



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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# Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 008**

Tuesday, February 15, 2022

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Chair: The Honourable Jim Carr





# Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

Tuesday, February 15, 2022

• (1125)  
[English]

**The Chair (Hon. Jim Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.)):** Good morning, everybody. I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number eight of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of November 25, 2021. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application. The proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website. The website will always show the person speaking rather than the entirety of the committee.

For members participating in person, proceed as you usually would when the whole committee is meeting in person in a committee room. Keep in mind the Board of Internal Economy's guidelines for mask use and health protocols.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. If you are on the video conference, please click on the microphone icon to unmute yourself. For those in the room, your microphone will be controlled as normal by the proceedings and verification officer. When speaking, please speak slowly and clearly. When you are not speaking, your mike should be on mute. All comments by members should be addressed through the chair.

With regard to the speaking list, the committee clerk will advise the chair on whose hands are up, to the best of his ability. We will do the best we can to maintain a consolidated order of speaking for all members, whether they are participating virtually or in person.

Pursuant to the order adopted by the House of Commons on Tuesday, December 7, 2021, and the motion adopted on Tuesday, December 14, 2021, the committee is resuming its study of gun control, illegal arms trafficking and the increase in gun crimes committed by members of street gangs.

Today we have with us, via video conference, from Communities for Zero Violence, Evelyn Fox, founder; and from Keep6ix, Richard Miller, founder.

Witnesses will have up to five minutes for opening remarks, after which we will proceed with rounds of questions. Witnesses may also choose to split their allotted time for opening remarks with other witnesses if they so desire.

Welcome, everyone.

I now invite Ms. Fox to make an opening—

**Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC):** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Lloyd.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** Given that this committee started half an hour late, I think it would only be fair to the witnesses if we were to allow 45 minutes for the first round and then 45 minutes for the second round so that we can have an equal weighting for witnesses. It looks like this first panel will get less than half an hour to discuss this.

Have there been any deliberations by you and the clerk, Chair, to address this shortened timeline?

**The Chair:** It has been only that if we need it, we can add extra time at the end of the meeting. I am told that the extra time could be up to about 15 minutes.

I'll be as efficient as I can, Mr. Lloyd, and as fair as I can be, including allowing this first panel to go longer than the allotted time.

Okay? All right.

So—

• (1130)

**Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.):** Chair, just on that point of order, in other committees we've been able to get the full two hours in when we've started later. Are we not able to go until 1:30 p.m.?

**The Chair:** It's fine with me.

Clerk, can we go as late as 1:30 eastern time?

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Wassim Bouanani):** Mr. Chair, we should be able to do so. Yes.

**The Chair:** All right.

So that will be our goal.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, do we require unanimous consent to extend the timeline of the meeting?

**The Chair:** I'll look—

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** Some of us do have things planned for after the meeting. I could do 15 minutes extra but certainly not an extra half-hour.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Clerk.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chair, you may request unanimous consent from the committee to go beyond 15 minutes. It's at the discretion of the committee to decide collectively or—

**The Chair:** Do we require unanimous consent to go beyond 15 minutes?

**The Clerk:** Is that question directed to the committee or to me, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** It's directed to you, Clerk.

**The Clerk:** You may, sir, yes, but for the first 15 minutes it's not necessary. Beyond that, you may request it if one of the members has requested unanimous consent.

**The Chair:** Well, let's see where we're at 15 minutes after the hour. Then we'll consult the committee on how they want to proceed.

Okay? All right.

So—

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Chair?

**The Chair:** Yes, go ahead, Ms. Damoff.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** We should decide now because it will determine how long these witnesses are here. If we're able to go to 1:30, which I don't think you need unanimous consent for, then we can do a full hour with these two witnesses and a full hour with our second panel.

I wonder if we could determine that now because otherwise it's going to impact... and I really don't want to spend too much time talking about this because we're cutting into the witnesses' time, right?

**The Chair:** Exactly.

Let me just ask the committee, is it your view that we ought to go to 30 minutes after the hour?

The consensus is that we should. Let's note that there is a member of the committee [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] so let's proceed.

I would now like to invite Ms. Fox to make an opening statement of up to five minutes. The floor is yours.

**Ms. Evelyn Fox (Founder, Communities for Zero Violence):** Thank you. My organization is Communities for Zero Violence.

Thank you for inviting me to speak in this forum. My name is Evelyn Fox. I'm the founder of Communities for Zero Violence, a non-profit agency that provides peer-led supports for homicide survivors and victims of community violence, as a way to interrupt the cycle. Communities for Zero Violence was formed eight months after the homicide of my eldest son Kiesingar Gunn in 2016.

Over the past five and a half years I have taught myself about the firearm laws and regulations, educated myself on the chief firearms officer's functioning and taken the firearms safety course, just for the knowledge, and was very impressed to hear the instructor's constant reminders of how to handle and store a firearm safely.

Every instance of violence has an intervention point that has been overlooked or not been acted upon by either people closest to that person, service providers or those in positions of power whose job it is to intervene. For instance, you can imagine my surprise when I learned that only 10% of personal references are contacted when someone initially [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] and none of

the references contacted when renewing the licence, especially with trainers emphasizing the fact that the references would be contacted before being approved for the licence.

How is this ensuring public safety? Why are references not being contacted?

We live beside a country that has a patchwork system to regulate firearms that are illegally seeping through our borders in one form or another. CBSA is only required to inspect 1% of shipping containers that come over our borders: one of every 100. CBSA has seized vehicles at the border with multiple firearms hidden in them. How many times have those individuals smuggling the firearms been successful before getting caught? How will this be addressed? What improvements to the borders will be implemented?

More regulation for firearms in Canada as a way to eliminate community and gang violence, when all the community-level violence is being committed by those who are not licensed to possess or use them, will not be effective. Canada has adequate laws for firearm ownership, and the gatekeepers of ensuring our laws remain intact and strong have done an amazing job keeping them this way.

The talk of allowing the municipalities and provinces to ban firearms within their borders is an American-style regulation that we know does not work. To even suggest it is irresponsible and not in the best interest of any Canadian.

There has been discussion after discussion, report after report, with all the same recommendations for the past 14 years about addressing the social determinants of health and investing in communities across Canada, and still a gun ban and more regulation of firearms is a primary focus of investment. The significant polarization of opinions do not allow us to have an honest and meaningful discussion about the gun violence across the country. We cannot talk about a firearm ban without speaking about banning poverty and all the underlying issues that stem from it. We have traumatized communities that are never able to heal due to the continued occurrences of violence and the lack of resources to provide them support.

When my son Kiesingar was killed, my younger son was 12. He went from being a straight-A student with aspirations of being a human rights lawyer with the United Nations to failing all of his classes due to his inability to focus and his invasive thoughts. He started engaging in at-risk behaviour and self-medicating. He started engaging in illegal activities that started to escalate into various serious crimes. If I hadn't done everything I could to intervene, he was destined to end up being killed or killing someone else.

This is what all levels of government should be focusing on. There should be proactive, not reactive, approaches to eliminating the violence. The “Review of the Roots of Youth Violence” report, which outlines the most pervasive risk factors of why youth engage in violent acts, was issued in 2008. All levels of government are aware of the risk factors and recommendations set out in the report, and every party since in majority has cut the areas of recommendation and are now surprised that we have escalating community and gang violence.

Our communities are in crisis and it is long past due to do what is right by Canadians whose voices have been largely ignored, who deserve gainful opportunities to enrich their communities and their lives.

Those of us who have had our loved ones murdered are real people who suffer with real trauma. We deserve to have the support of our elected officials to make our communities safe. We should feel safe enough to allow our children to go to school, play in playgrounds, and attend social events and recreational facilities without the fear of them not returning due to the escalating violence that is terrorizing our cities.

• (1135)

Community safety is a right: A right my son had to go out and enjoy his time with his fiancée, a right to return home after enjoying his night and a right to exist free from violence wherever he chose to travel throughout the city, our province and our country. That—

**The Chair:** Ms. Fox, I'm sorry for having to interrupt.

**Ms. Evelyn Fox:** That's okay.

**The Chair:** The five minutes is up. Please accept from me and from all members of the committee our sincerest condolences on your loss.

**Ms. Evelyn Fox:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We grieve with you.

Mr. Miller, you now have the floor for up to five minutes for your opening remarks.

Please proceed.

**Mr. Richard Miller (Founder, Keep6ix):** Good morning, Mr. Chair. I want to thank you so much for inviting me to be a part of this very important conversation.

I am Richard Miller, the founder of the Keep6ix non-profit organization. Keep6ix engages with individuals who have had their lives affected by the criminal justice system. I have lived experience within the justice system; therefore, I believe I can speak to the issues concerning individuals who have made bad decisions and consequently ended up in the justice system.

There are a couple of points I would like to address.

Keep6ix has developed a program called “Gangs 4 Tuition”. This program gives individuals an opportunity to trade gang lifestyles for education in skilled trades and the tech sector by means of mentorship and expert-delivered training programs, along with life coaching. Gangs 4 Tuition carries a follow-up component to ensure

success of the participant by keeping the participant accountable for each aspect of the program.

I am here today to partner with you in order to continue to grow this program on a national level in order to effect positive changes in the following areas.

The first area is to reduce crime rates by providing individuals with a positive lifestyle through the acquisition of transferable skill sets and training, leading to employment and sustainable, self-sufficient living.

