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• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Marc Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs, Lib.)): Welcome to meeting four of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted on September 23, 2025, the committee is meeting to begin its study on bail, sentencing and the handling of repeat violent offenders.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format pursuant to the Standing Orders. One member is attending virtually—welcome, MP Housefather.

[Translation]

All in-person participants, please consult the guidelines written on the cards on the table. These are measures in place to help prevent audio and feedback incidents, which occur from time to time, and to protect the health and safety of all participants, including the interpreters. You will also notice a QR code on the card for a short awareness video, which you should have already watched.

[English]

I want to make a few additional comments for the benefit of witnesses and members here today.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. I sometimes do so informally, but you should get a sense of where I'm looking.

For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone to activate the mike, and please mute yourself when you are not speaking. For those on Zoom, at the bottom of your screen you can select the appropriate channel for interpretation, either floor audio, English or French, depending on your preferences. Those in the room can use the earpiece and select the desired channel. All comments should be addressed through me, the chair.

[Translation]

For members in the room, please raise your hand if you wish to speak. For members on Zoom, please use the “raise hand” function. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can. We thank members for their patience and understanding in this regard.

[English]

I want to welcome our three witnesses for today's meeting. They appeared on short notice.

[Translation]

Is there an issue with interpretation, Mr. Fortin?

Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): No, Mr. Chair. It's that, in your opening remarks, you didn't mention whether the sound tests had been done and what the results were. I just wanted to ask you that, and I didn't want to interrupt the witnesses to do it.

The Chair: Thank you for the reminder.

The clerk has confirmed that the tests have been done and that everything is working properly, unless you have a relevant complaint.

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: No. It's just that we're being asked to mention it in the introduction, publicly and not privately. That's why I was asking you. If you're telling me that the sound tests were done and the results were conclusive, so much the better. I didn't want to bother you with that, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: No problem, Mr. Fortin.

[English]

Thank you to the witnesses for appearing on such short notice, as we decided on the priority of this only on Tuesday.

Today we have, from the Canadian Police Association, Tom Stamatakis, president. From the National Police Federation, we have Brian Sauvé, president; and from the Toronto Police Association, we have Clayton Campbell, president.

Thanks to all three for your service.

I will remind the witnesses that you have five minutes for your opening statements followed by questions from members of the committee. We have adopted, in previous meetings, the timeline restricted to each member.

I'll go in the order I presented you.

Mr. Stamatakis, you go first, then Mr. Sauvé goes second, and then Mr. Campbell goes third.

Welcome, and please go ahead.

Tom Stamatakis (President, Canadian Police Association): Thank you very much.

Good afternoon and thank you for the invitation and for allowing me to appear this afternoon on behalf of the Canadian Police Association, which represents more than 60,000 frontline police personnel across Canada.

Our members include civilian and sworn law enforcement professionals serving in every province and territory, in large urban centres as well as rural and remote communities. Collectively, they bring a perspective that is both national in scope and grounded in day-to-day experience.

This is the first time we have had the opportunity to appear before this committee since the last federal election, so I want to begin by thanking you for the invitation.

I also want to congratulate you, Mr. Miller, on your election as chair, and mention that I look forward to working with you in this new role.

Frontline officers are uniquely positioned to speak to the challenges facing our justice system. When Canadians call for help, it's police who respond. It's our members who arrest repeat violent offenders, only to see those same individuals return to the streets weeks, days and sometimes even only hours later. While it's fair to acknowledge that Canada's justice system generally works well, the persistence of this small but highly disruptive group of offenders places an enormous strain on police resources, heightens risks to officers and communities, and perhaps most importantly, erodes public trust in the system.

That erosion of trust is real. Statistics Canada has documented a steady decline in Canadians' confidence in the justice system and the courts. This does not serve anyone well. When citizens lose faith in the fairness and effectiveness of the system, victims feel unheard, communities feel unprotected and officers feel as though their work does not matter. Confidence is the foundation of legitimacy, and without it, every part of the system suffers.

What makes this situation especially frustrating is that both the governing Liberal Party and the official opposition Conservatives acknowledged during the last election that bail and sentencing reform must be a priority. In fact, both parties made specific commitments in response to questions from the Canadian Police Association.

As you all know very well, it is rare in Canadian politics to see such broad agreement across party lines, and it would be a profound missed opportunity if Parliament failed to act. Canadians rightly expect progress when their elected officials all recognize the same problem. That is why this committee's work is so important.

We hope that your study can move this discussion beyond partisan lines and into the realm of practical solutions. This is not an idealistic or quixotic hope. It is the kind of constructive, evidence-based collaboration that Canadians expect and deserve from their representatives.

From our perspective, there are clear and achievable reforms that would help restore confidence and strengthen accountability: creating a stand-alone offence for breaching parole conditions to ensure that supervision orders carry real consequences; mandating the reporting of all breaches by supervising authorities so that gaps and

delays do not put the public at risk; replacing automatic statutory release with earned discretionary parole for high-risk repeat offenders so release is based on rehabilitation and not the calendar; strengthening reverse onus provisions and bail decisions, particularly for violent and habitual offenders, to better protect communities while awaiting trial; expanding resources for police to locate and apprehend offenders who breach conditions, ensuring swift and consistent accountability; and finally, increasing resources to support any changes that are made in relation to bail and sentencing reform, particularly with respect to additional training and resources for Crowns, JPs and judges to facilitate the modernization of facilities and capacity building within the corrections system.

These are not radical proposals. They are targeted, evidence-based measures that respect the Charter of Rights and Freedoms while enforcing the fairness and effectiveness of our justice system. Most importantly, they reflect what Canadians expect, that when repeat violent offenders violate the conditions of their release, there are meaningful and immediate consequences.

Our members are doing their jobs. They arrest dangerous offenders and bring them before the courts, but without reforms, the cycle of arrest, release and reoffending will continue to erode confidence in the system and place unnecessary strain on communities.

The Canadian Police Association stands ready to work with all members of Parliament and with our provincial and territorial partners to turn consensus into action. During the question and answer portion of today's meeting, I'd welcome the opportunity to provide more detail on our proposals and discuss how they can be implemented.

Thank you.

• (1540)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Stamatakis.

It's over to you, Mr. Sauvé.

Brian Sauvé (President, National Police Federation): Good afternoon. Thank you for inviting me to appear today.

I'm Brian Sauvé. I'm a sergeant in the RCMP and president of the National Police Federation. We are the sole certified bargaining agent representing nearly 20,000 members of the RCMP, serving communities across Canada and internationally. Our members have varying mandates, including federal enforcement and national security. As well, in many municipalities and provinces, they are the police of jurisdiction. They experience first-hand both the successes and the shortcomings of the criminal justice system every day.

Tragically, Canadians have seen far too many cases in which individuals released on bail have reoffended, sometimes with devastating consequences. These incidents leave deep scars on families, communities and police officers. They have also shaken the public's confidence in a system that must balance fairness with safety.

I want to be clear: Our members believe strongly in the principles of justice, restraint and fairness that underpin our Criminal Code and our charter, but they also see the human toll of a system that often functions like a revolving door. Our members are repeatedly arresting the same individuals, often for crimes committed while already on judicial interim release. This is dangerous and demoralizing. It also drains police resources that could be better spent preventing crime.

In 2019, Bill C-75 introduced some reforms, codifying principles of restraint and requiring consideration of indigenous and other vulnerable populations who are disproportionately represented in our justice system. However, four years later, municipalities, provinces and police report that these changes have had little measurable impact on violent repeat offenders or public safety.

In 2023, Bill C-48 created new reverse-onus provisions for certain violent and firearm-related offences. These steps respond to some concerns, but they have not addressed deeper systemic issues, such as weak monitoring, inconsistent enforcement and poor data collection.

Canada's criminal justice system also continues to be underfunded, leaving resource gaps that criminals exploit. A disturbing trend that our members see is organized criminals recruiting youth to commit serious crimes, knowing that sentencing under the YCJA is far less severe. This places vulnerable young people on a dangerous path and further erodes public confidence.

In 2023, the National Police Federation released a report on bail reform. While much of that work focused on what provinces could do to improve monitoring, enforcement, and bail hearing standards, many of those recommendations are relevant to your study today. I'd like to highlight four areas where we believe urgent action is needed.

The first area is better data and information sharing. The courts often make bail decisions with incomplete information. National police records are often missing offences that exist only in local or provincial databases. Judges and prosecutors may not see the full picture of an accused's history. We need standardized, reliable justice system data across all jurisdictions. Without it, risk assessments remain inadequate.

The second is improving bail hearing resources and standards. Too often, bail hearings are rushed and presided over by officials without the proper training. We need experienced prosecutors and qualified judicial justices of the peace conducting these hearings, with adequate preparation time. Bail decisions are among the most consequential in the justice system. They must be made with full information and proper expertise.

The third is strengthening monitoring and enforcement. Once an individual is released on bail, monitoring varies widely across Canada. Some jurisdictions use electronic monitoring. Others have minimal or no supervision. Our members often arrest people who

have been released only hours or days earlier and have openly ignored their court-imposed conditions. Dedicated bail enforcement resources, including modern technologies and the use of special constables, would relieve pressure on frontline police and provide some accountability.

● (1545)

The fourth is addressing youth exploitation. Criminal networks are increasingly recruiting young people to commit violent offences, knowing the consequences are lighter. Federal and provincial governments must close this gap through targeted prevention, stronger deterrence and better support for at-risk youth. This is not only about penalties but also about stopping criminal groups from exploiting your people and protecting communities from harm.

All of this points to one larger truth: Fixing Canada's justice system cannot be accomplished by Ottawa alone. The federal government writes the Criminal Code, the provinces administer the courts and municipalities feel the greatest impact of repeat offenders cycling through the system. Too often, each level of government waits for the other to act, and progress stalls. The path forward requires smart, targeted initiatives developed and implemented collaboratively across jurisdictions. Federal, provincial, territorial and municipal leaders must work together alongside the police, victims advocates and communities.

Our members are committed to serving Canadians with professionalism and compassion, but they need a justice system that supports their work rather than undermining it. The National Police Federation stands ready to work with all levels of government to build a bail and sentencing system that truly prioritizes both fairness and community safety.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I welcome questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sauvé.

