, experienced board members might have made different decisions.

I am not arguing that it was a bad decision. It is consistent with the act, the regulations and the policies. However, experienced board members can make decisions that go beyond simply acting or not acting on Correctional Service recommendations. They can make intermediate decisions.

After reading the decision, and in light of some of the facts that have come to my attention, I would say that a somewhat different decision could have been made in this case. One thing that comes to mind is the fact that Mr. Gallese was allowed to go to massage parlours. That information was not recorded in the written decision.

There's also the fact that Mr. Gallese was still not being psychologically monitored after six months of day parole. Yet, in the original decision, this special condition was imposed because they felt that Mr. Gallese had emotion control issues that were not yet fully resolved. Had I been involved in the hearing as a board member, I would have thought twice about renewing the conditions that existed in the first month for another six months.

Instead, I would have renewed the conditions for a month or two. In addition, I would have required that the psychological monitoring be initiated. I would have required that a new correctional plan be established in light of the permission granted to Mr. Gallese to frequent massage parlours. Finally, I would have required that a new release plan be developed, which I would have reviewed a month or two later to reassess the situation with respect to the violations.

Again, I don't want to say that the decision wasn't right, but it could have been different.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you.

To me, this clearly demonstrates the relevance of risk assessment. If Mr. Gallese was given access to these privileges, it may have been because they felt he was not a danger to the community, when clearly he was.

Given your experience with the board, what factors are these decisions based on? How is it determined that an inmate on day parole is not a risk to the public despite his or her background?

• (1640)

Mr. Michel Lafrenière: The board always uses information previously processed by the Correctional Service. Case preparation in the Correctional Service is done by experts. A correctional plan established at the beginning of the sentence includes the requirement to meet certain goals, including participation in programs and psychological evaluation and monitoring. A host of factors are taken into consideration.

Our decisions are often made on the basis of a cascading release, which was done in Mr. Gallese's case. He was granted over 300 releases, both escorted and unescorted. Then the board granted day parole, but in a very specific context and with special conditions, the specific purpose of which is to ensure proper management and risk reduction.

I should point out that the special condition relating to psychological monitoring is often a bulwark against emotional disturbances. During psychological monitoring, a bond of trust is established with the officers and, above all, the psychologists. In this case, the monitoring was not done, even though it had been recognized as a contributing factor to the problem.

The Chair: Ms. Michaud, unfortunately your time is up.

[English]

Before I turn to Mr. Harris for the next six minutes, Mr. Lafrenière, I just got a note saying that you can turn your camera back on again. If you wish to do so—and I think the rest of the committee does wish you to do so—perhaps you could do that.

With that, I'll turn to Mr. Harris for six minutes, please.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Lafrenière, it's good to see your face again. Thank you for appearing, and Mr. Myette as well.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Lafrenière: Thank you.

[English]

Mr. Jack Harris: I'm sorry. Are you able to hear? Is there difficulty in hearing?

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Lafrenière: I can hear you.

[English]

Mr. Jack Harris: Is there a problem, Mr. Chair? I don't understand.

The Chair: I don't think so.

Mr. Lafrenière, can you see and hear Mr. Harris?

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Lafrenière: Yes, I can hear you and see you.

[English]

Mr. Jack Harris: Okay. It was just a technical difficulty.

The Chair: He's just exchanging pleasantries, Jack.

Mr. Jack Harris: I was about to ask a question. Thank you for being here.

Mr. Lafrenière, perhaps you could clarify this problem for me first. You said that there was a time when there would have been five commissioners making a decision, not two. Do you mean a decision of this type with respect to the continuation of day parole?

The question is.... I won't say it's as simple as that, but it's not the same question as granting or not granting parole in the first place. Was it the case that there was a time when it would require five commissioners to continue day parole for an additional period?

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Lafrenière: When I joined the board in 1986, all life sentence cases were handled by a panel of five board members. At that time, there were three board members who worked for the board, plus two board members from the community. They did not receive the same training as the other board members and sat as citizens in life sentence cases only.

Subsequently, the number of board members was reduced to four. So there were three members from the board and one from the community. Then only the three members from the board were kept, with that number being eventually reduced to two.

[English]

Mr. Jack Harris: My question was, is that for all decisions made in relation to any person who had a life sentence? We understand that they're still serving their sentence while they're in the community. Is it for every decision related to a life sentence or only those about initial parole? Just clarify that point for me, please.

• (1645)

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Lafrenière: All decisions regarding life sentence cases were made by a team made up of—

[English]

Mr. Jack Harris: All right. Thank you. It was a technical question. That will do.

Perhaps I can turn to you for a question, Mr. Myette. I'm very interested in your 7th Step program. It seems to me that it may well be modelled somewhat on the 12-step program for Alcoholics Anonymous. Two questions arise.

One, that seems to be the type of program that requires a high degree of motivation on the part of the participant to be committed to a particular course of action on their own, as opposed to it being imposed upon them by someone saying, "You are directed to go to this."

Second, is that a program that's considered part of programming, if you know what I mean? Would that be accepted as a legitimate part of a person's rehabilitation within an institution?

Mr. George Myette: Yes. First of all, it is voluntary. In fact, the groups are self-selecting. Unlike AA, for a person to become a member in a 7th Step group, they actually have to be accepted and voted in unanimously by the members in the group, because it's essentially based on trust and commitment.

What happens is this: If someone is interested, yes, they first of all have to be motivated to change. Second, they can't be mandated to join the group. Third, the process of actually joining the group is that they have to prove to the group that they in fact are motivated to change.

To answer your second question, it's not seen as part of correctional programming, because it is voluntary participation. However, in practice, what we see is a broad acceptance of the program by the institutions where we have operated because of the results of the people who participate in the programs, in that they then commit to their correctional plans. We don't see the group as a panacea; it is really just an opportunity for someone to start their true process of change. Then we will even, in a lot of cases, do what we call mock Parole Board hearings, because when these people are preparing for parole, if they can't convince the members of the group, who have been through the process themselves and understand all of the BS—I'll use that word advisedly—that people can come up with about why they did something, that they're sincere, then how are they going to ever convince the Parole Board that in

fact they do understand what caused them to do what they did in the first place?

Yes, I think it's a complementary.... It's not a program because it's a group involvement, but in a sense, in a lot of institutions, and if you were to poll institutions where the groups operate, I think you would find a very broad acceptance of the validity of what the groups do.

Mr. Jack Harris: Is there an assessment in the sense of...? Would, for example, the Parole Board take into consideration that a person had successfully completed the 7th Step program, or if there's such a thing?

Mr. George Myette: Yes. I think you'd have to pose that question to current Parole Board members, but in the past, yes. We have written letters of support. We've had feedback from Parole Board members. In my experience.... As I mentioned, I've been involved in the criminal justice system on the outside since 1973, and I started my field training in 1969. That's sort of a tongue-in-cheek comment, of course. I've had a lot of follow-up with Parole Board members over the years, and feedback in terms of what they think of the group process, so yes, I think we've seen reference to it for people who do understand it and—

The Chair: Thank you. Unfortunately, that is Mr. Harris' time.

