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• (1530)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick South-west, CPC)): I call this meeting to order.

Good day, everyone.

[*English*]

I would note to committee members in particular that we have a hard 5:30 stop for the House resources. I just want you to be aware of that. We cannot go beyond 5:30.

Why don't I open this, Ms. Shanahan, and then I'll come to you right away.

[*Translation*]

Welcome to meeting number 49 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3), the committee is meeting today as part of its study of the document entitled "Report 4, Systemic Barriers—Correctional Service Canada."

[*English*]

I'd like to welcome our witnesses.

From the Office of the Auditor General, we have Karen Hogan, Auditor General; Carol McCalla, principal; and Steven Mariani, director. From Correctional Service Canada, we have Anne Kelly, the commissioner; Alain Tousignant, the senior deputy commissioner; and Larry Motiuk, assistant commissioner, policy.

The Chair: Ms. Shanahan, how would you like me to proceed? Do you want me to recognize you or do you want to hear from the witnesses first?

Is this a point of order?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): It's a point regarding the agenda.

The Chair: Go ahead. You have the floor.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Thank you very much, Chair.

We all received the amended notice for this meeting asking for 20 minutes of committee time at the end of this meeting.

I have to say there have been some discussions—although not with everyone—about how this is a very important meeting. We want to hear from the witnesses and we want to have the full time—which you have been very good at doing at our previous

meetings—to have full rounds. I don't want to speak anymore on that, but I think there are other members who will agree with that.

If we can move the committee business to Monday, we'd like to see the full meeting with the witnesses today.

The Chair: I'll give you my response.

The problem is that every one of these meetings is important and, of course, whenever something comes along, there's always the risk of going into committee business. Next week, obviously, we're dealing with Arctic waters and then, after that, cybersecurity.

I think we should proceed with the committee business today. We received a letter from the Auditor General, which I think is noteworthy and it's regarding next steps.

I've allotted 20 minutes at the end, but if the questions are still overlapping, I'm not going to just end at 20 minutes before. If we're still on a roll, we'll go into the business time. The business time is to discuss the Auditor General's letter, which is really a reiteration of a response to us in committee last week, and there is a motion that is coming. With the 5:30 hard stop—and I know a few members here are very good at talking out the clock—my intention is to not allow any time for that debate. It is just a discussion of the letter.

What you're asking for just pushes off the inevitable into next Monday. I'd sooner deal with it today.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: We do have two meetings allotted to Arctic waters, so I think there's more time for that topic than what we have today.

I look to members. I'm asking if members are in agreement. We'd like to keep this....

[*Translation*]

We want the entirety of today's meeting. I discussed it with Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné and she agrees that today's meeting is very important.

[*English*]

The Chair: Is there unanimous consent to move up committee business to next week?

It's not my intention to move it on my own, but if there's unanimous consent, I will. Otherwise, let's get on with it.

I'm hearing no opposition, so in that case I will move the 20 minutes of committee business to the end of Monday's meeting, which will be in public as well.

Thank you for your patience, everyone.

Ms. Hogan, you have the floor for five minutes. Go ahead, please.

• (1535)

Ms. Karen Hogan (Auditor General, Office of the Auditor General): Mr. Chair, thank you for this opportunity to discuss our report on systemic barriers, which was tabled in the House of Commons on May 31, 2022. I would like to acknowledge that this hearing is taking place on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people. Joining me today are Carol McCalla and Steven Mariani, who were responsible for the audit.

In this audit, we examined whether Correctional Service Canada, or CSC, was meeting the diverse needs of its offender population. We found that CSC had failed to identify and eliminate systemic barriers that persistently disadvantaged certain groups of offenders. The overrepresentation of indigenous and Black offenders in custody had worsened, with higher security classifications, late delivery of correctional programs and delayed access to release on parole.

We raised similar issues in 2015, 2016 and 2017, and this audit found that CSC had done little to address the differing correctional outcomes, particularly for indigenous and Black offenders. Disparities were present from the moment offenders entered federal institutions. For example, indigenous and Black men were placed at maximum security levels at twice the rate of that for other offenders, and they made up half of all maximum security placements.

We also found that indigenous women were placed at maximum security levels at more than three times the rate for non-indigenous women, and they made up almost 70% of the women in maximum security.

The reliability of CSC's custody rating scale for initial security placements had not been validated since 2012, and its use for Black offenders had never been validated at all. We found that corrections staff frequently overrode the scale's security rating to place indigenous offenders at higher security levels with little consideration of culturally appropriate and restorative options.

Correctional programs are intended to prepare offenders for safe release on parole and to support their successful reintegration into the community. We found that timely access to correctional programs had continued to decline across all groups of offenders since our earlier audits, and it worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic. By December 2021, only 6% of men offenders had completed the programs they needed before they were first eligible to apply for parole.

[Translation]

While the majority of offenders were released on parole before the end of their sentences, indigenous offenders remained in custody longer and at higher levels of security until their release.

Since the onset of the pandemic, indigenous and Black offenders were more likely to be released at their statutory release date. Indigenous and Black offenders were also more likely to be released directly into the community from maximum-security institutions.

Indigenous women made up two thirds of those released from maximum security at women's institutions, and were unable to benefit from a gradual transition to the community that supports their successful reintegration.

With respect to its workforce, CSC's efforts to support greater equity, diversity, and inclusion fell short. CSC committed to building a workforce that reflects the diversity of its offender population, but it had not yet established a plan to bridge these representation gaps.

We found workforce representation gaps across institutions with regard to indigenous and Black offenders as well as gender representation gaps among staff at women's institutions.

This is our fourth audit since 2015. It shows poor and worsening outcomes for different groups of offenders. CSC has taken little concrete action to change the seemingly neutral policies, procedures, and practices that produce these outcomes.

CSC acknowledged in November 2020 that systemic racism is present in the correctional system. It is long overdue that CSC remove the systemic barriers identified in this report.

• (1540)

This concludes my opening remarks. We would be pleased to answer any questions the committee may have.

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

[English]

Commissioner Kelly, you have the floor for five minutes. Go ahead, please.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Kelly (Commissioner, Correctional Service of Canada): Thank you.

Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and committee members.

I would also like to acknowledge that we are on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

Joining me today are Alain Tousignant and Larry Motiuk. It is a pleasure for me to appear today with my colleagues to discuss actions we have taken in response to the Auditor General's report on systemic barriers. I thank the Auditor General and her office for their recommendations, all of which I have accepted.

I will focus my remarks today on the highlights of our progress to date. Through this report, and other incidents in the news, we are reminded of the existence of systemic barriers and racism within the criminal justice system, and how we collectively need to do more.

Since becoming commissioner, I have made it CSC's priority to create a safe, respectful, diverse, and inclusive organization. CSC continues to make this a priority while, at the same time, doubling down on our efforts to overcome the operational disruptions caused by the pandemic.

[English]

This includes working to address the overrepresentation of indigenous and Black offenders within the federal correctional system. We know that the rate of admissions of indigenous people into federal custody continues to grow as it has for the past 10 years. For example, last year indigenous offenders represented 35% of our admissions.

While CSC cannot influence the decisions that bring offenders into our custody, it is our responsibility to improve outcomes for offenders by providing them opportunities for effective rehabilitation. We have implemented a number of initiatives to accomplish this, and we are in the process of hiring a deputy commissioner for indigenous corrections.

We have also been working to develop a national Black offender strategy to identify new opportunities to address Black offenders' unique lived experiences and the barriers they may face.

I'm encouraged that our efforts are yielding positive results. For example, in 2021-22, high percentages of indigenous and Black offenders were not readmitted to federal custody within the five years following the end of their sentences.

In her report, the Auditor General raised concerns about CSC's custody rating scale or CRS. The CRS is one component of a systematic and comprehensive process with respect to how we assign an initial security level to federally sentenced offenders, but it does not define the final placement decision. In addition to conducting ongoing research to ensure that our actuarial tools are reliable and valid, CSC signed an MOU with the University of Regina, which is working at arm's length to develop an indigenous- and gender-informed security classification process.

In collaboration with four external experts, CSC is also undertaking an extensive exercise to validate the custody rating scale for Black men offenders and to revalidate it for women and indigenous offenders.

One of the ways that we can better meet the needs of offenders is through correctional programming. Results indicate that CSC's correctional programs are equally effective across a broad range of ethnic groups. Offenders who participate in programs are less likely to recidivate than are non-participants, regardless of ethnic background.

However, as the Auditor General has indicated, timely access is key. Offenders who are serving short sentences and who have an identified program need are being prioritized and, in fact, we have already seen an increase in the percentage of those who complete

their program prior to their first release. We also have a virtual correctional program delivery initiative, which will modernize program scheduling, referrals and assignments, and ultimately improve offenders' timely access and completion of correctional programs.

[Translation]

In addition to the measures I just mentioned, we are working to better reflect the diversity of the offender population among the staff who work with them.

● (1545)

The Correctional Service of Canada has set ambitious targets for Indigenous and visible minority representation within its workforce, which take into account the offender population at each of our facilities.

