



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 2nd SESSION

Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 031

Monday, May 31, 2021

Chair: The Honourable John McKay



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• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order. We have a quorum, and I'm sure Shannon will join us shortly.

This is the 31st meeting of the public safety committee, and we are studying ideologically motivated hate crime. We have two outstanding witnesses this afternoon: Dr. Christian Leuprecht, who is well known to this committee, and Dr. Barbara Perry.

Maybe I'll ask you for your seven-minute statements in the order in which you appear on the notice of meeting, and then we'll move to questions.

Dr. Leuprecht.

[Translation]

Dr. Christian Leuprecht (Professor, As an Individual): Mr. Chair, vice-chairs and members of the committee, thank you for inviting me today to discuss this very important topic. I would be happy to answer your questions in either official language.

[English]

I've provided my text in English, so I will follow it.

Violent extremism in Canada is a marginal phenomenon, and situations arising out of ideologically motivated violent extremism garner a lot of public attention. That's followed by political commitments or opportunities, such as the hearings that we're having today, to move on certain policies.

Detecting domestic IMVE and disrupting it is costly, and costs are disproportionate to the benefit. There are many other threats, such as cyber-threats, foreign interference and foreign espionage, that are far more consequential for Canada's security, prosperity and democracy, but they're difficult to quantify publicly in the absence of human casualties. If done better and more systematically, rebalancing Canada's national security and policing posture, with a greater emphasis on cyber, organized crime, money laundering and protecting Canadians from foreign malign actors, would have a far greater benefit for public safety and for depriving IMVE of resources and enablers than the current approach, whose track record seems neither particularly efficient, nor particularly effective.

Who is likely to sympathize with, provide material support for or actually engage in violent extremism and why has become one of the more pressing security questions of our time. That question is made more difficult by the very small number of those in this category, on the one hand, and the vast majority of people in compara-

ble circumstances who are very resilient to radicalization. I provide some numbers that I will skip over, but I'll simply point out that, as shown in testimony before this committee, terrorist attacks and incidents, although extremely tragic, are very rare compared with many other incidents of violence and violence related to ideology.

We need to distinguish between ideologically motivated violent extremism and ideologically motivated extremist violence. One concerns the narrative; the other concerns action. We can lay this out in two pyramids: the narrative pyramid and the action pyramid. These two pyramids are distinct from one another. In the action pyramid, we have terrorists at the apex, then radicals and, below them, activist sympathizers. You got a similar description from Tim Hahlweg of CSIS, with passive engagement, active engagement and mobilizing to violence.

The relationship between thought and action isn't clear. It's not a conveyor belt, and it's not causal. This raises a host of questions. How do individuals end up in one of those three radical action categories? Are there three different kinds of people who end up in these different categories? What are the drivers of the transition between these categories? What motivates an individual to cross boundaries, passing from non-radical to radical or from radical to terrorist? What are the barriers to these transitions? Why do so few people become radicalized, and is there anything special about these few? Do the categories of action and the transitions between different categories depend on the particular cause being espoused, or do all movements and issues exhibit commonalities in the structure of radicalization?

From the perspective of intelligence and law enforcement, we might also ask, is it possible to tell which category of action an individual will move toward by examining an individual's attitudes? More generally, can current attitudes predict the future political trajectory of a particular individual?

It turns out that the relationship between narrative and action is indeterminate. Few in the narrative pyramid ever move to action, and action is not necessarily motivated by belief in a narrative. I've sketched 12 mechanisms—at the micro, meso and macro levels—that we've identified. It turns out that ideology is one of those 12, and in quite a few cases ideology is not present at all. People engage in violence for a host of reasons that have nothing to do with ideology, so it's neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for violence.

When ideology is present, more often than not ideology becomes the justification and the rationale for the violence rather than the cause of the violence per se.

For policy purposes, we need to treat the problem of narrative and the problem of action as distinct problems. We see this as such in Canada, the problem of mass radicalization—that is to say, entire communities that are radicalized—is not really a problem. What we see is individuals who are radicalized. This is a question about those individuals who are sympathetic to violence.

I would say that in terms of those investigations—I explained this in my brief—we don't have a particularly great track record in terms of the RCMP and success of the RCMP.

Democracy is on a slippery slope when we merely hold political beliefs that, however objectionable they may be, end up being equated with criminal behaviour. With the exception of a few offences such as incitement and hate speech that cross into the criminal realm, the hallmark of democracy is to police criminal action, not opinions.

Generally speaking, radicalization per se—a shift in beliefs, feelings and actions towards increased support for one side or the other—is not a problem. The challenge and test for democracy always comes at the margins.

I would conclude by saying that overplaying and politicizing the threat of IMVE by going after a needle in a haystack.... A better approach would be for the government to improve how Canada is postured to detect, disrupt, contain and deter against the full spectrum of national security threats in the first place. To that effect, we can focus on federal police reform to make federal police more functional, with a foreign human intelligence service and a dedicated criminal intelligence service.

There are many far greater threat vectors to public safety that Canadian communities confront day in and day out. They are from non-conventional threats by state and non-state actors such as cyber, and conventional threats such as organized crime, money laundering and the like, on which a government concerned about national security could take concerted action that would have far more direct and immediate impacts on public safety than IMVE.

• (1540)

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Leuprecht.

Dr. Perry.

Dr. Barbara Perry (Professor and Director, Centre on Hate, Bias and Extremism, University of Ontario Institute of Technology, As an Individual): Thank you very much for the invitation to

appear. I very much look forward to sharing my thoughts and engaging in some conversation.

I did share with you two graphics to illustrate my comments today. The first is a sort of typology that we've been building around the diversity of the far-right movement. That's really my focus, looking at right-wing extremism specifically. I want to sketch out in a very short period of time some of the contours associated with the far right that we identified in the study that we published in 2015, which was funded by Public Safety, but also coming out of the current study that we're working on, also funded by Public Safety, which is an update of that first one.

The first graphic, the categories of the far right in Canada, is quite important in terms of reminding us of the diversity of the movement when we think about the far right. Even in 2015 when we were looking at the movement, the focus was really on those very traditional kinds of groups that you see at the top—skinheads, neo-Nazis, white supremacists and what have you. Since then there's been sort of a diffusion of the movement in different directions, not a splintering so much as a coalescing into much more discrete categories so that there are identifiable strands that are specifically anti-Muslim, specifically anti-immigrant or specifically misogynistic, for example.

In addition to that, we have the accelerationists. Each of these I can unpack a little bit for you in the Q and A if you like, but the intent of this graphic is just to highlight the diversity that we're seeing within the movement.

The second graphic that I shared with you is the distribution as we saw it in 2015. You see the concentrations there in Ontario, Quebec and Alberta in particular, and to some extent in B.C., for a total, as a conservative estimate, of just over a hundred active groups associated with some arm of far-right extremist ideologies.

In the current study, we've identified over the past four to five years an incredible growth in those numbers to at least 300 groups now, and again, that is across the country. We're seeing more activity down east for example, but other than that, the concentrations have stayed fairly similar, that is, with higher concentrations, again, in Ontario and Quebec and Alberta.

I'll just share with you a few of the other trends we're identifying in the current study. I referred to the growth in numbers that we're seeing, and I should say that's growth in numbers of groups and growth in numbers of individuals drawn to various elements of far-right extremist ideologies. Just as we're seeing a diffusion of the movement itself, in terms of the numbers of focal areas, we're also seeing a diffusion, or an atomization almost, with respect to the movement itself—that is, more individuals being drawn to small elements, sort of cherry-picking from the narratives of an array of different groups and ideologies to suit their own needs, whatever they may be.

We are seeing a lot more of those floaters, as we're starting to call them, but we are also seeing more groups, that is, new chapters of groups that were existing in 2014 and 2015, as well as new groups that have emerged on the scene, most notably the Proud Boys and Soldiers of Odin.

We're also seeing a shift in the demographics associated with the groups. Just as we tend to think of the far right as the skinheads and the neo-Nazis, I think we tend to think of it as a youth movement. That is certainly still the case. There are an awful lot of youth aged 16 or 17 to 24 or maybe early thirties involved in the movement, but we are seeing many more middle-aged and older folks coming to the movement as well.

Accompanying that is a shift in other kinds of demographics, in terms of education and income or profession in particular. There are more middle-income earners or above. We look at January 6 events in the U.S., for example, as sort of an inflated illustration of what we're seeing here. A fairly large proportion of those people were professionals—accountants and doctors and lawyers—and we're seeing some of that here as well, so it also applies then that many have a higher level of education, university degrees and advanced degrees in some cases.

• (1545)

I think that's especially the case within that element that refers to themselves as the alt-right. These were sort of the ideologues, if you will, of the movement as opposed to the shock troops, who are those more traditional Nazis or skinheads on the streets.

One of the other trends that we're seeing is increasing coalition building or alliances, and early on in this phase of the study, 2015-16, 2016-2017, even 2018, we were seeing much more coalition building across groups, strategizing across groups within the movement, planning and codeveloping protests, rallies, concerts and a whole array of other activities. We've seen a lot of that, but we're also now seeing, in the context of COVID, especially in terms of lockdown and anti-masks and anti-vaccination activities, efforts to leverage or exploit those very mainstream grievances and fold them into far-right narratives as a way of expanding their audience, grabbing people and sort of leading them down the garden path, if you will.

The last trend that I want to highlight is probably one of the most dangerous, and that is that we are seeing an increased fascination with gun rights and with being fully armed within the group. Even for the Proud Boys, one of their mantras is "we love our guns". We see that in a number of other groups. We see images of them online with stockpiles of weapons and engaging in paramilitary training. We have that, that they're heavily armed.

