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Chair

Mr. Joe Preston

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• (1100)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC)): Let's get started. Today we're here in public and televised with the study of the fair elections act. We have a small amount of committee business to start the meeting, and we'll get to Mr. Kingsley as quickly as we can after that.

I think, Mr. Christopherson, you're first.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Chair, yes, on a point of personal privilege, I asked for this opportunity.

The last meeting of the committee was dealing with Monsieur Mayrand and the issues of the bells and the problems and whether or not the deal that was made with the government was honoured. At that time I certainly expressed how unhappy I was with what I considered to be incredibly dishonourable actions on the part of the government, and I personalized it in the form of Mr. Lukiwski because I can only deal with the face of government that I'm given.

I want to go on record publicly, and I appreciate the opportunity, Chair, to make it clear that although I had to focus my remarks on the government member that I was negotiating with in good faith, I believe in my heart that it was not Mr. Lukiwski's decision at all to violate that agreement. I want him to know I still consider him to be an honourable member and I look forward to working with him. I hope we can set that aside. I meant what I said, but I did not mean it towards the individual in the way that it could only come across, but I meant it to the government. There's been enough time now for me to say personally to Mr. Lukiwski that nothing has changed in terms of the respect that I have for him. In fact, I'm sure it brought great grief to him to see a deal that he made, I think in good faith, broken. I just want to put it on the record, Chair, that I look forward to continuing a good relationship with Mr. Lukiwski and I have the greatest respect for him.

The Chair: Mr. Lukiwski, very quickly on that one.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, CPC): It will be quick.

I thank you, David, for your apology. It's certainly accepted. I do have to point out to you that if this is the face of government you have to deal with daily, I have sympathy for you, frankly, more than anything else. Thank you very much. Yes, the respect is mutual and we'll go on as always. Let's just see if we can make this committee work.

The Chair: Yes, and you stole my joke about the face of government. As the president of the Tom Lukiwski fan club, I'm very honoured you had those words today.

Mr. Christopherson, the next thing we're going to deal with is your notice of motion that we closed off on the last time. Did you want to speak at all to that?

Mr. David Christopherson: Yes, Chair, I would.

We did have a steering committee. We had an agreement in order to get to our witnesses and not take too much time, that we would take just a moment to state our positions and then allow a vote to take place.

This was a motion that I made asking that those who are not affiliated with recognized parties in the House be given an opportunity to participate on this committee in a fashion that has been used before with the review of the Board of Internal Economy. At that time they were given the opportunity to be at the committee and ask a question during the rounds.

My motion basically is asking that we afford the independents that same opportunity for the very simple reason that I know when we did our review the last time over two Parliaments we didn't have representatives there from independents, and we didn't make as good decisions as we could have. If we're serious about an election law that's fair to everybody, then we should have those participants here at the table. They would decide among themselves who would be here and in what rotation, but I think it would be a signal to Canadians that finally this committee is prepared to start dealing in a fair fashion with a bill that is so important to Canadians.

I hope that we'll have the support of the government because they are the swing vote here to allow that important voice in our electoral process to be heard, that of those independents who are not part of recognized parties in the House. I think this would go a long way to improving the fairness of the process we're undertaking.

Thanks, Chair.

• (1105)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Christopherson.

On the same point, Mr. Lamoureux, as quickly as you can.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I just wanted to emphasize that the Liberal Party believes it's absolutely essential that we provide the Green Party, the Bloc party, those that are classified technically as independents, the opportunity to come before committee and be engaged in the process.

We're talking about our Elections Act. This is a pillar of our democracy. We're all familiar with the manner in which this government has been forcing this legislation through. We understand there are no other political entities in Canada that are supporting this legislation outside of the Conservative Party, and we should be affording them the opportunity to sit at this table and participate in some of the dialogue that is taking place in regard to a very important piece of legislation. One could ultimately argue that an election law is a pillar of our democracy. They have a right, I would argue, to be sitting at this table. We would ask the government to respect that right and allow them that opportunity. That's the only thing that's going to prevent them; there's no doubt. The only thing that will prevent them is a government decision to disallow that political engagement from the Green Party and the Bloc party, which we think would be a mistake.

The Chair: Mr. Lukiwski, on that motion, please.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Very quickly, I appreciate my colleagues keeping the remarks brief and then we'll go strictly to a vote.

The government will be voting against the motion, David, and I'll tell you why.

Independents, frankly, do have an opportunity to participate in this committee as witnesses. Mr. Bill Casey will be coming. As you know, Bill was an independent in the last term of office. We've also stated that at any time if you want to expand the list of witnesses and bring independent members to come and testify, you can certainly do so. Their voices will be heard.

But, primarily, it will be setting, I believe, a very bad precedent. One can certainly make the argument that independents should be at every committee discussing legislation. That's not the way the Standing Orders have been developed, and there are reasons for that. We have a history of well over 100 years as to why that has taken place, so we want to continue on with that tradition. If we want to hear the opinions of independent members on how this bill affects them, we have the opportunity to do so.

The Chair: Okay, we'll vote on the motion.

Mr. David Christopherson: Could we have a recorded vote?

The Chair: Certainly we can do that Mr. Christopherson.

(Motion negated: nays 5; yeas 4 [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: The other piece of committee business we must deal with is the budget for this study.

We will be seeing a number of witnesses. For those of you who were at the steering committee today, you have an idea of that number, but since that was an in camera meeting, we'll just discuss the budget. The budget currently sits at \$38,700 to cover the witness costs of this committee, and I need permission from the committee for that.

Mr. David Christopherson: I'll be glad to move it, but I have a question.

The understanding is, of course, that if this gets adjusted as a result of other witnesses, then we accept that we'll be making a further submission, if need be.

The Chair: Absolutely. We're starting here with this amount and being as frugal as we can be, but we will not leave anyone out if that's the case.

Mr. David Christopherson: Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: All in favour of the budget?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Could we have a recorded vote on that?

The Chair: You want a recorded vote on the budget? Okay.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 8; nays 1)

The Chair: Mr. Kingsley, it's great to have you here today. I know you have an opening statement and you'll do your best to keep it as short as possible because we have lots of questions for you. But welcome again, it's great to see you again.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley (Former Chief Electoral Officer, As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank the clerk as well as the translators for the translation of the text you are about to receive.

Good morning, also, to all of the members of the committee.

● (1110)

[*English*]

I would also like to thank two people who shall remain nameless, who are good friends and colleagues who have worked days on end to help me prepare for this appearance.

[*Translation*]

Honourable members of the committee, it is always a privilege to appear before you. I am here today to speak to Bill C-23.

I followed the appearance of Mr. Mayrand on CPAC and I agree with his testimony. Canada's electoral democracy and our electoral agency, Elections Canada, stand second to none throughout the world because our elections enjoy the confidence of Canadians. They are built upon five values: participation, fairness, impartiality, transparency and accountability. I have evaluated the bill from their perspective.

A number of the proposed changes in the bill will sustain the values underlying the act.

The provisions respecting voter contact calling services will help avoid the repetition of the infamous robocalls during the 2011 election, or help trace them by providing an information trail for investigators.

On that, the committee should consider extending the requirements respecting the retention of records so that they mirror the time limitation for prosecutions. Moreover the records should include the phone numbers of persons contacted in order to maximize their usefulness to investigators. This latter information would not become public and would be accessible only for investigative and prosecution purposes.

The significant increase in potential fines for conviction of breaches of the act up to \$100,000 for some offences, along with the potential for jail time, will help enhance deterrence significantly.

The graduated and significant reduction of the reimbursement of campaign expenditures will apply automatically in all cases where the spending limits are breached.

The provision of a fourth day for advance polls will benefit electors who increasingly vote in advance of polling day — a number in excess of two millions Canadians in the 2011 election.

The reformed legislated schemes for loans and unpaid claims will help ensure that rules concerning contributions are respected.

The Advisory Committee of Political Parties will be established in law. This committee has operated since 1977 and has proven an invaluable mechanism for exchanges between Elections Canada and all the registered parties, including the smaller ones, that often have a very different take on issues.

And lastly, the new statutory provisions respecting interpretations and advance rulings by Elections Canada will benefit participants and the public, albeit the time requirements imposed on Elections Canada will have to be adjusted to be workable.

[English]

There are also a number of major changes that are relatively neutral in their effect.

One is the decision to move the Commissioner of Canada Elections from the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer to that of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

This move constitutes an extension of the decision Parliament made in 2006 with the Accountability Act to transfer the authority for the prosecution of offences under the Canada Elections Act from the Commissioner of Canada Elections to the Director of Public Prosecutions. Parliament fixed a problem that did not exist. It bears repeating, Mr. Chairman, that as a result of that decision it has been the Director of Public Prosecutions, not the Commissioner of Canada Elections, and not the Chief Electoral Officer, who has decided when to prosecute under the act since that time. The commissioner serves only an investigative and advisory role in that process. It has always been the courts that have determined guilt, not the Chief Electoral Officer, not the commissioner, and not the Director of Public Prosecutions. In the performance of his investigative functions, the commissioner has always operated independently of the Chief Electoral Officer and will continue to act independently of the Director of Public Prosecutions with the protections afforded those operations in this bill and in the Director of Public Prosecutions Act. What is lost is the simplicity of the previous enforcement regime, its cost-effectiveness, and the timeliness of prosecutions.

