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Chair

The Honourable Judy A. Sgro

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• (1100)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.)): I call to order this meeting of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we're doing a study of bus passenger safety.

I am pleased to see our witnesses here from the Department of Transport. Kevin Brosseau is Assistant Deputy Minister of Safety and Security. Thank you for coming back again.

We also have Michael DeJong, Director General of Multimodal and Road Safety Programs.

Mr. Brosseau, we'll open it up to you for five minutes, please; that will leave ample time for questions from the committee members.

Mr. Kevin Brosseau (Assistant Deputy Minister, Safety and Security, Department of Transport): Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee, for the opportunity to discuss Transport Canada's initiatives to enhance bus passenger safety.

As mentioned, I am joined today by Michael DeJong. He is the Director General of Transport Canada's Multimodal and Road Safety Branch.

[Translation]

At the outset, I would like to emphasize that Transport Canada will not hesitate to take every action to protect Canadians on our roads. The importance of this commitment was underscored with the January 2019 collision involving a transit bus in Ottawa, and in the context of the 2018 Humboldt tragedy.

[English]

My thoughts and prayers remain with those families as we approach the one-year anniversary of that tragedy.

To strengthen passenger bus safety, the Minister of Transport raised this important topic with the Council of Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety at their meeting on January 21, 2019. As a result, the ministers agreed to task officials with a series of action items to strengthen bus occupant safety—namely, developing a national standard for entry-level training for commercial drivers, including bus drivers, by January 2020, as well as finalizing a technical standard for electronic logging devices by this spring, a technology that will help track the hours of commercial drivers, such as motorcoach drivers, to reduce the risk of fatigue.

Passenger bus safety in Canada is a shared responsibility amongst all levels of government and bus operators. Transport Canada's role is to establish specific safety requirements set out in the Canada motor vehicle safety standards, such as brake systems and emergency exit requirements. Provinces and territories enforce safety and prescribe rules of the road, such as speed limits and vehicle licences.

[Translation]

Transport Canada works closely with provinces and territories and key partners to advance a cohesive, national approach to these issues.

[English]

This coordinated approach to passenger bus safety includes concerted efforts to address the Transportation Safety Board's recommendations stemming from the VIA Rail-OC Transpo collision in 2013. Statistics drawn from the national collision database show that driver behaviour is the leading contributing factor in fatal collisions in this country, with speeding accounting for 23%, distraction 22%, and impairment representing 19%.

Transport Canada's efforts to improve commercial bus safety extend beyond the structure of the bus. Specifically, the department is taking a comprehensive, multipronged approach to commercial passenger bus safety that includes efforts to address structural crashworthiness, crash avoidance, human factors and vulnerable road users outside the bus. For instance, in February of this year, the department published comprehensive guidelines to reduce the risk of driver distraction from in-vehicle displays.

We have also completed a review of accident data from urban centres to support the potential development of a standard for crashworthiness. We have also worked with industry to develop a comprehensive research plan to look at new technologies that can help protect bus passengers in the event of a collision. Recognizing that collision avoidance is the key to saving lives, the department published a regulation in June 2017 to mandate electronic stability control in heavy vehicles like motorcoaches and school buses. This will improve driver control and help prevent rollovers.

These efforts were further reinforced in July 2018, when the department published a regulation making seat belts mandatory in highway buses. As part of this regulatory initiative, Transport Canada also introduced technical manufacturing requirements for when school bus operators choose to install seat belts on their school buses. Recognizing that technology evolves and we can never be safe enough, Transport Canada is always searching for ways to strengthen road safety. We're working with partners to take a fresh look at existing and potential new measures to further strengthen school bus safety, with an emphasis on seat belts. In particular, we've established a task force bringing together federal, provincial and territorial government representatives, as well as safety associations, manufacturers, operators and school board representatives, to examine bus standards and operations, both inside and outside the bus.

[Translation]

The safety of all road users continues to be a top priority for Transport Canada, and the department is steadfast in its commitment to continue working with key partners in order to sustain momentum in this area.

[English]

Thank you, Madam Chair.

[Translation]

Thank you.

[English]

We look forward to taking your questions.

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

We'll go on to Mrs. Block.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I want to welcome our witnesses here today. I enjoyed the presentation by the TSB on Tuesday, and I certainly recognize the different roles you play at Transport Canada and the TSB.

I want to go back and ask you some questions about the study that was done in 1984. As we all know, back in the fall, CBC's *The Fifth Estate* issued a statement or a story on the issue of seat belts on school buses. It prompted a lot of concern and discussion on the subject. They referenced the 1984 Transport Canada study. It came under some scrutiny at the time. I'm wondering, given all the technological changes that have occurred in vehicles, whether that report's findings are still valid.

• (1105)

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: Before answering the question in terms of 1984, which I'll turn over to my colleague, who is very steeped in that data, I will say that we know seat belts provide another layer of safety. School buses, which are built very robustly, provide a number of safety features. In fact, they are the safest vehicles on the road, given all the safety features that are included in them. We know that seat belts are an important part of that. That's why the task force has been struck—to look at seat belts on school buses. We're going to engage in a pilot project in the province of Saskatchewan with a particular—yet to be identified—school district. We will be able to

roll that out in terms of putting seat belts on school buses and identifying all the key issues related thereto.