What we're also seeing—and this is another project we're on right now with DND—is looking at the contours of the far-right within the context of the CAF, because we've had a number of high-profile cases of late. Again, looking at the events of January 6 in the U.S., there is evidence of links between members of the CAF, current or former, and the far-right movement. We have the arms, we have the training and the third dangerous sort of potentially lethal element of that are the xenophobic ideologies that often inform these groups. I think that is one of the trends that we really need to keep our eyes on.

I will leave it at that and flesh out anything that is of interest as we move forward.

Thank you for your time.

• (1550)

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Perry.

We'll turn to the first six-minute round with Mrs. Stubbs, Ms. Khera, Ms. Larouche and Mr. Harris.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Thanks, Chair.

Thank you to both of our witnesses for being here today, for offering your expertise and your time to us.

Dr. Leuprecht, you commented, I thought, quite compellingly about the difference between words and actions, and the different scales and kinds of people who might be identified when talking about these complex issues. I wonder if you might comment and expand on the differences between terrorists, radicals and activists.

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: It's a very good question in light of what my very talented colleague, Dr. Perry, just presented.

If we think of this as a pyramid, at the top we have people who are engaged in illegal action and violent action. Those are the people we commonly refer to as terrorists. Below that, we have people we refer to as radicals, who are engaged in possibly one or more forms of illegal actions, whether they are an illegal protest, perhaps firearms violations, or so forth, but they're not violent per se against third parties or the public. Below that, you have activists. Those are people who, for instance, might possibly sympathize with radicals or with terrorists, but they aren't engaging in forms of illegal action, illegal speech, incitement, hate and the like.

We often conflate these in public discourse, and I think it's important for intelligence, for enforcement purposes and for policy purposes to treat these as three distinct problems. One might be a problem of counter-radicalization, persuading people. One might be a problem of making sure we have the right incentives in place so that people who might be engaged in illegal action don't engage in violent action, and for those who are predisposed or engaging in violent action, make sure we have the criminal intelligence capabilities to detect and disrupt those before they can do harm.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Thank you.

Added to that, on your points about the predictors of people taking action, I think in your research you suggest that religion, political opinion and country of origin are all bad predictors, or not necessarily predictors that will result in action.

I wonder if you have any comments on what purpose CSIS's categories of motivation serve.

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: There is a temptation in the public discourse, I think, to reduce this to monocausal explanations, and clearly, religion can be one of them. There are so many people who are religious, and virtually none of them become violent. Many of the people who become violent, for instance, are not religious or don't adhere to, say, any ideology of any particular form. Understanding that the predictors are multi-faceted and combine in different ways in different cases is critically important.

I think this is where some of the structural work that Dr. Perry is doing can help us. It can help us to identify some people who may be at higher risk, but then ensuring, for instance, that when we're talking about youth—and as any of us who have children of our own or are familiar with youth know, youth do things that we would prefer them not to do—we get them the right intervention and the right help, rather than necessarily and immediately criminalizing viewpoints that in and of themselves we find objectionable but that aren't necessarily criminal.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: To your point about protecting public safety through preventing and creating consequences for criminal activity, do you have any comments to expand on in terms of reforms or changes or concrete solutions for federal policing or other intelligence services?

The Chair: You have a little more than a minute.

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: I would say that the much-vaunted risk reduction measures that CSIS was granted, commonly known as “disruption”—the ones that do not require warrants—have proven quite effective and successful at reducing risk.

I would also say that we have a federal police force that spends 85% of its time and resources doing provincial contract policing, which detracts from its federal mandate. I cite at least one case, the Victoria Parliament plot, which was extremely unsuccessful, given the resources that were invested into this case, where the RCMP was chastised by the judge for its entrapment practices.

I think we need to be better postured in terms of federal policing. We need to have a separate criminal intelligence service and likely move that out of the RCMP to make that a separate stand-alone entity. We need to have a better sense of the foreign influences here that may be illegal or criminal under Canadian law. To that effect, we need a foreign human intelligence service, because CSIS, for reasons that go beyond our time here, cannot currently engage in that mandate effectively.

• (1555)

The Chair: We are beyond our time.

Thank you, Madam Stubbs.

Madam Khera, you have six minutes.

Ms. Kamal Khera (Brampton West, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to both of our witnesses for being here, but more importantly, for all the work you do.

Dr. Perry, I want to start off with you, and I want to talk about online hate.

I know you've teamed up with Facebook Canada to address instances of online hate. It is a topic that we've certainly discussed in committee. You have declared that online platforms have been a gift to alt-right groups known for spreading conspiracy theories via video clips.

Could you maybe expand a little bit on your findings and efforts in this area? How do we address promoting hatred on mainstream channels, as well as on underground networks, such as Parler and Gab?

Dr. Barbara Perry: These are all very good questions. They're not easy questions by any stretch.

One of the most disturbing things we found in this round of work—the Institute for Strategic Dialogue is doing much of our on-line analysis—is that in two successive years, Canadian posters were among the most active within the far-right ecosystem, if you will.

Just quantitatively, that's problematic. We tend to think we are immune to those kinds of narratives, but there you are. In particular in the first round—that would have been the 2019 report that we did with ISD—we actually found that they were, in fact, second and third in two of the most extreme platforms, Fascist Forge and Iron March. These are the ones that are most likely to promote violence, and mass violence in particular.

Again, quantitatively, that is the problem, but it's also a problem qualitatively, given the breadth of the speech, the viciousness of the speech as it's directed towards particular individuals or particular communities, whether it's emails or posts directed towards an individual or it's those who vilify particular groups. It's rampant online, obviously.

I think we have to consider the impacts of this on a sense of community, a sense of belonging and a sense of security, as well. It is something that absolutely silences communities. It makes them less willing to engage online, which has become the way we communicate—especially now, with COVID.

How do we confront it and how do we regulate it? It's such a challenge. We've been exploring it globally over the last five or six years. We've been trying to constrain the most heinous sorts of speeches.

When I'm talking about hate speech here, I'm talking about dangerous speech, speech that promotes violence, that explicitly promotes vilification and that directs hatred towards particular groups. *Warman v. Kouba* identified these sorts of elements of speech as the hallmarks of hate.

I think we need to put much more pressure on social media giants to enforce their community standards. Most of them are at least as strong as our own federal definitions. We need to encourage the actual use of those. I hear so many...from the research but also from the people I work with. They are identifying speech that seems to cross those boundaries, which... There's no response to the complaints, so I think we need to hold their feet to the fire.

In terms of the alternative platforms, that's where the real challenge lies because access to the darkest spaces is more difficult for researchers, for police, for journalists and for anyone who wants to know what's happening there. There are challenges there because they're specifically set up to avoid any sort of community standards. Most of us are at a loss as to how to respond to those. Again, perhaps we put pressure on the domains to not host them, as happened with Parler. I think it was after the January 6 events.

I think that is a new challenge presenting itself.

• (1600)

Ms. Kamal Khera: Thank you for that.

You also noted in your remarks that IMVE is usually directed at groups that are already stigmatized and marginalized. You said it is a mechanism of power.

Can you expand a little bit on which groups are targeted and how?

Dr. Barbara Perry: I should add—maybe that's another trend I should start talking about—that again, in response to the online piece, we're seeing a really dramatic upsurge in anti-statist narratives online, specifically anti-Trudeau narratives. It's not just those marginalized communities. In this case, perhaps it's the champions of those marginalized communities who also become targets.

We continue to see anti-immigrant sentiment leading the way, along with anti-Muslim sentiment. In some regions of the country, anti-indigenous narratives are particularly popular. We seem to be seeing a bit of a resurgence of anti-queer and anti-trans narratives among some of these groups as well. It's interesting because it will shift over time in terms of immigration patterns, perhaps, or in terms of the assertion of rights by particular communities, that sort of thing. These groups seem to be the key targets in recent days.

In the context of COVID, I think we also need to raise the issue of anti-Asian narratives and violence.

Finally, I should add that anti-Semitism is always there, barely below or barely above the surface. It's almost a foundation for so many other forms of hatred. Often those Jewish conspiracy theories are used to explain the evil ways of others, that it's Jews who are responsible for drugs in Black communities or—

The Chair: Unfortunately, Ms. Khera's time is up.

Ms. Kamal Khera: Thank you.

The Chair: We will have to leave it there, but thank you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Larouche, welcome to the committee.

The floor is yours. You have six minutes.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to both witnesses for being here today to speak to us on such an important topic.

Mr. Leuprecht and Ms. Perry, your opening statements were quite informative.

My first question is for Ms. Perry.

In your opening statement, you referred to the link between the far right and the anti-women movement, if I understood correctly. I'd like to hear more about that.

You also mentioned at the end of your remarks the radicalization of members of the Canadian Armed Forces, or CAF. I know that, in November 2020, the University of New Brunswick gave you and researcher David Hofmann a \$750,000 grant to carry out a three-year study on hateful ideologies and extremism within the CAF. According to the announcement, you had ongoing conversations with General Jonathan Vance, the then chief of the defence staff, who had sought out your advice and expertise.

Can you tell us why the former chief of the defence staff reached out to you for your expertise?

I'm especially interested in the advice and recommendations you gave the former chief of the defence staff. As your research reveals, sexism and misogyny are common threads in right-wing extremist groups.

What advice did you give the former chief of the defence staff who wanted to address the problem in the CAF?

[*English*]

The Chair: I would just point out that I doubt you received \$750 million. I dare say that you received \$750,000. If you could, if possible—

• (1605)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: I did say \$750,000, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: I think it was the interpreter then.

