



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 035

Monday, June 15, 2026

Chair: Iqra Khalid



Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights

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• (1100)

[English]

The Chair (Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

[Translation]

Good morning, everyone.

[English]

Welcome to meeting number 35 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. Pursuant to the order of reference of April 2, 2026, the committee will continue and complete, I hope, its study on Bill C-238, an act to amend the Criminal Code regarding restitution orders.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application. I think that everybody's gone through their Zoom sound checks effectively. We should be good on that.

I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses and members. Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mic. Please mute yourself when you're not speaking. For those on Zoom, you can see the selection at the bottom of your screen and choose which interpretation you would like. You have the option of floor, French or English audio. For those in the room, you can use your earpiece and select the desired channel on your device.

This is a reminder that all comments should be addressed through the chair. For members in the room, if you wish to speak, please raise your hand. For members on Zoom, please use the "raise hand" function. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can. We appreciate your patience and understanding in this regard.

Appearing today and with us for the first hour, we have Cristina Scarpellini from Angels of Hope Against Human Trafficking. She's a founder and is here by video conference. From The Go-Give Project, we have Evie Ali, executive director.

We welcome you both.

We'll start with Cristina, please, for your opening remarks of five minutes.

Cristina Scarpellini (Founder, Angels of Hope Against Human Trafficking): Chair and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

My name is Cristina Scarpellini, and I am the founder and executive director of Angels of Hope Against Human Trafficking, a registered Canadian charity that provides long-term, trauma-informed support to survivors of human trafficking and sexual exploitation, as well as to individuals who are at risk of exploitation. Since founding Angels of Hope in 2015, I have had the privilege of walking alongside survivors as they rebuild their lives after experiencing some of the most devastating forms of abuse imaginable. Through this work, I have witnessed both the profound harm caused by human trafficking and the remarkable resilience of survivors who refuse to let their exploitation define them.

Angels of Hope serves survivors of all ages, genders and backgrounds across Ontario. We provide free, bilingual services in a safe, supportive and trauma-informed environment. Our approach is survivor-centred and rooted in harm reduction, recognizing that healing is not a linear process and that recovery takes time, trust and long-term support. To date, Angels of Hope has provided long-term support services to more than 400 survivors and their families.

Every survivor's story is different, but there is one common theme: The impact of human trafficking does not end when the exploitation ends. The trauma can last for years. Survivors often require ongoing mental health support, addiction treatment, housing assistance, education, employment support and community reintegration. The funding may end, but the trauma does not.

Our support for Bill C-238 is rooted in what we see every day on the front lines. When a trafficker exploits a victim, the harm extends far beyond that individual. The effects are felt by families, communities, the health care system, social services, law enforcement and the organizations that step in to provide support and recovery services. For years, charity and frontline organizations like ours have worked tirelessly to address the consequences of human trafficking. We provide counselling, advocacy, case management, crisis support and long-term care because survivors deserve every opportunity to heal and rebuild their lives.

The reality is that the costs associated with recovery are significant. Too often, those costs are borne by survivors, their families, community organizations and taxpayers. Meanwhile, the individuals responsible for creating that harm are rarely required to contribute to repairing it in a meaningful way. Bill C-238 recognizes an important principle: Those who cause harm should bear greater responsibility for addressing its consequences. This legislation acknowledges the real and measurable impact that human trafficking has on victims and the organizations that support them. It recognizes that recovery is not immediate, services are essential and frontline organizations play a critical role in helping survivors move forward. From our perspective, Bill C-238 strengthens accountability. It sends a message that human trafficking is not only a crime against an individual victim. It is a crime that creates lasting social and economic costs that ripple through entire communities. Most importantly, this bill recognizes something survivors tell us repeatedly: Recovery requires support, and support requires resources.

No legislation alone will end human trafficking. We need prevention, education, enforcement, survivor services, housing, mental health supports and long-term investments in recovery. However, Bill C-238 is an important step because it recognizes the reality faced by survivors and the organizations that serve them. As someone who has dedicated more than a decade to supporting survivors, I believe this legislation reflects both fairness and accountability. Survivors should not have to carry the burden of recovery alone. Families should not have to carry it alone. Communities should not have to carry it alone. The organizations providing critical support should not be expected to shoulder that burden alone.

On behalf of Angels of Hope Against Human Trafficking and the survivors we serve, I would like to thank the committee for its attention to this issue and for considering measures that strengthen accountability and support those affected by human trafficking. Human trafficking thrives in silence, secrecy and vulnerability. By supporting survivors, strengthening accountability and investing in recovery, we can build safer communities and create a future where fewer people become victims in the first place.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

● (1105)

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

We're moving to Ms. Ali for five minutes.

Please go ahead.

Evie Ali (Executive Director, The Go-Give Project): Good afternoon, everyone.

My name is Evie Ali, and I am the co-founder and executive director of the Go-Give Project in greater Sudbury.

The Go-Give Project began as a small grassroots organization, and we have grown into a municipally funded charitable organization. Our work is rooted in an emergency response framework and operates at the intersection of addiction, homelessness, poverty, mental health and crisis response.

Our staff provide outreach services, a drop-in centre, overdose response, resource navigation, crisis intervention and de-escalation.

Our ongoing support to our community's most vulnerable individuals allows us to see first-hand the profound impacts of victimization. Through the work, we witness the profound impacts violence and financial instability have, and usually on those who are the least equipped to navigate complex systems.

While our organization is not a legal service provider, we see every day the impacts that crime and victimization have on individuals. Many of the people we support have experienced theft, assault, fraud, exploitation, intimate partner violence and property damage. For those already living in poverty or instability, even the smallest financial loss can be devastating. Replacing identification, medications, cellphones, clothing or personal belongings, or securing emergency transportation can pose significant barriers to recovery, housing stability, employment and personal safety.

Restitution orders can provide important pathways for recognizing the financial harm caused by crime. However, in practice, many victims face challenges navigating the justice system and often struggle to access meaningful compensation or even understand the processes that are available to them. From a frontline perspective, any measure that improves the awareness of restitution, increases accessibility and reduces barriers for victims is a positive step. Victims should not be expected to navigate complex processes, especially during times of trauma and uncertainty.

As Parliament considers Bill C-238, I encourage members to consider not only the legal framework of restitution orders but also the practical realities that victims are facing, particularly those who are marginalized, living in poverty, experiencing homelessness or dealing with addiction or mental health challenges. The justice system works best when individuals who have suffered from harm feel heard and supported throughout the process. Financial restitution alone cannot undo trauma, but meaningful access to restitution can help restore dignity, stability and a sense of justice.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

● (1110)

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

Before we go into questions, I will remind members that it is important to be respectful, as this is a very sensitive topic that we are talking about today, and to really have respect for the victims and the survivors.

We'll start our first six-minute round with Mr. Lawton.

Please go ahead.

Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair. Congratulations on your first meeting as chair, from the outset of the meeting anyway.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here.

I'll start with you, Ms. Ali.

First off, thank you for the work you do. In communities across the country, we've all seen the problems that you identify, and people who have the heart and desire to serve and try to address that is something that we have a great deal of gratitude for.

I wanted to get into a little more of the specifics on the work you do, particularly for people with addictions. You have identified work on harm reduction supports. What is the harm reduction you're referring to that your agency participates in?

Evie Ali: We practise harm reduction in a number of ways throughout the agency. Of course, we could look at the basics, where we're looking at needle exchange programs via public health. That is a very small part of what we do.