Going back to your original question, I'll turn it over to Michael to respond, in particular, to the 1984 report. Sorry, it was well before my time at Transport, so it would be better to turn to Mike.

Mr. Michael DeJong (Director General, Multi-modal and Road Safety Programs, Department of Transport): Absolutely. With respect to the 1984 study, that has been joined by significant amounts of research into school bus safety, which has now been published on Transport Canada's website. The 1984 study had conducted and presented the results of a literature survey, as well as discussions with stakeholders. It summarized a crash test program with three school buses and also explained the results of the tests, indicating potential for greater head injury if lap belts were installed.

Subsequently, to answer your question, there were significant technological advances and additional research that led to the technical specifications for the school bus regulations introduced in July 2018. These technical specifications included requirements, for example, for three-point seat belts, as well as to ensure that the seats on schools buses would be well and thoroughly anchored.

Mrs. Kelly Block: I know that the same investigation by the *The Fifth Estate* highlighted a study that was done in 2010 as well. That's almost 10 years ago. I recognize that more research has been done. Do you end up stacking the findings from these different reports and bringing the relevant pieces forward, or do you start from scratch and say, "No, we're going to start all over again"?

Mr. Michael DeJong: You're quite right; we would look at the cumulative amount of research over time. We look at the research stemming from the 1984 report, including the internal research report "Optimizing the Protection of School Bus Passengers". That was from 2010, and it is now available on the department's website.

We look at other research as well, including a summary from 2007 of collision studies that occurred between 1995 and 2004. We would look at the totality of the research to inform the development of refinements and updates to Canada's motor vehicle safety standards as they apply to school buses.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Thank you.

Just really quickly, I know that the minister, along with his provincial counterparts, announced the creation of a task force to look into seat belts on school buses. You mentioned a pilot project that's going to be done in Saskatchewan. Can you quickly tell us what the mandate of the task force is?

Mr. Michael DeJong: It was tasked by the Council of Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety in January 2019. The task force was mandated to look at school bus safety measures, or potential school bus safety measures, both inside and outside the school bus. The request or the mandate of the task force had been to identify and assess these potential measures and then bring back recommendations to the council of ministers for consideration.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Hardie.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for being here.

This is a more complex issue than just a matter of safety belts or seat belts. That's where everybody went initially. One of the reasons I wanted us to have this discussion was that I know, from my days with the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia, which invested very heavily in road safety issues, that it's not that simple.

Let's start with this task force and the work in Saskatchewan. How do you see any testing of seat belts on school buses working, given the need, for instance, for some smaller kids to have booster seats to make sure the belt is properly positioned? Or are there new safety belt technologies that would eliminate that need in a school bus?

• (1110)

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: Before I turn to Mike to talk about the particular technologies, you're absolutely correct that this is complicated and complex, when you consider that some school buses have up to 70 children, all the way from kindergarten up to basically adult-size in grade 12. I grew up in rural Alberta. I know what it was like riding the bus. To ensure that those seat belts are safe, as they are in our cars, they have to be worn properly. We have to be assured that they're being worn properly, as well as recognizing the fact that the seats have to be robust enough to be able to support the seat belt actually being worn.

Mike, I'll turn it over to you to talk about the technology advancements or the technical standards that are required to be able to adjust and to be able to deal with that size difference as we talked about.

Mr. Michael DeJong: You've certainly identified a number of the operational considerations that have to be looked at as part of the mandate of the school bus task force. As Kevin noted, and as you noted, the size of the children, accounting for the nature of children in school buses, can range from very small children who would be required to have booster seats, which would still be a requirement, to school children who are virtually adult-sized. Being able to account for the varying adjustments and the operational considerations is a key component of this.

The task force is also looking at a number of other complicating factors, such as the requirement to be able to quickly unfasten seat belts in the event of an emergency, and to be able to monitor and ensure that the seat belts are always correctly worn by all occupants all the time. These are important safety considerations to account for,

to ensure that the use of the seat belts doesn't compromise the other safety features available on the school bus.

The task force is developing operational guidelines to be able to potentially support the use of seat belts in the event that we go in that direction.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Are there other considerations? For instance, in the design of the seats, the padded back on the seat in front of you in a school bus or in any bus, if it's there, obviously prevents somebody from colliding with something very hard and very difficult if it's a frontal collision, because the physics of a crash is such that everybody moves toward the point of impact inside the vehicle. In the case where seat belts are used, even today in motor vehicles, the other issue that comes up is the whipping effect on the head, either forward or back, or side to side, which leads to significant soft tissue injuries, depending on the person.

Are there some seat designs you're looking at that could deal with those, especially with the side to side, which would be certainly a function if a crash took place?

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: You've identified, again, the level of complexities, and thus the need to carry out a full, well-thought-through research project and program to identify what could be seen to be unforeseen consequences related to a particular decision—for instance, with respect to seats—and validate that mitigating factors are actually in place that will prevent injuries in one scenario—for instance, a rear-end collision—but that won't exacerbate them in another—for instance, a T-bone or a side impact collision situation. That includes enhanced seat stiffness required for the three-point harness, and a number of other different factors. That is part of the reason why it has taken so much time to get to the point at which we're able to make an informed decision.

Mike, I'll let you build on that point, that particular question.

Mr. Michael DeJong: Absolutely.