Anyway, if you could bring it back to the actual study, that would be good.

Thank you.

Dr. Barbara Perry: I will just respond briefly to the first one. That was the question of misogyny in the movement. There's no doubt that misogyny from the get-go is embedded in the far-right movement. It is grounded in racism, yes, and anti-Semitism but also in patriarchy.

One of the mantras is the 14 words, which is well known, I think: We must ensure the existence of the white race and a future for our children. If we're going to ensure that, we have to control our women, and our women's sexuality in particular. That expands into other elements of the movement as well.

We do see that continuing within the movement, so there's some overlap. I should say that, in all of these areas, there's some overlap between what we think of as the incel movement and the far-right movement, but not all incel activists are necessarily far-right.

With respect to the CAF work, it's very early days for us. We're still waiting for our research ethics approval at the university level. We do have a post-doc working independently on a targeted engagement grant with the DND as well, looking specifically at policy interventions.

I will talk about areas rather than specifics, because we are seeing issues around people who are already in the movement and who enlist in the CAF, often in the reserves, to get the kinds of training that they think they need and can bring back to the movement. We're seeing problems already as people enlist. We're seeing problems with people being recruited while they are in service, and then we see problems with veterans, people who have left the military and are looking for a familiar place to belong. Very often, they are being lured into the movement.

We're looking at strategies in all three of those areas in terms of screening tools at the outset and ways to monitor and identify radicalization in service. Also, there's this gap between Veterans Affairs and the CAF once people have left in terms of the kinds of supports they get in this area specifically, so that's another area that we really need to build out, I think.

As you know, the DND and all branches have identified or created new orders around hateful conduct and engagement in identifiable groups—not “identified”, but “identifiable” groups—with hateful conduct at their core, so part of our task will be helping to operationalize them or identify ways that those orders can be operationalized as well.

Thank you for those questions.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: That means there is a link between radicalization and the culture of toxic masculinity, in other words, the male domination, as you said, that the CAF is often criticized for. That is how I understand your comments and the research you are conducting.

[*English*]

Dr. Barbara Perry: Yes, that is certainly something we've seen with the far right generally. You put together that hypermasculinity associated with the far right with the hypermasculinity that is associated with the military culture as well, and it's almost layering on there. The forms of masculinity within the military that have enabled this culture of sexual oppression, again, underscore or exacerbate the toxic forms of masculinity of which you're speaking there. It's doubly damaging and dangerous.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Larouche.

Mr. Harris, six minutes, please.

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

I want to thank Dr. Perry and Dr. Leuprecht for their analysis and presentation.

Let me start, first of all, with Dr. Leuprecht.

Thank you for your very concise and incisive analysis, as usual. I think you've told us that the resources of society to protect the public would be better spent on some more conventional things than

the individuals here, the dozen different causes for individuals to act up in a radicalized way. That's helpful.

Can I ask you something about the military, even though you didn't talk about it? I want to ask Dr. Perry some questions, but because you're a professor at the Royal Military College, can you tell us what you have to say about the fact that there have been individuals identified at some events, including the Rideau Hall event, involving military types? Dr. Perry just mentioned that as a problem at the recruiting level, sometimes people go into the military for that reason, but I heard recent comments from military leadership saying that the problem is more pervasive than they thought it was.

What's your perspective on that, from the point of view of teaching at RMC, and also on what the military ought to be doing about it?

• (1610)

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: That's a lovely question, Mr. Harris.

Of course, the Canadian Armed Forces is an institution that is tasked with defending our way of life. There is conduct that is unacceptable in the Canadian Armed Forces that may be acceptable in civil society. It might still be objectionable, but acceptable. I think that's the first point about the armed forces.

The second is that inherently we know there's a selection effect in the Canadian Armed Forces, and that selection effect has some ideological dimensions, regional dimensions and the like. But I think it is not appropriate to construe and paint with a broad brush the Canadian Armed Forces—an institution that has shown itself fully committed to defending our way of life—and associating the institution as a whole with somehow being sympathetic to any form of right-wing ideology.

Yes, the institution has a challenge with certain aspects of institutional culture, but I personally object to relating that to right-wing idiosyncrasies and ideology. There are many issues that play into the institutional culture in the Canadian Armed Forces.

I would also remind the audience that the individuals in the Canadian Armed Forces we're talking about are, to the best of my knowledge, all reservists. They are reservists of various types who have spent different amounts of time in the Canadian Armed Forces. Some have been out and then have returned to the armed forces. The armed forces have also, by and large, done a reasonably good job at identifying these individuals or acting upon them expeditiously, when these matters have come to their attention.

There's certainly an issue where more needs to be done proactively. I know Australia and the United States have very much stepped up their efforts to identify these individuals precisely for the reasons that Dr. Perry laid out: the propensity of some of them to join precisely to get the sort of training that we would never want someone with those sorts of perspectives on life to have. But I think we've proven ourselves reasonably resilient and the organization has proven itself resilient against individuals who join for anti-democratic reasons.

I would separate the issue of institutional culture from ideology.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, Dr. Leuprecht.

Dr. Perry, you mentioned the notion of toxic masculinity. This is a cultural thing, obviously as well, that you find in institutions. Justice Bastarache told us it existed in the RCMP with misogyny, homophobia and other aspects of toxic masculinity that he identified, and that cultural change was very difficult.

Can you say, so far, whether you're going to have the kind of access that you think you'll need to be able to do a proper job of investigating this question within the military?

Dr. Barbara Perry: We certainly have the support of senior leadership. The question will be whether we can garner the participation of people across the service. We're starting with a series of interviews with people at different levels, hopefully, at the majority of bases across the country, as well as social workers, padres and those sorts of folks. Then we'll do a survey.

I think the survey will be interesting. I suspect we won't get as strong an uptake on that as we would like, which is the nature of survey research anyway. We're hopeful and optimistic with the interview phase in particular.

• (1615)

Mr. Jack Harris: Dr. Perry, you have an interesting chart indicating the distribution of the far right in Canada. I see there are no groups in Newfoundland and Labrador. That's a piece of good news for me.

Tell us, briefly, what is the manosphere, which you have identified as one of the categories of the far right?

Dr. Barbara Perry: That's the misogynistic element, which intersects often with the incel movements. The parts of the movement that are particularly... When we talk about toxic masculinity, this is the worst of the worst in the movement. Its focus is on constraining women and constraining women's rights, and are most likely to engage in not just physical violence but sexual violence against women, often women within their own arena, within the movement itself, and within specific groups.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Harris.

Colleagues, our next round is a 25-minute round. We have less than 15 minutes, so I'm going to take the chair's prerogative and cut it back to three, three, one and a half, one and a half, one and a half, and three and three.

The Liberals need to identify to me who their second questioner might be.

We will start a three-minute round with Mr. Kurek.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate the witnesses appearing before committee. It's certainly very interesting what you have presented, and I've had a chance to look at some of your work.

To Dr. Leuprecht, your research suggests that online bravado appears to be a bad predictor of whether or not somebody will be a violent extremist. I don't think you say no link, just that it's not a good metric to use to predict violence. I ask this question in the context of being an elected official and having an online presence. I certainly have been subject to and seen a lot of very extreme content, some of which was directed at me.

Could you expand on that and talk about whether that's an accurate summary of what your research has concluded?

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: If you look at the amount of research that Dr. Perry has collected, if there was a connection, let alone a strong connection, between bravado and violence, we would expect to see a lot more violence in Canada than we do. What it suggests is that we need a much more nuanced approach to the issue.

There are four different levels at which we can engage in this. One is a matter of the criminal investigation side for people who engage in this type of conduct, but the other three are conversations we need to have more aggressively.

What are the economic and psychological barriers that as a society we have put in place to prevent people, who engage in bravado and so forth, from moving to action?

What can we do with certain elements of the community, where there are actual small groups and pockets that we can identify, to tell them counter-narratives, to tell them a better story? That's an opportunity, in particular with youth who we know are susceptible to influence.

We also need to turn this around: If there are so relatively few ones but there's this huge number of zeros, what are we actually doing right as a society to make our society resilient, to begin with, from people buying into this proliferation of hate online? This is something that, compared with, for instance, some of our partner countries, Canada has done very well, so we need to focus on the proactive measures that we as a society have in place.

Mr. Damien Kurek: I've been concerned about some of the politicization around this issue that seems to pen some of the ways we describe it into more of a political issue than how law enforcement could actually address this. I wonder if you have any comments on that. I know the time is brief.

The Chair: Please be very brief.

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: I'll provide a very brief reply that while there is a proliferation of groups—and Dr. Perry can maybe comment on the Canadian context—in the U.S., the vast majority of postings online are generated by a tiny group of individuals. This is not a random distribution problem across society. It is highly concentrated among a few people who are extremely aggressive and proactive in this space and a large number of followers who are hangers-on.

• (1620)

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Damoff, please. You have three minutes.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Quoting from the CSIS reports, since 2014, 21 people have been killed and 40 others have been wounded on Canadian soil because of extremist ideological views. Obviously, CSIS has a problem with what's happening.

Dr. Perry, last month you said the far right has become more adept at integrating populous grievances into their own narratives and exploiting them to enhance membership. I recently read *White Fragility*, and in there there's a quote from the godson of David Duke, where he talks about how they need to change the language they use—we need to shut down immigration, we need to fight affirmative action and we need to end globalism—and that you can win those positions as long as you don't get outed as a white nationalist.

You mentioned earlier the anti-Trudeau sentiment. We're hearing talk of tyranny and corruption. Often the people who use this terminology call themselves “patriots”. I wonder if you can maybe talk a bit about your concerns around this.

