

STOLEN SIGNAL

The Costly Consequences of Copper Theft in Canada



Report of the Standing Senate Committee
on Transport and Communications

The Honourable Larry W. Smith, Chair
The Honourable Donna Dasko, Deputy Chair



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Acknowledgement

The committee would like to thank witnesses who shared their expertise with us. We would also like to acknowledge the contribution of the senators who were members of this committee in the previous Parliament and who were actively engaged in this study.

The Committee Membership



The Honourable
Larry W. Smith
Chair



The Honourable
Donna Dasko
Deputy Chair

The Honourable Senators



Dawn Arnold



Réjean Aucoin



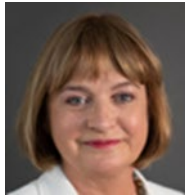
René Cormier



Todd Lewis



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Jim Quinn



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Ex officio members of the committee:

The Honourable Pierre Moreau, P.C., or the Honourable Patti LaBoucane-Benson

The Honourable Leo Housakos or the Honourable Yonah Martin

The Honourable Raymonde Saint-Germain or the Honourable Bernadette Clement
(until December 31, 2025)

The Honourable Lucie Moncion or the Honourable Joan Kingston *(since January 1, 2026)*

The Honourable Scott Tannas or the Honourable Rebecca Patterson *(until January 4, 2026)*

The Honourable Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler or the Honourable Robert Black *(since January 5, 2026)*

The Honourable Brian Francis or the Honourable Judy A. White

Other senators who have participated in the study:

The Honourable Andrew Cardozo

The Honourable Bernadette Clement

The Honourable Rodger Cuzner

The Honourable Clément Gignac

The Honourable Katherine Hay

The Honourable Leo Housakos

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Andrea Mugny, Committee Clerk

Peniel Negre, Administrative Assistant

Senate Communications Directorate:

Sabryna Lemieux, Communications Officer

Orders of Reference

First Session of the Forty-fifth Parliament

Extract from the *Journals of the Senate* of Wednesday, September 24, 2025:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications be authorized to examine and report on copper wire theft and its impacts on the telecommunications industry;

That the papers and evidence received and taken and work accomplished by the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications during the First Session of the Forty-fourth Parliament as part of its study of issues related to transport and communications generally be referred to the committee;

That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than June 26, 2026, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report; and

That the committee be permitted, notwithstanding usual practices, to deposit its reports on this study with the Clerk of the Senate if the Senate is not then sitting, and that the reports be deemed to have been tabled in the Senate.

The question being put on the motion, it was adopted.

Shaila Anwar

Clerk of the Senate

Orders of Reference

First Session of the Forty-fourth Parliament

Extract from the *Journals of the Senate* of Thursday, February 10, 2022:

The Honourable Senator Miville-Dechéne moved, for the Honourable Senator Housakos, seconded by the Honourable Senator Dean:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications be authorized to examine and report on matters relating to transport and communications generally, including:

- a) transport and communications by any means;
- b) tourist traffic;
- c) common carriers; and
- d) navigation, shipping and navigable waters; and

That the committee submit its final report no later than September 30, 2025, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

The question being put on the motion, it was adopted.

Gérald Lafrenière

Interim Clerk of the Senate

Executive Summary

In recent years, telecommunications and electricity companies have experienced an increase in copper theft and vandalism. These crimes cause critical infrastructure service outages and can have serious consequences for public safety. Businesses, municipalities and various organizations experience financial losses due to copper theft.

In light of the evidence heard, the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications (the committee) recommends amending the *Criminal Code* to impose harsher penalties for crimes involving critical infrastructure, such as copper theft. The committee believes that the federal government could encourage provincial and territorial governments to review their regulations. Furthermore, the committee believes that better sharing of information on metal theft among law enforcement agencies would ensure better coordination of investigations into these offences.

List of Recommendations

Recommendation 1

That the Government of Canada amend the *Criminal Code* to impose more serious penalties for metal theft that causes damage to critical or essential infrastructure.¹

Recommendation 2

That the Government of Canada encourage the provincial and territorial governments to regulate the sale of scrap metal, including by keeping a record of transactions and the origin of the metal.