One of the key elements for research is to look at the interplay between the compartmentalized seats and the potential safety benefits associated with seat belts. Compartmentalized seats refers to the high-back padded seats in school buses that are spaced very closely together to absorb the impact of students in the event of a collision and help disperse the energy through the body in order to help mitigate the potential for injury.

In order to anchor seat belts to the seats, there had been concern about whether those seats would need to be stiffened to ensure that the seat belts are properly anchored in the seats. Research continues in this area. A key element is looking at the potential safety benefits associated with seat belts in the context of the existing seat designs.

One of the Canada motor vehicle safety standards does refer to the requirement for compartmentalized seats. Transport Canada does look at seat designs on an ongoing basis to continuously assess whether there are additional technological improvements or additional safety features that could be added.

• (1115)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Monsieur Aubin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to thank the witnesses for being here.

Without going so far as to talk about an admission of failure, the reason we are conducting this study today is that we must at least seriously consider that more needs to be done. Some tragedies have left entire families in mourning and with a more difficult life to live.

I was particularly interested in the testimony of the TSB President last Tuesday. She said that the mandate of organizations equivalent to Canada's TSB in many developed countries includes the review of bus collisions. In Canada, however, TSB data can only be obtained when there is an accident between a bus and another means of transportation, such as trains.

It is already within the TSB's mandate to review bus collisions with trains, planes and boats. Does it seem appropriate to you to ask Transport Canada or the minister to include in the TSB's mandate the review of accidents where two buses have collided?

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: Thank you for your question.

I assure you that the TSB's recommendations are taken very seriously. They are important and well-documented. However, it is Parliament that should answer this question because it comes under the act.

Mr. Robert Aubin: I'll ask the question another way so you can answer it.

Does the few pieces of information that have been successfully obtained from the TSB on accidents that could be investigated provide new insights to increase safety and allow you to implement additional measures?

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: Absolutely. You always need to have a different perception or opinion on other facts to effectively manage road safety. This information is of great value.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Without taking away from the quality of the work done at Transport Canada, the TSB has the public's trust. We look forward to its reports because we feel we are making progress and it has relevant expertise.

After conducting an accident investigation, the TSB made a number of recommendations to Transport Canada, which remain unanswered to date. For example, the TSB has compared Canadian and American standards that apply to bus construction. Canadian standards don't appear to be at the same level.

Do you think it's appropriate for Canada to adopt standards similar to the American standards?

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: Thank you for your question.

It is very common for Canada to align its standards with American ones. With respect to crashworthiness, which Ms. Fox told us about, the TSB guided us by making a recommendation in this regard.

[*English*]

We continue to research that point, and in fact, I think we are making positive progress in that regard to ensure that further...

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

Please excuse me, but I'm better in English.

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: It's not a problem.

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: It was important that we carry out a detailed, thorough, holistic, multipronged research approach towards addressing the recommendation in terms of crashworthiness standards, not simply adapt the American standards but have them properly done in the Canadian context to ensure that we do not cause, for instance, crashworthiness structural changes to a bus that change the weight dynamic or the structure to a point where perhaps there are unforeseen consequences.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: I have to stop you there because I have very little time and many questions.

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: I'm sorry.

Mr. Robert Aubin: No problem.

I was wondering if you could give me a time frame and provide me with at least a year, if not a specific date. When was the last time Transport Canada conducted crash tests on buses or coaches, including school buses?

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: I'm not sure, but I can tell you that we will be testing city buses this summer.

[*English*]

Do you know when we last tested, Mike?

Mr. Michael DeJong: I can simply say that the motor vehicle test centre does procure many buses to be able to continue testing and, as Kevin has mentioned, is now in the process of acquiring additional out-of-service buses in order to commence testing on the buses this summer.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: In its report, the TSB recommended, among other things, the addition of a data recorders to the basic equipment of buses. I know you used it to record a driver's driving hours. Do you think it would be useful to have such data recorders on buses? Would they allow us to better understand collisions? My question also concerns video cameras, which were also mentioned in the TSB report

[*English*]

The Chair: Can we get a short answer to that question, if possible?

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: The short answer is, absolutely. We continue to work with the Society of Automotive Engineers, the SAE, to look through that and noodle through how to make that work with a crash or the event data recorder in response to the third recommendation.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Aubin.

Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Welcome to our guests.

First of all, I'll reference the documentary I watched on the *The Fifth Estate* about a study conducted by various groups that talked about how seat belts could make children safer on school buses when it comes to certain types of crashes.

Could you talk about that study a little bit and how it might factor into the current task force review?

Mr. Michael DeJong: As part of the task force, we are looking at school bus safety from quite a comprehensive perspective, with an emphasis on seat belts and other safety measures, both inside and outside the bus.

In terms of other potential impacts, we would draw statistics from the national collision database on some of the leading causes of accidents involving buses. For example, based on the statistics, the leading cause for collisions involving buses is failure to yield the right of way. The second leading cause is around distracted driving.

Then it's important to contextualize these statistics around the full road safety statistics that we draw from the national collision database about how speeding is still the most prevalent cause of accidents in general, followed by distracted driving at around 22% of fatalities in Canada, followed by impaired driving at 19%.

We would draw on these statistics in order to then inform and help develop recommendations for what we might propose as part of the task force on school bus safety.

Mr. Churence Rogers: Okay.