We also look at reducing harms through our outreach services by providing that de-escalation, as well as crisis intervention. We work alongside the Greater Sudbury Police Service in order to provide protection for both agencies and to ensure that individuals are being treated fairly and accessing everything that is available to them. We also have drop-in centres. We operate cooling and warming throughout the summer and winter. Essentially, all of our work is framed around reducing harms in addiction.

Andrew Lawton: You're distributing needles to IV drug users. Are you giving out crack pipes, pipes and those sorts of materials as well?

Evie Ali: That would be correct.

Andrew Lawton: Is any of the work you do directed towards recovery, to getting people off drugs? If so, could you please explain a little bit more about that?

Evie Ali: Absolutely. Harm reduction would always be the first step. We can't just ship you off to treatment. If we don't have a relationship with you, you don't want to hear that from us. We really pride ourselves on the meaningful relationships we have built.

For a bit of a brief background, we sent seven people to treatment centres across northern Ontario last month, and this month we're hoping to see an increase in those numbers.

Andrew Lawton: How many people would you serve in distributing drug paraphernalia in a month?

Evie Ali: I don't have that data in front of me but would be happy to submit a written response.

Andrew Lawton: That would be very helpful. Thank you.

Are you a participant in any safe supply programs?

Evie Ali: There currently aren't any official safe supply programs available.

Andrew Lawton: Is your organization a supporter of safe supply?

Evie Ali: We're not here to discuss drug policy.

Andrew Lawton: We are, unfortunately, because in the actual legislation there's very little limitation on what types of organizations would receive restitution under this. One of the discussions we'll be having when we get to clause-by-clause is about whether we need to fine-tune that.

From a political perspective—and this is not your responsibility—we have seen a great many problems with safe supply in provinces that have done it. Therefore, when we look at which organization should be able to receive restitution, it is relevant. I'm just curious about what your organization's view is on safe supply.

• (1115)

Evie Ali: What I can share with you is that every day we are supporting marginalized victims of crime in some way or another. Sometimes that can be a very simple support chat, and sometimes it escalates further and we have to rehouse, relocate and replace lost and missing items. The impacts are there. They're tangible, and they're in our communities and many communities—if not all.

Andrew Lawton: Do you believe people facing drug addiction should be supplied with drugs?

Evie Ali: I fail to see the relevance.

Andrew Lawton: It's highly relevant when we're talking about the way drug policy is unfolding on streets and in organizations across the country. We have these two distinct viewpoints. We have some organizations that are more inclined to say that recovery is the path forward that we need to be prioritizing. Then we have others that have been pushing what I think has actually amounted to enabling drug users by providing them access to the very substances that are causing the problems.

We've also seen, in communities with safe supply, a significant increase in diversion, where the safe supply drugs are then sold in some cases to students, while the person who was given the safe supply drug then gets the money to buy the stronger drug they really want. It's highly relevant if we're talking about creating a pipeline where an organization is going to be receiving funding and then that organization might be participating in something that's making things worse.

If you don't want to answer, that's fine. I just want to stress why this is such a big issue here.

I'll turn to you, Ms. Scarpellini.

On the human trafficking side of things, in a previous bill we had tried to really look at human trafficking and the absence of really strong penalties. Paul Brandt, a country singer who's done a tremendous amount of work on this, has pointed out that human trafficking is not an issue we can pin on any particular community. It's literally everywhere. I'm wondering if you could, in the minute I have left, speak to what that looks like in northern Ontario.

Cristina Scarpellini: In northern Ontario, specifically greater Sudbury, we are considered a hub for human trafficking due to our geographical location.

Andrew Lawton: What are some of the stories that have struck you about who this affects? One of the things I have learned about this issue is that there is this "it couldn't happen to me" dynamic, where people feel like it's always some other demographic that's at risk when it really is anyone.

Cristina Scarpellini: In my opinion, it doesn't discriminate against a certain class of people. Some people may become more vulnerable, but in all honesty, it could happen to anyone.

Andrew Lawton: Thank you very much.

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

We're moving on to Ms. Lapointe for six minutes.

Please go ahead.

Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to start by thanking Cristina and Evie for the many meetings you've had with me and for the discussions we've had that have really helped give shape and form to this bill. I also want to thank you for appearing at committee today.

Cristina, you talked about how survivors, families and communities shouldn't have to carry the burden of recovery alone. That really speaks to the importance of the support services that are offered in not only Sudbury but communities all across Canada. Can you tell us about the importance of those services for victims of these crimes?

Cristina Scarpellini: Long-term support for victims of human trafficking is important so that they don't end up back with their trafficker. If we have a survivor who isn't healed, chances are they could end up back with their trafficker. Our goal is to walk hand in hand with them on their healing journey. If a survivor is using substances, we can get them to abstain from them and go into treatment. It's very important that a survivor recover from this so that they don't become a statistic, either back with their trafficker or dead.

Viviane Lapointe: Evie, in your opening statement, you talked about the profound impacts of victimization. Can you expand on those impacts and on what you see every day?

Evie Ali: Absolutely. The crimes that we provide support on vary from petty theft to things that are more significant like serious assaults and so forth. Support, as I mentioned, can range as well among a variety of things. Sometimes it's very simple, but sometimes it requires all hands on deck to support an individual because we're looking at a multi-faceted problem. When you have a victim coming forward from a marginalized population, they don't have

somewhere safe to go. They don't have the resources behind them to continue to promote a healthier lifestyle or to get them out of where they were.

I say this coming from lived experience. I am 16 years sober. I used to be homeless and an addict in the very same community that we're serving. It was only because I had privilege that I get to sit here and have this conversation with you today.

It is our goal to bridge the gaps and barriers to provide that privilege to other people who come from other demographics and who won't necessarily have access.

● (1120)

Viviane Lapointe: Thank you, Evie.

In some of the discussions we had, we talked about how this bill is not only about bringing accountability to those committing these crimes. It's also about visibility for the frontline responders who support these victims.

Currently, support organizations like yours, Evie, are largely not seen in our judicial system. Can you talk to us about that?

Evie Ali: When we're dealing with victims who have been through the justice system, typically they will land back at our agencies or similar agencies. Our agencies are all above capacity. We're underfunded, and we're all dealing with multiple simultaneous crises.

When a victim comes forward, we have to do our best to support them within the limitations we are given. Those limitations are often financial. While there are often other supports available to victims, there are many hoops they have to jump through to access them. This is what we keep coming back to with this bill. Victims should not have to go through complex processes during those times in their lives just to access meaningful supports.

Viviane Lapointe: Cristina, in your opening statement, you talked about how Bill C-238 recognizes an important principle, which is that those who cause harm should bear greater responsibility for addressing its consequences.

Can you expand on that point and share with us some of the things that you've heard from the victims of human trafficking you support?

Cristina Scarpellini: I often hear from victims of human trafficking that they don't get justice. It may be that they went through the justice system and their trafficker wasn't convicted, or even if their trafficker was convicted, they feel that the trafficker should be contributing to their recovery, since they were the one who caused the trauma.

Viviane Lapointe: You also talked about how the impact of trafficking doesn't end when the exploitation ends. Can you tell us what is meant by that?

Cristina Scarpellini: For the trauma that survivors endure while being exploited, the real recovery starts after they've exited the game. That is a long, intense and complex process. We've had survivors who have been working with us for the past five years, because healing is not a linear journey.

Viviane Lapointe: Thank you, Cristina.

Evie, you talked about how raising awareness of restitution is a positive step. Can you expand on that?