The increase in spending and contribution limits is another one.

Under the bill, spending limits will increase by 5% and contribution limits will increase by 25%. As well, individuals will be able to donate more of their own money to their candidate and nomination campaigns. This should increase their ability to meet their start-up obligations, reducing their reliance on loans without seriously impacting the overall role of money in the process.

There are aspects of the bill that will benefit from further consideration. Several changes are essential.

The proposed exemption from a registered party's election expenses of those related to party funding communications with persons who have donated more than \$20 over the preceding five years to emanations of the party is not justified. It is simply not possible to seek funds without including reasons for giving, and this can only constitute advertising for or against a party or a candidate. Moreover, it favours richer and established parties to the detriment of small and especially newer parties.

Nor will it save taxpayers any money. The established parties will continue to spend very close to the newly increased spending limits and will be reimbursed accordingly. The only way to reduce the amount of the reimbursement is to reduce the election expense limits.

Respecting registered party returns, your committee should consider vesting in law the authority of the Chief Electoral Officer to access and inspect relevant documents supporting the information on party returns when relevant. This recommendation has been before your committee previously as part of the report on the 38th general election, and it was included in Parliament's unanimous resolution of March 2012 in the wake of the robocalls scandal.

Bill C-23 would certainly provide longer reach and sharper teeth should the authority to compel testimony be granted to the Commissioner of Canada Elections when he investigates breaches of the Canada Elections Act, as agreed as well in the 2012 unanimous resolution.

The need for this authority, which is possessed by most of the electoral authorities in Canada and by many other federal agencies, is demonstrated by the apparent lack of progress in the robocalls investigation. Persons in positions likely to be able to provide important information now know they can refuse to talk to investigators. Their lawyers know. I would note in passing that this authority could only be exercised once approval is granted by a court upon application by the commissioner.

I would now like to address two vital matters that must be changed to maintain fundamental values of our electoral democracy. As they stand, these provisions will impact very negatively on the values of participation, impartiality, and transparency.

First there is Bill C-23's proposed abolition of the legal provision whereby one elector can prove his or her identity through vouching by another elector. This will directly affect the constitutional right to vote of a significant number of Canadians without justification. Strict measures surround the vouching process under the act allowing those electors who present themselves at their designated poll without the requisite documentary proof of ID and/or proof of address to establish them through another elector from the same poll who has already provided the required documentary proof to the satisfaction of the electoral officials.

The voucher takes an oath that the voucher knows the person to be vouched for and his or her address. The person being vouched for similarly takes an oath. One can only vouch for another once and a vouchee cannot vouch for someone else. In practice, in many cases vouching is employed in circumstances where there is no risk. In the majority of the cases, vouchers are related to the person for whom they are vouching and the person being vouched for may already be on the list of electors.

Moreover, Mr. Chairman, vouching is often used where proof of ID is provided and proof of address is lacking. For example, vouching occurs on reserves, which are defined territorially, and where the person being vouched for already possesses a status Indian card, acceptable proof under the Canada Elections Act. Each reserve usually constitutes one or more polls, and consequently the possession of such a card should constitute sufficient proof of address. It does not; hence the need for the vouching process.

Similarly, in the cases of students, poll officials obtain certifications by university housing authorities concerning those who reside in their residences. Again, this does not constitute sufficient proof of address. A large number of vouching cases take place in institutional residences where Elections Canada send revising agents as part of the targeted revision process during the election and determine who the residents are. Virtually all these facilities are designated mobile polls, when they don't already constitute a regular poll, thus amounting to a totally controlled environment where the required proofs are already in the hands of election officials.

Mr. Chairman, the errors identified with the vouching process earlier in this committee have been administrative in nature, owing to failings of poll officials rather than being indicative of fraudulent voting. The resolution of this administrative problem lies in the simplification of processes, the rigorous application of the requirements by electoral officials, and the reinforcement of their obligations during their training.

• (1115)

I note the bill currently proposes to add greater certainty in circumstances where it appears at a poll that an elector's name has been crossed off the list in error, or it is purported that someone else has voted under that person's name. In such circumstances, the Canada Elections Act requires that the elector take an oath before being permitted to vote. The bill proposes to amend these requirements so that the elector will now be required to take the required oath in writing.

Amending the vouching provisions to require that the requisite oath also be given in writing will address the concerns which have been raised respecting vouching. There is a fundamental inequity when a federal statute requires documentary proof of identity and address before one can exercise a constitutional right, and no federal agency provides such proof in one readily available form.

Also, I wish to address Bill C-23's amendment to section 18 dealing with the Chief Electoral Officer's ability to communicate with the public, limiting it to four basic voting elements: who, when, where, and how, touching candidates as well.

The Chief Electoral Officer must retain the authority to reach out to all Canadians, to speak to them about our electoral democracy, the

importance of our constitutional right to vote, and the methods and the values at the core of our electoral system. He speaks without regard to partisanship. Candidates and parties do so typically in a partisan manner with the legitimate purpose of obtaining their vote, which is not a problem.

The Chief Electoral Officer must be able to sustain important endeavours by academia such as the Canada election study, and by NGOs such as Student Vote and Apathy Is Boring. In total disclosure, I chair the latter's advisory council. We have a major problem of participation in our elections. Less than 40% of young people between 18 and 24 actually vote in this country right now.

The Chief Electoral Officer must retain the authority to provide the information requested by the media, and to share any information he deems pertinent with Canadians at any time. His overarching concern is the integrity of our electoral system. Any concern by a political party can be raised at the proposed advisory committee of political parties for consultation. It can also be raised at this very committee at any time.

Let me be clear. Absent the rescinding of the proposed section 18 in Bill C-23, Canadians will lose their trust and their confidence in our elections. That is not acceptable.

With these changes as proposed, Bill C-23 has the potential to maintain our electoral process and Elections Canada second to none in the world.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

• (1120)

The Chair: Mr. Kingsley, thank you very much for your opening statement.

We'll go to a seven-minute round.

Mr. Lukiwski, you're starting us off today.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Thank you, Mr. Kingsley, for being here. It's good to see you again.

Mr. Kingsley, one of the things we haven't heard much of in the examination of this bill are the changes the bill proposes to the political financing regime. I think that's a very important aspect of this bill.

I'd like to get your take on that. I'd like to get your analysis on the changes this bill proposes, particularly on the attempt to take big money out of the election financing regime, particularly taking big money out from corporations and unions, and to also ensure political parties are not able to skirt donation limits through unpaid loans, which we have seen in years past, and testamentary donations.

Could you please comment on what your analysis of this bill does with regard to those items?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: I think I alluded to loans and unpaid claims. Loans become unpaid claims after three years.

In my view this is a very good attempt to come to grips with the problem which exists when you have a regime that regulates money as well as the Canadian system does. Frankly, our system is the best in the world. It's as simple as that. This bill does not affect that in my view. The limits are increased in certain places. I find that acceptable. They do not thwart the purpose of the regime.

With respect to loans, several measures are put in place here so there is less of a need for loans as well as the fact the loans can come from financial institutions only. This is all meant to prevent the back door to the scheme that we have come up with, this very good system we have to regulate money. I think the bill is a reasonable attempt to come to grips with this.

I think your committee should be looking at this in a year or two, or several years after the next general election, to see how well people were able to adapt to that.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: For the purposes of those Canadians who may be watching and listening who aren't aware of how political parties and candidates frankly in the past have been able to skirt donation limits through unpaid loans, could you please give an example.

For example, I know there are many questions and many comments that all parties have made criticizing the Liberals because of unpaid leadership loans in the past.

Could you please give a framework of how the current system works, and how it can be abused, and how the changes in this bill would regulate those?

• (1125)

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: I'm sure that Canadians who follow this are aware of this. Essentially the issue is, especially when there are leadership campaigns or other candidacies just to be elected to the House, one can obtain loans, and the regime for reimbursement has not been clear under the statute, and therefore some of those loans have remained unpaid over time. The Chief Electoral Officer has told us that the regime is unenforceable, and I must accept that. Therefore, this is why I consider this to be a very reasonable attempt to come to grips with that.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: With respect to unpaid loans, in the case of some of the former Liberal leadership candidates, those loans have been unpaid for several years. Most reasonable people, I think, would assume that if you haven't paid back a loan within a reasonable amount of time, that individual—or the party if it's a case of a party, but usually it's candidates—should face some sanctions. That has not happened.

In other words, you can have individuals who still owe hundreds of thousands of dollars from loans they received during their leadership bid that have been unpaid for several years and they face absolutely no sanctions. One of the things that obviously appears to me should be done is then consider those unpaid loans as contributions.

What do you see in this bill that helps address the problems that we've faced for the last number of years with respect to unpaid leadership candidate loans in particular?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: Only a financial institution will establish the risk and determine what it thinks is a reasonable loan to

make, or individuals. But individuals can only make a loan or offer a loan guarantee up to the limit of \$1,500 for that year, which is what they are entitled to. This will obviate the need and remove the capacity for individuals or corporations or others, except for financial institutions, from making any kind of substantial loan to a candidate or to a leadership candidate.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Thank you.