Mr. George Myette: Oh, sorry.

The Chair: That's all right. I'm unfortunately tasked with running a clock here.

Colleagues, we have 25 minutes of questions in the next round and we have 15 minutes left, so my proposal is that we go three minutes, three minutes, one and a half, one and a half, and then three and three. Hopefully, that will be acceptable.

Mr. Motz, you have three minutes, please.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, thank you to both witnesses for your testimony today. You have both provided an experienced perspective, specifically Mr. Lafrenière on the mistakes made by the Parole Board in this case, a perspective that's shared by many Canadians with regard to this tragedy, and Mr. Myette, among other issues, on the special care that has to be taken with offenders who have a history of domestic violence. Thank you both for that.

Mr. Lafrenière, as we know, the Parole Board has the authority to withhold parole for individuals who are a threat to the public. You indicated in your opening statement that the members in this particular hearing or these particular hearings—this case—could have asked for a new hearing or new evaluation. They could have even asked for a new hearing. Do you believe that the Parole Board members who adjudicated this case assessed the threat to the community accurately?

• (1650)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Lafrenière: In my opinion, it wasn't a bad assessment and it was conducted according to the criteria in the act, the decision-making policies and the regulations. Let's not say that the decision was in error, let's say that the case could have been handled differently.

Among other things—

[*English*]

Mr. Glen Motz: Thank you, Mr. Lafrenière.

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Lafrenière. I'm just getting communication from the interpreter that the sound is not working.

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Chair, I propose that he shut his camera off again, and then I'll go on to the next question, please.

The Chair: Okay. That sounds reasonable.

Mr. Lafrenière, did you want to complete the thought, or did you want Mr. Motz to ask you the next question?

Mr. Glen Motz: I got the answer required.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Motz, please proceed, and I'll start the clock.

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Lafrenière and Mr. Myette, we've seen the fallout of this from an accountability perspective, and it was surprising to many people across the country that the only accountability that really took place here was that frontline individuals would be accountable. There would be no accountability with the Parole Board. That surprised a lot of them. What are your thoughts on that?

Plus, are there any thoughts on the fact that the correctional investigator has a role to play as an independent investigator, rather than having the Parole Board and the Correctional Service investigating themselves in this case? I wouldn't mind your perspective on both of those questions.

The Chair: Please be very quick.

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Myette, I'll start with you first, please.

Mr. George Myette: I'm sorry. I got lost in the process. Could you quickly repeat your question, please?

The Chair: Unfortunately, we are running out of time here. It's been three minutes.

Mr. George Myette: I'm sorry.

The Chair: I apologize to everyone, including Mr. Motz. We're not going to be able to get an answer to his question. Possibly somebody could pick it up later on.

Madam Lambropoulos, you have three minutes, please.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank both our witnesses for being with us today.

Mr. Myette, you spoke a lot about how good a program 7th Step could be and that it could act as a support group.

You've been involved for 38 years, and obviously you've seen many positive cases. I notice that the services are only offered in certain provinces and not in all of them. There aren't chapters in every province, including in my own province of Quebec.

I was wondering if there's anything particularly blocking it or if it's just because members haven't necessarily found out and started a chapter in these areas.

Mr. George Myette: Primarily, I think because we're a volunteer-based organization, we do get some support funding from Public Safety for volunteer development. To answer your question, though, in fact we are in the process of starting a chapter in Montreal, so that will be changing fairly soon.

Over the years, we have never been a largely funded organization like John Howard, Elizabeth Fry or others. Being somewhat of a self-help organization, we're dependent on volunteers in the community. Where we have success in finding local volunteers—particularly ex-offenders who get involved—we will establish chapters in those areas. In fact, due to some extra initiative on our part in the last couple of years, we've expanded into southern Ontario and into Saskatchewan. We were just about to start in Winnipeg prior to COVID. Throughout COVID, in fact, we have also now picked up some momentum in the Montreal area and in New Brunswick.

Yes, we are limited in certain ways, but where we are able to establish a base, we will provide services. However, we are largely a volunteer organization.

• (1655)

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: I know you are a volunteer organization, but what are the methods you use for outreach, and once they've been released or once they're on parole, how do people find out that your organization exists and can help them if they do want to change?

Mr. George Myette: We try to distribute information in the institutions and through other community organizations. For example, I mentioned earlier that I sit on the board of the National Associations Active in Criminal Justice, which includes all the criminal justice community organizations. I mentioned John Howard, Elizabeth Fry, the Salvation Army and St. Leonard's. Through their organizations as well, we will try to disseminate information, and of course we have a website, which I'm guessing you looked at just from your comments.

Not all inmates have access to websites, because in the institutions, they don't, and—

The Chair: Unfortunately, we're going to have to leave it there, Madame Lambropoulos.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you.

Mr. George Myette: Thank you.

The Chair: Madame Michaud, you have a minute and a half.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Myette, you have some fascinating experience. The work your organization does to support offenders is very important.

The Correctional Service of Canada-Parole Board of Canada National Joint Board of Investigation issued some recommendations for the joint report. However, no recommendations were made to the Parole Board to prevent situations like the Levesque case.

Based on your experience and your reading of this case, would you make any personal recommendations for improving the procedure or do you believe that everything is fine and no changes to the current procedure are needed?

[*English*]

The Chair: You have about 30 seconds.

Mr. George Myette: As I mentioned before—and somebody else commented on it—a case like this, especially a case of intimate partner violence, is somewhat unique, at least among the people I've been involved with who have committed murder. I think there has to be a very intensive psychological assessment and follow-up in the community.

That's why I said earlier that I agreed with some of Mr. Lafrenière's comments about additional oversight. It's never too late to change a decision. If somebody was released and needs to be corrected, it has to be done.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Michaud.

Mr. Harris, you have one and a half minutes.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you.

Clearly Mr. Gallese was a high risk to reoffend when he was let out. The evidence is from the result of what happened. Either he was not properly assessed on the way out or he was not properly managed. I don't think we have the answers to that question.

What's your opinion, both of you, quickly? Do you believe this requires further investigation and a further independent inquiry into how his case was managed, both inside and outside the institution?

The Chair: If Mr. Lafrenière could turn off his camera, we might get better sound.

We'll go with Mr. Myette first.

Mr. George Myette: An additional investigation wouldn't hurt. I'm not sure that I have a specific answer as to what that should consist of, but I know that if it's a high-risk situation, revisiting it... After all of this information is collected and recommendations are made, I would go back and sift through everything and take a look at it. I would defer to experts in the psychiatric assessment of individuals like Mr. Gallese.

The Chair: Please answer very briefly, Mr. Lafrenière.

We seem to have lost him totally.

• (1700)

Mr. Jack Harris: He's muted.

The Chair: Is he? I can't see him.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Lafrenière: The joint investigation by the Correctional Service of Canada and the Parole Board Canada is a mandatory, legislated investigation when tragic violent events such as this one occur.