Next is economic empowerment. Young adults are empowered through financial literature to make investments in their own health and education.

The third area is mental health issues. Keep6ix provides mental health counselling to individuals who are registered in our Gangs 4 Tuition program.

Next is education about public safety and targeting at-risk youth and young adults before they get into trouble. Most of them are from single families with no guidance. The programs allow them the opportunity, through mentorship, to live a life without violence. Keep6ix also has a program that allows individuals to turn in a firearm to our program which in turn is turned over to the police department.

Next, individuals within our programs are given ongoing support. As you are aware, 90% of individuals who are incarcerated have a mental health concern. Consequently, Keep6ix provides counselling sessions on mental health for individuals in our program.

Last, organizations like Keep6ix continue to find ways to reduce the amount of guns in our community, which in turn will put an end to violence.

Keep6ix is a non-profit organization and is willing and ready to partner with any organization to ensure the safety of the public.

I thank you for this opportunity to speak on this platform. My desire is to garner support to continue this work, which we have been doing for the past five years.

Thank you.

• (1140)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Miller.

Now I'll open the floor for questions.

To lead us off, Mr. Lloyd, you have six minutes.

The floor is yours, sir.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** Thank you, Ms. Fox and Mr. Miller, for your testimony.

I want to start by saying thank you for the excellent work that you're doing in our communities.

Throughout this committee, the words that you have put forward have been echoed by law enforcement: that we need more investment in community-based approaches and that we are woefully underfunding community-based approaches to divert at-risk youth from a life of crime and to get people who are in a life of crime to divert away from a life of crime.

What specific measures do you think this committee could recommend that would be most effective for the government to dedicate resources to in order to reduce gun violence and to reduce youth gang activity?

Thank you.

Ms. Fox, you can go first.

**Ms. Evelyn Fox:** Thank you.

In 2008, as I said, the “Review of the Roots of Youth Violence” report was released after the 2005 “year of the gun” issue we had in the city of Toronto.

Outlined in that report are various recommendations that were put out by the provincial government to tackle [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] youth engage in the violence. Poverty is one of the number one issues, and the rest filter down in terms of systemic racism, the education system and the lack of housing. Anyone who's been to Toronto or Vancouver knows that the cost of living in our cities is unbelievable. You can't survive in the city unless you're an upper-income person.

It's not surprising that we have the level of violence that we have when we continue to see the financial gaps grow and people just trying to survive. The trauma that is left in these communities... Some people who I support have lost more than one family member or friend—multiple people. They never have a chance to even attempt to heal before another one is taken.

We hardly have any services that cater to community violence, which is one of the reasons I started my organization. Trying to find myself and my children continuous supports was horrible. It was absolutely horrible trying to navigate, and I work in social services. It's very difficult to find resources that are culturally specific and that people have the ability to connect with to deal with the trauma they've been exposed to.

You have children who are growing up through all of this trauma, and it's becoming somewhat normal to them to the point where.... What would we expect them to do, living in this environment?

• (1145)

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** Yes, thank you for that.

I will go to Mr. Miller, but I have one final, quick question, Ms. Fox.

Clearly, there's a potential plan by this government to spend up to \$1 billion, perhaps more, to buy back firearms, which we know will be predominantly bought back from legal owners. They'll primarily be long guns, not hand guns.

Do you think this would have any impact on the youth you're talking about and the people involved in a life of crime? Is this go-

ing to have any impact on them? Do you think that \$1 billion dollars could be better spent on the programs that you're saying are needed?

**Ms. Evelyn Fox:** The short answer would be no, it would not have any affect at all. The long answer is that it absolutely infuriates me that the government that is supposed to be acting on our behalf is willing to dump more than \$1 billion into a buyback from legal owners, and the \$250 million that's been promised over the past six years still hasn't been filtered down to the provinces and the municipalities. That is a drop in the bucket compared to what communities across Canada require to do the real work.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** Thank you so much.

Mr. Miller, what are your thoughts on my first line?

**Mr. Richard Miller:** Can you repeat your first question again, please?

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** We're seeing youth getting involved in a life of crime. Thank you for the work you've been doing in that. What sort of specific programs do you think are required to be most effective at diverting youth from a life of crime and, if they are in a life of crime, getting them out of a life of crime?

**Mr. Richard Miller:** From the work that we've been doing, one of the main factors is the employment and the trade. We find that individuals are able to be in a setting where they feel they're giving back, but also they're able to provide for themselves.

I'll give you a brief example. We have individuals who are into the trades and the union. These individuals or young people, who come from a marginalized community, were making \$37 dollars an hour. You have an individual who has a \$60,000 a year income starting out. That alone says a lot. It gives these individuals a more positive aspect of not—as they would say to me—looking over their backs.

That is my first take on it. The next thing we have to deal with is their trauma. We look at incarcerations—

**The Chair:** You'll have to wrap it up in 10 seconds please, Mr. Miller.

**Mr. Richard Miller:** Sure. We have to look at dealing with the trauma that they have gone through because that plays a big role in their actions and their behaviour.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Now I would turn the microphone over to Mr. Noormohamed.

You have six minutes. Please proceed.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll be sharing my time with Mr. McKinnon.

Mr. Miller, I'm asking you this question with the backdrop of the murder of the 18-year-old youth yesterday at David and Mary Thomson high school in Scarborough. His grandmother actually is a colleague of my partner.

I ask you this question reflecting on the work that you do, which is incredible, by the way. I want to thank you for what you do. You've made it clear that getting these weapons—these guns—off the streets and out of the hands of young people is critical.

Can you share with us two things? Why is it critical to take these weapons off the streets? What should we as legislators be doing to make sure that happens?

**Mr. Richard Miller:** The reason it's important to take the guns off the streets and from the hands of these young people is the fact that young people are resorting to death threat measures with these firearms. If we're able to get these firearms off the street and out of the hands of these young people, we're able to then deal with the issues they are suffering from within and put them on a more positive path.

Once we are able to curve the weapon issue itself, we can address and work with these young people. At the end of the day, we have to look. There's an underlying issue within every one of these individuals who are getting into these situations with firearms.

• (1150)

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** I have one more question for you. How easy is it for these young people to get weapons right now?

**Mr. Richard Miller:** [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] to get right now. I'm sure if they go to the right place in the city, an individual can get themselves a firearm probably within a three-hour basis, tops.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** It's a lot for us to think about.

Thank you, Mr. Miller. Again, I appreciate everything that you do.

I'll yield the rest of my time to Mr. McKinnon.

**Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Noormohamed.

Mr. Miller, I'm just wondering if you could comment on the origins of the firearms that are being used here.

If we get rid of legal firearms, we understand that there's also an emerging opportunity to create weapons, or ghost guns if you will, with printed parts and so forth. I'm wondering if you can comment on these other sources of firearms and whether they are a factor.

**Mr. Richard Miller:** When it comes to getting rid of firearms, the issue is not arising from the legal individual who has a registered firearm. The firearm that is committing the crime is not the firearm that was registered to Mrs. or Mr. Johnson, unless there was a break and enter in this problem.

These firearms are being transported in the underground sector into the country through the borders in different ways. We have to look at that.

Just briefly speaking about the buyback program, has anyone ever taken the time to look at even the firearms that are being turned in from the buyback program? These are not the firearms that are committing the murders in our community. These are the firearms that Mrs. Johnson or Tom had. He might have passed away and the family member is getting rid of it.

If we're going to spend a lot of money on this, we have to focus on the actual issue.

**Mr. Ron McKinnon:** Thank you.

The actual issue is not the buyback of legal firearms; it is the black market trade in firearms. Is that what you're saying?

**Mr. Richard Miller:** That is correct.

**Mr. Ron McKinnon:** How do we best stifle this black market trade?

**Mr. Richard Miller:** The black market trade itself is something where I feel best we need to educate. Education plays a big role. Unless you give individuals the opportunity to succeed and give them other resources, we're still in the same boat. It comes down to the education.

One thing that we particularly focus on is the education piece for these individuals. The choices and the consequences that they'll be looking for in going down that path. If we are able to catch them at a younger age, then we're able to program their mind and give them these resources that are available to them.

When I hear a young man say, "You're telling me I can go into the union and be making \$30 an hour? We've never had anyone come here and show us that?..." Now they have another resource available that they never knew about. They can make healthy choices.

**Mr. Ron McKinnon:** Thank you, Mr. Miller.

I believe that's my time, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Well, you have 30 seconds, if you would like to use it. If not, we'll move on.

**Mr. Ron McKinnon:** We can move on. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Then I would like to ask Ms. Michaud to take the microphone. She has six minutes.

The floor is yours. Please proceed.

[*Translation*]

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

I thank the witnesses for being here with us today. We are grateful to all of them.

Ms. Fox, I offer my deepest condolences for the loss of your son. Thank you for your commitment, for your fight. You said in your opening statement that you had educated yourself on the matter and are trying to change things. That's extremely laudable.

I can't help but come back to a point you raised earlier. You said that the federal government wants to shift responsibility for banning hand guns to municipalities and provinces. You think that's not a good idea, and I don't think so either. In my opinion, this falls under the federal government's responsibility, and it lacks some political courage because of pressure applied by the firearms lobby.

If municipalities were to take over responsibility for regulating this sector, it would be pretty problematic. In my riding, there are 56 municipalities. Imagine the headache if regulations were different from one municipality to the next. It would be the same thing for the provinces. Some are more inclined than others to legislate, and others have no inclination whatsoever to ban hand guns.