Finally, I'll just move to a different element of the bill, very quickly to the changes that we have in the bill to try to prevent the problems we saw with robocalling and the Pierre Poutine example in the last election.

Could you comment briefly on why the changes we are proposing in this bill would help prevent those types of situations from occurring again in the future?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: The bill will require that people who offer the services that are called robocall services or automated calls must register with the CRTC and they must file their names. People who retain their services must also be known and the messages must be kept, under the present bill, for one year. I recommended that it should be something akin to 10 years, which is the length of time that an actual investigation and prosecution can take place. There's not much point in keeping it for one year when so many things can happen quite rapidly in one year and the time will have elapsed, so I would urge your committee to consider that.

For all those reasons it becomes a traceable item. Obviously, if someone is doing it without doing all those things, they are breaking the law, and this is where people would have to step in. I'm also recommending that the numbers that were called be kept so that the trail can be followed right to the people who received the call so that they can tell the investigators what it is they remember about that call.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: In your opinion then, would the changes we are proposing ultimately help prevent the same Pierre Poutine situation we saw in the last federal election?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: Yes, they would.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lukiwski.

Mr. Scott, you have seven minutes, please.

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Kingsley, for coming and for an extremely detailed and contextualized presentation.

I appreciate that you've been very fair in commenting on some of the positive aspects of the bill and categorizing some other parts as neutral, but you've also very clearly indicated some problems that I think you would obviously like to see fixed. Frankly, I may be understating that because at the beginning of your remarks you indicated that you seem to be largely in agreement with Mr. Mayrand on many of his concerns. What I would like to do, if possible, is double-check and ask whether there are any elaborations you'd like to make on some of the concerns that you've expressed.

One of the things you have expressed is that section 18 as now modified is getting rid of public education outreach functions and replacing them with a targeted list of communication functions. That has to absolutely be repealed and the current provision put back in place. That seems to be what I heard you say.

I do know back in 2006 in your report you stated:

Elections Canada was also able to conclude landmark agreements with various Aboriginal organizations, to generate stronger interest and participation in the election among First Nations, Métis and Inuit electors.

I've taken the time to read a lot of your work over your tenure, and to me, outreach, public education, and enhancing general participation in elections were hugely emphasized. With that, am I right in thinking that you think getting rid of section 18 is a very large mistake?

• (1130)

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: I've categorically stated that proposed section 18, in my view, must be totally repealed from the proposed legislation.

If I may, I'm very pleased that you're raising the whole issue of aboriginal electors. A Canadian population that had been slowly reducing to 60% participation actually went to 64% at that election. We were able to achieve that. Phil Fontaine and I, through efforts that had been deployed, were able to trace that for aboriginal electors, especially first nations, the increase had been 8%. Who knows where we would be if there had not been those efforts with respect to the young people. Would we be at 33%, 35%, or 41%? I don't know. All I know is that when you're the Chief Electoral Officer, you know you have a job to reach out to groups that require special efforts to be deployed by the electoral authorities. This is the only way one can visualize that job.

Mr. Craig Scott: Great. Thank you.

I'll now move on to the interconnection between the new voter contact services regime and the investigative powers of Elections Canada. My colleague Mr. Lukiwski asked you a question about the new voter contact services registry. I think your answer was that it will help, and I can't disagree. The problem is whether it will actually make us too complacent, because there are still things that are not either in it or connected to it.

The first thing is, am I correct in hearing you say that the one-year period for retaining data on the part of the telecoms, the voter service companies, etc., is far too short?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: It's far too short.

Mr. Craig Scott: The second thing is that, and Mr. Mayrand pointed this out, it's rather inexplicable and a problem that phone numbers do not have to be retained. Did I hear you say that?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: Those are the two matters that I raised that your committee should consider very seriously introducing into this bill; especially the prolongation to hold records for one year simply does not do it. If you consider that parties take six months to file their reports, Elections Canada then must do its audits. Not all reports are audited in one day. This can take several months. If there's anything wrong after you've dealt with the party to and fro, you then have to refer this to the commissioner for an investigation. Then that has to be referred to the prosecutor. One year doesn't do it.

Mr. Craig Scott: I'd also point out something Mr. Mayrand mentioned. He said that the shorter the period, the more you need a power to go to the courts to ask for documents to be retained once an investigation is under way, and that power is also not in the bill. I've had my own private member's bill on this, and I was under no illusions that it would solve the problem of truly rogue operators doing automated calls using proxy servers and burner phones, not even using the services of legitimate voter contact companies.

There's nothing in the regime that will actually tackle that problem. The only solution I see is you must beef up the investigative powers of the Commissioner of Canada Elections. Two things are missing. One in particular is the power to compel witnesses along with requisite safeguards for their rights. The other thing is the access of Elections Canada to national party documentation supporting their expense claims. Neither of these has been included in the bill. I understand that in your remarks, as I was listening, you said both of them are still needed. Would you agree with me that without those two powers, the ability of Elections Canada or the commissioner, if he's now in the DPP's office, to actually get to the bottom of the more serious forms of robocall fraud, the ones that don't even use the existing legitimate system, is going to be very difficult?

• (1135)

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: I would submit to you that even with those powers, it'll be very difficult. There are people who want to cheat. It's as simple as that. They are few and far between, but they are there. Obviously, it would help if those two powers were included, and that's what the gist of my remarks was in my recommendation to this committee, to consider them seriously if we're not including them.

Mr. Craig Scott: Just to finish this round of questioning, I did understand you to say unequivocally.... I want to make sure I heard correctly that the practice of vouching is at some level the last constitutional safety net for the right to vote, and that it should be retained. Is that the correct interpretation?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: I'm saying that vouching is an essential ingredient of our system; it is very well protected under our present system. One can easily understand why there are concerns—the lacking documentation. Solve the lacking documentation issue. Deputy returning officers are very busy on election day. They see a lineup of people and they see people who need to be vouched for. They recognize the people. They know they're there with their brother, so they'll say, "Okay, you can vote. Forget the documentation. I have 20 other people in line."

This is what happens in the reality of things. They now have to produce bingo cards. They now have to check ID. They have to check residence. These were all things that were added without any consideration by your predecessors on this committee when I told them that they should consider adding people at the polls, which is now being done—now being done. In 2006, I sounded the bell on that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kingsley.

Mr. Lamoureux, for seven minutes, please.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Kingsley, welcome to the committee.

I have a number of questions that I would like to get on the record.

Let's go back to the ability to compel. You state, "Bill C-23 would certainly provide longer reach and sharper teeth"—an interesting choice of wording, I thought—"should the authority to compel testimony be granted to the Commissioner of Canada Elections...".

Without the authority to compel a witness, we would argue that the legislation, when a violation has occurred, in fact, is going to get weaker, because those individuals.... Now it's becoming even that much better known that if you don't want to say anything to Elections Canada, you don't have to say anything to Elections Canada. Many independent election authorities today across Canada already have that authority, so in the past we were saying that in fact this should have been brought in, in the form of a change, to allow Elections Canada to compel a witness.

Could we have a clear statement from you: do you not concur that having the ability to compel a witness would in fact directly help in getting prosecutions for things such as the robocalls?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: The short answer is yes.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Good. I'm satisfied with that.

Regarding vouching and when we talked about vouching, in reading your report I see you've indicated that obviously it's important that we continue with the vouching. I'm very happy to see that. It's something that we support. There needs to be ongoing vouching taking place.

Are there issues that you have around vouching in some ways, and that in fact what we really do need is to retain vouching, to maybe look at ways in which we can improve it, but definitely keep it? Is that a fair assessment of your position on it?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: I have no problem whatsoever with vouching the way it is structured under the Canada Elections Act at the present time. I am suggesting that if the committee wishes to go further, the oaths that are taken should be in writing as opposed to oral, with documentary evidence only being filled out by deputy returning officers and clerks.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: That's right. So your advice is that if you want to fix it, go ahead and fix it, but just don't get rid of it.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: Please, please do not get rid of it. Some 120,000 Canadians—

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: I respect the plea, and I hope we won't get rid of it. Hopefully that will be an amendment.

On it you also indicate, and I am quoting you directly, "Let me be clear: absent the rescinding of the proposed section 18 in Bill C-23, Canadians will lose their trust and their confidence in our elections." You are stating that this is not acceptable. What is it that you're referring to? This is the Chief Electoral Officer's ability to communicate with the public without limitations. Obviously you're really concerned about this.

You conclude by saying that with these changes to Bill C-23, there is potential....

Are you saying that if the government does not make the types of changes we've just made reference to, this is a bill that really should not be passed by the House of Commons?

• (1140)

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: That is a judgment I shall have to reserve until I see what the changes are that you as a committee succeed in convincing the government about.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Right.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: Then I will not hesitate to pronounce myself—

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Right. You followed the proceedings when Mr. Mayrand was here. He was fairly clear in terms of the damage this would cause, not only in terms of the changes and the manner in which the changes were being imposed, but no real consultation was done with other political entities, stakeholders, and so forth.

