



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 004

Thursday, September 25, 2025

Chair: Jean-Yves Duclos



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• (1215)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Québec Centre, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

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

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted last week by the committee, the committee is meeting for its study on the growing problem of car thefts in Canada.

We theoretically have an hour, but we'll have to stop somewhere between 1 p.m. and 1:10 p.m., depending on the time and context.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, but all members are attending in person today.

I would like to welcome the witnesses, who are taking their seats.

First, from the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, we have Craig Oldham, director general, program development and intergovernmental affairs, crime prevention branch.

From the Canada Border Services Agency, we have Aaron McCrorie, vice-president, intelligence and enforcement. He appeared a few days ago.

Finally, from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, we have Liam Price, director general, international special services.

To begin, each witness will have the floor for a maximum of five minutes. We'll then move on to members' interventions, in accordance with the usual rules on speaking order and time.

Mr. Oldham, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Chair, may I address something, please?

The Chair: Of course.

Frank Caputo: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I don't want to take too much time. I hope we can dispense of this within about two minutes.

We had a motion on the floor over a week ago about the minister coming to committee. My understanding was that the Liberals were going to have dates for the minister. In good faith, we didn't pull any stunts or anything like that to resurrect that motion. I was ad-

vised by my counterpart—and I don't put any blame on him—that there is no date for the minister because we have not invited the minister, as is required by a motion.

It appears that we need a motion to get the minister here, so I will be moving my motion. The minister has obviously not had the greatest of weeks. We're dealing with crime. We're dealing with a confiscation on which there's a secret recording. We don't know what's what.

This is an area in which Canadians need answers. We need answers, as parliamentarians, on behalf of our people.

I don't want to take up too much time. I think this should be very quick. I will be moving my motion again.

The Chair: Is this a motion for which you have sent a notice in the last two days?

Frank Caputo: I am moving the same motion that is already on the books.

The Chair: You're asking to return to the debate on the motion that we had.

Frank Caputo: I'm not asking to return to debate. I'm moving the motion again.

The Chair: You cannot move that motion. It's already there. You would like to turn back to the debate on that motion. That requires an immediate vote on whether we leave the witness presentations that we have scheduled today and instead to have a debate on that motion.

• (1220)

Frank Caputo: I don't want a debate. I think we just have to deal with this. It should take no more than two minutes.

The Chair: I will ask the committee members whether they want to do that.

This is a dilatory motion that leads to moving, perhaps briefly, to that debate. I'm asking which committee members agree to turn to the debate that we had adjourned the last time around. It must have been Friday.

Madame DeBellefeuille, are you in favour?

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Yes, I am.

The Chair: Okay.

[English]

Who is in favour of going back to that motion?

Jacques Ramsay (La Prairie—Atateken, Lib.): What was the motion?

The Chair: I'll say it in French this time.

[Translation]

Mr. Caputo's motion, which is a dilatory motion, invites us to resume the debate, which we weren't able to finish, on last Friday's motion.

Are all members in agreement?

[English]

It is unanimous. We can now perhaps briefly debate that motion.

Go ahead, Mr. Ramsay.

[Translation]

Jacques Ramsay: The minister is willing to come. He was invited to appear as part of the study suggested by Mrs. DeBellefeuille, who proposed that Secretary of State Ruby Sahota and the minister each come for one hour.

However, there was another motion that the clerk didn't send, because we hadn't adopted it, so the minister was simply unable to provide a response. The motion was to have the minister appear for two hours.

The Chair: Madam Clerk, can you find the motion that was proposed last week and that we had started discussing? We didn't have time to finish the discussion.

[English]

The clerk will find it, and then we can check the results. Is it your understanding that this is the same motion?

Frank Caputo: Yes. I believe there was a friendly amendment to change it from four hours to two hours. That was my recollection.

[Translation]

The Chair: Madam Clerk, can you confirm that?

In the meantime, Mrs. DeBellefeuille, you have the floor.

Claude DeBellefeuille: That's more or less what I wanted to say. We had gotten very far in the debate, and we had made a compromise. I myself had proposed amending the motion to go from two meetings to just one. We were almost done, but we ran out of time to pass it.

If our Liberal friends have no objections, I think it would be wise for us to be able to quickly adopt the motion and then hear what our witnesses have to say.

The Chair: Okay.

I'm going to suspend the meeting for a few moments to give the clerk time to find this motion.

• (1220)

(Pause)

• (1220)

[English]

The Chair: We have gathered enough evidence to validate that we have a motion for two hours for the minister. We can read that motion again if that is useful.

The committee would like to invite the Minister of Public Safety for an appearance of two hours at this committee. Is that the everyone's understanding?

Frank Caputo: That's the gist of it.

I think we had a date on it as well.

The Chair: As we all know, experienced members in particular, the committee can always suggest a date. That does not force a minister or any other MP to come at a particular time on a particular date. It is obviously for the clerk, their team, the minister's office and the department involved to find a possible date for that to happen.