The problem with these types of investigations is public perception. They give the impression that they are completely internal investigations, that they are only about investigating the organization. I would welcome an external investigation as well, if only to reassure the public and to show that the investigation is being done independently.

I'm not criticizing the work that was done, I'm criticizing the perception it gives.

[*English*]

The Chair: Unfortunately, we're going to have to leave it there.

Mr. Van Popta, you have three minutes.

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Thank you.

Mr. Myette and Mr. Lafrenière, thank you for being here. I've listened with great interest to your testimony.

Mr. Myette, I was reading on the website for the 7th Step Society that no program has been effective in reaching out and influencing, I suppose, hardcore convicts. Would your organization be an exception to that rule, or is that a problem we face generally?

Mr. George Myette: I would say that we're not the only exception to the rule, but we certainly are one way of reaching people who have not responded to the standard rehabilitation programs that are there. Part of that is our self-help base, in that people who feel they can't connect with other organizations or programs just because they identify them as being part the system will be more amenable to participating in the 7th Step type of program.

Of course, we're not the only answer, but in a lot of cases we certainly have had an impact on people coming from that background, for recidivists in particular.

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Good. Thank you.

Do you feel confident that if your program had been available in Quebec for the subject of our investigation today, it would have made a difference for him?

Mr. George Myette: Well, if he had passed the test and been able to join the group....

First of all, it would have been an assessment by the group if he was sincere and actually had faced his problems. We certainly have had other people with psychological issues, people whom the group has actually encouraged to take psychological counselling, psychiatric counselling, because of trauma.

At lot of people who come through the system have experienced severe trauma earlier in their life. We're not a psychotherapy group. We strictly try to deal with people facing and dealing with their issues, but in some cases—and I can't say specifically in his case—something like that might have been effective, because it does get the person to actually examine what their real issues are and potentially deal with them, as opposed to acting out on their impulses and anger, because in a lot of cases that happens, and in this case, of course, that's exactly what happened.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Van Popta. Unfortunately, we're running out of time here. I apologize.

We will go to Mr. Iacono for the final three minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellán, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Myette, given your personal experience and your experience with many ex-offenders, what are the long-term benefits of granting a pardon?

[*English*]

Mr. George Myette: I think the biggest impact is restoring some self-esteem. Some of you may have seen that I appeared in front of a standing committee back in 2010, before the pardons act was dismantled, which was a big disappointment to me. I won't take that platform here today, because we're here about something else, but in my case I would say that it restored a lot of my personal feelings of self-worth and gave me confidence to be able to go out in the community, which I did.

I worked in the system for a number of years. I left the 7th Step organization as a staff person in 1982, stayed as a volunteer, and went to work in the oil and gas business. I had a successful career for many years and was able to give back. I think that's probably

one of the biggest benefits for me personally, and I would say to a lot of other people, plus it opens doors for people who don't have to say on an application form "I have a criminal record." Under the pardons act now, as a record suspension, that has changed somewhat, and hopefully that battle isn't over yet, but in any event, an individual who can regain some of that self-esteem is given that extra boost to continue on with their direction in life.

● (1705)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you.

In the tragedy involving Marylène Levesque, it turned out that Mr. Gallese was a repeat violent offender.

Does an organization like the 7th Step Society of Canada have specific measures for this type of profile? Are they already in place?

[*English*]

Mr. George Myette: Are you asking me that question?

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Yes.

Mr. George Myette: Do you mean within the 7th Step organization or generally speaking?

Mr. Angelo Iacono: It's as you wish—both.

Mr. George Myette: Okay.

Particularly within our organization, because we've dealt with a lot of people with violent pasts who have killed other people.... In a lot of cases, though, the circumstances were different, because they didn't involve intimate partner violence. I can't say that we've had one person serving life for murder who has participated in our program who has been in that same situation. Most of the people we've had have had drug-related, gang-related types of violence, or bar fights, etc.

I would say, in the case of Mr. Gallese, that it was more of a psychiatric issue, I think, and something that maybe wasn't addressed. Again, I can't speak to it entirely, but I don't know specifically within the CSC system how they address it. I know they have psychological assessments and try to deal with it that way.

Accountability is the key issue for any individual who is in that situation. If they were to be involved in our group, that's what we primarily focus on.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: We're going to have to leave it there. Thank you, Mr. Iacono.

That brings this session to a close. I want, on behalf of the committee, to thank both Mr. Myette and Mr. Lafrenière for not only their testimony before the committee but also for their many long years of service to the larger community. What you've done over the years is admirable. Thank you for it.

We are going to suspend, and the clerk will arrange to let our other witnesses in from the green room.

• (1705) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1710)

The Chair: We'll resume our meeting.

Welcome to our new witnesses. I'm assuming you've been appropriately briefed, so I'm going to turn to Ms. Campbell for the first seven minutes.

I apologize in advance for probably cutting you off at some time during the next hour. This is just the way it works these days. Try to look up at the chair from time to time. If I'm waving my hands frantically, it probably means I would like you to stop.

Ms. Campbell, could we have your opening statement of seven minutes, please?

Ms. Mary E. Campbell (As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Very briefly, for those of you who don't know me, I'm a lawyer by background. I was at Solicitor General Canada and then Public Safety Canada from 1984 until 2013—you can do the math—under four different prime ministers and three different governments.

I want to make two points, and the first one focuses on the roles of CSC and Parole Board of Canada, because I'm still hearing a lot of cross-talk and confusion about what each one is responsible for.

The Parole Board of Canada is responsible for decision-making, period. Once they make a decision about a case, it is handed over to CSC to supervise and manage, and they are to come back to the Parole Board if something is starting to go off the rails or needs to be changed. The board has no role to play while the person is in the community under that supervision. The board relies on the information that CSC brings to them. That's fundamental to understanding this case.

The second point I want to make relates to the facts, because I'm hearing, if I may be so bold, an absence of certain facts.

When we look at the March decision, we can see he was already two years past day parole eligibility. It wasn't a rushed case. He had over 300 escorted temporary absences into the community—300. He had 11 unescorted temporary absences. He had completed treatment programs: AA, NA. He had family support, halfway house support, parole officer support.

For that decision, if you can point out where the mistakes were made—the page and the paragraph number—I would really be grateful, because that decision appears completely solid. It's one of the best decisions I've ever read, and I've read quite a few.

Regarding the September decision, there were nine days left in the day parole—nine days. They were there to consider a new day

parole. The board was essentially blindsided, I would say, by what they heard. They were not aware about the contact with the sex workers.

They immediately suspended the hearing. The two board members talked between themselves, and they talked about revocation. Revoking the release was on the table for consideration. They came back into the hearing with the PO and Mr. Gallese and made it abundantly clear they were so concerned about this that revocation was on the table. The parole officer opposed that, saying that they could manage the case. Mr. Gallese obviously said he would behave himself, that he'd follow the conditions that were set by the board. The board, on a balance, decided it was worth continuing the day parole.