We now have an international community that's looking at it and saying that this is just wrong the way Canada is proceeding with this. Do you believe that the government has a responsibility to maybe put things on hold and acknowledge there's a need for changes, and that if they're not going to agree to those changes and start looking to how they're putting in place the changes, it's really to the detriment overall...?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: There is no way I can visualize any limitation on the Chief Electoral Officer's capacity to express himself or herself to Canadians about any matter which he or she considers important.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: That's right.

Given your response and the proceedings and so forth, what would you rank it today? When you said "A minus", was that more so believing there are going to be amendments brought forward? Could you provide a quick comment on that?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: I rated the bill. You saw the positive elements that I've underlined.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Yes.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: That is what I did.

Insofar as any other rating, I'm waiting, because the minister has clearly stated that he wishes to move it up to A plus. Let us see what is done to move it up to A plus by the government and by the minister.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: If they don't make any changes, are you still going to give this bill an A minus?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: If they don't make any changes is a theoretical question. I will address it when it is a reality.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: I'm glad to hear that.

This is a quote from yesterday in the House of Commons:

In the 2006 election, I was called personally and offered hundreds of voter cards that had been left in apartment buildings and so on. Like an idiot, I said, "No, we don't do that sort of thing". I should have said, "Yes, come on down", and had the police waiting.

What would you advise a member of Parliament who actually received that sort of a call to do? What would you advise a candidate in an election to do?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: I'm afraid I don't know exactly the context of what you're quoting, so it's very difficult. I would not want to react artificially or superficially to something. I don't understand the context in which the remark was made.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Okay.

Let me go back to the idea that we're talking about Canada's election laws and there are jurisdictions outside of Canada. I asked Mr. Mayrand what he says about the current process when he goes abroad. He wasn't very pleased with the current process.

Could you provide a comment with regard to the process we're going into? For example, we had suggested that we go across Canada, that we not just be here in Ottawa but that we listen to what other Canadians have to say, and that there should have been some sort of consultations done with opposition parties. Do you not think this is a fair thing to be requesting?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: I don't want to comment about the process that was followed to bring the bill forward, because my successor has done that. That is obviously the perspective of the Chief Electoral Officer in position, and I don't want to be commenting on that for the simple reason that he stated what he had to say about that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lamoureux.

We'll go to our four-minute round, starting with Mr. Reid.

Mr. Reid, you have four minutes.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Just to make it clear, those comments that Mr. Lamoureux was offering were given by Laurie Hawn, member of Parliament, who is sitting just down the table and who will be a witness before us on Thursday.

Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for giving me this time.

Mr. Kingsley, thank you for being here again. It's a real pleasure.

I want to concentrate on some comments you made today regarding vouching in two locations. You talked about vouching on reserve and in restricted access institutions. I'll start with your comments regarding reserves. You said that vouching occurs "on reserves which are defined territorially and where the person being vouched for already possesses a status Indian card, acceptable proof under the Canada Elections Act. Each reserve usually constitutes one or more polls, and consequently the possession of such a card should constitute sufficient proof of address; it does not. Hence the need for the vouching process."

That could be seen as an argument, as presented here, for vouching. It could also be seen, I would submit, and I'm looking for your feedback of what I'm about to submit, as an argument in favour of extending the purpose and use of the status Indian card. It has a special status under the law.

I remember being on the committee when we actually negotiated over this point. One of the members of the committee, Karen Redman, who is no longer a member of Parliament, suggested that

the status Indian card be given a special spot, which it is under subsection 143(2.2) of the current law, changing that status a bit so as to allow the status Indian card to also serve as a proof of residence. If that were done, would that resolve the issue you drew attention to here?

• (1145)

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: In that particular context, yes it would.

Mr. Scott Reid: Okay.

Let me turn to the question of institutional residences. One of the problems that I think occurred, and we saw this in Etobicoke—Centre, was with what the current vouching system actually does not provide. Getting rid of vouching will have no influence on people who are in areas serviced by mobile polls. In this case we're talking about seniors who no longer have a driver's licence and many other forms of ID, but nobody doubts that they are who they say they are. They are in an institution to which access is limited. That would be true in other residential institutional settings as well, such as correctional facilities.

In such a situation, I wonder whether the solution would be to design a special system—I'm not sure if it would be vouching or something else—that simply is not drawing upon the current system, because you aren't going to find other people living in the same poll who can provide a vouching service. One possibility would be to require or compel institutions to provide information to Elections Canada. Perhaps vouching by someone who is a spouse of that individual could be allowed. The point is that it's a specific problem that requires a specific solution. It's not part of the broader problem of voter ID elsewhere.

Can I ask for your thoughts on that?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: If one is able to design a system whereby these people are entitled to vote simply because they are there and they've been enumerated or revised onto the list during the very election, if one can devise such a system, then it handles that part of the matter.

Mr. Scott Reid: Right.

For example, as part of the duties of a returning officer for the riding, they could be required to enumerate mobile polls first and the institutions could be required—perhaps they are not—to submit the information promptly.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: It would help if the institution were to be compelled. I know some of them are hesitant, too busy, or whatever the reason. There's always a good reason for not doing the right thing in the minds of some people. They are part of the targeted revision, all the mobile poll areas. All of those institutions are targeted for targeted revision during the election period. This is why, to me, it is an issue that I cannot understand, why we doubt these people.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go to a four-minute round with Mr. Scott.

Mr. Craig Scott: This is something maybe I can come back and talk to Mr. Reid about, his example of the mobile polls. I've never fully understood that, because the act says to vouch for somebody you have to be an elector in the same polling division, which is a different thing from a mobile poll, on election day. If there is a gap on vouching in that context, we definitely have to deal with it. I'm not sure there is, but if there is we should deal with it.

Thank you again. I wanted to come back to just a couple of things. The whole question of the exemption on fundraising during an election campaign, you've indicated it's not justified and that, "It is simply not possible to seek funds without including reasons for giving, and this can only constitute advertising for or against a party or a candidate." You've given other reasons.

Mr. Mayrand also said that from his point of view, it's unmonitorable. There's a whole exemption that has been put in there in a way that he won't actually even know who's actually being contacted in any effective way so that can be monitored. I'm not sure if you heard or read that part of his testimony and if so, do you think he's accurate on that?

• (1150)

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: Obviously, if a document is not available, is not reported on, then one cannot verify it, one cannot audit it. It is not part of what is to be...because this is what the bill proposes at this time, that this be excluded and not reported on; not only excluded, but not reported on.

Already we see the problem with party returns. This is an issue that is before you and I hope you will solve it this time. It's been with you since the 38th general election.

Mr. Craig Scott: Great, thank you.

I was very glad that you pointed out the analogue to problems with vouching, the irregularities that the Neufeld report audit revealed. You essentially said don't get rid of the methods of identification like vouching, but make the election day process much better. One of the features of that is more timely recruiting and training of election day workers. Mr. Mayrand has now unequivocally said he thinks that the time has come for parties to get out of the business of being part of staffing of election day workers to give Elections Canada more time to recruit in advance and to train much further in advance, plus he acknowledges training has to improve.

Do you have any comments on that issue of making sure not only that there are more officers—that was your point—on election day, but that training improve so that the kinds of irregularities that have been used by the minister as his Trojan Horse don't happen again?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: Obviously, under the bill there's an additional week that the Chief Electoral Officer shall have at his disposal in order to start recruitment. In other words, candidates of the first and second party of the previous election will have one week less to nominate people. I think it has to be recognized by Canadians we're now at the stage where only 30% of those positions are filled by the nominees who you provide, only 30%, and 10% in the western provinces. It has become almost an anachronism.

When I was Chief Electoral Officer, I was just waiting for that to die on the vine frankly, and if you don't do it this time, you'll do it the

next time you look at the bill in a couple of years. You'll be doing it because it will not affect you in any way, shape, or form.

Mr. Craig Scott: I have one last question and need a quick answer. I understand that, at best, moving the Commissioner of Canada Elections to the DPP's office is neutral. There is no actual gain from your perspective. Is that true?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: There is no gain, and it is a perpetuation of an unfortunate decision that was made in 2006, which really was not at all the issue that was debated at your predecessor committee, even though I reported on it.

To me, it's ball game over on that one, and the change really does not affect anything except cost-effectiveness and the timeliness of prosecutions, in other words, the time it takes between the investigation and the laying of charges.

This is an issue that has not been addressed by this committee at any time, and I suggest you should do that. The Director of Public Prosecutions is a public official. He should come here and answer to you about how he has handled this responsibility in the meantime.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Reid, you have four minutes to finish off with this round, please.

Mr. Scott Reid: Before going to Mr. Kingsley, I just want to respond to something that Craig Scott said regarding the current Chief Electoral Officer's suggestion that parties should get out of getting election day officers out there.

I disagree with that suggestion, and I want to say why. The DRO and the poll clerk at each poll are appointed by the first and second parties in that riding from the last election. Their job traditionally was to be the first line of defence against fraud by the other party. They essentially cancelled each other out.

It is difficult to find people for those positions, I grant that, and it's getting harder as time goes on, but they do serve as a useful check. In ridings where there is reason to be afraid that someone might want to resort to monkey business, they serve as a very effective protection. I think it's important to keep that. I say this as someone who initiated the measure that caused the returning officers for ridings to no longer be a partisan appointment, to become an appointment made by the Chief Electoral Officer. So as someone who tried to get parties out of that role, I think that getting them out of the DRO and poll clerk roles would be a bad idea.