Who is in favour of that motion?

(Motion as amended agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Then we will now move back to the business of the day.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Caputo.

[English]

Our business, as I said earlier, is for Mr. Oldham to speak first for about five minutes.

• (1225)

Craig Oldham (Director General, Program Development and Intergovernmental Affairs, Crime Prevention Branch, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): Thank you very much.

I'm Craig Oldham. I'm one of the directors general in the crime prevention branch of Public Safety. I am largely responsible overall for the national action plan to combat auto theft.

As highlighted in the RCMP's Criminal Intelligence Service Canada report from December 2023, the issue of vehicle theft in Canada had been steadily increasing in the years prior to 2024. From 2021 to 2023, Ontario and Quebec saw larger than normal surges in auto theft. Ontario witnessed a 78% increase in violent carjacking, while vehicle theft rates in Quebec rose by 50%. The involvement of organized crime groups in the vehicle theft market also augmented significantly during the same time.

[Translation]

These circumstances warranted a swift and thorough response, and this is exactly what we have been collectively delivering across impacted jurisdictions since then.

[English]

With the February 2024 national summit on auto theft and the follow-on launching of the national action plan on combatting auto theft, the federal government has worked steadily with an array of partners to advance a number of initiatives to prevent auto theft, recover stolen vehicles, stop their export and combat the organized crime networks behind the crime.

[Translation]

As you may be aware, the national action plan on combatting auto theft has so far been updated on two occasions: first on October 16, 2024, followed by a second update on March 8, 2025.

[English]

Through collaborative efforts with provincial, territorial, municipal and industrial partners, and as highlighted in the March 8, 2025, update, we continue to see positive results from these dedicated actions.

In the first half of 2025, national auto theft trends have decreased by 19.1%, compared to the same period in 2024. This is from the Équité Association's "First Half of 2025: Auto Theft Trend Report".

The Canada Border Services Agency intercepted 2,277 stolen vehicles at its marine and intermodal ports in 2024, with significant interceptions in Quebec and Ontario. In addition, 1,155 vehicles have been detained thus far in 2025.

Finally, since integrating data from the Canadian Police Information Centre with Interpol's stolen vehicle database, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police have received 4,312 notifications and 889 international collaboration requests via Interpol's stolen motor vehicle database.

[Translation]

As we know too well, organized crime groups and networks are quick to adapt, and that is why Public Safety Canada, or PS; RCMP; CBSA and other involved federal departments continue to work actively with our partners to ensure a comprehensive and agile response to this evolving criminal trend.

[English]

This includes gathering provincial and territorial partners in early October to assess the overall progress and to agree on an approach to further engagement with industry partners beyond the existing national auto theft plan-related activities. This also includes continued work with Interpol so that they can further continue to contribute in tackling transnational organized crime.

I would like to point out that as part of that success story, Interpol, in collaboration with 12 West African countries, conducted a successful operation in March of this year, during which most of the vehicles intercepted originated from Canada.

Unless there are immediate questions, Mr. Chair, I will pass the floor to my colleagues from the RCMP and the Canada Border Services Agency in reverse order.

• (1230)

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Oldham.

Mr. McCrorie, you have the floor.

Aaron McCrorie (Vice-President, Intelligence and Enforcement, Canada Border Services Agency): Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to discuss progress in combatting auto theft.

[English]

I'm Aaron McCrorie, the vice-president for intelligence enforcement at the Canada Border Services Agency.

[Translation]

Auto theft is a complex issue driven by organized crime that fuels broader criminal networks and undermines public confidence. It requires more than a single agency to address; it demands a unified, coordinated response. Auto theft has personal, social and economic impacts and is a priority for the Canada Border Services Agency.

[English]

Our adversaries are transnational criminals who collaborate across borders. Successfully disrupting and defeating them therefore also depends on collaboration. The Canada Border Services Agency is working with law enforcement partners and stakeholders such as the Équité Association to support the continued work on combatting auto theft.

Prior to and after the national summit on combatting auto theft in February 2024, the agency has been focused on auto theft. We have responded to 100% of referrals received from the police of jurisdiction, and over 1,800 interceptions of stolen vehicles were made in 2023.

In 2024, the Canada Border Services Agency intercepted 2,277 stolen vehicles, and in 2025, as of September 23, 1,155 have been intercepted. These interceptions were driven by referrals from policing partners and our own intelligence-driven targeting. This highlights the importance of strong partnerships and coordinated efforts among the CBSA, the RCMP, and provincial and municipal police services, as well as with other key stakeholders.

[Translation]

The Canada Border Services Agency undertook additional work following the National Summit on Combatting Auto Theft with the dedicated funding received. For example, we deployed scanning technology in the greater Toronto area to enhance our ability to examine cargo containers at intermodal facilities destined for export.