I'd like to have your opinion on the matter.

What should the real solution be?

Do you think it's the federal government's responsibility to ban hand guns?

• (1155)

[English]

**Ms. Evelyn Fox:** Yes. If there was to be a ban implemented, it would most definitely have to be a federal ban. Copping out to the provinces and municipalities isn't going to do anything. We have people who travel back and forth. We have people on Canada-wide warrants who travel from province to province without detection. The municipalities and provinces don't have border control. There is no way to regulate that, and we see how it works in the States: It doesn't work. It's not right to try to make the municipalities and provinces responsible for that. That is a federal issue that needs to be governed by the federal government.

[Translation]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Thank you for your answer, Ms. Fox.

I understand that you're especially committed to fighting gangs and illegal weapons.

Nonetheless, I'd like to ask what you think about gun violence, for example in the cases of homicide committed by an intimate partner, mass shootings or suicides.

I understand your reticence when it comes to the weapons buy-back program. However, is it fair to think that the federal government should tackle these problems as well? Should it also tackle the issue of owners of an illegal firearm or a weapon that's been on the illegal weapons list since May 2020, if memory serves, or even owners of firearms not on the list, but similar to one on it?

Which measures do you think the federal government should take?

[English]

**Ms. Evelyn Fox:** As I said previously, for every act of violence, whether it's suicide or a mass shooting, whatever the case may be, there is always an intervention point. That person has been failed by whomever, whether it's the person closest to them, a service provider or even those whose job it is to ensure that person's safety. They have failed in intervening.

I don't think that a gun ban against legal owners is the right solution. We also know, as I said, that only 10% of the references for the PAL licence to own a firearm are checked. Why is that? If we have an issue with domestic violence, a woman is concerned for her safety and her partner has a firearm, why would all the references not be checked? Why would they not be checked to get the licence and to renew the licence?

If the partner signs the application, that's deemed as their consent and they're not even contacted to get feedback. I'm surprised, actually, that it is this way considering we're so homed in on firearm regulation. Why is it that those references are not 100% checked? What I was informed of in the safety course is that those references

would all be checked to ensure that I was a safe enough person to attain that licence.

[Translation]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** I agree with you on that.

Bill C-71 and corresponding regulations are not clear about the verification process, and it is difficult to determine if it's well done or if all of the details that allow a person to obtain a firearm are checked.

I'd like to touch on another subject.

You've fought for a community approach instead of putting massive funds into law enforcement.

In your opinion, what do urban communities need to prevent criminal activity?

• (1200)

[English]

**Ms. Evelyn Fox:** I think that not so much funding into the police.... The police are a reactive response; they are not a proactive response. I think that programs like Marcell Wilson's with the One by One Movement, which does gang intervention.... I think that trauma support is a major factor, because once you have experienced the homicide of a loved one, you literally lose your mind. It is the most horrible experience I have ever had in my life, and I will never be the same person I once was. I had thoughts of suicide [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] my son going out of control [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] to get involved. I couldn't function. People have to leave their jobs because they can't function anymore. People see their other children spiralling out of control, and they don't have what it takes to intervene.

The cycle of violence is very real and very serious. We need to address the root causes. That is what needs to be done. We've had person after person in this forum speak about it, and for 14 years have had the same community leaders speaking about the same thing. And still, it's the voices of the people in anomalous situations who are not affected by the everyday violence that are heard over the people who live this day to day. It's extremely frustrating, but that's what needs to happen. The social determinants of health and the root causes, that is where it lies; and if we had done it 14 years ago, we would not be in this place today.

[Translation]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Thank you very much, Ms. Fox.

I think that my time to speak is up.

I don't see the chair onscreen anymore. I think we're having a technical problem.

[English]

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Clerk, did we lose our chair?

[Translation]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** The clerk seems to be on the phone.

[English]

**Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC):** We lost the clerk, too, Pam.

**The Clerk:** We lost the chair for a moment. He will be recon-nected. One of the vice-chairs can take over. Mr. Lloyd, no, actually Ms.—

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** I'll just move in here and give the time to Mr. MacGregor.

[Translation]

**The Clerk:** Ms. Michaud, can you take over the role of chair?

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Kristina Michaud):** I will do so with great pleasure.

I think that we were at Mr. MacGregor.

Mr. MacGregor, you have the floor for six minutes.

[English]

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's nice to see you in that role.

With apologies to Mr. Miller and Ms. Fox—I appreciate their testimony—I need to take my time to move a motion that I gave notice to the committee on. Everyone had notice on Friday.

Madam Chair, the motion I'm moving reads as follows:

That the committee invite the Minister of Public Safety and department officials from both the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Canada Border Services Agency to appear as soon as possible before the committee to answer questions regarding the occupation of Ottawa and the federal government's response to convoy blockades disrupting our borders, notably in Windsor, Ontario; Emerson, Manitoba; and Coutts, Alberta.

I don't want to spend a lot of time on this. I am open to interpretation on what “as soon as possible” means, and I'm happy to have that conversation with colleagues off-line, but I'll just keep it at that. The motion's been moved, and I invite comments from my colleagues.

Thank you.

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Kristina Michaud):** Thank you, Mr. MacGregor.

The clerk confirmed that we can now debate this motion.

Ms. Damoff, you have the floor.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

[English]

I want to thank my colleague for bringing this motion forward. I think we all want to get some answers about what has been transpiring.

I am going to propose an amendment, and I hope it's acceptable to the mover and the committee. We have a broader study where we can do a deeper dive on this. My Liberal colleague brought it forward last week, I think it was.

Since Mr. MacGregor provided this motion, the Emergencies Act has been invoked, and part of that act legislates a parliamentary re-

view committee to review the actions under the act. In addition, the agencies named in this motion, rightly so, are focused on the emergency that is transpiring across our country right now.

I would propose that the motion be amended after “as soon as possible”, by adding the words “following the revocation or expiry of the emergencies act”.

In that way, we would be able to get answers from these agencies. The emergency is happening while we're speaking, and they will not be at liberty to talk about what's happening operationally. So basically it would be that the groups and the minister named in the member's motion would come as soon as possible after the the Emergencies Act expires.

• (1205)

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Kristina Michaud):** Thank you, Ms. Damoff.

I saw a hand up, but I don't know if it's Mr. Lloyd's or Mr. Noor-mohamed's.

I give you the floor, Mr. Lloyd, in the interest of fairness.

[English]

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** Thanks.

I think the chair is back now, but I'd be—

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. MacGregor.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Thank you, Chair. It's good to see you back.

I appreciate Ms. Damoff's amendment. I am leaning to being against it, and I'll state my reasons.

I very much understand that the Emergencies Act was brought into force yesterday. However, I am not interested so much in our security and law enforcement services' tasks under the Emergencies Act but rather the last two weeks. We, as a committee, have a legitimate questions about how things fell apart so quickly, and I'm really interested in having a deep dive on how we got to where we're at over the last two weeks. That's why I'm interested in maybe not voting in favour of the amendment but keeping the original motion as is.

I know from talking with my Conservative colleagues off-line that there might be some interest in adding the Ontario Provincial Police. I'm definitely in favour of that amendment.

**The Chair:** Mr. McKinnon, I see that your hand is up.

**Mr. Ron McKinnon:** Thank you, Chair. I want to speak in support of Ms. Damoff's amendment.

It is incredibly important that we hear from the people Mr. MacGregor mentioned, as well as potentially the Ontario Provincial Police.

The problem is that we are in the throes of this at this time, and while we might want to talk about what has gone on, the people involved are not going to speak about ongoing operational measures. They just can't. They also need to be heads-down working on the problem.

I would be happy to support the amendment, but without the amendment, I'm not going to be able to support Mr. MacGregor's motion. It's an excellent idea, but I can't support it at this time.

**The Chair:** Mr. Lloyd, I see that your hand up, or is that from before?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Mr. Chair, if I may, Mr. Noormohamed's hand has been raised for some time, as well as Mr. Van Popta's.

[*English*]

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** No, my hand is up.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** Mr. Chair, do I have the floor?

**The Chair:** Well, I was away. Whose hand was up first?

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** These hands came up after you came—

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Mr. Noormohamed is the one who raised his hand.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Okay, I'll take the [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] from the—

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I very much think that where Mr. MacGregor is headed is important. I would want to see us really think about—whether it's the OPP or the Ottawa Police Service—who else would need to be added.

Speaking from my time in the department, the one thing I will tell you is that it is unlikely that we are going to get answers to any of the questions we would have because, even though the Emergencies Act has been invoked, many of these things are still going to be considered ongoing operations. Whether or not we're going to get the answers, I think Ms. Damoff's amendment helps us get to where we want to go. I think it would be deeply disappointing if we got everybody together during this process and what we got a lot of was, "I can't tell you that right now because it's an ongoing operation."

I do think this is an important thing for us to consider with that amendment. I would be supportive, and I do think we may want to consider through the next little while what else we may want to add to that to make sure that it does give us, in the fullness of time, what we need and, Mr. MacGregor, what I think you're trying to get at, which I think is very important.

• (1210)

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Lloyd.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm inclined to agree with Mr. MacGregor. I don't support this amendment from our Liberal colleague. I think this is an important study. There is an ongoing operation, as they said. Mr. MacGregor is asking a very reasonable thing of this committee, to explore what's been going on for weeks in this country.