Going back to the vouching issue, Mr. Kingsley, I just wanted to ask about your suggestion relating to how vouching would be done. You made the following suggestion, which I'll quote. I'm going to ask you to expand on it if you could. You said, "Amending the vouching provisions to require that the requisite oath also be given in writing"—right now, I gather, it's verbally—"will address the concerns which have been raised respecting vouching."

Could I ask you to expand upon what you're getting at and also on some of the practicalities involved in asking people to fill out a written oath, presumably on-site, with a busy election official?

• (1155)

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: Well, in point of fact I'm trying to address the perception that has been brought forth, which is in my view nothing but a perception, that there are problems with vouching by utilizing other sections of the bill, where it says that in these cases—impersonation, someone else having voted in someone's place—you will now have to sign that oath, as opposed to only taking it orally. I'm saying okay, if that's what you want to do. If that solves that particular problem, then it must obviously be able to solve the problem of the perception that some people have about the vouching system.

I will add that with respect to the returning officers, there have been comments made that we appointed...which were predominantly Liberals. That was an excellent move on your part, sir, and I thank you on behalf of Canadians, on the appointment of returning officers. Just so everyone knows, we were obligated by that law to seek the advice of every party leader about every returning officer, and any party leader who objected to any returning officer, that name was off the list. I did not care who objected. We did not overturn any political leader. So the 180 people who were left as returning officers were all people who had been accepted by all the parties.

Mr. Scott Reid: I wanted to have time to ask another question, but seeing that we're going back and dealing with that bit of the historical record, I'll just say that in my own constituency of Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, the former Liberal-appointed returning officer, Caroline McMillan, was reappointed, and in this one case I can say for sure that was a reasonable decision. She performed and has performed very professionally since that time.

I concur that in that one example, which is the only one I can turn to, it was a wise decision on your part.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: I return to 307 others. All the leaders had the option, through all the people sitting in the House, to say no to any returning officer, and I just accepted that. I did not question it.

If one leader said “no,” that returning officer was replaced.

The Chair: Thank you. We can't start another line, so we'll stop there.

Mr. Kingsley, it's always fantastic when you come to committee, and we learn a lot when you do. We hope to see you again in the future. We know we will. This committee gets to invite you on all elections matters.

We will suspend for two minutes while we change witnesses and start our second half.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: Thank you, sir. I appreciated this.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

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_____ (Pause) _____

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• (1200)

The Chair: I'll call our meeting back to order for the second half. We still are in public and televised.

We have two distinguished guests with us for this hour of our study. David Brock is the Chief Electoral Officer of the Northwest Territories, and Keith Archer is the Chief Electoral Officer from British Columbia.

Have you arm wrestled to see who's going first?

David Brock is going first.

If we could have short opening statements from each of you, and then we'll go to rounds of questions.

Mr. David Brock (Chief Electoral Officer, Elections NWT, Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories): Good afternoon, Mr. Chair, and members of the committee. Thank you for the invitation to appear before you today.

In my opening statement I will address only those aspects of the bill that may have the most adverse effect on electors in the Northwest Territories. Those are the end of vouching, the examination of identification documents by candidates or their representatives, and limiting the communications of the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada.

Voter ID laws in the Northwest Territories mirror those in the Canada Elections Act; therefore, this makes for a valuable comparative study. Following the 2011 territorial general election, the legislative assembly concluded that voter identification requirements did in some cases discourage qualified voters from voting. The requirements do seem somewhat excessive, particularly in our small communities where we all know each other.

In the 2011 territorial election, for every 1,000 ballots cast, 15 electors required vouching. Even though the population of Yellowknife is more than five times greater than the next largest NWT community, vouching was twice as likely to take place at a polling station in a community other than Yellowknife. The reason is apparent: in 27 of 33 NWT communities, less than half of residents hold active government-issued photo identification. This causes me to draw three conclusions: first, the frequency with which vouching occurs is relatively low; second, electors in smaller NWT communities are more likely to rely on vouching in order to exercise their right to vote; and third, in my view, removing vouching from the Canada Elections Act would, at least in the short term, cause a barrier to access for some electors, especially in our smaller communities.

The claim that vouching increases the risk of fraud is, in my view, unfounded. Consider the process. First, the person vouching must have proper identification and the person being vouched for must provide basic personal information and swear an oath. As the Parliament of Canada considers eliminating vouching, the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories is contemplating expanding vouching by recognizing the relationship of electors beyond the polling division as well as by increasing the maximum number of times an elector may vouch for another elector.

I ask this committee to recommend removing the provisions of this bill that repeal vouching.

The Parliament of Canada is also considering allowing candidates and their representatives to examine an elector's identification at a polling place. It is important to have partisans monitor activity at polling stations to ensure that the electoral processes are carried out in accordance with the law. However, it is equally, if not more, important that ballots be cast free from intimidation or undue delay.

To restate, in 27 of 33 NWT communities, fewer than half of residents hold active government-issued photo identification. Almost all of the approved additional documents that may be used as proof of residence are likely to contain personal financial information. The risk of unveiling personal financial information to a polling official, especially in small communities, is already a possible deterrent to voting. I'm concerned that this deterrent will be exacerbated if these documents may also be examined by partisans.

The riding of Western Arctic had a 53.9% voter turnout during the 2011 federal election. Along with many other northern ridings, it falls near or below the bottom 10th percentile for participation rates in federal elections. Allowing partisans to examine an elector's identification may, for some, be intimidating and inhibiting, and thus could cause even lower rates of participation in Canada's north.

I ask this committee to recommend removing the provisions of this bill that allow candidates or their representatives to examine elector identification.

Finally, the summary of this bill clearly states that it is an objective to limit the Chief Electoral Officer's power to provide information to the public. With declining participation rates, it is not clear why it would be a policy objective to have fewer election-related messages.

Under current federal law, the Chief Electoral Officer may implement public information programs, particularly for "those persons and groups most likely to experience difficulties in exercising their democratic rights."

One such group is aboriginal peoples, who comprise 51% of the population in the Northwest Territories and whose participation in federal elections is already significantly lower than average. We know that the decision to participate turns on a sense of civic duty and a minimum level of political resources. Political parties and candidates are very well placed to offer political resources, but partisans are not necessarily interested or incentivized to convey a sense of civic duty to all eligible electors.

● (1205)

The Chief Electoral Officer of Canada is best positioned to answer for all Canadians why voting matters.

I am concerned that limiting the information provided by the Chief Electoral Officer may have a disproportionate effect on aboriginal electors in Canada, a group of people who comprise a majority in the Northwest Territories. I ask this committee to recommend removing the provisions of this bill that limit the power of communication by the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada.

That concludes my opening statement.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Brock.

Mr. Archer, please make your opening statement.

Mr. Keith Archer (Chief Electoral Officer, Elections BC): I thank the chair and members of this committee for inviting me here this afternoon.

I'm Keith Archer, the Chief Electoral Officer of British Columbia, an appointment I have held since September 2011. Prior to this appointment, I was a professor of political science at the University of Calgary for 27 years.

Bill C-23 contains more provisions than I can address in the short time available to me. Consequently, my comments focus on two themes that go to the heart of some of the key provisions of the bill and which were discussed by the minister responsible in a newspaper article yesterday. They are first, voter identification and accessibility of the ballot, and second, citizen engagement in the electoral process.

Let me start with voter identification and accessibility of the ballot. Because Canada does not maintain a national citizen registry or issue universal national identity cards to all citizens, the federal jurisdiction and many provinces have adopted some variant of the same framework to provide proof of identity and current residential address for voting. That is a type one document, which is a government issued identity document with photograph, name, and residential address; or two type two documents, one of which has the person's name and one of which has the name and residential address; or a type three process as a fail-safe mechanism, which is the use of vouching.

Bill C-23 makes it more difficult to satisfy voter identification requirements by removing the voter information card from the list of approved type two documents and by eliminating vouching, the fail-safe method. I would encourage a rethinking of both these changes.

Only about 85% of Canadians possess a type one identity document, such as a driver's licence. For those 18 or 19 years of age, it's about 60% and falling. For those over 65, it's about 70%.

Type two documents are necessary to ensure that the millions of other eligible voters who don't have a current driver's licence can still exercise their section 3 charter right to vote. The list of type two documents that are approved is quite extensive. The independent non-partisan election administration agency approves type two documents usually following extensive discussions with various service providers to ensure that classes of voters are not administratively excluded from voting. We recognize that these documents considered individually are imperfect. Requiring that voters produce two such documents increases one's confidence that they establish that the voter is who he purports to be. This is added to other checks in the system such as having voting taking place in a public space, providing candidates the opportunity to scrutinize the voting process and to challenge voters on their right to be registered and to vote, hiring election officials from their local communities, and levying substantial penalties for voter impersonation.

The type two identification requirements strike a balance between proof of identity with certainty while ensuring an accessible ballot. The only document on the type two list controlled by the election agency is the voter information card, or in the case of British Columbia, the where to vote card. As we focus our efforts on continually improving the quality of the voters list, we continue to improve the quality of the VIC or the where to vote card.

The other identification issue in Bill C-23 is the removal of the vouching procedure.

