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Chair: Mr. Ron McKinnon



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• (0815)
[English]

The Chair (Mr. Heath MacDonald (Malpeque, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 107 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Monday, October 23, 2023, the committee is resuming its study of the growing problem of car thefts in Canada.

Before we begin, I would like to ask all members and other in-person participants to consult the cards on the table for guidelines to prevent audio feedback incidents.

Please take note of the following preventive measures in place to protect the health and safety of all participants, including our interpreters. Only use a black, approved earpiece. The former grey earpieces must no longer be used. Keep your earpiece away from all microphones at all times. When you are not using your earpiece, place it face down on the sticker placed on the table for this purpose.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format. I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of members and witnesses. Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. As a reminder, all comments should be addressed through the chair.

I would like to welcome our witnesses for the first hour.

We have the Honourable Pablo Rodriguez, Minister of Transport, and the Honourable Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs.

From the Department of Transport is Lisa Setlakwe, assistant deputy minister, safety and security.

From the Canada Border Services Agency, we have Aaron McCrorie, vice-president, intelligence and enforcement, and Annie Beauséjour, regional director general, Quebec region.

From the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, we have Tricia Geddes, associate deputy minister, and Talal Dakalbab, senior assistant deputy minister, crime prevention branch, by video conference.

From the Royal Canadian Mounted Police are Mr. Bryan Larkin, deputy commissioner, specialized policing services, and Matt Peggs, regional commander, federal policing, central region.

Ministers, I now invite you to make an opening statement of up to five minutes.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): I have a point of order, Chair.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I was already recognized.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I'm raising a point of order, though, Chair.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: There's been some confusion about this in the past. I wonder if Ms. O'Connell was raising a point of order or if you're providing her with the floor.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I didn't say "point of order".

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I think there should be some clarity about that.

The Chair: I'm providing her with the floor, similar to what I did with you at the last meeting.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: You're providing her with the floor. Okay, as long as that's clear, that you, as chair, are choosing to provide her with the floor.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Chair, I move that we resume debate on Mr. Genuis's amendment to the subcommittee report and the subcommittee main motion—the report.

The Chair: Okay, it is so moved.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: If there are no speakers, we can go to a vote.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Chair, I have a point of order. That's a resumption motion, which we vote on immediately. It's a dilatory motion.

If the motion passes, then we don't hear from the ministers; we go into debate. Hopefully, we can hear from the ministers and then resume debate on this at another time, but it's a dilatory motion, so there's no debate on it.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I have a point of order. If the member wants to speak to it, we can get to a vote and have the ministers speak as scheduled. However, we're resuming debate.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: That's not a point of order. It's a dilatory motion.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: If the Conservatives want to filibuster to avoid their embarrassment over Bill S-210, that's their prerogative. We want to deal—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I have a point of order. You're not resuming debate. You moved a motion to resume a debate.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Excuse me, do I have the floor, or are you going to just speak over me the entire time?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: No, you don't.

The Chair: Hold it.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: You weren't recognized by the chair, Ms. O'Connell.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Yes, actually I was.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: You said "point of order", but you weren't recognized.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: You're not the chair of this committee, so I suggest you turn your mic off.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: You're not either, Ms. O'Connell.

The Chair: Excuse me. Maybe I should repeat the introduction on the interpreters.

It's Ms. O'Connell first, and then Mr. Genuis, please—one at a time. You'll get your point.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: It's a dilatory motion, Chair. There's nothing to debate.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. O'Connell.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Chair, I said what I had to say. We can deal with the amendment and vote on it, vote on the subcommittee report and get to the ministers who are here and prepared to testify.

The Chair: We're going to go to a vote.

All those in favour?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I'm sorry, but I have a point of order, Chair. We're voting on the dilatory resumption motion. Is that correct?

The Chair: We're voting on the amended motion.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: No, we're not. She moved a motion to resume....

Please just pause and consult with the clerk.

Here's how the rules work. If you move a resumption motion, then you vote on the resumption motion.

● (0820)

The Chair: Can we get back to the meeting, please? Thank you to the clerk.

There is a motion to resume debate. We're going to proceed with a vote, and that's where we are.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I'm resuming the debate.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: On a point of order, it's a dilatory motion to resume the debate.

The Chair: Is there going to be a vote?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Yes.

The Chair: All in favour?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I'd like a recorded vote.

The Chair: We'll have a recorded vote.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: On a point of order, Chair, could you share the speaking list on the motion? If we're resuming, presumably we're restoring the old speaking list. Could you share what that is?

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Simon Larouche): What I had was Mr. Shipley and Mr. Motz.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Just to clarify, I had the floor.

The Clerk: It's what I had from my list.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Clerk, could you clarify? I had the floor when we adjourned.

The Chair: Could you address the clerk through the chair, please?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Sure.

Through you, Mr. Chair, to the clerk, I had the floor when we adjourned. If we're resuming, my understanding would be that I have the floor now to resume.

In any event, I'd like to be added to the list.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I have a point of order, Chair. Usually when you resume debate, the speaking list renews, but if members opposite want to filibuster this meeting, that's their prerogative. We're ready to vote.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. McKinnon has a point of order.

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): When we last spoke on this matter, it was for a different motion. It was a motion to go to a different order of business and to give Mr. Caputo the chair.

For that motion, Mr. Genuis had the floor, but this is not the motion that has been moved.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: On the same point of order, Chair, if I can clarify, there was the original motion, and there was the resumption motion. In both cases, I had the floor when there was adjournment.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: You're not going to get your clip quota.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: In response to Ms. O'Connell, I'm obviously disappointed that the Liberals have overruled the agenda here, but we didn't move that motion. They did.

The Chair: Mr. Genuis, you have the floor.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you very much, Chair.

What we've seen happen today, just to briefly review, is that an agenda was sent around whereby two ministers would appear to discuss the grave problem of car theft in this country, and Conservatives—

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: On a point of order, Chair, what is the relevance? We're dealing with the amendment to Mr. Genuis's motion—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I literally haven't finished a sentence.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. O'Connell.

Mr. Genuis, continue.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Chair.

I know that Ms. O'Connell attends many committees. I hope that that has led to some familiarity with the rules of committees. I will certainly speak on the motion, but the context in which we're discussing this motion ever so briefly is that we had a meeting today scheduled to hear from ministers on car theft, and our position was that the ministers were making themselves available for an extremely limited period of time, for only an hour together. Nonetheless, we were and we remain prepared to use that time to ask the ministers important questions about this issue.

The Liberals have moved a motion, sadly with the support of the NDP and the Bloc, to move to a different item of business, which is procedurally in order but, I think, substantively objectionable, because we have two ministers of the Crown here who are supposed to be prepared to answer questions on auto theft. I can only conclude, because of the Liberal decision to move a motion to proceed to an order of business, that they're not interested in allowing their ministers to testify on this matter.

We have a draft subcommittee report before this committee that contains in it a number of provisions that we have certainly been prepared to discuss with other parties in hopes of coming to a reasonable conclusion. The core issue in the subcommittee report and in the amendment I've put forward is the proposed report on the transfer of Paul Bernardo.

Six months ago, this committee held some hearings on the transfer of one of the most heinous criminals in this country's history from maximum-security to medium-security prison and on the lack of engagement with and information to the families that were associated with that transfer. Those hearings happened only because Conservatives insisted that they happen. Liberals and other members of this committee wanted to prevent families from having their day in Parliament. We pushed back on that, and we were indeed very insistent on allowing those families to be heard.

It has now been six months since those hearings happened. Drafting instructions were provided to the analysts at a meeting in early December. After drafting instructions were provided, I can only assume that a report was prepared, so, in our amendment to the subcommittee report, we are taking the position that the report

must be complete. That's why we proposed this amendment to the subcommittee report.

We have had a number of meetings at which it would have been useful to discuss the subcommittee report. In every case, the Liberals did not allow even basic discussion of the subcommittee report. The first meeting this was brought up at, the discussion was adjourned. At the subsequent meeting, witnesses were scheduled on another matter when we should have been discussing the subcommittee report. We proposed to resume consideration of the subcommittee report at that time, but there was no agreement to do so. Liberals would like us to effectively kill the Bernardo transfer report by passing a subcommittee report that does not make mention of it. It is in that spirit that we put forward this amendment.

Now Liberals are trying this silly game today where, on the one hand, they schedule ministers, but on the other hand, the chair, as was demonstrated, chose to give the floor to Ms. O'Connell, who then moved a motion to proceed to another matter of business.

Look, our ministers have a lot of work they could be doing. Mr. LeBlanc has a leadership campaign to be working on—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Garnett Genuis: —as well as a busy file.

● (0825)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs): Mr. Chair, on a point of order, I could do it from here, too.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I see Minister LeBlanc is working on bringing Minister Rodriguez onside for his campaign. He has not only begun his campaign; he's secured his first—I was going to say “high-profile endorsement”—medium-profile endorsement. I know Minister Joly thought she had Montreal wrapped up, but Minister Rodriguez may give her a run for her money.

Chair, I think I've just made the point in terms of what we should be discussing today. I'll say that Conservatives are happy to discuss the subcommittee report at a time when we don't have ministers. I would encourage the chair to schedule the resumption of discussion of the subcommittee report at the next meeting, so that this matter can be concluded. Conservatives would love to come to an agreement on the subcommittee report that leaves intact the various other sections of the subcommittee report as discussed but does include an opportunity to get to the bottom of some of these outstanding matters.

The amendment calls, in particular:

That the draft report on the transfer of Paul Bernardo be immediately distributed to committee members and that, notwithstanding any other items mentioned, with the exception of testimony by ministers, the committee not hold any other hearings or present any reports to the House until the committee has completed and presented its report to the House on the Bernardo prison transfer.

That's our position, and out of respect for the ministers' time and the important issue of auto theft, I move that we adjourn debate.

• (0830)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I'd like a recorded vote.

The Chair: On whether we adjourn debate, we're going to do a recorded vote.

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: It's defeated.

Continue, Mr. Genuis, please.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Chair, we've had another vote here. Conservatives have proposed that we be able to hear from the ministers on the issue of auto theft, and bizarrely we have the cover-up coalition trying to prevent the ministers from being able to testify.

I notice there's a repeated pattern of Liberals trying to prevent prospective leadership candidates from being able to share their views before parliamentary committees. We were trying to give Mr. Carney an opportunity to present at the finance committee yesterday, and Liberals were very opposed to that. Now we're trying to give Mr. LeBlanc an opportunity to present here at the public safety committee.

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

Mr. Garnett Genuis: The Liberals are preventing it again. You would think they would want to give people the opportunity to share their approach.

The Chair: We have a point of order.

Mr. Ron McKinnon: I'm confused by Mr. Genuis. We moved his motion. He seems resolved that we not be able to vote on his motion. We've heard hours of his argument on why his motion is worth supporting, but he won't let it come to a vote.

I'm just wondering if he could clarify that point.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McKinnon.

Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Though it's not a point of order, I'm happy to clarify what has occurred.

I think the record will show actually that debate on my motion has barely occurred; there's been maybe three or four minutes of discussion.

To review, what happened was this, and I can't remember the precise dates. There have been two meetings, broadly speaking, at which this matter has been under consideration. The first meeting was one in which the chair presented the subcommittee report. When I began to read an amendment into the record, the chair then suspended so that the amendment in writing could be distributed and translated. Then a vote began, so the meeting was immediately adjourned. There was no debate on the main motion at that time.

At the next meeting, I sought unanimous consent for a motion to resume consideration at that time. Mr. Bittle forcefully denied unanimous consent to allow us to resume consideration of this motion at that time. The Liberals have persistently prevented the issue of the Bernardo transfer, in the context of this amendment, from even being considered. Now they have, strangely, brought two ministers to a committee, pretending that they want to let those ministers testify. Instead of going to the ministers, the chair, Mr. MacDonald, who I think people will know is a Liberal MP—I know he does his best in the context of the committee, but he is a Liberal MP—chose to give the floor to Ms. O'Connell before the ministers could testify, which was a strange thing to do. If you had ministers here to testify, normally you wouldn't just give the floor to Ms. O'Connell.

That certainly implies that there was a plan to not have the ministers testify but to move consideration of a different matter. Ms. O'Connell is in fact agreeing with me. It sounds highly suspicious, and I agree that it is highly suspicious.

She moved the motion that we not allow the ministers to appear on a different item, and that is what has then directed us to a different item here. This is an item that needs to be discussed. We're not going to dispense with the discussion of the subcommittee report under this kind of artificially designed pressure tool by the government. We want to hear from ministers, and we also want to discuss the subcommittee report.

My suggestion would be that we proceed to hear from the ministers and then set aside some time to discuss the subcommittee report. I would even say there might be resources to allow for the resumption of discussion of the subcommittee report after the ministers and the other scheduled witnesses have appeared.

In the hope that members will see the benefit of allowing this to occur, I move that we proceed to hearing from the ministers.

• (0835)

The Chair: Is that a motion you're asking for?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Yes. It's a dilatory motion. I think it's dealt with on page 1187, but I might be off by a little bit.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: He has a lot of friends. Don't worry.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: It's a motion to proceed with hearing from the ministers.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Could we have a recorded vote about hearing from the ministers? We could even pass it on division.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: We could even pass it on division.

The Chair: We'll proceed with a vote.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Could we have a recorded vote, please?

The Chair: Could we have a recorded vote, please, for the second time?

(Motion negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

The Chair: Continue, Mr. Genuis, please.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Chair.

I had hoped that the intervening moments would provide an opportunity for clarification of conscience among some of my colleagues, but sadly that has not occurred. This is a truly bizarre display.

[*Translation*]

I want to remind you that this study on car theft was proposed by the Bloc Québécois. However, today, the Bloc Québécois has decided to vote against giving the ministers the opportunity to answer questions on this subject. It's very odd.

[*English*]

The NDP, Liberals and Bloc are, allegedly, concerned about this issue, yet we have proposed multiple times that we adjourn debate on this other matter to allow the ministers to speak. I just proposed a motion that we proceed to hearing from the ministers, yet we have this Liberal-Bloc-NDP tactic of blocking ministers from presenting. This is consistent with the evident desire of Liberals to prevent any prospective leadership candidates from being heard at committee.

Mr. LeBlanc, as well as Mr. Rodriguez, should be held accountable on their files. That said, Ms. O'Connell was suspiciously given the floor at the beginning of the meeting, and she's reinforced the point. That was suspicious.

I do welcome the sort of [*Inaudible—Editor*] chorus reinforcement of my messages today.

Suspiciously, she was given the floor by the chair, and when she was given the floor, she moved a motion to shift to a different item, an item that was not on the agenda and an item involving the subcommittee's report.

Here we are, and I have tried, through a number of dilatory motions, to give the committee the opportunity to hear from the ministers, but those proposals have been blocked by the cover-up coalition. I hope other colleagues will see reason here and see the outcome. I hope they realize that it is better to give the ministers an opportunity to present and give us an opportunity to ask them questions.

On the subcommittee report, we are debating amendments that we proposed to the seventh report of the subcommittee on agenda and procedure. The amendments we proposed are to a number of different sections. We have not proposed any changes to sections of the subcommittee report that deal with Bill S-210, so any suggestions to the contrary are verifiably false. These amendments are public. These amendments do not, in any way, impact the sections that deal with the study of Bill S-210. They deal with other matters.

The first change is in section three of the subcommittee report. The existing section proposed that the ministers appear together. It actually deals with the appearance of ministers. It proposes that

ministers appear together for the first hour of a meeting. We proposed, instead, that it be amended to say that the ministers appear separately for one hour each on the study of auto theft.