Yes, I'm aware there's a parliamentary review committee that will be struck because of this legislation, but we've seen committees, even as of last week and this week, studying similar things, so I will not be supporting the Liberal motion. I think it's a positive motion for us to look for, and I'll be supporting Mr. MacGregor's original motion with a proposed amendment to add the OPP. I won't move that now. I'll just indicate that's where I stand.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay, colleagues.

Clerk, we're ready I believe to—

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chair, we still have a few hands up.

**The Chair:** Oh, I don't see any hands up. Who's got their hands up?

**The Clerk:** We have—

**The Chair:** I can't see the room. The room is a postage stamp, so you'll have to tell me whose hands are up.

**The Clerk:** We have Mr. Van Popta, Mr. Shipley and Madam Michaud.

**The Chair:** Let's go in that order.

You call them, because I can't see them.

**Mr. Tako Van Popta:** I believe I'm next, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Tako Van Popta:** Mr. Chair, thank you.

I agree with my colleague Mr. Lloyd who just spoke previously. I think this is a very important motion that Mr. MacGregor is putting forward. I would support it, of course, with the amendment, which it sounds like he's agreeing to, that the OPP be added.

I understand Ms. Damoff's arguments, but I don't think they're convincing. Everything is always a moving target, but that doesn't stop us from studying it. I believe it's just very timely for us to get the witnesses in here now for us to understand what is going on. That's the work that the public safety committee should be doing, and I certainly support that we go ahead with it as soon as possible.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Who's next with their hand up in the room, Clerk?

**The Clerk:** It's Mr. Shipley.

**The Chair:** Mr. Shipley, go ahead.

**Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC):** Thank you, Chair.

I also feel that Mr. MacGregor's motion was quite appropriate. I won't be supporting the amendment to that by Ms. Damoff.

We are getting tons of questions, as I'm sure all parliamentarians are as to what's going on right now. We're getting blanketed with emails every day. People are looking for answers now. They're looking for what's going on and how this is going to get resolved.

I definitely think now is the time to do it. I'll be supporting Mr. MacGregor's motion and not the amendment. But regarding the OPP being added in there, I would point out that a lot of these incidents that have been taking place have been doing so with a tremendous amount of OPP support. I hear they're quite involved in the Ottawa situation now. Many of the border crossings have been handled, and I'm seeing a lot of OPP uniforms. So I would like that amendment being added to the motion, but definitely now is the time to be looking at this. It's not time to put this off. Our constituents, our residents, are looking for answers now, not later.

Thank you, Chair.

**The Chair:** I believe there's one more hand up in the room, Clerk. Who would that be?

**The Clerk:** It's Madame Michaud, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Madame Michaud, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

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

I'm inclined to agree with what Mr. Shipley just said. Mr. MacGregor's motion is good, and the words "as soon as possible" still allow us to be flexible and decide in subcommittee when this will happen. It could be after this study or a little sooner. We can decide on that later.

I will therefore support the motion in its current form, but I won't support the amendment, even though Ms. Damoff made some good arguments.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Ms. Damoff, I see that your hand is up.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Just really quickly, Chair, I think it's important to note again that we are actually studying this issue in depth. This isn't a one-time opportunity to hear from them. We've already approved a study that will include a number of these issues.

Having said that, I've given my arguments on why the amendment is useful. It seems pretty obvious that it's going to fail, so I'll leave it there.

• (1215)

**The Clerk:** There are no more hands up in the room, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** I don't see any hands anywhere.

Clerk, let's move to calling for the votes.

The motion to amend would be up first.

**The Clerk:** The question is on the amendment moved by Ms. Damoff.

(Amendment negatived: nays 6; yeas 5 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** The amendment to the motion does not pass.

We move now to the main motion.

Can you do the roll call, please, Mr. Clerk?

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** Well, it's not a point of order. I believe we're now debating the main motion. We don't necessarily have to jump to a vote right away on this.

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** I want to move an amendment, as I indicated previously, that we add the OPP to the list of witnesses. I think it's been very clear to everyone throughout the past number of weeks [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] police forces across the country. I think as the public safety committee, it would be very important for us to review that coordination between police services. I think a lot of Canadians, particularly people in Ottawa, are quite upset by what they perceive, rightly or wrongly, to be a lack of action by the Ottawa police force, and have questions about what the role of the OPP would be.

We also know, from yesterday's press conference on the Emergencies Act, that it's being proposed that the RCMP will be given the powers to enforce municipal bylaws. We know that the OPP is the primary police force in Ontario, so I think it would be very important to include them as well. We need to make sure that all of our police forces are working in tandem, working together, and that we know what they're intending to do with these new powers that the government has received under the Emergencies Act.

The public safety committee has an essential role to review and safeguard Canadian civil liberties. I know, or I believe, all members of this committee believe in that mission and support that mission. So without further ado, I say let's move this motion to get the OPP added onto the calendar here.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Ron McKinnon:** I have a point of order, please.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. McKinnon.

**Mr. Ron McKinnon:** I believe we're probably done speaking with these witnesses. I suggest we give them our profuse thanks and ask them to withdraw.

**The Chair:** If we can deal with the amendment and the motion within the next two or three minutes, there would still be almost 10 minutes left. Why don't we deal with the motion first and then make the decision about whether to dismiss the witnesses?

Is there any other discussion of the proposed amendment?

• (1220)

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chair, in the room, we have Mr. Melillo.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Melillo.

**Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

We have a few folks who want to speak to this, so I would actually echo Mr. McKinnon's point of order and say that it would be time to allow our witnesses to leave and thank them for their testimony.

I do want to speak to the amendment that Mr. Lloyd has put forward. I think it's very important. Obviously the government is moving forward with an unprecedented action that we're seeing right now and it would be of great benefit to this committee to have additional opportunity for accountability and looking at what the role is going to be for the OPP in Windsor and in Ottawa and what we're seeing across the province.

I'm in favour of the motion that the NDP has put forward, but I believe the amendment Mr. Lloyd is suggesting is incredibly reasonable and very important right now, given the circumstances.

**The Chair:** Are there other hands up in the room?

**The Clerk:** Mr. Van Popta, and then Mr. Shipley.

**Mr. Tako Van Popta:** That's good. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Sorry. I'm going to make the decision to thank our witnesses. There just won't be any more time left. I regret that, but those are the rules that constrain us all.

Witnesses, thank you very much for your insight. It has been very emotional, very important and very impactful, so thank you very much for that.

Now let's move to the hands up in the room.

Clerk, go with those that you see, please.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Van Popta.

**Mr. Tako Van Popta:** Thank you, Clerk; and thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to speak in favour of the amendment that the OPP be added to the study. It's very important for this public safety committee to come to an understanding of how we got to this point where our government made the unprecedented decision to invoke the Emergencies Act. I want to hear from the various police forces involved here, particularly in the province of Ontario, about how we came to that point. To what extent were the OPP and the RCMP and the city police working together, and the CBSA, who are also part of this study, and how could we improve that? What could have been done better?

It's really important for us to come to a better understanding of that issue in particular, but also how we came to this point where the government has decided to call it an emergency and take these unprecedented steps.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Clerk, are there other hands up in the room?

**The Clerk:** Yes, Mr. Chair. Mr. Shipley is next.

**The Chair:** Mr. Shipley, go ahead.

**Mr. Doug Shipley:** Thank you, Chair. I'll be supporting wholeheartedly this amendment put forward by my colleague Mr. Lloyd. The OPP would be a great service to add to this discussion that

we've been having. They are the largest police service in Ontario. A lot of these incidents that have happened over the last few weeks have been in Ontario and it would be hugely remiss of us not include them in our study.

They also would bring a lot of background information from different and past incidents that might help us to figure out how we got here today, and they might have some insights on what could have been done better and moving forward.

I definitely would agree with the amendment of adding the OPP. It would be very important to have them here. They are a large service, doing the entire province of Ontario and bringing a wealth of information, both from current and past events. I definitely support bringing them to some studies on this and I look forward to meeting them, so I'll be supporting that amendment.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. McKinnon, do I see your hand up?

**Mr. Ron McKinnon:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm very interested in hearing from the OPP. I think they have a very useful perspective on this, so I will support that amendment. However, I go back to the fundamental problem I have with doing it at this time. Because it is an ongoing matter, people are not going to be able to speak freely to it at this time.

I want to comment further on Mr. Van Popta's remarks about the need to examine how we got to this point. I think that's also a very important question. However, that is precisely the role of the parliamentary committee that we are required to create as a consequence of invoking the Emergencies Act. A parliamentary committee must be struck to examine and consider the aspects that Mr. Van Popta brought forward.

I will support the amendment, but ultimately I will not support the motion.

• (1225)

**The Chair:** Are there any other hands up, or can we go to a vote?

**The Clerk:** Yes, Mr. Chair. Madame Michaud is next.

**The Chair:** Madame Michaud, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

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

I will be brief. I think that this is an interesting addition to the study, given that Ontario Provincial Police officers have been on the front lines since the beginning of this crisis. I am therefore in favour of this amendment.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Are there other hands up?

**The Clerk:** We have Mr. Chiang.

**The Chair:** Mr. Chiang, go ahead.

**Mr. Paul Chiang (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In my experience as a police officer in the past, the police will not be able to speak much about the operational issues and what's happening right now because it's an ongoing operation and an ongoing situation in Canada. My experience is that they will give us the bare bones of what they are doing.