Dr. Barbara Perry: We have to put it in a broader context too. The events of January 6 are a reminder of the risk of allowing that kind of anti-statism to go unchecked. Granted there you had a political leader who was also sort of a threat to democracy, if you will.

However, I think in the Canadian context, that anti-Trudeau sentiment we're seeing from the right is also contributing or being woven into similar grievances coming from the mainstream as well. It's this process of gradual absorption of those mainstream issues into the far right, of reinterpreting them and sending them back.

We saw that earlier with the yellow vest movement, which began as a really legitimate and important set of concerns around threats to the oil industry in particular. That same process is at work here in the context of shutdowns.

Ms. Pam Damoff: When you talk about anti-Trudeau sentiment, we're not talking about the differences on policy here. We're talking about people who actually believe the Prime Minister should be arrested and put in jail.

Dr. Barbara Perry: Yes. That's because there's a whole litany of crimes for which he's thought to be guilty. It's not just the lockdowns or mishandling of COVID. It's also that he's responsible for “unbridled immigration” and “dangerous refugees”, and all that sort of thing, almost borrowing Trumpisms from the U.S.

Ms. Pam Damoff: It's the terminology that the white supremacists in the U.S. were saying they wanted to use in order to make it more appealing to the masses.

Dr. Barbara Perry: Yes. It's that sanitization.

You mentioned David Duke. We saw it with David Duke in the 1980s, when he said, “throw off your white capes and put on your business suits.” That's the same sort of thing. That's sort of the alt-white in particular and their mastery of that mainstreaming of hate,

that sanitization, making both their appearance and their narratives more palatable.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Damoff.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Larouche, you may go ahead. You have a minute and a half.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Thank you.

Ms. Perry, you talked about how the gun culture ties in with the radicalization of paramilitary or right-wing extremist groups.

What is the link between the radicalization of those groups and guns?

Also, what do you see as a solution to combat that culture, which could lead to the radicalization of certain groups, be it online or not?

This being my last turn, I would like both Mr. Leuprecht and Ms. Perry to answer.

[*English*]

Dr. Barbara Perry: I'll speak to the first half, and perhaps, Dr. Leuprecht, you can respond to the second half.

Dr. Leuprecht mentioned this notion of defending our way of life, and this is why there's this desire to take up arms, to defend our way of life as they understand it, which is very different from what I think Dr. Leuprecht was speaking about there. For us, the idea is to defend equity, inclusion, respect for inclusion. For them, those are exactly the threats, so that defensiveness really is the foundation of that arms narrative that we're seeing.

I'll allow you to answer what we do.

• (1625)

The Chair: He's not going to be allowed to answer it, only because we're running behind time. I apologize.

Mr. Harris, a minute and a half, please.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, Chair.

Dr. Perry, at the end of your commentary, you talked about anti-Semitism as not quite an afterthought, but that it wasn't part of the mainstream of your concerns. However, we've met with members of the Jewish community who are very concerned about the rise in anti-Semitism over the past number of years, four or five at least, and they are concerned about their security and safety and with direct attacks and ongoing threats against them.

Is this something that you've noticed, or is it something that's separate from this far-right extremism? What can be done about that?

Dr. Barbara Perry: As I indicated, it's the foundation of so much else that's associated with the far right, but you're absolutely right, every indicator has suggested quite a dramatic increase over the last five years or so, from the B'nai Brith reports to the official data that we have. Certainly, just in the last three or four weeks with heightened activity in the Middle East, we've seen a really dramatic uptick in online attacks, as well as physical attacks on Jewish communities across the country, so that is absolutely a significant issue.

Even the COVID-related narratives are not just anti-Asian but also anti-Semitic, those very traditional age-old conspiracy theories rear their heads again.

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

Mr. Van Popta, you have three minutes, and then Mr. Fisher will finish the round with three minutes.

Mr. Van Popta.

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

Three minutes is not a lot of time to talk about such important issues, but I have a question to Dr. Leuprecht.

Thank you for your testimony. You had talked about the pyramid. Maybe you could expand on that a little bit. What I've scribbled down is that at the bottom are activists, who are maybe engaged in objectionable behaviour, then radicals, who are engaged in illegal behaviour, and then terrorists.

In an earlier response to Mr. Kurek's question, you said that bravado is not a good predictor, so what is a good predictor of somebody moving from one level to the other in this pyramid?

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: That is the million-dollar question, and I think we can show that this is really poorly established. The RCMP, when they testified two weeks ago, mentioned 273 cases in 2019 and 2020. How many of those did actually result in actionable charges? There was the Victoria legislature plot there.... I would say that, yes, this is a security intelligence problem, but it turns out that, on the criminal intelligence side, we're not doing that great perhaps a job. We can also infer that it's actually not as big a problem as the resources that we're actually devoting to this particular issue. It is easier for us to capture because we can see it and we have a visceral reaction, most human beings who live in a democracy have a visceral reaction against it, but it remains a phenomenon very much at the margins.

I think we need to remember here and circle back to the issue of the United States. The U.S. is a very polarized society and has always been, and its own political institutions reinforce that. I think we have political institutions that have always forced more of the views into a more moderate and reconciliatory institutional process, so, yes, there will always be some spillover in views from the United States, but by and large, our society has done a better job at moderating those and is helping to reconcile those within our political mainstream.

Mr. Tako Van Popta: You're not going to be able to answer this in 30 seconds, but you said that perhaps empowering CSIS would

be a good tool for Canadian public safety. Could you expand on that for a few seconds?

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: I think in general we have a relatively homeopathic approach in this country towards all matters of national security. If we improved the overall capabilities, capacities and skill sets of our national security agencies—both the criminal intelligence and security intelligence—it would have ancillary benefits for the whole spectrum of public security threats, including ideologically motivated violent extremism. This, of course, is critical in a highly diverse society where we cannot have people trying to antagonize one another by virtue of differing views, opinions or backgrounds.

● (1630)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Van Popta.

Mr. Fisher, you have the final three minutes, please.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Dr. Perry, it's fair to say that some individuals are more susceptible to being radicalized. I think you touched on that. You used hypermasculinity as an example. With MP Damoff, you talked about the grievances and things that inspire right-wing extremist groups to do the things they do.

I'm interested in the fact these groups tend to hijack a movement. Whether it's a yellow vest or an anti-masker or an anti-vaxxer, they don't necessarily have their own...or they're looking for bigger numbers by joining and hijacking a movement.

Unfortunately, we only have a couple of minutes, but I thought maybe you could just touch on some of that phenomena.

Dr. Barbara Perry: It's exactly as you describe it. They do have their own ideologies. I wouldn't say "coherent", but often they have a foundation, anyway. In an attempt to make it more appealing to a broader audience, they will glom on to, if you will, those very typical, normal, banal, everyday kinds of grievances or anxieties, whether they're economic, cultural or even physical in terms of the threat of crime or in this case in the context of COVID, which is the threat of disease.

They will exploit those narratives and often explain them through the lens of race or immigration or gender, even. I think that's where the danger is of bringing unsuspecting, unintentional people into the movement.

Mr. Darren Fisher: That's very much like the anti-Asian hate we see rising in Canada.

Dr. Barbara Perry: Yes, that's explaining a medical problem or a social problem through the lens of race.

Mr. Darren Fisher: You talked about the impact of COVID on all of us. We talked about meeting virtually rather than meeting in person.

Tell me the impact that might have had on some of these right-wing groups. I think I read somewhere that, because of COVID, some groups have been decommissioned, but I wonder whether they're just harder to see.

Dr. Barbara Perry: I think they're actually more visible online. That's what we're seeing. There's more activity online and less activity offline because, believe it or not, they're actually obeying the stay-at-home orders as well, for the most part.

They're very active online and very visible. Some of them are easier to see than others. Even Proud Boys, who were designated, actually rebranded in Hamilton, for example, as Canada First. I think that, as we push them underground, they'll pop up in another form.

The Base and Atomwaffen were also designated. I don't think they're going to go anywhere, because those are the most extreme. They're the worst of the worst. They've just dug in their heels rather than disband. They're out there. I wouldn't advise going looking for them, but if you go looking for them, they're easily found.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fisher.

Colleagues, unfortunately that brings us to the end of this hour. I'm sure you would dearly love this hour to continue, as I would. I'd dearly love to ask a few more questions, but time is the enemy here. On behalf of the committee, I want to thank Dr. Perry and Dr. Leuprecht for a very thoughtful, informed and very able analysis. It would be delightful to call you back. I just don't know when we might have that opportunity. Again, thank you very much.

We'll suspend while Dr. Perry and Dr. Leuprecht leave, and Mr. Gurski and Mr. Geoffroy get into the room.

We're suspended for a minute or two.

• (1630) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1635)

The Chair: We're resuming the meeting.

Thank you for appearing. One was on extremely short notice. Both are listed in the order of precedence.

We'll start with Mr. Gurski, a retired Canadian intelligence analyst, and then go to Martin Geoffroy, a director and research professor.

Mr. Gurski, you have seven minutes.

Mr. Phil Gurski (As an Individual): Thank you very much, Chair, for inviting me today, as you said, on rather short notice. I found out about this a little before noon today, but I'm absolutely humbled to be asked to appear today. I had the opportunity to listen to the previous witnesses give their testimony, and I want to make a few preliminary remarks and then a few substantive remarks before my seven minutes are up.

I did spend 32 years working in security intelligence in Canada, both for the Communications Security Establishment, or CSE, as well as for the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, or CSIS. The remarks I am going to share with you today are based on that experience. I am not an academic, despite the fact that I have writ-

ten six books on terrorism since my so-called retirement from CSIS in 2015. My experience in looking at violent extremism, radicalization and terrorism stems from actually working on investigations, several hundred of which I did when I worked at CSIS as a strategic analyst.