Recommendation 3

That the Government of Canada create a task force on metal theft to promote information sharing among law enforcement agencies.

¹ Since this study was conducted, the Government of Canada introduced in October 2025 [Bill C-14, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Youth Criminal Justice Act and the National Defence Act \(bail and sentencing\)](#) (Bill C-14). Clause 10 adds subsection 334.1(2) to the *Criminal Code*, creating an “aggravating circumstance” when an offence interferes with the access or functioning of an essential infrastructure or causes it to be unsafe. A Justice Canada [backgrounder](#) states that copper theft is an offence interfering with essential infrastructure.

Background

The Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications (the committee) is publishing this report, entitled *Stolen Signal: The Costly Consequences of Copper Theft in Canada*, further to its study on the topic during the 1st Session of the 44th Parliament. The committee heard 14 witnesses at two meetings held on December 10 and 11, 2024. Five briefs were also submitted. The committee did not table its final report at that time due to the dissolution of Parliament in March 2025.

On July 11, 2025, the Canadian Telecommunications Association and Electricity Canada sent a letter calling for the committee to complete its study on copper theft and “to publish a final report with recommendations that address this growing issue.”²

On [September 24, 2025](#), the committee was authorized by the Senate of Canada to examine and report on copper wire theft in the Canadian telecommunications industry.

On October 23, 2025, the Government of Canada introduced [Bill C-14, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Youth Criminal Justice Act and the National Defence Act \(bail and sentencing\)](#) (Bill C-14). Clause 10 adds subsection 334.1(2) to the *Criminal Code*, creating an “aggravating circumstance” when an offence interferes with the access or functioning of an “essential infrastructure” or causes it to be unsafe. A Justice Canada backgrounder states that copper theft is an offence interfering with “essential infrastructures.”³

Facts About Copper

Copper is widely used across various industrial sectors, such as electronics, construction, transportation and telecommunications. It is valued for its malleability, conductivity and resistance to corrosion in the manufacture of electrical wires and cables, plumbing fixtures and “industrial machinery.”⁴

Copper retains “its chemical and physical properties through repeated recycling.”⁵ According to Jean-François Boulanger, Associate Professor at the University of Québec in Abitibi-Témiscamingue’s Research Institute on Mines and the Environment, copper recycling will be an important part of the “coming energy

² Canadian Telecommunications Association and Electricity Canada, *Call to complete study on copper theft and publish recommendations*, July 11, 2025.

³ Government of Canada, *Bail and Sentencing Reform Act: Proposed legislation to make bail laws stricter and toughen sentencing laws*, [Backgrounder](#), October 23, 2025.

⁴ Government of Canada, [Copper facts](#).

⁵ Ibid.

transition.”⁶ In February 2026, the price of copper was approximately US\$13,000 a tonne.⁷

Copper Theft: A Threat to Canada’s Critical Infrastructure

During the committee’s study, various federal government representatives said that copper theft was a threat to critical or essential infrastructure, which encompasses the “processes, systems, facilities, technologies, networks, assets and services essential to the health, safety, security or economic well-being of Canadians and the effective functioning of government.”⁸

According to Brigitte Joly, Director General at Public Safety Canada’s Critical Infrastructure Directorate, disruptions of critical infrastructure could result in “catastrophic loss of life, adverse economic effects and significant harm to public confidence.”⁹

To address threats to the security of critical infrastructure, federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for emergency management approved the [National Strategy for Critical Infrastructure](#) (the Strategy) in 2009. It identifies 10 priority sectors for critical infrastructure,¹⁰ including the transportation sector and the information and communication technology sector. The 10 sectors are interconnected and interdependent. As Ms. Joly of Public Safety Canada explained, copper theft can also affect other sectors of critical infrastructure.

⁶ Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications (TRCM), 1st Session, 44th Parliament, [Evidence](#), December 10, 2024 (Jean-François Boulanger, Associate Professor, Research Institute on Mines and the Environment, University of Québec in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, as an individual).