For the benefit of members, I'm letting the witnesses complete their statements even if they go a little over five minutes, unless there's an objection. We have a lot of time today, and I think it's important to hear from them unless someone objects.

Mr. Campbell, it's over to you.

Clayton Campbell (President, Toronto Police Association): I need only three minutes, so I'll share some of my time with the other side.

Good afternoon, Chair, vice-chairs, members of the standing committee, legislative staff and other guests.

My name is Clayton Campbell. I'm the president of the Toronto Police Association. As president, it's my greatest honour to represent more than 8,600 members of the Toronto Police Service, both uniformed and civilian.

I'm here to advocate for the communities we serve, because there's little difference between what we want and what the public wants, and that is safe and healthy neighbourhoods. Despite what some may suggest, I'm here to advocate for a fair and balanced justice system. We believe in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, we believe in rehabilitation and we believe in second and third chances.

Our suggestions for improving the current system are entirely focused on violent offenders who have consistently shown a total disregard for the safety of innocent people. They are based on the daily lived experiences of our members and the victims they support, and they were developed with the help of talented legal minds.

I'd like to start with recommendations to the bail system as it relates to sureties. Specifically, we want legislation that defines who presumptively is unsuitable to be a surety.

Currently, anyone can take this role, act as the eyes and ears of the justice system and be responsible for reporting any breaches of the person's release orders. If that person has a criminal record or has previously acted as a surety for someone who has breached their conditions, or if there is a power imbalance between the surety and the accused, these factors should disqualify them from this role. It is unreasonable to expect that someone who relies on the accused for financial support or has been victimized by them should act as their surety.

We recommend strengthening the secondary grounds for detention by including a mandatory provision that someone with two convictions for serious violent offences would be ineligible for bail for 10 years, and those with three or more convictions would be barred from bail for life. Recognizing that someone with a proven history of serious and violent victimization may have given up their rights to release at the earliest opportunity is not cruel and unusual.

We also cannot overlook the role of victims in the bail process; therefore, we would like their rights strengthened to include access to the details of release within 24 hours and that, in certain crimes, victims be provided with a transcript of the bail hearing upon request.

Finally, we recommend that bail pending an appeal should be considered only where there is a likelihood of success, since these individuals are no longer accused but rather have been convicted of their current crimes and, therefore, are no longer entitled to the presumption of innocence.

Regarding sentencing and parole, we recommend mandatory consecutive periods of parole ineligibility for multiple life sentences, with a release valve in specific circumstances to address the judicial discretion concerns noted in Bissonnette.

We also suggest amendments to the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, particularly as it relates to high-risk prisoners. Specifically, we suggest establishing a separate parole regime for the small number of high-risk prisoners. This regime would include, among other measures, lengthening the interval between parole hearings and granting victims full party status at these hearings.

Sadly, considering the high rate of youth violence in our city right now, we also need to propose recommendations to strengthen the existing Youth Criminal Justice Act. We believe many of our suggested changes to the adult system should also be implemented for young people. We also request consideration of the expansion of the allowable periods of both open and closed custody for young people, so that longer sentences can become a viable option in cases of violent crimes, weapons offences, human trafficking, robbery and sexual assault.

These suggestions may seem counterintuitive to the core principles of rehabilitation and restraint when it comes to young people. Still, I want to remind you that we are discussing youth as young as 14 years of age who have committed serious violent offences not once but multiple times.

● (1550)

In closing, I'd like to emphasize that it might be easy to dismiss our stance as biased or politically motivated. However, for us, this is not a matter of politics. It's about public safety. We have a proven track record of collaborating with anybody from any party who shares our values.

At home, in Toronto, our mayor is a lifelong member of the NDP. The chair of our police service board is a Liberal. As you know, we have a Conservative premier, yet we have all set aside political differences to do what's right for the safety of Torontonians and our police members. We urge you, at the federal level, to do the same.

We have shared these thoughts and others with Minister Fraser and the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Pierre Poilievre, in letters dated September 12, 2025. We'd be happy to make those available upon request.

Thank you. I'm looking forward to any of your questions.

The Chair: Thank you to all three of you.

We're now at the first round of questions. As agreed upon beforehand, we have the Conservatives going first for six minutes.

MP Brock, you'll have the floor.

Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant South—Six Nations, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to all of our subject matter experts, as I like to call all three of you. Thank you for your attendance. Thank you for coming as quickly as possible. This is an incredibly important study for all of Canada. In my view, it is long overdue. We are pleased that we're finally launching it.

I have a question for Mr. Campbell, to start.

The federal gun ban and confiscation scheme is an absolute disaster. Police, academics, licensed gun owners and everyday taxpayers know that targeting lawful firearm owners won't make Canadians safe.

You, sir, are on record saying, "We know that the gun buyback program is going to have essentially zero impact on the crime in Toronto." The public safety minister, Gary Anandasangaree, certainly doesn't seem to think it will work either. He admitted on a leaked audio recording that legal gun owners aren't causing crime and that police services likely don't have the resources to follow through on the project.

Does the Toronto Police Association and its members, sir, believe that the Prime Minister should fire the Minister of Public Safety? Give me a yes or no.

• (1555)

Clayton Campbell: I don't want to weigh in on who should be fired at this time, but I definitely would want to comment on the gun registry and the impacts on safety in Toronto, if that's possible.

Larry Brock: Please go ahead.

Clayton Campbell: The bottom line in the city of Toronto is that the gun buyback program would not have any impact on the violence we're seeing. The violence that we're seeing in relation to firearm offences is, essentially, exclusive to a small number of gang members, thugs, using illegal firearms. Most of the time, they come across the border. About 90% of the 700 illegal firearms we seized last year came across the border. Most of the time, it was people on bail or people prohibited from using a firearm.

I can say that in the city of Toronto, it's a very challenging thing when it comes to funding public safety. I'm sure if you were to ask the mayor of Toronto, Olivia Chow, or Chief Myron Demkiw of the Toronto Police Service how they could use even a fraction of the \$750 million, we'd find a lot of better ways to spend that money to actually improve public safety in our great city.

Larry Brock: I listened very carefully, sir, to the recommendations you made to the committee in your opening statement. There is, in my view, a lot of similarity between what you are proposing and what our party has been proposing. In fact, we introduced a new private member's bill called the "jail not bail act". I believe you were at the press conference a few weeks ago.

At the heart of that bill is to replace the so-called "principle of restraint" under section 493.1 of the Criminal Code, which essentially states that judges must release the accused at the earliest opportunity on the least restrictive conditions. Practically speaking, this means that regardless of what the offence is, regardless of the impact it has on the community or the victim, regardless of the

criminal record, which may establish a pattern of breaching court orders or a pattern of committing the same offence over and over again, and quite frankly, regardless of the number of prior releases the person may be on, that person should be released.

At the core of your recommendations, sir, do you believe the principle of restraint has to be rescinded?

Clayton Campbell: We do, and we've called for that.

In the end—and I want to repeat it—it's not about politics for us. It's about our member having to go see the mother of an eight-year-old, just a few weeks ago, who was shot and killed while sleeping in his bed beside his mother. One youth has been arrested; two are still outstanding. They were both on release and using illegal firearms. Something needs to change.

Our members, as my friends here have talked about, are frustrated. They really are doing their best. They're putting their lives on the line. Something needs to change.

We need to make sure the small number—it's a small number in the city of Toronto—of really violent individuals are not out there wreaking havoc on our streets every day.

Larry Brock: For over four years, all three of you, as well as all other members of the police associations and services, premiers, MLAs, mayors and victim advocacy groups, have been pleading with this Liberal government under the leadership of Justin Trudeau and now under Mark Carney, and all the various justice ministers, to implement immediate bail reform to keep Canadians safe.

I'd like to hear from all three of you. In your collective opinions, why have your pleas fallen on deaf ears with the Liberal government?

Clayton Campbell: I can start.

For the first time, we did meet with Sean Fraser. We met and we explained exactly the same things I'm saying today. The same information we've provided to the Conservative party we've provided to Sean Fraser as well.

I really don't know. I say to anybody who's not sure what to do to come on out for a ride-along in the city of Toronto. You'd see some of the violence going on. You'd see the victimization.

This is not about someone who's made a mistake or some minor criminal offences. This is just a small number of really violent thugs and criminals who are causing all the problems in the city.

• (1600)

Larry Brock: Thank you.

I believe the justice minister needs to go on a ride-along very soon.

Clayton Campbell: We'll take anybody at any time in the city.

Larry Brock: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Brock, thanks. The time is up. Perhaps one of the other members will allow the other two to complete their thoughts on this.

We'll now turn this over to the Liberals.

Ms. Dhillon.

Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you so much to all our witnesses for coming in on such short notice. I think all committee members appreciate that.

I'll start with Mr. Sauvé.

I very much appreciated your comments and your recommendations. One of those recommendations was that Ottawa cannot do it alone. We pass the laws, and we put in programs. All levels—provincial and municipal—must also contribute.

In your opinion, how can they do better to work with Ottawa as well?

Brian Sauvé: I think it starts with the leadership. One thing this government can do is provide that leadership.

One of the benefits of my particular role is that I get to meet with municipalities—large, small, and anywhere in Canada, whether it's the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, the Union of BC Municipalities, Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, or reeves, mayors and elected officials from all communities, large and small. They've all been talking about this. In fact, we were part of a panel at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities earlier this year, with Chief Nishan from Peel and one of our superintendents of major crime in northern Saskatchewan talking about bail reform.

You have willing partners. I will tell you that. You have willing mayors. You have willing provincial leaders who want to get this right. Somebody has to pick up the ball and start running with it. That comes from here.

As we mentioned in our opening remarks, this is a shared responsibility. You can change as many laws as you want, but if there are not enough places to put someone in jail before trial, what's the judge going to do? Are they going to double bunk?

If we don't have enough corrections officers to actually patrol those jails.... Keep in mind that police services are recruiting heavily across Canada right now. Corrections, which is a provincial responsibility, is a challenging job. Perhaps it doesn't come with the commensurate compensation package that policing does. I think they're having challenges recruiting enough corrections officers.