This amendment is consistent with a proposal made publicly yesterday, as well, highlighting and reinforcing our belief. If each minister has an hour of time available, it makes more sense that they appear individually for an hour, so that they can each individually be asked questions about their own individual activities and their own work on their own portfolio.

Liberals are clearly doing everything they can to minimize ministerial accountability, first, by saying that the ministers would appear together all at once, and now, by moving this motion by Ms. O'Connell to prevent ministers from testifying. They are repeatedly lining up with their coalition partners to prevent us from hearing the ministers.

• (0840)

Our proposal as part of the amendment to the subcommittee report was, frankly, quite generous in terms of ministerial appearances. We did not propose that they each appear for two hours on auto theft. We proposed, rather, that they appear for one hour each. In the context in which the ministers have said they have an hour available to them, it would have been reasonable for them to appear separately for an hour each. That's what we proposed.

I also proposed that we invite the Minister of Public Safety to appear for one hour to answer questions on ArriveCAN. I can tell from his expression that Mr. LeBlanc is very interested in addressing the arrive scam scandal. We have been able to have a number of different witnesses, public servants and deputy ministers, come repeatedly to answer important questions on the arrive scam scandal, but we have had ministers relatively reluctant to appear, although I will say that one of Mr. LeBlanc's fellow contenders in the upcoming Liberal leadership race, Minister Anand, did appear and answered one hour's worth of questions at the public accounts committee. Ms. Anand has exceeded her future competitor Mr. LeBlanc in terms of her willingness to appear before committee on the arrive scam scandal.

Of course, the arrive scam scandal is something that happened. It involves procurement and various issues, but, crucially, it involves the CBSA. There seem to be some significant problems there, even in terms of officials pointing the finger at each other and accusing each other of lying. This is why, in our subcommittee report, we proposed that Minister LeBlanc be given the opportunity to answer questions from members of Parliament on the issue of the arrive scam scandal. We've been very generous in our proposal of only one hour.

The committee would, I think, be interested in hearing from Minister LeBlanc on the arrive scam scandal—what he knew when, what he did with that information, whether he thinks it's normal that a two-person company based in a basement somewhere received an overwhelming amount of money from his department, and what he did with that information once he received it. We have a system of ministerial accountability in which ministers should answer questions. Of course, the agenda for today was to have ministers answer questions on auto theft.

Look, there are many issues: the main estimates, of course, but also foreign interference and the proliferation of corruption and scandal under his watch. There are various other matters that we would be interested in hearing from the minister on. That is why, as part of the subcommittee report, we proposed amendments that would allow for the meaningful questioning of ministers, instead of this very limited and abbreviated interaction.

I know members of this committee and members of the public are very interested in our having that opportunity to question ministers, so in that vein I would propose—time having elapsed, with perhaps my having persuaded some members—that we now proceed to hear from the ministers.

• (0845)

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: A recorded vote....

The Chair: Could we have a recorded vote, please?

(Motion negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yes.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: First of all, Chair, Mr. Genuis—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I have a point of order.

Is Ms. O'Connell on a point of order?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Genuis, it's a point of order, and I have the floor, so you can wait.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Is it a point of order?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: You can wait. I have a point of order and the floor, so you can wait.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: You don't have the floor. You do have a point of order.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I actually do. You're not the chair, so you can wait, and don't speak over me, as I've said multiple times.

Mr. Chair, Mr. Genuis can't continue to make the same motion over and over. If he wants to hear from the ministers, we have no speakers up. We're prepared to vote on his amendment. He's filibustering his own amendment. We're prepared to vote and get right to the ministers.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: That's not a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. O'Connell.

Mr. Genuis, do you have a point of order?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: No. I have the floor, though, so I'll just continue, I suppose.

The Chair: Well, you were talking, so I thought you—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. I was just maybe clarifying for Ms. O'Connell that typically when someone raises a point of order, it relates to matters of order, not their opinions about what should or shouldn't happen.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I will just say that, in terms of the moving of dilatory motions, the practice, the rule, is that if there are intervening activities that have occurred that could materially impact the outcome, then a motion may be moved.

I thought I presented very persuasive arguments about the value of hearing from ministers. I thought it was legitimate, and clearly you thought so, as well, to allow us to move the motion again.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Ms. O'Connell is talking fairly loudly, which I don't normally object to, but since she vociferously objected to my doing it, I think it's sort of worth acknowledging.

Anyway, Mr. Chair, as the committee has seen, we have repeatedly moved for us to be able to hear from the ministers. We've put forward motions to proceed to hearing from the ministers. We've proposed amendments to allow ministers to appear for more time. It's clear that the Liberals do not want to allow the ministers to appear. They and their coalition partners have repeatedly blocked our attempts to proceed to hearing from the ministers on these important matters, and that's a big problem.

I hope that we can adopt the subcommittee report. I hope that we can adopt that through some negotiations among parties that recognize the changes that need to be made. Frankly, the original draft of the subcommittee report was, clearly, wildly unacceptable. It did not provide for the completion of important matters that this committee has already agreed to.

There are a number of other changes that we proposed as part of this amendment. We proposed to remove the reference to drafting a report on the auto theft issue for May 30. We believe, instead, that additional meetings should be held on the auto theft study.

Then we amended point five. Point five is with regard to the statutory review of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians. It's a very important review required by law, and it has not occurred. I believe that other parties were highlighting the importance of this issue.

Then the proposal for a study in relation to the statutory review was reduced to merely a briefing on the statutory review, which is not consistent with, I think, our statutory obligations. The amendment we proposed to the subcommittee report was:

That the committee undertake the statutory review of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians Act, as required by law, with a goal of completing that review before the end of 2024.

This corresponds to a legislated obligation to complete a statutory review, and that statutory review relates to a critical matter of national security. It's in a context in which we know about the significant issues of foreign interference, which may well be back before this committee soon in the form of a study on the government's proposed legislation on this. There is a significant and important relationship between the work of NSICOP and the problem of foreign interference. In many past NSICOP reports, alarm bells have been rung in the public versions of those reports, and I can only assume they have been rung even more forcefully in the private versions of those reports. Alarm bells have been rung in relation to the problem of foreign interference. Therefore, there is, I think, an important connection between a review of the work of NSICOP and understanding how we can do better on the issue of foreign interference.

• (0850)

The new proposed item six really is at the heart of what Conservatives are proposing in relation to changes to the subcommittee report. What we are proposing, as the new item six states, is:

That the draft report on the transfer of Paul Bernardo be immediately distributed to committee members and that, notwithstanding any other items mentioned, with the exception of testimony by ministers, the committee not hold any other hearings or present any reports to the House until the committee has completed and presented its report to the House on the Bernardo prison transfer.

I'll just say, in general, with respect to this amendment and the issues raised by the subcommittee report, Conservatives are prepared to discuss and negotiate the various provisions. We're proposing a number of additional meetings on the auto theft study. We're proposing hearings on a number of other subjects. We are prepared to negotiate all of those items and to try to come to a consensus with respect to the agenda of the committee going forward.

However, a fundamental point for us is that the hearing on the Bernardo transfer lead to a report; that the report, which has already been drafted, be distributed; and that members complete the work on that report.

The normal process through which parliamentary committees operate is that they conduct studies on legislation or on other important public issues of the day. When those studies are complete, they provide drafting instructions to analysts. Those analysts prepare a report that is considered by committee, which makes amendments and adds recommendations, etc., and is then adopted and reported to the House.

This reflects a core principle of how our parliamentary system is supposed to work: that parliamentary committees exist to facilitate the detailed study of specific public issues and to allow committee members to become experts on specific policy areas and then use their expertise to inform Parliament as a whole. The function of informing the House on the activities of parliamentary committees is obviously central to what they do. Parliamentary committees aren't

just think tanks somewhere over here. They are creatures of Parliament with a reporting function to Parliament.

When studies are completed, typically, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee would request that the government provide a written response. The opportunity is then for the government to review the report, identify areas where they disagree, agree or take note, and provide some explanation about their policy in that respect.

There's also an opportunity for concurrence, that is, for a debate in the House whereby members of Parliament can pronounce themselves in general on whether they agree with the conclusions of the report or not. It's clearly part of the function of committees to conduct hearings, and that gives people opportunities to speak and brings greater attention and focus to a particular subject.

However, the committee's work should not happen in a vacuum, isolated from the activities of Parliament. Those hearings should be a means by which the committee develops its expertise, comes up with specific recommendations and informs the House about the results.

When the committee undertakes a study and when witnesses are called, I think there's a reasonable expectation, at least among those who are informed about the mechanics of this process, that their testimony will contribute to the deliberations of Parliament more broadly. Sometimes it's a personal sacrifice of time or because the committee is asking them to delve into matters that are very personal or difficult to talk about. Witnesses who choose to appear are making those sacrifices likely with a goal in mind: The challenges and the sacrifices associated with testifying are worth it insofar as they then create the opportunity for policy changes to be driven through the committee's process.

That's just the normal thing. It's not an original proposition that maybe committees should provide reports on things that they study. That's the way every committee, in every room and on every policy issue, works, outside of some very narrow exceptions. The committees study issues and they prepare reports. Those reports go to the House, which then creates an obligation, if desired, for a government response and creates a potential opportunity for the House to debate and pronounce itself as a whole on those conclusions.

• (0855)

That is the committee process, and that was the spirit in which the committee undertook its work in the late fall on the Bernardo transfer.

It's just worth recalling that I was here at the public safety committee when we were pushing for this issue to be studied. The other parties then, as now, resisted any kind of discussion or engagement on the issue of the Bernardo prison transfer. We wanted to get to the bottom of what happened, why families weren't informed, etc. Liberals did not want that to happen. We had to persistently use a variety of different tools available to us to insist that the families of the victims be heard.

This was in a context where they were not properly informed at all about the prison transfer. As I recall, they were told the day of that the prison transfer was happening, when it was already effectively a *fait accompli*. The families of the victims did not have their day prior to the transfer, but we believe that they should be given their day in Parliament. That includes the opportunity to testify and then the subsequent opportunities for that testimony to drive substantive policy changes.

This is what we proposed with respect to the Bernardo prison transfer. Eventually, we were able to get those hearings to happen. There was an in camera meeting to discuss drafting instructions. I wasn't there.

• (0900)

The Chair: Could I have everybody just quiet down a little bit? If you're going to have a conversation, could you take it outside? We're having a problem hearing.

Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Well, thank you, Chair. This is the first time I've been told to take it outside at a committee. I've felt that way at times, but I've never said it.

Chair, based on the conversations happening around the room and the intervening time that has taken place, I think there may be an appetite to let the ministers testify. I will propose that we proceed to hearing from the ministers.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I have a point of order.

That's out of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. O'Connell.

We'll continue to a vote, please.

Is it a recorded vote?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Yes.

The Chair: All right.

(Motion negatived: nays 7; yeas 4 [See Minutes of Proceedings])

The Chair: Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: We have, again, repeatedly tried to give the ministers the opportunity to testify. I have for the third time explicitly proposed a motion asking that we proceed to hearing from the ministers. Three times in a row, all of the Liberal members, as well as their partners in the Bloc and the NDP, have voted against allowing the ministers to appear.

It's quite shocking that we would have two ministers here, that the agenda would say that ministers appear, but that Liberal mem-

bers would move a motion to proceed to a different item to prevent the ministers from appearing, and that members would then repeatedly vote against the opportunity to hear from ministers.

Clearly, we have to address the subcommittee report. I'm very happy for us to debate the subcommittee report after the ministers...even later today. We could have debated it previously if there had been agreement to proceed to it. We can certainly debate it at the next meeting.

I am struck by, in particular, Ms. Michaud—who, as I recall, had proposed previously that this committee undertake a study of auto theft. She is now voting with the Liberals to deny herself the opportunity to ask questions to the ministers.

Ms. O'Connell may want to add herself to the speaking list. I think she's—

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I'm just saying it's interesting how you go after the two women on the committee. That's an interesting point.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Are we allowing crosstalk, Chair, or not?

I think my record will show that when ministers or other members have raised things, I've challenged them as well. Actually, that's probably not even worth dignifying with a response.

However, to the point about the issues of motor vehicle theft, I want to share some statistics about the dramatic increase in vehicle thefts that have occurred under this government.

Mr. Ron McKinnon: On a point of order, vehicle thefts are not relevant to the matter in question. I urge Mr. Genuis to stick to the matter in question.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. McKinnon, I'm happy to respond to you. Unfortunately, your point of order seems to reveal that you haven't read the amendment we're discussing. The amendment says, in additional proposed paragraph 8, "That the committee hold 4 additional meetings as part of its auto theft study before the end of June." We might have to shift those timelines, given how close we are to the end of June. Nonetheless, the point is that the proposed amendment deals explicitly with the issue of auto theft, so it is curious for you to say that the issue of auto theft has no relevance to the amendment, when the amendment includes a proposal for additional meetings precisely on the issue of auto theft.

I think Mr. McKinnon has revealed something that doesn't entirely surprise me, which is that he and perhaps other members of this committee have not even familiarized themselves with the amendment we're talking about.

Of course, they would have had weeks to do so, because we moved this amendment a number of weeks ago. It's on the public record, and it is regarding the agenda of the committee. If we're going to have a discussion about it, members should have read it. On the other hand, I sympathize with members like Mr. McKinnon, who did not read the amendment and weren't prepared for this discussion today, because this wasn't what was on the agenda.

• (0905)

The Chair: Mr. Genuis, I think that's enough debating with Mr. McKinnon. Can we get back to your amendment, please? Thank you.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay.

Ms. O'Connell was concerned that I was challenging only the—

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: He means “personal attacks”.

Mr. Garnett Genuis:—record and decisions of female members of the committee. Mr. McKinnon did say some things that were clearly problematic, so I hope she appreciates that I've demonstrated that I'm happy to hold Liberals of all types accountable.

I'll go on to the issue I was discussing before I was interrupted by the point of order from the member who...

For the benefit of Mr. McKinnon and other members, I wonder if the clerk can distribute the amendment, just so we don't have this kind of confusion going forward.

These are the statistics in terms of the rise of auto theft. It's why Canadians are gravely concerned about it and why I think they are legitimately seeking answers from ministers on it.

There has been a 34.1% increase in auto thefts across Canada in the period from 2015 to 2022, which I assume is the latest point for which we have Statistics Canada numbers available. Based on what we're hearing anecdotally, I think members would expect that they may well have gone up substantially further since 2022.

There has been a particularly dramatic spike in certain regions of the country. There has been a 120% increase in auto thefts in New Brunswick, 190% in Moncton, 59% in Quebec, a 105.9% increase overall in Montreal, a 122.5% increase in Ontario and a 122% increase in the Ottawa-Gatineau area. This is staggering.

In the tenure of this NDP-Liberal government, there has been an over-200% increase in auto thefts in the greater Toronto area: 216.94% increases in auto theft. These are dramatic numbers. The government's own news release, in fact, says that in 2022, close to 10,000 vehicles—9,600 vehicles, approximately—were stolen in the Toronto area alone. According to the Canada Finance and Leasing Association, that represents a 300% increase since 2015.

This is why we think it is important to study the issue of auto theft. Notionally, members of other parties said they wanted to study the issue of auto theft, yet they have tried to block at every turn meaningful actions on this issue.

The government trumpeted the fact that they were going to have a summit. They had a meeting at which this was discussed. Mr. Rodriguez says it was a great summit.