⁷ International Copper Study Group, [Chart 1. Trends in world refined stocks and prices](#).

⁸ Public Safety Canada, [Canada’s Critical Infrastructure \(CI\)](#).

⁹ TRCM, Brigitte Joly, Director General, Critical Infrastructure Directorate, National and Cyber Security Branch, Public Safety Canada, [December 10, 2024](#).

¹⁰ The 10 critical infrastructure sectors are energy and utilities, finance, food, transportation, government, information and communication technology, health, water, safety, and manufacturing.

The strategy also recognizes that the 10 sectors are interconnected and interdependent. Interdependencies create a risk of cascading failures. For example, theft of copper wire that interrupts communications will disrupt the provision of other essential services such as emergency and financial services.¹¹

Public Safety Canada's role in this area is "to make connections between [the] different critical infrastructure sectors and to ensure issues, risks, actions and lessons learned are shared."¹² In 2010, Public Safety Canada established the [Canadian Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee](#) so that the private and public sectors to exchange information and to collaborate strategically on issues that may affect the telecommunications infrastructure.

According to Wen Kwan, Senior Director with the Spectrum and Telecommunications Sector at Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED), "[o]ver 1,300 incidents of [copper] theft have been recorded by Canadian carriers since January 2022."¹³ Like Ms. Joly, Mr. Kwan believes these incidents could have serious consequences:

These criminal acts can disrupt emergency 9-1-1 services and adversely affect hospitals, schools and businesses. After each incident, it takes on average 10 to 12 hours for telecom service providers to fully restore internet access, television and phone services to their customers. In some cases, it takes significantly longer, particularly for complex repairs in hard-to-access locations. Sometimes entire communities are left without telephone, wireless and internet services for extended periods until repairs are completed.¹⁴

In the spring of 2024, ISED coordinated a public awareness campaign on copper theft. It was developed in partnership with Public Safety Canada, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and telecom companies. The department also distributed an information bulletin to raise awareness in the law enforcement community about copper theft. In addition, ISED wrote to the Public Prosecution Service of Canada to

¹¹ TRCM, Brigitte Joly, Director General, Critical Infrastructure Directorate, National and Cyber Security Branch, Public Safety Canada, [December 10, 2024](#).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ TRCM, Wen Kwan, Senior Director, Spectrum and Telecommunications Sector, Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED), [December 10, 2024](#).

¹⁴ Ibid.

help raise awareness among federal and provincial prosecutors “that crimes targeting critical infrastructure have serious consequences.”¹⁵

According to Ben Stickle, Professor of Criminal Justice Administration at Middle Tennessee State University, there is no set profile for metal thieves. Some of them have “industry experience”¹⁶ in fields like construction, recycling or utilities. Their expertise allows them to target places that meet certain criteria, such as ease of access, a high quantity and quality of metal, and limited surveillance. Recycling centres and scrap dealers are the final stage, where stolen metals are sold. Professor Stickle explained that thieves use different strategies to offload the stolen goods:

Thieves avoid detection and complicate investigations by mixing stolen metals in with legitimate scrap, selling to multiple centres and even travelling across jurisdictions. Trusted sales, where a thief poses as, or is in fact, a legitimate worker with legitimate access to scrap metal is common. While some recycling centres may knowingly accept stolen goods, most thieves use deception and exploit oversight gaps to sell metal without capture.¹⁷

Peter Tewfik, RCMP Chief Superintendent and Officer responsible for Community Safety and Well-being in Alberta, said that the RCMP takes copper theft seriously. A number of copper theft incidents took place in Alberta in 2023 and 2024:

¹⁵ TRCM, Wen Kwan, Senior Director, Spectrum and Telecommunications Sector, Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, [December 10, 2024](#).

¹⁶ TRCM, Ben Stickle, Professor of Criminal Justice Administration, Middle Tennessee State University, [December 10, 2024](#).

¹⁷ Ibid.