[English]

We are supporting police-led joint intelligence groups and coordinating the sharing of intelligence and information on auto theft to support law enforcement investigations.

[Translation]

We have also led regular meetings with the chiefs of police to discuss the progress on combatting auto theft and exchange information on trends and intelligence.

[English]

The Canada Border Services Agency, in partnership with the Department of Justice, continues to review its legislative frameworks. A review of reporting obligations and compliance measures is in progress to ensure that the CBSA has the necessary tools, laws and regulations to detect stolen vehicles before they are exported.

Équité Association is reporting a 19.1% decrease in auto theft in the first half of 2025 compared to 2024, which I would argue—and it's echoed by Équité—is the result of the collective efforts of police of jurisdiction, the RCMP, the Canada Border Services Agency, the Équité Association and other partners.

The Équité Association report also notes significant decreases of theft in Ontario, which is down 25.9%, and in Quebec, which is down 22.2%. These are provinces that previously experienced the highest auto theft rates from 2021 to 2023.

[Translation]

Coordinated efforts have shown great results, and we are committed to continuing these efforts with partners.

I look forward to answering any questions the committee may have.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McCrorie.

Mr. Price, the floor is yours.

[English]

Liam Price (Director General, International Special Services, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): Good afternoon, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much for the opportunity to provide an update to the committee on the RCMP's work to combat auto theft as part of the national action plan.

My name is Liam Price, and I am the director general of international special services within federal policing at the RCMP. It's a hard title. Essentially, it's our relations with Interpol, our posts overseas and our peace operations around the world.

[Translation]

Addressing auto theft requires strong partnerships. Co-operation among police services, governments, industry and international partners is essential to addressing this agile, resilient and persistent threat. While the investigation of each auto theft incident falls under the police of jurisdiction in Canada, the RCMP plays three essential roles.

First, our federal policing mandate enables us to investigate the most serious threats to Canada.

Second, we also take a leadership role as the national police force supporting provincial and municipal efforts.

Finally, we act as the local police force in communities under contract.

• (1235)

[English]

Under the pillars of the action plan, the RCMP, as co-lead or lead, is responsible for a number of activities. I'd like to provide some highlights of our efforts and then focus on my area of responsibility, which is international co-operation.

Domestically, as you've heard from my colleagues, the RCMP continues to participate in multiple active joint task forces across the country. These include, for example in Quebec, Project Rechercher, which is led by the Sûreté du Québec. Also, there is Project Vector, which is led by the Ontario Provincial Police.

These efforts aim to disrupt organized crime activities for stolen vehicles at all stages, and they are producing results. Overall, Project Rechercher has led to some of the seizures you've heard about already, such as the seizure of some 1,300 stolen vehicles, as well as the repatriation of more than 100 from overseas. This has resulted in 48 arrests and more than \$1 billion in funds seized, and to date, Project Vector has contributed to the seizure of many of the vehicles intercepted at the port of Montreal that were bound for overseas.

We also continue to collect, analyze and disseminate intelligence to inform our collective direction, and we deliver training to support our collective efforts. Criminal Intelligence Service Canada and the Canadian Police College, which are both hosted by the RCMP, are leaders in these areas.

Let me now shift to my area of responsibility from the more transnational perspective.

Auto theft is an issue that goes beyond Canada's borders. It is a global phenomenon that requires global responses. To this end, as you've heard from my colleagues, we've significantly expanded our efforts to share information about Canadian stolen vehicles with foreign partners.

Since February 2024, data from CPIC, the Canadian Police Information Centre, has been integrated with Interpol's stolen motor vehicle database. That means details on more than 150,000 stolen cars from Canada are now integrated in the global fight around the world.

By sharing this data, we have made it easier for foreign police to identify whether a car in front of them may have been stolen here in Canada. This is working. As you've heard, we've received notification that foreign police have checked and found stolen Canadian cars more than 4,000 times. On the back of that, we've received hundreds of requests for collaboration on investigations. As a result, that's helping us recover stolen vehicles and target the networks behind the thefts.

However, we are doing more than that. We're also taking this effort overseas. As you heard from Director General Oldham, we are deploying experts as part of multinational operations, such as Operation Safe Wheels under the auspices of Interpol, which is funded by Canada, to West Africa to help local authorities there target imports of vehicles to the region by organized crime. Many of the vehicles we found there with Interpol and with local authorities did come from Canada.

In closing, I would just like to reiterate that the RCMP remains engaged with partners to combat auto theft and to ensure that criminals are held to account.

We know that criminal networks are quick to adapt, and we appreciate the ongoing collaboration among partners to deprive criminal groups of this important profit centre and reduce harm to our communities.

I look forward to answering any questions committee members may have today.

Thank you, sir.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: I'd like to thank the three witnesses for their opening remarks.

We're now going to open it up to questions, starting with the Conservative Party.

Mr. Caputo, you have the floor.