I support the motion about having the OPP join us on this thing, but in terms of the police talking about stuff.... After every operation, they do an after-action report to see where they fell short, what they did wrong and what they did right. Once that report is completed, they will be able to talk to us more about what they did and what they didn't do properly. My suggestion is to delay it. That would be best, instead of calling them right now to come in to testify.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clerk, are there any other hands up in the room? I don't see any on the screen.

**The Clerk:** Yes. We have Mr. Van Popta.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Van Popta.

**Mr. Tako Van Popta:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to respond to Mr. McKinnon's earlier comment that this special committee is going to be examining many of the questions this committee would also be interested in coming to a better understanding about. We are the masters of our own committee and the work we do. I don't think that we don't do that work because someone else might do it for us.

This is very important for all Canadians. The number of emails and correspondence I'm getting from people in my constituency suggests to me that this is a very important issue that Canadians want answers about. We want to know how the RCMP is conducting its operations and what the CBSA has done, and what it could have done, to prevent some of these issues from happening. There's also the OPP. It's very incumbent upon us to ask these questions to come to a better understanding. That's exactly what this committee is for, and I think it is the work we should be doing.

**The Chair:** Are there any other hands up before we go to a recorded vote on the amendment?

Mr. Clerk, are there any in the room?

**The Clerk:** Yes, Mr. Chair. We have Mr. Shipley.

**The Chair:** Mr. Shipley, go ahead.

**Mr. Doug Shipley:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll just quickly add to Mr. Chiang and Mr. McKinnon's comments about the lack of comments that current-serving police services may be able to make about the current situation and the operations. I agree with that, but many of the experts coming may be able to tell us what's happened in similar instances on different occasions and how those situations were handled. It might be a good learning experience for anybody who's viewing it and for our committee. While they may not be able to speak in great detail about current operations, they might be able to give us a lot of information about past similar occurrences that they have dealt with and that perhaps ended a little quicker.

• (1230)

**The Chair:** Mr. MacGregor, I see your hand up. Go ahead.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Very quickly, because I want to get to a vote, I'm not interested in so much of what's going on under the Emergencies Act and anything that is operational in nature. The thrust of my main motion is to examine how we got to the point where the Emergencies Act was required.

I think my Conservative and Bloc colleagues agree with me. This is really about examining intelligence failures and a lack of coordination from January 29 up until the present day. How did we get to this point? That's what I want us to focus on.

I believe, Mr. Chair, we probably have the votes to proceed. I will end there.

**The Chair:** Yes, as long as nobody else wants to make a comment.

Are there any other hands up? I don't see any on the screen.

Clerk, are there any other hands up in the room?

**The Clerk:** No, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Okay. We can then proceed to a recorded vote on the amendment. Is that correct?

**The Clerk:** That's correct, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Clerk.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

**The Chair:** I want to confirm, Mr. McKinnon, that you were polled.

**Mr. Ron McKinnon:** Yes, I was. Thank you, Chair.

**The Chair:** Now we'll move to the main motion.

Clerk, if you could call the roll—

**Mr. Eric Melillo:** Could I comment on the main motion, briefly?

**The Chair:** Sure. Go ahead.

**Mr. Eric Melillo:** Thank you.

I don't want to get too far into the back-and-forth once again, but I would make one last appeal to some of my colleagues across the across the way. This is a very strong motion put forward by the NDP. I would encourage them to support it.

I'm not trying to reiterate what's already been said, but as Mr. MacGregor has said, he is looking at what has happened leading up to this point. He is looking back toward the past. We shouldn't necessarily be assuming what might or might not be said, or might be able to be said. This is an incredible opportunity for the committee to do really important work, and have an understanding of how we got to this point and how we move forward.

I hope all members will support this motion moving forward.

I wanted to make that one last appeal. I appreciate your affording me that time, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Ms. Damoff, I see your hand up.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Quickly, Chair, I want to go back and reference that the committee has voted to do a study on this issue. The motion before us is, I think, the second, or actually the third motion we've had, if we include our study. We've voted to start a study as soon as the constituency week is over, that will be taking a really deep dive into this. We can get the answers we're looking for.

It's important to remember that. If we keep doing this, we're delaying the good work of the committee on important issues like the guns and gangs study we're doing now and the deeper dive we're going to do.

We won't be supporting the motion. We would have supported it if it could have been delayed until after the Emergencies Act, but we won't be supporting the motion as it is written right now.

• (1235)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Are there any other hands up or any commentary before we move to the vote?

I see Mr. Lloyd.

Go ahead.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It just appears that the ground keeps shifting under the Liberals' position on this. We had quick studies over the past few weeks. We brought FINTRAC to committee. We've interrupted this very important study on crime, gun control and gangs to deal with very urgent issues that are facing this country. I just think it's a bit disingenuous to say that we don't want to delay this important study. Well, it's already been delayed numerous times when it was what the government wanted to do, but now that it's what.... Opposition parties are very concerned about what's been taking place across the country for the past few weeks.

I found that the FINTRAC testimony was extremely helpful last week in terms of giving us an idea of how our financial intelligence works in this country. It certainly made me much better informed. Learning last night, when the government was saying they want to talk about freezing Canadians' bank accounts, I found it tremendously helpful that we had had our deputy director of intelligence, Barry MacKillop, last week. I think that just demonstrates further why it's so important.

The national deputy director of FINTRAC was able to tell us key information during an ongoing situation. It sort of belies the government's argument that we can't get any useful information from law enforcement and other witnesses during an ongoing situation. I think it's absolutely critical that we figure out how we got here as a country and that we move forward with this motion as soon as possible, as Mr. MacGregor has said, so that we can bring Canadians answers, because there's so much confusion in this country right now.

My email inbox and my phone lines are off the hook. Canadians don't understand why a piece of legislation, which is older than I am, is now being invoked in this country. They don't know what the implications of this legislation are. They don't know why we have

come to the point where we need this legislation. I think it's very important that we have the RCMP and OPP to give us some context on what their actions have been during this.

Thank you, Mr. MacGregor, for bringing this up. I just don't think that the arguments coming from the government side really have a lot of merit in this situation.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there any other hands up? Is there any other commentary before we go to the vote?

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chair, in the room we have Mr. Van Popta and we have Mr. Shipley.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Van Popta.

**Mr. Tako Van Popta:** Thank you, Chair.

I want to again reiterate my support for Mr. MacGregor's motion. I think it's very important and very timely. I want to thank him also for his clarification as to what his intent of this study would be, and that is to come to a better understanding of how we as a Canadian society got to this point where we need to call on the Emergencies Act to give the government extraordinary powers.

I'm with Mr. Lloyd; people in my riding are shocked that we came to this point. How is it that we came to that point? This is not going to be a study into the operations of how the police are going to be doing their work going forward but to come to a better understanding of why we are in a situation where Canada, a G7 country, has to call upon itself extraordinary powers under the Emergencies Act, which has never been used before, at least not since the days when it was called the War Measures Act.

At that time, it definitely was a national security crisis. This time, we see the police doing the work that they're supposed to be doing. There was a demonstration at Pacific Highway crossing, which is right next door to my riding. There were a lot of trucks and people there, but in the meantime, it's cleared up. It's the same thing with what's going on in Windsor and what's going on in Coutts, Alberta. The police are doing their work.

What's going on in the government's mind, the minds of the people on the Liberal side of this House, that they had to call this extraordinary power upon themselves for the government to deal with this as an emergency, when it seems that the police are doing their work? To the extent that they're not, we need to understand why not.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Shipley, I understand that you have your hand up in the room.

**Mr. Doug Shipley:** Thank you, Chair.

I want to applaud Mr. MacGregor for bringing this forward today. We've all mentioned on this side of the table today—and I'm sure it has to be happening to my Liberal colleagues too, that their emails and phones are just bursting with questions about what's going on right now. I know ours are. Last weekend alone we had over 700 emails on Saturday and Sunday asking questions about this tumultuous time that Canada is in right now. I've never seen our country so divided. Quite frankly, the members from the government side themselves are divided. We're seeing questions over there: What's going on? Where are we going? Where are we heading? It's disturbing. The fact that some people want to put this off bothers me, and I find that disturbing. Let's get some answers. Let's get them as soon as we possibly can.

I think Mr. MacGregor's motion to bring in the Minister of Public Safety, and the department officials under him, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Canada Border Services Agency and the OPP will at least help us start to get some answers for our constituents. The residents of Canada, the people who are calling and emailing me, want, need and desire answers. We need to get those so we can provide those to our residents.

I wholeheartedly applaud Mr. MacGregor for his motion at this time. I'm glad it says "as soon as possible". I hope that is quickly. I look forward to the coming days and to questioning these important witnesses who will be before us and to getting some great insight and some information so our residents will understand how we got here and how we're going to resolve this. Let's all hope we don't get here again.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

● (1240)

**The Chair:** Mr. Chiang, I see your hand up. The floor is yours.

**Mr. Paul Chiang:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to move an amendment to include the Ottawa Police Service in our study.

Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** Yes, I hear you.

**Mr. Paul Chiang:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Ms. Damoff.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** I'm sorry, Chair, but my hand was up on the main motion.

**The Chair:** Okay.

We've just had a subsequent amendment to the motion by Mr. Chiang.

Clerk, are we ready for a recorded vote on the amended motion? Could you just remind members of the committee exactly what they'll be voting on now?

**The Clerk:** Yes, Mr. Chair.

The question is on the amendment moved by Mr. Chiang.