[T]wo corporations shared with the Alberta RCMP data that identified the number of and the estimated costs associated to the crimes on their sites. For the first organization, over a 12-month period, they experienced 191 incidents across Alberta, totalling just over \$3.5 million worth of damage. The second organization, over an 18-month period, experienced about 675 incidents, totalling almost \$5 million in damages. Those incidents are primarily related to the theft of copper wire, with corresponding thefts of other property, mischief causing damage to property, break and enters, among other things.¹⁸

Mr. Tewfik explained to the committee that metal theft is difficult to prevent and that a number of factors complicate investigations:

- a lack of consistent provincial scrap metal legislation across the country;
- the difficulty in linking stolen metals back to the owner;
- the unpredictable nature of the crime;
- the large geographical area across which the sites are located; and
- the evidence needed to prove the offence.¹⁹

The RCMP division in Alberta works with companies at risk of copper theft and the provincial government to increase reporting and improve security infrastructure.

Impact of Copper Theft on the Telecommunications and Electricity Sectors

Representatives from the telecommunications and electricity sectors expressed their concerns about how copper theft affects their operations.

Eric Smith, the Senior Vice-President of the Canadian Telecommunications Association, said that estimates show “a 200% increase in theft and vandalism incidents between 2022 and the start of 2024.”²⁰ These crimes affect individuals and communities, utilities, hospitals, airports and businesses, and threaten “public safety

¹⁸ TRCM, Peter Tewfik, Chief Superintendent, Officer in Charge of K Division, Community Safety and Well-being, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), [December 10, 2024](#).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ TRCM, Eric Smith, Senior Vice-President, Canadian Telecommunications Association, [December 11, 2024](#).

and human life.”²¹ In response, telecommunications companies have bolstered their security measures, particularly by investing in surveillance equipment.

Bell Canada has experienced a number of incidents involving copper theft in recent years. Between January 2022 and December 2024, it identified “over 1,650 ... security incidents”²² across its footprint. Of that number, copper theft is “responsible for 88% of the physical security incidents.”²³ These criminal offences have profoundly negative effects on Canadians and the economy, according to Michele Austin, Vice-President of Public Affairs at Bell Canada:

*Businesses can't process transactions. Airports must stop ticketing passengers and sometimes have to cancel flights. Emergency services cannot answer calls for help. Small businesses must stop work or close until they are back online. Families can't check up on loved ones.*²⁴

TELUS is another telecommunications company dealing with this issue. Brian Lakey, Vice-President of the TELUS Reliability Centre of Excellence, said that copper theft is a growing problem. He said that “[s]wift and decisive action is needed”²⁵ to protect telecommunications infrastructure:

*Canada's critical infrastructure, including communications, electricity, water, transportation and financial networks, remain vulnerable to acts of physical destruction. When thieves damage or steal our copper cables, essential telecommunications services like emergency, Amber Alerts and access to 9-1-1 are impacted. This is a matter of public safety.*²⁶

Since 2021, copper theft “has robbed over 170,000 TELUS customers more than 200 million minutes of essential telecom service.”²⁷ According to Mr. Lakey, the consequences can be particularly dire in rural communities. For instance, in Grande

²¹ TRCM, Eric Smith, Senior Vice-President, Canadian Telecommunications Association, [December 11, 2024](#).

²² TRCM, Michele Austin, Vice-President, Public Affairs, Bell Canada, [December 11, 2024](#).

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ TELUS, [Copper wire theft in the telecommunications industry](#), December 9, 2024.

²⁶ TRCM, Brian Lakey, Vice-President, Reliability Centre of Excellence, TELUS, [December 11, 2024](#).

²⁷ Ibid.

Cache, Alberta, copper theft “has led to community isolation more than four times in the last 18 months.”²⁸

TELUS has invested in security systems, including floodlights, video cameras and “specialized locking equipment.”²⁹ Similarly, Bell Canada spends \$1 million annually on security.³⁰ They both replace copper wire with fibre optic cables where possible. However, these preventive measures are expensive and take time to implement.