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

[*English*]

Thank you to all our witnesses.

This question is for Mr. McCrorie from the CBSA.

The government promised 1,000 new CBSA officers. You're obviously aware of that. How many have been hired?

Aaron McCrorie: So far this year, based on the funding we got in the fall economic statement, we've hired 30 new officers to work on removals and 36 new officers to work on the new technology that we're purchasing. We're developing the plans to look at how we hire and bring on board the additional 1,000.

• (1240)

Frank Caputo: Is that 36 in total, or 66?

Aaron McCrorie: It's 66. Let me clarify that those are the 66 from the fall economic statement.

Frank Caputo: Do those 66 specifically count toward the 1,000 that have been promised?

Aaron McCrorie: Those are in addition to the 1,000.

Frank Caputo: If they're in addition, then you haven't hired any of the 1,000 that have been promised. Is that correct?

Aaron McCrorie: We're in the process of developing our plan to hire them.

Frank Caputo: Let's be real: We've all worked for the government, and "in the process of" is something of an indefinite timeline. The reality is that Canadians were promised 1,000 new officers at

the border. At the rate we are going, by the rough math that I'm doing here, it will take seven years to hire those 1,000 officers. Isn't that of concern?

Aaron McCrorie: I don't think it's going to take seven years. Our HR department is looking at how we can expedite this in working with our college to bring people on as quickly as they can.

Frank Caputo: What I'm saying is that this was a promise and that the promise hasn't been kept, because 66 have been hired. We can all agree on that.

Aaron McCrorie: I'm telling you that we're developing our action plan so that we can bring those 1,000 officers on board in addition to others we bring on as part of our—

Frank Caputo: Mr. Price, I will put the same question to you. Of the 1,000 RCMP officers, how many have been hired?

Liam Price: Sir, I don't know. It's not my area of responsibility.

Frank Caputo: I get that it's not your area of responsibility, but with all due respect, you are at the public safety committee, and I anticipated that you would have anticipated this question would be asked. Is that fair?

The Chair: Let me point out that there are thousands of officials throughout the government, as we know. Some of them come to discuss a specific topic. The topic today is car theft. If you can focus your questions on car theft, that would be useful.

Frank Caputo: With all due respect, Mr. Chair, the number of officers that were promised at the border directly impacts car thefts, so I'm going to continue on here.

Sir, clearly you knew that this was going to come up. Can you get hold of somebody who can get us that number?

Liam Price: I'd be happy to take it on notice and get back to you with details.

Frank Caputo: We're going to have another round here soon, and you have two other panel mates—

[*Translation*]

Marianne Dandurand (Compton—Stanstead, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

The Chair: Ms. Dandurand, you have the floor.

Marianne Dandurand: Mr. Chair, you said that the member was off topic, but he's asking the same question.

The Chair: Members get a certain amount of leeway in terms of the questions they ask, but witnesses, of course, can't always provide the helpful answers that members want if the questions don't relate to the topic on the agenda.

[English]

Frank Caputo: On the same point of order, Mr. Chair, I will continue. The reason I will continue is that we are talking about auto theft. Central to auto theft is our border. Central to our border is how many RCMP officers are there. Central to how many RCMP officers are there is how many were promised. I will continue on with this questioning.

Mr. Price, are you prepared to send a text message to somebody who knows, and then we can come back to you in the next round?

Liam Price: Mr. Chair—

Hon. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): I have a point of order.

[Translation]

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

[English]

Hon. Ali Ehsassi: Mr. Chair, we're all familiar with the procedures that are used in committee. The way it works, as I'm sure Mr. Caputo is fully aware, is not that you ask a witness to text someone back in the department. That is truly unprofessional and a practice we would not want to encourage here.

If Mr. Caputo wants to ask Mr. Price to follow up with information, that is permitted, but the practice Mr. Caputo is promoting is truly unprofessional.

The Chair: Thank you for pointing this out.

Obviously, Mr. Caputo and all other MPs are free to formulate their questions in the way they choose, but obviously they will want to take into account those points of view.

Frank Caputo: Unfortunately for my Liberal colleague, I'm here on behalf of Canadians who have questions. We need those questions answered and we need those questions answered now.

I don't think it's unprofessional to ask a senior member of the RCMP whether they can get the information in a timely manner. In fact, I think that's not only professional; it is my constitutional obligation as a member of His Majesty's loyal opposition.

How many containers—

Jacques Ramsay: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Frank Caputo: Okay, this is getting ridiculous.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Ramsay.

Jacques Ramsay: Mr. Caputo is on the same line. He's asking an officer a question on something that is not his area. He doesn't work in human resources but on car thefts, so I don't think it's realistic to ask him to answer the question and to imply that he should know that answer.

• (1245)

The Chair: Again, witnesses have the freedom to say whether they can or cannot answer the questions.

I'll follow up again with you, Mr. Caputo.