Having said that, I have been retired for six years, which means I have not had daily access to intelligence for more than half a decade, so I would ask the members of this committee to bear in mind that I don't think my knowledge is that out of date. I don't think a lot has changed since 2015, but it's important to realize that the remarks I'm going to give you today are based, in part, on my historical experiences with dealing on counterterrorism investigations in Canada and abroad, and that they do date, though, slightly under six years in terms of their age.

I was a little bit surprised, in all honesty, listening to the previous witnesses—both of whom I know very well and have a great deal of respect for—that in 2021 we are no longer talking about the elephant in the room, which is Islamist extremism. If you read the headlines anywhere in the world on a daily basis, and I'm not just talking about Afghanistan, Somalia, Nigeria and Sahel but western Europe and other parts, the United States, etc., you see that not a day goes by without either an attack or an arrest when it comes to Islamist terrorism.

If you look at the global terrorism index, which is the single best resource in the world—they issue an annual report on terrorism—you see that 99.4% of all terrorist attacks in the world on a yearly basis are carried out by what we call Islamist extremism. You notice I use the term “Islamist extremism”. I'm not a big fan of this newfangled IMVE, ideologically motivated violent extremism. I think it sacrifices accuracy on the altar of I'm not sure what, but to me you can't deal with a problem unless you name it accurately. This is why we talk about far-right extremism, far-left extremism. This is why we talk about Islamist extremism, or Hindu extremism in India, or even Buddhist extremism, which should be an oxymoron. There are Buddhist terrorists, actually, in the world.

I just want to push back a little bit. That terminology was not active when I worked at CSIS. It came in after my retirement. I'm not going to draw any conclusions based on that, but I do recommend that we call things what they are and be as accurate as possible.

I don't disagree with Christian Leuprecht from RMC—again, I've known Christian for a very long time—when he talks about this being a small problem. He's absolutely correct, to a certain extent. It's true that Canada has not faced a great deal of terrorism in the entirety of its 154 years as a country. In fact, I just published a book on “A history of terrorism in Canada from Confederation to the present”, and attacks have been few and far between.

At the same time, the reason there have been so few attacks is that CSIS and the RCMP have successfully thwarted some very important plots. You may recall that this past weekend there was an article in Global Media, as well as the National Post, about an individual called Zakaria Amara who was up for parole. He was a member of the Toronto 18, a case that I followed from the very first day until their arrest in June 2006. Nothing happened because of the RCMP and CSIS. Had that group been successful in carrying out their attack in, probably, August 2006, they would have killed hundreds and wounded thousands of people, but we stopped them.

I think when we talk about numbers we should celebrate the fact that, as a nation, we do not suffer from successful terrorist attacks on a regular basis, which is true. We simply don't have the critical numbers that other countries have, but let's not lose sight of the fact that a lot of plots were foiled. When you work in security intelligence you realize that nobody cares when you get it right. Nobody cares when you stop an attack. They only care when you don't stop the attack, and that's when fingers are pointed. Why didn't you stop it? Why didn't you recruit sources?

• (1640)

I don't disagree with the previous witnesses that, when it comes to terrorism as a national priority, we don't have the criticality that many of our partners have. I'll give you one statistic that should illustrate this, I think, very profoundly. The CSIS equivalent in the United Kingdom is called MI5, the British Security Service. In recent years, they have stated publicly that they have 23,000 people of interest and 30 concurrent threat-to-life plots that they're worried about. Let those numbers sink in for a second—23,000 people capable of carrying out an act of terrorism and 30 actual plots. In my time at CSIS, we had a couple of hundred investigations at any given time. The numbers simply don't match what our allies have.

More importantly, one of the previous guests talked about talk versus action, and it's true. There are many more talkers than there are walkers. Many people talk the talk and don't walk the walk. You don't know who's going to walk the walk until you investigate them. There are no reliable predictors in this regard, but that's why you do investigations. That's why you look into people, to determine if this person is serious or this person is merely spouting things online or off-line to sound important, to raise a grievance or to share their anger with people. That's why we have CSIS; this is why we have the RCMP.

Not surprisingly, I'm a big supporter of CSIS. I worked there for 15 years. I'm a big supporter of the RCMP. I think these organizations do a fine job on our behalf. I think the bottom line is that they have to be adequately resourced. Even if the problem is not as large as it is in many countries around the world, it doesn't mean the problem has gone away.

Dr. Perry talked about the far right. I don't have a lot to say about the far right; it wasn't my specialty. There are a variety of types of violent extremism, terrorist movements out there, some domestic and some international, that still pose a threat to Canadian national security.

• (1645)

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

Mr. Phil Gurski: I just hope that the nation has the resources necessary to deal with it.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madam Larouche.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: A few times, the interpreter had trouble making out what Mr. Gurski was saying. He may need to adjust his mike or headset, I'm not sure.

Mr. Phil Gurski: Thank you, madam.

[*English*]

The Chair: Maybe the interpreters could indicate in the future, as Mr. Gurski responds to questions, whether there's any issue that may be something to do with his microphone, his inflection or something of that nature.

If we could just keep that in mind, then we can respond.

Professor Geoffroy, you have the floor.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Geoffroy (Director, Research Professor, Centre d'expertise et de formation sur les intégrismes religieux, les idéologies politiques et la radicalisation): Is it my turn now?

The Chair: Yes.

You may go ahead. You have seven minutes.

Mr. Martin Geoffroy: My colleague Barbara Perry, who, like me, studies right-wing extremism, has done research focusing mainly on the emergence of right-wing extremism online. The research centre where I work, Centre d'expertise et de formation sur les intégrismes religieux, les idéologies politiques et la radicalisation, or CEFIR, in Longueuil, near Montreal, recently published a study on right-wing extremism in Quebec.

The study did not focus on right-wing extremism online. A lot of research is actually conducted on the subject, but seldom do studies address right-wing extremist events that take place in the real world, in other words, in the street. When I started doing this research, I was surprised to see that, before our centre came along, the scientific literature on Quebec included hardly any research on the number of events held in Quebec in connection with right-wing extremist groups. That's what we undertook to do in our research. We put together a timeline of events associated with far-right activity in Quebec over the last decade, so from 2010 to 2020.

As I said, most of the research in this area deals with the emergence of activity online. That makes understanding the situation more difficult. Mr. Gurski made the point earlier,

[*English*]

talk the talk and walk the walk.

[Translation]

Making hateful comments online is one thing, but acting on them in real life is another. That's what we wanted to investigate. Many were surprised when our findings revealed that 521 events related to far-right groups had taken place in Quebec in the last 10 years. Given how extensive the study was and how long it took, I would be happy to provide more details on the study should you have any questions afterwards. We provided some documentation on the most active groups. The numbers showed a spike in activity in 2017, following the attack on the Quebec City mosque and the events related to Quebec's charter of values. A rise in far-right activity was observed during that period.

Our graph revealed a slight decline in 2019, with a significant increase noted in 2020, during the pandemic. The nebulous far right in Quebec somewhat benefited from the pandemic.

In conjunction with our work on right-wing extremism, we conduct studies on movements that object to the public health measures and believe in conspiracy theories. We noted that, in 2020, most of the far-right groups reorganized themselves around the movement against public health measures. Former members of far-right groups that have almost disappeared make up a large proportion of the groups against public health measures. That's true for Storm Alliance and La Meute. Many of those who belonged to the two groups in 2018 and 2019 are now leaders of the groups against public health measures.

Overall, our research shows a rise in far-right activity, not necessarily online, but in real life. The activity varies, ranging from protests and hate graffiti to online harassment. Those are real actions people have taken, not comments they have posted online. The activity even includes terrorism. In many cases, it involves harassing or bullying people they consider enemies. In 2018, I myself, was on the receiving end when I was giving a talk at Cégep Édouard-Montpetit. During a seminar on right-wing extremism, members of La Meute and the Soldiers of Odin showed up to cause a ruckus and scare us. They were there the whole day. That is a bullying tactic; it is one of the 521 events documented in our list.

• (1650)

Lastly, in Quebec, we noted an increase in real-life protests involving far-right groups, as well as an increase in violence, with 2020 being the most violent year.

I was surprised to hear Barbara Perry say earlier that those in the far-right movement follow the public health measures. I'm not sure whether Quebec is a distinct society on that front as well, but I would say that members of the far right in Quebec are very much against the public health measures. They have even led the movement against the public health rules. They systematically disobey the public health rules.

Are my seven minutes up, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You have a minute left.

Mr. Martin Geoffroy: All right.

Here is an overview. Over the last 10 years, a total of 113 events involving some type of violence occurred, given that we observed a number of categories of violence. Over the last 10 years in Quebec,

22% of right-wing extremist events were violent. Violence has been on the rise since the early 2010s, with the rate increasing sharply in the second half of the decade. The yearly average went from 2.6 violent events between 2010 and 2015 to 19.4 violent events between 2016 and 2020. Therefore, the increase in violence related to far-right groups in Quebec is problematic.

In fact, events involving physical violence jumped dramatically during the second half of the decade. Until 2015, the average number of events involving physical violence was two, but the number rose to nine beginning in 2016. In 2017, we noted 23 violent events, and in 2020, a total of 35 violent events involving far-right groups were noted.

The most violent year of the decade was 2020.

The Chair: Thank you, Professor Geoffroy.

[English]

This is a six-minute round.