The Service is also formalizing its goals for gender representation in women's facilities. Currently, in the five women's institutions and women's healing lodges, all management positions are held by women, some of whom are Indigenous and visible minorities. In addition, 75% of the front-line workers in our women's institutions are female.

Since the release of the Auditor General's report, we have conducted an employment systems review, which has informed the development of our comprehensive Employment Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Plan.

[English]

In conclusion, it has been a challenging few years. I want to thank all our employees for their ongoing hard work, dedication and commitment as we continue to balance many priorities and make important progress on numerous fronts.

As commissioner, I remain steadfast in my commitment to support positive outcomes for indigenous, Black and other racialized Canadians in the correctional system. This includes taking meaningful action to address the recommendations made by the Auditor General, the correctional investigator and other external advisory bodies to sustain lasting positive change.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you all very much.

We'll turn now to our first round. The first four members will each have six minutes.

Mr. Brock, thank you for joining us today. You have the floor for six minutes, please.

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

I want to thank the witnesses for their attendance today and for all the hard work they've put into this report.

I want to preface my questions by informing the witnesses, and informing other members of this committee, that I come to this particular committee today with 30 years' legal experience as a Crown prosecutor prior to my election in 2021. I was in the trenches dealing with systemic racism in the criminal justice system.

My first question is for you, Ms. Kelly. You made a broad statement with respect to the criminal justice system generally, although this particular study is about the Auditor General's report regarding Correctional Services. Do you acknowledge that, in addition to that broad statement, courts across this country, prosecutors across this country, are actively taking steps to reduce the overincarceration rate of indigenous inmates—men, women and youth—as well as Black inmates—men, women and youth—through the use of specialized courts, such as the indigenous peoples court, gang-related courts in some of the larger centres and things of that nature? Do you acknowledge that?

Ms. Anne Kelly: I believe there are some steps being taken, but I can only speak to what we see, obviously, in terms of the offenders who are admitted within our custody. What I can say is that regarding indigenous offenders, unfortunately, the admissions are growing. As I said, last year 35% of our admissions were actually indigenous offenders. That's what I would say.

Mr. Larry Brock: Okay. I think that begs the question of why we have a year-to-year increase in the number of admissions for indigenous offenders and Black offenders. When I take a look at the Auditor General's 29-page report—I may be naive in this, because I didn't have all the documentation to prepare for my attendance today—I don't see any data to support what the predicate offence was by which these individuals found themselves in the federal institution. I see no reference to age demographics with respect to these inmates.

Are these some of the data points that you actually collected?

• (1550)

Ms. Anne Kelly: Certainly, in CSC we have that. Yes.

Mr. Larry Brock: Okay.

Ms. Anne Kelly: For indigenous offenders, for example, they tend to be younger than other offenders. Their sentence lengths, unfortunately, have become longer over the time period. More are serving indeterminate sentences. Unfortunately, there's been a profound change in offence-type composition, with more serving sentences for murder or a schedule 1 offence. Combined, basically it's climbed to 84%. As well, they have very high needs. The high-needs rating has gone from 86% up to 90% up.

We absolutely collect that data.

Mr. Larry Brock: We have indigenous and Black youth committing murders. You also mentioned level one or class one offences.

Ms. Anne Kelly: It was schedule 1.

Mr. Larry Brock: Does that include significant, dangerous firearm convictions?

Ms. Anne Kelly: It's more violent, yes.

Mr. Larry Brock: It's very violent. Okay. Needless to say, it's a longer sentence. Is that correct?

Ms. Anne Kelly: Yes. That's what we're seeing.

Mr. Larry Brock: When you have violent offences, such as homicides, random shootings and things of that nature, you'd agree with me that the overriding sentencing determination by a court is not one of rehabilitation but rather separation from society. Do you agree with that?

Ms. Anne Kelly: Again, for us in CSC, they come to us. Our job in CSC is to provide them with opportunities, with programs and interventions, to actually try to rehabilitate them so that they can become law-abiding citizens. That's our mandate. That's what we work with.

Mr. Larry Brock: Okay.

There's another point I want to draw. A lot of these offenders, unfortunately, come from very significantly socially disadvantaged groups—quite often socially and economically, with poverty, lack of education, lack of a parental fostering network and things of that nature. Quite often, and we ought not to be surprised by this, they are funnelled into a gang lifestyle.

Did your data show that as well?

Ms. Anne Kelly: Yes. The data shows that in terms of gang affiliation, it's higher.

Mr. Larry Brock: That's right. In fact, I'm looking at StatsCan from 2021. Of the 297 gun homicides in Canada in 2021, almost 50% of them were gang-related. When you dig even deeper into the composition of the gangs, close to 50% of all gang members in Canada are made up of African Canadians and first nations.

Does your data support that as well?

Ms. Anne Kelly: Yes.

Mr. Larry Brock: Right, so it ought not—

The Chair: Mr. Brock, I hate to interrupt you, because I know you're in a line of questioning here, but your time has expired. I believe we will get back to you later on.

Ms. Shanahan, you have the floor for six minutes, please.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for appearing here today and for the important work they do.

I was a member of this public accounts committee in 2016 and 2017. We probably looked at the 2015 report as well. I remember being very disturbed by the overrepresentation of indigenous and racialized individuals in the prison system. Certainly, at that time there were many expressions about the goal of rehabilitation being the primary goal of our prison system. We were failing at that.

What is different this time, Commissioner Kelly?

Ms. Anne Kelly: In terms of indigenous offenders, right now 32% of the population is indigenous. For women it's 47%. For Black offenders it has actually gone down. It used to be 9.2%. It's gone down to 8.7%.

Since 2017 we've put in place a number of initiatives. For example, for indigenous offenders we've created indigenous interventions centres in some of our institutions. What happens there is that they get programs earlier. In terms of section 84 releases, where you have to engage the indigenous community, that starts right at the beginning when they are admitted to federal custody. Basically, they work with an indigenous community liaison officer if they want to go back to the indigenous community.

The other thing is that we have Pathways in our institutions. Basically, Pathways can be arranged in the institution so that offenders can continue to practice their culture and traditions. We have indigenous correctional programming that's culturally appropriate for the offenders. As well, after they complete a program for indigenous offenders, there's an automatic review of their security classification. We also have healing circles. When they go before the parole board, instead of a normal hearing they have a healing circle.

We've done a lot—

• (1555)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: I'm sorry to interrupt.

Did this not exist back in 2015, 2016 or 2017?

Ms. Anne Kelly: I'm not sure. Actually, that's the Parole Board. I'm just going through the beginning of sentence up until release.

The other thing is that we've trained 1,500 employees. We've done the blanket exercise. All the executive committee has done it as well. In terms of representation, 10% of our staff is actually indigenous. We have around 140 elders. We have a national elders working group as well as a national indigenous advisory committee. Actually, we're meeting with them in a month. We talk about barriers. We talk about what's going on in the institution. They provide advice to me.

The other big thing is that we are in the process of hiring a deputy commissioner for indigenous corrections. Hopefully, that will help advance our mandate.

Certainly, we are working really hard. We have different initiatives that are specific to not just indigenous but all offenders. For example, we have digital education pilot projects where it's the curriculum from the province. We have received very good, positive feedback from the offenders. We have virtual correctional program delivery, where we will be able to have offenders who require a program get together from different institutions. That will be the class. It will be done virtually, but with a teacher in the classroom.

That will help us basically meet the demand for programs, because programs are key in CSC.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: On that note, Commissioner, my colleague mentioned the social and economic upbringing of many of these offenders, young people who then find themselves in prison for extended terms. Are there any studies that tell us that these programs, while they can't replace a healthy upbringing, can make a change in those lives?

Ms. Anne Kelly: Yes. Certainly, Larry can speak more to this.

The indigenous correctional programs have been developed with indigenous people. Clearly, with indigenous people we see that

there is a lot of trauma as well, so that's included in the program. Too, there are elders who participate in the program to help them so that they can speak about what they've experienced.

In June 2019, Bill C-83, actually considering the indigenous social history, was enshrined in legislation. We've done a ton of training on indigenous social history. What I will admit, though, is that, with regard to how it translates in the recommendations and the decisions, we still have a little bit of work to do. We actually are very good at gathering the information and the indigenous social history, but then, looking at all these factors when we make recommendations and decisions, there is room for improvement.

• (1600)

The Chair: That is all the time. Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Villemure, you have six minutes.

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Thank you, Chair.

I would like to thank the witnesses for joining us today to discuss a very important subject.

Ms. Kelly, I understand that the very first report issued by the Office of the Correctional Investigator in 1974 raised the discriminatory treatment of Indigenous people in federal custody. In the decades since, the Office has made over 70 recommendations specific to correctional services for Indigenous inmates in its annual reports.

Fifty years later, do you have anything positive to report?

Ms. Anne Kelly: Over the past 50 years, we have done significant work.

I have been with the Correctional Service of Canada for nearly 40 years. I deeply believe in the mandate to help and encourage offenders to become law-abiding citizens. I truly do. They are going to be our neighbours, your neighbours, and clearly we want them to be better citizens upon their release than when they enter our institutions. That is important to me, to Mr. Tousignant and to Mr. Motiuk.