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: Sorry. I was just going to say that we know seat belts do add an added layer of protection to that.

Mr. Churence Rogers: Is the test you're going to do this summer part of the task force review?

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: The tests that we are going to do are, in fact, part of the task force. We are hoping to have an initial report from the task force before the summer. Then we will just continue to build on that for coaches, highway buses, and municipal buses versus specifically on school buses.

Those will be the tests going on. The pilot project that I mentioned in Saskatchewan, given the issues we identified, is going to take some time to get through, but those parts will build on what the task force is ultimately going to recommend back.

• (1125)

Mr. Churence Rogers: When is the timeline for the task force to complete its work?

Mr. Michael DeJong: The task force had been instructed to work as a multidisciplinary task force to develop recommendations for consideration by the council of ministers in the spring of 2019.

Mr. Churence Rogers: Okay, thank you.

When it comes to bus safety, you see other jurisdictions in this report. It referenced the investigation. Do you know what other countries do when it comes to things like seat belts on buses or other safety measures to ensure that people survive bus crashes? Have you done much research on that?

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: In relation to school buses, we've certainly looked to the south many times and have some information with respect to that. There are eight states in the U.S. that have varying forms of regulations or laws related to seat belts. That goes from lap belts only, in New York and Florida, I think, to California, which has a more rigorous legislative approach to lap and harness belts, the three-point seat belts.

That's the American context. In terms of other countries, Mike might be able to speak more directly about that.

Mr. Churence Rogers: Has there been a reduction in fatalities as a result of these efforts?

Mr. Michael DeJong: Yes, absolutely. We do have statistics on that. Over the course of the last decade, there has been one fatality of a bus occupant on a school bus, and that represents a decrease. The statistics going back to 1984 show 23 fatalities of bus occupants on school buses. That shows a significant reduction in Canada.

Mr. Churence Rogers: In 2020, it will be mandatory for new coach buses to have seat belts. Why have school buses been left out of this new requirement? I know you've answered that question a number of times with different questioners, so just a short answer would be fine.

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: It's in relation to all the operational issues that manifest on school buses differently than on transit or highway buses, coupled with how safe school buses are already built. Different from a transit bus or a highway bus, they're already built to be quite safe. There would be that. There are all those operational issues that Mike and I have talked about that complicate things to a certain degree and thus are looked at separately and differently than for highway buses or transit buses in the country.

Mr. Churence Rogers: I realize all the—

The Chair: That's time, Mr. Rogers. Make it short.

Mr. Churence Rogers: I realize all the variations of that. Back in Nova Scotia, my grandson was involved with a school bus partially leaving the highway because of freezing rain conditions. He had quite a scare, actually.

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: I'll bet.

Mr. Churence Rogers: He made reference to the fact that there are no seat belts on school buses, but he's always strapped in when he's in other vehicles.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Iacono, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank the witnesses for being here this morning.

The Motor Vehicle Safety Regulations, or MVSRs, may either require manufacturers to install safety equipment on certain types of vehicles or set standards that must be followed by manufacturers that choose to install non-mandatory equipment. What is meant by “non-mandatory equipment”?

[*English*]

Mr. Michael DeJong: Under the Motor Vehicle Safety Act, the federal government and Transport Canada are mandated to establish the Canada motor vehicle safety standards for the vehicle itself. They're intended to regulate to a minimum level of safety. At the same time, there are also guidelines and standards that we develop in order to encourage and suggest additional levels of safety as well. An example would be distracted driving and the guideline for in-vehicle displays that Transport Canada has published and has now made available on its website. That would be an example of Transport Canada responding to a recommendation from the Transportation Safety Board.

A stronger example would be the technical standards that were identified in the July 2018 school bus seat belt regulations, which the manufacturer must follow if a school board chooses to install seat belts, in order to ensure that the seat belts don't compromise the other safety features.

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you.

Can you give us more details on the standards that currently apply to buses, and the safety equipment they must be equipped with?

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: Are you talking about any kind of bus?

Mr. Angelo Iacono: I'm interested in school buses.

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: We have a long list for school buses. I can start, then Mr. DeJong will—

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Could you send the list to the clerk?

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: Certainly. It would be easier given the many safety criteria.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Could you also explain the differences between the standards for passenger buses and those for school buses?

[*English*]

Mr. Michael DeJong: There are a number. There are 18 Canada motor vehicle safety standards that apply broadly to buses, whether they are motor coaches, transit buses or school buses. There are

specific additional requirements that have contributed to the exceptionally strong safety record of school buses, making them the safest vehicles in Canada. Examples would be the requirements around compartmentalization that specifically protect school children in the event of rear-end and frontal collisions. There is also, for example, Canada Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 111, around mirrors and rear visibility systems for school buses. CMVSS 108 is around lighting and reflective devices. This helps control traffic that goes by school buses and requires school buses to have flashing lights. CMVSS 217 is around bus window retention.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Are you reading the list to us? If you prefer, you can also send it to the clerk.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael DeJong: Absolutely.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: The MVSRs were amended in 2018, particularly with respect to technical standards for school bus passenger seats and collision protection. How will these changes increase and improve passenger safety in the event of a collision?

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: Are you talking about school buses?

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Yes.

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: I'll start. Then Mr. DeJong will provide more details.

I would say that the most important consequence of these amendments was the clarification of the requirements.