We now have Mr. Van Popta, Mr. Lightbound, Madam Larouche and Mr. Harris, please, with six minutes each.

Go ahead, Mr. Van Popta.

• (1655)

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Thank you very much to the witnesses for being here.

My first question will be for you, Professor Geoffroy. You talked quite a bit about the extreme right. CSIS says that's not a very useful categorization. They've adopted the term "ideologically motivated violent extremism", or IMVE. I wonder if you have any thoughts about that.

Also, specifically, they've identified three categories: ideologically, politically and religiously motivated extremist violence. How useful do you think those three categorizations are? In particular, the mosque attack in Quebec was categorized as ideologically motivated, not religiously motivated.

Mr. Martin Geoffroy: What do I think about this? For my part, I think that when you talk about Islamism and you relate....

[Translation]

I'm going to switch languages now, because it will be easier for me to explain.

The Chair: All right.

Mr. Martin Geoffroy: Talking about Islamic terrorism and right-wing extremism without talking about Christianity reveals a cultural bias. Allow me to explain. When people talk about terrorism, they associate it with the Islamic religion, something they do not do with the Christian religion, which tends to be the religion of mainstream society. They dissociate the far right, politics and the Christian religion, but all the right-wing extremist groups I study are made up of fundamentalist Christians.

It's important to differentiate between the practice of a religion through Sunday worship, for instance, and religious fundamentalism, which exists in all of the world's major monotheistic religions, whether it be Islam, Christianity or Buddhism, as Mr. Gurski mentioned. In Myanmar, the terrorists are Buddhists, thank you very much.

I don't think those categories are adequate because they fail to take into account the fact that fundamentalism, whether it be Catholic, Christian or what have you, is closely associated with far-right political movements.

I'll give you a few examples from Quebec. According to our research, one of the most active neo-fascist groups in Quebec is Atalante. The Fédération des Québécois de souche is another. Both groups are very close to a Catholic group in Quebec by the name of Fraternité sacerdotale Saint-Pie X, which runs a Catholic fundamentalist school in Lévis. That group is the basis for an article I'm working on, which will be published in a book soon. All of those Quebec groups draw their intellectual and political inspiration from the religious group Fraternité sacerdotale Saint-Pie X.

In September, we will be publishing another article on youth groups in Longueuil that are inspired by the Fraternité sacerdotale Saint-Pie X and another far-right group, Tradition Québec, which even launched a new right-wing extremist group made up of young people. We present them in the article and refer to them as Zoomers and Groypers. I won't define those terms today, but they are closely linked to the meme culture and the culture of young traditionalists.

I never thought I would see young students who are traditionalist, Catholic far-right fundamentalists, but they exist. One of them attended the CEGEP where I teach. Fortunately, the phenomenon is relatively marginal, but that does not mean a fringe group cannot be dangerous.

To answer your question about categorization, I think it's important to take into account the fact that all of those extremist groups, whether on the far left or the far right, are closely associated with fundamentalist movements in various monotheistic religions. Right-wing extremist groups in Quebec are very closely linked to fundamentalist groups, but not to the Catholic religion.

The Fraternité sacerdotale Saint-Pie X, for instance, is not part of the Catholic Church. It was excommunicated in 1988. It is very much a hate group. What is specific to extremist groups, be they—

• (1700)

[English]

The Chair: Unfortunately, Mr. Van Popta's time is up. You have my apologies for that, but time is the enemy in all of these committee meetings.

Mr. Lightbound is next, for six minutes, please.

[Translation]

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

My questions are for Professor Geoffroy.

Thank you very much for being here and sharing your expertise with the committee. It just confirms how important this study is.

[English]

The Chair: Joël, your microphone is not connected properly.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound: My apologies to the interpreters. My mike was not connected properly. The problem is fixed now.

Mr. Geoffroy, thank you very much for being here today and sharing your expertise with the committee. It just confirms how important this study is.

Given everything we have heard, I can't help but point something out. You noted an increase of more than 6,000% in events involving right-wing extremist groups over the last decade. You said the number of events had gone from two to 129 a year; that is a huge jump.

CSIS's latest report on threats in Canada shows that 21 people have been killed and 40 others have been injured on Canadian soil since 2014 further to ideologically motivated violent extremism. More people have been victims of ideologically motivated violent extremism than of politically or religiously motivated violent extremism. That, too, confirms just how pertinent the committee's study is.

Barbara Perry, the director of the Centre on Hate, Bias and Extremism at Ontario Tech University, told us that right-wing extremist movements had a gun culture. She said one of the mantras of the Proud Boys was "we love our guns".

From what you've observed in your research, have you seen a similar connection between right-wing extremist groups in Quebec and guns?

Mr. Martin Geoffroy: We haven't studied those groups, specifically, but certain groups in Quebec do promote arms, the Three Percenters among others. I doubt Quebec has any Proud Boys members, because they are much more present in English-speaking Canada.

Right-wing extremist groups have a whole masculinity-affirming culture, and a culture that values not just freedom of expression, but also the taking up of arms, and that comes from the United States. The gun culture can go hand in hand with a culture that revolves around more traditional masculinity.

Soon, we will have research on the role of women in these far-right groups. We've interviewed a number of women members, and their role is very traditional. For example, they cook but do not make decisions. You see what I mean. The fact that more and more women belong to these groups is certainly noteworthy.

To give you a very brief answer to your question, I would say a connection certainly exists between these groups and the promotion of guns. In Quebec, members of certain far-right groups have often taken to the streets in military garb. We started doing research on that in co-operation with the Royal Military College Saint-Jean. In fact, at Cégep Édouard-Montpetit, we will be holding a seminar on right-wing extremism in the armed forces in February of next year.

We are seeing many former members of the armed forces who belong to far-right groups, and obviously, that is consistent with the gun culture. One of the founders of La Meute, one of Quebec's main right-wing extremist groups for a period of time, was actually a former member of the Canadian Armed Forces who had fought in Afghanistan. He said he founded the group after being traumatized by the war in Afghanistan. La Meute is a fascinating group because it adopts a military-like power structure, as these types of groups often do. Within La Meute, members had military ranks.

In short, a connection exists between these groups and the taking up of arms.

• (1705)

Mr. Joël Lightbound: I find it intriguing how you outlined the development of these movements over the past decade in your report. You spoke about the germination, outbreak, growth and development of these groups. Between 2017 and 2019, we saw many more groups like La Meute, which you just referred to, in the public arena. We also saw that these groups were fuelled by different events in the news. The American election, the migration movement at the border and refugee protection claimants come to mind.

You spoke of the charter of values and the secularism law. I would have added the global compact for migration. There have been all kinds of conspiracy theories about Canada ceding control of its borders to the United Nations. Even some of my Conservative colleagues in the House of Commons suggested that this was the case.

You said that, since 2020, there has been a shift from more nativist theories focused on a fear of immigration and on rather xenophobic sentiments towards a stronger movement against health measures, the authorities and the elites.

To what extent do these two agendas overlap in far-right movements right now? Are both agendas being fuelled, or is there really a shift in ideology towards health measures and away from the more xenophobic or anti-migration sentiments?

Mr. Martin Geoffroy: “A leopard cannot change its spots.”

[English]

The Chair: You have less than 20 seconds.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Geoffroy: I have 20 seconds. Is that what you're telling me?

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Yes, exactly. I'm sorry.

The Chair: It's 20 seconds.

Mr. Martin Geoffroy: I don't know what to say in 20 seconds.

We've noticed that, over the past year, far-right groups have set aside their anti-immigration agenda somewhat and shifted towards an anti-authority agenda. This is what we call “all-out anti-authority.” However, behind this anti-authority agenda, we can see that anti-immigration is never far away.

I could go into more detail if someone wants to ask me another question about this topic.

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lightbound.

I'm sure Madam Larouche would be delighted to carry on that question.

[Translation]

Ms. Larouche, you have six minutes.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Thank you, Mr. Chair. You seem to know me well.

I want to continue along the same lines as my colleague, Mr. Lightbound. It's fascinating. Mr. Geoffroy, I'll briefly address this topic, because I have another question for you first.

You spoke about the upcoming study on far-right codes in the Canadian Armed Forces. I gather that you'll be conducting a study at the CEGEP. It's still about the sexualization women's bodies and the toxic masculinity that we associate with misogyny. At the same time, in the immigration policy agenda, I can identify a movement to return to the traditional role of women. That way, women must oppose immigration policies and have more children. They're relying on more nativist policies. I can also see a threat to the advancement of women in this far-right movement.

Mr. Martin Geoffroy: What's the question?

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: My question is about the fact that you're talking about your upcoming study on the far right in the Canadian Armed Forces. You're talking about toxic masculinity, so the sexualization of women's bodies. You're also talking about—

Mr. Martin Geoffroy: I didn't conduct a study on women in the Canadian army. However, we conducted a study at the Royal Military College Saint-Jean, which is close to our place. This study looked at the officer cadets' beliefs and knowledge about different religions and radicalization. We'll be presenting this study at the conference.

That said, studies have already been carried out on the far right in the army. The results of these studies will also be presented during the conference in February. I don't have any results to show you today, because we don't have them yet.

In addition, I have done many interviews with women who were high-ranking members of various far-right groups in Quebec. They all told me the same thing. The role of women in this group is traditional. The women are there, ultimately, to serve the men.

However, there are sometimes exceptions. For example, the Soldiers of Odin had a woman leader, Katy Latulippe. Very often, these women become leaders of the group when their boyfriend is in prison or when something of that nature happens. It's a bit like a transfer of power within the family. Women often join these groups by being someone's girlfriend, basically.

In general, the role of women is quite traditional in these groups.