We have clearly made progress over the past 50 years. Let me share a story that illustrates that point. Every week I send messages to staff and inmates, and several offenders write to me. One day an Indigenous inmate wrote to me. He told me that since his arrival in the institution, he had been difficult. But along the way, he met people, educators, correctional officers and program officers, and he decided to change his life. This offender is about to obtain his Bachelor's degree in psychology. He asked me if he could come back to the institution to help other Indigenous offenders once he had returned to the community and proven himself. There are many such stories.

Mr. René Villemure: That is certainly a lovely story and I thank you for it. Like you, I am a great believer in rehabilitation.

Earlier, you listed a host of your activities and programs, including those related to equity, diversity and inclusion. I suppose people learn a great deal through the training you provide. But do you assess their comprehension, or do you simply provide the training?

Ms. Anne Kelly: Are you referring to offenders, or inmates?

Mr. René Villemure: I am referring to Correctional Service of Canada staff.

Ms. Anne Kelly: We do provide training, of course. However, we are in the midst of a culture change at Correctional Service Canada and we have conducted a culture audit.

We are certainly seeing more diversity. We are also reviewing inmate grievances against staff, as well as a range of aspects that indicate whether there have been improvements. Of course, the training and correctional programs are making gains.

Mr. René Villemure: Thank you very much. I hope your culture audit was not conducted by McKinsey, if you will pardon the joke.

Mr. Motiuk, your research credentials are impressive. I would like to ask you the same question. Do you assess your employees' comprehension when it comes to diversity, inclusion and other topics?

[English]

Dr. Larry Motiuk (Assistant Commissioner, Policy, Correctional Service of Canada): There are a couple of ways to answer that. First and foremost, we do staff surveys. We've done them in the past. We also work closely with our frontline service providers to ensure that they have good comprehension, good understanding, of the core program components they're delivering. We certify them too, in terms of the assessment tools they administer.

Yes, we do assess them and we certify them in terms of their understanding of the application of these measures as well as the programs they deliver. Then we measure the results in terms of reductions in reoffending. Our evaluations clearly indicate that we have significant reductions in reoffending for indigenous people, and for all offenders, if they complete the programs.

• (1605)

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure: I am keenly interested in assessing comprehension, because one can attend a training session and not understand or learn anything. But understanding is key.

Ms. Kelly, do you believe your weak efforts at equity, diversity and inclusion among your correctional officers are related to discrimination issues among prisoners?

Ms. Anne Kelly: Could you repeat the question?

Mr. René Villemure: Are your weak efforts on equity, diversity and inclusion among correctional staff related to discrimination among inmates?

Ms. Anne Kelly: In terms of our efforts around diversity since 2021, we've set some truly ambitious representation targets. Our method involves factoring in what is known as workforce availability.

I'll use the example of Saskatchewan Penitentiary, which is in Prince Albert. Let's assume that 70% of the penitentiary's offenders

are Indigenous. As part of our equation in setting our representation goals, 70% of the workforce is from the available workforce and 30% corresponds to the percentage of Indigenous offenders in the institution.

This means that in institutions with a higher number of Indigenous offenders, we will ensure that there is a representative and diverse staff.

On that subject, Mr. Tousignant and I met with three heads—

The Chair: I am sorry to interrupt you, Ms. Kelly, but your time is up.

Mr. Desjarlais, you have six minutes.

[English]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I find it troubling. I often come to this committee, and I often find the Auditor General yelling at the top of her lungs about the conditions that are often facing indigenous and Black people in Canada, and the systems continuously stay the same.

I'm an MP who actually went to visit people in these penitentiaries. I went to the Edmonton women's penitentiary and asked them what their needs were. They are great.

I'm hearing my colleagues ask questions. Obviously, being a Crown prosecutor doesn't give you the kind of education that would be necessary to understand the conditions of indigenous peoples and how they get up to that place. This is not an indigenous and Black issue. This is a Canadian justice issue. It's an issue of our justice system, not of the individuals who are failed by it. The residential school system, the sixties scoop, the planned and targeted genocide of indigenous women—it's clear.

This isn't me saying this. This isn't even many indigenous people who've been saying this. I want to give light to the words of the Auditor General in a quote from just today. I hope all members will pay attention to this really important piece—I'm looking at my Conservative colleagues in particular—and listen to the important pieces this has to offer. I often hear them talk about “getting tough on crime” without understanding the people they're getting tough on and why they're there.

The Auditor General says the following: “This is our fourth audit since 2015 that shows poor and worsening outcomes for different groups of offenders. CSC has taken little concrete action to change the seemingly neutral policies, procedures and practices that produce these outcomes. CSC acknowledged in November 2020 that systemic racism is present in the correctional system. It is long overdue that CSC remove the systemic barriers identified in this report.”

These are real people. Why is it taking so long to address the very basic human rights of people? I had to look these women in the eye and tell them that I was going to try to do better for them. It's tremendously difficult.

To the member from Edmonton West, that penitentiary is right in your backyard, the Edmonton women's penitentiary. I asked them—

A voice: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: I don't care if you've been there. I'm wondering if you've listened to them. They're asking for help. The conditions in those prisons are terrible.

I've spoken to the elders who assist there. They're overwhelmed—overwhelmed—with one elder being asked to serve hundreds of people.

To the commissioner, I don't know how to put this any other way, but these people aren't all the same either. We have one federal penitentiary for indigenous women in the entire Prairies. From Winnipeg to Saskatchewan to Alberta, they're all lined up in one penitentiary and dropped off in my community of Edmonton Griesbach, where they find themselves houseless. They find themselves without support. They are forced into crimes of desperation and exploitation. Simply, our systems are failing them—especially CSC.

I am lost for words. The reports are there. The numbers are there. All I can do is ask that we see these people for who they are and the conditions that they're in. They're not there because they want to be there. They're there because this country has forced them to be there. Whether it's because they've taken their children.... I've spoken to elders who are in the maximum security prison there, old women who have been there for decades, because they fought in desperation to find their children and failed in doing that. The first question I was asked when I was there was, “Can you help me find my daughter?”

These are real people who are missing their family members. They can't even go and visit them, because they're from Winnipeg. Their daughters are missing. They want to talk to their families. This is one of the most egregious reports I've seen. These people can't wait. They're going to die in this place without ever seeing their family again. We need to help these people. They're not there because of reasons within their control.

I'll probably run out of time in this segment to ask any questions, but I hope you see how real this is. It's taken people like me to get elected to get this message all the way to this place, because I haven't heard it once yet. I hope my colleagues can see the need to reframe our minds on this.

• (1610)

We need a policy in Canada that reforms these systems away from the simple slogan of “getting tough on crime”, because that contributes to genocide in this country. Yes, people who break the law should be punished, but those who find themselves in conditions because of what Canadians have done...? You need to do some reflection. How have Canadian laws disproportionately impacted these people—my relatives?

Those Gladue reports are important pieces of information. I hope Crown prosecutors also do their work in understanding the value of those reports when seeking so desperately to put our people in jail. It's important that we do this work. It's called by elders who have passed away....

The calls to action in the TRC are clear. In my continued statements later on, I'll ask about the TRC and what you've done—

The Chair: Mr. Desjarlais, I will end it there. That is your time. Thank you very much.

Turning to our next round, Mr. Genuis, you have the floor for five minutes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Brock will go next, and then I'll go in the round after that.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Brock, it's back to you for five minutes.

Mr. Larry Brock: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I truly appreciate the words of my colleague Mr. Desjarlais. They were appropriate. They were heartfelt.

I thank you for that, sir. I do take to heart what you had to say. I have one little push-back. I prosecuted in indigenous peoples court for 10-plus years. I made a difference in hundreds of lives of indigenous offenders. I've seen successes. I've seen more successes than I've seen defaults and tragedies. I just want to say that prosecutors do take Gladue reports very seriously, but thank you for your intervention.

Going back to you, Ms. Kelly, I had just formulated a question when I ran out of time in the first round. I talked about the very large percentage of gangs, almost 50%, that are composed of Blacks and indigenous offenders, with those individuals committing very serious, violent offences that are harming people, killing people and exposing great danger to communities. It's probably no wonder—to me, and I hope you share the same view—that upon their initial placement in a federal institution, given the nature of the conviction, which quite often is not a first-time conviction but rather a pattern of dangerous-like convictions.... You don't wake up one day and decide, “You know what? I'm going to join a gang, and I want to kill somebody.” It's often a series of tragic mistakes that lead you to ultimately end up in prison.

My point is that it ought not to be a surprise to the auditors and to the Auditor General that the system itself is classifying these individuals who are deemed at high risk at the maximum level. Do you agree?

• (1615)

Ms. Anne Kelly: Again, we have a security classification process. We take into account a lot of information, such as police information and the judge's sentence. We also have the custody rating scale, which is an actuarial tool. The parole officer looks at everything, including indigenous social history or Black social history. Then we make a determination.

That's how we classify offenders.

Mr. Larry Brock: Paragraph three of Ms. Hogan's opening statement gives an example: "Indigenous and Black men were placed at maximum-security levels at twice the rate of other offenders and made up half of all maximum-security placements."