May I proceed?

**The Chair:** You may proceed.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chair, we have Mr. Van Popta, who wants to speak to the amendment, I believe.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Van Popta.

**Mr. Tako Van Popta:** I want to thank Mr. Chiang, who put forward that motion to add the Ottawa police. I think that would add more value to the study we're hoping to put forward. Hopefully the main motion will pass.

We see other cities that have banished the protests. Again, I think we need to come to a better understanding of what the issues were here in Ottawa with the Ottawa police. Were they not fully re-sourced? Did they not anticipate the challenges this would bring forward? What was going on or what were the failures that led to their being unable to prevent this from becoming what it is, which we see here in the precinct area today?

I would definitely support the amendment to add the Ottawa police.

Thanks.

**The Chair:** Are there other hands up in the room, Clerk?

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chair, Mr. Blois would like to speak next.

**Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, very quickly, I'm a new member to this committee, subbing in, of course, for Mr. Noormohamed right now. I understand that there are witnesses who are seeking to give testimony on gun violence in the country. I think it's imperative that we move to vote.

I will support Mr. Chiang. I think it's important that we have this protocol, but I've seen some members seemingly prolonging this. Let's get right to a vote and let's get those witnesses in so we can hear their testimony.

**The Chair:** Are there any other hands up before we move to the vote?

Okay, Clerk. Take the recorded vote, please, on Mr. Chiang's amendment.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Clerk, please proceed with the vote on the main motion as amended

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** The motion passes. Thank you very much.

We're now at a point where we—

● (1245)

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chair—

**The Chair:** Yes.

**The Clerk:** —there's a point of order in the room by Mr. Van Popta.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Van Popta.

**Mr. Tako Van Popta:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to my colleagues for voting yes on this very important motion for this study. I think it's a very important study.

I propose that we meet over the break week because of the time constraints, just to accommodate everybody's schedule, if possible, Mr. Chair, if you think that's an agreeable solution.

**The Chair:** I don't think now is the time to discuss that, but I'll take the point and we'll look at that possibility.

Meanwhile, we're at a point in this agenda where we have to suspend—very briefly, I hope, Clerk—to accommodate the sound checks for the next witnesses.

We will suspend and resume—I'm hoping—in five minutes.

Madam Damoff, do you have a point of order? I see that your is hand up.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Yes, Mr. Chair.

I was just wondering if we could extend the meeting by an additional 15 minutes so that the important witnesses we have, who have been so patient, could get the full hour before the committee.

**The Chair:** What's the view of the committee to extend to about an hour from now to accommodate the next panel of witnesses? Do we have consensus that we'll do this?

I see that we do.

**An hon. member:** No.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chair, some members in the room would like to speak to it.

**Mr. Doug Shipley:** Thank you, Mr. Chair—

**The Chair:** Speak to whether or not we can extend the meeting by 15 minutes...?

Colleagues, we have witnesses who are waiting to give testimony, so let's try to accommodate that, but—

**Mr. Doug Shipley:** Agreed, Mr. Chair—

**The Chair:** —go ahead. I'm not going to stop people from a point of order.

**Mr. Doug Shipley:** Agreed, Mr. Chair.

We had agreed prior to the meeting that we would extend until 1:30. I think we should stick with that.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Then let's do that and take a very short suspension, Clerk. I'll be standing by for a word from you when we can resume.

We now have a suspension. We'll see you in a few minutes.

● (1245)

(Pause)

● (1250)

**The Chair:** I call this meeting back to order.

With us this second hour by video conference we have the Centre culturel islamique de Québec, Mr. Boufeldja Benabdallah, the spokesperson; the Coalition for Gun Control, Wendy Cukier, the

president; One By One Movement, Marcell Wilson, the founder; and PolySeSouvient, Heidi Rathjen, the coordinator.

We have up to five minutes for opening remarks, after which we will proceed with rounds of questions to the extent that our time allows. Witnesses may choose to share their time with other witnesses if they wish. Welcome to you all.

I now invite Ms. Rathjen to make an opening statement of up to five minutes. Please proceed.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Heidi Rathjen (Coordinator, PolySeSouvient):** Thank you for giving me this opportunity to testify before the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

Gun control is just one of many measures to reduce gun violence. There are different gun control measures that aim to prevent different types of crime, in all sorts of very different contexts. But since our group is made up of victims of mass shootings, our primary goal is to prevent similar tragedies.

The majority of mass killings are committed with legal weapons, mostly assault weapons, but also handguns. This is why we call for a ban on assault weapons and handguns, as well as a ban on high-capacity magazines.

And, given that the massacre at the École Polytechnique was linked to pure misogyny, and that mass shootings are closely associated with domestic violence, we also seek to keep guns away from violent spouses. Over two thirds of the mass shootings in the United States were perpetrated by aggressors that had a history of violence. That is why we are also calling for significant improvements in firearms licensing.

● (1255)

[*English*]

I will now touch on three areas that we feel need to be addressed.

The first is large-capacity magazines. The law passed in 1991 limited the number of cartridges in magazines to five for long guns and 10 for handguns, with some exceptions. Unfortunately, since then these exceptions, combined with new interpretations of the law and changes in the market, have accentuated major flaws in the laws and regulations.

Here are only two examples. First, the law allows magazines designed for more than the legal limit to be sold as long as a device blocks their number at the legal limit. However, according to the RCMP, these modifiable magazines are readily restorable to their full capacity. Many recent mass shooters legally purchased modifiable magazines and illegally converted them to their full capacity, including Justin Bourque, Richard Bain, Alexandre Bissonnette and Matthew Vincent Raymond.

The second is that the Conservative government in 2011 introduced a new interpretation of the 1991 law: If a magazine is not specifically designed for a gun in which it fits, it is exempted from the legal limits. There is zero public safety rationale behind this. In fact, the coroner who investigated the 2006 Dawson shooting said this loophole allowed the shooter to use a 10-bullet magazine for his restricted long gun, the Beretta Cx4 Storm, instead of a five-bullet one, suggesting that this could have made a difference.

The risks created by these flaws are as obvious as the urgency to fix them.

The second point I want to talk about is the verification of the validity of a potential buyer's licence. In 2015, the Liberals promised to reinstate the mandatory verification of a potential buyer's licence by the RCMP before the transfer of a non-restricted firearm. In 2018, the Liberal government introduced Bill C-71. The measure in the bill is described in official documents as follows:

C-71 provides that vendors must verify the firearms licence of the buyer, by contacting the Registrar of Firearms before transferring a non-restricted firearm. The Registrar would check the licence number in the Canadian Firearms Information System and issue a reference number if the licence is valid.

Running the licence number through the system is the only way to ensure that a licence is not counterfeit, stolen or revoked. A seller cannot check that themselves, and yet the regulations tabled last June require no such thing. According to the proposed regulations, once they check the photo on the buyer's licence, sellers will have to contact the RCMP to obtain a reference number authorizing the transfer. However, there is no obligation for a seller to provide any information whatsoever related to the buyer's licence to the RCMP, and there is no obligation stated anywhere in the laws and regulations that the RCMP has to run the licence number through the system.

This shocking loophole was confirmed to us in writing by Public Safety officials and to the Canadian press by a Public Safety spokesperson.

**The Chair:** Please wrap up in the next 10 seconds. I'm sorry.

**Ms. Heidi Rathjen:** My last point is about revoking the licences of stalkers and domestic abusers. Currently in the United States, spouses or ex-spouses who are the subject of a restraining order are automatically prohibited from owning guns. This is not the case in Canada. We can do much better. Such prohibitions are discretionary now, but they should be mandatory, like in the United States. As we know, many of the men—

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. I'm sorry, but we're out of time.

Ms. Cukier, I now invite you to make an opening statement of up to five minutes. The floor is yours. Please proceed.

**Ms. Wendy Cukier (President, Coalition for Gun Control):** Thanks very much.

My name's Wendy Cukier. I'm the president of the Coalition for Gun Control, which is a network of 200 public safety community organizations and public health groups.

I am also the co-author of the book called *The Global Gun Epidemic*, with the past president of the American Public Health Association. I say that because I believe that a public health approach is the most appropriate way of looking at gun violence generally, and gang violence in particular.

When we think of gun violence, we can think of it as cancer. There are different forms. There's no one solution to all problems. If we're talking about domestic violence, if we're talking about suicide, if we're talking about mass shootings or if we're talking about gang violence, they all have a particular etiology or set of causes and solutions.

When we look at gang violence, I will say the following. I'm the head of the Diversity Institute and a full professor at Ryerson University. We've done a lot of work looking at the impact of disadvantage and inequality in Canada. There's no doubt that addressing the root causes of violence is absolutely critical. We know that certain youth are more at risk for gang violence [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] but that's not what I'm going to talk about today.

Today I'm going to talk about access to firearms, because while firearms do not cause violence, they increase lethality. The best example of this is a comparison between Canada, the United States, the U.K. and Australia. All of these countries have similar root causes. They all have inequality. They all have poverty. They all have racism. Canada, the U.K. and Australia have about the same rate per 100,000 of beatings, stabbings and other kinds of homicides. When it comes to gun violence, however, we see a profound difference. Last year, the U.K., which has twice as many people as Canada, had about 30 gun murders. Canada had 277, the highest number we've seen in many years.