I would actually love to hear more from him about what the government has done on this.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport): Next time you come—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I didn't receive an invitation actually, Mr. Rodriguez.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: It's in the mail.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Actually, it was sent to you.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I would welcome further interactions of this nature with Mr. Rodriguez.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: If you stop filibustering, then we can speak.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Hopefully, if not by me, members have been persuaded by Mr. Rodriguez's clear desire to speak, so I will move now that the committee proceed to hearing from the ministers.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Stop filibustering.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Please encourage your colleagues, Mr. Rodriguez, to vote in favour of my motion to proceed to allowing you to testify.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: There's no debate once you move the motion.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: That is, for once, correct, Ms. O'Connell, so let's vote.

• (0910)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Your mansplaining will go over well on your podcast. It's okay—you're the party of controlling women's bodies, so—

The Chair: Excuse me. Please call the vote, Clerk.

(Motion negatived: nays 7; yeas 4 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: The motion is defeated.

Mr. Genuis, you have the floor.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Chair.

I'm sorry to disappoint Mr. Rodriguez, and not for the first time. My primary priority here is to make my constituents happy, not Liberal ministers.

We have now moved four times that the committee proceed to hearing from ministers. In all four of those cases, Liberals and their coalition partners have opposed and blocked that testimony from being able to occur.

Our view, as reflected in the amendment we've proposed, is that ministers appear separately for one hour each on the study of auto theft and that the Minister of Public Safety be invited to appear separately for two hours for consideration of the main estimates and his leadership ambitions.

Oh, sorry, no, that's not in there. It's just the main estimates, don't worry, or for one hour on the main estimates and one hour on, I guess the motion says ArriveCAN. It should really say the arrive scam scandal, but we chose not to use that word in the hopes that it would have a better chance of passing.

That's with respect to ministers appearing and also proposing that the committee undertake the legally required statutory review, that the draft report on the Bernardo transfer be immediately distributed and that the committee proceed with hearings on that.

We've also proposed that the committee hold its previously agreed-upon meeting on the transfer of Luka Magnotta out of maximum-security prison by the end of June. This committee had agreed to look at the transfer of another violent criminal, Mr. Magnotta, and again, there was no mention in the original draft of the subcommittee report of completing that work.

In the same spirit as our desire to get to the bottom of what happened with Paul Bernardo, we believe that it is important for the committee to complete its work with respect to the prison transfer of Magnotta. When the committee has passed a motion beginning the process of doing a study on an issue, those motions should have meaning. They should lead to that work being undertaken and being undertaken in a timely way.

Regarding the additional auto theft meetings, the Conservatives are proposing in this amendment to the subcommittee agenda that we hold four additional meetings as part of the auto theft study before the end of June. It's obvious why. I was sharing some statistics previously on the rate of auto thefts occurring—

The Chair: You're coming up to our time now, so I'm going to suspend after this first hour, and we'll take a five-minute break.

Thank you to the witnesses. We appreciate your time.

We'll continue in five minutes with new witnesses.

Thank you.

• (0915) _____ (Pause) _____

• (0925)

The Chair: We're reconvened.

To begin with, I will today resign as chair and turn this over to the clerk for an election. I thank everybody for their time and effort on this committee. It's been an interesting process, but as of right now I turn this over to the clerk to call for an election. Thank you.

The Clerk: Honourable members of the committee, I see a quorum. I must inform members that the clerk of the committee can receive motions only for the election of the chair. The clerk cannot receive other types of motions and cannot entertain points of order or participate in debate.

We can now proceed to the election of the chair. Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the chair must be a member of the government party.

I'm ready to receive motions.

[*Translation*]

Ms. O'Connell, the floor is yours.

[*English*]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Clerk, I move that Ron McKinnon be elected chair.

[*Translation*]

The Clerk: It has been moved by Ms. O'Connell that Mr. McKinnon be elected as chair.

Are there any further motions?

[*English*]

Yes.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): I know he just resigned, but I would vote for Heath MacDonald.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Motz that Mr. Heath MacDonald be chair.

Since more than one candidate has been nominated, pursuant to Standing Order 106(3), any motion received after the initial one shall be taken as a notice of motion, and such motions shall be put to the committee serially until one is adopted.

The first motion is:

[*Translation*]

Ms. O'Connell moves that Mr. McKinnon be elected as chair.

[*English*]

(Motion agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4)

The Clerk: Mr. McKinnon, you're the chair.

The Chair (Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.)): Well, thank you all.

We still have a motion on the floor, and Mr. Genuis has the floor.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Chair, just maybe as a point of order, the committee addressed another matter of business—I just want to make sure we're procedurally correct here. The committee addressed the election of the chair, which I believe supersedes the item under consideration. Is it necessary to move another resumptive motion if we're going to continue, given that we dealt with a different item? The committee cannot have two motions on the floor at the same time and did just deal with a motion for the election of chair, so I am of the view that this motion is not on the floor anymore and I welcome proceeding to witness testimony. If it is on the floor, I have more to say, but I don't think it's actually on the floor anymore.

The Chair: My advice via the clerk is that it remains on the floor and that this matter of committee business did not side-swipe that. If you want to go to committee business we are happy to do a vote on this, but otherwise you have the floor and you may continue to speak.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Chair, that's not entirely clear to me, because I do think that it is an established principle of committee that you can't have multiple motions on the floor at once. I don't know if you're comfortable allowing the clerk to weigh in on the matter.

● (0930)

The Chair: Do you want to speak or not?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Well, I do, but let's just make this make this clearer, and then the committee can pronounce itself on the matter either way. I move that we proceed to hear from the witnesses.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I'd like a recorded vote.

The Chair: We'll have a recorded vote.

(Motion negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

The Chair: We shall continue with the debate.

Mr. Genuis, you have the floor.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Chair.

I don't know if this sentiment is widely felt, but I do want to say I'm sorry for the witnesses, who have come here and put in the preparation, that members of the Liberal Party, the Bloc and the NDP just voted against our giving them the opportunity to be heard.

It couldn't be clearer. We just put forward a motion to proceed to hearing from the witnesses, and the other three parties voted against that motion.

Of course, we have other business to attend to, the subcommittee report, and the chair could very easily have set aside time for that to occur. Mr. Badawey is heckling that we should just go to a vote on this motion, but I don't think it's reasonable at all to propose an item of business that's not on the agenda for discussion and say, we must have an immediate vote before we will allow the items that are on the agenda to proceed. I would suggest the committee undertake the items that are on the agenda, but that we set aside time to consider the matters in the subcommittee report.

Nonetheless, let me conclude my remarks here quickly with a couple of final points. The amendment we've proposed is to establish certain things with respect to the future business of this committee: to establish that this committee should complete its hearings and present a report to the House on the Bernardo prison transfer, to complete the work that it has committed to with respect to the transfer of Luka Magnotta out of maximum security, and that the committee should hold four additional meetings as part of its auto theft study before the end of June.

One item that I haven't mentioned yet is that the committee invite the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions to appear for one hour and the Minister of Public Safety and the Premier of B.C. to appear for one hour to discuss the impact of the government's approach to dangerous drugs on public safety and the diversion of taxpayer-funded drugs. This is another urgent public safety issue.

That particular proposal does not have a timeline associated with it. It's something that could well be done in the fall. Our view is that we should hear from ministers and those responsible more generally for this file at a time when there is an acute and escalating crisis around addiction and the diversion of taxpayer-funded drugs driving that crisis.

This is broadly what we're trying to do. We're trying to establish the agenda of the committee going forward and trying to establish it

on a consensual basis. We're not going to accept that a backroom deal between coalition partners, which excludes some parties, should be the basis for setting the committee's future agenda. We think it should be set in a consensual manner that allows the important work of the committee to conclude.

Of course, we're prepared to make reasonable compromises in the course of establishing the committee's agenda going forward.

The one point that we have persistently insisted on, and we will insist on, is that, given that the families of the victims and their representatives made the sacrifice of presenting their experience before Parliament, it is vital that we honour that sacrifice by taking the information we receive from them and finalizing a report and reporting it to the House so that it can lead to policy actions.

We are committed to saying that, given that they testified and given that the report has been drafted, we should complete the report. It's clear from the original version of the subcommittee report that Liberals in particular are trying to block, bury and suppress the report that has been prepared on the Bernardo prison transfer. They didn't want this study to happen in the first place and they want to prevent this report on why and how Paul Bernardo was transferred to medium-security prison from ever seeing the light of day.

● (0935)

We are opposed to the covering up of this information. We are opposed to Liberal efforts to bury the Bernardo report. That report must see the light of day. If other parties are prepared to agree that the report must see the light of day, then we have a lot of room to talk about the other items in this amendment. However, we will have a hard time finding consensus if the government, the Trudeau Liberals, persist in their posture of denying victims the opportunity to be heard through this report.

With that, Chair, I would like to be added to the list again, because I have a few other points I want to make, but I know that Mr. Shipley is keen to weigh in, so I will cede the floor for now. Please add me back to the bottom of the list, and I look forward to hearing what my colleagues have to say on this.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Shipley, go ahead.

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Thank you, Chair. Congratulations, and welcome back to a role you had not too long ago.

I would like to speak on this important issue. I won't be quite as lengthy as my colleague was. I just wanted to mention my concern and disappointment that we're not talking about auto theft here this morning. We had a great list of witnesses who were available to appear before us, including two high-ranking ministers in the Liberal government, whom I was very prepared to ask some questions of. We have moved a motion many times to see if we could get to them. They've now left the room, so we won't be able to ask them any questions. We still have some good witnesses here, of whom it would be nice to ask some questions.

On auto theft, our study is entitled "Growing Problem of Car Thefts in Canada". That alone shows—and we all agreed to that title—that it's a serious concern. It's been growing immensely. We've heard from a tremendous number of witnesses, throughout this study, just exactly how bad it's getting. We heard from numerous police services—the Montreal Police Service, the OPP, Laval Police, Toronto Police Services—all talking about the rapid increase.

I would just like to touch on a couple of key points, and then I will pass the floor over to my friend and colleague Mr. Caputo. I'd like to talk about the auto theft and how much it's impacting and costing residents right across Canada, specifically in my riding of Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte. I mentioned this once before, and I'm going to repeat it, Chair. I had a resident call me in regard to their young son, who is 19 years old and had a clean driving record, and the renewal for their insurance had gone up \$75 a month. They had not received any tickets for their three or four years of clean driving.

Usually, people are used to seeing their rates going down. This resident told me that when the call was made to their insurance company as to why it had gone up \$75 a month, which is a lot of money, they were informed it was strictly—and this was the answer that came right from the insurance company—due to the rising auto theft issue.

This is a very serious issue. It's costing people, and it's affecting a lot of people. In Ontario alone, auto theft claims are up 524%. The Toronto police are discussing how brazen thieves are getting. Carjackings have doubled this year. Break and enters have become so frequent that a TPS officer recommended that Torontonians leave their keys by their front doors to prevent thieves from coming further into their houses. It's just remarkable what we're hearing. After nine years, people just don't know, when they wake up in the morning, if their car is going to be in the driveway.

It's a real shame that we couldn't get to some important questions for the ministers today. I had pages of great questions. I have many pages of different quotes from the police services we heard from during our testimony here. I won't get into all that now. I would, as my colleague Mr. Genuis mentioned, like to be put back on the list after that, but I will give the floor over to my friend and colleague Mr. Caputo.

• (0940)

The Chair: You want to put your name back on the list, at the end?

Mr. Doug Shipley: That's correct, sir.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Caputo, go ahead.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Thank you, Chair. Welcome to your new position here.

We did have two ministers here. It's unfortunate that we will not be speaking with the ministers, through the chair, in questions and answers. It's one of the few times we actually get to hear directly from ministers. It's indeed a rarity that we do hear from ministers directly.

In fact, we have many statistics here relating to auto theft between 2015 and 2022. I would have thought the Bloc would want to hear from the ministers, given that they proposed the study on auto theft that occupied, I believe, if my memory serves, over six meetings. There was a 34.1% increase across Canada from 2015 to 2022. Those numbers may be even higher, because we're now in 2024, obviously. There was a 120% increase in New Brunswick.

Now, who was here from New Brunswick a few minutes ago? It would have been very interesting to hear from him—from Minister LeBlanc. In Moncton, his home community, I believe, there was a 190% increase. We voted five or maybe six times to hear from Minister LeBlanc on this, and we won't be hearing from him today. It's unfortunate that the Liberals....

It's no surprise that they voted the way they did, but it is a surprise that the Bloc voted the way they did. It's no surprise that the NDP voted the way they did, as they have stymied and obfuscated on behalf of the Liberals for over two and a half years.

There was an increase of 105.9% in Montreal. There was an increase of 122.5% in Ontario. As my colleague Mr. Shipley just pointed out, it was to the point where people were actually being advised to keep their keys readily accessible, presumably so as to avoid violent confrontation with people stealing their cars. It's almost like harm reduction: We don't want you to get hurt, because people will inevitably be stealing your car. That's how bad it's gotten.

Now, it would have been interesting, too, to speak with Minister LeBlanc as public safety minister. Two reporters, fairly well known, I'm sure, Robert Fife and Steven Chase, actually had a story in the *Globe* today, which said the following:

Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc had initially promised that the Commission into Foreign Interference would have full access to secret documents, including "all relevant cabinet documents" even if some of that sensitive information can't be made available to Canadians.

Buried in a footnote in Justice Hogue's May 3 report, she said there were redactions in some of the cabinet documents handed over to the inquiry and added "discussions as to the applications of these privileges is ongoing."

We actually had the minister here who said this. On the one hand, this isn't uncommon, as we know, with the Liberal government—the government of budgets balancing themselves and of getting back to a balanced budget set in stone after four years. It's not uncommon that the Liberals would reverse themselves, but here we're talking about foreign interference, and there has been a lot of obfuscation on this point.

We have the minister, who we could have heard from today, saying that we're going to give this respected judge all the information that we need, all the information that she needs, in order to shine the light—which, in my view, this Liberal government has done anything but when it comes to foreign interference—yet they are claiming the very thing they said they would not claim, which is cabinet confidence. This report came out today from Mr. Fife and Mr. Chase. It would have been wonderful to ask the minister about it.

It would have been wonderful to ask the minister about the 190% increase in auto theft in Moncton and the 120.15% increase in auto theft in New Brunswick. It would have been wonderful. I'm sure he would have given us wonderful answers as he campaigns to be the next Liberal leader.

Be that as it may, we won't hear from him. We voted I believe five or maybe six times to hear from the officials. Unfortunately, that didn't happen.

● (0945)

I'd like to move on to some of the issues in relation to the Magnotta and Bernardo transfers. It's very clear to me that the Liberals do not want to talk about this. It's very clear to me that their partners in the NDP and the Bloc are assisting them—at least in this meeting, in any event—in doing that.

I'm going to read from a letter dated March 11, 2024, from three people: Marcia Penner, Tennille Hilton and Laura Murray. They sent this letter. I believe it was to the chair. I will go through this letter here.

It says: “To say we are heartbroken is an understatement. Today's meeting was nothing short of a political train wreck and beyond disrespectful.”

Now, I was there. I'll let the people who watched the meeting—it's readily available online—decide why that was, but I certainly agree with the comments of the writers, that the intent of this meeting was to propose the motion to undertake a study of reclassification and transfer of Luka Magnotta and other federal offenders, such as Paul Bernardo—a necessary motion that all parties were seemingly in agreement on before the personal political agenda started.