All of those resources need to be in place. Someone has to take the ball and lead with it. You'll be able to pull your provinces and your municipalities along with you.

Anju Dhillon: The other thing you mentioned was how important bail is as part of our justice system. You spoke about the importance of good data in shaping reform. We're also committed to this evidence-based policy.

What specific types of data collection, such as breach rates, risk assessments and things like that, would you like to see or recommend as part of the—

Brian Sauvé: Let me give you an example. I'm a first-time offender. I've been arrested for theft over \$5,000, and I'm in court. This isn't a real example; this is hypothetical, by the way. I'm in court this afternoon at one o'clock. I'm released on bail because I have good character references, it's a first offence, etc. Within the next three months, before my substantive charge gets to trial, perhaps I violate that recognizance 17 times. It could be any number of things. It could be possession of credit cards. It could be a "no-go". It could be consumption of alcohol. It could be any one of those conditions. I have violated 17 times, I get arrested 17 times, and I face 17 charges of breach of recognizance in addition to the substantive charge.

What we have seen is that my counsel will negotiate a plea of guilty of perhaps a lesser included offence to that theft under. Maybe a theft over goes down to a theft under. The breaches will go away. They will be stayed. I then move jurisdictions to a different province. I commit a similar offence. All Crown is going to see is my conviction for theft under or theft over. They will not see those 17 charges of breach of recognizance. Does my bail hearing have the adequate information in front of them to impose adequate conditions, or would a JJP or a judge who sees that I have a conviction and those 17 stays make a different decision on my bail?

That's the sharing of information. Usually those are provincial record systems, and they don't share.

• (1605)

Anju Dhillon: Thank you so much.

Would you share your thoughts on this, Mr. Stamatakis?

Tom Stamatakis: I was just going to echo what my colleague said. We have all said the same thing. It is about data collection, information sharing and also modernizing existing systems so information can flow from police services to Crowns and from Crowns from province to province, so it's the same information that flows consistently. We don't have that right now.

We don't have effective means of communication between police services who are dealing with these violent repeat offenders every day. We don't have an effective information-sharing system between the police and the Crowns or from province to province, as my colleague has mentioned already. We're not sharing that information if offenders move, sometimes even within the same province, but if they move from province to province, there is no package of information that goes with that offender when the file comes to a Crown prosecutor, so that they are aware of it and can properly prepare for a bail hearing, for example, and it's certainly not before a justice of the peace or a judge who might be adjudicating the bail hearing. That has to happen.

Modernization is a big part of it. I think this is some of the important work that your committee can do around those issues, where it gets back to that leadership piece that's already been mentioned. I think there's a legitimate role for the federal government with respect to that.

Anju Dhillon: Thank you.

[Translation]

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

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Stamatakis, Mr. Sauvé and Mr. Campbell, thank you for being with us today. Your experience is valuable and will help us in our deliberations and decision-making.

Mr. Campbell, I was listening to what you were saying about repeat offences and I asked myself a question. As Mr. Brock rightly said, the current rule is that individuals must be released at the earliest opportunity. The rule stems from the fact that they are presumed to be innocent until proven guilty. However, that doesn't mean they always have to be released. Certain conditions have to be met. The Crown prosecutor must prove that the release of an individual would pose a danger to society, that there is a risk of the individual fleeing and failing to appear, or a risk of the administration of justice being brought into disrepute. So, for the sound administration of justice, to prevent the accused from fleeing or to avoid any danger to society, that individual would be kept in custody. However, in the example you gave, there was clearly a problem.

Did the problem stem from a simple poor decision, if I may say so with all due respect to the judge? I actually don't even know which judge made the decision. Should we describe that as a poor decision, or was there a poor assessment of the accused? How would you unpack that example?

[English]

Clayton Campbell: I think there are probably a lot of different components to it. There could be some that are poor decisions. There could be, as my friend mentioned, a very busy Crown attorney dealing with things.

We're here talking about amendments to the Criminal Code. There are clearly amendments that are needed. We talked about how we support the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the presumption of innocence, but, when you're talking about someone who has been convicted or charged with multiple offences, something needs to change.

Someone mentioned the provinces; obviously, everybody plays a part. We recommended clear changes to the Criminal Code to strengthen that and to try to deal with the small number of violent individuals who are causing all the problems.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: I could be wrong, but it would seem to me that a repeat offender who has reoffended multiple times would stand a good chance of their release being refused, based on the criteria currently in place. While this is a really serious and concerning topic, I'm going to switch gears, as I don't have a lot of time.

In light of all that, what are your thoughts on the rehabilitation of those who are convicted? Is it a sham? Are we being led down the garden path? Alternatively, do you believe that it exists, that it is possible and that it needs to be worked on? If so, how should the government proceed?

• (1610)

[English]

Tom Stamatakis: There is no effective.... In my opinion, and based on my experience and on feedback that I receive from members, we're not effectively rehabilitating anybody. Most of our corrections facilities do not have any kind of a therapeutic component to them. Our programming really only starts at the federal level, so if people are incarcerated in provincial facilities, it's very rare that they're going to have access to any of the programming that they would need to come out and be successful.

That's an area where we're really lacking capacity, and the federal government can play a leadership role in building that capacity in provinces so that we are providing therapeutic capacity in our corrections facilities. That way, when people who have serious substance use challenges or mental health issues are sentenced and incarcerated, even if it's for a short time, they're not just thrown in a jail cell to sit there; they actually can get access to support and services. We're not doing a great job in this country. There are a couple of provinces that are rethinking their approaches, and they're having some success, but it's not enough.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: How much time do I have left, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You have a minute and a half.

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: So I will go quickly.

Earlier, you talked about the situation of criminal organizations that recruit young people to commit crimes. That's something I find really unacceptable.

I was of the opinion, perhaps naively, that the sentence should be doubled for someone who recruits a young person to commit, for example, car theft. Shouldn't that action get the recruiter sentenced to twice the length of the sentence they would have received if they had stolen the vehicle themselves? If not, are there other possible measures?

I'd like you to quickly give me your opinion on how to deal with these situations.

[English]

Clayton Campbell: There's not one answer to it all, but I can tell you that when you're seeing youth.... You're right; they're being recruited by criminal organizations and gangs to be involved in heavy levels of violence, only the youth are out in a very short amount of time. For those serious violent offences, firearm offences, some of the things I mentioned—discharging firearms in the streets of Toronto—they have to be treated as adults. They need to be. The reality of it is that there are many components to it. Stiffer sentences are one of those.

We just had a child of 12 years old murder somebody—

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: I'm sorry, Mr. Campbell, I don't mean to interrupt you, but my question is more about the individual who recruits the young person. What should be done with that individual?

[English]

Tom Stamatakis: We need a more stringent regime of sentencing and accountability for the people who are recruiting, and we need to build capacity for those younger kids who are being recruited because of their socio-economic condition, because of poverty, because of all these underlying issues.

There has to be a two-pronged approach. Prong one is better accountability in the system and more stringent sentencing for those people who are taking advantage of young, vulnerable people. Prong two is that we have to look at how we support those young, vulnerable people so that we can get them out of that system, so that we don't turn them into chronic violent offenders for the next however many years.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Stamatakis.

We'll go to the second round, led off by Mr. Baber, this time for five minutes. Then there are four others: Mr. Housefather for five minutes, Mr. Fortin for two and a half, Mr. Lawton for five minutes, and then Mr. Housefather again for five minutes.

I'll pass the floor to you, Roman.

Roman Baber (York Centre, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Gentlemen, thank you for your service, and thank you for your attendance here today.

Mr. Campbell, thank you.

I represent the great Toronto riding of York Centre, which is located in the west side of North York. I want to thank the heroes of 31 Division and 32 Division for serving and protecting my constituents. I want to thank the entire Toronto police force for all the remarkable work it does.

Mr. Campbell, it seems that Torontonians are waking up almost daily to hear about another overnight shooting. We hear almost daily about gang-related gun violence or targeted shootings on our streets. In 2022, the Liberals passed sentencing reform in Bill C-5, which removed certain mandatory minimum penalties and expanded the availability of conditional sentencing orders.

Can you tell the committee what, if any, effect the Liberal government's Bill C-5 sentencing law has had on gang violence in Toronto in the last few years?

• (1615)

Clayton Campbell: You're seeing people with conditional sentences involved in further offences. The reality of it is if someone shoots a firearm in the streets of Toronto and shoots somebody or is committing major levels of violence, such as carjacking or kicking in someone's door to steal their car keys, they're not going to do it if they're in custody. The reality is that it's swung to protecting the rights of the accused, and we're forgetting about the victims who are in the streets of Toronto.

I mentioned that we have an NDP mayor, Olivia Chow. She's talking about bail reform. If we're in the city of Toronto and she's talking about this, then the pendulum has swung and we need to do something about it.

I don't pretend to be a lawyer. There are probably lots of lawyers in the room. I don't pretend to be a lawyer and know every single section and what we need to do. We can follow up with everybody on some of our recommendations, but I know as a police officer representing 8,600 people, there needs to be some change. We've seen people out of custody on conditional sentences with ankle bracelets on for shootings and murders, only to continue to victimize the citizens of Toronto.

Roman Baber: Thank you, Mr. Campbell.

Mr. Sauvé, you spoke about the need to potentially increase sentencing provisions for young offenders. One thing that really stands out in the last few years, particularly in the realm of gang violence, is the prevalence of youth participation. Of course, if a teenager breaks into a vending machine, none of us wants them embroiled in the correctional framework. However, if a young offender commits a second-degree murder, their custodial sentence under the Youth Criminal Justice Act cannot exceed four years. When you factor in pretrial custody time, young offenders convicted of murder are remanded to very little, if any, post-trial custody time.

Could you please offer some recommendations with respect to reforming the sentencing provisions of the Youth Criminal Justice Act to help mitigate some of the gun- and gang-related violence committed by young offenders?