The Rogers Communications network has also experienced outages caused by copper theft. In May 2024, network vandalism affected 10 federal constituencies in Alberta, Ontario and New Brunswick. One incident “impacted approximately 15,000 broadband customers in Alberta.”³¹ In total, “approximately 35,000 Canadians”³² were affected by acts of vandalism that impacted Rogers Communications broadband, wireless, wireline and digital services.

Canada’s electricity infrastructure is also affected by copper theft. According to Francis Bradley, President and Chief Executive Officer of Electricity Canada, “[h]undreds of incidents [of this type] occur every year.”³³ These crimes endanger the lives of thieves, first responders and utility workers alike. Ross Johnson, President of Bridgehead Security Consulting Inc., gave a concrete example of how copper thieves endangered their own lives and employees’ lives at an electric substation in Namao, Alberta:

*Copper thieves often get away with the crime without injury, but, occasionally, the consequences are grave. In this case, the most immediate were the terrible injuries to the intruder. The second injury was to the substation worker who entered the site to de-energize it so the first responders could enter. He ended up with post-traumatic stress disorder, which kept him off work for several weeks.*³⁴

Similar to telecommunications companies, electricity companies have also had to adopt advanced surveillance technologies. They have replaced “high-value

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ TRCM, Michele Austin, Vice-President, Public Affairs, Bell Canada, [December 11, 2024](#).

³¹ Rogers Communications, [Committee Study on Copper Wire Theft in the Telecommunications Industry](#), p. 1.

³² Ibid.

³³ TRCM, Francis Bradley, President and Chief Executive Officer, Electricity Canada, [December 11, 2024](#).

³⁴ TRCM, Ross Johnson, President, Bridgehead Security Consulting Inc., [December 11, 2024](#).

metals”³⁵ and improved collaboration with law enforcement. However, it is not feasible to protect each of the 55,000 electricity substations across North America. Many are unmanned or remote. As a result, companies have to prioritize the “most critical”³⁶ stations, according to Mr. Johnson of Electricity Canada.

Recommendations Suggested by Witnesses

Amend the Criminal Code

Section 334 of the *Criminal Code* provides for a sentence of not more than 10 years for an offender found guilty of theft if the value of what is stolen—in this case, copper—is more than \$5,000. However, if the value is not more than \$5,000, an offender found guilty is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years. A number of witnesses said that the legislative and criminal framework needs to be strengthened to deter would-be thieves.

Matthew Taylor, Senior General Counsel and Director General at the Department of Justice Canada, said that Canada “has a robust legal framework to address copper theft.”³⁷ Certain offences are even punishable “by up to 10 years of imprisonment in the most serious cases.”³⁸ Thieves may be charged with mischief if there is destruction, damage or interference with the lawful use or operation of property, or the offence of break and enter could also apply. However, Mr. Taylor recognized that most copper thefts are under \$5,000, which means that the “penalties are [lower].”³⁹

In its brief, TELUS emphasized the importance of taking action at a legislative level to address copper theft. It called on the federal government to amend two federal statutes:

- Amend the *Criminal Code* to introduce penalties for damaging critical telecommunications and power infrastructure.
- Amend the *Telecommunications Act* to recognize the impacts of copper wire theft and damage by adding provisions that prohibit dealing in illegally obtained copper.⁴⁰

³⁵ TRCM, Francis Bradley, President and Chief Executive Officer, Electricity Canada, [December 11, 2024](#).

³⁶ TRCM, Ross Johnson, President, Bridgehead Security Consulting Inc., [December 11, 2024](#).

³⁷ TRCM, Matthew Taylor, Senior General Counsel and Director General, Criminal Law Policy Section, Department of Justice Canada, [December 10, 2024](#).

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ TELUS, [Copper wire theft in the telecommunications industry](#), December 9, 2024.

For its part, Rogers Communications called on the federal government to create a new *Criminal Code* offence for “mischief – essential infrastructure”⁴¹ to specifically target damage to critical telecommunications infrastructure. It suggested drawing inspiration from the [Countering Foreign Interference Act](#), which creates a new offence for the sabotage of essential infrastructure under section 52.1(1) of the *Criminal Code*.