Now, my recollection, Chair, is that, on behalf of the Bloc, Ms. Michaud signed to have an emergency meeting, pursuant to section 106(4) of the orders, so that we could have this meeting. The Liberals came out and said, “You know what? We're content with this meeting. We will have this meeting. Not only will we have this meeting, but we also want to add witnesses.” My recollection is that there would be six meetings. Everybody was in agreement. Then, out of nowhere, the Bloc said, “You know what? We want

only one meeting, and these are the people we want to hear from.” The Liberals, who had previously said, “We agree to six meetings with these witnesses,” were all of a sudden so eager to withdraw the need for the witnesses they said were necessary to explore this very important issue—almost with glee, in my view. They said, “Yes, we just need one meeting.”

I'll go on to read here, because I think it really does encapsulate what occurred at that meeting. They say that this—referring to the motion, I believe—then resulted in the interference of good judgment and decisions, a display of childlike playground behaviour debating who has the most friends, and a public display of nonsense. The intent and focus should be on why sadistic pedophile, rapist, psychopathic and dangerous offender murderers are being transferred from maximum-security penitentiaries to medium-security facilities.

I don't think we'd have much disagreement there, although we now know there are actually 57 dangerous offenders. When I say “dangerous offenders”, I mean those people who have been designated by the courts as dangerous offenders. For those who aren't aware, a dangerous offender is designated in the most exceptional of circumstances. In a country of almost 40 million people, I believe there are roughly 815 dangerous offenders. That's all. Somebody do the math. I think the math is roughly one in 47,000, if memory serves. In my community of Kamloops—my home community, where I was raised—that would be two people for all of Kamloops. It's exceptionally rare, yet 57 of them are in minimum security.

Now, the dangerous offender designation is an interesting one. In fact, in all my time practising criminal law, I don't think I once dealt with a dangerous offender hearing, because they are very rare. I'm leaving out the nuance here. In broad strokes, a judge is essentially saying, “There is so much concern about your behaviour legally, and you are such a risk to the community and to the person who was offended, that we will sentence you not just on what you have done but also on what you might do.” It is not a low threshold, putting somebody in what's called an “indeterminate sentence”—a sentence that does not end—with a warrant of committal, as it's called, on that person. They will be committed to custody indeterminate. A judge has said, “You are so dangerous that we believe you may have to spend the rest of your life in jail.” It's reserved for the worst of the worst.

● (0950)

Paul Bernardo is himself designated a dangerous offender, yet 57 are in minimum security, with no fences.

I'll get back to the letter. It asked, why are the transfers being done secretly, without proper notification to the victims and their families?

That's a great question. It's a wonderful question. Had we had the six meetings, it would have been a wonderful question to ask. Why are these notifications being done? The last time I checked, much of the focus of our system should be on victims. As Conservatives, we obviously believe that victims should be at the centre.

Most people here have probably been the victim of something. I've been the victim of relatively minor offences. People have written letters to me that were threatening and harassing, and charges were laid. That's pretty darn trivial to the victims of what people like Bernardo and Magnotta have done.

Why was this transfer done in the dead of night? Why wasn't the notification appropriately done? Why wasn't there any consultation, period? I'm not sure, Mr. Chair. Well, I am. Actually, I shouldn't say I'm not sure. To me, this is a debacle that lays wholly at the feet of the leadership of Correctional Service Canada.

I'm constantly hearing from individuals. These are people on the front lines, not people who sit at national headquarters telling people what to do. If you want to know if something's working well, go talk to the people on the front lines. What they're telling me is that this isn't working. Correctional services are not working well. It's a message that I wish Commissioner Anne Kelly would hear. It's a question that I wish Minister Dominic LeBlanc would hear and actually enforce, but perhaps he's too busy shining up his résumé to become a prime ministerial candidate.

In any event, moving on to the next paragraph of the letter, it says that, instead, we chose to quote numbers of how many inmates were moved to medium-security facilities under the Conservative government, and how the ice rink at La Macaza is not in working order and was, in fact, installed under the Conservatives.

I couldn't have said it any better. The issue, really, wasn't about whether there was an ice rink, in my view.

It's funny. I was told there were skates available. I'm not sure why skates were available for an ice rink that didn't exist, and why hockey nets were there. You would have to ask Anne Kelly and her people about their carefully worded press release and the very nuanced language they used. They certainly weren't seeing what I was seeing, but perhaps we can all go for a tour one day and have a look and see what we actually do see. The photographs I've disseminated publicly pretty clearly show a hockey rink.

In any event, the writers make a very good point. This wasn't about whether there was an ice rink, whether it was working, or whether the tennis courts actually were in use or not. They were used. They were used up until last fall. I believe it was October.

However, the letter writers rightly note that what was not mentioned, or made clear, was that all of the transfers done during that time frame included serial killers, psychopaths and dangerous offenders, such as Paul Bernardo or Luka Magnotta. Here, Marcia Penner, Tennille Hilton and Laura Murray they hit the nail right on the head.

For all the people who say, "You know what? That rink was in existence. These amenities were in existence under Stephen Harper," with all due respect, you're missing the point. Paul Bernardo, Luka Magnotta and others—there are other very serious offenders

who were transferred to that jail—were not transferred there under Stephen Harper. In fact, I have great faith that a Conservative government under Harper, if this had occurred, would have taken steps to remedy this issue and ensure that it would not occur again.

To all the people who say, "Well, politicians can't intervene," I say that's true, but as politicians and parliamentarians, our job is to react.

● (0955)

In this case the Liberals, with the help now of the NDP and the Bloc, are choosing not to react. They've done that on a number of fronts. They've done it very openly, saying that this is a decision...that corrections has its own view and it will make the decisions.

They also enabled this with Bill C-83, talking about the "least restrictive measures", as opposed to the measure that ought to be the most just.

We, as parliamentarians, react all the time. We reacted to two cases that struck down section 33.1 of the Criminal Code, which essentially said—again, I'm not getting into the legal nuance—that you cannot claim intoxication for a general intent offence. We immediately tabled legislation. Why? It's because that's what's expected of us.

To say that you can't intervene in a decision... No, we react to a decision. We don't say to the commissioner, or the public safety minister shouldn't be saying to the commissioner, to move Paul Bernardo.

What the public safety minister should be doing is analyzing the regulations, or the commissioner—and I believe she probably left this out of her testimony before this committee—could issue a commissioner's directive on maximum security and who should be there.

Let's not pretend that this is someone else's problem. Let's not pretend that nothing can be done. When there is an issue and that issue is made clear based on evidence, the expectation is that we, as parliamentarians, will react. When we react, we are not reacting in a way that is intervention. We are reacting to right a wrong. It bothers me so much that...

I note that bells are ringing here, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Glen Motz: It's the start of the House.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Oh. I'm so sorry. Thank you.

I note, Mr. Chair, that there is no appetite. In fact, my colleague, Mr. Généreux, had a bill that would have returned a very narrow calibre of offender to maximum security. I believe it was for two first-degree murders and dangerous offenders, if memory serves. Again, it was a very narrow category. Very few people have two first-degree murders. In my time practising criminal law, I think I prosecuted one first-degree murder. It is incredibly rare.

What did the Liberals do, including with people who had proximity to offences in relation to Magnotta and Bernardo? What did they do? They voted against it. What did the Bloc do? They voted against it. What did the NDP do? They voted against it. This was after we got this letter, which I am quoting from.

I will go on. They said that key information to have would be how many such people, serial killers like Bernardo and Magnotta, were moved under the Harper government. It is not unheard of or unreasonable that there are certain prisoners who should be classified and moved as such.

You'll hear no agreement from me. I've said repeatedly, and I'll say it again publicly: There is a place for minimum security; there is a place for medium security and there is a place for maximum security.

I think we all wish we lived in a world where everybody could be supervised in minimum security, with no fences, living a life that closely mirrors what a person would get on the street. It would be wonderful if we lived in a world like that. Unfortunately, we don't live in a world that permits it. We live in a world where there are Bernardos and Magnottas.

The question is, what do we do with that? Perimeter security aside, can this person escape?

The question, in my view, is actually one of justice. Is it just and appropriate that Bernardo and Magnotta have access to the amenities they have in medium security?

I go back to the letter writers, who hit the nail on the head. This devolved into a debate among so many people about recreation and whether this is appropriate. Let's dismantle that mistruth.

On recreation, are people saying there's no recreation in maximum security? I've been to a number of maximum-security jails—maybe even most in this country. I can tell you there is recreation in every single one of those facilities. It's not like you get moved from maximum to medium and then there's a gym. In fact, when I was at a federal institution in the Atlantic, a new unit design actually had exercise facilities joined to the unit, so that a person could safely exercise without actually having to be moved.

The argument was made of people just discounting exercise, and that people need recreation because it keeps them calmer. Do people in maximum security not need exercise to keep them calmer? In fact, you're actually dealing with a calibre of offender who is likely more dangerous. This is because the only reason you get to maximum security, generally, is that your escape and public safety risks are too high, or your institutional adjustment—that's what it's called; it's essentially your behaviour in jail—causes problems. That's what gets you to maximum security.

This whole notion of being against recreation couldn't be further from the truth. Why? Recreation is present, yet this was turned into a discussion by some, unfortunately, about recreation. The idea of prison recreation is, in my view, a discussion that is worthy of further debate. In fact, there might be people who would argue that there should be hockey rinks and tennis courts. Some may even argue that they should be in medium security, and that's a discussion I'd be happy to have.

Again, returning to what the letter writer said, this is a question of whether or not Paul Bernardo and Luka Magnotta should have access to such things.

The letter writers go on. This is the point they so eloquently make, which I wish I could say as clearly as them.

• (1000)

They said that further to the ice rink comment, no one is disputing that an ice rink could or should be at La Macaza and used for suitable medium-security offenders.

I underline "suitable".

They went on to say that the debate is that Paul Bernardo should not be living in a medium-security facility at all, period.

I'm going to say that again, because I think it's very important, particularly for the people who voted for six meetings to one. Here it is: They said that further to the ice rink comment, no one is disputing that an ice rink could or should be at La Macaza and used for suitable medium-security prisoners. The debate is that Paul Bernardo should not be living in a medium-security facility at all, period. That is about as clear as you can get it, they wrote. This move should never have taken place.

I pause there to note that the discussion and the study of the Bernardo transfer commenced, I believe—and, Clerk, you can correct me if I'm wrong—in October 2023. As it stands now, based on the subcommittee report that we are debating, we don't even have a date for the report to be completed. That is how little consideration is being given to this committee, to Canadians generally and the victims specifically about the issue of the Bernardo transfer. We would rather talk about everything other than Bernardo and Magnotta.

It's clear to me that those are the marching orders of the Bloc. To their credit, the NDP voted for the six meetings. I will give them credit for that. The Bloc inexplicably put forward the motion to reduce it from six meetings to one, and the Liberals voted for it. They were all too happy to strike their witnesses, who they had said were all too necessary for this discussion.

Not only did we go from six meetings to one, but that meeting has not yet been scheduled. When is the meeting going to be scheduled? I ask that rhetorically, Chair, but when is the meeting going to be scheduled? When? When are we going to have this meeting? Are we going to go into the fall of 2024, or are we just going to have more pushing it down the way? It's pretty clear to me that the Liberals are happy to work with the Bloc and in some cases with the NDP.

It sure was very quick to be agreed here at the outset of the meeting, when you gave the floor to the Liberals—or when the past chair gave the floor to the Liberals, I should say—that there was an agreement there: “We don't want to talk about this. We want to talk about something else.”

We as Conservatives do want to talk about this, and I'll tell you right now, victims want to talk about this, and Canadians want to talk about this, and my Conservative colleagues and I will not lift our foot off the gas pedal when it comes to talking about this.

The letter continues, saying that it is the designation of prisoners of this calibre that is under severe scrutiny and question, not the facilities and amenities at La Macaza.

This paragraph absolutely nails it. They said that it is easy to get diverted and off track. When not directly impacted by these decisions, it is easy to brush things aside and simply say this isn't our job.

Again, I go back to the fact that I hope nobody in this room has ever been a victim of offences of this nature. If you have, I don't know what it's like, but I'm sorry for what you're going through. I can, however, say that people here are speaking from their hearts when talking about the direct impact. “Do not brush this aside.” This is what people are telling us when they come to us.

• (1005)

There were other letters that came to my inbox. I know they were cc'd to other members of this committee, and they didn't mince words—they know what those letters said.

It's so easy to say that we can't change this, or it's out of our hands. Well, it's quite easy to do that when you just delay the meeting. We don't want to talk about Bernardo now; let's talk about it in the fall. We don't want to talk about Magnotta now; let's talk about it in the fall. We have a draft report; let's not even discuss it. We don't want Bernardo in the news.

It's clear the Liberals don't want Bernardo in the news. The Liberals don't want Magnotta in the news. For some reason, the Bloc is prepared to help them with this. I don't understand.

They go on to say that it's so easy to say that we can't change this, or that it's out of our hands, but that as politicians, it is—capitalized “is”—our job.

I couldn't agree more. It is our job. People expect us to deal with things head on. We are parliamentarians. We are expected to deal with the tough issues. We are expected to say this: Commissioner Anne Kelly, why was Paul Bernardo transferred in the middle of the night? Commissioner Kelly, why wasn't adequate victim notification made? Commissioner Kelly, more information has come up about the Magnotta transfer—internal memorandums now—talking about the fact that we want to keep this quiet, even though when there is a heightened public interest, there is a basis to release this information.

If there is not a heightened public interest in the transfer of an offender with the notoriety and severe offences of Luka Magnotta, I'm not sure where that public interest would exist. His offences rank as some of the worst that anybody in this room has ever heard of. I feel sorry for the investigators who had to deal with that, for the people who had to see the photographs of that time after time.

Yet, here we are, saying, no, it doesn't reach the threshold of notoriety. We don't want to do that. I will go back to the letter. It says that as politicians, it is our job. I couldn't agree more. We are failing to do our job here.

I ask rhetorically, Chair, what will it take for this committee to talk about Magnotta? What will it take for this committee to talk about Bernardo? What will it take for this committee to table the draft report on the Bernardo transfer? I've been here for only two and a half years, so perhaps somebody can correct me afterwards. I'm trying to think of a time when it took so long for a study report to come to committee, especially after the hearings had wrapped up.

I believe, Clerk, you can help me out here. I'm not sure of the last date of the Bernardo hearings—likely sometime in January or February, maybe even in the fall they had come up. At this rate, we won't be dealing with the Bernardo transfer report until next fall, literally years after the transfer occurred, months after the committee did its business.

Why is this committee afraid to deal with the report? I'll go back to the letter again. It is our job. What are we so afraid of?

I return to the letter. It's your job to listen, help and implement change, it says.

Isn't it ever? It is our job to listen, to help and to implement change. If we won't listen to victims, who will we listen to? These victims saw this committee go from six meetings to the Liberals cheering on the amendment to go to one meeting.

• (1010)

Now we have the consequence of that, yet we still show up here and there's still no desire to address this.

One must wonder why they don't just want to rip off the band-aid. Let's just deal with Bernardo and let's just deal with Magnotta and be done with it. It happens; these transfers happen in the dead of night. It's almost like Correctional Service doesn't want anybody to know.

Commissioner Kelly, I'll tell you this: Canadians want to know, and I'll go even further and tell you that Canadians have a right to know. They have a right to know where their tax dollars are going and whether their tax dollars are being used effectively in managing some of the most dangerous and most notorious individuals. This is especially true when we talk about the use of drones in jail.