Two years later and 500 miles away, I guess that sure, you might have made a different decision. However, again, the law and the facts really supported the decision that they made that day, and they did not ignore the seriousness of it.

Everything really went off the rails after that, when the board had no involvement in the case whatsoever. On September 24, Mr. Gallese met with the PO to talk about the decision. Unfortunately, on October 9, he was assigned a new parole officer. Barely three weeks after this hearing, he got a new parole officer. That parole officer acknowledged that they did not read the entire file, did not read all the documents, did not talk to Mr. Gallese about the original offence.

In terms of doing collateral checks as to what Mr. Gallese was up to in the community, if he said he was working somewhere, normally you'd go to the place of employment to make sure he's met with someone. You talk to that person. No. This PO, I'm sorry to say—and I'm quoting here—“took it for granted” that Mr. Gallese was complying with the board decision, took it for granted that he was complying. Tragically, as we now know, he was not complying at all. As a result, the parole officer failed to recognize that the case was going off the rails and therefore failed to contact the Parole Board.

Normally what we do in that situation is set up a parole hearing and say, “Look, either we need to change the conditions”—he had six special conditions—“or, Parole Board, you need to look at revocation; it's not salvageable.” That was not done.

• (1715)

When we talk about how things could have been different or who could have done something differently or better, those two decisions, in my mind, are not the problem here; it was the supervision that Mr. Gallese was under.

We can also talk a bit about statistics, if you wish, at some point. Stats are irrelevant to a grieving family; forget it. They are irrelevant to a grieving family. However, stats are very important to you, because you are the legislators. If you want a different system, a system in which the supervision and the Parole Board decision-making are closer, that is absolutely your entitlement.

I was one of the creators of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act. There are other models, and at one time supervision was under the Parole Board of Canada, so there is no particular magic to the system we have now. You could have a system of release in which there is no Parole Board involved. Those are all on the table,

In terms of what would address, or what would have changed what happened here, there is one person to blame here, and that is Mr. Gallese. Let's be very clear about that. It is very evident that there were flaws in the community supervision; had they been rectified, tragedy might have been avoided.

As I said, if you can show me in the Parole Board decisions where an error was made, I'd love to have that discussion.

• (1720)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Campbell.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Roy, you have the floor for seven minutes.

Mrs. Nancy Roy (Senior Counsel and Board Director, As an Individual): Good evening, distinguished committee members.

Thank you for inviting me to share my point of view. I hope that I will be able to provide you with a vision that unfortunately is often forgotten. The vision is of those close to the victims, or of the victims themselves, when they survive, of course.

My university training is in criminology and law. I have worked in a number of community organizations dealing with upholding rights. I have spent these last eight years helping families and loved ones of persons who have been murdered. We have more than 800 members, just in Quebec. I have worked with the Association des familles de personnes assassinées ou disparues, or AFPAD, as its general manager. There, I have met with courageous and resilient families, but there is unfortunately much to be criticized.

Those in these situations must go through shock, grief and the media's coverage of the drama that afflicts them. They are hardly ever prepared for it. A long, often unfamiliar legal process follows. That process often happens months, even years, after the tragedy. It drains them financially because a large majority have to pay the costs of the legal process.

Then comes the sentencing and incarceration of the person who has torn a dear one from a family and loved ones. The notion of justice must be completely redefined. It is difficult for them to understand the legal implications and the rights the offenders are given. A few years ago, the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights came into

effect. But unfortunately, the rights given to the criminals, no matter how violent they may be, are greater than those given to those close to the victims. This is a constitutional matter that is hard for those broken by the tragedy to understand. Unfortunately, our legal system gives priority to the rights of the offenders. So the extent of some rights set out in the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights needs to be better understood.

How does the right to information operate? Families and loved ones receive little information about the dangers. At least, that was the case with Marylène's loved ones or those of the previous victim—we must not forget her. More consideration must be given to the victims' loved ones; they must be consulted and what they have to say about the impact of the crime must be heard.

Now I will talk about the right to protection. How were the loved ones of Mr. Gallese's previous victim protected? What was done to protect Marylène's life? In my opinion, their right to life and their right to live in security, their constitutional rights, were completely disregarded.

Marylène Levesque had the right to be protected. She had a right to her life and a right to the security of her person. We all saw how the tragedy played out in the media. Nevertheless, what I take from the findings of the Correctional Service Canada and the Parole Board of Canada, is that, on January 22, 2020, Marylène Levesque was murdered in Sainte-Foy, Quebec, by an offender on day parole. The offender, Mr. Gallese, then pleaded guilty to the charge of first degree murder and was convicted. On February 3, 2020, the Parole Board of Canada and Correctional Service Canada convened a national board of investigation.

These were the conclusions. First, apparently, the decisions made by the members who granted the conditional release on March 26, 2019 and September 19, 2019 met all training requirements and demonstrated the level of knowledge necessary to perform their tasks. Let me tell you that I do not agree. Community resources, such as AFPAD or the shelters for women who are victims of violence, are never invited to the training sessions for board members or Correctional Service Canada on the impacts of crime. Families are therefore resigned to the fact that they have only one right, the right to read a statement that takes all their energy and that plunges them back into the tragedy.

Second, apparently, the Parole Board members correctly applied the criteria set out in the Corrections and Conditional Release Act. They applied the risk assessment framework, as set out in the manual, and they had at their disposal all the relevant and available information for sound decision-making. In my opinion, the board members had neither the knowledge nor the appropriate training to read the signs, the precursors of the violence that was clearly apparent. Training on the cycle of violence and the expertise of our organizations could have been very useful for that decision or in the training of those board members.

It is very easy to avoid responsibility by taking refuge in statistics and telling ourselves that these things rarely happen. In my opinion, this was one stolen life too many. It should have been protected by a system that should prioritize the safety of society over the rights of an individual who had already been found guilty of homicide, the most serious crime in Canada.

• (1725)

Here is what I take from those observations. They are a fine example of the board avoiding responsibility. According to the report, nothing could have been foreseen. That is an insult for the loved ones of the victims and for a society that believes that is protected each time a dangerous criminal is released. It has that belief despite the danger that he represents, despite the heinous crimes he has committed, and despite the improbability of rehabilitation.

I suggest that there should be an acknowledgement of regret in some form that is more transparent and more open to a culture of change, focused on respect and on the protection of loved ones and potential victims. We cannot be opposed to improvements, of course, but we can't just have recommendations based only on greater oversight or enforcement. It's a little fanciful to think that such oversight can be provided to thousands of inmates. You realize that just by looking at the number of women who have been killed in Quebec. How were those women protected? No, this is not about those who reoffend in all cases. But if we are going to talk about protection, increasing staff and more funding for halfway houses, a lot of good work has to have been done in advance. The problem actually comes before the release, during the risk assessment. That requires professional training and skills that are up to the task of detecting the potential dangers. So I am recommending some urgent changes.

First, decisions must be made exclusively with a view to protecting victims or potential victims when there are any doubts or any possibility of harm or reoffending.