Evie Ali: Absolutely. Bill C-238 really just acknowledges that frontline organizations are absorbing costs in relation to these crimes that are being committed.

Viviane Lapointe: If you could you give this committee advice from the people you support every day, what is the most important message you would want these committee members to walk away with today?

Evie Ali: I always want to repeat and enforce that nobody woke up one morning and decided to live this lifestyle. There is always a chain of events or a significant event that leads somebody to where they sit today, be that an encampment, a jail cell, a sidewalk or without a home. Nobody woke up and decided, "Today, I want to try drugs and ruin my life. Today I want to risk my life and lose my family." Nobody woke up and chose that. There's always an underlying cause and an underlying circumstance. Sometimes it relates back to very early childhood. Sometimes it's something that happens through our growth spectrum as we become adults.

I really cannot stress that enough. We hear so much that they don't want help or they just want drugs. That's just not the reality. We're dealing with multiple systems designed on outdated policies that still stigmatize and create barriers for the individuals to access help. Then we want to sit here screaming that they don't want it.

Again, I really cannot stress enough that nobody woke up and chose this. Everybody has something that's led them to where they are. Nobody is happy in this lifestyle, despite the misconstrued stereotypes we may see surrounding it.

That's really important to me.

• (1125)

Viviane Lapointe: Thank you.

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

[Translation]

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

Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Ali and Ms. Scarpellini, thank you both for being here this morning.

Obviously, we all recognize the importance of helping victims of crime who are dealing with legal proceedings that are often complex and costly. In that regard, we must commend the work both of you are doing in your respective organizations. Thank you.

That said, with respect to the bill we're studying this morning, I'd like to discuss a few things with you.

Ms. Ali, are you currently receiving funding from the province?

Which province do you work in?

[English]

Evie Ali: We are in Ontario.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Are you currently receiving funding from the Ontario government and the federal government?

[English]

Evie Ali: No, we do not.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: How do you fund your activities?

[English]

Evie Ali: Our activities are currently municipally funded and privately funded.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Okay.

With respect to those requests, we understand that, when someone is sentenced, victims can currently receive restitution. If Bill C-238 is adopted, organizations would also be eligible.

Have you considered how the requests of victims should be aligned with those of organizations?

[English]

Evie Ali: Absolutely. The victim should always remain the priority.

However, when we started to really dive into things and look at the number of victims accessing the restitutions available to them versus what is actually available, we noticed that a very small number are equipped to access or navigate the steps. Some just aren't aware that those steps are even available to them.

It's always important to keep the victim on the front line. This bill simply recognizes that agencies are also absorbing costs.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Ms. Ali.

[English]

Evie Ali: Again, we're not a legal agency, so I can't speak to the legal framework of this. I can only speak to what we experience.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Ms. Ali.

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

How do you think the requests of victims should be aligned with those of organizations?

Cristina Scarpellini: Could you repeat the question?

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: I was saying that, currently, victims can receive restitution when their offender is convicted. The bill would add restitution to organizations.

How do you think the requests of victims should be aligned with those of organizations?

Is there an order of priority?

Cristina Scarpellini: I'm sorry, I don't understand the question.

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Okay.

I'll move on to another question.

Which province do you work in?

Cristina Scarpellini: I work in Ontario.

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Do you receive subsidies from the Ontario provincial government or the Canadian government?

Cristina Scarpellini: We receive funding from the Canadian government, but just for one-year projects.

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: You know that, at present, there are what are called "surcharges" that are imposed when someone has a conviction. The proceeds from the surcharges are used by the government precisely to fund the activities of organizations that help victims.

How do you see that?

In your opinion, are the surcharges not high enough? Here, we're multiplying the categories.

How do you see the situation in that regard?

Cristina Scarpellini: May I answer in English?

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Yes, of course.

Cristina Scarpellini: Okay.

Excuse me, my earpiece isn't working properly.

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Madam Chair, could we suspend the meeting to allow the witness to resolve her earpiece issue?

[English]

The Chair: Absolutely.

Could I ask IT about any challenges, please?

In the meantime, Monsieur Fortin, do you have questions for other witnesses? Maybe we can come back to this question for this witness once we figure out the IT.

• (1130)

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Yes, I'll continue with Ms. Ali. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Ali, do you see the issue on your end?

Do you receive funding under the surcharge program?

[English]

Evie Ali: We do not.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: I would also like to discuss another topic with you.

Would it be fair to say that the most important thing for victims, for your clientele, is to have a trial that takes place within a reasonably short time frame and that is also concluded within a reasonable period of time?

[English]

Evie Ali: I think that would be presumptuous for us to assume for everybody. I don't think I have an appropriate answer. That's out of my scope.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: I would also have asked Ms. Scarpellini that question.

Those are the issues I wanted to address, Madam Chair. I'd like to come back to Ms. Scarpellini once her microphone is working again.

[English]

The Chair: Perhaps Ms. Scarpellini can answer the question in writing to the committee.

Would that be something that you'd be comfortable with, Monsieur Fortin?

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: I might be comfortable with that, Madam Chair.

The only issue is that, as you know, we'll be doing clause-by-clause in half an hour. I don't see how a written answer that I will clearly receive at some later date—this week or next week—will be of any use to me. It will therefore be too late.

[English]

The Chair: I understand.

Ms. Scarpellini, can you try to answer now? Is your sound a little better?

Cristina Scarpellini: I think so. I just tried to attach it again.

[Translation]

Could you repeat your question, please?

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Okay. I'll repeat it.

Isn't it more important for victims to have a trial that proceeds quickly, that starts quickly and concludes quickly, than to know how organizations will be funded?

[*English*]

Cristina Scarpellini: Absolutely, it is important that trials are done in a quick manner for the sake of survivors, but we also need quick funds to help those survivors as soon as they exit the situation.

[*Translation*]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Are you currently receiving money through the victim surcharge program?

[*English*]

Cristina Scarpellini: No—

The Chair: Monsieur Fortin, you're over a minute over now.

[*Translation*]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: I wasn't at six minutes, Madam Chair.

Did you stop the clock while Ms. Scarpellini's microphone issue was being sorted out?

[*English*]

The Chair: I absolutely stopped the clock.

[*Translation*]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: I don't understand, because I was looking at my time, and right now I'm at six minutes and two seconds. In any case, it will be fine.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you. I appreciate your understanding, Monsieur Fortin. You will have another round, of course.

We're moving on to our second round of five minutes, starting with Mr. Baber.

Please go ahead.

Roman Baber (York Centre, CPC): Ms. Ali, thank you for your evidence and for your appearance today. I very much share your perspective with respect to addictions. Nobody chooses to wake up in the morning and suffer some of the consequences that our friends, neighbours, loved ones and constituents have been known to suffer from. I thank you for your efforts.

I'd like to talk about the practicality of the bill. I appreciate your sentiment that it's important to bring awareness to restitution, and I agree with you. Restitution may be a component of sentencing. While it will never make the victim or the organization whole, it certainly helps everyone involved. However, I'd like to canvass the feasibility of what is being studied by this committee.

I see that you were founded in 2020. May I ask what percentage, roughly, of your budget is geared to administration?

Evie Ali: It's approximately 60%.

Roman Baber: Is that six zero?

Evie Ali: It's six zero.

Roman Baber: Within that budget, does that include your legal budget?

Evie Ali: That is correct.

Roman Baber: Does that include any litigation budget?

Evie Ali: It does not.

Roman Baber: It's fair to say that organizations such as yours are rarely involved in litigious matters. My understanding is that you don't currently spend any money on any active litigation.