It's no secret that people like Bernardo and Magnotta in medium, and even in maximum.... I believe that over 150 cellphones were seized from one maximum-security jail in Canada in one year. Commissioner Kelly and her team have some answering to do. How is it that 150 cellphones were in maximum security in one year? I can get the exact statistic on this. I have it somewhere here. There are answers needed.

A simple fence would prevent it. When you have somebody like a Bernardo or a Magnotta in medium security, and not even in maximum.... It's a lot easier to get things like ceramic knives into medium security. I was in a jail a couple of weeks ago, and a drone had just dropped ceramic knives in there.

• (1015)

The Chair: Pardon me, Mr. Caputo.

The time scheduled for our witnesses has passed, so on behalf of the committee I would like to thank all our witnesses for their extreme forbearance.

You are released, if you wish to go. You can stay and enjoy the proceedings, but please feel free to go if that's your will.

Thank you.

Mr. Caputo, you may carry on.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Thank you.

I'm going to give people a moment to say goodbye or thank you to the witnesses, if that's okay.

Can we suspend, please? It might be appropriate.

The Chair: The committee will suspend at the call of the chair.

• (1015)

(Pause)

• (1025)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order.

Before I give the floor back to Mr. Caputo, Mr. MacDonald has advised me that there are 4-H members in the audience.

Welcome to the thrust and parry of Parliament.

We shall carry on with Mr. Caputo.

Please go ahead.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I was speaking about a letter that was written on March 11, 2024, and in my view this letter really animates a number of the concerns that I have and that this committee ought to have, and while—welcome to our new colleague here—the committee ought to have these concerns, I'm saddened that it doesn't. I think that part of what this letter talks about is just how far we have gone astray as a committee. I think there are individual committee members who may have more responsibility than others.

I go on with the March 11 letter. They say it is our job to listen, help and implement change. Now, I'm going to read an exchange that took place here during the Bernardo meetings. This is from November 27, 2023. It may actually be November 27, 2024, by the time we actually get this report tabled. Actually, this intervention is between you, Mr. Chair, and the commissioner of Correctional Service Canada, Anne Kelly. I quote, member, Mr. McKinnon.

I notice a common thread in questions from my Conservative colleagues. There seems to be, still, an impression that somehow the reclassification of Mr. Bernardo to medium security is somehow a mitigation of his sentence. Can you tell me if the pillows are softer in medium security?

Her answer: "No, they are not."

With all due respect, I think it really misses the point to ask whether the pillows are softer in medium security. In Canada, a lot of people don't know this, but there is no sentencing principle of retribution. There is no sentencing principle of punishment per se. Some people have disagreed on this a bit, but, "Are the pillows softer in medium security?" With all due respect to the chair—and I know or I believe that there are victims watching or people who are interested in watching—this is exactly the type of thing that is dismissive of what people have gone through as victims, what the French family and the Mahaffy family, and the other nameless, faceless, voiceless victims have gone through—people whose names we will never know.

I've often said our work, or the work I'm trying to do, is about giving names to the nameless, voices to the voiceless and faces to the faceless.

Mr. Chair, when we ask about whether the pillows are softer in medium security, I think we completely disregard that. I think we denigrate the victim experience. Frankly, I'm surprised, and maybe this was withdrawn, but it should have been withdrawn, because in my view, it is a slap in the face to victims. The commissioner answered, "No, they are not." Mr. McKinnon continued:

Under the conditions of his imprisonment, he was not sentenced to maximum security.

That's true, you can't be sentenced to a security level in Canada.

He was sentenced to serve a term of some number of years in a prison.

That's life imprisonment.

He wasn't sentenced to medium versus maximum, so the change of classification is really only about managing the prisoner, managing the conditions of the prison and determining whether or not this person is a danger within the institution. They do not, in any way, increase his opportunity to be put on the street or to escape.

• (1030)

The commissioner said, "That's right. Security classification is very important. It's to manage the inmates where they should be managed."

It's interesting that the commissioner says this, because escape risk is one of the things, if public safety risk is at "high", that will actually send you to maximum, if my memory serves. I'm not sure why the commissioner would say that.

The chair said, "They do not, in any way, increase his opportunity to be put on the street or to escape."

I've been to Millhaven Institution, where Paul Bernardo was previously kept. I saw the cell where he previously was. I've been to La Macaza. The two jails could not be any more different.

For those people who've not been in jail—which is most of the public and probably most of the people in this room—a maximum-security model is highly controlled. Particularly in new jails, there is minimal interaction with inmates.

When I was visiting a jail recently, the correctional officers would do a walk every hour. Every time they did their hourly walk, there was somebody present up above, who could use deadly force at any time to protect them. Once an hour, they would go through.

If somebody needed something, I presume they could make a request, because there was an open area where they could communicate with officers, but there was no hand-to-hand interaction. There was face-to-face interaction, but there was a distance between them.

When you go to La Macaza, it is completely different. You don't have the double-door model, as I'll call it. In maximum security, it's always two doors. When one door is open, the other door must remain shut. When we're talking about escape risk, actually, I'm surprised that the commissioner didn't pick up on this. It is harder to go through two doors than it is to go through one door. In order to get to an inmate at Millhaven, for instance—to actually see them on the living unit—I would estimate that we probably went through three, four or five locked doors, in addition to the external gate.

At La Macaza, once we went through the initial gate, we walked into the unit that housed Bernardo. I don't even think the door to the unit that housed Paul Bernardo was locked.

To say that there's no difference in escape risk is, in my view, completely misguided. Moreover, I think the point that was trying to be made is that there's no difference in perimeter security. That's true. The two external fences are exactly the same. The difference is what is between a person who's incarcerated and that external fence. In maximum security, you probably have to go through one

or two fences, one or two gates, or both in order to get to that external fence. In medium security, somebody can get there.

The chair continued to ask the commissioner. He said, "Okay. The day-to-day experience of Mr. Bernardo in medium security is—

• (1035)

The Chair: Mr. Caputo, the chair did not ask any of those questions.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Are you not the chair?

The Chair: The chair did not ask the question. I asked those questions as a member. It's erroneous for you to say that the chair asked those questions.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Okay, well, the chair as he then was, a member of this committee, asked the following:

Okay. The day-to-day experience of Mr. Bernardo in medium security is, except for the increased access to programs, essentially the same as it would be under maximum security.

This is what the commissioner said:

Yes. He gets up. It's the same food. It's the same type of cell. It's the same bedding. Many of the same things that you would have in maximum security are there in medium security.

I could not disagree more with the commissioner. I'm going to come back to this, because I have a quote here. This is from Mr. Danson, and he speaks about the comments of the chair, as he then was as a member of this committee, asking questions. The date on that was December 4, 2023. I'm reading:

The glib comment about pillows is... If I shared that with the families, that would be gut-wrenching for them. That would be a shock to them—to make light of this by talking about whether the pillows are softer or harder in medium security versus maximum security.

To suggest that transferring Bernardo to medium security does not disconnect us from the fact that he is a psychopath, to me, is just words. The fact of the matter is that he will have a lot more freedom and a lot more rights in medium security.

I'll go back and repeat what the chair said as he then was, as a member of the committee:

Okay. The day-to-day experience of Mr. Bernardo in medium security is, except for the increased access to programs, essentially the same as it would be under maximum security.

The commissioner answered:

Yes. He gets up. It's the same food. It's the same type of cell. It's the same bedding.

I'll bet it's even the same pillow. I'm sorry; that wasn't said by the commissioner. She said:

Many of the same things that you would have in maximum security are there in medium security.

With all due respect to the commissioner, this is completely wrong. When a person walks into Millhaven or any maximum-security jail, the security level is like a nine out of 10, if you want to put it like that. There is a super-max jail in Canada that Correctional Service is almost reluctant to send people to now, even if they attack officers, but that's another point.

When one goes to medium security, once they're inside the fences—and yes, there are large fences; it's still jail, there are still cells, and the cells are exactly the same—a person's ability to roam about is substantially different. When a person is out of their cell in medium security, they can walk around to the workshop. If they're not doing work, they can use the gym. There is so much more freedom of movement, I'd say 20 times more freedom of movement, yet Commissioner Kelly is saying yes to answer that question.

I would love for the media to go into both institutions, I don't know why we wouldn't. If you want to shine a light on the difference, then shine a light. Perhaps members of this committee should go into both so they could see the difference. Maybe we could even feel the pillows.

It's "essentially the same as it would be under maximum security." The commissioner answers, "Yes. He gets up ." That happens in both maximum and medium. "It is the same food." Yes, it's the same food in maximum and medium. "It's the same type of cell." Yes, it is the same type of cell in maximum and medium. The cells are the same. They're the same size, with presumably the same mattress and the same pillows. "It's the same bedding." Yes, it is. "Many of the same things that you would have in maximum security are there in medium security."

What it's not saying is that many of the things you have in maximum security are not in medium security. In maximum security, if a person leaves their cell or their unit, they frequently have to go through a metal detector to get through. Given the number of drones that are dropping ceramic knives, that is a huge concern to officers, because the metal detectors won't even pick up those knives, but that's another issue, and we can get to that another day. I'd love to hear from the commissioner on that point. Well, we did hear from her on that point, and her answer was most unsatisfactory.

A person in medium security can walk freely inside the unit to outside of the unit. In maximum security, the correctional officers are in what's colloquially called a bubble, which is plexiglass, bulletproof glass.

- (1040)

Actually, there are firearms present in there.

I could not believe this when I saw it, but in medium security, it was a horseshoe similar to the size of this horseshoe here. It was a bit more curved, and there was one officer here, one officer roughly where the chair is and one officer to the other side.

This is the interesting part. In order to get to where the officers are, there wasn't even a door. The platform was probably the level of this table. A person had to go up two steps. That's what it looked like. That's omitted from Commissioner Kelly's comments.

Offenders like Bernardo, Magnotta and others presumably could go up those two steps. Correctional Service wouldn't even put in a door to protect the officers. The officers asked for a door, and they said no. Here's the thing, Mr. Chair. On that horseshoe, they have people who are coming from behind them. They're coming from over their right shoulder if they're on the right, or their left shoulder if they're on the left. They have a panoramic mirror, but your eyes can't focus on two places, so if somebody does something in front of you and you focus there, you don't know what's coming, so what is it? There's an entrance right there, and within three feet—three feet—of that entrance is a correctional officer.

Now, I would say to anybody on this committee, I would say to Commissioner Kelly in talking about it and implying that it is the same, that is not the same. I would not turn my back on Paul Bernardo, and I would not turn my back on Luka Magnotta, but we expect our brave correctional officers to do that at a time when drones are dropping ceramic knives in like they're candy. People are getting mistaken about whether the drone is actually dropping for them or for somebody else. It's that bad. "Is that your drone or my drone?" It's actually gotten that bad. People may think I'm being facetious. I'm not. It has gotten that bad. These officers have to turn their backs to them, without a door.

With all due respect to Commissioner Kelly, when the chair, as he is now, said, "essentially the same as it would be under maximum security", and she said, "Yes," she did not talk about these incredibly different changes.

I would ask this rhetorical question, Chair: I would not turn my back on the Bernardos and Magnottas of the world, so why should these correctional officers have to do the same? Why?

In maximum there are high-powered firearms and all sorts of weapons. In medium, they don't have those weapons present, and corrections won't even pay for a door. It's shocking. It's disgusting. It is a complete slap in the face to the brave women and men who work at La Macaza, who not only have to deal with people like Paul Bernardo and Luka Magnotta but also have to manage them physically and deal with all that comes with managing these people psychologically.

It's no doubt an environment that beckons trauma for the people dealing with it, and corrections won't even put in a door. There would need to be—I believe there are three units—six doors, one on each side. That might make the half-second difference to prevent somebody from walking straight up those two steps and stabbing an officer with a ceramic knife or other weapon that was dropped by a drone.

That's another thing, too. Corrections doesn't want to pay for razors. They showed me the razors. Razors are typically used to make weapons. It's the most common. You take a toothbrush, melt it and insert the razor. I had an officer tell me about how bad it was to see somebody who was slashed from the ear to the mouth with one of those razors.

There are razors that are tamper-proof. They're small. They gave me one. It was tiny. I have to look into this, but I was told that corrections doesn't want to pay for those razors, because they cost more money.

• (1045)

Again, how many of us would work in that horseshoe with the Paul Bernardos and Luka Magnottas of the world, who can easily fashion a weapon out of a toothbrush and a razor blade? Is the safety of our officers not worth the additional cost of a razor blade that would shatter if you attempted to make a weapon out of it? Through you, Chair, I say this directly to the commissioner of corrections.

It's bad enough that drones are dropping things rampantly. If you want to talk about drones and security, it befuddles me that we do not have jamming technology, so that people like Bernardo and Magnotta don't have access to those things. The response from Corrections has been nothing short of a joke when it comes to drones. In one institution, they showed me the only drones they could jam were drones that were registered and were from the manufacturer of the jamming machine. You can't make this up. How many people who are using their drones to drop drugs and weapons into penitentiaries register the drones? It's zero, yet we expect our officers to work there without a door when it comes to the Bernardos and Magnottas of the world.

Take solace, though: The pillows aren't softer.

I'll go back to the letter now. They say that when they first got word of Bernardo's move, they contacted several politicians of all different parties.

That was a pretty wise move.

I was put in touch with an organization called My Voice, My Choice, which I'm sure many people around this table have been in touch with. These are brave women who have spoken about their traumatic experiences as victims. Not only are they victims, but they are also suffering from what I and other people would call secondary or systemic victimization, like the victims of Bernardo and Magnotta are probably going through, dare I speculate, in these circumstances, in which the system reopens that scar, that victimization, even if the scar is not completely closed. It just gets opened again and again.

I'd like to give a shout-out to the people from My Voice, My Choice. They contacted people to get things changed when it came to publication bans, and they contacted all parties, which I remembered as I was reading this letter.

The writers said they contacted several politicians of all parties. It wasn't their concern which party was better or worse but, rather, which party would listen and help get this horrible decision reversed.

We could have had six meetings to do this. In fact, the Liberals came in and said we would have six meetings. Not only would we have six meetings, but they wanted more witnesses and they would have added them. It was fairly non-partisan, I thought. The Conservatives said we wanted the meeting. The Bloc signed on for an emergency meeting, and the NDP said they wanted the six meetings, and then the Bloc inexplicably said no; they only wanted one meeting, and the Liberals gladly withdrew their witnesses and went to one meeting.

It doesn't matter which party, say the writers of this letter. They want this horrible decision reversed. However, we couldn't actually even hear from the victims on that point, because the victims were the witnesses excised from the witness list the Liberals were all too happy to agree to initially for six meetings but now only wanted for one meeting.

How is that victim-centred? How is that not contributing to secondary victimization? There is no doubt, in my view, that it is contributing to secondary victimization. More concretely, it's a complete slap in the face to the victims who were watching and, as a result, wrote this very punchy letter, which says it a thousand times better than I ever could have.

• (1050)

The letter goes on to say that it was very clear that day that the safety and well-being of the public is not a concern to certain people and their designated parties.

We, as parliamentarians, should be concerned. I believe I know who this letter is referring to. I'll let the public judge for themselves. We've had a few personal attacks today. I'm not going to go there. People can watch the video themselves and see who they believe acted appropriately and who didn't. They know who they are, and in their heart, I would hope they know whether they acted appropriately, especially with the dismissive language that was used, in my view.

The letter goes on to say that that personal agenda supersedes any of the victims, their rights and the crimes committed against them. In other words, these three women—victims, as defined in the Criminal Code, in my view—said that the “personal agenda” of certain members around this table got in the way of our talking about what was important, of our talking about what matters.