Frank Caputo: On the same point of order, I've been interrupted three times while asking a very basic question.

There were promises made by this government. I am asking whether—

Hon. Ali Ehsassi: I have a point of order.

Frank Caputo: No, I have the floor here, Chair. I'm responding on a point of order. He cannot raise a point of order on my point of order.

The Chair: It's the same point of order. I think we've already discussed it quite well now, so I would just encourage everyone to focus on the issue of interest today.

We have the benefit of three great witnesses and we want to hear from them.

Frank Caputo: Has my time been stopped throughout?

The Chair: I will enhance your time. You have another minute and a half.

Frank Caputo: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The point I'm trying to get to, Mr. Price, is this: This issue has come up in the House of Commons countless times. We all can acknowledge that. You are a senior member of the RCMP. I think it's reasonable that we, as parliamentarians, would expect that if you don't have an answer, you will get that answer forthwith. We would also expect and hope that this is information you would be armed with when you come to committee.

I will move on.

Mr. McCrorie, what percentage of export containers are scanned at the border?

[Translation]

Aaron McCrorie: Thank you for the question.

[English]

I couldn't give you a breakdown in terms of import versus export, but I'd suggest that around 1% to 2% of containers are examined.

Frank Caputo: I'm not talking about imports. I've asked this question before. I'm aware of the answer, but I need to get it on the record.

One per cent to 2% of import containers, or 1.5%, are scanned. I'm only asking about export. Do you have statistics about how many export containers are scanned? That's where the stolen vehicles are.

Aaron McCrorie: It'll be a fraction of that.

What I need to emphasize is that what we're talking about here is whether or not those containers are physically examined or scanned with an X-ray machine, for example.

Frank Caputo: When I say "examined", if it's a fraction of—

Aaron McCrorie: If I may, it's an important distinction, because we use advance commercial information, whether it's inbound or outbound. We have a new targeting tool that we've developed in response to auto theft that allows us to use that advance commercial information to identify which container should be subject to a physical exam.

It's really about separating the wheat from the chaff so that we can focus our efforts where we think the vehicles are.

Frank Caputo: I 100% understand, but if we're only examining a fraction of 1.5%, we're examining a fraction of a fraction. That gives me pause for concern.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. McCrorie, I have to interrupt you because I now have to give the floor to Mr. Ramsay.

You may have a chance to give a brief response later.

Jacques Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, from what I understand, there's a 20% reduction in the number of car thefts. Congratulations. I assume that the measures you're going to implement will continue to yield results and that this percentage may increase even more.

As you said, organized crime tends to evolve and adopt increasingly sophisticated ways of operating.

My questions are for you, Mr. Oldham, but the other witnesses can also answer them.

What are the next steps in the national strategy that could yield greater results? What best practices around the world are we using as inspiration for establishing the national strategy?

Craig Oldham: Thank you for the question. It's really interesting.

[*English*]

The fight against auto theft, I would suggest, is a team sport, and it would be difficult to point to one single action. I would very much suggest that probably our greatest strength has been the collaboration portion of this, bringing the partners—municipal, federal and international, through Interpol—together to do the intelligence-based law enforcement that allows us to target and zero in on the problems.

I would suggest that there have been a number of regulatory and legislative changes as well that have also enhanced our ability to reduce the number of auto thefts and to make this less attractive to organized crime, which, much like water, will always follow the path of least resistance and go where they think the profits are the highest. The more deterrence we put here, the less engagement.

• (1250)

[*Translation*]

Aaron McCrorie: I'd like to thank the member for his question.

[*English*]

I would echo that statement about the importance of collaboration.

When I look at the results for the Canada Border Services Agency, I see that we recovered in the order of 2,300 vehicles last year. We're on track to do about 1,500 this year, and I think that's an indication of auto theft going down. That's all entirely due to collaboration with our policing partners. When we've identified stolen vehicles, it's been based on police referrals, on the new intelligence capacity that we've built and our new targeting tool that we've developed.

In the Toronto area rail yards, we deployed two scanners to look randomly for vehicles. We have done 6,500 scans so far this year, and we've not identified any stolen vehicles as a result of those 6,500 scans, so the success is working with partners, the success is taking an intelligence-driven approach and the success is based on collaboration.

Our president has convened chiefs of police about seven times since the auto theft summit to coordinate efforts, and I've convened my counterparts about 25 times, all with a view to making sure that we're all working together, all collaborating, to identify stolen vehicles and defeat the organized crime behind it.

[*Translation*]

Liam Price: Mr. Chair, I'd also like to thank the member for his question.

[*English*]

I would echo my colleagues and really emphasize that role of global collaboration. The Secretary General of Interpol highlighted Canada's inclusion of all of the stolen motor vehicle data in Interpol's databases as a global best practice and one that should be emulated by countries around the world. That has led to our finding connections we didn't know were there, and that's really important to sealing off the vulnerabilities that Mr. Oldham spoke about.