Evie Ali: That's correct.

Roman Baber: You understand that in the event that your organization is successful in obtaining a portion of a sentence, in that a judge would sentence a criminal to provide restitution to your organization, you would then have to engage in enforcement proceedings to try to collect that money.

• (1135)

Evie Ali: I do understand that.

Roman Baber: Have you had any conversations or any considerations to see if such an endeavour would in fact yield a financial benefit or if it would more likely result in a financial loss, vis-à-vis legal costs?

Evie Ali: We have not explored it in depth at this time. What I can share is that the whole process is very similar to any process we have to go through as a non-profit or charity to access funding, especially when it comes down to the federal and provincial funds. They want everything except the blood of my first-born. This really wouldn't be news for us. We're used to having to fight for every penny. As of right now, at this stage of the bill, we don't see that being a roadblock.

Roman Baber: I appreciate your consideration. My view, respectfully, is that a litigious process when you try to collect funds from a criminal may yield not just different results; there may also be different requirements and methods in order to pursue it. This effectively amounts to an order that would be registered with the court. Then you would try to seize assets or try to garnish wages to satisfy that judgment.

Would you be so kind as to tell me what the common profile is here? I'm sure every situation is unique, but when you talk about folks who, regretfully, perpetuate crimes against some of the victims you serve, what are some of the common scenarios in which you encounter such individuals? Give me a scenario.

Evie Ali: Typically, in terms of the most common situation we encounter, our community is often victimized by other communities, by individuals coming from other communities. We are not looking at neighbour-on-neighbour crime as often as we are looking at intercity crime. That really has a ripple effect. I think it's more impactful than neighbour-on-neighbour crime, which is typically your pettier crime. People can step forward and move forward from that. The things we're seeing in our community are leaving lifelong, lasting impacts, and then, when we talk about having individuals in these situations, it keeps them where they're at.

Roman Baber: Do those folks who presumably come from other communities often share an addiction component of their own?

Evie Ali: From our experience as a frontline agency, when we look at Bill C-238, we're looking at organized crime and drug dealers who are coming in and profiting off our marginalized community, and not at our marginalized community.

Roman Baber: Do you anticipate that you would be able to satisfy a judgment against a drug dealer?

Evie Ali: I don't believe it would happen every time, but I believe there is ample opportunity for those outcomes.

Roman Baber: You would be prepared—

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Baber. We are out of time for you.

We are moving on to Ms. Begum for five minutes.

Please go ahead.

Doly Begum (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Thank you very much, Chair.

Good morning. I'll start with Evie and then go to Cristina.

Thank you so much for being here. Last year, I remember, you were facing budget cuts and a lot of layoffs. If I'm not mistaken, you had to have fewer staff and fewer resources to do the same amount of work. Post-COVID, you've had a massive increase in the number of people who have required your services. You have saved so many lives. Do you want to expand a little on that?

Evie Ali: Yes. It's really been quite a journey throughout the last six years.

There were multiple points to your question, but let's talk about the saving lives piece. From January to April, we lost 42 individuals in our community as a result of toxic drug poisonings. In that same window of time, we responded to 129 overdoses that were effectively reversed. We do work at a very limited capacity, because we are a non-profit agency, and we did reduce our staff as of January 1 of this year due to some funding cuts.

Could you repeat the question?

Doly Begum: That's okay. There's another thing I was just looking at. Reports from last year show that 5,630 people died from accidental overdoses. That was a decline from the year before, but that's still too many. You talked about the 40 people you had to deal with. I cannot imagine having an incident where you know you could save a life and you know it's something you could prevent, but because of resource scarcity you lose a life.

I want to touch on something that I think my colleagues hinted at. One of the issues we face is that when something like this happens, most of the time when you don't have the resources, people end up in hospitals. That actually costs us more, if I'm not mistaken. Is that correct?

From your perspective, do you think Bill C-238 could strengthen your ability to support more people so that we could actually save more in the long run?

• (1140)

Evie Ali: Absolutely. Again, if we look at how Bill C-238 is outlined, it's just acknowledging that we are absorbing costs related to these crimes taking place. As you mentioned, we are seeing overloaded emergency first responders across the board. It's not just in northern Ontario. I'm pretty sure it's everywhere. We work very closely with our community partners to alleviate some of those strains, but funding is always the barrier.

This is acknowledging the work already being done and the impact it already has. It's just in a more legal framework.

Doly Begum: Thank you so much for being here today. I really appreciate your sharing your story, as well.

I want to move to Cristina with my remaining time.

First, thank you so much for being here this morning.

You talked a lot about the system and how we cannot allow the victims to fall into the same trap. Do you believe the current justice system adequately recognizes the burden placed on organizations that provide services to trafficking survivors?

Cristina Scarpellini: I don't believe the whole justice system [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

The Chair: I'm sorry. I've stopped your time.

Can I get IT to get in touch with...?

Are you back? Can you hear us?

Cristina Scarpellini: Yes, I can hear you.

The Chair: Please continue, then.

Cristina Scarpellini: I'm sorry. Could you repeat that question? I totally got sidetracked.

Doly Begum: I wanted to ask if you think the current justice system adequately recognizes the burden placed on organizations like yourselves that provide services to trafficking survivors.

Cristina Scarpellini: Like I said, I think, for the majority, yes, it does. There might be the odd person for whom it doesn't. They need [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]. Recovery only starts after they've exited the game.

The Chair: You're back again.

Ms. Scarpellini, you keep freezing on our screen over here, so I'm not sure if...

Cristina Scarpellini: I'm sorry.

The Chair: Try turning off your camera, for the connection. It is your connectivity that's the issue over here. Perhaps you can answer the question in your remaining time with your camera off.

Cristina Scarpellini: I'm sorry. That's what I had to say in regard to that.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Begum, your time is up.

[*Translation*]

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

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Ali, earlier, my Conservative colleague asked you a question about the recovery process. I just want to make sure we understand each other.

The bill provides that, when someone is charged with assault, for example, not only will the Crown have to prove that an offence was committed, but the trial will be prolonged so that the harm suffered by the organization seeking restitution can be established and the link can be between that harm and the accused's wrongdoing can be demonstrated. The wrongdoing will, of course, be the commission of the offence, but it will still be necessary to prove that harm occurred and to establish the connection between the two. That will take some time, and it will vary depending on the circumstances.

Aren't you afraid that defence lawyers will use that court time to seek a stay of proceedings on the grounds that the trial was not held within a reasonable time?

• (1145)

[*English*]

Evie Ali: I suppose this is something that could be considered.

Again, I am not a legal expert, so I really can't speak to that.

[*Translation*]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: I recognize that you're not a legal expert or a lawyer, but you are still, in my humble view, an important player when it comes to supporting victims of crime. That's why you're here today.

Everyone around the table wants to provide the best possible support to victims, across all parties. I'm wondering if we're making things more complicated for victims. I don't have the answer to that question, and I'd like to hear your views on it.

Wouldn't we be supporting them better by ensuring that the accused's trial takes place quickly and by providing support to organizations, for example through the surcharge program, rather than by making the situation more complex?

[*English*]

Evie Ali: A really important piece of Bill C-238 is that it allows judges to order restitution. This is where we start looking at the risk to reward benefit. Maybe it's not ordered in every case, especially for community agencies, or if it doesn't make sense for the victim, because the victim has to always be at the forefront. It does give judges the ability, so the bill is not saying that every time someone, in relation to a drug or human trafficking crime, is from Cristina's or my organization, our agencies will be ordered restitution. That's not what the bill is saying; it's saying that it becomes a possibility.