Second, board members and those involved in violence against women need more training, especially in terms of the cycles of violence and the effects on community resources. The Barreau du Québec, of which I am a member, along with other professional bodies, requires a minimum number of continuing education hours.

Third, we must use the example of some administrative tribunals—

The Chair: Mrs. Roy, your time is up.

Mrs. Nancy Roy: Can I finish? I have a few seconds left.

[English]

The Chair: You can have 10 seconds. Go for it.

[Translation]

Mrs. Nancy Roy: Third, we must use the example of some administrative tribunals in Quebec that have a doctor as a decision-making member. The requirement could be for a psychiatrist or psychologist. In that way, decisions would be made on the basis of more than simple reports.

I will continue along those lines if there are any questions.

[English]

The Chair: There will be questions, I can assure you.

The first question will come from Mr. Paul-Hus.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul-Hus, welcome back to the committee.

You have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the family and friends of Marylène Levesque, who have suffered greatly since January 22, 2020. I know how much Marylène's murder has changed their lives for ever. I share their grief.

This crime led me to introduce the motion that gave rise to this study. The study is born from the urgent need to shed light on the profound and systemic failures of the correctional and parole systems, failures that led to a preventable murder.

A violent criminal, guilty of the brutal murder of his spouse, is released. He is granted temporary absence and given the right to have sexual relations with vulnerable women. The board members are poorly trained and turn blind eyes. The first failures occurred in a system that is supposed to protect the public. Who could have imagined such a situation?

It was and it remains important and necessary to shed light on the circumstances of this murder to make sure that this kind of senseless killing never happens again.

What have we learned? First, we have learned that no one at the helm of the Parole Board of Canada or the Correctional Service Canada feels responsible. No one at the helm of those organizations knew, before January 22, 2020, that the board had given the green light to conditions of release that put the public in danger.

Second, we have learned that the appointment process and the training of members of the Parole Board has major shortcomings. The board was dealing with a lack of experienced members. Board members worked from a psychological report that was more than two years old. They could have immediately suspended the release and waited for updated data on this individual's profile before making their decision. Another barrier keeping the public safe collapsed. The halfway house could have monitored the comings and goings of this criminal and the course of his behaviour. That was not done. Another safety net fell down.

According to the testimony we have heard, the Parole Board of Canada is not responsible, the halfway house is not responsible, and the government is not responsible. We must therefore conclude that other murders of this kind may well happen again in our streets.

No one at the Parole Board took Marylène's murder seriously. There were even no apologies. Imagine if your child had suffered what Marylène suffered. This is a disgrace. Incompetence cannot be tolerated. My conclusion is that this committee must produce a report that demands concrete steps. The report must state the truth and recommend whatever action is necessary.

Mrs. Roy, I would like to let you continue and tell us about your recommendations, because they seemed to be very good.

• (1730)

Mrs. Nancy Roy: Thank you.

I was saying that, as some administrative tribunals do, one of the decision-makers must absolutely be trained in psychiatry or psychology. We heard Mr. Lafrenière talk about the shortcomings earlier. I would also like mandatory psychological treatment in the long term. I would also like a public registry of criminals who have re-offended or who present a significant risk. Our victims and potential victims must be protected.

I would also certainly like to ask you to ensure that the agreements with loved ones are made public. Examples are Marylène's family, Mr. Bolduc's family and the families of a number of others. The process must be transparent. Otherwise, the impression is that those families' silence is being bought.

Harm has been done and there must be compensation for that. Agreements can be reached because the mistakes that were made can be admitted. I feel we must have more transparency and more accountability.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Thank you, Ms. Roy.

This is our last day on this study, which the committee was instructed to conduct after I put forward a motion in the House of Commons. Every member in the House, including the Prime Minister, voted in favour of the study.

I'm eager to see the committee's report and the recommendations that come out of it. In the meantime, you mentioned another report that was produced following an internal government investigation. The report wasn't made public.

Can you tell us what you think of that? Should it be made public?

Mrs. Nancy Roy: Victims' voices are always silenced. Unfortunately, their rights are not recognized under the Constitution. The investigations, research and work carried out by boards are never made public. There is no transparency. No information is provided to the organizations assisting the victims.

We are focusing on Mr. Gallese and his reintegration, but let's not lose sight of his many victims—not just the two people he killed, but also their families, whose lives have been shattered. Loved ones are doomed to a life without the victim.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Thank you.

We also talked about the board members. You suggested that board members did not have enough experience. We learned that, in 2017, a purge had taken place, which the motion in question also refers to. Board members in Quebec were dismissed from their duties, and new board members were then appointed.

You have been tracking cases for years now. At that time, did you notice a drastic change in how cases were handled?

Mrs. Nancy Roy: I would say so. As I see it, the transfer of knowledge and expertise matters.

First of all, a person has to have a minimum level of education to be able to recognize pre-incident indicators. People have to be experienced, like Mr. Lafrenière, who has years of experience and extensive knowledge about offenders.

In complex cases like this, where individuals have been convicted of murder, the group of decision-makers should always include either a psychologist or a psychiatrist.

• (1735)

[English]

The Chair: Unfortunately, Mr. Paul-Hus, we're going to have to leave it there.

[Translation]

Thank you.

[English]

Ms. Khera, take six minutes, *s'il vous plaît*.

Ms. Kamal Khera (Brampton West, Lib.): Thank you, Chair, and thanks to both of our witnesses for being here.

My question is for Ms. Campbell.

Ms. Campbell, thank you for being here and for your testimony and, importantly, for all the work you've done and for your advocacy.

I really want to first thank you for stating the fundamental difference between the Parole Board of Canada and the CSC, because I find there is still much confusion about their roles and the work they do, including among members of this committee.

I'll just allow you to clarify these matters for the committee.

Ms. Mary E. Campbell: Yes, I have a couple of comments on Parole Board appointments in particular because, as I say, I have been there through the Mulroney, Chrétien, Martin and Harper governments. I have seen a lot of appointments. That was part of my job.

First off, you have to understand the model that you have. Members are appointed for a fixed term, usually three years or five years. That's it. No one should have any expectation that they are going to be renewed. That's the model. It's a short-term or fixed-term appointment. Some people are renewed and some are not. If you want to have a so-called professional board on which people are given permanent jobs, that's a different model. You're Parliament. If that's the model you think would be better, you write the laws, but the one we have right now is it is a fixed-term appointment.

The board has other things to take into account, such as having a diverse board. They are required by law to have a board that reflects the community. That means different ethnic backgrounds, different race, different gender, different life experience, and it's done regionally. You're appointed to a region. They have to manage all those things, and if for some reason, just happenstance, you end up with a board on which everyone looks the same and speaks the same language, you have to balance that. That's why sometimes when a board member's term ends and they've done great service, it's "Thank you very much; now we need to fill in some other gaps so that we have a board that looks like the community." That's an important point for the community to understand.

Ms. Kamal Khera: Thank you for that.