I looked at exhibit 4.4 on page 8 and saw that, while that percentage does seem to be accurate, the bigger picture, which is not contained in the opening statement of Ms. Hogan, is that most—almost three-quarters if not 90%—of all Black and indigenous offenders end up classified in minimum and medium security.

I'm looking at exhibit 4.4. Do you see that? A combination of 89% for indigenous offenders ended up in minimum and medium security, and for Black offenders it was 85%.

Ms. Anne Kelly: What I can say is that the concordance rate, so our actuarial tool.... The final offender security level is 75%. The actuarial tool is then used to anchor your judgment, but in terms of indigenous offenders, it means that in 25% of cases they're either overridden or underridden. They're underridden more times than they are overridden.

It's the same for Black—

Mr. Larry Brock: You also have to factor in the nature of the conviction. Does your data make a distinction between those ultra-serious convictions, those offences, versus the less serious offences that still warranted a two-year plus sentence?

Ms. Anne Kelly: Absolutely. Our custody rating scale takes into account—and this is one component—age at time of first sentencing, criminal history, offence severity, sentence length—all those factors.

Mr. Larry Brock: When I look—

The Chair: You have time for a very quick question, Mr. Brock.

Mr. Larry Brock: I look at exhibit 4.4. Is that a combination of all offenders, of all types of convictions, or is that only the really serious ones that I've been prefacing—the homicides and the significant weapons offences?

The Chair: Ms. Kelly, give us a relatively quick answer as well, please.

Ms. Anne Kelly: I'm looking at exhibit 4.4.

Mr. Larry Brock: Is it generalized, or is it specific?

Ms. Karen Hogan: I can help, Mr. Chair. It is all. We didn't sub-categorize. It is all offenders in all federal institutions.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Hogan. If there's more on that, we'll have to come back to Ms. Kelly.

Mr. Dong, you have the floor now for five minutes.

Mr. Han Dong (Don Valley North, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

I want to thank all the witnesses for coming today.

I want to say to you, Mr. Desjarlais, that your opening remarks really touched me. It's not news to us, but I really admire that you have a very focused purpose of being in this place, not just in this committee but in the House as well. We've been through this many times, and I see the consistency and the persistence in your pursuit. I think all members felt it and felt the same thing.

Let's get to the specifics.

Commissioner Kelly, what really stood out for me when I read the report is that the custody rating scale has not been updated since 2012, and the one for offenders I think hasn't been updated at all. Why is this? What are you doing to change that? It's an important tool to determine the level of security.

• (1620)

Ms. Anne Kelly: It's absolutely an important tool.

Actually, on the CRS, the development of the custody rating scale was in response to a recommendation from the Auditor General back in 1994. That's why we developed the custody rating scale. It has been empirically tested—and Larry could speak to that—many times.

What we're doing, however, is that, for indigenous offenders, we have an MOU with the University of Regina, and they are working at arm's length to develop an indigenous-informed, gender-informed security classification process, because there are certain factors that are gender neutral, like age and criminal history—

Mr. Han Dong: Yes, I get that part.

Ms. Anne Kelly: They're going to look at more gender-responsive and culturally specific factors as well.

Mr. Han Dong: I appreciate that. I'm sorry that I have to cut you off from time to time. I don't mean any disrespect.

Is there any timeline on that?

Ms. Anne Kelly: Yes. It's a five-year MOU, and we're into the third year.

Mr. Han Dong: Will it be another two years before the final product or updated CRS will be ready for use?

Ms. Anne Kelly: Larry, you have more of the timelines.

Dr. Larry Motiuk: Yes. The timelines on the validation exercise on Black men.... There aren't enough Black women in custody to actually do a validation study. We only have 19 in the whole country. We have a substantial number of Black men. We've downloaded data. We're working with external experts. The timeline on that is December of this year, and we're well under way with that exercise.

Mr. Han Dong: That's two years for indigenous offenders—

Dr. Larry Motiuk: That's right.

Mr. Han Dong: —and by the end of this year for—

Dr. Larry Motiuk: We're only looking at one tool, the custody rating scale specifically for Black men, a validation study. We're looking at the entire process for indigenous women.

Mr. Han Dong: That leads to my second question. I noticed that the report says that 30% of these assessments based on the CRS were overridden, and half of that resulted in a higher level of security. What does that say to us? Is it that the CRS is not effective enough?

Dr. Larry Motiuk: That's not necessarily the case. It means there could be other reasons for overriding the scale.

For example, it's an initial placement. One needs to realize that, upon admission, they might not have a lot of criminal history, but there could be factors that might raise the security level. A good example would be gang affiliation. It isn't really sensitive to that aspect, but if other information came to the awareness of a parole officer, they might recommend a higher level of custody than what the custody rating scale would say.

Mr. Han Dong: That explains the 50% who probably received a higher security level, but shouldn't all that already be considered within the CRS?

Dr. Larry Motiuk: It can be, but again it's one tool and not all tools are perfect. We have a concordance rate of around 75%, which is pretty accurate. It's a good benchmark, and you need to anchor your assessments, which are highly professionally based, on something that's objective and individualized.

Mr. Han Dong: So—

The Chair: Keep it very brief, Mr. Dong

Mr. Han Dong: Okay.

By the time they're updated, will we see the 30% overriding rate drop?

Dr. Larry Motiuk: Yes, actually we have observed that in the last year. It has come down quite a bit. It's closer to 25%.

Mr. Han Dong: What's the percentage? It's 25%. Okay.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Villemure, you have two and a half minutes.

Mr. René Villemure: Thank you, Chair. Our answers will have to be brief.

Ms. Hogan, you have written about the Correctional Service of Canada on numerous occasions. Employees have therefore had the opportunity to see your reports and read them. Did they understand them?

• (1625)

Ms. Karen Hogan: I believe there are Correctional Service of Canada officials present who are in a better position to answer the question.

Mr. René Villemure: Then I will ask them.

Ms. Karen Hogan: I must confess to being quite frustrated. Since 2015, worrying outcomes related to offenders' race and ethnicity were reported on at least four occasions. It is this systematic process that continues to generate negative outcomes for some offenders. This matter must be resolved.

Mr. René Villemure: Thank you very much.

Ms. Kelly, I have the same question for you.

As you indicated earlier, there is good representation in some cases. However, representation does not necessarily mean understanding.

Last fall, Radio-Canada reported that 498 employees participated in your most popular training session, out of a total workforce of 18,000. That is a 2.8% participation rate. It was the Indigenous cultural bias training.

I don't know whether those employees understood, but not many of them participated in that training. Is there anything new you can share with us about this?

Ms. Anne Kelly: In terms of training, I have numbers on diversity that are better than the ones you just mentioned.

Over the past five years, results have improved. It takes time. As I mentioned, we don't decide who is admitted to our institutions. Once they are admitted, we try to provide them with programmes and interventions.

Mr. René Villemure: In your culture change, you are attempting to go from very bad to bad. Is that right?

Ms. Anne Kelly: Culture change?

Mr. René Villemure: Your culture is changing. You mentioned a culture audit earlier. So I suppose you are hoping to go from very bad to bad.

Ms. Anne Kelly: No, I wouldn't say it is very bad or bad. After all, our organization has about 18,000 employees. We have dedicated and committed employees who understand CSC's mission.

Mr. René Villemure: Out of 18,000 employees, 498 participated in the Indigenous cultural bias training. That's hardly a high percentage.

Ms. Anne Kelly: No. I don't have the most recent data.

Mr. René Villemure: Very well. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you both.

Mr. Desjarlais, you have two and half minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank my colleagues on both sides for what I think is very important questioning and your patience with what is a very difficult study for me.

I've been on the opposite end of this for a long time, and I have only seen it get worse. You can call it what you want. You can say that improvements are being made. The reality is, Commissioner, you made an important statement: The number is increasing.

I don't necessarily believe that the Correctional Service is to blame. I believe, like many indigenous folks, that this is a holistic problem that will require a holistic solution. You made mention of that in your remarks, and I appreciate that. I also recognize that your department has accepted this in the past. Absent my being here, your predecessor sat here and agreed three times to the Auditor General's recommendations to make things better.

The TRC has been out for a long time—since your entire appointment, and I'm sure the gentlemen with you as well. I'm not sure if you've even read it, and that's the question I'd like to know. What is your literacy in terms of the TRC? Do you know what the Truth and Reconciliation call to action number 35 is?

Larry, I'll perhaps ask you that.

Dr. Larry Motiuk: Not specifically number 35, but I'm well aware of some of the recommendations, and—

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: What about Alain?

Do you know what 35 is?

Ms. Anne Kelly: Yes. For us, it's around correctional programs. It's around healing and a holistic approach. It's around section 81— healing lodges—because it's seen as a barrier.... It's the—

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Commissioner, why don't your colleagues know what that is when it's the one core mandate of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for your department? How is it that this isn't the central piece to your work when 70% of indigenous people are incarcerated and under your charge? How is it that, at this level, you come to a committee with a study on indigenous incarceration, the overrepresentation of indigenous people, and your senior bureaucrats don't know what I'm talking about?