Then we can start looking at the risk to benefit rewards. We can start looking at what is in the best interests of the victims. Are we now supporting victims throughout the trial, where they might need

all of these things? Perhaps they need clothes to attend court. They might need a cellphone to speak with their lawyer. Those types of things are costs that we're going to absorb. Judges will now have an opportunity, if they see fit, to have those costs paid in restitution to the agency. It doesn't become mandatory.

[*Translation*]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Do you—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fortin.

[*English*]

I appreciate that.

We'll now move on to our final five-minute blocks.

Mr. Brock, please go ahead.

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

I also want to take the opportunity, as my colleague Mr. Lawton did, to publicly congratulate you on your election as chair of this amazing committee, where generally, more often than not, we take a collaborative approach to deal with the pressing, ongoing issues that are concerning to Canadians. This certainly is such an area.

I want to thank the two witnesses for their attendance today and their participation in this study.

We as parliamentarians can walk and chew gum at the same time, and we often do that very well as we navigate a myriad of policies and government bills but, most importantly, private members' bills. The fact is that this is a private member's bill.

At this time, Madam Chair, I'd like to move my motion that I presented and filed on Thursday June 4, 2026. I'm prepared to read it out and to speak to this motion at this time. I move that:

The committee consider Bill S-233, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (assault against persons who provide health services and first responders) on or before Monday, June 15, 2026, provided that the House and Senate sponsors of the bill be invited to testify along with any other witnesses deemed relevant by committee members and that following the testimony, the committee immediately proceed to clause-by-clause consideration of the bill, and the chair only be authorized to adjourn the meeting after clause-by-clause consideration of the bill is completed.

In essence, this is a bill, just like the bill before the committee today, that never ought to be a partisan issue. To reflect the non-partisan aspect of this bill, one needs only to take a look at the history of the bill.

The bill originated in the Senate, and it passed all three levels in the Senate. It moved over to the House of Commons. At second reading, it passed unanimously with every single member of the House of Commons agreeing to swift passage, in essence getting it to the justice committee as soon as possible. There were 332 yeas and zero nays, and there were eight paired members for a total of 332 members participating.

We all believe it's non-partisan. We all believe that greater protections should be afforded to all health care workers and to frontline officers. We also have to reflect upon what we knew long before the pandemic hit, but it was even more pronounced during and following the pandemic, that there is a rising level of violence against our frontline workers.

This, Madam Chair, is extremely personal to me because my spouse is a frontline worker. She is a registered nurse. She's about to celebrate 30 years in her profession. I remember vividly how many times, during the pandemic, because she was an essential service worker at that point, she was abused and ridiculed. She heard sexist remarks being made to her, and she was spat at on numerous occasions. There were too many times to count, but I could see it on her face and I could tell by her demeanor that this wasn't the profession that she signed up for almost 30 years ago.

Where is this violence coming from? Some people thought it was maybe an origin and a by-product of the pandemic and society essentially shutting down, and the anger that people had during that time, but that anger has continued following the end of the pandemic.

• (1150)

What's more concerning—and I have a lot of literature that I'm going to share with this committee right now—is that for every nurse, for every doctor and for every other health care professional or paramedic who actually has the courage to come forward and report this to their supervisor or to the administration of the workplace environment, or ultimately report this to the police, for every one of those individuals, there are dozens of individuals who basically shut up and put up with this abuse.

In my view, that is an absolute shame, because those who study to become a professional, those who wish to become part of the medical profession and those who want to take part in performing first responder duties do that essentially as a call to service. I have a call to service. My spouse has a call to service. We all have calls to service, but those who serve the public should never be expected to carry with them the licence to be abused. That's certainly something that I wasn't taught as a parliamentarian—

Andrew Lawton: I have a point of order.

To my colleague, Mr. Brock, I'm sorry for the interruption here.

I am hoping, Madam Chair, that you could confirm the speaking list—or perhaps direct the clerk to—so that we understand what to expect here.

The Chair: Yes, absolutely.

After Mr. Brock, we have you, Mr. Lawton, and then Mr. Gill, Ms. Lapointe, Ms. Begum, Ms. Gladu and Ms. Lattanzio.

Andrew Lawton: Thank you.

Larry Brock: I think I was talking about the licence for abuse.

As parliamentarians, we all take harassment training, but we've all been subjected to irate constituents from time to time. I've dealt with numerous irate constituents from time to time, because I guess we all take the adage that although none of us—and no parliamentarian—can ever say they received 100% confidence from the electorate in any general election, we serve at the will of the electorate. That represents people who voted for us and people who didn't vote for us.

For the nursing profession, the medical profession and first responders, they, too, have that call to serve the public, to care for the public, to heal the public and to respond to emergencies and dangers in the public.

Again, as a prosecutor, I harken back to those occasions where I prosecuted assault and threatening behaviour directed by the public towards health care professionals. If there were a common theme back then, I would say that the common theme was either acute underlying mental illness or intoxication, where someone is perhaps not thinking as rationally as they should. Those cases I prosecuted always had an underlying element that didn't completely excuse the behaviour, but certainly helped put it into focus as to why that person decided to act out the way they did.

The first thing I want to bring to the attention.... I took a recent meeting not too long ago—I believe it was last week—from the CEO of one of the health care systems in my riding: St. Joseph's Healthcare, out of Hamilton.

• (1155)

The Chair: My apologies, Mr. Brock. I want to pause for a second.

I see the speakers list and I'm going to check with resources to see how long we can go today. We would love to hear everything you have to say.

Give us 30 seconds while we figure out what our resources look like. We're happy to go to the end of the day today.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Before suspending the meeting, wouldn't it be a good idea to release the witnesses, since we clearly won't be able to continue the discussion?

It's a bit of a shame to keep Ms. Ali here for nothing.

[English]

The Chair: If it's okay with you guys and with the witnesses, I think it's better for us to keep the witnesses here. I'm hoping this matter will be resolved very soon. We just need to make sure that our backup is on point as well.

If it's okay with you, Monsieur Fortin, I'll ask the witnesses to stay.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: I'm fine with that, Madam Chair.

[English]

The Chair: Thanks very much.

Mr. Brock, as we continue to figure out.... I haven't suspended the meeting.

Larry Brock: I'm consulting with a colleague.

The Chair: I was just saying if you want to continue speaking, you can go ahead and do that now, while we're figuring out—

Larry Brock: I thought you were waiting for resources.

The Chair: The clerk is figuring that out.

Please continue.

Larry Brock: I misunderstood you.

I was about to read out some articles. The first one is a letter from February 2025 that was jointly signed by the Canadian Nurses Association and the Canadian Medical Association. It reads, “The reprehensible assault of health workers in Halifax last week is a harsh reminder of the dangers health professionals across Canada face while trying to provide quality care to patients.”

On that particular case in Halifax, this is a report from the Halifax police service, dated January 30, 2025. It reads:

Halifax Regional Police has charged a man in relation to a stabbing that occurred yesterday at the QEII in Halifax.

I take it that this in a hospital or a medical setting.

It continues:

At approximately 1 p.m., officers responded to a report of a man with a knife at the hospital. A man who was receiving care at the hospital stabbed two people in the emergency room and injured two others by throwing objects at them.

One victim sustained significant injuries.

At approximately 1:10 p.m., officers located and arrested the man on scene without further incident.