Ms. Campbell, in April 2015 you said that we are witnessing the demise of the parole system. Since then, have you seen any improvement within the parole system under the current government, and what else do you think needs to be done?

Ms. Mary E. Campbell: Gosh. I wrote a list in the fall of 2015 about what needed to be done. I still have that list.

I think some things have improved. There have been comments that the number of people out on parole has increased and that this is a bad thing. No. I think you have to look at that number. Yes, the number of people on parole has increased, but that was only in relation to the dramatic decline prior to 2015, when the parole numbers went way down. You don't actually have an unusual increase since 2015; it's just an increase back to normal numbers.

The system, by and large, works well, but I think the Board of Investigation made some important recommendations. I was shocked to see that CSC parole officers were not trained in domestic violence, as George Myette has said. I think that's a particular kind of violence that they need training in, and board members as well.

I think we could be applying great efficiencies in parole supervision. Not everyone is a psychopathic monster, and far too many resources are devoted to those who don't really need them.

Streamlining amendments could be made that have not been made. Things have been done that I think have really done a disservice to the process. I can share my list with you sometime.

• (1740)

Ms. Kamal Khera: Please. It would be great if you could share that list with the committee.

Ms. Mary E. Campbell: Of course, a terrible case always happens, and this is such a tragic case. The natural instinct is to think we need to change the system because of one case. That's really the worst thing you can do. You have to pinpoint what happened, if you can.

These cases, as tragic as they are, are also very rare, which makes them very difficult to predict. The risk assessment said four out of five people with his profile would not reoffend. Well, tragically, it means one likely will offend, so how do we figure out who?

Ms. Kamal Khera: Thank you.

I know I'm running out of time, but if you don't get to finish your answer, maybe you can include it in your testimony.

What are your thoughts on the current pardon system and the impact it's having on allowing ex-offenders to successfully reintegrate, understanding that it was in the minister's mandate to reduce systemic barriers through record suspensions?

The Chair: You have a little less than 30 seconds, please.

Ms. Mary E. Campbell: I think, as Mr. Myette has said, that tragic reforms were made to the Criminal Records Act. They have not been undone. Two major political parties apparently think that they're okay, and I'm strongly of the view that they're not helpful to reformation at all.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Khera.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Michaud, you may go ahead. You have six minutes.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being with us. We certainly appreciate their participation.

Ms. Campbell, you covered the different roles of the institutions we are looking into, as well as the facts of the situation and the decisions that were made. In your estimation, most of the decisions that were made were the right ones. Something probably went wrong in relation to the new parole officer who had been assigned to the case just a few weeks or months before the tragedy.

I'd like you to talk more about the decisions that officer made.

As you understand the facts of the case, was it that parole officer who authorized Mr. Gallese to frequent massage parlours, where he met Ms. Levesque before ultimately killing her?

I'd like to hear your comments on that decision, whoever made it. Is normal or appropriate for that type of decision to be made?

[*English*]

Ms. Mary E. Campbell: No, that new parole officer was not the first one who allowed those visits to happen.

Again, you have to go back to the six special conditions that were placed by the board in the spring of that year. There is a fundamental difference between conditions imposed by the parole board and instructions that are given by the parole officer. You have conditions, and you have instructions. To use a technical term, I have seen some instructions that are lusus and that do not conform to the conditions. They go beyond them and they contradict them and they contradict the law. In a document, I think I called instructions the Wild West of corrections, because there's very little monitoring of them. Only the parolees themselves know what the instructions are.

They're intended to flesh out the conditions. If a condition says, "Don't go to places where alcohol is served", you can parse that out a lot of different ways. The instruction is intended to say, "Don't go anywhere that's a bar, and don't go anywhere that doesn't serve any food." In this case, the initial parole officer said it was okay to go and have visits with sex workers, and that's really where it got off the rails in that sense. I don't want to hang any parole officer out to dry, but it's very clear from the evidence, to me, that this is where things really fell apart.

You had very good testimony from two sex trade workers, and I thought they made some very useful points about how the current laws around sex work really cause danger to a lot of the workers. I would hope that you and your colleagues on the justice committee would have a look at the current legislation. The comments they made were very useful.

• (1745)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Your answer is duly noted. Thank you.

In a 2015 article, you talked about offender remorse, saying it was possible that parole decisions were being made on the basis of the remorse shown by offenders.

Do you think that's a good thing or a bad thing?

[*English*]

Ms. Mary E. Campbell: Yes, let's be clear. I've been very candid all the way along, and people are free to disagree with me. I felt that the message that was sent down to everyone in the system was quite a harsh one, and it was listened to. There was quite an emphasis put on, "Are you remorseful for what you did?" Remorse is not irrelevant. If you show remorse, in a sense you're acknowledging you did something wrong. You know that you shouldn't have done it, and it's the starting point then for rehabilitation.

To have that as a primary factor... There are people who never feel remorse, first of all because they feel they did not commit the crime—and many of them are right—but also because it's not in their makeup. That doesn't necessarily mean that they can't be rehabilitated or live safely in society. This notion that you must really almost grovel and display constant remorse may be unrealistic, and it's not necessarily the most important factor in determining your risk of reoffending. I did feel for a period of time that there was far too much emphasis on that, to the detriment of other more scientific factors, in assessing risk.

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: What other factors should be considered?

[*English*]

Ms. Mary E. Campbell: I think that the science of risk assessment has obviously improved greatly over the years. It's not a precise science.

You have to bear in mind it's not just a binary in/out decision that the Parole Board makes. It's what the conditions are that would make this release safe. Nobody is one hundred per cent or zero per

cent one or the other—risky or not risky. I think the crafting of the conditions and the nature of the supervision are equally important.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Michaud.

[*English*]

Mr. Harris, you have six minutes, please.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to both of you for attending today.

Ms. Campbell, thank you for bringing up the Criminal Records Act, and to Mr. Myette as well, having been a beneficiary of the pardon system. I'm of the party and was personally involved in fighting against the changes to the Criminal Records Act that got rid of the pardon system and called it a record suspension, whatever that means to the general public. That battle is not over, but thank you for that.

First of all, can you tell me and everybody listening and watching.... They're called parole officers. You referred to the parole officer being present. The parole officer does not work for the Parole Board. Am I right or am I wrong?

Ms. Mary E. Campbell: You are absolutely right.

Mr. Jack Harris: The parole officer works for the Correctional Services of Canada and is involved in the supervision of the offender in the community.

Ms. Mary E. Campbell: That is correct.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you. I think that is a source of some of the confusion.

I want to refer you to the same article that Ms. Michaud did, but to a different point. You talked about parole being not so much for the offender but for you and me. You said that when used properly, paroling eligible inmates helps smoothen their transition back into society, which reduces their likelihood to reoffend. Fair enough.

The article continues:

The main test for paroling an inmate should be whether they are a risk to the public, Campbell said. Other factors are weighed as well, but ultimately if a candidate poses little risk to the community they should be let out under supervision.