I'm going to say that again.

I would be remiss, too, Mr. Chair, if I might interrupt.... I know this isn't relevant, but I believe we have some young people from 4-H who have joined us as well. Is that correct? I know that a few of them are from my riding of Kamloops—Thompson—Caribou.

Welcome. Mr. Kurek is coming to say hello. I don't think he's ever had contact with an animal in his life, so—

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Frank Caputo: —you can educate him. Just look at his boots, and you'll know.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Caputo.

On behalf of the committee, I welcome our students. Once again, welcome to the thrust and parry of Parliament.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Returning back, that personal agenda supersedes the victims, their rights, and the crimes against them. These are victims saying that people around this table put themselves and their political agendas above them. You know who you are. They put themselves and their political agendas above them. Not only that, but afterwards, this committee refuses to study the Magnotta transfer that we all agreed to with the one meeting, which, as I noted, was from gutting the six meetings that the Liberals initially agreed to. We haven't even gotten to that meeting.

The victims are saying, “Politics is superseding victims.” What are we doing? We are not even studying the very thing we agreed to study for the one meeting. At this rate, we won't study it until the fall. In fact, the Liberals and Bloc would be content if we never studied this at all. More concretely, we're not even presenting the draft reports on the Bernardo study. What could possibly be more of putting a political agenda before victims than that?

There's a report ready to go. It's ready to be discussed. We should be dealing with this, yet the members of this committee will go on today with their daily lives, not having to live with the trauma that the victims of the Bernardo and Magnotta offences have to deal with. Many of them are living nameless, faceless and voiceless. This is the respect we show them by not even getting to this report.

Mr. Danson's reference to the pillow on the chair, when he appeared before the committee, was made on December 4 last year. It is now May 23. Six months have elapsed since that reference was made. We don't even have a report to discuss that, let alone a report that has been made public. That lies at the feet of the Liberals, with the Liberals' hands being held by the Bloc. Today, the hands were held by the NDP when it came to not hearing from witnesses regarding auto theft.

Just for reference, Mr. Chair, I'm returning to the letter. Just to be clear, those who voted against us today... I presume those who voted for the one meeting were the Liberals, at least two of whom are here today, and the Bloc, the member who is here today. The NDP member was Mr. Julian. He did not vote. He voted for the six meetings, in fairness to him. Just to be clear, those who voted against us today are telling the victims and their families that what has happened to them wasn't that bad. Enough time has passed now, and the monster who committed these crimes against them has done the time and deserves to be rewarded—very key words there—and live better than most Canadians today.

Let's dissect that. I'm going to go on to the next line here. It says, “I want you to reread that again” in bold. Then it says that Paul Bernardo is living better than most Canadians today.

I said that same thing, and I really heard about it. This is coming from the victims, so let's dissect this. You are telling the victims and their families that what has happened to them wasn't that bad. This is that secondary trauma, that secondary victimization I'm talking about.

This committee will not do what—

• (1055)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Michaud.

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

There aren't many of us in the meeting room, but I must say that the microphones are working quite well, and we don't even need to put in our earpieces because we can hear Mr. Caputo very well. I don't think he needs to yell to make his speech. He could lower the tone, which would be good for everyone.

He could also refrain from repeating the same things five or six times, because we're starting to get the picture.

Having said that, I have some questions for him.

What is the Conservative Party's position on Bill S-210?

Is he filibustering today because he doesn't want to study this bill?

In answering my questions, he could say something other than what he's talking about now.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Michaud.

I would certainly urge Mr. Caputo to keep his volume down, on behalf of the members and certainly on behalf of the interpreters.

I would also advise that we could get back on topic better, but go ahead.

Mr. Frank Caputo: With all due respect, Mr. Chair, I think we're directly on topic when it comes to this.

It's interesting that my colleague from the Bloc said that we're starting to get the point. That's what came through the interpretation. If we're just starting to get to the point, maybe I should repeat it a little more often. If this is what it takes to get to the victims, if we're just starting to hear what the victims are dealing with—

The Chair: Mr. Caputo, could you turn your mic around?

Mr. Frank Caputo: I was told I was too loud.

The Chair: The interpreters can't hear you when you put the mic towards the other side of the table.

Don't shout into the mic. Speak normally, so that the interpreters can do their work.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Again, on that—

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Just don't yell.

The Chair: Mr. Genuis has a point of order.

• (1100)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you. I think that speaking with intensity and passion is actually what is normal for Mr. Caputo. If the goal is for him to do the normal thing, maybe it's helpful if the chair specifies.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Genuis.

Let the record show that, Mr. Caputo, if you try to keep your volume within.... I don't want to use the word "normal", but please keep it down, so that the interpreters' ears are protected.

Thank you.

Mr. Frank Caputo: I'm sure we have the interpreters in the back there. I have a voice that carries, I'm told. I will keep the microphone—

The Chair: Also, Mr. Caputo, please don't touch the mic.

Mr. Frank Caputo: With all due respect, Chair, we can't have it both ways. You can't say, don't speak—

The Chair: I'm not saying, don't speak. I'm saying, don't touch the microphone, as it causes feedback. It causes problems. All right?

Speak in a plausibly loud voice that they can hear but not too loud so that it hurts anybody. Don't touch the mic, please.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Okay. Well, I apologize to the interpreters if I've hurt their ears—

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: They're just trying to do their job. That's so condescending.

The Chair: Please don't be insulting to the interpreters.

Mr. Frank Caputo: I am not being condescending. I am not—

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Don't be condescending to people who are just trying to do their job in a safe manner.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Ms. O'Connell, I didn't interrupt you. I would appreciate the same courtesy.

The Chair: Let's avoid the back-and-forth, please.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Chair, I do apologize if I've hurt anybody's ears. I will try to modulate my voice accordingly and still speak with the passion that I believe—

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): That was slightly less condescending.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Bittle, I didn't interrupt you here. You've just arrived. I would appreciate the same courtesy from you as well. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Caputo, please avoid the back-and-forth. If you have an issue with Mr. Bittle, please raise it with the chair.

Mr. Frank Caputo: With all due respect, Mr. Chair, I was speaking, and I have the floor. I am raising it with you because all comments go through you.

Through you, I did not interrupt Mr. Bittle. I don't intend to interrupt Mr. Bittle.

Mr. Chris Bittle: You know you do.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Through you, Mr. Chair, I would ask him to not interrupt me and afford me the same courtesy that I intend to afford to him.

Mr. Chris Bittle: I can give you the exact same courtesy you give me.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Shall we get to your votes, Mr. Bittle—

The Chair: Mr. Bittle and Mr. Caputo, please stop.

Gentlemen, please—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Bittle's mic keeps turning on, and he doesn't have the floor.

The Chair: Can we please—

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: So does yours.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: It's amazing.

The Chair: Mr. Genuis—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: So does yours, by the way.

The Chair: Mr. Genuis and Ms. O'Connell, let us maintain some order here.

Mr. Caputo, I believe you have the floor.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Genuis, no side comments, please.

Mr. Caputo, go ahead.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I go back to this letter that I was speaking about. Let's repeat that last paragraph again, because I think it's quite germane to what we just observed here. They said that, just to be clear, the members who voted against them today were telling the victims and their families that what happened to them wasn't that bad; enough time has passed now, and the monster who committed these crimes against them has done the time and deserves to be rewarded and live better than most Canadians today. They wanted us to read that again: Paul Bernardo is living better than most Canadians today.

Since we brought this up—I'm sorry; I'll try to keep my voice down—let's talk about Mr. Généreux's private member's bill, which would have sent Paul Bernardo back to maximum security. Let's talk about that. Let's talk about how members around this table voted. I voted in favour of it. Mr. Shipley voted in favour of it. Mr. Viersen voted in favour of it. How did the Liberals vote? They voted against. Every one of them voted against. The NDP voted against it. The Bloc voted against it. This is exactly what, in my view, is being contemplated by this letter.

Moving on in the letter, they said they prayed that nothing like this would ever happen to us or our families, but they could say with certainty that if the tables were turned, the meeting that day would have had a whole different outcome.

I think it's actually a very charitable thing to say in the circumstances, “We pray that nothing like this ever happens to your families.”

Now, this is the whole point that was being made in the letter: Victims are experiencing something differently. Victims have met with members—I'm sorry, but my voice was getting loud again. Victims have met with members of this committee, the victims in the Bernardo matter. I know because I was cc'd on the emails that were sent to members of this committee, who seem more intent on making a joke out of things than treating this issue with the dignity and seriousness it deserves. We weren't there. We weren't them, and what are we doing? We're saying that we're not getting to the study of Magnotta that we all agreed to—from six meetings to one—just that one meeting, we don't want to get to it. What are we all saying? We don't want to table the Bernardo report, even though it looks like meetings wrapped up in December, January or maybe February.

Clerk, you can advise us of the dates, I'm sure.

However, I pause to say this. What if they were our sisters? What if they were our brothers? I have two sisters. I have a daughter. I have lots of friends, I think.

• (1105)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: On division.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Frank Caputo: That was pretty good.

If this were us, would we be prepared to make the same claim? Would we be prepared to vote the same way on Bernard Généreux's private member's bill, which would have sent Paul Bernardo back to maximum security? Would we have been prepared to do that? I don't believe for a second that we would have. That is the problem with the approach taken by the Liberals and the Bloc when it came to the reduction of six meetings to one, and when it comes to the subcommittee report we have before us, which doesn't have either the Magnotta meeting or the completion of the Bernardo study on the list. If the victim were our brother, sister, friend, family or anybody we knew, it's my view that our approach would be radically different.

I'm going back to the letter: “Our best friend's voice may have been stolen from her, but let us be very clear: She is as loud as ever and will forever be heard.” Yes, your best friend's voice will forever

be heard. “She will live on, and I hope that we will not forget. We will never stop fighting for her and for the justice of her and all victims alike.” It's signed Marcia Penner, Tennille Hilton and Laura Murray.

Yes, there are things that are more important than asking whether the pillows are softer in medium security. There are things that are more important than what we do here today in the eyes of some. In my eyes, it's more important to address the fact that this committee undertook a study of the transfer of Paul Bernardo and doesn't want to report on it, or that this committee undertook the position that it would study the Luka Magnotta transfer, despite changing from six meetings to one. That still hasn't been scheduled. This letter, in my view, says it all.

With that, I'll give my time to someone else here. Thank you.

• (1110)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Caputo.

Next on the list is Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Chair.

I'll be relatively brief here, but I want to add a couple of quick comments. There has been a desire for other members to offer commentary, and to do so through points of order. I don't understand why they don't just speak to the issue in the usual fashion.

I want to add that what we're doing here is pushing for the committee to complete its report on the Paul Bernardo prison transfer. My colleague Mr. Caputo has done a great deal of excellent work on the issue of prison transfers, which includes going to prisons and understanding the situation that is on the ground in those places.

He's talked about the importance of getting it right when it comes to protecting the rights of victims and ensuring that heinous criminals remain in the appropriate level of security prison.

In the context of this committee, we are saying that, whatever one's view on that issue, it is appropriate that the committee, having done this study, should provide a report to the House. There is a draft report, and it should simply be completed and presented to the House. Liberals are trying to block this report.

That's the context. Conservatives are fighting for the release of the report on the Bernardo prison transfer. We have proposed an amendment to the subcommittee on agenda and procedure's report that calls for the release of that report. We're certainly prepared to discuss, engage and negotiate on all other matters, but we are insisting on the release of the Bernardo report and that that work be completed. I hope members will see the value of that substantively and will work with us to realize that objective.

I did want to add to the conversation by saying that this is another case where we have Trudeau Liberals trying to avoid responsibility for what are in fact government decisions. Persistently across a range of different areas, Liberals want you to believe that they are not responsible for the things that happen under their watch. Justin Trudeau has been the Prime Minister of this country for nine years, yet he denies responsibility for any of the things that happened under his tenure.

In this particular case, with the question of prisoner transfers, it is up to Parliament to establish rules and to propose and consider amendments to the law that deal with the level of security that a person experiences in prison.

The decision not to pass a law is a policy choice, just as the decision to pass a law in that regard is a policy choice. All of the other systems and people who work within the public service operate within a framework of law established by Parliament.

We have a system of rule of law and parliamentary supremacy, so public servants don't make arbitrary decisions without reference to law and policy; they act within laws that are established. As you would expect, Conservatives proposed a change to the law in Parliament as it relates to these issues of security.

That law was proposed by a Conservative MP, Mr. Bernard Généreux. The bill is Bill C-351. Those members of the public who are interested in this issue of the prison transfer can and should consult the appropriate sites for details on what happened with this bill, what was said in the various debates, how it unfolded and what the final vote on that bill was.

Sadly, it did not pass; and it didn't pass because the other parties voted against it—all of them, as Mr. Caputo mentioned.

• (1115)

I'll just very simply read the summary, so there's no doubt about what this bill would have done:

This enactment amends the Corrections and Conditional Release Act to require that inmates who have been found to be dangerous offenders or convicted of more than one first degree murder be assigned a security classification of maximum and confined in a maximum security penitentiary or area in a penitentiary.

If this bill had become law, Paul Bernardo would have been sent back to maximum-security prison. Parliament did have a chance to vote precisely on this matter. The bill didn't name any individual, but it invited the House to make a determination on a matter of law related specifically to the circumstances that were at play in the Bernardo transfer case.

That bill is no more. If it had passed, it would have gone to a committee, perhaps this committee or perhaps the justice committee; I'm not sure. However, had it passed, it would have been referred to a committee and at least for study.

I would submit to members that, at second reading, the vote is not on this specific text but on the principle of the bill. The principle that was being considered with Bill C-351 was the principle of the bill, but there would have been plenty of time for study and amendment. I know there are cases in which members do vote at second reading for a bill that they think merits further study, even if they have concerns about aspects of the text and even if they might

well plan to vote a different way at third reading. Second reading is a chance to consider the principle before the House.

Members of other parties voted against it.

During debate on Bill C-351, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Mr. Kevin Lamoureux, spoke to the bill. That will surprise some members, but Mr. Lamoureux did speak to Bill C-351.

He said:

It is one of the planks the Conservative Party's members talk about. If we remember, there are four things that they talk about, saying these are the things they would do if they were—

He said “heaven forbid”.

—to form government. One of them is to abolish crime.

He continued:

I am not too sure exactly how they are going to abolish crime. I think they have some sort of wand or, through legislation, they are going to make it illegal to commit a crime and, therefore, if it is illegal to commit a crime, crime will go away. I suspect that is what they are thinking.

Those were the profound reflections of the member for Winnipeg North in the House of Commons.

He is right, to a point, that the Conservative priorities we have been articulating in Parliament are to “axe the tax”, “build the homes”, “fix the budget” and “stop the crime”. “Stop the crime” is one of those four.

Mr. Lamoureux is wondering how, exactly, the Conservatives will go about stopping the crime. The modest proposal I would maybe start with is that we will repeal the Liberal policies that have demonstrably led to an increase in crime. Violent crime was dropping in this country prior to the change in government.

Liberals made specific policy changes, based on their ideology, and those policy changes had consequences. The trajectory of crime in this country was reversed. We've talked about some of these statistics. There's the astronomical growth in crime under this government, or, in particular, certain areas of crime, such as auto theft. I was sharing statistics earlier on the numbers around auto theft.