Brian Sauv : Thankfully in Canada we don't see that very often. However, for those situations when we do, I think I'd say that we have a rushed system. In order for an accused who is a youth to be considered for trial as an adult, it's challenging on a system that is already overburdened. It has the Jordan principle to move forward with, and it is stretched, so we need to have proper resources allocated to our court system regardless of the jurisdiction. It doesn't matter if it's Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, P.E.I., Newfoundland or Nunavut: In order for them to be able to adequately weigh the gravity of the offence and the impact it had on the victims and the impact it's having on families and the police officers involved, to make that decision to try as an adult, it takes resources. Ultimately, once that decision is made in the proper forum, then you'll have sentencing as an adult.

Roman Baber: This is a very important point that you made, Mr. Sauv , because I believe that the bail reform passed by the Liberals, Bill C-75, explicitly removed prosecutorial discretion to charge as an adult. Now our Crowns can no longer avail themselves of that possibility.

Do you recommend that we repeal that provision?

Brian Sauv : I recommend you study it. What the results of that study are is why we are here, and it's possibly one solution.

Roman Baber: Thank you.

The Chair: Anthony, you have five minutes.

Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you so much, gentlemen, for being here. I really appreciate it.

I was formerly a mayor and councillor, and I have indeed done ride-alongs with the Montreal police. Mr. Campbell, I'd be happy to do one with the TPS the next time I'm in Toronto, and I'll get in touch to arrange that. I know my colleague, Vince Gasparro, did one recently.

Gentlemen, I think this is one where we're wildly in agreement. I think pretty much all of us agree that repeat violent offenders should have a very tough time getting bail and should not be out on the streets. We might differ on how we implement this, and we have a lot of problems, because nobody takes complete responsibility. You have the federal government, which is responsible for the Criminal Code, and you have the provinces, which are responsible for the administration of justice. This includes police and Crown prosecutors, court resources, judges, justices of the peace, jails and jail guards. Everybody blames everybody else when things don't work out.

• (1620)

[Translation]

The Chair: Hold on a second, Mr. Housefather. There's a problem with the interpretation.

Anthony Housefather: Okay.

The Chair: It seems that the problem has been resolved.

You may continue, Mr. Housefather. You have four minutes left.

Anthony Housefather: Thank you.

[English]

Gentlemen, the first thing I want to ask you about is Bill C-48, where we reversed the onus of proof with respect to various violent offenders.

I'll start with Mr. Sauv .

How has that changed things? Has that improved things? Should we use that mechanism for other types of violent offenders?

Brian Sauv : Very quickly, I think I've been quoted widely as saying that it was a good start. There is more to do.

Anthony Housefather: What would be the next step?

Brian Sauv : A "good start" just means that you've started.

I've said a number of times—and I think I've said it here today—that I'm happy to see that you guys are all working together and everybody is moving forward in the same direction to accomplish the same goal, which is safe streets, safe communities, safe police officers and safe Canadians.

If that means continued expansion of reverse-onus provisions as far as a recommendation goes, fantastic, and then the provinces and the territories, which administer that justice system, need the guidance, the leadership and the resources to do that.

We can't just have laws that say we're keeping people in jail and not have places to put them. We can't have laws that say judges must do this but then not give them the resources to accomplish it in a timely manner. We can't just say that we're going in this direction and that our police officers will do that, that they will enforce what you put in place, but then, all of a sudden, the subsidiaries, the corollaries or all of those downstream impacts, fall off the rails and then you're back where you first started.

That's what I would recommend. I'm sorry. That was a little longer than.... It was a good start.

Anthony Housefather: I agree: That was a good start for an answer.

Mr. Stamatakis.

Tom Stamatakis: We're on the record as supporting some of what you alluded to in Bill C-48 and expanding reverse-onus provisions, but I will say that it has made no difference, because of the thing that Mr. Sauv  alluded to in his opening remarks, and this is one of the areas that I urge the committee to focus on. Once you create the laws, how do you create the environment where everybody works together, where all levels of government work together, to then implement the laws?

I can give you examples post Bill C-48 and the reverse-onus provisions, in which, in British Columbia, for example, people who should have been subject to those reverse-onus provisions were being released on bail. It ties back into what my colleague mentioned about resources, capacity and all of those kinds of things.

Part of what needs to come out of this exercise, in my opinion, are some clear recommendations around how, if there are changes—if there are amendments—to the legislation, they can be implemented in a more effective way and followed through on more effectively by the provinces.

Anthony Housefather: That makes complete sense.

Can I mention that I think one of the things that would make a lot of sense is that once federal legislation is adopted and in the process of it being adopted, you would then have a federal-provincial-territorial meeting with the FCM, the conference of mayors and police chiefs?

You would bring everybody together at the table to talk about how it would be implemented, as opposed to the federal government just saying, “We did our job, so now you go and do it,” and vice versa.

Would that make sense to you, Mr. Stamatakis?

• (1625)

Tom Stamatakis: On how it will be implemented and specific commitments around following through, I 100% agree with that.

Anthony Housefather: Do you agree, Mr. Sauvé?

Brian Sauvé: I agree, and I'm surprised that it hasn't already happened. Everybody has been talking about it for three years, and all of a sudden no one has been in the room taking a leadership role and saying, “Let's try to get this ball across the finish line.” I agree with you 100%.

Anthony Housefather: Mr. Campbell, I didn't give you a chance to speak to this. Do you have anything to add?

The Chair: I'll let Mr. Campbell complete his thoughts, but the time's up for now, Anthony.

Anthony Housefather: I'm sorry, Marc.

The Chair: No worries.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fortin, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Sauvé, you said earlier that there was a lack of communication among organizations, be they municipal, provincial or federal police services, or the Crown. You said that situations were resulting where individuals had committed crimes in different regions or provinces, but that wasn't necessarily taken into account at their parole hearing. So I was thinking that a common registry may be useful. I think that's more or less what you were telling us.

Along the same lines, a few years ago, we proposed the creation of an organized crime registry. You know that there is a registry of terrorist organizations. All terrorist organizations that are added to the registry suffer various consequences, which I won't go into because it would take too long.

Do you think it would be useful, in the fight against crime, to set up a registry of criminal organizations for organizations like Hells Angels and other criminal groups? For example, in the case of criminal organizations that recruit young people, it could be said that they are criminal organizations, since they are on the list. This would limit the length of trials, since proving that they are criminal organizations would not be necessary. It would be automatic, since they are on the list, and people would know what to expect.

What do you think of that proposal?

[*English*]

Brian Sauvé: I agree, but there are better ways to do it. For example, if we're going to modernize law enforcement, national security and information-sharing systems in Canada, let's do it once. It's challenging already, with different police services across Canada using different systems on the street. You saw that come out in the Mass Casualty Commission. Halifax Regional Police are using Versatarm and the Halifax RCMP are using PROS. They don't communicate with each other. You actually have to pick up the phone and talk to them. If we're going to talk about information sharing in Canada from a law enforcement perspective, then let's go with one system.

We already have a CPIC system. It works quite well, but it could use a serious injection of technology to bring it to 2026 instead of 1986. That can be your law enforcement system. All police agencies have access to it. It is sequestered for national security files as well as put-off anti-corruption investigations and such in different areas. You can use that system. It would be easy enough to have a Crown in both Prince Rupert and Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta, access that system.

The Chair: Mr. Lawton, the floor is yours for five minutes, please.

Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC): Thank you very much to all of you gentlemen for being here, and also for your service. It's very much appreciated.

Mr. Campbell, has Gary Anandasangaree, the public safety minister, ever consulted with you on the firearms buyback?

Clayton Campbell: Yes. We met with the public safety minister. We met with Sean Fraser, the Attorney General. We spoke about the same things that we've spoken about here today. We've communicated to everybody equally.

Andrew Lawton: Mr. Sauvé, have you spoken with the public safety minister about the gun buyback?

Brian Sauvé: We've been in conversation and getting updated from the commissioner of the RCMP just as to how it may impact our members—

Andrew Lawton: In the development of it, were you consulted for the effect it would have on your members and your members' willingness to participate in it?

Brian Sauvé: We were not, no.

Andrew Lawton: Okay.

Mr. Stamatakis, I would ask you the same question: Were you consulted in the development of the buyback by Minister Anandasangaree?

• (1630)

Tom Stamatakis: We provided feedback when that program was first developed. That was before the current minister—

The Chair: There's a point of order from Mr. Chang.

Wade Chang (Burnaby Central, Lib.): It's on relevance. I don't think the question is relevant to the study.

Andrew Lawton: Chair, I would say that the firearms policy in this country—when all witnesses have spoken about the expanse of gun crime—and the priorities of this government in dealing with it, are highly relevant. I actually think it's quite short-sighted for the member to suggest that going after legal gun owners is not relevant to a study on crime and bail and repeat offenders when firearms have been mentioned by our witnesses.

The Chair: It's a stretch, but keep it a little tighter, Mr. Lawton. I understand where you're going, but let's afford the witnesses the opportunity to answer, and perhaps stick closer to the theme of the study.

Andrew Lawton: I will. My Liberal colleague actually raises an important point here, which is that law-abiding gun owners have nothing to do with crime.

I'll ask you this, Mr. Campbell, because you have spoken about it in the past: Do you believe law-abiding firearms owners in Toronto are a public safety risk?

Clayton Campbell: No, and we've talked about this before. The gun buyback program is going to have zero impact on the crime we're seeing in the city of Toronto, period. Quite frankly, I don't know if there's any plan in place, but if there were some sort of plan to try and obtain these firearms, I'm not sure who's going to do it or with what resources. If you want to help public safety in the city of Toronto, I can think of a hundred different ways we could do it.

Andrew Lawton: Mr. Stamatakis, I'll put the question to you as well, because we have heard repeatedly, when speaking to police officers and police chiefs, that they do not have the resources to keep up with existing criminality on the street. Police lack the resources to check on bail conditions. I'm wondering if you can speak to that, first and foremost. How are police forces with scarce resources dealing with the amount of time it takes just to check up on people on bail?

Tom Stamatakis: They're not. We don't have the resources and we don't have the capacity to target repeat violent offenders who are released on bail to the extent that we should. You have to prioritize based on how prolific the violent offender is and what resources you have available.