My assessment of what you said in your opening remarks and in response to questions is that in your opinion, the decision to parole Mr. Gallese in this case was correct, that he was properly assessed and that he was therefore of little risk. You've defined that, I suppose, by saying a 20% risk is enough to be considered little risk.

Do you stand by that?

• (1750)

Ms. Mary E. Campbell: That's not my assessment.

The risk assessments say that a low-risk offender is defined against at least one of the risk assessment tools as four out of five will not reoffend in this manner. However, it's not directed toward the individual; it's saying that out of people with this profile, four out of five are unlikely to reoffend.

Public safety is always number one. There are perhaps different pathways to public safety. One of the advantages of getting people out in the community while serving their sentence is that there's a possibility then that they can actually do something to give back to the community while they're out on parole, as opposed to sitting in a prison cell thumbing through the TV channels. You can impose conditions that would be far more useful in terms of volunteer work, or indeed education or training.

I'm not just making this up. We did a big study of the inmate population at one point, because I was concerned. There are high-risk offenders that get a lot of attention. I wondered how many low-risk offenders there are and at what stage they are being paroled, and if we are spending or wasting a lot of money keeping them inside. That study was very revealing. It did not get a lot of attention, but it showed that about half the inmate population is actually considered low risk and that there are other alternatives. In some cases you have to create those alternatives. You can't just say, "Okay, you're out."

Mr. Jack Harris: I'm obviously not in favour of that. The situation in prisons, as a recent study shows, is that many of the inmates are over-assessed for risk at the beginning in a biased manner. Black individuals and indigenous people are over-assessed, don't get access to programs and don't get access to parole as a result of being put in maximum institutions. There are a lot of problems that need to be solved.

In this case, I'm a little concerned that if the public sees that a four out of five chance or a 20% chance of reoffending is considered a criterion, then that certainly means.... I don't think we should keep the other four in because one might offend, but surely a better system than that type of risk assessment is needed. Don't you agree?

Ms. Mary E. Campbell: It's important to remember that this not the only test for releasing someone. The risk assessment scores are one factor. However, a whole lot more goes into making that decision, including such simple things as whether they have a home to go to, whether they have the support of family, who their associates are, and whether they are still hanging out with other offenders.

I don't want to leave the impression that if you're in the category in which four out of five won't reoffend, you're good to go and carry on. It's simply that the risk assessment is one tool that is used and weighed by the Parole Board.

The Parole Board—in this case, the inquiry team—listed all the things that the Parole Board looked at. Police reports, the judge's sentencing comments, letters from the community, victim impact statements and a ton of different kinds of information went into that mix. I don't want to leave the impression that it's risk assessment scores alone that'll get you out. That would be a mistake. That

would be almost like the United States sentencing commission, which uses sentencing grids, and you sort of add it up. Well, if you've got two here, five there and six here, that's 18, and you're good to go. I don't think that's a great system.

The Chair: We're going to have to leave it there, Mr. Harris, unfortunately.

Colleagues, again we have 25 minutes of questioning in the next round, and we only have about 15 minutes left, so I'll adopt what we did in the first hour which is three, three, one and a half, one and a half, three and three.

You have three minutes, Mr. Kurek.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and let me thank both witnesses for being here.

Ms. Roy, I appreciate a lot of what you shared, and thank you for your advocacy for victims.

Do you feel the Parole Board lacks sensitivity toward victims, specifically female victims of violence, but also, by extension, their families and those affected?

• (1755)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Nancy Roy: You must never lose sight of the fact that Mr. Gallese had already killed one person. He had been convicted of homicide for murdering Chantale Deschenes, a fact that is often overlooked.

When I accompany families to Parole Board hearings—some families I've been accompanying for decades—I am reminded that the only right they have is to read a statement to the board members. The statement is often given to the inmate. Families do not have the right to ask the board members questions, they do not have the right to give their opinions, and they feel as though their being there is not taken into account. It must be, but I don't think parole board members have adequate training on issues related to violence and the effects these crimes have on victims' families.

Mr. Gallese had already been deemed a risk, so why take the chance that he would claim another life?

The tragedy was predictable, but unfortunately, yet another family had to lose a loved one, like so many other families [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]. It's almost shameful that a dangerous man with the potential to reoffend was allowed out on parole.

[*English*]

Mr. Damien Kurek: Hopefully I have enough time for one more question that I think is very relevant.

What is needed to give victims the proper voice at parole hearings, so that unreformed and violent offenders are not repeating these crimes once more, as we saw in this tragic case?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Nancy Roy: Their voices need to be heard better than they are now.

I think they also need to be given opportunities to speak. Since the pandemic began, some families have unfortunately had to give their statements by telephone. That's not acceptable. These people's lives have been shattered, and they are only given a few minutes to speak. They actually receive little consideration.

If their statements—

[*English*]

The Chair: Sorry to interrupt, Ms. Roy. We're going to have to leave it there.

Mr. Iacono, you have three minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Campbell, one of the recommendations the board of inquiry issued to the Correctional Service of Canada was to integrate training on domestic violence into the parole officer induction training and to offer the training during the parole officer continuous development training.

Do you think that is a useful recommendation?

Do you think it will improve the supervision of offenders who pose a risk to women?

[*English*]

Ms. Mary E. Campbell: As I said, I was shocked to read the inquiry report's comment that parole officers did not have specific training in domestic violence. I think the recommendation is a very solid one, and I think the recommendation should be taken up not just by CSC and the parole officers but also by the Parole Board and the board appointees.

The education has to be both initial and ongoing. Parole officers will say to you, "Look, I have a caseload that's far too high already. I don't have time in my day. I have so many reports to fill out," and so on. Again, I think that's something for parliamentarians to take into account. Are they resourced to properly do their job? We know that the community side of CSC is a minuscule part of the CSC budget. Less than 5% goes to the community side. I think that is tragic. I think more training, especially on domestic violence....

If I were you, frankly, I would call CSC back in a few months and say, "Well, what have you done? What is the training? What have you implemented? What's your plan?" to find out and to hold their feet to the fire on that one.

• (1800)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: I just want to say one last thing, Ms. Campbell, and then, I will give the floor to someone else.

If you have any other suggestions on how to improve the system, we would appreciate it if you would send them to the committee clerk.

[*English*]

Ms. Mary E. Campbell: I would be happy to do that.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madame Michaud, you have a minute and a half.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In Mr. Gallese's case, a dangerous person was allowed out on parole, as you've repeatedly said, Ms. Roy.

As soon as an offender has a potential to reoffend, however low it may be, don't you think they should be denied parole?

Mrs. Nancy Roy: I think the whole justice system needs to turn its focus to the rights of these victims and potential victims, rights that should never be overlooked. Whether it's the correctional system or the parole system, victims have to be given more consideration. We have the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights, but unfortunately, victims have no idea where to turn to assert most of those rights, including the right to restitution.