•(1210)

In the 2013 general election in British Columbia, vouching was used by about 14,000 voters. It was just under 1% of all votes cast that were by voters who were vouched for.

Our analysis reveals that vouching is more common in rural districts and in mixed urban-rural districts. There is no doubt that vouching adds complexity to the voting process in B.C., and since the election official overseeing this process only receives three hours of training on all aspects of voting administration, we recognize there may be minor administrative errors in completing this process.

However, let's not confuse minor administrative errors, such as a voter not signing a vouching form in the right place, with election fraud. An analysis of administrative errors in vouching in B.C.'s 2013 election showed that fewer than 1,000 such minor errors occurred among the 1.8 million votes cast, and there was no indication of election fraud in any of these cases. Simplifying vouching procedures can dramatically reduce error rates.

The bottom line to vouching is this. Vouching allows tens of thousands of voters in B.C. and hundreds of thousands of voters in federal elections to exercise the franchise for which their citizenship entitles them. There is no evidence which I am aware of that links vouching provisions in Canadian elections with voter fraud, and there are many safeguards in place to ensure this is the case.

Let me talk briefly about citizen engagement. The last point I wish to make concerns citizen engagement in Canada's electoral process. In British Columbia, Elections BC is the province's window into the world of election administration. We are the people who are engaged to think about these issues every day of the year, to understand current research, trends, and best practices in other jurisdictions, and to ensure that expertise benefits our citizens and provides the best advice possible for policy-makers.

We have a particular role to play in removing barriers to participation so that all eligible electors can exercise their franchise. At times this could mean focusing extra efforts on citizens who face more substantial barriers than their neighbours. The right to vote is not diminished because a citizen is young, or a new Canadian, or because they have recently moved and their identity documents have not been updated.

It also means that we have a role to play in fostering public discussion about electoral matters. I was very pleased recently to head a panel in British Columbia that issued a report to the legislative assembly regarding the issue of Internet voting. We've benefited considerably from the previous work of our colleagues at Elections Ontario and Elections Canada. We also recently collaborated with the Centre for the Study of Democratic Institutions, at UBC, on a conference on the 2013 B.C. election.

All of that is to say there are a number of groups that have an interest in fostering the democratic process: political parties and candidates, civil society organizations, scholars, activists, and not least of all, election administration agencies. Indeed, our election administration agencies in Canada are the only group specifically designed to take an independent non-partisan approach to citizen engagement.

I would encourage the committee to reconsider limiting the role of Canada's independent election agency from this important work. Elections Canada's current and past work stands as an international exemplar of election administration best practice.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I'm happy to turn the floor back to you.

• (1215)

The Chair: Super. Thank you both for your statements.

We'll go to Mr. Reid for a seven-minute round.

Mr. Scott Reid: I'd like to start with Mr. Brock. Obviously you're both free to comment on the things I ask, but I am a little bit worried that if you both comment on my first question, I won't get around to the second one, which is intended for Professor Archer. I alert you to that.

On the issue of advertising, there was formerly very little in the way of restrictions on what the CEO could do. I was very frustrated with the fact that the Chief Electoral Officer spent a lot of time advertising why you should vote and very little on how you can vote. I personally found some of the advertising ineffective, or so it seemed to me. The ads, for example, showed people with tape over their mouths start speaking and no sound comes out. I didn't think that was a very effective way of getting people out to vote. Also, it starts with the assumption that there's something wrong with the system, with you as a voter, if you aren't getting out and voting, and there's maybe something wrong with the people who are presenting themselves as candidates, as opposed to there being something wrong with the way the system itself is administered. There's a lot of evidence showing that actually is where the problem lies.

With regard to the problem of lack of youth participation, the CEO conducted a study and published it on his website. It broke down young people into five subcategories, as I recall, and then explained why they weren't participating. Lack of an accurate voter information card was ranked as one of the reasons for three of the subgroups, a majority of the subgroups. Clearly, there is a problem there. That is the reason it says, in the list of things the CEO's advertising can do, how electors may establish their identity and residence in order to vote, including the pieces of ID they may use to that end. I know this because I lobbied the minister to put this in. People don't vote in some cases because they aren't sure where to vote. They're new to the community and they're not sure where the voting takes place. They don't get a voter information card. Sometimes they're given information cards that give the wrong location. That can happen too. This is a significant problem, and it is not going to be resolved by an advertising campaign about why you should vote. It's about the bread and butter; here's how you vote.

Likewise, we had a group that came to my constituency office. We arranged a meeting with the minister. They were disabled people wanting to have it explained how people can vote if they're disabled: voting at home, voting if they're shut in. Anybody who's gone out canvassing knows there are many people who can't get out of their houses for a variety of reasons. They're disabled and they have to wait for their son or grandson to carry them down the stairs; that happens. They're in the middle of changing a diaper when you knock on their door to ask them to vote for you. There's a variety of reasons that make it difficult. How you can vote at an advanced poll; how

you can vote at the returning office; how you can vote by mail; these are all things that are not advertised as well as they should be.

If I could make a change to section 18 of the act from what it says now, it wouldn't say that the Chief Electoral Officer may provide the public with these things; it would say that the Chief Electoral Officer must provide the public with these things, and must report afterwards as to how effective they were and how they could be improved.

I throw all these things out, and I understand what you're saying regarding advertising. I hope you can appreciate the frustrations I have with regard to the efficacy of our advertising, given some of the problems that exist.

• (1220)

Mr. David Brock: Through you, Mr. Chair, I thank the member for the comments and the question. I do have a strong appreciation for the arguments made by the member.

To provide an example, last March we cooperated with the Public Policy Forum to conduct a dialogue on youth civic engagement. Part of what we heard from young people was that they needed a better understanding of the reasons for voter registration and of the basic methodology of how to register to vote. That was a very strong message we took in recognizing there was a clear thread between two of the three priorities for the inter-election period for Elections NWT, improving civic engagement, particularly youth civic engagement, and improving the quality of our register of territorial electors, which produces the voters list, and that there was action we could take to act on that. That's an illustration of the strength of my appreciation for the argument just made by the member.

Perhaps I can say two things. One is that I think, in terms of reporting back, there's always value in agencies of Parliament reporting back to the legislature in terms of their effectiveness of how they spend taxpayer dollars. One of the difficulties, of course, with voter turnout is that there are numerous variables that affect turnout and so it's difficult to say, in a causal fashion, that one form of advertising may have been more effective than the other, although there have been suggestions about how randomized experiments and using different methods of advertising in different electoral districts can help discern between those.

Finally, I would say, with respect, that I think recognizing there's a need to improve the how, when, and why of voting doesn't necessarily negate the importance of having the Chief Electoral Officer also communicate the importance of voting generally. The two are not mutually exclusive, and I think both are very important to communicate to electors.

Mr. Scott Reid: Thank you. Okay.

Given the fact that I have only one minute left in my allotted time, why don't I just ask Professor Archer to comment on the same thing rather than pose a new question.

Mr. Keith Archer: Sure.

In the recent election in British Columbia, we focused a lot of our attention on trying to convey a set of key messages to our electors. First, the message was where, when, and how to vote. The second message was that voting is your right as a citizen and we make significant opportunities available to you as a voter.

As David was saying, we tend not to separate into watertight compartments the types of messaging we provide to voters. Certainly, virtually all of our messaging includes the key elements of how an elector can exercise their franchise.

We also engaged in a lot of outreach of electors in the most recent election, particularly people who either were not on the voters list or for whom the information on the voters list was not current.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Archer. We have to move on. Mr. Reid's time is completed.

Maybe you'll get a chance to share that thought during Mr. Scott's seven minutes.

Mr. Craig Scott: To both guests, thank you for being here and for taking such great care with your presentations.

I thought, just to sort of announce where I'd like to try to get in seven minutes, I'd start with Mr. Brock. I appreciate that you had a couple of other recommendations that you didn't have time to cover in your remarks, and I wanted to ask you about two of them, at least.

With Mr. Archer in particular, I'd like to go a little bit more into the where to vote card, but I'll come to that in just a second.

Mr. Brock, I was glad to see that you've been reading the bill close enough that you are a little bit concerned, or maybe a lot concerned, about the fact that in clause 10, proposed section 20 would allow the Chief Electoral Officer to engage the service of persons having technical or specialized knowledge of any matter relating to the Chief Electoral Officer temporarily, but in order for them to be remunerated, Treasury Board would have to approve.

Just as an example, the Auditor General doesn't have that kind of constraint on what he or she can do by way of hiring temporary specialists, and I believe they can draw directly on the consolidated revenue fund for that purpose.

I'm wondering if you could speak briefly to this question, and then maybe Mr. Archer has some thoughts on it. Is this an inappropriate insertion of government budgetary decision-making in the realm of a parliamentary officer?

•(1225)

Mr. David Brock: Great, thank you for that question. Thank you for raising one of the matters that was addressed in my brief that I didn't have time to address in my opening statement.

Perhaps I can say three things about the provision that would require Treasury Board approval to remunerate officials working for Elections Canada to provide technical assistance or other specialized knowledge. One thing is it is difficult to discern from the bill as it's currently written how that might be applied, because we have no cases of implementation to draw upon, so in some ways I'm working from an understanding of what I think the implication of the bill would be, but we would have a better understanding if this were implemented, and my hope is that it won't be, as I've made clear in the brief.