They identified the accused. He was charged with one count of attempted murder, three counts of assault with a weapon, three counts of aggravated assault and two counts of possession of weapon for dangerous purpose.

Going back to the letter, it further reads:

This latest example may be an extreme case, but the sad reality is that doctors, nurses and other health workers are subject to verbal and physical abuse on a daily basis. The results from the Canadian Medical Association's (CMA) 2021 National Physician Health Survey found that eight in 10 physicians have experienced intimidation, bullying, harassment and/or microaggressions in the workplace at some point in their careers. Four in 10 reported that these experiences happen “frequently” or “often,” with women significantly more likely to say they happen at least once a week.

A recent national review of workplace violence reports highlighted that incidents against nurses have become more severe and frequent in recent years, often resulting in physical and psychological harm. Legally, workplace violence is classified as both a health and safety issue and a criminal offence in Canada. In Alberta, reports of violent incidents in health-care settings surged by 37% between 2019 and 2021.

We also acknowledge that toxic online behaviour increasingly manifests in real life. With influential figures normalizing the use of threats and bullying, it is unsurprising that these behaviours are being echoed in health-care settings. But hospitals, medical clinics and other health-care facilities simply can't tolerate this—people's health and lives are at stake.

In 2021, the federal government responded to calls for help from CMA, the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA), and the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions with legislation that made it illegal to use threats and bullying to stop a health worker from providing care to patients—

That was, if my colleagues recall, Bill C-3 from the last Parliament.

The letter continues:

It also prohibits actions that would prevent a person from obtaining health services or accessing health facilities.

We urge the public to respect these laws and call on public safety and law enforcement officials to continue their vigilance in enforcing them.

Our thoughts are with the victims of the senseless assaults in Halifax and their families.

● (1200)

I referenced the health care system in Brantford. I met with the CEO and one of his staff members, who echoed what I just read out in my earlier introductory remarks on this motion about the rising levels of violence and the under-reporting. Specifically, they have given their full support for the immediate and swift passage of Bill S-233, an act—

● (1205)

Andrew Lawton: Hear, hear!

Larry Brock: Yes, I would agree with Mr. Lawton and his “hear, hear!” commentary.

I was speaking about support for an act to amend the Criminal Code regarding assaults against persons who provide health services and first responders. They said that workplace violence in health care is a serious and growing problem for organizations across Canada.

At St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton, an academic health sciences centre, four health care workers are assaulted on the job every day. This health care system consists of facilities in Hamilton and also in Brantford. In fact, I was born at the St. Joseph's Hospital. It still stands to this day.

In recent years, racial and sexual assault are among the fastest rising forms of violence. Unlike in other workplaces, health care providers can't refuse service. That's important. How often have we, in our daily lives, gone to either a public establishment or a private establishment, even going through the drive-through—whether that be for fast food, Tim Hortons or Starbucks—and you are inevitably faced with a warning that harassment and verbal abuse will not be tolerated, will not be accepted and will constitute grounds for non-service. That's appropriate, because it's not just health care and frontline workers who are experiencing rising levels of violence.

The Chair: Mr. Brock, may I make a suggestion, respectfully, if that's okay?

Larry Brock: Yes.

The Chair: We have witnesses here. We're doing clause-by-clause for Bill C-238. Your motion is very much registered in our committee. I'm hopeful that we can get through this bill before we start on the next one. We have to finish the first sandwich before we start the next sandwich.

Perhaps we can come to an agreement that we go through with the rest of our witness testimony and go through clause-by-clause on this bill and then pick up the debate. We can sit for as long as you want to debate this.

Larry Brock: I thank you for your kind suggestion.

Respectfully, I am not going to follow that suggestion. I anticipated that I might receive some commentary and instruction from the chair. I took it upon myself, as vice-chair, to reach out to the parliamentary secretary last Wednesday and offered what I thought to be an entirely reasonable proposal that would have highlighted and debated the importance of Bill C-238 and Bill S-233.

The proposal—

Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): I have a point of order.

If we're going to be getting into the exchanges between me and the vice-chair of the committee, I'd be more than happy to indulge in the last conversations we had via text. I'd be more than happy to share them with the committee. I indicated that I was more than happy and open to discussing how we would be able to proceed. In the last text that was sent out—I think, as of last Friday—I kept the door open to be able to iron out the creases that we are now dealing with today, at committee.

I find it very unfortunate. We knew that we were going to proceed with this PMB. We made it crystal clear, as a matter of fact, yet here we are, in tactics of filibustering. It is quite obvious to everybody.

If we're going to be going that way, then I think it's important that members around this table acknowledge and be made aware of that the door was always open, but we were crystal clear that we were going to proceed on this particular PMB.

Thank you.

Roman Baber: That's not a point of order.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Lawton.

Andrew Lawton: I would point it out, for the record, that we had previously scheduled clause-by-clause for Bill C-238 and that was subsequently changed by the chair.

Your hands are clean on this, given the timing in which you've come over, but our intention had been to finish this last week.

I think it needs to be stated, for the record, that there was a needless delay in the way these meetings were scheduled that led to us having this matter on the agenda today, when we had an agreement—a good-faith agreement across party lines—to have Bill S-233 on the agenda for today.

The Chair: I completely understand that, Mr. Lawton. As you know, I wasn't part of the scheduling piece. However, we have witnesses here. We have a bill before us. If possible, can we just get it

done? We're more than happy to debate the next bill before us. I leave it to members. If you want to continue with your articles and with talking about your motion, that's absolutely fine, but I would prefer to save time for our witnesses and move the agenda forward.

Go ahead, Mr. Brock.

Larry Brock: May I suggest this? If there is a willingness on behalf of the parliamentary secretary and the government to accommodate a discussion on Bill S-233, I am more than happy to agree to a brief suspension in order to engage in those discussions. I'm mindful of the fact that you asked for additional resources. I'm hoping additional resources will be made available. However, the sad reality is that today is our final meeting for this session.

I will take the opportunity to read out my exchange with the parliamentary secretary, because it certainly was not on a with prejudice or without prejudice basis. This is the proposal I put to her last Wednesday at 3:30: "Here's my proposal: We move expeditiously today, and clause-by-clause in the first 30 minutes of Monday's meeting." That would be today, June 15. It continues, "Then move immediately—

• (1210)

The Chair: Mr. Brock, you have my sincerest apologies.

Do you know what? I think you guys have had ample time to discuss negotiations with each other. If this is the path you'd like to take, please go ahead and continue.

Larry Brock: I would.

Larry Brock: It says, "Then move immediately to Bill S-233, with Todd Doherty taking one round of questions, and we move immediately to clause-by-clause. All of this is completed within two hours. We cancel Wednesday's meeting." Her response was, "Let's see how today goes, and we'll talk after."

There's been no discussion.

The Chair: Go ahead, please.

[*Translation*]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

I have no objection to our colleague Mr. Brock sharing those discussions with us, but could we have them in writing?

These are exchanges by email or text, so these are documents, and the documents should be provided to the committee in both official languages.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fortin. My understanding is that the motion Mr. Brock is discussing was sent to you by email. It was a couple of weeks ago, if I'm not mistaken.

[*Translation*]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Yes, I received it. I'm not talking about the motion, but rather about the email exchanges.

[English]

Larry Brock: I'm happy to ask for unanimous consent to have this exchange of text messages translated into both official languages and made available to my colleagues.

The Chair: Ms. Lattanzio, go ahead on the same point of order.

Patricia Lattanzio: I just [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] the motion Mr. Fortin was requesting with regard to the exchange of text messages between myself and Mr. Brock.