Back to the buyback program, I agree with my colleague. There are a lot of resource challenges, and there are things we could be using those funds for that would be more effective than a buyback program that, to be blunt about it, police services in Canada don't have the capacity to try and manage.

Andrew Lawton: Mr. Sauvé, do RCMP members want anything to do with having to go around collecting firearms from law-abiding gun owners?

Brian Sauvé: I haven't spoken to RCMP members about collecting firearms. We are on record as saying, back when Bill C-21 was tabled, that the appropriate use of resources to have an impact on crime in Canada is to target illegal firearms trafficking coming up from the States. If any government were to take any resources and put them into greater border enforcement or guns and gangs units with municipal or provincial police services, you would see a marked impact on gun crime in Canada.

Andrew Lawton: Thank you.

Mr. Sauvé, you said earlier that the federal government can provide leadership. Do you see that leadership from this federal Liberal government on these bail issues?

Brian Sauvé: Well, we're sitting here, and I think this is a great thing. I've heard there are numerous pieces of legislation coming forward that are going to touch on different aspects of law enforcement, immigration, border security, bail—all of those things. That encourages me, and it should encourage Canadians that these difficult discussions that Canadians have been asking for are actually happening.

Andrew Lawton: I'll put a question to you, Mr. Campbell.

There was a situation in St. Thomas, Ontario, where a homeless man and a repeat offender was released on bail with a curfew. He had a condition where he had to be in his home by 10 p.m. Is that something that's happened in Toronto—an unenforceable bail condition?

Clayton Campbell: I'll agree with Tom that there is not the capacity to look at these people out on bail and actually try to enforce. The province of Ontario has a recommendation to look at. It's an app. There are a lot of young police officers. It's essentially like MLS if you're looking for real estate, but for bad guys out on bail. It's something that's in the province of Ontario. Talking about information sharing, that is something that could be implemented Canada-wide that could help us if we had the capacity to actually track these bad guys.

Andrew Lawton: Have you encountered bail conditions that are unenforceable?

The Chair: Mr. Lawton, your time is up.

It's over to Mr. Housefather for five minutes.

• (1635)

Anthony Housefather: Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

Gentlemen, one of the things I hear most often from frontline officers who have to go to bail court is a frustration with the number of times there's a consent release, which I believe is where the Crown essentially agrees to a release plan without being heard before a judge.

Would you consider it to be an issue that there are too many consent releases? If so, yes, I know more resources is one of the remedies, but can you tell me what you think about that and whether that's something we should be looking at?

Clayton Campbell: I can speak for Toronto. Absolutely, our members don't have the time or resources to go to all these bail hearings and actually advocate sometimes to keep people in custody. If we had the resources to do that, they would 100% be there and be providing more information to the Crown to hopefully help them make the right decisions to oppose bail.

Tom Stamatakis: Ironically, the requirement to have police officers participate in bail hearings was essentially a result of down-loading, because of resource challenges with the Crown. It was downloaded to the police, who don't have the capacity to begin with. This should 100% be an area of focus.

I think we've all alluded to it at different times. We need better information available to the decision-makers when it comes to bail release or any other type of release regime, so that they're making informed decisions.

One source of good information is the police, who are interacting with these violent repeat offenders every day, often multiple times a day. Also, there has to be a mechanism whereby we can include victims in this conversation, particularly for violent repeat offenders. What they're doing in our communities.... It's not just Toronto. It's not just the big cities across Canada anymore. It's the big cities, the towns and the villages from north to south and east to west, right across the country. Their violence is having a significant impact on Canadians.

Anthony Housefather: Mr. Sauv , do you have anything on that?

Brian Sauv : I don't think I have anything I can add. These two guys covered it off pretty well.

Anthony Housefather: I agree that this is a really important issue to focus on. We need more contested hearings, and we need to have more information at these hearings before people are just released with conditions.

Here is one thing I wanted to ask about. I may be wrong, but in certain provinces—I think Ontario, which you guys would be more familiar with, is one of them—a justice of the peace does not have to have a legal background.

Is that something that should change? Should the justice of the peace be required to have a legal background to at least have a better understanding of the criminal law?

Brian Sauv : I can touch on that.

I don't necessarily think JJPs or whoever is conducting that hearing has to have a legal background.

For example, all police officers have a considered equivalent training across Canada, whether it's in use of force, knowledge of

the law, provincial or federal statutes and all of those great things. Why doesn't our provincial justice system have a consistent standard in the enforcement of bail, the decisions on bail hearings or how they present a bail hearing? Nova Scotia is different from Ontario, which is different from British Columbia, which is different from Alberta, which is different from Nunavut.

For some cases, our members are the Crown. That has been left to them. I was in Whati, Northwest Territories, a little while ago. We are the only representative of the government in that particular small town. That training should be available to them to meet that standard, but that standard doesn't exist across Canada. Hence, every province does it differently.

I don't know about legal training, but a consistent level would be appreciated.

Anthony Housefather: I have one last question.

In terms of youth exploitation and recruiting young people, Mr. Fortin suggested a double sentence or a sentence of twice the duration.

Do you guys have any good suggestions, briefly, on what is the right way to deter in that instance?

Clayton Campbell: I agree that sentencing has to be looked at. When you're seeing gang members or organized crime members recruiting youths as young as 13 and 14 years of age to be involved in this level of violence, I think there should be increased consequences for these individuals.

• (1640)

Tom Stamatakis: You could build something into the reverse-onus provisions, for example, when you identify a person engaged in that behaviour.

Anthony Housefather: Thanks very much, all of you.

The Chair: Thank you, gentlemen.

We're on to the third round. We'll be led off by MP Shipley for five minutes. Then we'll go back again to Madam Dhillon for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Then Mr. Fortin will have two and a half minutes.

[*English*]

We'll then have Andrew Lawton for another five minutes and Wade Chang for five minutes.

Rh al  loi Fortin: In the new round, don't I have five minutes?

The Chair: No.

[Translation]

You have only two and a half minutes. You can always count your party's seats in the House and do the math to figure it out.

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Is that a challenge for me?

The Chair: Yes, it's a challenge for me, but I will maintain my neutrality.

Enough chatter. Let's move on.

[English]

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

Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

I had a nice list of questions here that I was prepared to ask, but Mr. Campbell, you said something that really piqued my interest. I want to get into this a little bit with you, because I've been thinking about this for a while now.

You mentioned that the justice system seems to have leaned more towards—and I'd like all three to weigh in on this, please—the rights of the accused than towards those of the victims. I scribbled that down as you were speaking. I think I pretty much quoted you there.

I was recently present at a swearing-in of three justices of the peace in Toronto. There were many speeches that night, not just from the new JPs coming in, but from some senior justices, management, really a cross-section of people. I left that event a bit perplexed, quite frankly, because in all the speeches I heard that night, all I heard was that everybody was there to protect the accused. The word "victim" was never spoken once.

I left that, and I said—I was actually with my wife and I drove home—did you hear that? She agreed. Not once did anyone mention that they were there to protect the victims.

Could you expand on what you were talking about, Mr. Campbell, and if you really feel the justice system has leaned that much.... I'm sorry, I'd like all the gentlemen to comment on this and explain, maybe, what's really going on in the courts.

Clayton Campbell: In terms of our recommendations, if it's around parole, we have some recommendations there, some parole hearings for those really high-risk offenders, talking about victims' rights and making sure they understand when someone's released, but I think it's a big difference when our members, the ones I represent, are out there seeing this extreme level of victimization. It's not something you're reading on a piece of paper. You're seeing someone shot and killed. You're seeing a child raped. You're seeing that eight-year-old I keep coming back to, shot in his bed at eight o'clock in the morning, and it's our members who have to deal with these people. It's our community officers who have to go back into those communities and try to build relationships. It just seems like it's always focused on the offender.

I get that every person has rights and there's a presumption of innocence, but we need to put victims first. I think Canadians are fed up with it. Even in the city of Toronto, they want to see conse-

quences, real consequences, for this small number of individuals causing the violence in our streets.

Tom Stamatakis: What they also want is relief, because the repeat violent offenders, that small number of people who are chronically committing these crimes, are effectively terrorizing citizens in these communities, and they want relief from that. Even worse than the actual crimes themselves is this atmosphere of an unsafe environment that it's created for citizens who are just going about their daily lives. That's why we all emphasize an opportunity for weighing...and it gets back to making sure that people who are making decisions around release, whether it's bail or parole, have all the information available.

There are some things happening in our parole system right now that everybody should be worried about. We're getting to a place where parole boards are talking about making decisions about releasing murderers without hearing from victims or the affected families of victims.

To me, this is a problem, and we need to rethink that.

Brian Sauvé: I'll make it quick, but I'd urge you to consider why victim impact statements are only received post conviction. Why not pre conviction and during a bail hearing? Having someone accused of domestic or intimate partner violence and not hearing from the victim at a bail hearing.... How big of an impact is that going to have on that victim, should they be released on bail?

• (1645)

Doug Shipley: Thank you. I have very little time left, but I would like to expand on this issue. It sounds like we have agreement that this is going on. Can anybody pin down why this is happening and when? All you gentlemen have been in law enforcement for a long time. When did you start to see this switch—because it hasn't always been there—and why?

Tom Stamatakis: In my experience, what I would say is that we have gotten away from holding people accountable and expecting individuals to take responsibility for their actions. I can get into a long story about why I think that's all happened, but I think when we shifted away from that notion of holding people accountable and expecting people to be responsible for what they do, making excuses for them and attributing what they're doing to all the underlying issues, that's where we lost our way, and that's where I think the voice of the victim and the average community member who's just trying to live their life in the community got lost.

The Chair: I'm sorry, but we have to move to the next....

Doug Shipley: Can I be very quick?

The Chair: No. I don't want to cut in. I'm letting you guys finish your thoughts, and if these guys can fire a question off within the time period, then we're allowing some....

What was that?

Doug Shipley: Can he submit it in writing to us, if he has something to add?

The Chair: Absolutely, you could submit it in writing. We have a lot of time left until 5:30, so another member could capture that. I'm just trying to allow our witnesses to finish their thoughts, and I will cut members off if they're talking past their time. I think, for these guys, it's important to finish it off, but I don't want it to go on too long, because it looks like favouritism.