There are two issues here. One is that Elections Canada often engages individuals in the area of research or in specialized technical work within the institution, and they're very good about publishing the results of that work. I, as Chief Electoral Officer in a smaller

jurisdiction by number of electors, and in this case even by geography, rely upon that work because Elections NWT has nowhere near the capacity of Elections Canada to produce that kind of what is really world-class research on electoral behaviour and election administration.

In addition to that, I don't believe that university academics would fill that gap because, having spent some time in that area, and Dr. Archer knows this better than anyone, political scientists or others are mandated to respond to gaps in the theoretical literature, not necessarily to address public policy challenges that Elections Canada or the Parliament of Canada may be facing in a very short amount of time.

My final point is one which I think is fundamental to a few provisions in the bill. I think it is important in this country to think carefully about the relationship between officers of Parliament or, in my case, officers of a legislative assembly, and the executive. I think that going back to 1920, the understanding was that we needed to have an impartial body that did not have an accountability or reporting requirement to the government, but rather had that requirement to the legislature, and Elections Canada is perhaps the strongest example of that in the world.

My concern with this provision is perhaps inconsequential as it could be in the long term, depending on how it's implemented, that it fundamentally misunderstands the relationship between Elections Canada and the Parliament of Canada. The office of the Chief Electoral Officer is not an arm of the executive. The office of the Chief Electoral Officer is an agent of Parliament, and the accountability relationship and responsibility is owed to Parliament as a whole.

Mr. Craig Scott: Thank you.

Mr. Archer, if you could briefly make a comment, I want to now go to the where to vote cards issue.

Mr. Keith Archer: Sure. Let me give you a couple of examples of recent spending that our office was involved in to illustrate how I understand the relationship between the office and the legislative assembly and/or government with respect to spending initiatives.

I mentioned in my comments that we sponsored a conference on a 2013 provincial election, and we did it with the University of British Columbia. For us, that was part of our event funding because understanding the determinants of people's civic engagement, for example, was an important element in the event, and so when the funding is allocated for a project like that, it is part of the statutory spending that the office has that I report on to the legislative assembly as event funding in advance of the event, and then report on subsequently after the event.

When I was involved in a recent panel on Internet voting, it was an interesting evolution of that project, because I was requested to do that by the Minister of Justice, and it was important for me to ensure that I wasn't reporting to, and this panel wasn't reporting to, a government ministry, but rather to the legislative assembly. I agreed to head up the panel but under the condition that I would select the panellists, that I would approach the legislative committee for funding for the work of the panel, and that ultimately, the report of the panel went to the legislative assembly as a whole and not to a government ministry. The independence of the office is reflected in a number of our activities, whether they're event activities or special projects.

• (1230)

Mr. Craig Scott: With my last 30 seconds, Professor Archer, if somebody were to receive a where to vote card that says "John Smith", but John Smith lived there before and the current individual's name is John Brown, and then he waltzed off to vote, how would he have to commit fraud with that card? Would he be able to vote that way?

Mr. Keith Archer: If I have time to expand on this answer a little, the broader question is—

The Chair: You surely don't, but that's—

Mr. Keith Archer: Given that a large number of items are type two identity documents, if you have somebody else's type two identity document, are you able to use that and vote fraudulently? The answer is you do so at great risk to yourself, and there is a very good likelihood that you're not going to be successful, whether it's with your voter information card or whether it's with the library card that you happen to find in the lobby of your condo building as well.

Impersonating someone else with their type two identity document is a serious offence in British Columbia, subject to a fine of \$20,000 and two years in jail.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Archer. I've given some extra time for that, so remember we did that.

Mr. Simms, you have a seven-minute round, please.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): I thank you for coming in. I'll get right to my question, because we don't have a lot of time.

I have a couple of things to add on that. First of all, Mr. Brock, I'm reading your report. I'm from a rural area, very rural. I have 193 towns in my riding. When I first heard about the vouching system being eliminated, it caused great alarm where I live because a lot of people do not have this necessary ID. Most of the major ID, such as the example of health cards yesterday, don't have an address in my province, so that becomes very problematic.

The voter identification card, however, provided that, as well as utility bills, especially for people in a seniors home.

Can you illustrate how difficult this will be? You do make that recommendation, to not throw out vouching, and I agree. I think it should be fixed and not thrown out, if indeed it is the major problem that the minister professes. Could you elaborate on some of the essential difficulties being as large an area that you have to cover as Elections NWT? Mr. Archer, feel free to comment on that as well.

Mr. David Brock: Thank you for the question.

I have just two notions in response to that. One is that I provided an appendix to the brief with detailed percentages for every community in the Northwest Territories on the frequency of identification held by residents.

I mentioned that in 27 of 33 of them, it's fewer than 50%. In some of those communities, admittedly quite small communities but their right to vote is no less than anyone else's, we're seeing percentages such as 2% or 4% as opposed to 80% in the city of Yellowknife. In some communities in the Northwest Territories, the frequency with which we find active photo identification held by residents is very low.

Add to that, my understanding is that in some communities in the Northwest Territories, and I'm sure it's true in other northern ridings with a lot of rural communities, it is also difficult to obtain photo identification. If you live in Colville Lake, or Ulukhaktok, or Trout Lake, you don't just walk down to the local DMV office and get a driver's licence. Access just to obtain the card is difficult.

In addition to that, there may be very few incentives to do so if you live in a town where you don't own a car and there's really not much purpose in driving because you can walk to the other end of town and you never fly anywhere. By the way, you don't you need to show identification to fly in the Canadian north anyway. There's very little incentive and very little access to obtaining government-issued photo identification.

Mr. Scott Simms: The address is what's key here, and you'll find that it's problematic as well. I know in my area, with certain ID... For instance, the minister mentioned bracelets and this type of ID. It's supplementary because it's the address that made sense here and the voter identification card was used quite extensively and I'm assuming it was in NWT as well.

Following Mr. Archer's story, I didn't give you a chance to weigh in on that.

• (1235)

Mr. David Brock: Quickly, Mr. Chair, yes. It's primarily that people don't necessarily have difficulty proving their identity with the other 39 documents available. It is the difficulty of proving one's address, which in smaller communities in the Northwest Territories is primarily a post office box anyway. It's not a residential address, so I'm not sure how that goes any great distance to improving the integrity of the system.

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Archer.

Mr. Keith Archer: In British Columbia, the vouching provision was used more in our most northern electoral district, the district of Stikine, than in any other electoral district. We certainly don't have the numbers that David is talking about, but about 3.5% of all voters in Stikine were vouched for, and in some of the urban districts, it would be less than one-half of 1%. There are certainly differences across the province, and as you're suggesting, it's not randomly distributed. People in the more remote areas are evidently more challenged to provide their proof of identity with a single document.

Mr. Scott Simms: Switching gears for a moment, you said earlier, Mr. Brock, that being an agent of Parliament, you report to the legislature, which to you is the most important piece of what you call your independence in doing what it is you do and being separate from the executive.

Do you feel that Bill C-23 is a step in the wrong direction in doing what it does? It's not so much about independence, but without the right tools, it's more like isolation. Would I be correct in saying that?

Mr. David Brock: Mr. Chair, I should clarify that the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada is an agent of Parliament. I as Chief Electoral Officer in the Northwest Territories am an officer of the legislative assembly. I think there's an important variance between the system here and the system in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. That is that we have no registered political parties and no mechanism to register political parties; nor are they represented in our assembly.

Nonetheless, the fundamental relationship is the same, and that is that I, like other chief electoral officers in Canada, including the Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario, report through the Speaker and primarily the board of management, or board of internal economy, to the legislative assembly as a whole. That speaks to an important principle underlying why the office was set up the way it was nearly 100 years ago, to remove the administration of elections from the power of the government.

To turn to the bill before us, I don't see many provisions in the bill that change that relationship, but two in particular concern me. One is Treasury Board approval and the other one is the role of the Governor in Council in requesting the CEO to undertake international cooperation or assistance.

Mr. Scott Simms: Of course, you obviously take advantage, as you mentioned earlier, of much of the research being done by Elections Canada. I know that 19 scholars internationally also regard Elections Canada as doing fantastic work in respect to research and publicizing. Their not being able to do that is really going to hurt you, isn't it? You talk as well about seeking Treasury Board approval. You rely quite heavily on them, and this is going to be a problem.

Mr. David Brock: Mr. Chair, to go back to my response to Mr. Scott when he spoke similarly, I think it depends on the implementation of that specific provision. My concern is that creating a mechanism for Treasury Board approval by logic also sets up a mechanism for Treasury Board disapproval. I don't want to get to the point of saying that Treasury Board would be disapproving. It's just that it sets up a mechanism under which Treasury Board could be disapproving.

The Chair: Thank you. You're over seven minutes.

We'll go to Mr. Lukiwski, on a four-minute round. We'll start it with him.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Gentlemen, thank you both for being here.

I want to pick up on what my colleague Mr. Reid had been talking about vis-à-vis advertising.