May I seize the opportunity to say that he can read out whatever was in the exchanges? However, I think it's worth noting that the last exchange with Mr. Brock.... I will take the liberty of reading it into the record. After I reiterated that this is where we were going today, I made it crystal clear that Madame Lapointe's PMB was going to follow the same procedure we had with the two previous Conservative Party PMBs, to which the last exchange with Mr. Brock was, "With one meeting remaining, discussions are moot." I'm glad to hear that there's been a change of heart, and now he wants to discuss this in the middle of a meeting. My door is always open.

I have no issue with regard to these exchanges being shared with the other members—absolutely none.

The Chair: Thank you very much for that, Ms. Lattanzio.

Mr. Fortin, Mr. Brock, Ms. Lattanzio and all the members, figure your stuff out off-line.

Let's continue the meeting, as Mr. Brock has brought to this....

Please go ahead.

Andrew Lawton: I have a point of order.

Mr. Brock sought unanimous consent on tabling the exchange. I believe—

The Chair: My understanding is that Mr. Brock asked if he could request unanimous consent.

Larry Brock: No, I didn't say that. I'm asking for unanimous consent, Madam Chair.

The Chair: All right. Members, do we have unanimous consent on this?

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Madam Chair—

Voices: No.

[English]

The Chair: As I had suggested to members, it's better for you guys to talk to each other and collaborate so that we can move this forward as soon as possible. As I had said, I would really like for us to move forward on Bill C-238 and make sure that it gets to the House before we rise. However, if members are not wanting to go that route, then I leave it to you.

Mr. Brock has the floor—

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

[English]

The Chair: Monsieur Fortin, go ahead on your point of order.

Larry Brock: There's no translation.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: In terms of the document that Mr. Brock is reading—

A voice: There's no interpretation.

• (1215)

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: The point I want to raise, Madam Chair, is that I am one of the vice-chairs of this committee. I did not participate in these discussions, nor was I invited to do so. If any discussions or agreements between one of the two vice-chairs and the parliamentary secretary are made public, it is important that I be notified and that I be given the opportunity to review those documents.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Monsieur Fortin.

My understanding is that Ms. Lattanzio did just read out the messages that were exchanged between the two—

Larry Brock: I have a point of order.

The Chair: I would really like to move on to your—

Larry Brock: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Go ahead, sir.

Larry Brock: I was in the middle of reading out every text exchange, and then I was hit with several points of order. I disagree with your characterization of the parliamentary secretary's summary of the text messages. For the benefit of Mr. Fortin, I will slow it down so that he can hear it in his native tongue, in French. I want the full exchange between myself and the parliamentary secretary.

Given the fact that I asked for unanimous consent to accommodate our Bloc colleague and was refused by the government, I am prepared to repeat the text exchanges between myself and the parliamentary secretary very slowly so that Mr. Fortin is not prejudiced.

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, Lib.): I have a point of order.

Chair, this back and forth is a complete waste of the committee's time. If the Conservatives want to continue to filibuster, let them do that, but I think it's not appropriate for people to be sharing texts and translating people's personal texts. I don't give my consent to that.

The Chair: Mr. Brock, you have the floor. Please go ahead.

Larry Brock: Thank you.

Doly Begum: I have a point of order.

I'm confused as to what MP Brock's point is here. What started off with a very beautiful recognition of health care workers...and congratulations to your wife on 30 years of service, caring for so many loved ones across your community.

I just want to take a moment to say we are so proud of our health care workers, nurses, doctors, PSWs and every single person who supports and takes care of our loved ones in their most vulnerable time, in their worst situations. It is so important that we recognize that. I was really impressed when Mr. Brock started—

Andrew Lawton: I have a point of order.

Doly Begum: —to talk about that because it recognized the importance of the work we're doing. I think it's really important that we focus on that. Right now, we're debating Bill C-238, which also focuses on something equally important but a little different: restitution.

An hon. member: Point of order.

Doly Begum: We have witnesses here and—

The Chair: If you guys want leverage on your points of order, please give leverage to all of your colleagues.

Doly Begum: I'll just take 30 seconds, Chair—

An hon. member: Point of order.

The Chair: I would like to see what point she's going to make.

Calm down, guys. Let's go.

Doly Begum: I just wanted to say that we are parliamentarians here. We should not be reading out text messages that we have sent to each other. If the vice-chairs want to understand a conversation with the parliamentary secretary, they should do that off-line. As someone who is here to serve her community, I do not find that appropriate.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Begum.

Mr. Lawton, you had that point of order.

I would really appreciate it if we can get back to Mr. Brock. He moved UC. It was not granted, and I would like for him to get back to his motion.

Go ahead, very briefly, Mr. Lawton.

Andrew Lawton: Mine's a genuine point of order.

It was just that Ms. Begum was debating the merits of the motion. It sounds like, given her insistence on the importance of what Mr. Brock is saying, she'll be supporting the motion, so I look forward to that.

The Chair: I think we should get back to Mr. Brock.

Please go ahead, sir.

Larry Brock: For the benefit of our colleague Monsieur Fortin, this is the exchange. I'm doing it slowly.

I wrote, "Here's my proposal. We move expeditiously today and clause-by-clause in the first 30 minutes of Monday's meeting. Then move immediately to S-233, with Todd Doherty taking one round

of questions, and we move immediately to clause-by-clause. All of this s completed within two hours. We cancel Wednesday's meeting."

Ms. Lattanzio's response was, "Let's see how today goes, and we'll talk after."

I responded, "Will your team agree to wrap up by six?"

The parliamentary secretary responded, "Viviane has amendments to present, so we cannot be done by six."

My response was, "It's her bill. Why wasn't it included to begin with and how is she presenting as a witness?"

Ms. Lattanzio's response was, "She can move amendments to her bill. Your colleague Luc did the same thing a few weeks ago." That was Wednesday.

On Thursday at 2:44, literally within minutes of every justice committee member receiving the notice of motion for today's date, with no reference at all to Todd Doherty's Bill S-233, I responded, "I guess the utility of a discussion is moot, given the notice of meeting for Monday."

The same day, I got a response from Ms. Lattanzio saying, "Discussion is always possible. We are just following what I've told you in the past, as we did with the other two PMBs—two meetings each, one with proponent of bill plus officials, the second meeting with witnesses plus CxC." That's clause-by-clause.

My response last Thursday was—

• (1220)

Patricia Lattanzio: It was the final response.

Larry Brock: It was, "With one meeting remaining, discussions are moot."

Patricia Lattanzio: That concludes it.

Larry Brock: That concludes. Thank you for filling in the blanks, Ms. Lattanzio.

The Chair: We're moving on, Mr. Brock. Thank you very much.

Larry Brock: Thank you. I'm going back to my motion.

It underlines and reinforces how we as parliamentarians can walk and chew gum at the same time. There was every single ability for us to conduct ourselves in a fashion to move quickly last Wednesday and today. We're talking about only a handful of amendments. We could have expeditiously moved with Todd Doherty's presentation. We probably wouldn't even need one full hour. We probably could have gotten by with one round and then moved to clause-by-clause.

I appreciate Ms. Begum's intervention highlighting not only the importance of Todd Doherty's bill but certainly the importance of Ms. Lapointe's bill.

The fact of the matter is that, without any agreement, without any understanding and without a telegraph of a willingness by the government to accommodate Bill S-233, they would rather punt that particular bill into the fall session. We'll have to deal with this in the fall session. This was moved very quickly, as I said at the outset, at the Senate in the fall. It was moved very quickly and unanimously at second reading in the House. There is absolutely no rational explanation offered by the government why this—

The Chair: Mr. Brock, if I may—

Larry Brock: I'm still talking.