• (1710)

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Okay.

I'll go back to the previous question.

Clearly we must take ideologically motivated violent extremism seriously. As you have seen, this type of extremism increased significantly between 2013 and 2018. This includes the hatred expressed by groups such as the neo-Nazis, or the misogynistic culture with the incel or "involuntary celibacy" movement. These hate groups have used social media as a communication tool a great deal. In the report, you also explain that the isolation and job loss caused by the pandemic amplified the risks of people ending up in online echo chambers where these extreme ideologies can spread.

How could we prevent this radicalization, which we can see is linked to the increased online presence during the pandemic?

Mr. Martin Geoffroy: I would say that it's linked to the online presence, but that it goes much deeper than that.

Cognitive biases play a key role in conspiracy theories and all those extremist groups that believe in conspiracy theories. These biases are very significant, and not only for extremists, both far left and far right. The biases have been amplified by what G erald Bronner, a French colleague with whom I work, calls the cognitive marketplace of ideas online. In the marketplace of ideas, we don't have any control. The most attractive proposals aren't true or scientific, but instead revolve around conspiracy theories.

Racism and immigration issues are often behind these conspiracy theories. There has been a great deal of talk about QAnon. Actually, QAnon is recycling old conspiracy theories and modernizing them. This happens in cycles and it's always the same conspiracy theories.

In the case of QAnon, it's about a global pedosatanic cabal. However, I can tell you that, in the 1990s, I studied a group of Catholic fundamentalists called the White Berets based in Rougemont. I don't know whether you're familiar with them.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Yes.

Mr. Martin Geoffroy: In the 1990s, the White Berets were already talking about a global pedosatanic cabal. They said that the government would inject chips under our skin to control us. Does that sound familiar? We're hearing that quite often today.

When people talk about QAnon as if it's a brand new thing, I find that somewhat amusing, because these types of conspiracy theories keep coming back.

The purpose of a conspiracy theory is to find a scapegoat for our misfortunes. Goodness knows that, in the past year, many people have suffered a great deal of misfortune. Of course, there was a need to find a scapegoat. One way to fill that need was to talk about the "Chinese virus."

[English]

The Chair: Thank you. I apologize again, but we're in rough shape here.

Go ahead, Mr. Harris, for six minutes, please.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to both of you for the very interesting presentations.

First of all, Dr. Geoffroy, you talked about these groups changing or morphing over the years and said that lately they are all acting out to become anti-vaccination and anti-public health. Does that mean they're not really tied to any particular ideology and are perhaps looking for a place to act up, looking for a home or looking for a cause to align with so they can carry out their attitudinal behaviour? Is that going on as well?

• (1715)

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Geoffroy: We and our colleagues from the UNESCO Chair at the Universit  de Sherbrooke are conducting parallel research on the various movements against health measures. A core group of people who are part of these movements or who believe in this agenda come from the far right.

During the pandemic, we've seen different movements coming together in anti-health measures groups. These movements are merging and working together in a category that I would call the "anti-authority movements." My colleague, Ms. Perry, has already published articles on this topic.

Anti-authority movements are often conspiracy movements that question all forms of authority: government authority, health authority and educator authority. According to these groups, educators like me are indoctrinators.

During the pandemic, we've seen that they have—

[English]

Mr. Jack Harris: Excuse me, but I'll interrupt. I'm just trying to keep the questions going.

Are they migrating from other existing groups, such as the Atalante or the various other ones you mentioned?

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Geoffroy: Yes, there's a shift. One leader of the anti-health measures movement in Quebec, Steeve L'Artiss Charland, is the former second-in-command of La Meute. There's also Mario Roy, who is now in prison for contempt of court and who is part of the sovereign citizens movement. He's a former member of La Meute and Storm Alliance. Because of a decline in these groups in Quebec, in 2019, many of these people moved over to the anti-health measures groups. They even took the lead and managed to solidify this movement.

We've also seen other groups. For example, the anti-vaccine groups include many people from the new age movement and people who believe that cancer can be cured by the power of thought. Before the pandemic, these groups were considered somewhat dangerous. However, I don't know whether you've noticed, but with the pandemic, the anti-vaccine movement has become dangerous. It's one thing to refuse a vaccine, but in the context of a pandemic, this could cause death.

We didn't care too much about these movements before the pandemic. However, strangely enough, the movements have come together. I can now see that the anti-vaccine movement will merge with the far-right agenda. During the pandemic, these agendas found a way to join forces. Will they split up or splinter again after the pandemic, or will they continue to merge? That's a good question. I'm not a futurist.

[English]

Mr. Jack Harris: With regard to the idea of these individual groups being a danger to society, when I look at your research, the end result is about 20% over 10 years of involvement in some kind of violence, which would be either verbal, physical or online.

How serious is the danger that they pose? There are "threats and hate speech" listed in your categories of violence, also "vandalism", "mischief", "physical conflict", "harassment and bullying", "attacks and assault" at 6%, and "terrorism" is 1%.

Are they a serious threat and danger to life and limb, or are they at a lower level than that, for the most part?

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Geoffroy: I'm often told that these groups aren't dangerous because they're small in number and marginal. We often estimate that the far right in Canada amounts to less than 1% of the population. Political parties that have a far-right ideology don't get many votes. The parties will get less than 1% of the vote. They won't succeed in getting members elected to Parliament, for example. Within the population, these groups are extremely marginal.

However, just because they're marginal doesn't mean that they aren't dangerous. For a terrorist attack to occur, all it takes is one person fuelled by extremist ideologies. We saw this in the attack on the Great Mosque of Quebec City. The small groups are dangerous given that it takes only a few individuals for these types of acts to occur. Moreover, an individual becomes dangerous when they're desperate, meaning when they see that their political option has no hope of being democratically recognized or of succeeding. At that point, they may think that violence is the only way to further their cause.

• (1720)

[English]

The Chair: Unfortunately, we're going to have to leave it there. I apologize, again, which I do quite frequently.

Colleagues, once again, we have 25 minutes' worth of questioning in the second round, and we have 17 minutes in which to accomplish it. I'm going to be arbitrary again and cut members back to about half of what they were anticipating.

With that, we'll start with Mr. Kurek for three minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Lambropoulos will then have the floor for three minutes.

[English]

There will be one and a half minutes for Mr. Harris and Ms. Larouche, and Mrs. Stubbs and Ms. Damoff will have three minutes each.

Mr. Kurek.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Again, I'd like to thank both of the witnesses for coming today.

Mr. Gurski, what would your expert opinion be on the threshold for determining if something rises to being terrorism? It appears that there's a great deal of overlap between what could be religious extremism, in motivated attacks, for example, against the Jewish community, but those could also be xenophobic IMVE, by this study's definition. Similarly, anarchy is a political system defined by the absence of a government.

How do you differentiate from political extremism when it comes to anti-authority violence, and is there any differentiation between these groups?

Mr. Phil Gurski: It's an excellent question, and I'm glad you asked it. As somebody who worked in counterterrorism for as long as I did, I ask myself that a lot of times too.

We at CSIS were driven by the Criminal Code, and in section 83.01 of the Criminal Code, it defines an act of terrorism as a serious act of violence planned or perpetrated for three primary reasons: ideological, political or religious. That's right in the Criminal Code.

A lot of what I'm hearing described today, in my mind, would not qualify as an act of terrorism. It would qualify as a hate crime, such as misogyny. It could qualify as run of the mill, if I can use that term. For example, I hear a lot of references to the incel attack in Toronto in 2018. I went on record in Canadian media saying that it was not an act of terrorism. It was an act of violent misogyny.

I do think when we mass these terms together, it's very problematic. It's very problematic from the perspective of who gets to look at them. CSIS doesn't do criminal investigations. It's the security intelligence service that gathers intelligence to help the RCMP and law enforcement at the end of the day.

I think we have to be very careful with terminology here. A lot of what Mr. Geoffroy is talking about is absolutely worrisome to me, but it sure as heck isn't terrorism. It's something else that's on our plate of ills, if you want, as a Canadian society. I prefer to limit the term very closely. I've even advocated to just get rid of the term "terrorism" altogether out of the Criminal Code, because there are other crimes, other prosecutions, that are possible to take care of these things.

Mr. Damien Kurek: It's tough to ask a question after that, but if you could define "violent extremism", what would that definition be?

Mr. Phil Gurski: Most people will see violent extremism and terrorism as synonymous. I tend to lean in that direction and, to be perfectly honest, Mr. Kurek, I don't have the time to split hairs on whether there's a difference between the two. They are virtually synonymous.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kurek.

Madam Lambropoulos, you have three minutes, please.

• (1725)

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

I'd like to thank both of our witnesses for being here with us to answer our questions. It has been very interesting testimony on both parts.

[Translation]

My first question is for Mr. Geoffroy.

In your report, you referred to 521 events observed. Does this include online events? I don't know whether you spoke about this.

Mr. Martin Geoffroy: This doesn't include online events. It includes only events that happened in the real world. The only online events that we included were harassment events.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: I'll ask my second question.

Do you know the causes of the increase observed over the past decade?

I'm not talking about 2020 because you said that it was by far the year with the most cases. I think that it was quite a unique year. You spoke about the Quebec case, and I understand your point.

Under normal circumstances, why would this increase occur?

Mr. Martin Geoffroy: This is the topic of a study coming out in September in which we're developing a psychosocial profile based on interviews. I can't talk too much about that right now.

The reasons are extensive and complex. I'll give you the example of an interview that I conducted with the leader of La Meute, Mr. Maikan. I asked him why his group came to intimidate us when

we were giving a talk on the far right at the CEGEP. He told me that this was the only way for his group to be heard.