Like Mr. Reid, I totally agree that the advertising dollars being spent by Elections Canada should solely be concentrating on where to vote, how to vote, and what ID you need, and for a couple of

reasons. I strongly believe that the current advertising campaign on why one should vote hasn't been effective. Statistics prove that. I also think that if you just give the basic information of where and how to vote and with what ID, that in itself is promoting voter turnout.

Last, I would point out that I think with all of the other tools we have at our fingertips through schools, through parental guidance, through political parties trying to educate people and get them out to vote, if a person doesn't vote because they don't feel the need to vote, all the advertising in the world from Elections Canada is not going to convince them to vote. But most of the people don't vote because they don't know where or know what they should bring by way of ID.

I also would suggest to you, and this is on which I'd like your comments, that if Elections Canada concentrated their advertising dollars on a yearly basis on what documentation one needs to provide to be able to vote.... Now we have not quite 18 months before the next election. If an advertising campaign were started vigorously today, do you think that those people who might want to vote but don't have the proper ID might have enough time to get the proper ID?

• (1240)

Mr. David Brock: Mr. Chair, if I understand the question correctly.... Maybe I'll just address the last point, if that's okay, although I'd be happy to elaborate on the previous comments.

As I indicated, at least with respect to the Northwest Territories, and I'm reasonably certain from my experience across the Canadian north that it's true in other communities, although a vigorous advertising campaign to encourage and illustrate why it's important to have identification documents is a valuable thing, it won't necessarily motivate individuals to get sufficient identification in advance of polling day.

I know this because we undertook a massive advertising campaign solely focused on the new voter identification provisions that came into force in 2010. A year in advance of the general election, we had posters and guidebooks available in every community, had radio advertisements in 11 official languages—and radio is still largely listened to in all communities in the Northwest Territories—and nonetheless legislators, as they've made clear, still received complaints and concerns addressed to them as representatives that the voter identification requirements were too strict for people to satisfy and be able to exercise their right to vote.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Let me ask, before we go to Professor Archer, are you saying, of the 39 other eligible pieces of identification, that this provision was too strict, or that voters were saying it's too strict, that they can't comply, can't come up with two pieces of identification out of the 39?

Mr. David Brock: I wouldn't say that those are as strict as the active photo identification. What I would say is it's clear that some individuals had a difficulty pulling together sufficient identification required at the polls to prove not just their identity but their residency. That point has been put to me by legislators in the Northwest Territories, and I've taken their concerns seriously.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Professor Archer.

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Archer. You always get the end of this.

Mr. Keith Archer: On the question of whether election agencies currently provide that information, my sense is it was a key feature of virtually all the advertising we did in British Columbia, the where and the how and the when of voting.

Adding to that basic information, we also were a bit more active in this last election campaign in focusing the message on parts of the electorate that historically are less likely to vote. I'm happy to say that in the 2013 general election, we saw voting increase by 165,000 votes in British Columbia and turnout increase by four percentage points, the first time it has increased in more than a generation and a half.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madame Latendresse, you have four minutes, please.

[Translation]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): I want to thank our witnesses for having come to share their comments with us today. We really appreciate this very much. Their comments will be very useful to us and they will allow us to continue our work and possibly to amend certain parts of this bill.

I would like to go back to what Mr. Lukiwski just said. We are constantly hearing about the 39 pieces of ID that can be used. Your presentation was very specific. You explained type 1 and type 2. As for these 39 types of ID, at least one of them has to indicate the elector's address, is that not the case? This is the problem. In fact, in a lot of cases, that is precisely the type of ID people do not have to go and vote.

If I understood what you said correctly, Mr. Brock, the problem arises particularly in remote communities, in your territory among others, and in the Canadian north, generally speaking.

I would like to hear your comments in that regard.

• (1245)

[English]

Mr. Keith Archer: Perhaps I could start this round.

Whether we have the right number of type two documents is a never-ending question. In British Columbia we don't specifically identify all of the identification documents that are acceptable. We have categories of documents that are acceptable, and it's at the determination of the Chief Electoral Officer whether a document would be approved or not.

We had some commentary this past election on one of the documents that we included for the first time. Historically what we've done in British Columbia is we've accepted a hospital bracelet as an identity document. Even mentioning that document, I think, gives people a sense of the breadth of the documents that can be used for ID in British Columbia.

Then, we were working with one of the agencies in the downtown eastside of Vancouver, which indicated to us that many of their clients were unable to satisfy the voter ID requirements even with an expansive list of documents. We agreed that we would accept a prescription medication label as one of the identity documents, because among this group of eligible voters, who often don't carry very many identify documents, this is a document that many of them

possessed. Now, that document in and of itself could not demonstrate their identity, could not satisfy the identity requirements. It would have to be used in conjunction with another document, such as an attestation of residence from a homeless shelter, for example.

That example illustrates that the agencies work with various service organizations to understand how our different groups of electors can ensure that they can exercise their democratic right and not be disenfranchised administratively because they don't carry the same kinds of documents that other voters may carry as a matter of course.

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: Would you agree that vouching would be the final safeguard to make sure those people, even if they are not able to meet these requirements, would be able to exercise their right to vote?

Mr. Keith Archer: I believe vouching is a very important provision within our system. I would be surprised if the 14,000 people who were vouched for in British Columbia in the 2013 general election had identity documents on their person that would have enabled them to vote. I just don't think it was the case.

Obviously, we don't ask them that, but I don't think it was the case. Consequently, I would expect that many of them would have been disenfranchised for no other purpose than they didn't have the identity documents that were specified in the act. They were otherwise eligible to vote.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Archer.

Thank you, Madame Latendresse.

Mr. Reid, four minutes, please.

Mr. Scott Reid: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have to reset my little watch here. I'm trying to keep track so I don't go over my time.

The Chair: You're not trusting me?

Mr. Scott Reid: No, it's just that I can't tell.

I have a tendency, like all of us, to launch into long-winded questions.

The Chair: You have used 15 seconds of your time, just so you know.

Mr. Scott Reid: That's right.

My question, and you can both respond to it, but I'm hoping to start with Professor Archer this time, is on the different kinds of ID. You have looked at different ID and consulted with different organizations about this. I assume that some similar consultation process goes on with the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada before he chooses to add items of ID to his list.

We on this committee have not had a chance to see what those consultations were, whom they were with, what kinds of outcomes they produced, what kind of expectations they had, and what the results were. None of this is shared with us. It's a source of perpetual frustration to me that this and much other information is not shared with us.

I see this committee's role effectively being—because he is an officer of Parliament, and he reports to Parliament via this committee—as a board of directors. He is the management of Elections Canada, which is effectively a government corporation that is charged with the role of administering elections. I sit on another corporate board of directors, and we wouldn't put up with the lack of information that flows from Elections Canada. It's been a systemic problem. I don't blame just Mr. Mayrand for this; it has been an ongoing problem.

However, these initiatives pop out of nowhere without consultation with us. They are pushed forward without any information being provided to us, unless we ask for it. Then we don't get any feedback on how well they have done, except these sort of off-handed comments that it was a great success, totally non-quantified.

My question is, can these things can be quantified? Are they such arts that they can only be described qualitatively? Perhaps that is the case. Could there not be some sort of mechanism by which we would get better feedback as to the merits and demerits of this list of pieces of identification, which in the federal case is 39, but could be expanded to include others as appropriate?

• (1250)

Mr. Keith Archer: The reporting relationship between independent officers of the legislature and their assemblies I think varies a bit from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. I understand your process federally less well than I understand our process in British Columbia.

I know in our case we had an interesting dialogue recently with the legislative assembly over the requirement for province-wide door-to-door enumeration in advance of fixed-date general elections. The Election Act was amended to require that Elections BC conduct a universal door-to-door enumeration. We haven't done that since the 1980s in B.C. because we use a continuous register of electors, as we do federally.

I was preparing to conduct that exercise, and I prepared a budget for the legislative assembly. It was a substantial budget, almost \$30 million. We thought it was going to have almost no positive impact, and I told the legislative assembly that, through the finance and

government services committee, which is the committee that I report to.

Fortunately, because I recommended this requirement be eliminated, the legislative assembly did eliminate the requirement. We didn't use it in the last election, and instead brought forward a process of both universal and targeted enumeration. We called it voter registration uplift.

We spent about a quarter of the funding that the other proposal would have required, and we believe we had a very significant impact on the quality of the voters list. My report on the enumeration activities is being tabled in our legislative assembly tomorrow.

It strikes me as one of the natural processes in which we have these conversations with the legislative assembly. We advise on our activities. That is not to say we couldn't improve our process in British Columbia. There may be some tweaks you would like to see at the federal level as well.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We're going to stop at the end of that round.

Mr. Brock, Mr. Archer, thank you for sharing with us your views today and your jurisdictions. It's been great to have you both and to have a lot of information shared.

Before the members leave, I have a couple of quick pieces of business.

We had originally set up a time for a South African delegation to come and see this committee. They have cancelled. They will not be able to come here.

For those of you still not completely on the paperless test that this committee is doing, please speak to our clerk. I'm not carrying any papers around anymore, and it's fantastic. I know you will love it too, so please talk to our clerk.

Is there anything else for the good of the committee today?

Seeing nothing, we will adjourn. I'll see you all on Thursday.

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