Can you admit that's a failure in how we need to actually see...? Indigenous people need to have trust and need to be able to see that the officials in charge of these systems care. When I hear things like that, you have to share in my disappointment.

• (1630)

The Chair: Mr. Desjarlais, can you give the witness a few moments to answer, please? I have to move on.

Commissioner Kelly, it's over to you for a quick answer.

Ms. Anne Kelly: I can assure you.... We often say that we talk about this, but the greatest responsibility is having the care of other human beings. They committed crimes, and it includes indigenous offenders, Black offenders—all offenders. We want to work with them, basically to ensure that they are better when they are released.

The one thing I do want to say—

The Chair: I'm going to cut you off there. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

I am sorry, but I need to be judicious with the clock as much as possible. I'm sure there will be another opportunity.

Mr. Genuis, you have the floor for five minutes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Chair.

There's policy. There are the objectives. There's the question of values, and then there's the question of implementation. I think we've had a lot of thoughtful and moving comments made about policy, ideas and values. Usually in this committee, we deal with implementation. I want to really drill into that in my questions.

For eight years, the government has been talking about, as a policy objective, addressing the problem of the overrepresentation of certain communities in our justice system. It seems from the data

that they're not addressing it. They may be talking about it. They may be sincere in their motivations. However, as far as implementation goes, in fact the needle is moving in the wrong direction as it pertains to indigenous peoples. We have to acknowledge that's a failure of implementation.

I want to start by asking the Auditor General this. Is it fair to say—correct to say—that regardless of good intentions, and perhaps powerful words at times from the government, they are not making progress when it comes to the issue of responding to the overrepresentation of certain communities in the criminal justice system?

Ms. Karen Hogan: Unfortunately, this audit didn't look at the entire criminal justice system. We started from where the responsibilities of Correctional Service Canada start, which is once they have been found guilty and sentenced to two years or more and remanded to a federal institution. At that point, you can see from the statistics in our report, representation from indigenous peoples is growing.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Yes, so things are actually getting worse. Whatever the strategy is that is being tried by the government, whatever intentions are forming it, the results are getting worse.

Thank you for clarifying that. You're looking at what happens to people once they're already in prison, not at the factors that may contribute to getting them there. In terms of the data you looked at, in terms of the way people are treated once they're in prison, the overrepresentation problems in terms of the various ways people are treated are still getting worse over time.

Ms. Karen Hogan: I would point you to exhibit 4.1, which looks at a linear representation over 10 years of the changing demographics in federal institutions.

What we then looked at was whether the outcomes or the goals of the Correctional Service to rehabilitate individuals and reinsert them into the community were being effective. That's where we still saw differing outcomes based along race and ethnicity.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

For the folks at Correctional Service of Canada, when you hear that and you look at these numbers, is your approach to say, "Well, we need to just do more of the same", or is your approach to say, "My goodness, something fundamental about what we're doing isn't working and we need to reorient our strategy dramatically"?

Ms. Anne Kelly: I would say it's a little bit of both: that we need to—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I don't know how that's possible, but I'll let you finish. I'm sorry.

Ms. Anne Kelly: No, it's just that.... For example, when we introduced indigenous intervention centres, it was with a purpose of ensuring that when they are admitted they immediately can start a program, that they can start working with the elders. If they want to return to their indigenous community, they work with an indigenous liaison officer so that they can liaise with the indigenous community. We've done a number of things.

We also, like I said, look at—

• (1635)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I'm sorry. What I want to focus on, though, is.... I don't have the expertise to know if those things you talk about are the right things to do or not the right things to do. I can just look at the results. For some of these new strategies you're talking about, are they things that you've been at for a while? Because if you've been at them for a while and they aren't working, maybe it's not the full picture or it's something else.

I guess the question I'm trying to drill down on is this: Are you seeing that this isn't working and that we need to try something else, or are some of these things you're talking about brand new strategies that you're putting forward to try to address what has not worked up until now?

Ms. Anne Kelly: Some of them are brand new. Like I said on the virtual correctional program delivery initiative, we're really excited about it because we believe that it's going to allow for more timely access to programs, which is essential. It's critical that offenders complete programs, because they have a better chance at succeeding in the community.

Alain and I met with three chiefs in the community—the Neka-neet First Nation, Beardy's and File Hills Qu'Appelle as well—the tribal councils, and we talked about.... Actually, I'm going to meet with Chief Ananas. We're actually reaching out to the community. We have indigenous recruitment officers who go into the community to try to recruit indigenous people.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I think I might be out of time.

I'll just say quickly that we appreciate your sincerity, but in eight years, it's not working.

The Chair: We are well over the time.

Thank you, Commissioner.

Ms. Yip, you have the floor for five minutes, please.

Ms. Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Thank you for coming and for answering some very tough questions.

This is both heartbreaking and frustrating, because we've heard about these same issues before.

In your opening remarks, Ms. Kelly, you mentioned that the CSC has been working to develop a national Black offender strategy. What work has been done to launch this strategy?

Ms. Anne Kelly: First of all, we've developed an ethnocultural action framework. There's some training in diversity and cultural competency. The results are good in terms of people who have participated.

We also have qualitative research, which we've done with the Nipissing University. They're talking to Black offenders to get their lived experiences. That's going to inform our policies and practices going forward.

We also have an ethnocultural advisory committee that's very active. One thing we're piloting is the Black offender social history. Similar to the indigenous social history, we're looking at the Black offender social history. This is something that they're quite excited about.

These are the types of things...and reaching out to the communities. One thing, both for indigenous and Black offenders, is that it's fairly well structured in the institution. They have access to programs and to elders. However, when they go back out to their communities, sometimes the supports aren't there. We're doing an outreach initiative as well, to bring in the communities to the institution so they can offer support when the offenders are released.

Ms. Jean Yip: You talked about the qualitative part, but what about the collection of disaggregated data in this strategy?

Ms. Anne Kelly: We collect data specifically for Black offenders. We have that. We always look at overall indigenous...and Black as well. We have that data.

As I mentioned before, in terms of the percentage of Black inmates in custody, it's actually gone down. It used to be 9.2% and it's gone down to 8.7%. Black offenders, when they are released, actually do better than the overall population.

For indigenous offenders, I just want to say that they do well too. We've seen an improvement. It used to be in the high seventies, but now it's 83.5%.

• (1640)

Ms. Jean Yip: Why do you think they're doing better? Are there programs that are more targeted to the issues? I'm trying to compare it to the indigenous statistics you just mentioned.

Ms. Anne Kelly: This is something that we're actually looking at—the why. We see that Black offenders, as the Auditor General mentioned, tend to be placed initially at maximum security. It's slightly higher than for overall offenders. They complete programs, but when they are released, they tend to do quite well. This is something that we need to look into further.

Larry, I don't know whether you want to add something.

Dr. Larry Motiuk: We have what we call our integrated correctional program model and a number of streams. Some are for aboriginal-specific delivery: One is called a multi-target program, and one is directed towards sex offenders. In general, for all offenders, we have a multi-target program and one for sex offenders as well.

We also have institutional maintenance. We have community maintenance. We see from our evaluations that there are substantial reductions in reoffending and returns to custody. We think that's contributing to successful reintegration at the moment.

Now, we're unpacking that data for different groups—in particular for Black offenders—to examine, out of that data, how they are benefiting from these programs as well.

The Chair: Ms. Yip, we need a very brief question with a very brief answer.

Ms. Jean Yip: Can you tell us more about the 30% figure in terms of overriding...? What can be improved?

The Chair: Again, I'll press for a brief answer only, please.

Ms. Anne Kelly: On the overriding, the concordance rate between the custody rating scale and the overall offender security level is 75%. With regard to the 25%, for Black offenders, they are underwritten to lower security 16% of the time and overwritten to higher security 9% of the time.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We are going into our third round. It is my intention to get to a fourth round, but it will be truncated, with probably only three minutes per member. However, for this one it's a full five minutes for government and official opposition members, and the normal time for the third parties.

We turn now to Mr. McCauley.

You have the floor for five minutes. Go ahead, please.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Thanks, Mr. Williamson.

Mr. Desjarlais, I appreciate your comments.

One of the issues on the several visits I've made to the women's penitentiary in our riding is allowing open drug use. One is allowing predatory males on site. A big one—and Mr. Desjarlais brought it up—is a lack of facilities in western Canada. You've talked about indigenous recruitment. We don't have a school in western Canada to train women CSC employees. They have to go out east.

I made a request to the government two years ago. I got no response. This obviously is a vital issue. I think it would go a very long way to solving some of these systemic issues. This was a perfect example of a systemic issue that we know about that we are forcing upon the system.

Is CSC considering a school so that we can recruit and train local indigenous people from the Prairies to help out? Also, are there plans for another facility in western Canada so we're not uprooting family? Family support is very important. It's impossible for many of these families to come out from even neighbouring Saskatchewan to visit and give support. Are there plans for that?

Ms. Anne Kelly: You're absolutely right.

When I speak with indigenous people, the one thing they say is that it's really difficult for them. We have an academy in P.E.I., and we have an academy in Kingston for training. They don't want to be away from their families.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I'm aware of that. I just stated that.