I'm very proud of that collaboration. It needs to continue, and we are continuing it. Later this fall, we will be at the next Interpol global conference on vehicle crime, talking about evolving trends that we're seeing around the world.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Ramsay, you still have a minute.

Jacques Ramsay: I'll turn it over to my colleague.

The Chair: Mrs. DeBellefeuille, you have the floor.

Claude DeBellefeuille: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd also like to thank the parliamentary secretary for being so generous to me.

Gentlemen, thank you for your remarks. It's unfortunate that we don't have more time to delve into this.

I wasn't part of the auto theft study, but I have read the Government of Canada's national action plan on combatting auto theft and its follow-ups, and I have to tell you sincerely that, from the outside, it seems as though everyone is making an effort, but the root of the problem isn't being addressed. I'll explain what I mean by that.

A professional Radio-Canada journalist recently said, on the *Enquête* program, that organized crime offenders from West Africa were very active in car theft. The method used for arriving in Canada is to apply for a study permit, which is granted by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, or IRCC. However, neither IRCC nor Global Affairs Canada seems to be involved in the national action plan. There is no accountability and no follow-up.

It seems to me that Global Affairs Canada should establish protocols with Côte d'Ivoire and inform us of how their relationship evolves. IRCC, for its part, should show how it can better monitor the issuance of study permits and better track students from West Africa. I think those are the major omissions from the national action plan, because those departments aren't accountable for helping to reduce vehicle theft.

I also don't get the impression that there's more space for border officers at the Port of Montreal. I don't think Mr. McCrorie is surprised to hear that. There aren't more hired border officers either. I think there are about eight specifically dedicated to combatting auto theft.

In short, I see improvements, but some stakeholders are missing.

What do you think of my idea to take the national action plan and add active participation by Global Affairs Canada and IRCC when it comes to issuing study permits for students from West Africa?

Aaron McCrorie: Thank you for your question.

[English]

You're absolutely right. This was an interesting case in which CBSA played a very active role with the police of local jurisdiction to conduct an investigation. In part, this was driven by some of the findings that CBSA inland investigators generated in working with FINTRAC as well.

Part of our normal working relationship with IRCC is in fact based on the information we have gathered through this exercise. We share that with IRCC so they can do a better job when they are issuing student permits. It's also a little bit on CBSA, because some of those student visas will come to us for background checks. That will inform us in terms of how we do background checks prior to a visa being issued.

The other part I would highlight is that the police are going to play their role in doing the criminal investigation and ultimately charging people. For example, if students who are foreign nationals are convicted, then we will remove them. They would be inadmissible as a result of criminality or serious criminality. One of the consequences, once they are done with the criminal system, is that we would remove them. We're actively pursuing that.

• (1255)

[Translation]

Claude DeBellefeuille: I have to interrupt.

As we speak, we know that students from West Africa are part of organized crime in Canada and are stealing cars. The idea is to intervene upstream.

Some students who come here for the purpose of studying can leave and then come back without their round trips necessarily being monitored. We wonder why Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada isn't tracking where they go.

Border services doesn't document the whereabouts of students.

Is that correct?

[English]

Aaron McCrorie: I can't answer on behalf of IRCC. I can't talk about what the IRCC is doing, but what I can say is that we do have inland investigators. When we receive tips or when we receive information that there may be students, for example, involved in criminality, we will pursue that or share that information with police. To the extent that we have information about it, we will either work with them or let them pursue their criminal investigations.

We don't actively monitor every student in the country and we don't actively monitor every foreign national in the country, but when we do receive information about criminality, we will pursue that. Again, we either do that with police or we will pursue it on our own. The ultimate consequence for that will be removal if somebody is convicted.

[Translation]

Claude DeBellefeuille: I'd like to ask you one last question.

I see that Public Safety Canada, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Canada Border Services Agency are taking measures under the national action plan, but I don't see a lot of motivation to encourage the auto sector to build cars that aren't so easy to steal.

I find these measures a bit timid. There's plenty of talk, but it seems to me that there also has to be action taken at the source.

Why does Canada allow the manufacturing of cars that are so easy to steal?

Who is following up with the Minister of Public Safety so that he can have his officials change course, and they can get results more quickly?

The Chair: You have 10 seconds, Mr. Oldham, to answer the question.

[English]

Craig Oldham: Mr. Chair, I will try to answer in 10 seconds.

Certainly, we are engaged with the auto sector and the manufacturers. It's a new area of work where we are increasingly engaged with them. In fact, we have meetings in October with partners in that area.

I would also point to the work that ISED is doing to try to encourage innovation around reducing auto theft through technology. It is obviously a complex space because of the interaction with the United States and the joint nature of the auto industry. A more detailed explanation of this subject could probably come from Transport Canada and ISED. I am not the expert in that kind of detail.