As soon as there is any doubt as to the risk an individual poses, the interests of potential victims should take precedence over the individual's interests.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: That's a compelling point. You said that victims were given little consideration in the whole process and that victims impact statements were often given to the offender. The fact that the offender will know certain details about the victim's life is a source of concern for victims because the offender could still end up out on parole. I, myself, have spoken to victims who were worried about that. The only tool they have is their statement, and it's not a very useful one because the parole board could decide to allow the person out on parole. That gives victims no reassurance whatsoever.

[*English*]

The Chair: Unfortunately Madame Michaud is out of time. You can probably try to work in that answer in some other fashion.

With that, we'll turn to Mr. Harris for a minute and a half, please.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, Chair.

I reiterate the request for any other information. Perhaps if you find that list from 2015, or if some of them are contained in an article written by you and Professor Doob, that might be helpful.

There is a concern that I share about this whole case. The case is about an offence by a person who had a history of intimate partner violence, which was clearly identified as the major risk for reoffending in the sense of what one might be concerned about.

Dr. Zinger has told our committee as well that there are far too many staff per capita of prisoners in the corrections services institutions as compared to outside.

First, is that something that ought to be addressed by government as soon as possible? Is that a high priority, or are there so many things for correctional officers to do in prisons that they need them there too? Do we need a bigger budget?

Second, given that corrections officers aren't properly trained in intimate partner violence as an issue with the offenders, is there anything equivalent within the prison system itself?

The Chair: Mr. Harris has given you 15 seconds for both of those questions.

Mr. Jack Harris: Yes, yes, and no will do.

Ms. Mary E. Campbell: I know Dr. Zinger has identified the number of staff per inmate ratio. I would beg you not to give more resources to the institutional side. Give them to the community side, where they are desperately needed.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Before I ask Ms. Stubbs to start, I have Ms. Khera as having the next three minutes for the Liberals. Is that correct? If someone could communicate with me somehow or another as to who the next Liberal questioner will be, it would be helpful.

Meanwhile, I will turn to Ms. Stubbs for three minutes.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Thanks, Chair.

I also would agree with our colleagues who invited the witnesses. I would say to both witnesses to provide any additional written submissions you'd like after this meeting in terms of potential options for improving the models, as well as any other input you'd like to give us.

Thank you both for being here.

Ms. Roy, as a loved one of a woman who went missing and then was murdered in 2011, I want to thank you for your heroic and tireless advocacy, for your clarity, your conviction, and your resolve.

You made a comment that I hear frequently from victims' families and know all too well personally. You've said victims are left in the silence and you talked about the lack of transparency. Could you comment on whether you think victims' advocates and organizations should have been heard by the joint committee that did the investigation into what happened that resulted in the murder of Marylène Levesque. Then I invite you to later add whatever other information you want about making sure that victims can be heard.

• (1805)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Nancy Roy: You're absolutely right. Victims have to be given a greater voice, and more transparency is needed. I would like to see organizations like ours that support victims' families kept informed of restitution agreements that are reached in relation to victims or their families. The Canadian Victims Bill of Rights gives victims the right to restitution, but unfortunately, victims have access to restitution in few cases. If the process were more transparent

and if agreements were made public, more families could receive restitution and be better informed.

[*English*]

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Do you have any other specific recommendations you would make in terms of honouring the voices and experiences of victims?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Nancy Roy: I have a number of other recommendations. For example, a public registry should be established, families should be protected and better informed, and offenders should have to submit to psychological follow-up. That would help families feel safer. They are often scared. Speaking out against the offender in a statement is harrowing. Even thinking about putting into words the impact the tragedy has had on their lives is difficult. They have little in the way of psychological support and help. The Correctional Service of Canada provides some assistance, but the Parole Board of Canada unfortunately provides no psychological help. There is no support once they've made their statements.

[*English*]

The Chair: We're going to have to leave it there, unfortunately.

I just reiterate to others—perhaps Ms. Campbell or Ms. Roy—who wish to submit further recommendations to the committee to please communicate through the clerk. That would be very helpful.

The final three minutes are to Madam Khera.

Ms. Kamal Khera: Thank you, Chair.

Ms. Campbell, I'll go back to you. Can you talk about what impacts the changes to the pardon system brought about in 2012 and what impact they have on the ability of people to integrate?

Also, did the change affect public safety?

Ms. Mary E. Campbell: Yes, I would say it did affect public safety.

One of the biggest impacts of those changes was the enormous workload pressure they put on the parole board. Requiring a parole board member to make a decision on each and every pardon has drawn those resources away from their regular decision-making on paroles. The parole board has always been under-resourced, and it really put huge pressure....

I think at one point—maybe even still—they were running four different pardon schemes: for the old people, who were grandfathered in; for the new people; for the old gay sex offence mechanism that came in; and for the drug pardon. It's a huge resource pressure. It means that there isn't the time to devote to other cases.

It also means that the people who really have done what they were asked to do, which was to turn their lives around and obey the law, are waiting and waiting. It means they're not getting a job, they're not doing the travelling, they're not doing whatever. That's an impact upon public safety.

Quickly on the registry of high-risk offenders, the government created it quite a few years ago. I don't think it's made one bit of difference to anything, but someday we'll talk about that again.

As to victims and their role at parole hearings, yes; again, it's partly case law. The role of the victim is to explain the harm that was done and any current safety concerns that they have; it's not intended to influence the actual decision. It's very similar to victim impact statements at the time of sentencing. You're Parliament, however, and if you want to change this, it's certainly within your purview to do so.

I would just say finally that if there is anyone who has not read the two parole board decisions or the full inquiry report, which is about 104 or 108 pages, I'd very happily email them to you. They're widely available.

• (1810)

Ms. Kamal Khera: Thank you.

How much time do I have, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You have about 40 seconds.

Ms. Kamal Khera: I think Pam is back.

Pam, did you want to ask a question?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Thank you very much. I'm sorry I had to pop away.

My question is for Ms. Campbell.

Do you feel that there has been a lot of misinformation put out during these...? I know you've watched it all, and I'm wondering what your comment is on it.

Ms. Mary E. Campbell: Unfortunately, yes: I feel that there has been a lot of misinformation put out. I'm rather old school, I guess; I'm very fact-based. I'm a researcher at heart, even though I'm a lawyer. I think that far too often we're hearing people's opinions. God bless you, you're all entitled to an opinion. I think there was an infamous statement from south of the border, but you're not entitled to your own set of facts.

Part of this, then, rests on the system, and we've always struggled with that: How do we do a better job of communicating just basic facts about the system to help people understand? We've done a handbook for judges and lawyers, a handbook for victims. We've.... We tried a TV show.

The Chair: Unfortunately, we're going to have to terminate both the facts and opinions at this point. "You are entitled to your opinion, you are just not entitled to your facts." I thought that was Churchill, but that commentary certainly applied to President Trump. There's no question about that.

With that, I want to thank both witnesses, not only for your time here but for your patience with us and for your patience with the technology. Thank you for your—literally—lifetime of service. It's greatly appreciated by the committee and I think by the citizens of Canada.

With that, colleagues, the meeting is adjourned.

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