• (1645)

Ms. Anne Kelly: Yes, exactly.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Thanks for repeating what I said, but, please, the question is whether there are plans to have a school on the Prairies.

Ms. Anne Kelly: During COVID, because we didn't want people to travel, we started having training at our regional facilities. Obviously, that helps.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Is there a long-term plan to set up a school so you can properly recruit indigenous women from the Prairies and more importantly from Edmonton?

Ms. Anne Kelly: This is something we've been discussing.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Is it past the discussion stage?

What will it take to get past the discussion stage?

Ms. Anne Kelly: At this point, as I said, we're discussing it.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: So not right now.

Ms. Anne Kelly: As a result of COVID, though, there is training happening in the Prairie region.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I have a couple of quick questions for you.

Since 2017 staffing levels for CSC have increased by 9%. Overall, the public service has had an almost 30% increase.

Are you getting the resources you need? We're hiring everywhere in the public service overwhelmingly, but CSC has barely budgeted.

Ms. Anne Kelly: Again, we have a staff complement of approximately 18,000. Obviously, COVID has been really hard on everyone.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: COVID hasn't stopped the government from hiring 30% more people.

Do you have the resources? Have you been given the marching orders from government to address any staffing issues?

Ms. Anne Kelly: We have the resources. Actually, with Bill C-83, we got resources for structured intervention units and also for enhanced health care.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: How many SIUs were built then?

Ms. Anne Kelly: Pardon me?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: How many of the SIUs were built, say, at the women's institution in Edmonton?

Ms. Anne Kelly: We have one in every women's facility.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: There's one. Okay.

I have just a really quick last question, and this is for the AG as well, maybe.

Mr. Brock was getting at how the inflow of indigenous and other communities in the prison system is very heavily weighted, it seems, with more violent offenders. Are we adjusting for that or are we continuing on, as Mr. Dong brought up, the system that you have to allocate prisoners to maximum or minimum security?

It hasn't been updated for years. Are we going down the wrong path when we need to address this influx of perhaps overly violent offenders? Is your system preparing for that, or are you preparing to make changes for yesterday's problems?

Ms. Anne Kelly: No. Every year we do an environmental scan. We look at what's coming. It's Dr. Motiuk who does that with his team. We look at the population profile and the forecast. Obviously, then, we prepare for that. As I said, the main other thing is that there's going to be an indigenous-informed gender-informed security classification process for indigenous offenders.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: When?

Ms. Anne Kelly: We're in the third year. It's a five-year MOU with the University of Regina.

The Chair: Thank you. That is your time.

Ms. Bradford, you have the floor for five minutes, please.

Ms. Valerie Bradford (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MP Desjarlais, I hear your pain and I share your concern.

I'm from Kitchener South—Hespeler. We have the Grand Valley Institution for Women there. I had the opportunity to visit it last June. I'm very concerned about the plight of the indigenous women there. The vast majority of the population in that prison is indigenous women from out west. Would you happen to know the figures on that? What percentage...?

Ms. Anne Kelly: The percentage at Grand Valley...?

Ms. Valerie Bradford: Yes.

Ms. Anne Kelly: No. I don't have that with me.

Ms. Valerie Bradford: It is the only federal prison for women in Ontario. Many of these offenders originate from out west because there aren't enough facilities there for them. They're uprooted from their communities, where they would have their support. Many of them are mothers. They come all the way to Ontario, three or four provinces away, to serve their sentences.

Can you talk about the mother-child program there, and what efforts are made to allow them to keep their children? These of course are people who have a sentence of at least two years.

Ms. Anne Kelly: We have a mother-child program. It has been in existence for quite some time. We work with family services, first of all, and children can stay with their mothers at the institution when they're preschool age. Once they reach school age, it can be a on part-time basis. It's a program that we promote, obviously. I think it's good for mothers if they are able to keep their child with them until school age.

• (1650)

Ms. Valerie Bradford: Is it offered to every mother who has a preschool child? Is this program made available to every mother? Is there the capacity for that?

Ms. Anne Kelly: First of all, they need to meet certain criteria. It depends on the offence. If it's an offence against a child, they wouldn't meet the criteria. Again, we work very closely with child services.

Ms. Valerie Bradford: My concern is with the scoop and the history in this country of separating indigenous children from their families of origin. This is a concern.

What I've learned is that the Kitchener community is quite supportive of the female prisoners we have there. A number of em-

ployers offer them employment opportunities. Some of the women are able to go out to work in the community. In particular, there's a very lovely restaurant that supports them, and the Elizabeth Fry Society does as well, but what happens when they're released is that there are no halfway houses in our area, so they get uprooted again and moved even further east, over to Kingston.

They're moved even further away from all the support services that were there supporting them during their four years or whatever. They're uprooted again and moved even further away. Not only that, but in order to get their children back, they have to prove that they can provide a home—accommodation—and of course we know that these days hardly anybody can afford to do that, let alone someone who's just coming out of a penitentiary system.

It's a heartbreaking thing here. I mean, these people obviously made a bad choice at some point, you know, but they could end up losing their children forever because of a mistake they made when they were younger. We keep moving them further and further away from their supports, both their original ones and then the ones they established in our community. What can be done to address this? It just seems that we're making a problem worse.

Ms. Anne Kelly: In regard to transfers, sometimes transfers occur because there's a particular reason: Maybe the woman at Grand Valley would no longer be safe and that's why she's transferred.

When they are closer to release, normally we look at their release plan. If a woman's release plan is in the Pacific region in B.C. and that's where she has her community supports, normally we would transfer the woman closer so that she can be released in an environment where she's going to have supports.

The Chair: Ms. Bradford, I'm afraid that is the time. We're a little over.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Villemure, you were next on the list, but I am told you wish to skip your turn.

[*English*]

Mr. Desjarlais, you have the floor for five minutes, please.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank my Bloc Québécois colleague and all my colleagues for what I think is a very important line of questioning, because I think this is....

What I'm hearing is that we care about this issue, all of us. I really hope—I really, really hope—we don't have to return to this audit again in the way it is. That is more than a challenge; that's a demand. It's a demand for just basic morality and basic levels of understanding on this issue.

I still don't have confidence that CSC has the cultural competency from the top to do this work correctly. That is why so many indigenous people feel neglected and not heard. I want to know what actions you've taken to educate your own selves about the history of this country. You spoke at great length and mentioned six or seven times now this indigenous social history. I made remarks at the very beginning to clarify that this is not an indigenous or a Black problem. This is a Canadian problem in terms of how we think of fellow human beings.

The TRC is clear about many of these outcomes, and I just wish.... Take five minutes and read it. Take five minutes. Memorize it. People died for those things. Take just five minutes. There are seven calls to action for your department. There are not that many. There are seven calls to action. I need confidence today that, when I leave this room, you're going to do something about your own learning and you're going to make efforts to rebuild that trust. I might not be here forever. You might be able to wait me out, but I hope you can remember this for as long as you possibly can in your service to Canadians: that these are real people too and they deserve a chance.

Do you know the history of this country well enough to understand why these people are in the position they are in? If not, that's okay. We can help—the government benches here, and the opposition will support. What resources do you need to change this?

Do you know the history of colonization in this country?

• (1655)

Ms. Anne Kelly: Yes. I would say we do. I would also say we care. We care about ensuring that we offer the offenders who come into our custody what they require so that they don't return to custody. If they return to custody, for us that's a failure. We want them to stay in the community.

That's why we have a national elders working group. That's why we have a national indigenous advisory committee that provides advice to me. That's why I invite all of you to come into our institutions to see what—

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: I have, and that's the problem, Commissioner. They're worse. They're not working. I am telling you that indigenous people are being left behind, and something needs to change. It needs to change at the top.

If you don't believe that you have the resources to do this job, we need to know. I need to know that you have confidence and that you understand the issue well. I will tell you again that this isn't a matter of blaming people. It's a matter of understanding. There is a failure here. We're talking about the failure of your department. We're not talking about the success of your department. We're talking about the abject, overt, objective failure.

It's not that I am saying this. The Auditor General, the top independent office in this country, has told you that you have failed many times over. There needs to be confidence. I need that—indigenous people need that—to know that these systems aren't a sham, where you can contract a university to do the work that should be done by indigenous community members. I won't talk about that today, but it's something that I hope you will take seriously. Community members are the ones who know best.

The TRC, if you'd read it, actually says that. Call to action 38 makes explicit note. It doesn't say consult with the universities. It doesn't say consult with the government. It doesn't say consult with other persons. It says you need to find ways to consult directly with community members.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Desjarlais.

We'll turn now to Mr. Kram, who has been very patient.

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): We're going to go with Garnett.

The Chair: You're being even more patient.

Mr. Genuis, we'll go over to you for five minutes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Chair.

I want to ask about something that's not in the report, which is on spiritual care or chaplaincy services in prisons. We've heard from various groups about access by minority faiths to that system. I'm of the view that certainly chaplaincy services are important. Ensuring that people from different faith backgrounds, cultural backgrounds, are able to access chaplaincy services that provide them with spiritual support is important.