We consider the auto sector, the manufacturing sector and all of the private sectors as key partners in the national action plan.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

We absolutely have to leave between 1:10 p.m. and 1:15 p.m. There are two more interventions.

We'll start with Mr. Lloyd, and then we'll go to Ms. Acan.

[English]

Dane Lloyd (Parkland, CPC): Thank you.

Mr. Oldham, you said that 2,227 vehicles were intercepted at the ports by CBSA in 2024, plus 1,155 so far in 2025. I noted that in 2023, about 1,800 vehicles were intercepted at the border. However, according to the Équité Association, out of all the vehicles that were stolen in 2023, about 2.5% of stolen vehicles were intercepted at the border. That went up to about 3.9% in 2024. If the trend continues this year, it will sit at about 5%. It doesn't seem like a very dramatic increase in the number of vehicles being intercepted at the border.

Why has the number not increased, given all the investments and announcements the government has made?

• (1300)

Aaron McCrorie: Not all cars that are stolen in Canada are bound for the export market, so I think you need to be careful with...

I don't mean this disrespectfully—

Dane Lloyd: I understand that.

Aaron McCrorie: —but in terms of how you calculate the percentages of what's going out, I can say that even this year, we're seeing a decline in the number of vehicles we've intercepted at the border. By rough math, we're probably going to intercept about 1,500 vehicles. That's still higher than the years prior to 2022. In 2022 it was about 1,300 vehicles, so we're still seeing more.

When you look at the combination of the number of vehicles we're intercepting and the decline in auto theft, I'm not pretending that CBSA is the only answer, but I think the point is that we've been working very well with our partners, which is having an impact on auto theft.

Criminals are moving on to other and different modes. We're seeing changes in their trends. We're seeing them move to the west coast rather than the east coast, for example, but I do think we're having an impact.

Dane Lloyd: I'm well aware that it's a significant issue, because if criminals are not shipping vehicles out as much, they're still stealing vehicles. It's estimated that in the first half of this year, 23,000 vehicles were stolen. These are bound for domestic sale, within Canada. Carfax just released a report saying that 372,000 cloned VINs, or vehicle identification numbers, are currently in operation in Canada today. Of those, 127,000 are Ontario-registered vehicles.

I'm very concerned. I know that this is a provincial issue as well, but hundreds of thousands of Canadians are driving vehicles that potentially are stolen vehicles. What are we going to do about it when these people find out that the vehicles they're depending on for their livelihoods were stolen? Are there any plans on how we're going to deal with that?

Craig Oldham: Thank you for that.

There is a fair bit of activity around the VIN issue. It's a very interesting one. Ontario has been quite seized with this as a province. They are working with us on it and also with Transport Canada and ISED. It's a technological problem as well that needs some resolution. We're not there yet, but we are working hard at it.

I think it would also be accurate to point out that stolen vehicles in Canada are often used domestically for parts. It's the old chop shop sort of methodology here, not just revinning and remodelling a vehicle.

Dane Lloyd: Is there a concern, though, that...? With Carfax providing a reporting service on whether your VIN is a real VIN or a cloned VIN, if you find out that your VIN is cloned, you're talking about a \$50,000 loss, and potentially even more, in terms of what you paid for that vehicle. People have brought that concern to me.

I don't want to say that people will do the wrong thing, but there's a risk that these vehicles will magically get stolen. People will file insurance claims. Vehicles will be found burned out in the forest and insurance claims will be filed. The liability costs could be massive.

What plans are being made to ensure that these potentially 372,000 cloned VIN vehicles are not going to undergo that kind of fate?

Craig Oldham: I can't speak to your numbers, as I'm not familiar with them, but I will say, as I said previously, that the revinning issue is of concern. Through this national action plan and the collaboration among provinces, municipalities, police forces, etc., we are actively working on that issue.

There is not a plan yet. We are working on a plan. That would be a fair assessment.

Dane Lloyd: We're in a cost of living crisis right now. Probably through no fault of their own, people bought these vehicles. This is the work of transnational gangs, is it not? These are gangs that are selling these stolen vehicles and revinning them. What's being done to combat these gangs in doing revinning domestically in Canada?

That's my final question. Thank you.

Craig Oldham: I will say that globally, the government is doing quite a bit around the gang issue. You've seen actions within the border bill. You see actions included in Bill C-2, which is coming forward. There were changes through Bill C-69 back in June of 2024, which increased offences around the possession and distribution of devices that are linked to this, of course, and adding the revinning factor—

• (1305)

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Oldham, I'm sorry to interrupt, but the time is up.

[English]

Dane Lloyd: I'd ask you to follow up in writing to finish the answer.

Thank you.

The Chair: Yes. That would be greatly appreciated.

[Translation]

Ms. Acan, you have the floor.

Sima Acan (Oakville West, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is for all the witnesses.