The Chair: I understand. If I may, can I ask you to bring it to the actual substance of the motion that you have moved, please?

Larry Brock: I intend on doing that, Madam Chair. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Larry Brock: That's where we find ourselves—at a bit of a log-head, I might say.

I talked about the position of the CNA. I talked about the position of the CMA. I referenced the case in Halifax. I circled back to my own riding. I circled back to my wife's commentary and what she was subjected to. I'm now returning to some other publications that I was able to research.

This one is entitled “Workplace Violence Against Nurses in Canada: A Legal Analysis”. It talks about how this is happening not just in Canada and not just in North America but around the world. It says:

Workplace violence against nurses is a significant global occupational health problem widely acknowledged in the academic and policy literature. Nurses experience intimidation, threats, and violence far too often in the course of their employment. A recent survey by four international health organizations found that violence against health care workers has been occurring at a higher frequency since the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020, and that it happens all over the world

Workplace violence is a major concern for nurses in Canada and has received increasing attention from Canadian nursing organizations and government stakeholders.

That would be the British Columbia Nurses' Union; the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions; the CNA, the Canadian Nurses Association; the Government of Canada in 2021; and the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, also known as RNAO.

The full extent of workplace violence against nurses in Canada is difficult to determine due to pervasive underreporting, the lack of a consistent definition of workplace violence across studies and policy documents, and a lack of recent comprehensive Canadian data on this issue. Although now over a decade and a half old, the most recent comprehensive examination of the Canadian nursing workforce took place in 2005; this data revealed that [almost 30%] of nurses providing direct care reported having been physically assaulted at work within the past year, and 44% reported emotional abuse from a patient.

That's according to StatsCan data from 2006.

A national survey of nurses...(2017) found that 61% of nurses had experienced workplace violence over the previous month, and two-thirds of those had considered leaving their jobs due to the experience.

We already have a shortage of health care workers. Let not Canada be forever known as the outlier who fails to pass the appro-

priate legislation and then sees even a further drain of our health care professionals because the Government of Canada is not doing enough.

A 2019 survey by the CFNU found that 93% of nurses reported physical assault as the most frequent type of psychologically traumatic event exposure, with 46% of surveyed nurses reporting exposure to physical assault 11 or more times.

Workplace violence against nurses can have serious consequences, both for individual nurses and for the health care system. The experience of workplace violence may result in physical injury and psychological consequences for an individual nurse and may result in short- or long-term absences from work. The results of a 2019...national survey of nurses on occupational stress found that workplace violence can have serious impacts on nurses' mental health, including post-traumatic stress, major depressive incidence, generalized anxiety, panic, and alcohol use disorders with the potential for suicidal ideation and attempt.

• (1225)

They compiled a list of cases. Now, mind you, this was before the passage of Bill C-3, which provided assault against a health care worker to be an aggravating factor. They compiled the 12 most leading cases at that time. They do not provide the area of jurisdiction. They don't provide the court of jurisdiction, and they certainly do not provide the province, but I wish to read out a few of these cases.

This is Regina v. Gelenzoski from 2006:

[That offender] pled guilty to assault. [He] was seeking medical attention following an assault on a police officer. [He] was restrained and spit on the nurse caring for him after telling health care staff that they were positive for Hepatitis C.

This was the impact on that particular nurse:

The nurse reported feeling traumatized and was in fear of having contracted Hepatitis C for a year before being confirmed negative for the virus. The nurse reported that the incident interfered with their ability to do their work as a nurse.

This was the sentencing decision:

The offender's last conviction was in 1990 and he was remorseful. The offender was sentenced to 90 days in prison for the assault on the nurse.

Discussion of the victim being a nurse on sentencing was:

No [discussion], but the judge did consider the pervasiveness of violence against health care workers by placing emphasis on the sentencing objective of denunciation. "Police and health care workers are on the front lines. The message that the law will not tolerate the type of behaviour that [the offender] has demonstrated must be sent...."

I'll move on to 2009 and the decision of Regina v. Knight:

Knight was found guilty after trial for publishing defamatory libel. [He] sent a letter to the medical ethics committee falsely accusing a nurse [who happened to be his ex-spouse] of allegations including drug trafficking.

This was the impact on that nurse:

The nurse reported being “angered” by the false allegations.

Under sentencing:

Knight had a long criminal record and it was not his first offence against this victim. He was sentenced to [a 15-month house arrest sentence] to be served in the community. The court of appeal changed the sentence to be served in jail, finding Knight posed a danger to the community.

This is the discussion of the victim on sentencing:

No [discussion]. The judge remarked, “the innocent victim is entitled to pursue her life and her profession in peace, free from false accusations that require her to defend herself and her reputation.”

This is a little more recent, from 2016, Regina v. Stard:

Stard pled guilty to assault causing bodily harm. [He] was seeking health care and became uncooperative. When the triage nurse turned away, Stard repeatedly punched the nurse without warning or provocation.

The nurse suffered a concussion, torn retina, and bleeding in the eye socket. The nurse suffered PTSD and experienced difficulty with memory, balance, and focusing. The victim's personality had become unpredictable and often angry. The nurse was unable to return to work.

This was the sentencing decision:

Stard had no criminal record and was apologetic. [He] received a conditional discharge, meaning he did not have a conviction entered against him or serve time in prison.

In my view as a former prosecutor, it is deplorable that a judge, under that extreme level of violence, would deem that to be in the public interest.

Discussion of victim being a nurse on sentencing:

The victim's status as a nurse was not found to be...aggravating.... The judge commented, “people that provide service to the public, and this would include taxi drivers, bus drivers, nurses, doctors, are in a position where they should be free from attack while doing their job.”

In 2018, there was the decision of Regina v. Delorey:

Delorey was found guilty after trial for assault with a weapon. [He] threw a cup of urine at a nurse.

I often hear about urine and feces throwing on a fairly regular and consistent basis every time that I take a stakeholder meeting with that profession.

● (1230)

In terms of impact on the nurse, it states, “No information was provided regarding impacts on the nurse.” It also states:

Delorey was already serving a life sentence in a federal prison at the time of the assault and was sentenced to [a further] 12 months in prison to be served concurrently with his ongoing sentence.

Next is Regina v. Martin, which was a “Court of appeal decision in 2018, varying the trial decision of 2017.” It states:

Martin pled guilty to assault. [She] was a certified involuntary patient at a psychiatric hospital and was assaulting a nurse student when a nurse intervened. [She] grabbed the nurse by the face and hair, shaking and scratching the nurse's face.

Again, there was no victim impact statement done by the nurse.

In terms of sentencing, it says:

Martin struggled with mental illness and had a significant criminal record. She was sentenced to 45 days in jail for the assault on the nurse. The Court of Appeal varied the assault sentence to run consecutively to Martin's robbery sentence.

Was there any discussion about the victim being a nurse? It says:

The victim's status as a nurse was not considered an aggravating factor. The trial judge made the general remark—

● (1235)

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Brock. I'm going to have to pause. I see that bells are ringing in the House. I seek unanimous consent to continue this meeting.

Some hon. members: No.

The Chair: In that case, I will say thank you very much to our witnesses for their testimony today and participation in Bill C-238.

We really appreciate the amazing work you're doing and we hope to continue our conversation soon.

The meeting is adjourned.

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