• (1120)

I didn't get to mention the numbers for Winnipeg, but since I'm referencing Mr. Lamoureux's comments, I should say that the rate of auto theft in Winnipeg went up by 62.5% during the time the Liberals were in government.

What are we to make of that, Chair?

The 62.5% increase in auto theft in Winnipeg is not of the same magnitude as the increases in other areas, like the well over 200% increase in the greater Toronto area and the over 100% increase in Montreal.

Crime has gone up dramatically under the Liberals. The Liberal parliamentary secretary is asking, as part of the debate on Bill C-351, what Conservatives would do to stop the crime.

Well, we would start by stopping the Liberal policies that have led to an increase in crime. There may well be more to do after that, but that would seem like a logical place to start.

In the course of debate on Bill C-351.... Again, we had a bill before Parliament that would have addressed precisely this problem. The Liberals want to know how it could happen that a person would be transferred from maximum security to medium security. Well, how could it happen that they voted against the bill that would solve the problem?

It's a very simple matter that could have been addressed with a vote at second reading on the bill. Any members with specific concerns about specific mechanics could well have brought those concerns to the committee study and maybe proposed reasonable amendments to the bill.

Sadly, Bill C-351 was defeated. When given the chance, other parties voted against fixing this problem. They voted, in effect, in favour of continuing to allow prison transfers for Bernardo and people like him, from maximum to medium security.

I will say that, in particular, this bill would not just have prevented things like this from happening again. This bill would have required that inmates who fit a particular description be assigned a maximum-security classification. The effect of this is that Mr. Bernardo would have been sent back to a maximum-security prison as soon as this legislation passed.

In any event, this bill was defeated.

Our position is that the report related to the prison transfer, which has now been sitting on the shelf for six months at this committee, be published. Because of the rules of in camera, members and staff are not able to share that report with the public. The committee should finish its work on that report. We know drafting instructions were given and, as such, we can presume there is a report that is ready, but it has not been tabled in the House.

To honour the victims and, hopefully, to hear some concrete recommendations, I suggest we proceed with that report. That is our position. That is what we're establishing through this process.

I hope we'll see support for my amendment, which would ensure that work gets done.

I hope the report contains a recommendation that measures like Bill C-351 are reconsidered. Of course, procedurally, I don't think can happen in this Parliament, but you can be sure that in the next Parliament, members will be fully engaged with these issues of protecting the rights of victims.

A Conservative government led by Pierre Poilievre will put the rights of victims first. We will ensure that victims who have suffered at the hands of violent criminals are not shocked and revictimized by finding out that in the middle of the night the person who brutalized their family was transferred to a medium-security prison and they weren't even engaged in the process in any way.

You can be sure we will use the legislative authority that the House has and not constantly pass off responsibility, as this government has always done.

• (1125)

Chair, I've spoken mainly on Bill C-351 and the prison transfer. There are a number of other issues dealt with in this amendment, and one of them is auto theft. Maybe that's what he's going to focus on, or maybe it's something else. I don't know, but I'm eager to hear from my colleague Mr. Viersen, who has forgotten more than I will ever know about cars in general. I will cede the floor, but I'd like to be added back at the bottom of the list.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Genuis.

We will go now to Mr. Viersen.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I came here this morning interested to hear from the ministers about what the Liberal government is going to do, is planning to do or is doing to reduce auto theft in this country.

Auto theft has been a major problem in Canada, and we have seen, for as long as the Liberal government has been in power, a dramatic uptick. If you were to graph auto thefts in this country, you would see that auto thefts were trending down to 2015, and at that point there's a shift from trending down to trending upward, with dramatic increases in the last number of years.

I recently had the opportunity to sit down with the acting chief for my hometown of Barrhead, an RCMP officer, just to have a discussion around auto theft, what the trends are and what some examples are of the problems we have in our neighbourhood around auto theft. It was very interesting to have a meeting with him.

He brought a particular case along with him. He said that this individual had likely stolen 15 cars in the last 10 years, had been charged 148 times, had been convicted 43 times and had the remainder of those charges basically dropped or plead out. He complained about the fact that this was a revolving door. He also noted that the bail system was completely broken and was causing a dramatic amount of.... This was one individual they had charged 148 times. He lives in our community, and a disproportionate amount of police resources goes into policing one individual.

He told me that multiple vehicles had been stolen by this individual while he was out on bail. He was arrested in possession of a stolen vehicle, was put in jail, was released on bail and was awaiting his trial, only to steal multiple more vehicles. He said that there was a bundling, and by the time the court date came, the prosecution would bundle all the charges together. He would plead guilty to some in order for the other ones to just disappear. Therefore, the possession of stolen property, which he was charged with multiple times, would get bundled together because he was arrested for it the first time, arrested the next time and the next time, but he hadn't had the court date for the first arrest; therefore, by the time he made it to court, they would just take multiple charges, bundle them together and enter into a plea deal around all of that.

The police officer was telling me that this gentleman has spent four out of the last 10 years in prison, all related to auto theft, but, interestingly, was never once charged with auto theft. He was charged with possession of stolen property, so that's an interesting feature.

I said to the police officer that it seemed interesting, and I asked why they weren't charging him with auto theft. He said that the trouble with the courts right now is that you have to prove the individual stole the vehicle.

● (1130)

Mr. Chris Bittle: That's how the law works.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Many times you can't prove—

Mr. Chris Bittle: It's always been that way.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: On a point of order, Chair, respectfully, you have been a bit selective about calling out members of one side and not those of the other side for crosstalk. I would ask you to aspire to fair treatment of all members.

He has Salma Zahid as the name card, but I don't think that's who it is. Mr. Bittle is a man of many disguises. He's here repeatedly heckling my colleague from Peace River—Westlock quite loudly, so much so that it would likely hurt people's ears if the mic was on. I would ask that you bring him to order and allow members to speak without interruption.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Genuis. Your point is taken. It was not sufficiently loud that I heard it. Perhaps I've gone into a coma. That may be the case.

I would call upon all members to respect the person who is speaking at the time. Thank you.

Mr. Bittle, is it on the same point of order?

Mr. Chris Bittle: It's a different point of order. I was hoping to express that through the history of criminal law, the Crown has to prove that a crime actually has been committed, which is what I was trying to suggest.

I was hoping that Mr. Viersen, who is a passionate champion of child protection—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I have a point of order.

That's not a point of order.

Mr. Chris Bittle: —with respect to pornography, could explain why he's filibustering our getting to a bill that will deal with the is-

sue he's been most passionate about in this Parliament and previous Parliaments.

I'm just curious.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bittle.

I believe there's another point of order. Is it a new point of order or on Mr. Bittle's point of order?

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): It's on Mr. Bittle's point of order, Chair.

I believe that would not have been classified as a point of order but rather descent into debate, and I hope that Mr. Bittle will be availing himself of the speaking list, Chair, which I know you are keeping close tabs on.

To conclude my point of order, I would just ask if you would outline what the speaking list is. I'm sure Mr. Viersen has a few more things to say.

The Chair: Thank you.

As said previously, after Mr. Genuis, it was Mr. Viersen. Then it was Mr. Shipley and Mr. Motz, but they are no longer here, so it's Mr. Kurek and then Mr. Genuis again.

Mr. Viersen, please carry on.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair.

As I was saying, the police officer told me about the fact that the courts have made it increasingly difficult to prove that somebody has stolen the car, so he said in all of these cases, the individual was found driving a stolen vehicle and was charged with being in possession of stolen property. There was no doubt in the police officer's mind that this individual had, in fact, stolen the vehicle; however, the individual was never charged with stealing the vehicle, because, as I was informed by the police officer, the way the court system works is that being in possession of the car that is stolen does not prove the fact that you stole the car. Very often there is video evidence of this, but again, the police officer said that was difficult to use in court, so there are probably a number of things that the minister could do to make sure this type of thing could happen.

I have had many constituents reach out to me over stolen vehicles, like the business owner who owns a business right across the street from my constituency office. He had a Nissan Armada. Now, a Nissan Armada is quite a rare vehicle in Canada—a very rare vehicle in northern Alberta. He also had aftermarket wheels on that Nissan Armada, which made it an even more unique vehicle. There are likely very few in our county or in my hometown. I don't know of another Nissan Armada, and the fact that he put aftermarket wheels on it makes it very identifiable. That vehicle was stolen. Folks broke into his house, stole the keys off the kitchen counter, went into his garage and stole both of his vehicles out of his garage. He subsequently found a Nissan Armada on Kijiji that looked like his and had the same aftermarket wheels that he had. He approached the police to say, “Hey, I found my Nissan Armada on the Internet here for sale. Could you go retrieve it?” He was told that they did not have the resources to do that and that he should just deal with his insurance company to get a new Nissan Armada. These are the stories that we have to deal with.

The other thing I point out is around the security systems. It's fascinating to think that in Alberta, the number one vehicle stolen is a Ford pickup. An interesting thing about it is that, I think up until about 2006, the Ford pickups—the diesel pickups, anyway—did not have an immobilizer system on them from the factory, so they get stolen a lot more because they don't have that immobilizer system on them, like what are termed the “2nd-Gen Cummins” pickups. Many of them do not have what's called a SKIM program on them—sentry key immobilizer module is what SKIM stands for—so those vehicles are stolen more often.

In northern Alberta, auto theft looks different from in Toronto or Montreal, given the fact that, most often, auto thefts happen in our neighbourhood in connection with other crimes. Folks steal a vehicle to then go steal fuel, copper, batteries—all these kinds of things. Often, when these vehicles are retrieved, they're either burnt on a side road somewhere or they're found run out of fuel. Many times, if they're found with the folks in them, they will often arrest the person, and there will be batteries, copper and fuel in the box of the pickup as well.

• (1135)

I also have experienced it in my hometown. A Ford one-ton pickup was stolen, and they backed it through the front window of the jewellery store and made off with several thousand dollars' worth of jewellery. The vehicles that are being stolen are being used in the commission of other crimes. All of this goes back, though, to the fact that in 2017 the Liberals changed the bail system, and that has led to a crime wave across northern Alberta. As I pointed out earlier, for the one individual the police officer showed me the file of, most of those crimes had—

Mr. Chris Bittle: [*Inaudible—Editor*] confidential.

Mr. Arnold Viersen:—been committed while the individual was out on bail.

I am being heckled from across the way about this being confidential. No, it's not confidential. These are all public records, because this individual has been through the court system several times.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Okay.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: He has been convicted 43 times. He's had 143 charges against him. These are all publicly available documents. The newspaper has repeatedly reported on this individual, the crime waves that ensue when this individual is back on the streets, back out on bail, and the frustration that the RCMP feel when they basically catch these guys red-handed, in the possession of stolen vehicles, stolen batteries, stolen copper and stolen fuel. They say it's just very difficult to prove a lot of this stuff. Fuel doesn't come with a great identifier. Gasoline looks like gasoline looks like gasoline, regardless of where you got it. They say that they know it is stolen, but it is difficult to prove.

Now, I'm hearing from across the way that they say, well, there's a burden of proof and things like that.

Mr. Chris Bittle: It hasn't changed for decades.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Yes, there is no doubt about that. However, my question is this: Are the Liberals standing here today to defend criminals, or are they here to be concerned about the victims? I think that's fundamentally the difference between Conservatives and Liberals. Conservatives are concerned about the victims of crime. We work hard to ensure that crime is brought to justice. We want to mitigate the impacts of crime. We want to ensure that folks who work extremely hard to pay for food and fuel and housing themselves, and for their vehicles, can enjoy those things they work very hard to make the money in order to pay for.

I have a constituent whose fuel card was stolen from one of his trucks while he was away on holidays for 10 days. By the time he came back, 25,000 dollars' worth of fuel was stolen from his cardlock. They have a pretty good idea who stole it, yet the fuel is long gone, and there is no ability for the police to arrest the folks.

Now, the Liberal from across the way is saying, well, you're going to have to prove that.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Yes, that's how the law works.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: What I am saying is that we can change the law to make sure that the ability for the police to prove these things.... The threshold for these things could be reduced. We could make changes around thresholds for video evidence to be submitted.

• (1140)

In most cases there is clear video evidence of folks stealing. It's so blatant. In many cases, we get a conviction. The individual I was mentioning off the top was convicted 43 times. The challenge is in between. It's the same with the fellow who stole the 25,000 dollars' worth of fuel. He was eventually arrested and convicted on another series of crimes, and he went to jail, but he was back out on bail committing more crime in the interim. He was arrested, and he was released the next day. In the intervening months, he committed several more crimes, and then, by the time he was put in jail, he had been charged and committed more crimes, though, again, it was bundled together and pleaded out, pleaded guilty. We see this ongoing.

The police get very frustrated with these individuals, because they see that they are not at all concerned about the ramifications of the justice system. The police work very hard. The police spend a lot of resources to arrest these guys and to build a case, only to see the bulk of the work get bundled and pleaded out. They built cases for 148 charges; he was convicted of 43 charges, and the rest were dropped due to pleading out. That is fundamentally the problem. We need to make sure these guys are being reformed. We need to make sure they are brought to justice.

There needs to be punishment for the crime. Then there needs to be reformation, so that they are not just being released back out on the street in order to continue their life of crime. That has been the revolving door that our communities are extremely frustrated about. The police are extremely frustrated about it, and the Liberals are fundamentally responsible for it. They are the government of the land. They are responsible for legislating. They are responsible for judicial appointments. They are responsible for funding the court system. They are responsible for all of these things.

• (1145)

Mr. Chris Bittle: That's the province.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Regardless, we have seen the macro trends of crime across this country and auto theft across this country continue to go up since the Liberals took power.

The Chair: Mr. Kurek, go ahead on a point of order.

Mr. Damien Kurek: On a point of order, I have certainly been fascinated to hear what my colleague Mr. Viersen is saying and the very practical experience that he's sharing with this committee, but I would equally certainly like to hear the commentary that Mr. Bittle has been providing. Unfortunately, it's in the form of heckling, so it won't make it on the record. I'm sure that he, his constituents and many Canadians would love to know his thoughts on this matter and so many others.

Chair, I would ask, as was referenced before, for the fair application of the conversations that are not supposed to go on across the table and notably what Mr. Bittle has been suggesting, because I have a suspicion that—and I won't get into the place of debate here—his constituents would love to hear the context in which he has been heckling across the table and, interestingly, is doing so at the same time as I'm speaking to you, Mr. Chair.

A fair application of the rules, I would hope, is a guiding principle for all members of this committee.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kurek. Your point is well taken.

As before, I encourage all members to respect the committee and to avoid heckling and crosstalk.

Mr. Viersen, you have the floor.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Chair, I would perhaps suggest that you put Mr. Bittle on the speaking list as well, as he seems to have a lot to say in this committee today. I might ask for unanimous consent for that, but it doesn't sound like I would—

The Chair: Mr. Bittle, go ahead on a point of order.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Is there unanimous consent that I speak for 60 seconds?

The Chair: Do we have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: No.

The Chair: Mr. Bittle, please go ahead on another point of order.

Mr. Chris Bittle: It's unfortunate that motion failed, since Mr. Kurek wanted to hear from me. I'm hoping Mr. Viersen can turn his remarks back to S-210 and, again, as a champion for protecting children, say why he's—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: That's not a point of order, Chair. Can you enforce the rules? Mr. Bittle is showing disregard for the rules, as am I.

The Chair: Mr. Genuis, please do not interrupt.

Mr. Bittle had the floor.