[*English*]

If, in fact, a school board, a province or a territory wants to have seat belts in school buses, they will have to have that particular seat belt structure. The idea is that you will minimize the potential injuries caused by a seat belt that is improperly installed or not constructed to a certain standard. It will be three-point versus lap-only. That is why that technical requirement was put in, in 2018.

Mr. Michael DeJong: This goes back to the evidence base and draws from the national collision database, which shows that school buses account for such a small number of accidents in Canada. That being the case, the point that Kevin was making around the interplay between seat belts and the other safety features is an incredibly important aspect of the school bus task force, and the jurisdictions would need to be ready to mitigate those operational concerns, ensuring that the seat belts are always correctly used and correctly worn by all occupants all the time.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: How would we ensure that the seat belts are being enforced? Who would do that? Who would be tasked with that?

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: The enforcement piece, like everything else in the country, would be the responsibility of the province or territory where those school buses are located. That's where the enforcement piece happens. The compliance, though, would likely fall to the bus driver or a monitor on the bus. There would be varying areas of responsibility, I think, coming through the bus operator or through the province.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Could you please send the document you're referencing to the clerk for circulation to the committee?

Mr. Liepert.

• (1135)

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): I think you have touched on this a little bit. We had the head of pediatrics, I believe, from the children's hospital in Toronto here last week. His message was that there seems to be too much focus on things like seat belts in the bus versus all of the other.... The accidents they have encountered are accidents that occurred outside of the bus. When you're talking about this list that you're going to circulate, is that the focus, and would you agree with his assessment?

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: I didn't hear his evidence, unfortunately, but there is no doubt that an approach to ensuring.... When we talk about bus passenger safety, we have to look inside and outside the bus. That is definitely the focus of our strategy and research.

We know that vulnerable road users around a bus, which is usually the biggest vehicle on the road, are definitely at risk as well. At the same time, we know that seat belts add another layer of protection. That's why we have that stream of the task force looking at that issue holistically, with a look at seat belts but not ignoring all the other aspects related to proper lighting, mirrors, and signs that go up around school buses, to make sure that, on or off that bus, children are safest.

We know that children travelling in a personal vehicle are at risk as well. Another operational concern is that we want to make sure that we get that right, so that we're not taking buses off the road by putting in unreasonable requirements.

Those are all the different factors that will go into being able to give a proper recommendation to ministers.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Coming back to the question that was asked earlier around enforcement, the same thing would apply to enforcement outside the school bus as inside the school bus. In other words, you can have all the arms, technology and everything else that's associated with a stopped, unloading school bus, but if you have some driver who's not necessarily paying attention, it doesn't do much good.

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: There's no doubt that distracted driving, for instance, is a major contributor to injuries and accidents in this country. Therefore, I think most provinces have now really increased their penalties and enforcement in relation to that. It really is a

holistic approach to ensuring safety across the board. The other drivers, the driver of the bus, the structural crashworthiness of the bus—all those factors are taken into consideration.

Mr. Ron Liepert: In terms of this particular study or review that you're doing, is your mandate wide enough to make recommendations around things like distracted driving? I don't know what the exact name of the study is, but really what we're talking about is the safety of passengers on buses.

When it comes to school buses, would you be looking at making recommendations around increasing penalties for distracted driving, going through a flashing school bus light, and those sorts of things?

Is your mandate that wide? If not, should it be?

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: The task force and the individuals comprising that task force will look at the facts, data and evidence, and draw conclusions and recommendations from that. They will identify through evidence where the biggest risks are, to try to formulate recommendations that actually deliver meaningful results.

I have a child who rides a bus back and forth to school every day, and that's what it's about. It's about making sure that we've taken all the steps we can to ensure they're as safe as possible.

Mr. Ron Liepert: I'm finished, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Badawey.

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thanks, guys, for being here. I really appreciate it.

I'm going to take a bit of a different angle on this.

For the most part during this process, we've been concentrating a great deal on the buses. What I'd like to concentrate on is where the buses travel. As you know, we just put together a national trade corridors interim report, looking at trade corridors, the infrastructure, roads, rail, air and water.

In your dealings and experience, besides the buses themselves, looking at where they're travelling on roads in particular, do you find that there are investments we can make within that infrastructure to accomplish what we're trying to accomplish here with respect to bus safety?

• (1140)

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: I'll take a stab at this, and then Mike will build on it.

Mr. Vance Badawey: By the way, the reason I'm asking the question is that I think we all recognize, especially you guys more than us, that a lot of our transportation system is quite frankly archaic, going back many decades, and hasn't been improved, whether it's a widening of the road, rail crossings and things like that.

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: To start, we generally try to look at vehicles. We regulate vehicles, and we regulate people driving and in vehicles. That is really our focus in Transport.

Of course, there are other things. You mentioned the corridors initiative and other mechanisms to improve the infrastructure of the country, recognizing that it's a diverse country, from the Far North to large urban areas. There's no doubt that where a bus or any vehicle travels will have a contributing impact on ensuring the safety of the passengers.

However, again, our focus has really been on the human factors and on the structural issues related to the vehicles, rather than the roads that the vehicles travel on.

Mike, do you want to build on that?

Mr. Michael DeJong: I would point to a couple of items.