Linda Annis, Executive Director of [Metro Vancouver Crime Stoppers](#) and City Councillor for the City of Surrey, also agreed that “changes to the *Criminal Code*”⁴² are needed to impose tougher penalties for those convicted of copper theft. She also called for more frequent inspections of recycling centres and scrap metal operations.

In the view of the Canadian Association of Recycling Industries Board, crafting legislation that works to “stop criminals and working in concert with recyclers”⁴³ could “go a long way toward reducing this illegal activity.”⁴⁴

Some witnesses drew the committee’s attention to legislation that has been passed in the United States. According to the Canadian Telecommunications Association, Canada could look to the model in place in Florida,⁴⁵ which introduced new offences in July 2024 “to protect critical infrastructure from theft and vandalism.”⁴⁶ Similarly, Electricity Canada gave the example of Title 18 of the U.S. Code, Section 1366,⁴⁷ “regarding the destruction of an energy facility.”⁴⁸

Strengthen Regulations for Recycling Centres and Scrap Metal Operations

Some witnesses recommended stricter regulations for recycling centres and scrap metal dealers. However, Mr. Taylor, with the Department of Justice Canada, highlighted that “the federal government is responsible for the criminal law,” and

⁴¹ Rogers Communications, [Committee Study on Copper Wire Theft in the Telecommunications Industry](#), p. 2.

⁴² TRCM, Linda Annis, Executive Director, Metro Vancouver Crime Stoppers and City Councillor, City of Surrey, [December 11, 2024](#).

⁴³ TRCM, Brian K. Shine, Chief Executive Officer, Manitoba Corporation and Canadian Association of Recycling Industries Board Chair (CARI), [December 11, 2024](#).

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ The 2025 Florida Statutes, [Title XLVI, 812.145 Theft of copper or other nonferrous metals](#).

⁴⁶ TRCM, Eric Smith, Senior Vice-President, Canadian Telecommunications Association, [December 11, 2024](#).

⁴⁷ Criminal Resources Manual, [1673. Destruction Of Government Property -- Malicious Mischief -- Destruction Of Energy Facility -- 18 U.S.C. 1366](#).

⁴⁸ TRCM, Francis Bradley, President and Chief Executive Officer, Electricity Canada, [December 11, 2024](#).

that “the investigation and prosecution of specific criminal conduct is the responsibility of the provinces and territories.”⁴⁹

According to Mr. Tewfik of the RCMP, “a lack of consistent provincial scrap metal legislation across the country”⁵⁰ is a challenge in the investigation of these offences. Two provinces, Alberta⁵¹ and British Columbia,⁵² currently have statutes giving the police certain powers.

TELUS recommended that “all provinces renew and standardize their scrap metal dealer and recycler regulations.”⁵³ While it recognizes that “scrap metal dealers fall under provincial jurisdiction,”⁵⁴ TELUS believes that the urgency of the situation requires a collaborative approach between the federal government and the provinces. It called on the federal government to take on a leadership role “to encourage standardization and best practices across provinces.”⁵⁵ In its view, the following reforms would be useful:

- enhancing education for scrap metal dealers on identifying potentially stolen materials;
- increasing the capacity and frequency of dealer inspections;
- implementing standardized electronic reporting systems for all copper-related transactions;
- establishing a provincial registry of authorized copper sellers;
- allowing residents to sell copper only within their province; and
- regulating payment methods to ensure all transactions are traceable.⁵⁶

⁴⁹ TRCM, Matthew Taylor, Senior General Counsel and Director General, Criminal Law Policy Section, Department of Justice Canada, [December 10, 2024](#).

⁵⁰ TRCM, Peter Tewfik, Chief Superintendent, Officer in Charge of K Division, Community Safety and Well-being, RCMP, [December 10, 2024](#).

⁵¹ Province of Alberta, [Scrap Metal Dealers and Recyclers Identification Act](#), Statutes of Alberta, 2013, Chapter S-3.5.