I believe that point of order is done, so let's carry on with Mr. Viersen as we were.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We did gather here today to hear from two ministers about what the Liberal government is going to be doing around auto theft. I would point out that part of the Conservatives' "stop the crime" initiative is around auto theft, and our "jail, not bail" idea for repeat offenders will go a long way to alleviating some of the crime problems that we have here in Canada.

Many of the crimes, as I pointed out earlier, are committed by criminals who are out on bail. The reality, in the one case that I was laying out earlier, is that this gentleman stole 15 vehicles over the course of 10 years, though he was in jail for four of those years, and he stole many of those vehicles while out on bail after being arrested for stealing the first one.

Vehicle thefts across the country have been going up dramatically in the last number of years and particularly in the last two years. Year over year, from 2022 to 2023, Ontario was up 50%, Quebec was up 50%, Alberta was up 20% and Atlantic Canada was up 35%. That's just in the one year from 2022 to 2023. That is significant.

Again, I would refer people to the graph. If you were to graph auto theft in this country, you would have seen declining auto theft up to 2015, and since 2015 you would see an increase. In the last couple of years, a dramatic 50% increase year over year has caused that line to go up very steeply.

We've seen the insurance industry come out claiming that vehicle thefts are costing Canadians over \$1 billion every year.

I've spoken to many people who have had their vehicles stolen. I was in Toronto not that long ago, and I was talking to a fellow who had his Chevy Suburban stolen. It was a year and a half old, and he still had five years' worth of payments to make on it. He was frustrated by the fact that when he reported it to the police, they said, "Just contact your insurance." He pointed out that to replace that Suburban, he was out of pocket about 30%. He said that, yes, he got a Suburban three model years newer when he bought a new one, but that new Suburban cost about 30% more than the original Suburban he had. He said he wasn't intending to buy a new Suburban, but there he was out of pocket.

Never mind when the insurance industry says they've lost more than \$1 billion due to auto thefts; if the anecdotal story I heard means that the insurance company is out that much money and, on top of that, individuals perhaps have to come up with another 30% in order to replace their vehicles, that means Canadians are out of pocket another \$300 million.

That is placing a drain on the economy; all of that value is presumably leaving our country. We heard about people's vehicles being in containers within days and leaving the port of Montreal.

• (1150)

I think I was here at this committee when we had the port authorities here. I think it was the Halifax Port Authority that said it inspects only 0.3% of the containers. Then, when we asked them how many containers they inspect that are leaving the country, they said it was virtually none. The inspections all happen to containers that are coming into the country, not containers that are leaving the country.

I was hoping to hear from the ministers today to see what they've put in place, how that's changing, what they're changing around the ports. We know that they made some significant announcements around this, but announcements don't mean that stuff is actually happening, so I was looking forward to hearing from the ministers about that today.

Nonetheless, the Liberals blocked the testimony of the ministers today, so here we are, not getting the answers we would like to hear from the ministers at this point.

The vehicle theft continues; the costs to Canadians continue, and we look forward to hearing from the ministers at a future date.

• (1155)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): I have a point of order, Chair. It's just to help me better understand Mr. Viersen's remarks here.

He did mention the port of Montreal. Can the chair confirm whether any Conservative MPs showed up at the port of Montreal when there was a site visit there?

The Chair: I'm not able to speak to that.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: In that case, I can.

The Chair: Please go ahead, Madame Michaud.

[*Translation*]

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

I can attest to that—

[*English*]

Mr. Damien Kurek: I have a point of order, Chair.

The Chair: Excuse me. Ms. Michaud has the floor.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: On a point of order, Chair, she doesn't have the floor. Mr. Viersen has the floor.

The Chair: I have recognized Madame Michaud.

Please respond, Madame Michaud.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Chair, on a point of order, Mr. Viersen has the floor. We have a speaking list that has Mr. Viersen and then Mr. Kurek speaking next.

The Chair: I am quite aware of the speaking list. Ms. Michaud is responding to Mr. MacGregor's point of order to give the information he's requesting.

It is at the chair's discretion—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Under which standing order was the point of order raised?

The Chair: Mr. Genuis, please.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: No, it's not at the chair's discretion. You can't just make up the rules, Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Genuis, please come to order.

Madame Michaud, please go ahead and respond to Mr. MacGregor's query.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Who has the floor today?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: If Mr. Genuis will allow me to speak, I can attest to the visit to the Port of Montreal, since I was there.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I have a point of order, Chair.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: I can answer Mr. MacGregor's question. No Conservative members were present at the tour of the Port of Montreal.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I have a point of order, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Michaud.

Mr. Genuis, on a point of order.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Chair.

Chair, my understanding of the standing orders and the rules of this committee—which chairs don't invent willy-nilly, because there are rules that guide our work—is that a point of order is about a matter of order, not a request for substantive information.

For instance, if I were to raise a point of order to ask Mr. Kurek what his opinion was of some extraneous matter, I would assume you would rule that out of order, so I want to just encourage you to apply the rules and understand that your authority emanates from the rules and not from your person independent of the rules.

The Chair: Mr. Genuis, it is not a point of order to instruct the chair.

The chair will act according to his best discretion to maintain order in the room.

If we're done with that, we'll carry on with Mr. Viersen again.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I know that I could talk a bit more about the immobilizer systems and things of that nature; however, I will turn the floor over to my colleague, Mr. Kurek.

I would request to be put back on the speaking list. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Viersen.

We go now to Mr. Kurek, followed by Mr. Genuis, followed by Mr. Viersen.

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

I find it interesting, before I get into the substance of my remarks, that although there is much commentary by other members of this committee, they don't seem to be willing to put themselves on the record in that regard and be put on the speaking list.

As has been—

Mr. Chris Bittle: You denied my unanimous consent motion.

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Kurek.

I would encourage all members to respect whoever is speaking and not interject.

Please go ahead, Mr. Kurek.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Thank you very much, Chair, and I hope that the fellow member of your caucus heeds your words in that regard.

I would just note that I was very pleased to have a chance to visit briefly with the 4-H members who joined the committee and watched some of the proceedings here earlier today.

I want to compliment them and make sure that it is on the record especially how valuable an organization 4-H is across Canada. They are building the leaders of today, and I have no doubt they will take their seats around tables like this one and in the House of Commons in the future. As I mentioned to the 4-H students before, those impromptu and prepared speeches at 4-H are exceptionally good. Those who have been through 4-H understand public speaking. It's great preparation for things like members' statements, question period and committee interventions. Kudos to everybody who is in Ottawa this week doing some advocacy on behalf of the 4-H

organization. There is real frustration about the cuts that the Liberals have made to that organization.

I would, however, like to jump into the substance of what is being discussed here. It's interesting, because there are two very important items. Mr. Viersen has been talking about one. We have the auto theft issue. I will take a brief moment to talk about a story that a constituent shared with me.

• (1200)

The Chair: Mr. Kurek, I'm sorry to interrupt, but I thought it might be helpful to remind the committee of the motion that's before us. The motion before us is Mr. Genuis's amendment to the subcommittee report.

As long as everyone in the room is aware of that, I'll give the floor back to you, Mr. Kurek.

Mr. Damien Kurek: I'm very glad that you're ensuring there is relevance to the subject at hand. Absolutely, as it is clearly laid out in the motion that is before the committee, there is a very clear connection to the impacts Canadians are feeling about things like auto theft.

I would note one of the stories that was shared with me, because it has particular relevance. Quite often I think politicians gain the reputation of being disconnected from the people. It's a troubling trend that leads to mistrust, not only in politicians but also in our institutions. That's why I'd like to share something that has pertinence and clear relevance to the subject at hand. That is the fact that I heard from a constituent the other day about the instance of—

The Chair: I'm sorry, did I hear a point of order?

Go ahead, Mr. Bittle.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Yes. Mr. Kurek is leaning into his mic and just popped one of his Ps. For Mr. Kurek, like me, volume isn't his issue. He can just sit back a little. He doesn't need to lean in to the mic.

The Chair: Perish the popping of Ps, please.

Maybe you could move the mic further away, Mr. Kurek.

Mr. Damien Kurek: I've adjusted the microphone, Chair.

I'll take this opportunity to thank our interpreters. Although often they sit in a separate room through glass, my colleagues and I certainly appreciate the work they do. I'm happy to make sure that I try not to pop Ps, but as a farmer, when we talk about peas, we generally talk about them by the bushel. That's a bit different from the popping of Ps in the circumstance of a committee intervention.

Chair, I would like to get back to the story that I was about to share.

A local business has a shop on the edge of one of the communities that I represent. I won't get too specific, not only because there is an ongoing investigation, but out of respect for the victims. They had what was clearly an organized, very well-timed break-in. They had about 130,000 dollars' worth of equipment stolen just a few days ago.

I was having this conversation on Monday. As that was Victoria Day, I had the chance to be in the constituency for most of that day before heading to the airport. I heard from this small business owner—who works hard to provide for his family, for his son who is a partner in the business, and for the other employees that work for him—the devastating impacts that this \$130,000 in stolen equipment has had on his ability to operate. He and the community that was impacted have lost trust in the ability of the justice system.... As many constituents remind me on a regular basis, we don't seem to have a justice system in our country anymore, but rather a legal system that does not serve the cause of justice.

Whether it is small business owners like in the story I'm referring to, where \$130,000.... Now that may not seem like a huge number to people who sit around this table, Chair, but a small business owner losing 130,000 dollars' worth of equipment then has to make the decision about whether to make an insurance claim because of the possibility that insurance will go up to a point at which it's unaffordable. They may even get to the point where they will not offer coverage any longer.

That has a devastating impact on not only that family's life, but the families of everybody involved in that small business. Trust has been broken in our institutions because of the failure of our system to respond to such an egregious incident as this.

This was about two trucks and some tools that were stolen. This was not a huge heist, but it was well planned and it was well orchestrated. By the time the security system had alerted both law enforcement and the business's proprietor, the thieves were long gone. They're looking at a hopeless prospect of anything being done about that.

Chair, the reason I share that story is that it has a close connection to the answers that I believe all Canadians demand and deserve when it comes to the troubling rise in auto theft. This is not an isolated incident. This is a story that my Conservative colleagues and I hear on a regular basis. To hear commentary from other parties in the House of Commons dismissing the seriousness of this matter, Chair, is incredibly discouraging to Canadians who expect a justice system to serve the best interests of our country.

It is further discouraging for so many Canadians when they see that there is simply no ability for the system to actually put these perpetrators behind bars, because not only is it a victimless crime, as has been suggested by commentators, but it has a significant impact on victims, their families and the communities in which they live. The consequences are great. It has a significant reduction in productivity, whether it's for that small business owner, the customers he is working hard to serve, the community in which they operate or how that is amplified over the national conversation around the diminished productivity in our country.

• (1205)

It is time we rebalanced the scales to ensure that justice can actually be served in this country. Right now, if you ask most Canadians, while there are Liberals who would make grand proclamations, there's certainly a lack of trust that exists in the system as a whole, including for those we've often heard stories about. I know my colleagues, Mr. Caputo, Mr. Viersen, Mr. Genuis and other colleagues, have talked at length about this. It is not simply the process to which a conviction can be brought, because there is the burden of proof and the whole process that is fundamental to the rights of Canadians. However, it is often those who have been found guilty of crimes who do not face the justice that Canadians certainly expect. The consequences of that are that victims don't feel they are able to live or able to run their businesses. There's been this societal breakdown that results from that.

We hear that when it comes to the most egregious examples of some of the worst perpetrators, mass murderers, in Canadian history, when it comes to their prison classifications. That's not a laughing matter, as is so often suggested by the left-leaning political establishment in this country. That's serious. Those victims matter. It goes down the entire system, from the egregious mass murderers all the way down to those who—this might be hard to believe, for some people listening—in some instances have serious property crimes, when vehicles are stolen or there are break-ins. In rural areas of this country, the police are not even able to respond, and a phone call is the only response they give.

I don't blame our hard-working men and women in uniform. In fact, I speak to many of them on a regular basis, because those in law enforcement have a tough job. I hear the stories of how demoralizing it is for a police officer, in some cases, to spend hundreds of hours building a case and then to have it simply tossed out or pled out on a lesser charge, or—in the rare case where it is granted, when a conviction is made—for that individual, in some cases, to be back out on the street in no time at all.

It's no wonder that morale in our nation's police forces has taken such a hit under the soft-on-crime, hug-a-thug policies of this NDP-Liberal government.

I want to highlight that, Chair, and I may get back to that, because there's certainly a lot more that needs to be said on that matter. I want to also talk about some circumstances surrounding the corrections system in Canada and how it seems like the government is so intent to not see accountability in that system.

I find it really ironic, Chair, that the Liberals often level the political criticisms that Conservatives are playing American-style politics. They make that accusation often, yet I'd like to highlight what is a fascinating exploration of that, which is that the Conservatives actually have a great deal of respect for the unique aspects of what our Westminster parliamentary system is, and that includes assuring that executive government is engaged in the legislative aspects of how our government functions.

That is distinct from the way the American system works. That is a distinct difference from the separate executive and legislative branches in the United States. In Canada, there's a far closer connection, although there's a significant amount of overlap, and I won't get into what is an extended discussion about some history that has led to that. Canada's executive branch of government is closely connected to our legislative branch, yet it is the Liberals, in particular, but with the support of the NDP, who seem to be quick to suggest that there should not be legislative oversight and there should not be, in many cases, executive oversight. In this case, I want to particularly focus on the legislative oversight and that there should not be that oversight on the happenings of government.

• (1210)

I would make a point here. It is often forgotten by my left-leaning political friends across the aisle that government is subject to Parliament; it's not the other way around. Parliaments come and go, yes. We have every four or so years, sometimes less. In the case of this current Parliament, I know my constituents certainly want to see it shorter than four years. However, as is laid out in every act that is passed by Parliament, government is a creation of Parliament. Parliament is supreme. It is that fundamental principle that is so often forgotten by the Liberals, and we see that is clearly the case in the conversation around corrections.

Let me highlight to you why that is the height of irony. As we have heard extensively throughout the conversation, whether it be about Canada's most egregious murderers, or whether it be the stories that I hear as a representative of a federal institution, the Drumheller Penitentiary, or in speaking to union representatives from the UCCO, whether it be speaking with others who have had interactions with the justice system, or whether it be when I had a chance to tour my local institution, Chair, there has to be that oversight. There has to be. If there is not, it is an abdication of the responsibility at the very basis of our system, and we have seen that

over the last nine or so years. The result is that Canadians look at the system, the justice system in general, of which the correctional system is a key part, and there has been a significant erosion of trust in that.

I would just note, Chair, this is not simply from a one-sided discussion. I've—

• (1215)

The Chair: Mr. Kurek, to the endless disappointment of the committee, I think we're going to have to—

Mr. Damien Kurek: I'm sure. I'm sure.

The Chair: We have run out of resources, and we're going to have to pull the plug on this meeting.

We go now to Ms. O'Connell on a point of order.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: On that point, I would ask that you look for additional resources for future meetings, given that the Conservatives want to continue filibustering to avoid getting to Bill S-210. We're prepared to let them speak and filibuster as long as it takes, because we want to actually get down to work on the business of this committee.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: On the same point of order, Chair, I think we've been very clear about our position around the Bernardo transfer. I would just encourage Ms. O'Connell to negotiate in good faith with our lead on the committee. Hopefully, we'll be able to come to a resolution that involves the release of the Bernardo transfer report. That's our priority, that the Bernardo transfer report be released. If the Liberals are prepared to move on that and stop burying this report, then I think we'll be able to come to an agreement fairly quickly on how to proceed.

The Chair: Thank you, all.

With all being said and done, we are now adjourned.

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