In October 2018, the Minister of Transport and his provincial and territorial colleagues released a study on strengthening the safety of vulnerable road users. That included 57 safety measures, a number of which were around infrastructure, a number of infrastructure projects that are currently being piloted. Segregated cycling tracks would be an example.

Through the task force, Transport Canada and other partners, provinces and territories in particular, are looking at potential safety measures both on and off the school bus. That would include looking at school bus loading zones, or potentially looking at intersections. Exciting technologies are increasingly available, for example, around looking at the potential to have smart intersections, or vehicle-to-intersection or vehicle-to-infrastructure communications. This is an area that Transport Canada is looking at and monitoring the emerging technologies that could potentially have significant benefits for road safety.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Those are great comments, because we are in an age where technology can be an asset. In looking at different options and in looking at past incidents, some of those incidents are caused by the actual infrastructure and its surroundings, whether it be an intersection, a narrow road, a blind spot with trees or not enough lighting—and the list goes on. We have to expand our concentration to not only the vehicles themselves, but also the surroundings that those vehicles are travelling in. Therefore, those comments are very well taken. Thank you for that.

I'm going to give the rest of my time to Mr. Hardie.

The Chair: Mr. Hardie.

Mr. Ken Hardie: How much time do I have?

The Chair: You have two minutes.

Mr. Ken Hardie: That's good.

Mr. Vance Badawey: I was generous.

Mr. Ken Hardie: You were very good. Thank you.

First of all, with regard to retrofitting existing buses, how often is the fleet renewed? We'll use school buses as an example, but highway coaches as well. What's the useful life of a school bus?

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: Mike, correct me if I misspeak, but I think about 10% of the fleet is renewed every year.

We're going to have a colleague get us the exact information, but the fleet turnover is about every 10 years.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Okay.

One of the issues you brought up, of course, is the design of the seats. The seats themselves must be strong enough to restrain somebody in a safety belt in the event of a crash.

Does it appear to be an extremely difficult and expensive process for somebody to retrofit an existing bus to bring the seats up to the standards that would be required to really work with a seat belt efficiently?

• (1145)

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: It's difficult to pinpoint with real precision the costs associated with retrofitting buses, but we know certainly there is a cost to school bus operators. We've heard those dialogues in school districts around the country.

Mr. Ken Hardie: It would probably be a matter of the design of the coach that has gone onto the chassis.

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: Indeed.

We think it's probably in the range of \$15,000 to \$20,000 to retrofit a school bus.

Mr. Ken Hardie: I want to talk about speed, because the next place that people listening to this will go, after automatically assuming that seat belts are the way to go, is speed. Obviously, speed is a factor in the severity of a crash.

My concern is that if people start to say we shouldn't allow school buses to go over a certain speed, you're going to create other conflicts on the road, because it's the variance in speed among the various vehicles that actually is a contributor to crashes. In the scenario of a two-lane road out in a rural area somewhere, if the school bus is going more slowly than the traffic behind it wants to go, that traffic will speed up to get around it, and that obviously creates conflicts, and so on.

Therefore, what should we be thinking about when people bring up the speed issue in trying to manage the severity of crashes?

The Chair: I'll ask the witnesses to hold the answer there, because Mr. Hardie's time is up. We'll try to get that answer before the end of the session.

We'll move on to Mrs. Block.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Perhaps when I'm done asking my question we could allow the witnesses to answer Mr. Hardie's question.

I'm looking at something the Library of Parliament provided to us. They stated that the Transportation Safety Board of Canada investigated a September 2013 collision between an OC Transpo bus and a VIA Rail passenger train in Ottawa. I remember when that happened. The TSB issued recommendations to Transport Canada, which noted that the Canada motor vehicle safety standards did not include any "requirements for frontal impact, side impact, rollover or crush protection for vehicles...in excess of...26,000 pounds".

Can you tell me the status of the recommendations that were made as a result of that accident?

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: Indeed. I'll begin and turn to Mike for further detail.

Three recommendations were made by the TSB as a result of that tragedy here in the city. The first had to deal with in-vehicle video monitor displays. We've brought forward guidelines to deal with that.

The second, which you mentioned, was with respect to crashworthiness standards. That's where I mentioned our procuring out-of-service buses to be able to do the testing, to come to standards that will properly deal with the crashworthiness of buses, which will directly address that recommendation.

You might note that their last reassessment was that we were taking too much time. I agree that we were taking too long. It's a complicated issue, but we've advanced that and we're accelerating that to be able to procure these buses and do the testing this summer. It was important work to be carried out so we can advance that and come to a conclusion one way or the other with respect to standards on crashworthiness.

The third was developing a standard with the Society of Automotive Engineers for the event data recorders on all commercial passenger buses. I think that's progressing well. The TSB remarked that this work is progressing at pace.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Thank you very much.

I'll certainly allow you to respond to Mr. Hardie's question.

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: The question was in relation to the variances of speed. There's no doubt that sometimes this can be more of an issue, depending on the part of the country you're in. A big piece of what we're focused on is around the entry-level training of drivers and ensuring that people have the skill sets to be able to drive, with less of a focus on speed—recognizing that excessive speed for road conditions is the biggest contributor to deaths in this country. That's clearly understood, but we tend to focus beyond....

We have the structure of the vehicle itself, and then having a driver focus as well, ensuring that every driver of a commercial vehicle—a commercial bus, a commercial truck—in this country ought to have a mandatory entry-level training standard. That standard will come into force in 2020.