⁵² Province of British Columbia, [Metal Dealers and Recyclers Act](#), [SBC 2011], Chapter 22.

⁵³ TRCM, Brian Lakey, Vice-President, Reliability Centre of Excellence, TELUS, [December 11, 2024](#).

⁵⁴ TELUS, [Copper wire theft in the telecommunications industry](#), December 9, 2024.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Like TELUS, Electricity Canada believes the federal government should “standardize legislation across all provinces and territories, creating a unified and effective approach.”⁵⁷

Strengthen the Role of Law Enforcement

TELUS recommended that the federal government establish a dedicated metal-theft task force. It believes that the task force would ensure better coordinated investigations across law enforcement and “improved information sharing.”⁵⁸ According to TELUS, “[o]ther countries have seen success in dropping their copper thefts by implementing such measures.”⁵⁹

For its part, the Canadian Association of Recycling Industries (CARI) encourages Canadian businesses to report metal theft to law enforcement. Reports can be made on the website [ScrapTheftAlert](#), which broadcasts alerts within a 100-mile radius of where the theft occurred. As of November 2025, over 25,000 alerts have been published on the site, leading to the recovery of approximately \$3.6 million U.S. in stolen metals in the United States and Canada.⁶⁰ However, Canada has been slow to adopt this tool, according to CARI President Brian K. Shine:

*Since unveiling the site in 2014, Canadian law enforcement has only grown from 89 initial users to 117 users in 2024. The overall Canadian user count is 689. There’s certainly a lot of work to be done and opportunity to grow their valuable network. CARI is committed to doing so and could certainly use your assistance in helping to spread the word.*⁶¹

Some witnesses told the committee about police operations elsewhere in the world to address metal theft:

- In 2013, the British Transport Police launched Operation Tornado, which led to a 51% drop in copper theft in the United Kingdom.⁶²

⁵⁷ TRCM, Francis Bradley, President and Chief Executive Officer, Electricity Canada, [December 11, 2024](#).

⁵⁸ TELUS, [Copper wire theft in the telecommunications industry](#), December 9, 2024.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ [ScrapTheftAlert](#).

⁶¹ TRCM, Brian K. Shine, Chief Executive Officer, Manitoba Corporation and Canadian Association of Recycling Industries Board Chair (CARI), [December 11, 2024](#).

⁶² Dave Lee, [“Dramatic drop in copper cable theft across the UK,”](#) British Broadcasting Corporation, January 28, 2013.

- California recategorized copper theft as a serious crime considered as a felony offence that can result in imprisonment. At Los Angeles, there had a crackdown that resulted in 82 arrests, 60 felony charges and the seizure of 2,000 pounds of stolen copper (July 2024).⁶³

Ben Stickle, of Middle Tennessee State University, recommended establishing a national monitoring system that would “track [copper] sales across recycling facilities.”⁶⁴ It would create a centralized database accessible to industry, the police and scrap metal dealers to “identify and report suspicious behaviour”⁶⁵ at recycling facilities.

Launch an Awareness Campaign

Some witnesses told the committee that it would be worthwhile to promote education and awareness initiatives to inform the Canadian population of the risks associated with copper theft. According to Professor Stickle, this type of campaign would help educate the public “on the impacts of metal theft and promote vigilance.”⁶⁶ Jean-François Boulanger of the University of Québec in Abitibi-Témiscamingue also said that awareness campaigns “could be helpful.”⁶⁷ Linda Annis, Executive Director of Metro Vancouver Crime Stoppers and City Councillor for the City of Surrey, also recommended “a strong public information campaign”⁶⁸ that encourages people to call the police or Crime Stoppers if they know something.

The Committee’s Recommendations

The committee is of the opinion that copper theft is a threat to Canada’s critical infrastructure and the reliability of its telecommunications and electricity networks. These crimes cause major service outages that could have serious consequences for the health and safety of the Canadian population. The witnesses appearing before the committee were very clear on that point.

The committee recognizes that some of the recommendations made by witnesses fall within the constitutional jurisdiction of the provinces. However, it believes that

⁶³ TRCM, Brian Lakey, Vice-President, Reliability Centre of Excellence, TELUS, [December 11, 2024](#).