MP Dhillon, you have five minutes.

Anju Dhillon: Thank you so much.

I will continue with Mr. Sauvé. You were mentioning that it's important for bail decision-makers to have a legal background. Could you please explain, go into detail, why you think it's important?

Brian Sauvé: Not necessarily.... My perspective is not that they need to have a legal background but that the training across the country needs to be consistent. If that means some form of legal background, then, okay, that's for the decision-makers to come up with, but there needs to be consistent training in every jurisdiction across the country. Right now, it's a hodgepodge.

Anju Dhillon: Provinces such as Manitoba have launched or expanded electronic monitoring for high-risk accused. What lessons should inform any future federal-provincial work tools so that this is targeted, effectively, in the same manner? You mentioned just previously, during one of your responses, that there is a hodgepodge, that different provinces are doing different things, so would you be able to elaborate, please, using Manitoba as an example?

Brian Sauvé: The Province of Manitoba has been and is actually being pretty innovative, and I thank the premier for going down that road and doing difficult things in difficult times.

The electronic monitoring is interesting. It doesn't work in all scenarios, especially in Canada, where our 5G network is not necessarily adequate. I mean, if we're talking about the James Smith Cree first nation, maybe electronic monitoring is not great, but in the city of Regina or in the Lower Mainland of Vancouver, it might be. I think there are opportunities to leverage 2025 technology, or even going into 2027 technology. Does an electronic monitoring bracelet actually need a response by police should it set off an alarm and be outside of range, or can that just go automatically to the Crown and issue a warrant for an arrest, and the next police officer who comes across that person puts them in cuffs and sends them back? There are things we can do that don't necessarily burden the frontline police officers, if we're going to think about that.

Anju Dhillon: Thank you so much.

Mr. Stamatakis, I have two questions for you. You said that provinces are starting to rethink the way they provide corrections: Which provinces are those, and what programs are they providing? I think you can pick up on what Mr. Sauvé said.

Tom Stamatakis: First of all, I think technology is part of the answer. I think that's the future. We need to find ways to use technology to better assist not only the police but also communities, in terms of keeping them safer.

In terms of which provinces are doing things differently, I think Alberta is probably the leader in rethinking the approach. They're attaching therapeutic capacity to all of their corrections facilities, so that when they get someone into that facility and they're incarcerated for whatever reason, if there's an underlying drug addiction or mental health issue, they're actually being moved into the therapeutic wing of the corrections facility, where they can get support, treatment and even, potentially, training opportunities or whatever. That's how we disrupt the cycle of this constant offending. If all you do is arrest people, incarcerate them and do nothing, you're just kicking the problem down the road. You're going to release the person, they're going to come back and they're likely going to reoffend.

• (1650)

Anju Dhillon: You're talking about rehabilitative measures, and I agree with you. I think everybody here does. Just putting somebody back out without resolving the underlying issues is also an important factor. I appreciate your saying that as well. We're seeing—

Tom Stamatakis: It's both, though.

Anju Dhillon: Yes, of course.

Tom Stamatakis: Also, incarcerating disrupts the disorder and the crime. It's both.

Anju Dhillon: Absolutely. Yes. That's a global picture of everything.

I have a second question. Can you also talk about Crown resources? Many of the witnesses have said they don't have enough time to prepare for trials. Can you talk to us a bit about this—what you've observed?

Tom Stamatakis: That's a chronic problem. I've experienced it personally as a police witness on a file. You're just waiting. You may get an interview before the hearing, or you may not. That's something we hear consistently from our members all the time. It's a chronic issue.

We're here advocating on behalf of our members, but this is also a Crown resource, a public prosecution resource issue as well. They need more capacity; they need better tools, and they need to modernize their systems as well, so there's better capacity to exchange and share information, so that everybody in the process is making an informed decision.

Anju Dhillon: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Fortin, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to come back to the issue of criminal organizations.

Mr. Sauvé said that there were better solutions than creating a registry. However, isn't it cumbersome to prove that someone is a member of a criminal organization? Am I wrong? The first step is to establish that the organization in question is indeed a criminal organization. Then you have to prove that the individual is a member of that organization. Then you have to prove that they committed crimes for the benefit of the organization.

That is why such a registry could be useful. If the idea is good for effectively fighting terrorist organizations, it must also be good for fighting criminal organizations. In fact, and I say this with all due respect, criminal organizations may be doing more harm here in Canada than foreign terrorist organizations. The damage that Hells Angels, for example, can do in Canada is immense. Therefore, it seems to us that such a registry would be useful.

My question is long. I apologize. I have only two and a half minutes. We've already heard from Mr. Sauvé, so perhaps we could hear from Mr. Stamatakis on this.

If not with a registry, how can we reduce the time it takes to establish the necessary evidence? How can we be more effective in the fight against organized crime?

[English]

Tom Stamatakis: I'd echo Mr. Sauvé's earlier comments. We have systems in place right now. I agree with you that creating a record around a criminal organization's activity or the activity of an individual who is engaged in gang crime, organized crime, is important and a very useful tool, but let's not build a whole new system. Let's use the existing system. We have CPIC. With the right kind of investment, we can expand—

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: However, you don't have a registry of criminal organizations. It doesn't exist. It exists for terrorist organizations, but not for criminal organizations.

Don't you think that tool should be used? It can take up to a week or two to prove, at a hearing, that Hells Angels are a criminal organization and not a motorcycle club. Isn't that important to you?

[English]

Tom Stamatakis: There's always going to be a challenge building the case, gathering the evidence and putting it together in a comprehensive file that can then be successfully prosecuted.

We're talking about resources. It's a question of how you most efficiently use the dollars that are available. Do we build a whole other system, or do we find a way to use the existing systems and add to them to make them more efficient and more effective? I agree with what you're suggesting, but I would hate to see us try to build a whole new system to capture that in Canada, because capturing that is different from capturing organizations that engage in terrorism.

• (1655)

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Mr. Stamatakis, I'm sorry to interrupt. I don't mean to be rude, but—

The Chair: Mr. Fortin, your time is up.

[English]

Mr. Lawton, you have five minutes.

Andrew Lawton: Thank you very much.

Liberal Bill C-75, which enshrined in the Criminal Code the so-called principle of restraint, so that offenders have to be released at the earliest opportunity under the least onerous conditions, went into effect a little over six years ago.

How soon after that, Mr. Stamatakis, did you start to see the effects of increased bail on less onerous conditions?

Tom Stamatakis: This was an issue already. The effects were felt almost immediately for all the reasons we've described, and I don't want to repeat them.

We need a bifurcated system. I don't have an issue with the principle of restraint or the concept in Bill C-75 when it comes to a first-time offender with no history, but we need to find a way to treat the violent repeat offender differently.

Andrew Lawton: For sure, but you're saying you can draw a direct line from that provision to the bail problems on the streets that your officers have to deal with.

Tom Stamatakis: Well, it's a little more complicated than that, because we also have an underlying problem in this country with drug addiction and substance abuse. We have a huge problem with a lack of support for people suffering from mental health issues.

In my view, anecdotally—based on feedback from members and the experiences I've had in the community where I live—there is a correlation.

Andrew Lawton: I'll ask you, Mr. Campbell, on that drug question, when your officers encounter someone who is using drugs in public and you're laying a charge, what are federal prosecutors doing with those charges on simple possession?

Tom Stamatakis: Who is laying a charge for simple possession in this country?

Andrew Lawton: Let me ask you, what do your officers do in a case like that, and why?

Clayton Campbell: Most of the time, they're not doing anything, and they move on to something else.

Andrew Lawton: Your mic was off. I'll ask the question again and get you to repeat that.

When your officers come across open drug use in public, what are they doing and why?

Clayton Campbell: A lot of the time, they're just seizing it for destruction. They may not go down the road of actually laying a charge. If they did, you'd see it withdrawn.

If it's a resource issue with the federal prosecutors, I don't know, but that's generally what happens in the city right now.

Andrew Lawton: For these drug charges, just for those who are unaware, federal prosecutors with the federal Public Prosecution Service of Canada are responsible for that.

Clayton Campbell: Yes. If you want to go for a ride-along, you can come down to 51 Division, which is down in Regent Park. You can see open drug use every day, right in front of you, if anybody wants to come to take a look at it.

Andrew Lawton: We've been talking about bail, but we're not even at the bail stage, because the federal prosecutors are effectively deciding to not enforce or apply the law.

Clayton Campbell: I wouldn't want to guess on that. I can definitely get back to you with more information.

I'm not sure if any of my friends would have more information on that.

Brian Sauvé: I can say that was the case when I started my career over 20 years ago. The simple possession—Tom says it jokingly—but yes, on the Lower Mainland, in Vancouver, we did not arrest for simple possession. That's 20 years of experience there.

Andrew Lawton: All of you have spoken, to some degree, about officers arresting people and rearresting them days or sometimes hours later.

My understanding is that, when an officer makes an arrest, there is a legal risk, and there is a physical risk that it could go sideways. I have heard anecdotally, but I am hoping that one of you officers can shed some light on it, that there is a temptation not to expose yourself to that risk when you know that they are going to be out on bail and it will all be for nothing.

How does it affect the morale of officers when they're seeing these people they know on a first-name basis on the street, regardless of their having been arrested for a very serious offence?

Clayton Campbell: I can say that it has a great impact on morale. Our members in Toronto are doing their part, and they are literally risking their lives. A few years ago, we had eight police officers—I think I'm right, Tom—killed in the line of duty in Canada. They're risking their lives to make these arrests.

I am proud of them. They still go out there every day and do their job, because they care about their communities and they care about victims, but it's tough. It definitely impacts morale when you do a.... Let's say that our gang unit has a complicated investigation that takes a long time, lots of work and lots of resources—only to see those gang members back out of custody in a matter of days.

Tom Stamatakis: We had some emerging research in Canada recently—and Quebec is leading the way—where it's more troubling than that. Not only is it demoralizing, but we're creating an environment where police officers are disengaging. They are not taking those risks; they're not being proactive and intervening when they could be, because of the futility of it. It's creating a lot of challenges in our sector from a wellness, mental health and moral injury perspective.