Some people in Quebec and, I think, in other parts of the world, feel that their voices aren't being heard.

[English]

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: In my own research during my master's, I looked into misogyny and violence against women specifically. One of the findings that I was able to find was that this number has gone up in big part because people and society have obviously been evolving, and more and more people are included.

Women are getting places. They're holding positions of authority and of leadership, and people can't necessarily handle that. People who have normally benefited from the status quo don't necessarily like that this is happening, and they feel like they need to speak out. What exactly are your thoughts on this?

The Chair: You have 20 seconds, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Geoffroy: You're absolutely right. However, since there are only 20 seconds left, I can't say much more about this topic.

[English]

The Chair: You have eight seconds now.

Mr. Martin Geoffroy: I have eight seconds.

[Translation]

You're partly right, but there's more to it than that.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lambropoulos.

[English]

Madam Larouche, you have a minute and a half.

[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Mr. Gurski and Mr. Geoffroy, your presentations were very informative.

I'll try to ask both of you a quick question. Mr. Geoffroy could answer first.

You spoke about the only way for these groups to be heard. That's important to them. I'd like to establish a connection. You also spoke about an increase on the ground, but I want to address the Internet issue. We know that algorithms on the Internet create echo chambers, which push vulnerable people into extremist groups, where they develop a hatred for a particular group.

How can we change the rules and algorithms in these online spaces without affecting freedom of expression, which seems so important to these groups, who want to be heard?

Mr. Martin Geoffroy: Excellent question. Of course, the answer isn't straightforward.

I believe in educating people, starting with young people. That's what I do. I educate people about cognitive biases. It's becoming increasingly difficult to understand how scientific discourse works. This has been exacerbated during the pandemic. People don't know what constitutes a double-blind peer-reviewed academic journal. They take all kinds of information sources from the Internet. That's where you see people like Dr. Raoult. By the way, Dr. Raoult's research on hydroxychloroquine has never been published in an academic journal. He made what we call an argument from authority by saying that he was an immunologist, that he had received a Nobel Prize and so on. Arguments from authority are very popular with extremist groups. The groups may be against authority, but they may also support the authority of these people.

• (1730)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

I understand you can also go online to rate your professor—always a bit of fun. I wish I had gone to university when I could rate professors.

With that, Mr. Harris, you have a minute and a half.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a question for Mr. Gurski. You said that you heard the previous witnesses. Dr. Leuprecht talked about 12 mechanisms of radicalization, from personal grievance down to martyrdom. In your work with CSIS identifying who it is you follow to see what happens to them, how do you pick from those if it's so difficult, as Dr. Leuprecht pointed out, to actually predict who would end up in the other score?

Is there a method of selecting from this particular group? How do you actually do that?

Mr. Phil Gurski: That's a great question, Mr. Harris. I would simply say that we at CSIS have the legislative authority to investigate threats to national security based on what's called section 2 of the CSIS Act, and you kind of just go with your gut in many ways.

I will say that we came across many cases of people who appeared to just talk the talk and then would switch in a heartbeat to actually planning something, whether it was travelling abroad to join ISIS or things like that. It's not an exact science, and this is what worries me when we try to delineate this in such ways that it's only 12 mechanisms or that it's only 12 of this. Life is, unfortunately, much more complicated than that, and I think a lot of us simply went either on our instinct or on the fact that we'd seen many previous investigations that were analogous to that.

We didn't come up with any kind of foolproof system, and I would submit to you, sir, that it's, in fact, a fool's errand to try to reduce this to something that is actually as simple as that. A lot of it is learning as you go and having the necessary resources to take a look at those people when they actually start to do or plan to do some very dangerous things.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Harris.

Madam Stubbs, you have three minutes, please.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Yes, it seems evident from the diversity of perspectives of the many witnesses we've heard from already that this is extremely complex and that monolithic applications, perspectives or approaches on these issues don't necessarily seem to be apt.

Following on a question from Jack Harris, Mr. Gurski, given your lived experience, your work experience and also the extensive writing you've done on the how versus the why of radicalization, with the remaining time, I thought you might want to expand on that for the committee.

Mr. Phil Gurski: Thank you, Mrs. Stubbs.

You know, it really sounds simple, folks, but you go where the information leads you. I think the problem is that, if you go in with preconceived notions, you start making errors. I wrote about this a lot in my very first book, *The Threat From Within*. If you assume from the outset, for example, that poor socio-economic status is a large contributor or predictor, you'll find out that you're wrong as many times as you're right.

The bottom line is that we entrust our law enforcement officers and security intelligence officers to gather the information and see where it's going to take them, and to try to make decisions based on what they're actually seeing, as opposed to some kind of pre-arranged framework. By saying this, I'm not pooh-poohing the work done by academics such as Monsieur Geoffroy. I think it's very valuable, but those of us who work in security intelligence, in all honesty, didn't have the time to incorporate those theories, because we were too busy doing investigations. Were they helpful? Yes, they were, but they didn't frame or dictate the directions in which we took our investigations.

I'm not sure if that helps to answer that question, but you're right that it is extremely complicated and each case is different, unfortunately.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: I have a question for Dr. Geoffroy.

Dr. Perry spoke about this a bit. There are, of course, reports that in Quebec they have the highest rates of anti-Semitic incidents. The highest rates were in 2018 and 2019. I know earlier you said, in your words, the most violent year was in 2020. I wonder if you have any comments on that.

What is the driver of that? Do you know why that would be the case, localized in Quebec?

• (1735)

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Geoffroy: In terms of the specific nature of far-right groups in Quebec, there's obviously the fact that the groups are bilingual and that they're at the crossroads between American and French extremist groups. A great deal of anti-Semitism comes from French far-right groups. As you know, France has a significant history of anti-Semitism.

This is spread through certain groups. The Fédération des Québécois de souche, for example, is very anti-Semitic. There are several fundamentalist groups. I spoke earlier about the White Berets. The members of this community in Rougemont, near my home, are anti-Semitic. They constantly talk about the global Jewish conspiracy and so on. This isn't new. This anti-Semitism is reflected in the QAnon movement's obsession with George Soros, who is Jewish.

[English]

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

Madam Damoff, please. You have the last three minutes.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to both witnesses.

Mr. Geoffroy, thank you so much for the work you're doing.

You mentioned earlier the attack at the Quebec City mosque. Actually, I don't want to say his name, but the shooter was a law-abiding gun owner prior to going in and killing six men and wounding five others. Recently, in Quebec City, there was someone who was arrested in Mr. Lightbound's riding with an arsenal of weapons and bombs. There was a similar arrest in Alberta at the end of April. What is the connection with far-right extremism?

Obviously, at the Quebec City mosque, we're seeing a rise in anti-Semitism. We're also seeing a rise in Islamophobia. Neither is acceptable in any way. Could you talk about the connection between these terrorist acts, potential terrorist acts and far-right extremism?

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Geoffroy: Yes. Many people say, for example, that Alexandre Bissonnette didn't commit a terrorist act. I personally consider that he committed a terrorist act.

Alexandre Bissonnette wasn't charged with terrorism because it would have been pointless. We already knew that he would receive a life sentence, or close to it. Since it's much more difficult to charge a person with terrorism than with murder, the terrorism prosecutions were dropped because they would have been a waste of time. However, if the terrorism charge had been pursued, the acts could have been called terrorist acts.

This had a devastating impact on the Muslim community in Quebec City. The people at the Great Mosque of Quebec City consider this incident a terrorist event. They were very hurt by the fact that it wasn't called a terrorist event and that Mr. Bissonnette wasn't charged with terrorism. This gives them the impression that a double standard exists. When these types of acts are committed by a Muslim person, the acts are always called terrorism, not insanity.

Moreover, according to the conspiracy theory of Quebec's far-right groups, Alexandre Bissonnette isn't inspired by the far right, but instead suffers from insanity. However, if Alexandre Bissonnette really suffered from insanity or mental illness, he would be at the Institut Philippe-Pinel and not in prison. This isn't a matter of insanity. However, as I said earlier, we often have cultural biases.

I want to address what Ms. Larouche and Ms. Lambropoulos asked earlier. Our current research on right-wing women shows that most of these women have been physically and sexually abused in their lives. We'll be releasing this significant data in the coming months. I'm giving you the scoop today. These groups attract certain types of vulnerable women who continue to suffer abuse within these groups.

With psychologist Louis Brunet, I'm working on an account of the life of a woman who belonged to one of these groups. Throughout her life, this woman had been a victim of domestic violence and abuse. We're finding that the far-right groups under review are perfect places to sexually abuse women.

I've been studying sectarian groups for over 20 years. This looks very similar to the types of abuses committed within sectarian groups. This happens in the context of a misogynistic culture, where women are trapped in dangerous groups under the pretext of political reasons.

• (1740)

[English]

The Chair: We're going to have to leave it there. Thank you for that.

Colleagues, that does bring our time to an end.

On your behalf, I'd like to thank our last-minute witness, Mr. Gurski, for stepping in, and Professor Geoffroy, for his obviously passionate and knowledgeable information in this field.

Before I adjourn this meeting, I would note that after our meeting on Wednesday, where we have the minister and the commissioner, I'd like to add about 10 to 15 minutes, so we could get some idea of what we want to do with our views on the Bastarache report. Please make a note that the next meeting will be a bit longer than normal.

Could the parties give some indication to the chair and the clerk as to what they want to do with the supplementary estimates (A)? That would be helpful, bearing in mind that we have a very heavily negotiated and jam-packed agenda.

With that, again, thank you to both witnesses.

The meeting is adjourned.

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