⁶⁴ TRCM, Ben Stickle, Professor of Criminal Justice Administration, Middle Tennessee State University, [December 10, 2024](#), and TRCM, Brian Lakey, Vice-President, Reliability Centre of Excellence, TELUS, [December 11, 2024](#).

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ TRCM, Jean-François Boulanger, Associate Professor, Research Institute on Mines and the Environment, University of Québec in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, as an individual, [December 10, 2024](#).

⁶⁸ TRCM, Linda Annis, Executive Director, Metro Vancouver Crime Stoppers and City Councillor, City of Surrey, [December 11, 2024](#).

urgent action is needed to address this dangerous issue. In light of the evidence heard and the briefs submitted, the committee recommends:

Recommendation 1

That the Government of Canada amend the *Criminal Code* to impose more serious penalties for metal theft that causes damage to critical or essential infrastructure.⁶⁹

Recommendation 2

That the Government of Canada encourage the provincial and territorial governments to regulate the sale of scrap metal, including by keeping a record of transactions and the origin of the metal.

Recommendation 3

That the Government of Canada create a task force on metal theft to promote information sharing among law enforcement agencies.

⁶⁹ Since this study was conducted, the Government of Canada introduced in October 2025 [Bill C-14, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Youth Criminal Justice Act and the National Defence Act \(bail and sentencing\)](#) (Bill C-14). Clause 10 adds subsection 334.1(2) to the *Criminal Code*, creating an “aggravating circumstance” when an offence interferes with the access or functioning of an “essential infrastructure” or causes it to be unsafe. A Department of Justice Canada [backgrounder](#) states that copper theft is an offence interfering with essential infrastructure.

Appendix A – Witnesses

Tuesday, December 10, 2024

Jean-François Boulanger, Associate Professor, Research Institute on Mines and the Environment, University of Québec in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, as an Individual

Brigitte Joly, Director General, Critical Infrastructure Directorate, National and Cyber Security Branch, Public Safety Canada

Wen Kwan, Senior Director, Spectrum and Telecommunications Sector Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada

Ben Stickle, Professor of Criminal Justice Administration, Middle Tennessee State University, as an Individual

Matthew Taylor, Senior General Counsel and Director General, Criminal Law Policy Section, Department of Justice Canada

Peter Tewfik, Chief Superintendent, Officer in Charge of K Division, Community Safety and Well-being, Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Matthias Villetorte, Senior Counsel and Team Leader, Criminal Law Policy Section, Department of Justice Canada

Wednesday, December 11, 2024

Linda Annis, Executive Director, Metro Vancouver Crime Stoppers and City Councillor, City of Surrey, Crime Stoppers

Michele Austin, Vice-President, Public Affairs, Bell Canada

Francis Bradley, President and Chief Executive Officer, Electricity Canada

Ross Johnson, President, Bridgehead Security Consulting Inc.

Brian Lakey, Vice-President, Reliability Centre of Excellence, TELUS

Brian K. Shine, Chief Executive Officer, Manitoba Corporation and CARI Board Chair, Canadian Association of Recycling Industries

Eric Smith, Senior Vice-President, Canadian Telecommunications Association

Appendix B – Briefs and Supplementary Evidence

Bridgitte Anderson, President and Chief Executive Officer, Greater Vancouver Board of Trade, [brief](#), 19 December 2024

Michele Austin, Vice-President, Public Affairs, Bell Canada, [brief](#), 13 December 2024

Indra Bhan, Interim Chief Executive Officer and Chief Operating Officer, Surrey Board of Trade, [brief](#), 13 December 2024

Hardave Birk, Director, Government Relations, Rogers Communications Inc., [brief](#), 2 January 2025

Brian Lakey, Vice-President, Reliability Centre of Excellence, TELUS, [brief](#), 13 December 2024

Deborah Yedlin, President and Chief Executive Officer, Calgary Chamber of Commerce, [brief](#), 19 December 2024



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