[English]

I appreciate the numbers you shared from the Équité Association report. That is a drastic change since last year, since 2024.

In the numbers that you gave, you mentioned that Ontario had an almost 26% decrease. This is thanks to the civilian and uniformed members of law enforcement and also thanks to the Halton Regional Police Service, which is headquartered in my riding. Their Project Credit investigation revealed a sophisticated auto theft network operating in the GTA that included chop shops and revinning the vehicles. Those domestic chop shops are now expanding to ship parts internationally.

The Équité Association report also notes the RCMP's role in providing stolen vehicle data to Interpol as a key part of the successful strategy.

With criminals now targeting provinces like Alberta for international export and even expanding domestic chop shops to ship parts internationally, how is the enhanced data sharing with international partners like Interpol empowering the RCMP to disrupt these evolving global criminal networks at their source and at their destination points?

Liam Price: Thank you for the detail in the comments about our international efforts.

Let me first say that Halton is a great partner. The Halton Regional Police Service is an incredibly dedicated bunch of folks.

One of the great things about the RCMP is that it is a big tent with jurisdictions across Canada, so the sharing of data is happening organically. We were out in Winnipeg just last month talking with the Winnipeg Police Service and with police officers from across the west about the vehicle theft problem and sharing the lessons that have been learned from central Canada already.

That is happening on a daily basis through awareness and things like the purple notices that go out through Interpol. It's a key part of our effort, so that we don't have to relearn the problem time and again.

My colleague just mentioned the movement to the west. We're detecting these trends earlier because that sharing of data is happening organically.

I hope that's helpful.

Sima Acan: Thank you very much.

The report also mentions the positive impacts of Ontario's major auto theft prosecution response team, which focuses on crime hot spots. We see criminal tactics evolving and targeting different regions, such as Alberta, as I mentioned.

Could you please discuss how the RCMP is applying lessons learned from these successful provincial task forces to adapt its national strategy and stay ahead of these organized criminals?

Liam Price: Like any challenge involving organized crime, it is a bit of an arms race, a cat and mouse game. We take action; they adapt. We take action again, and they adapt again. It's a constant learning process.

One of the great things about the collaboration among all levels and all of the various partnerships has been our ability to use that collaboration to adjust our strategies. You described the movement from the export of full vehicles to chop shops. There's the movement from stealing cars physically to stealing them by fraud. Those are adjustments that we're making within the strategy at a very organic level. We're applying it as those data points come up in various other jurisdictions. We're sharing with international partners when we learn that there's a network that may have been active in one country and it has suddenly moved to another, and this group of folks is in your backyard, so let's pay attention to them.

To respond a little bit to an earlier question, one danger in focusing on just one group of people is that the organized crime milieu is quite a complex ecosystem, not necessarily from any one country or one background. We really need to use those lessons and investigations to focus on the people who are committing the crimes in the round.

• (1310)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Ms. Acan, you have a little time left for a very brief last question.

[*English*]

You have 15 seconds.

Sima Acan: Mr. Chair, I don't have any other questions. They have already answered some questions that I had.

If I have any time left, then I would like to share it with Madame DeBellefeuille, if she would like to take that time.

The Chair: That's great. We indeed have two and a half minutes, Madame DeBellefeuille. We don't have more than that.

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much as well, Ms. Acan.

My only question is for Mr. McCrorie.

The national action plan on combatting auto theft includes hiring new officers at the Canada Border Services Agency and deploying them at ports, rail yards and intermodal hubs. The plan is one year old; it will celebrate its first anniversary in November 2025.

Can you tell us exactly how many new officers have been deployed as part of the national action plan?

Aaron McCrorie: Thank you for the question.

[*English*]

Very quickly, probably around 30 FTEs have been hired, but the ones that really matter are the 25 FTEs that are operational. We hired 10 new intelligence and targeting officers, and then 15 additional commercial exam officers to deploy to Montreal at the port, in the Toronto area rail yards, the port of Halifax and the port of Vancouver as well. They're in place.

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille: According to the information I have, the number of border services officers at the Port of Montreal hasn't been increased.

Is that information false? Can you confirm that there has been an increase?

[*English*]

Aaron McCrorie: I'm not sure what the source of your information is, but what I would say is that we probably have on average about 40 people working at the marine and rail examination centre at the port of Montreal. With the additional resources, probably another six were added.

Again, some of them were intelligence officers and some of them are going to be there to facilitate the examination of containers.

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Chair, is my time up?

The Chair: Unfortunately, yes.

That said, the questions were excellent. There will be more opportunities to discuss all of this in the context of the border study, since these two files are related.

Ms. Acan, you seem to want to say something.

[*English*]

Sima Acan: Thank you.

Mr. Chair, if I may, I would like to move a motion to adjourn the meeting for today.

The Chair: I was going to do that now, because it's already 1:10 p.m.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much, everyone.

Have a good day.

The meeting is adjourned.

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