The availability of firearms increases the likelihood that people will die. While it's true that when we look at the sources of guns that gangs use, we know that smuggling is part of the problem. We also know that the diversion of legal guns to illegal markets is a significant problem. Guns are diverted through theft, illegal sales and, in some instances, straw purchases. We saw in the last few days over 2,000 guns that were allegedly stolen recently. We've also seen a number of high-profile incidents like the Danforth shooting, where the gun that was used was from gang members and stolen in Saskatchewan.

There has been, over the last decade, a tremendous proliferation in the legal ownership of restricted weapons and handguns. There are now over a million legally owned in Canada by [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]. I want to underscore that we support the implementation of Bill C-71. We believe that licensing and tracking long guns is part of the solution and that we need a total ban on military assault weapons and that we need the buyback program.

Fundamentally, we need decisive action to stem the further proliferation of handguns in Canada. Part of that would be a ban on the import and sale of guns where the threat outweighs the utility. You don't use handguns for hunting. You don't need them for pest control on a farm. While arming for self-protection is apparently on the rise, it's not supported, for the most part, by Canadian law.

I want to reinforce one final point. You'll hear this person say, "Anyone can get a gun if they really want to". You'll hear that person say, "Criminals don't register their guns", and so on and so forth. I want to remind you that every illegal gun begins as a legal gun, either south of the border or in Canada.

• (1300)

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Ms. Wendy Cukier:** Also, remember that the United Kingdom had 30 gun murders last year.

**The Chair:** Yes. Thank you very much.

**Ms. Wendy Cukier:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Wilson, you now have the floor for up to five minutes for your opening remarks. Please proceed.

**Mr. Marcell Wilson (Founder, One By One Movement Inc.):** Good afternoon, Mr. Chair, and ladies and gentlemen.

First, thank you for having me here today. It's an honour, especially with my background and coming from where I have come from. I could have never imagined there would be a day where I'd be speaking in the House of Commons.

I say that because I am what we refer to as a "former", that is, I am a former gang leader and former organized crime figure.

Currently, on the basis of the extent of my lived experience and my work in countering violence and extremism, I am now an internationally recognized subject matter expert on gang culture, behaviour and theory and the founder of the One By One Movement.

We are a think tank, consulting agency and speakers bureau and our goal is to decrease extreme acts of violence globally by utilizing data collected from our extensive and almost exclusive access to high-profile "formers" like me, as well as the access we have to the demographic we serve—most of them being active.

The One By One Movement works directly within at-risk and high-risk communities, in at-risk and high-risk environments, with at-risk and high-risk persons of various age, race and gender. We are hands-on, boots on the ground frontliners in the fight against gun and gang violence.

That said, I'm here today to address gun control, illegal arms trafficking and gun crimes committed by members of street gangs.

In my opinion, when speaking on gun control, when we hear the phrase, it should always be synonymous with illegal gun crime and illegal gun trafficking as over 80% of the gun violence we are witnessing is committed with illegal firearms smuggled in from the USA.

Understanding these numbers and that any loss of life is tragic, I think it is safe to say that very few gun crimes are committed with legally sourced weapons. The notion of banning illegal firearms as a main solution to combatting gun violence is not only false, it is offensive. This is because we, the Canadians who are suffering the majority of gun violence in Ontario, are mostly low-income and racialized communities, and the minority who have sadly lost their lives by acts committed with legally sourced firearms are not.

The current resources and efforts invested into banning illegal firearms sends a crystal clear message to the people who are facing illegal gun and gang violence on a daily basis amongst Canada's most marginalized communities that, when it comes to Canadian lives on this specific subject, the minority rules.

This government needs to ensure the message that all Canadian lives are precious. This can be accomplished by investing the same time, effort and resources into the most qualified agencies and groups that are concentrating on violence prevention and intervention initiatives with an acute focus on root causes and their risk factors that lead one to commit acts of violence. To say that banning firearms in this country will decrease violence in a meaningful way is like taking a sledgehammer to a problem that needs a scalpel.

That leads to the matter of addressing gun violence committed by street gangs. This is a major problem that is growing exponentially in the greater Toronto area. There has been a steady increase in the number of shootings related to street gangs, an increase in the brazenness of these acts and the perpetrators are only getting younger. This means that slowing the access to illegal firearms has to be a major pillar in this battle, but more importantly, there needs to be some long-term, sustainable investments made in prevention.

This means prenatal negative outcome prevention; early childhood violence prevention; youth violence prevention; and young adult violence prevention. It also means intervention: high-risk intervention; and police intervention. Lastly, it means reintegration and reinvention programs that are developed and implemented by those who truly understand the nuances of that lifestyle.

This is my expert valuation. Thank you for your time.

• (1305)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Colleagues, I'm looking at the clock and the roster. If I give five minutes to every party in this first round, we will end exactly on time.

Mr. Shipley, start it off, please. You have five minutes.

**Mr. Doug Shipley:** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses for being here today.

First I am going to discuss some issues with Mr. Wilson of the One By One movement.

First of all, Mr. Wilson, I want to personally thank you and your organization for all the great work you do. Breaking the vicious cycle of gang violence is a daunting task. I commend people like you who are out there making this world better through community initiatives.

Mr. Wilson, through this study, we've been talking a lot about gun crimes and violence. We're using a lot of numbers and data. I'd like to bring this onto a more personal level today. As you are aware, I have in the past spoken on an S.O. 31 in the House of Commons about young 12-year-old Dante Andreatta, who was tragically shot while just out for groceries with his mother in Toronto.

Seeing how yesterday another young 18-year-old was shot while in his school at David and Mary Thomson Collegiate, today I would like you to start off with much detail as you can, so we can get more of an experience of how this is affecting people and we can get away from data and numbers.

Please tell the committee about young Dante, his day that day and how he was tragically taken, who took it and how the family has been suffering with that going on.

Thank you, Mr. Wilson.

• (1310)

**Mr. Marcell Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Shipley, for the question.

What an unfortunate and tragic loss.

I will tell you from being boots on the ground and from working with people in those communities, one thing we face over and over in dealing with these shootings is the community trauma component. There's been a complete lack of victim services, essentially, to not only assist these families, but to assist the communities in dealing with the traumas of these shootings.

Unfortunately, they're happening so often that I fear our society is becoming numb to this. I fear that that people like Dante and their cases are being ignored or even overlooked in some ways because of a lack of political will to deal with the real issues, which are the street gangs and illegal firearms.

**Mr. Doug Shipley:** Thank you, Mr. Wilson.

Do you feel that the Liberal government has been too focused on gun legislation and regulation, as opposed to dealing with the root

cause of gang and gun violence, such as disenfranchised youth and poverty?

**Mr. Marcell Wilson:** My short answer is yes.

We are definitely not seeing enough resources going into preventative measures. As we all know through common sense and deductive reasoning, prevention is a lot cheaper for the taxpaying citizen than intervention.

**Mr. Doug Shipley:** Do you feel as though the government offers enough support to organizations such as yours that are aimed at youth diversion?

**Mr. Marcell Wilson:** No, we do not.

**Mr. Doug Shipley:** In what ways could the government be helping you more?

**Mr. Marcell Wilson:** As I stated in my testimony, I think there should be much more focus—or a main focus—on community-led organizations involving people with lived experience who understand how the streets work.

There is a huge disconnect from the street level to the government level when dealing with this subject matter. There needs to be an evaluation of the efficacy of programming that currently exists. There need to be more studies done on the impact of illegal gun crime in this country and things like that.

**Mr. Doug Shipley:** Thank you, Mr. Wilson.

With my last remaining minute, I'm going to pass it over to my colleague, Mr. Van Popta.

**Mr. Tako Van Popta:** Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Wilson. I'm going to continue with you.

Thank you for the very important work you're doing in Canada, particularly with youth.

I have just one quick question. As we, the committee members, seek to develop policies and initiatives that are going to keep Canadians safer, could you perhaps tell us one of your success stories? It would perhaps give us a good example of where we could go.

Thank you.

**Mr. Marcell Wilson:** Absolutely.

I'll speak of one of our members, Mr. Edward Hertrich. He was convicted of murder some time back and served, I believe, over 35 years in prison. He has now written a book and he is a public speaker. He now comes into communities and works with people who have taken a similar path to his. I'm actually very proud of Mr. Hertrich, the work he has done and the work he is doing with One By One movement.

**Mr. Tako Van Popta:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

That is an inspiring story.

Ms. Damoff, we go over to you next. You have five minutes and the floor is yours.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Thank you, Chair. I think all of us would agree that there's not one solution to the issue of gang violence. It's a multipronged problem that requires a multipronged solution.

I'm going to focus my question, though. I'm probably going to have time for only one. A number of police organizations have appeared before the committee to say that a buyback program will not make a difference. I'm wondering if maybe we could start with Mr. Benabdallah, then Ms. Cukier and then Ms. Rathgen.

Do you agree, and how urgent is it to move on a buyback program?

Mr. Benabdallah, do you want to say anything?

• (1315)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Boufeldja Benabdallah (Spokesman, Centre culturel islamique de Québec):** Thank you for the question.

Our goal has remained the same since I appeared before this committee last year and for the past two years.

We believe that assault weapons should be automatically bought back. We should not rely on the goodwill of the people who own them.

All firearms must be removed from our society, starting with assault weapons—we all agree on that—but also handguns. We cannot make a distinction between illegal and legal weapons. These are weapons that kill people.

We ask that everyone, not only the government, but also all members of Parliament, all senators and all people of good will, work together to eradicate these weapons from our territory. We want to be a non-violent people and a people who abhor the flow of these weapons that kill people. That is what we want.