• (1150)

Mrs. Kelly Block: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Jeneroux.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Thank you again for being here.

Our brief from the library says that, as of April 2019, the available data from the national collision database is only from 1999 to 2016. Is there a reason we don't have the data up to the current date?

Mr. Michael DeJong: The national collision database draws from statistics assembled from each of the provinces and territories. We work closely with the provinces and territories through the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators. We depend very much on that close collaboration to be able to assemble that dataset. I'm

happy to say that just recently, within the last month, the 2017 dataset has been added to the national collision database as well.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: What's the holdup? That's only 2017. We're in 2019.

Mr. Michael DeJong: It's simply a matter of providing sufficient time for provinces and territories to collect data—for example from coroners' offices, from hospitals and from a variety of datasets—and then to be able to scrub the numbers, validate them and provide that to Transport Canada so we can ensure comparable statistics across jurisdictions.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Are there particular provinces that are causing problems in terms of getting that data at this point in time?

Mr. Michael DeJong: No.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Okay.

When it comes to the statistics on crashes, fatalities and serious injuries, it seems, as we learned earlier this week in the committee, that only nine or 10 fatalities that have happened since 1999 directly involved bus crashes. I imagine that there are certainly numbers out there that would say that serious injuries also occur when these happen. Do we have statistics on what percentage of actual bus crashes involve those fatalities but also serious injuries?

Mr. Michael DeJong: Yes. There are some statistics we can offer in terms of school buses during that time frame. In the last decade, there was one fatality. Between 1998 and 2017, there were five. Going back to 1984, there were 23. That shows the overall decline. By comparison, between 1998 and 2017, during normal school transportation hours, there were 395 light-duty vehicle school-age passenger fatalities and 64,512 injuries; 158 school-age pedestrian fatalities and 22,629 injuries; and 41 school-age cyclist fatalities and 9,493 injuries.

The Chair: Mr. DeJong, could you supply that report to the committee as well? Is that possible? Thank you.

Monsieur Aubin.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Gentlemen, I will come back to the issue of statistics. You have described compartmentalization in head-on and rear-end collisions quite eloquently. It's a concept that is contested in another report, but I'll come back to that.

Do you have any statistics that distinguish between head-on or rear-end and side-on collisions and the impact this has had on the number of people killed or seriously injured?

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: We have those figures, Mr. Aubin.

Mr. Robert Aubin: What period do they cover? You don't have to say; you could send us that list.

Mr. Kevin Brosseau: It's the period from 2008 to 2017.

[English]

Go ahead, Michael.

Mr. Michael DeJong: From 2008 to 2017, rear-end collisions were the most prevalent. For example, in terms of all buses, there were a total of 18,594 collisions during that time period related to rear-end collisions. The second most prevalent were sideswipes.

• (1155)

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Is it almost always the same from year to year, or is there an increase or decrease that could be explained by technical or technological factors?

[English]

Mr. Michael DeJong: There has been a significant decline over the last 30 years. The overall road safety statistics in that area have shown a decline of 30% in fatalities over the last 30 years, and that decline is even more pronounced in the context of school buses.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: When we talk about the accidents that are the subject of the current study, we always have two types of vehicles in mind, either the bus used to transport passengers or the large-format school bus, which can carry 47 passengers.

What are Transport Canada's proposals or regulations for other types of transportation? There are, for example, smaller buses that carry up to 20 or 25 passengers. There are also models of stretch vans that can carry about 15 passengers. As a former teacher myself, I can tell you about it, because I have already seen quite serious, even catastrophic accidents in my region involving these smaller vehicles.

Are they subject to the same standards as school buses?

[English]

Mr. Michael DeJong: We do have statistics around large school buses versus small school buses. In fact, the small school bus safety record is exceptionally strong. Where there were injuries and fatalities over the period of 1992 to 2017 in large school buses, there were none in terms of small buses.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: My concern is more about these Econoline minivans that can be rented from companies like Avis, for example. They require an additional class on the driving licence.

Are these minivans regulated as road vehicles or school buses?

[English]

Mr. Michael DeJong: With respect to the Canada motor vehicle safety standards, there are 18 standards that are broadly applicable to buses.

An example where I would say Transport Canada has taken it a step further in terms of smaller buses would be with respect to electronic stability control systems. For example, in the U.S., the electronic stability control systems, or ESCS, are applicable only to large buses, whereas in Canada we've taken it a step further to include medium-sized buses as well as school buses. We're the only jurisdiction in North America to do so.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Monsieur Aubin.

Thank you to our witnesses. We very much appreciate it.

If you could forward to the clerk some of the various reports that you've referenced, we would appreciate it.

We will suspend for a moment until the next witness is here.

• (1155)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (1200)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order.

Our next witness is Vicky Kyriaco, General Manager and Chief Administrative Officer of the Ottawa Student Transportation Authority.

Thank you very much for taking the time to come today. We look forward to your testimony.

You have five minutes, please, and then we'll have questions from the committee members.

Ms. Vicky Kyriaco (General Manager and Chief Administrative Officer, Ottawa Student Transportation Authority): Thank you very much for inviting me to participate on this panel about the important topic of school bus safety.

[Translation]

I will also be able to answer your questions in French.