I don't often quote Nietzsche favourably, but I think he was right to say that he who has a “why” to live for can bear almost any “how”. A sense of the purpose of life, a sense of someone's ultimate meaning, I think plays a very important role in rehabilitation.

Maybe we'll start with the Auditor General.

Were you able to identify any inequalities in access to spiritual care or issues around representation within the provision of those services? If it wasn't part of your work, then we'll go to Corrections after that.

• (1700)

Ms. Karen Hogan: We didn't focus in on that writ large across the entire offender population, but we did look at whether or not culturally appropriate and restorative options were considered for indigenous offenders. These are options such as healing lodges or work with elders, and really that whole concept of considering indigenous social history, which has been codified into legislation and should be done.

We looked at a group of files, about 20 files, where we saw the custody rating scale being overridden and the indigenous offender being placed in a higher security institution. What was concerning was that we saw no evidence of their indigenous social history being considered in those 20 files. There was no documentation of it. That doesn't mean it didn't happen, but we saw no proof of it happening. That's why we recommended that more needs to be done around overrides, but also codifying and solidifying the considering of indigenous social history in the way it's supposed to be considered. That's not to be more punitive but to help for better restoration.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Yes. I think that discussion of social history is distinct from the discussion of spiritual care, but thank you for sharing some of that work that was done.

Maybe the folks at Corrections could share a bit about the relationship between chaplaincy and ensuring that access to those services is available to everybody.

Ms. Anne Kelly: We certainly value our chaplains. They do a lot. It's Bridges of Canada that is the entity. The inmates, depending on their spirituality, get the spiritual adviser they require. We do have that, and they play a significant role.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: From your perspective, is that access available if someone is Baha'i and they say they're looking for this kind of spiritual support. If somebody is a Christian from a particular denomination and they're more comfortable receiving support in the context of that tradition, would you say it's working well for people from any background to be able to access support that aligns with those preferences, or are there struggles to meet people's needs in terms of that access?

Ms. Anne Kelly: I think it's better now with Bridges. It's really to meet the needs of the offenders, and certainly I haven't heard any complaints from offenders.

Alain, I don't know whether you want to add anything.

Mr. Alain Tousignant (Senior Deputy Commissioner, Correctional Service of Canada): No, not at this point.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: From your perspective, is everything working very well in terms of people having that access?

We have heard from external stakeholders who have a different perspective. They will follow today's testimony and maybe have follow-up comments. I just think it's important for us to hear what you're saying one way or the other.

From your perspective, it's working very well in terms of people of diverse faiths and ethnocultural backgrounds accessing the services that align with what they're looking for.

Ms. Anne Kelly: Yes, it's working.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay.

All right. I think that's probably my time.

The Chair: You have just a few seconds left, so do you yield?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I suppose so, yes.

Go ahead, Kelly.

The Chair: You have about 15 seconds.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Is it 15 seconds? Never mind. I thought you said 50.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Fragiskatos, you have the floor for five minutes.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): I will in fact yield, Mr. Chair. I will pass my time to Mr. Desjarlais.

The Chair: You have five minutes, sir.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Thank you very much, Mr. Fragiskatos.

I'd like to continue to discuss how important it is to heed the advice of the folks I met with, in particular on the crisis of murdered and missing indigenous women. You oftentimes deal directly with women in these penitentiaries. In the one I visit, the one that Mr. McCauley referred to and also visited, we heard the same things I'm sure.

One of the biggest calls to action, and I really want to thank Ms. Bradford for bringing it up, is on the pain these women have—and it's going to be difficult for me to say this—when they're not with their children. Many of them have children, and they've never seen them since they were taken into these systems. The psychological pain.... I asked a question earlier about your understanding of colonization and the deep impact it has. When you lose your children, that's how you break a whole nation.

One of the first steps to healing for these people needs to be the establishment of those cultural and traditional healing lodges. It must be. I've spoken to the minister about this. He came to my riding and visited another penitentiary, the Stan Daniels centre, a low-security prison for men. They often talk about this as well, and I don't want to avoid the fact that these men are also suffering from this, but these women spend their entire lives—obsession—in those places thinking about where their daughter is, where their kids are and whether they're alive. Some of them have lost their children to the murdered and missing indigenous women crisis, and they don't even get to go to the funerals.

Why can't this change? What is the barrier? Mr. McCauley asked, why not build the resources these women need? There have been years—decades—of this kind of treatment. Reconciliation in this country is not possible until the fundamental pieces of this kind of justice are heard by people like you and deeply felt. Imagine that you were never to see your children again. How painful that would be amongst a whole nation of people who've also endured that pain. What do you have to live for after that?

This is a punitive system that hurts indigenous people. I need to know what steps you're going to take to ensure that traditional healing lodges, the model of restorative justice that better, smarter and wiser people than me have called for, which nations like mine have built...and they've survived for thousands of years until the last, let's say, one hundred. To destroy our system in lieu of a punishment system like this...it's catastrophic. What steps are you taking to ensure the restorative justice model that is called for by indigenous women, men, two-spirit and non-binary folks...? They're calling for that.

They need to know what your action plan will be for building these traditional healing lodges. If it's resources, please tell us, Commissioner.

• (1705)

Ms. Anne Kelly: Thank you for that.

As you know, we have 10 healing lodges. We have Okimaw Ohci, which is for women. We also have Buffalo Sage and Eagle Women's Lodge, which opened back in 2010, if I'm not mistaken. We also met with some of the chiefs, and we've discussed, actually, the possibility of having other healing lodges. I think that's good. I truly believe in restorative approaches.

Alain recently had a meeting with all 10 directors of the healing lodges, so I'll let him talk.

Mr. Alain Tousignant: Thank you, Commissioner.

Mr. Desjarlais, the first comment I would like to make is that I want to assure you and guarantee you that we are seized with this issue every day. Every day, we go to work and we discuss the issues we're talking about. Every single day. That issue is as gripping for us, to a certain extent, as it is for you.

We've worked on the ground with many indigenous communities. I've heard and seen the pain. I understand the pain.

• (1710)

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: You must recognize my frustration—

The Chair: I'm sorry, gentlemen. I appreciate it, but we are out of time.

Mr. Desjarlais, you will have another round if you allow me to stay on the clock.

Mr. Tousignant, I'm sure he'll come back to you.

We're turning now to McCauley.... No, it's Mr. Kram.

I almost skipped over you. You have only three minutes.

Mr. Michael Kram: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses for being here.

I was wondering if we could try to step back and look at the big picture a bit.

If the name of the your department is Correctional Service Canada, it is implied in the name that something has gone wrong in the first place. Otherwise, we wouldn't be correcting something. I was wondering if you could step back and look at the big picture, think of all your years of experience in this sector and answer for the committee what could be done to have fewer people interacting with the justice system in the first place.

It would be nice if we didn't have people committing crimes in the first place. It would be nice if we didn't have 15,000 people incarcerated in this country in the first place.

What can we do? Do we need better education? Do we need better poverty reduction? What can be done?

Ms. Anne Kelly: That's a question that goes over and above what I do. I'm the commissioner of the Correctional Service of Canada. As I said, we believe, first of all, in education programming.

The other thing is that we have a restorative justice sector as well. I can tell you that's really powerful. When it's the right moment for the offender and the victim to be able to talk, I think, in

the end, for the offender, it's a turning point. They tend not to recidivate again. It's actually very successful. It's not for everybody.

That's one thing, but there are many other things that.... Again, for us, they come into our custody and we take charge. Our motto is "Changing Lives; Protecting Canadians".

Mr. Michael Kram: That's very fair. I was not expecting an easy, simple answer.

If you look at the charts, exhibits 4.5 on page 11 and 4.7 on page 16 deal with parole eligibility and completing programs before parole eligibility. Women consistently perform better than men in literally every metric in this report.

Can you comment on why that is? Do you have particular programs that work better for women or that are designed for women?

What lessons could be learned to help male prisoners?

Ms. Anne Kelly: First of all, they're fewer in number. We have 654 women right now and we have five women's facilities, plus a healing lodge. The other thing is, having worked myself in prisons for women—the only prison in Canada—and having been the deputy commissioner for women, when you work in a women's prison, they tend to talk a lot more, get involved and get engaged. It is a different dynamic than in men's institutions.

The Chair: Thank you very much. That is the time.

Ms. Shanahan, you have the floor now for three minutes, please.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Thank you very much, Chair.

I want to say how much I appreciate the remarks we have heard from our colleague Mr. Desjarlais today, especially around how this issue is not just about indigenous marginalization; it's an issue of Canadian justice. I think the restorative justice system we have had the privilege to learn about from first nations people is one that can and will transform that justice system.

That being said, we are talking about systemic barriers today, so I would like to ask the Auditor General a question.

One of your recommendations, Ms. Hogan, was that "Correctional Service Canada should improve its collection of diversity information for offenders, ensure that the information is complete, and align its collection methodology with that of Statistics Canada." Why is that?

• (1715)

Ms. Karen Hogan: What we found, and as we've been hearing throughout testimony today, is that there's a lot of data available at Correctional Service Canada. A lot of the data gathered on visible minorities didn't follow the same 11 buckets that Statistics Canada uses, such that then you would have a lot more data available through Statistics Canada.