We have chosen to support the assault weapons ban. We know that, following an order issued in 2020, a letter is circulating to inform gun owners. It's not perfect, but it's really not bad.

When we told our community that the regulation of assault weapons is now a bit better, people were still pleased with it, but they would have liked regulations to go further, for the government to make the weapons buy-back mandatory.

As you know, six fathers were killed in our mosque. They were starting their new lives in Canada, and they had done extraordinary good for society. Of the five injured, one is now in a wheelchair. He can't even play with his children or work normally. As for the other four survivors, their lives were turned upside down by a handgun, a weapon that kills people. This is not a toy for scaring them.

The killer had five magazines: five times 10 bullets, and another five bullets. He fired 48 bullets, killing six people and wounding five others. He caused as much damage to the public. These weapons should not be in circulation. We do not want these weapons to circulate, just as assault weapons should not be in circulation.

[*English*]

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Thank you.

I want to give the other witnesses an opportunity to respond as well. Thank you for sharing what I know is deeply difficult testimony.

Ms. Cukier, perhaps we could go to you. If we're going to give Ms. Rathgen time, I have only a minute and a half left.

**Ms. Wendy Cukier:** Why doesn't Heidi go, as she's...?

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Sure. Also, I often hear someone say they're not qualified to speak on firearms. I welcome the opportunity to hear from you here. Thank you.

**Ms. Heidi Rathjen:** Thank you.

There is an urgency. As long as these weapons are out there, there's a risk they can fall into the wrong hands. As I said in my introductory statement, most mass shooters, youths, are legal gun owners using legal weapons. Since the amnesty, since the ban took place, there has been Corey Hurren, who rammed Rideau Hall and who, luckily, was stopped. He had one of these weapons, these grandfathered weapons, assault weapons that are protected by the amnesty. That's just one example. As long as the weapons are out there, the risk to public safety, that there will be another mass shooting, exists. That's why the buyback has to happen as soon as possible.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** I wasn't implying that you're not qualified, so please don't take it that way.

Ms. Cukier, I have about 15 seconds. Do we need to do it right away?

**Ms. Wendy Cukier:** If you look at the successful prohibitions in the U.K. and Australia, they were accompanied by buybacks.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Thank you.

Thank you, Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Ms. Michaud, it's over to you. You have five minutes. Go ahead, please. The floor is yours.

[*Translation*]

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

I thank the witnesses for being here. I regret that we do not have more time to discuss these issues. They are all outstanding witnesses who are very active advocates for gun control.

My special thanks to Ms. Rathjen and Mr. Benabdallah. I watched your webinar a few weeks ago, on the fifth anniversary of the massacre at the Quebec City grand mosque. The main point of that webinar was that, unfortunately, not much has been done by the federal government to control firearms.

I'll get right to the point.

Ms. Rathjen, I know that you've done a lot of work on the verification process used when someone wants to obtain a weapon. We were told by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, or RCMP, that they were going to proceed with the verification, and that would have been implemented in Bill C-71. However, last summer, the draft regulations that were tabled rescinded the mandatory verification.

I'd like to hear your comments on the issue.

• (1320)

**Ms. Heidi Rathjen:** Thank you for the question.

Following the introduction of the former Bill C-71, all of the key documents, all of the debates and all of the media coverage dealt with the RCMP's verification of the validity of the license. On the topic of verification, the documents indicated that the license numbers would be checked in the system to ensure that they were valid. This is not part of the regulations. The regulations only require the vendor to verify the photo and contact the RCMP. All that was required of the RCMP was that they be satisfied that the license was legal.

The wording used is problematic. The same was true of the language included in former Bill C-19, where the requirement to verify the license was removed. It states that the seller must simply have no reason to believe that the buyer is not licensed. In this regard, the Barreau du Québec stated that it was extremely problematic to prove in court what a person had in mind.

It is a loophole that has the effect of cancelling the measure altogether. One can think here of what a future government might do. The Conservative Party, which was opposed to Bill C-71, could require the RCMP to accept all applications without any verification. RCMP officials have testified before this committee that there will be a verification. I think it's a bit disingenuous to put that forward, because verification is an extremely subjective thing. All that is required of the RCMP is that they say they are satisfied.

In our view, this goes against what was promised. We found that Bill C-71 was relatively weak. Yet one of the main reasons we supported it was precisely because it included this measure regarding license verification. The current draft regulations do not include this measure. So Canadians will not get the measure that was promised to them.

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Thank you.

Ms. Rathjen, you mentioned certain shortcomings. I don't know whether you were referring to Bill C-71 or Bill C-21, which never saw the light of day, in the end. I'm talking about high-capacity magazines here.

Could you elaborate on these shortcomings, give us examples, if any, and tell us about the risk this could pose to public safety?

**Ms. Heidi Rathjen:** One of the loopholes is that the law or the regulations allow the use of high-capacity magazines, with 20, 30, 50 or even 100 bullets, provided that a screw blocks the number of bullets at five or 10, depending on the weapon. It is possible to remove this screw, and unfortunately, many mass murderers have done so. I'm thinking of Justin Bourque, who killed three RCMP officers; Richard Bain, who attacked PQ leader Pauline Marois in

2012 in Montreal; Alexandre Bissonnette, who attacked the Quebec City grand mosque; and Matthew Vincent Raymond, who killed two police officers and two citizens in Fredericton. These individuals had all legally purchased modifiable magazines and removed the screw to use the full capacity of the weapon.

Bill C-21, which was introduced last year but died on the Order Paper, included the addition of a penalty. A mere penalty is not what's going to stop someone who's about to commit mass murder from modifying a magazine. It was really a bogus measure that served no purpose.

I have other examples—

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, we're going to have to wait for other examples.

We're going to go to our last questioner.

Mr. MacGregor, that is you. Your five minutes will take us to the bottom of the hour and the end of the meeting.

The floor is yours.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'll continue with Ms. Rathjen from PolySeSouvient.

Continuing on the issue of high-capacity magazines, when you read the mandate letter of the Minister of Public Safety, it states quite clearly in that bullet point the following: "Requiring the permanent alteration of long-gun magazines so that they can never hold more than five rounds". To you, what does "permanent alteration" mean, and could police services ever visually confirm that from a distance?

Do you have any thoughts about that particular bullet point in the minister's mandate letter?

• (1325)

**Ms. Heidi Rathjen:** That's the problem we have now. We have these magazines designed for a much larger number of bullets than what is legally available and the problem is that they're readily convertible back to their illegal capacity.

The firearms industry, the arms industry, is perfectly capable of producing magazines that have five bullets and not more. By the way, we advocate for all magazines to be limited to five bullets. We don't see any legitimate purpose for allowing Canadians to have 10-bullet magazines. We think they should simply be limited to five, with no mechanism that would allow it—even something that would be very complex and difficult, but still possible—to be converted to a larger number, or a higher capacity.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Quickly, because I want to try to get three questions in, my second question continues on the verification checks. This falls under the theme of where the onus lies. We had testimony from the RCMP confirming that the seller has to verify the visual identity on a licence. We also saw in Bill C-21 that with the proposed red flag law, the onus is on someone to go to get a court order.

Do you want to talk a bit more about where the onus is placed here? Do you have an alternative suggestion for that?

**Ms. Heidi Rathjen:** With verification, the onus should be the law. From the early 2000s until 2012, licences were automatically verified—of both the buyer and the seller—for every gun transaction. It's the case now for restricted weapons. It should be the case for long guns. It should be in the law. There should be no reliance on the good faith. There should be no discretion. It should be automatic. That's what we were promised and that's what we're hoping this committee will recommend to the minister.

In terms of the red flag law, that's a really good point. Currently, unlike in the United States, there is no right to bear arms, so we don't have to go to court to remove guns, especially in an emergency. All victims have to do is call the police and the police will assess the situation and remove the guns if they feel that they're a danger. What Bill C-21 did was introduce another option where officials could direct victims to the courts to make their arguments under the same criteria, and there are lots of problems with the current criteria. It needs to be stopped. It needs to be better enforced. What Bill C-21 did with the red flag law didn't change any of the problems that we currently face.

As you said, it's again this tendency to offload the responsibility to do things right—

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Thank you. I'm sorry for interrupting. I want to get my last question in.

Professor Cukier, my final question is to you. You talked about how the U.K. has twice the population that the Canada has, but a drastically lower rate of firearms deaths. You talked about firearm bans in other countries.

I'm thinking of Australia. I have in-laws who live in Australia. They live in Tasmania, where the Port Arthur massacre happened. Australia took 650,000 firearms. Can you talk a bit about the experience of that country and what resulted after that policy was enacted?

**The Chair:** You will have to do that in 30 seconds.

**Ms. Wendy Cukier:** You're absolutely right. It had a dramatic impact.

Our legislation in 1995 had similar impacts, but the trends were reversed when the law was reversed.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Thank you for that.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I'd like to thank all the witnesses for your insights. Much of this testimony is emotional and impactful, and yours is no exception to that. On behalf of the entire committee and all of Parliament, thank you very much for sharing with us.

Colleagues, we're exactly where we had to be, so is the committee in agreement to adjourn the meeting now?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Okay. We'll see everybody on Thursday morning. As you know, it's a three-hour meeting, with two hours of testimony and an hour for instructions to staff. We'll see you in two days or I'll see you in question period. Talk to you later.

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