• (1700)

The Chair: That is your time. Thank you.

MP Chang.

Wade Chang: Thank you, gentlemen, for being here.

I represent the great people of Burnaby Central in B.C. I will start with Mr. Campbell.

For those who may be watching from home, they might not fully understand how the bail system works here in Canada. The federal government is responsible for the Criminal Code, and the provinces are responsible for the administration of justice, including policing, Crown prosecutors, court resources, judges, justices of the peace, jails and jail guards.

Is that correct?

Clayton Campbell: Yes, that's my understanding.

Wade Chang: Okay.

When we hear in the media that someone was not out on bail when they were charged again, the public is not informed if that person is released with the consent of the Crown attorney.

Do you think they should be?

Clayton Campbell: Could you repeat that? I apologize.

Wade Chang: We hear in the media that people are sometimes out on bail when they are charged again, and the public is not informed that the person was released with the consent of the Crown attorney. Do you think they should be?

Clayton Campbell: Do I think that the public should know what's happened with the Crown attorney, that they have released or consented...? Sure. Transparency is important, yes.

Wade Chang: I will turn to Mr. Sauvé.

In your public statement, you emphasized that bail reform alone isn't enough, and you called for data-driven, evidence-based measures.

As a government, we have been committed to that approach. What additional support, like mental health services or community-based interventions, would reduce reoffending the most, while protecting our communities here?

Brian Sauvé: I think my colleague, Tom, has touched on it, and so has Clayton.

We've talked publicly in different forums about the public safety continuum. It's not just policing, jail, corrections, parole, probation, Crown attorneys or judges, but also homelessness, addictions and vocational training.

In the provincial system, there is very little of all of the vocational training or addiction treatments. Your sentence is two years less a day, because it's a provincial sentence, not federal time, so that's great. All of a sudden, you're going to be out in six or nine months on parole, but you haven't had treatment. You don't have a place to live, and nobody has trained you for a new job. What are going to do?

There's also the issue that our members see, which is that the regionalization of services in the provinces has become a challenge. For example, Whati, Northwest Territories, is three and a half hours away from Yellowknife. If I am to appear in provincial court in the Northwest Territories, I'll be going to Yellowknife. I'm going to get picked up, and maybe I'll get remanded and sent down to Yellowknife, but perhaps I'll get released on bail. Does the system give me a bus ticket back to my home community of Whati, or do I have to hitchhike? The same thing happens in Prince George, Fort Nelson and Fort St. John. Just from the regionalization of our systems, have we put those offenders at greater risk of reoffending?

Tom Stamatakis: Can I just add...?

Wade Chang: Yes, of course.

Tom Stamatakis: We've allowed a narrative to become entrenched in this country over the last number of years that is an either-or. If we just arrest and incarcerate, that's bad. Then we say it has to be rehabilitation only, and we have to get to the underlying systemic issues that contribute to the crime. That's led to something that somebody else asked in terms of what has changed. We need to get back to both. It has to be both. We have to be able to....

People say all the time that we can't arrest our way out of this problem. I actually say that we can. We can arrest, because then we can connect people to services. We can do other things. Arrests shouldn't just mean incarceration.

The problem is that we have focused on one or the other, either-or. What we need is both.

Wade Chang: Thank you, gentlemen.

Do I still have time?

The Chair: You have about a minute, Wade.

Wade Chang: Mr. Sauvé, Bill C-48 strengthened reverse onus for intimate partner violence and firearms offences, two areas that police and victim advocates identify as priorities.

From the RCMP's perspective, how have these changes improved the safety of victims and the safety of officers on the front lines?

Brian Sauvé: I don't think they have, and I think the more any government can focus on firearms offences, or firearms-related offences, as well as domestic and intimate partner violence, the more Canadians will feel safe. The more focus you put on that, the more provinces and the more Crown attorneys and judges will pay attention, and we will get to a world where it is not okay to do any of those things.

• (1705)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chang. Your time is up.

Members, if we keep it tight, we have time to do another full round. It will be led off by MP Baber for five minutes, and then MP Saini for five as well.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fortin will then have two and a half minutes. After that, Mr. Brock will have five minutes, followed by Mr. Chang. That should take us to 5:30 p.m.

I will now give the floor to Mr. Baber.

[*English*]

Roman Baber: Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Sauvé, one of the big fails of the Liberal Bill C-75 is that it created a diversionary regime for offences involving failures to comply with court orders, so that offences such as failure to appear, breach of an undertaking and even breach of a bail condition may go unpunished.

Basically, Bill C-75 allows the Crown to divert or remove such cases from the docket. Crowns may be too busy, and they may be tempted to let these violations go.

Would you agree that this diversionary regime contributed to additional crime, and contributes to additional crime? What message does it send? Does it undermine the administration of justice in your view?

Brian Sauvé: That's a hard question to answer, especially within your five minutes.

As my colleague Tom said earlier, the trends are not new. We've seen conditional release on the upswing, especially during my service.

I'd recommend a couple of witnesses for you. Amanda Butler is a fantastic Ph.D. criminologist out of Simon Fraser University. She and retired chief Doug LePard did a study for the Province of British Columbia about random stranger violence, basically, in the streets of Vancouver in 2021.

They found that we are all creatures of habit: During the COVID pandemic, JJPs and judges were reticent to deny bail for even the most violent offences because of overpopulation or the creation of super-spreader cells within pretrial custody jails. That trend has continued post COVID and post vaccination, because we've become creatures of habit, so is it just Bill C-75, or is it societal in nature?

Roman Baber: Thank you. I was specifically asking about those types of diversions.

I want to move on to Mr. Campbell.

Mr. Campbell, I want to first of all pay tribute and send all my love to the family of Karolina Huebner-Makurat, a 44-year-old mother of two who was killed when she was struck by a stray bullet outside of a drug consumption site in Leslieville.

Yesterday, a drug dealer who sold fentanyl outside of that drug consumption site pleaded guilty to manslaughter. This was a 22-year-old man who admitted participating in a robbery that resulted in Karolina's killing. We all remember that tragic case.

Liberal drug policies are putting Canadians at risk. They don't just perpetuate addiction. They also attract crime, trafficking and other criminal activity.

We also will remember the testimony of London's chief of police, who indicated that much of the safe supply is often diverted and sold on the street for profit or often for deadlier drugs.

Would you agree with me that the Liberal drug policies, and specifically the drug injection sites that Pierre Poilievre correctly refers to as "drug dens", increase crime and violence on our streets?

Clayton Campbell: They absolutely do. We can follow up with the data on that. They're a mess. If anybody has been around them, they're a disaster... For the people who have to live close to them, I feel sorry for them. It's horrible. We've talked about people openly using drugs right on the street, right now. I can take you to any number of them.

Roman Baber: Also, of course, that attracts trafficking and violent crime and, just like in Karolina's case, robbery.

I'll take this opportunity to take you to a local Toronto issue, and that, as you may know, is that Toronto's homeless shelters now effectively function as satellite drug injection sites. Is that correct?

Clayton Campbell: Absolutely, and unfortunately, near one of our offices. I can see it from my office window.

Roman Baber: Right now, the City of Toronto is proposing an additional 20 shelters where anybody can come in and get drug paraphernalia and needles. One of them is close to my riding, at Keele and Wilson, and the other 19 also are in residential neighbourhoods.

They're asking the federal government to pay for such construction. This is at Caledonia and Eglinton and Keele and Wilson, in some of the most populated areas and surrounded by schools and day cares.

What do you think the construction of such shelters would do vis-à-vis crime to these residential neighbourhoods?

• (1710)

Clayton Campbell: We can get you the data that show that when there are consumption sites in neighbourhoods, violence, criminality and victimization all increase. I can get you that information.

Roman Baber: I sincerely appreciate that.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Saini, you have five minutes.

Gurbux Saini (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts.

Our government has consistently said that reform must be evidence-based, not slogan-driven. Conservatives will say jail, not bail.

As an expert, you have stressed the need for smart, targeted reforms. What message would you want Canadians to hear about why evidence-based reform is the right path forward?

Mr. Sauv , please.

Brian Sauv : I think everybody is familiar with Amazon. If I'm looking for a set of earbuds, am I just going to buy the first ones to pop up? No. I'm going to go in looking for something. I have my budget. I know what kind of quality I want. I'm going in with the evidence that I want for making a purchase.

Canada here is not going in seeking evidence from all of these witnesses through this study to figure out what's the best way that we can federally, provincially and territorially make better bail decisions. That needs evidence. We don't have that yet.

Gurbux Saini: Thank you.

I heard "youth exploitation" several times. What do you think is the core reason for that? Is it poverty? Is it new immigrants? Is it our citizens from broken families?

Mr. Stamatakis.

Tom Stamatakis: It's all of that. You have kids who are coming into situations where they're being inundated through a variety of platforms—social media platforms or what have you. They're living in challenging socio-economic environments. You have, in some cases, a breakdown of the family structure. In other cases, you have people just trying to survive and make a living, so they don't have the time to invest in their kids.

It's all of those things. It's a lack of programming, which creates vulnerability among the youth. You then have predators out there who see that and take advantage of it. They lure them into these kinds of criminal activities that create havoc in our communities and destroy their lives. It's all of that, and we need to do better.

Earlier you asked what the message is. The message, I think, is that the federal government's going to take a leadership role and that we're going to work collaboratively to get ahead of these issues. That's the message. That's what Canadians want to hear.

Gurbux Saini: Thank you.

Brian Sauv : I would add only this to my colleague's response about youth: What's the penalty? What's the consequence for recruiting youth into doing these things? These are adults who are taking advantage of disadvantaged youth. There are no consequences for that. If they get arrested, they might be part of an organized crime ring, and they might face charges for this, that and the other thing, but there's no charge for taking advantage of the youth.

Gurbux Saini: Thank you.

Mr. Campbell, you have said that there are many times when you see people commit a crime but you don't charge them. Is that also not sending the wrong message to society—that so-and-so got off without doing time, so I'm going to do the same thing?

Clayton Campbell: Absolutely.

I hate coming back to resources, but we would need literally 100 police officers at any number of corners in the city of Toronto to try to enforce it.