Correctional Service uses a rating scale of 30. Where an offender needs to self-identify and select what visible minority bucket they may fall into, we heard there was confusion and uncertainty as to what they should be ticking off. Then when we looked into the systems, we saw increasing gaps in that data actually being entered into the system. We felt that it was important to have that disaggregated data but in a way that was meaningful and useful.

We wanted to make that recommendation to Correctional Service to align with Statistics Canada but also to be more diligent in ensuring that it was entered into the system and that the information was complete so that they could make well-informed decisions going forward.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: That's a very interesting recommendation, Commissioner Kelly. Can you speak to where CSC is at in following that recommendation, and do you agree?

Ms. Anne Kelly: Yes. Actually recently we've made progress on simplifying and defining the race categories. As the Auditor General said, we used to have many—I counted 25—and now actually in our corporate reporting we're down to seven.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Very good. Thank you.

The Auditor General has also recommended that CSC develop workforce representation. I think we've heard a little bit about why that is important, with particular attention on overrepresented groups. Can you speak to that recommendation and what CSC is doing to respond?

Ms. Anne Kelly: For us, it's what I mentioned earlier. We've historically exceeded the workforce availability for indigenous people and visible minorities, but we have more work to do for persons with disabilities. For women we're almost there. We're at 51%, and workforce availability is 52.6%. The other thing though, in terms of more representatives of the population that we serve—and this is what I was explaining—is that now we have representation objectives for each institution that take into account the population. Let's say 70% of the offenders in the institution are indigenous. That's part of the equation. We set ambitious representation objectives for ourselves.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Mr. Villemure, you have three minutes.

Mr. René Villemure: I will give my time to Mr. Desjarlais again.

The Chair: In that case, Mr. Desjarlais, you have the floor.

[English]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to my Bloc colleague for allowing me additional time to really make certain that the conditions of these places are understood by Canadians.

To be frank, I wish that the commissioner was more frank and, I'd say, transparent, with the reality of how these places look and the resources they receive. I can't name one person I've met in my entire life working with indigenous people and living in community, who have had an opportunity to heal the way they would have

wanted to. We have a long way to go. We're only in the very infant stages of understanding this country's history in a way that provides a level of justice and a playing field that would be fair in the consideration of these traumas.

TRC call to action number 36 is in relation to the survivors of sexual abuse. The intersectionality between survivors of sexual abuse and colonialism is great. It doesn't take much other than asking many of our residential school survivors to talk about that experience. There were children in the most vulnerable positions who were taken advantage of because of this country's policies, a kind of injustice that is still pervasive in our population today. Few criminal charges have ever been laid against those perpetrators. They get to walk out in the free world here in Canada, many of them still among us, while these women have to stay in prison.

The call to action asks you to look into the effects of that, to build resources and supports for survivors of sexual abuse and to bring that into your understanding of their experiences in those places.

Our justice system is unjust. I don't think I have to tell you that, Commissioner Kelly. You know that. You have to deal with the unfortunate realities of a broken justice system, in one of the hardest roles in our country, and the attempts to find ways to do the work of healing when this country has done so much damage. You probably hear, if you've spoken to the women, how unjust it feels for them to be attacked constantly their entire lives, and then to be left in the position they are in, while their perpetrators get to walk.

It's clear that our systems are overrepresenting indigenous and Black folks, but they also need to find ways to represent that these people are living traumatic lives of their own and are forced by our policies—

• (1720)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Desjarlais.

We'll turn now to Mr. McCauley, for three minutes, please.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Thanks.

I just want to follow up, Ms. Kelly, with regard to more facilities for women in the Prairies. What is the plan going forward? If I look at the Edmonton Institute for Women, clearly, it's not conducive to proper healing. The majority of the women in that facility are indigenous, and it's not working.

What is the plan going forward? Is it more healing lodges along those lines? Institutionalizing them is not working. What are we going to do to address this?

Ms. Anne Kelly: We have the Edmonton Institute for Women and Okimaw Ohci. When Alain met with all the healing lodge directors, where it made sense, the women would be transferred to a healing lodge. As I said, we have Buffalo Sage Wellness House and Eagle Women's Lodge as well.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: When you say, “where it made sense”, what—

Ms. Anne Kelly: I mean, for those who met the criteria to go to a healing lodge.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: What is the criteria, because I've been through it? We have medium, minimum and maximum in the one facility. Is it to move everyone out in minimum and medium to these lodges?

Ms. Anne Kelly: Okimaw Ohci is both minimum—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: What would it take? Again, they're being institutionalized, and it's not going to work.

Ms. Anne Kelly: It is both minimum and medium. There are offenders we can look at transferring from—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I'm showing my ignorance here, as I often do in this committee, but what it is going to take then?

If I look at the facility in Edmonton—it's just down from my office—say 70% are indigenous at any one time—60% to 80%. How many are there because we haven't made the move to create more facilities and better facilities—more appropriate facilities?

Okay, we have this healing lodge. However, I don't sense a will to say that we have maybe 50 women at the Edmonton institution who we should move out immediately to more...whether it's culturally appropriate or better healing for them. What is it going to take? You said that you have all the resources and all the staff you need.

Ms. Anne Kelly: In terms of any of our facilities, we always review the population. Again, there are certain timelines that we need to meet. Security classifications are reviewed. If they're reviewed and a woman is now medium security, then we can look at transferring to Okimaw Ohci. It's an ongoing review process.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Do we have enough capacity at such lodges? Do we need more lodges? Do we need more in the Prairies, closer to Edmonton, closer to our major centres?

• (1725)

Mr. Alain Tousignant: If I may, I think in creating a healing lodge, we also need the community to be willing and be on board with wanting to create a healing lodge in a section—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: It's proactively working in communities then.

Mr. Alain Tousignant: We do have people—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Could you present to this committee, then, the communities you're working with to try to create this expanded capacity?

Ms. Anne Kelly: Yes. With the chiefs we met, we actually discussed that. Often they themselves will say—

The Chair: Commissioner, I'm going to have to cut you off.

I want to get a response to Mr. Kelly's request for documents. You're welcome to explain anything in that document that you'll send in, if you like, but I do need to watch the clock.

The last member we're going to hear from today is Mr. Dong.

You have the floor for three minutes.

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you, Chair. It's a very interesting topic.

I feel sorry that there were a lot of pointed questions toward Commissioner Kelly.

For individuals who end up in your care, there have been a series of failures in these individuals' lives at different stages.

The questions about better education, better programming and the social history are all good questions, but I doubt whether you have much control over that person's earlier part of life. However, you do have responsibility when the person enters your control.

I looked at the portion where it talked about preparation for release. That touched upon the correctional part of it. There are shocking stats for indigenous populations, who are delayed in getting parole or released early compared to other individuals. Why is that? Is it because of a lack of resources to prepare for their release? I can't understand.

Ms. Anne Kelly: There are a few things. Obviously, again—and I don't want to use it as an excuse—with COVID 19, it was more difficult to deliver programs. Indigenous offenders, as I mentioned when I talked about the profile, have fairly high needs. They require more intensive programming. With indigenous offenders, although the sentences are getting longer, there are also some who are serving shorter sentences. We don't have very much time to try to provide this intensive programming. That's why sometimes there are delays.

What we've put in place, though, is a prioritization tool, so that offenders who have an upcoming release are getting prioritized to get into the program. The other thing is that—

Mr. Han Dong: You just reminded me that I was going to ask another question. We saw the introduction of mandatory sentencing. Did that contribute to an increase in the numbers of people being incarcerated? Do you know that by stats?

Dr. Larry Motiuk: No, not really. If the mandatory minimum is what you're referring to for certain crimes, those who come to federal corrections are serving two years or over—

Mr. Han Dong: You guys don't have targeted data. Okay.

Going back to questions, is there anything that legislators and—

The Chair: Be very brief, please.

Mr. Han Dong: —government can do to help you in that stage of corrections? Is it maybe more resources to prepare early release for the indigenous population?

Ms. Anne Kelly: Obviously, if we had more resources, we could do more, but the one thing is that, for indigenous offenders, what we've done is an automatic review as soon as they complete a correctional program. It's an automatic review of their security level to see if they could be moved to a lower security—

Mr. Han Dong: That's for indigenous offenders...? Okay.

Ms. Anne Kelly: It's for indigenous offenders because they are overrepresented.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm afraid that is our time today. I appreciate everyone's comments, and heartfelt comments as well, and the co-operation amongst committee members to split time.

I want to thank the commissioner and her team for being here today and the Auditor General and her team for being here today.

I also want to take a moment to recognize that we have with us a delegation from several countries—Senegal, Rwanda and Vietnam—and I'm asking committee members to hold back for a few minutes. We'd like to get a photo with some of these auditors and, I believe, lawmakers, who are here learning what I'll call “best practices” in auditing.

Welcome to cold wintry Canada. You've actually come at a bit of a temperature break. Last week it was -25°C. Today, I think we're around zero.

With that, I will adjourn today's meeting and again urge members to hold back for a few minutes. Thank you.

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