As we've also mentioned, when those charges would be withdrawn anyway, you start to get into the cycle of—and Tom mentioned it—thinking, “Why bother? Why am I going to go through this entire process—make an arrest, maybe have to have a physical altercation with somebody, seize the drugs, submit the drugs—only to see it withdrawn?” I don't disagree with you, but that's the reality of what's happening on the streets.

• (1715)

Gurbux Saini: Both the National Police Federation and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police have said that bail reform should be informed by a strong partnership with law enforcement. What role do you see for ongoing federal police collaboration in reviewing bail outcomes and proposing further refinements?

The Chair: We'll need a super brief answer from, perhaps, one of you. We're running up on time.

Tom Stamatakis: The start is that you invited us to appear in order to provide you with some information and evidence. That's a good start.

Somebody mentioned some kind of a national summit where we get everybody together to try to come up with tangible, actionable solutions. That would be another great step in the right direction.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fortin, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Gentlemen, I talked to you about the fight against organized crime. I think that's important. We talked about young people being recruited to commit crimes. I imagine that, in about 90% of cases, criminal organizations recruit them. There is also the issue of drug trafficking. I think it always comes back to organized crime. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I get the impression that eliminating organized crime would make our streets much safer.

You seem to be saying that the current tools are effective in fighting organized crime, and I imagine you've had success in that fight, since you're telling me that the registry isn't necessary. What tools have given you the best results?

[*English*]

Clayton Campbell: I can speak about Toronto. We do lots of multi-jurisdictional things with the RCMP and with our other partners. The more opportunity to do that...

When you do investigations, they take a lot of resources, they take a lot of people power, they take a long time and they're expensive. In Toronto, if we're getting a gun unit or organized crime unit that works with other provincial and federal partners, if those resources are available, we can do more projects and take down more people who are out there committing crime.

[*Translation*]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: I understand, but you're telling me that there are currently tools in place that can be used. What are they?

[*English*]

Tom Stamatakis: Just to be clear, I'm not suggesting that a registry wouldn't be useful. I was talking more about how we would build that registry and what tools we would use to populate it. There have been very effective examples of responding to, for example, outlaw motorcycle gangs by creating prohibitions against the wearing of certain symbols. Those are the kinds of tools that are very effective when it comes to dealing with organized crime groups.

Those can be expanded upon. We've had great success in—

[*Translation*]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Are you talking about a ban on wearing emblems?

[*English*]

Tom Stamatakis: Yes. It's banning patches and other types of things.

We've also had great success in using civil forfeiture rules, for example, when dealing with outlaw motorcycle gangs and seizing clubhouses and other ill-gotten proceeds of crime, such as houses, cars and motorcycles. There are tools available. We just need to use them better and more effectively.

[*Translation*]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: I would have liked to talk to you about the situation in Quebec, but I see that my time is up.

[*English*]

The Chair: We will go over to Mr. Brock for five minutes.

Larry Brock: Thank you, Chair.

Again, I want to thank all three of you for your attendance today.

I just want to clarify something. This is our bail study. The Conservative Party advanced this bail study as priority number one at this justice committee. It was the Conservative Party who invited all three of you to attend, so we're very grateful for your attendance.

This is a question for you, Mr. Campbell. It's amazing what you can find on social media. I was scrolling social media during the last half hour or so. Yesterday, in downtown Toronto on a busy street, captured by video surveillance, a gentleman—I'll use that term very loosely—was standing on a sidewalk assembling what appears to be an AK-47. It was in broad daylight and in heavy traffic.

Do you think that type of person, or the gangbangers or thugs terrorizing our communities from coast to coast, would be—

• (1720)

Wade Chang: On a point of order, it's a joint study.

The Chair: I think you said, Mr. Brock, that it was a Conservative study. It is, in fairness, a joint study, and—

Larry Brock: It's a joint study, but the bail issue was a Conservative motion, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you for the clarification.

In fairness, there were witnesses brought forward who weren't solely from the Conservative list, I believe, if the clerk is correct, and I have no reason to question that.

Anyway, that is what it is. We froze your time, so please go on.

Larry Brock: Thank you.

He tried to ruin my clip, but we're going to get it back on track.

The thug I just described to you, the one on a downtown Toronto street, or the gangbanger—are they the type who would likely want to return that particular AK-47 as part of the Liberal buyback program?

Clayton Campbell: No, and we've said it many times. The gun buyback program will not impact the violence we're seeing in the city of Toronto. Rediverting some of those resources would.

Larry Brock: Thank you.

I was very fortunate to attend TPS about three weeks ago this Friday. I had a ride-along and saw first-hand what you're describing to this committee. I also received a number of startling statistics in terms of the number of people out on bail on charges for murder and serious gun crimes. Do you have any statistics today, or within the last few days, to share with this committee on the number of people on bail in downtown Toronto?

Clayton Campbell: I don't, but I can get that for you, absolutely.

I do want to mention, as it came up around youth, that we had over a dozen youth charged with murder this year in the city and 102 illegal firearms seized from youth in the city. I think that's an important stat.

Larry Brock: You have youth as young as 12 years of age on bail right now for first-degree murder. Is that correct?

Clayton Campbell: We do. It is completely common to see someone out on bail for either a previous shooting or a firearm charge. It happens all the time.

Larry Brock: Thank you.

Chair, I'll cede the rest of my time to Mr. Shipley.

The Chair: You have a little over two minutes.

Doug Shipley: Thank you, Chair, for giving me that time.

I think we'd be remiss if we didn't have a bit of a conversation today here about the actual frontline officers, the men and women who serve our communities.

I'd like to mention two tragic incidents that have happened over the past couple of years. Last year there was Constable Jim Peters, a Barrie police officer, who was stabbed while on duty by a repeat violent offender on probation at the time of the stabbing. Thankfully Jim survived that attack.

In 2023, OPP Constable Greg Pierzchala, a Barrie resident, was ambushed and murdered by a violent repeat offender who was out on bail under a lifetime firearms ban.

Gentlemen, you three represent lots of officers in the presence of your association. I think we need to talk about how these types of incidents, how these repeat offenders, are affecting the wellness, mental health and morale of your officers.

Tom Stamatakis: I just partnered in a research project with Dr. Nick Carleton at the University of Regina. We looked at publicly available data. From 2011 to 2014 we had over 245,000 charges laid in this country for assaulting a police officer. Our police officers, our members, are being assaulted every day in this country by these offenders we're talking about.

In April of this year, in my home service in Vancouver, we had an offender try to light a police officer on fire by pouring a flammable fluid on the officer while the officer was in the process of trying to arrest this individual. That's just one example. You've alluded to others. There are many other examples of police officers getting stabbed and seriously assaulted. All of those fortunately did not become those kinds of tragedies like what happened to Constable Pierzchala.

It's happening every day. We're not paying enough attention to it, and we ought to, because we're also experiencing a massive recruiting and retention challenge in our sector right now. In part, it's because of that. Why would somebody want to come into a regime where they're exposing themselves to this kind of risk every day but then are not being supported by heads of institutions, by elected officials, in some cases by other statutory bodies in place that are tasked with investigating these incidents when they happen. It's a real challenge.

• (1725)

The Chair: That completes Mr. Shipley's round.

We'll finish off with Mr. Chang for the final five minutes.

Wade Chang: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, gentlemen, again. Burnaby Central is one of the most diverse communities in Canada. We have many diverse families. Victim families, police officers and community groups often bring different perspectives. In each of your views, how do we best balance the need for public safety with fairness and traditional independence?

Clayton Campbell: If you speak to the community members who are out there, they're sick of the violence. They're sick of what they're seeing out there, and they want to see some change. They need the focus brought back to the victims, the communities, the people who are trying to go about their daily lives without being fearful of violence, being shot, stabbed, or carjacked. That's the balance. The balance needs to swing back to the victims in the communities and not the offenders.

Brian Sauv : In Burnaby, particularly, you had a brand new officer in charge of that detachment. I would encourage anyone from Burnaby to walk in and talk to him. He is more than willing to talk to anyone from the community about their priorities, their perspectives and their experiences. I would suggest that goes for any chief across the country.

Tom Stamatakis: Our services, particularly on the front line, have become more and more diverse. We better represent the communities that we police. We have more women in policing today than we ever had before. Every police service across this country has numerous advisory committees and other mechanisms for consulting with the community and hearing feedback from the community. Unequivocally, the feedback is that we have to do something about violent repeat offenders in our communities.

Wade Chang: Thank you.

I have one last question. Looking ahead, what should Parliament keep in mind as the government prepares to introduce new legislation on bail and repeat violent offenders this fall?

Clayton Campbell: I think you should take a look at what I talked about earlier on. I deal with an NDP mayor; the chair of our police services board is a Liberal; we have a Conservative premier, and we come together and get stuff done. I would ask this of both sides. I understand there's politics, but let's put our communities and the victims first and come together and pass something that's actually going to help keep our communities safe.

Brian Sauv : Let's keep it short: What he said.

Tom Stamatakis: Also bring in the provinces and all levels of government to participate in whatever the proposed legislation is, so that there are some actionable items that come from it.

Wade Chang: Thank you, gentlemen.

The Chair: Members, this completes the meeting today. I want to thank the witnesses for their testimony today. I want to thank you individually for your service, as well as the service of the members you represent, in keeping Canada and Canadians safe.

[*Translation*]

There will be no meeting on Tuesday, as it's the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, as you know. Therefore, the next meeting will take place on Thursday, October 2.

[*English*]

To that end, we want a full roster for next Thursday, so members, if you could send in your lists, we'll have a complete session next Thursday with a full set of witnesses.

I presume that it is the will of the members to adjourn the meeting.

Do you want to go in camera, or do you want...?

Larry Brock: Before the adjournment—

The Chair: Sure, go ahead.

Roman Baber: Thank you, Chair.

There is a very high Jewish holiday next Thursday. Nonetheless, there's also, I guess, a possibility that one of the ministers will attend. If my colleagues across the aisle know that none of the ministers will make themselves available next Thursday, could they please let me know?

The Chair: I think that's fair, yes. We'll get that information to your teams.

Thank you. The meeting is adjourned.

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