[English]

Student safety is the number one priority for OSTA and for our member school boards, the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board and the Ottawa Catholic School Board. We provide motorized transportation services for 70,000 children and active transportation programs for 45,000 students who walk, bike and roll to school.

Safety is dependent on a number of factors, and we use risk assessment and mitigation along with probability of outcomes in our determination. In the absence of reliable and relevant data, what is considered safe may be open to interpretation and can be subjective. What the public considers reasonable also comes into play. School buses have consistently been the safest vehicles on the road based on passenger kilometres travelled. The question is whether seat belts make the school bus even safer.

Some 20 years ago, one of our yellow buses was hit broadside by a truck, and one child died in that collision, but since then no student has suffered life-threatening injuries or loss of life due to a collision in our system. In fact, last year one of our buses was T-boned by a crane. The bus driver, who was belted in, expired, but the student walked away without injuries.

It is essential that studies be conducted to reflect Canadian conditions and expectations. Reliance on accident statistics in southern United States does very little to address the way we do things up here in the Great White North. To wit, I could not find a single image of students in snowsuits wearing seat belts on a bus.

Why are snowsuits and other winter wear, such as mittens, such an important consideration? First of all, the snowsuit limits the child's ability to move freely, limits dexterity and can become jammed in the seat belt mechanism. The snowsuit padding can give the impression of a tight seat belt at the time of attachment and can become compressed during collision impact, leading to excess space between the body and the seat. This slack then potentially allows the body to float and to slide out of the restraints, increasing the risk of injury.

We believe the following studies should be considered. First is the physical ability and manual dexterity required of children as young as three and a half years old to correctly attach the lap belt and adjust the shoulder belt to avoid stomach, neck and back injuries. Members on our Regional Safe Schools Committee express the thought that of the 10,000 kindergarten students we transport, only some would master this skill by the end of the school year, and even students up to grade 3 would find seat belts challenging.

Then, test the ability of children to undo the belt in the event of an emergency with the bus right side up, lying on its side, and on its roof. Based on one bus fire we experienced four years ago, the lone student who evacuated the bus said, "I got off and turned around, and the bus went poof!" We anticipate that a busload of 70 children in full winter gear will not be able to undo their seat belts and evacuate a burning bus as quickly as is necessary to avoid smoke inhalation and burns, particularly if the bus is on its side or upside down.

Third is the possibility for seat belts themselves to cause injury or death under the following conditions: first, incorrect or improper adjustments by the student—from the online images showing kids wearing seat belts on school buses, it appears that at least half of them are not actually wearing the belts properly; second, the way students might use the belt to hit or choke themselves or other students; third, injury to students who are not clipped into their belt at all.

The physical ability and dexterity of students with different types of special needs—these are both mobility and cognitive—to attach and to undo their seat belts in an emergency should be tested. Our goal is inclusivity and independence rather than isolation. The use of seat belts adds a level of complexity for many students who find it challenging and rewarding just to be on a regular yellow bus.

Finally would come general crash testing with and without seat belts for front, rear, side and rollover collisions at slow, mid-range and high speeds.

From a purely operational perspective, the implementation of seat belts on buses would radically change the way we deliver services in the Ottawa region. First of all, it would exacerbate our growing driver shortage because of the added responsibility, potential personal liability and demerit points due to tickets for minors in their care who don't wear their seat belts.

A proposed mitigation plan would be to engage bus monitors. It is unlikely that we would be able to hire 650 to 1,000 part-time people for this work, given the labour market in Ottawa. The added time required to attach belts, along with the time required to deal with students who remove their seat belts in transit, would no longer

allow OSTA to plan routes that service two or three schools in a row. We estimate that an additional 100 or more buses would be required to transport the same number of students.

With a lack of drivers and bus monitors, and lack of additional funding, we would need to cut service for at least 15,000 students to implement seat belts. The risk to the safety of these children would actually increase as they are relegated to other vehicles that are much less safe than yellow school buses, such as cars and city buses.

The consideration, then, after all the studies are completed, is this. Would parents choose seat belts on buses even if it possibly meant their children could no longer access publicly funded transportation and were relegated to a less safe mode of transportation? Or would parents consider today's school buses safe enough without seat belts?

● (1205)

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll move on to Mr. Jeneroux.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for being here.

Just to confirm, the Ottawa Student Transportation Authority's jurisdiction is from kindergarten to grade 12. Is that correct?

Ms. Vicky Kyriaco: That's correct.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: I have a whole bunch of questions. To start, to sum up your position, you don't think seat belts should be on school buses.

Ms. Vicky Kyriaco: I think we need more studies that examine it holistically, not just what happens to crash test dummies but what happens under real circumstances. If you have snowsuits, if you have three kids to a seat, if you're going at different speeds, what ends up happening? It's not up to us, really, to determine what the requirements are on the bus. It is up to the public to determine whether they want services under certain conditions, or whether they desire them under other conditions. We would follow whatever the government decides, as we have done so far.

● (1210)

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Would you base your determination solely on safety, not on the financial aspect of repercussions to the OSTA?

Ms. Vicky Kyriaco: I'm not sure I understand your question.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Are you basing the need or lack of need for seat belts 100% on the safety of kids, not necessarily on the financial repercussions that would be felt by the Ottawa Student Transportation Authority?

Ms. Vicky Kyriaco: Every determination of what is safe is dependent on data. If we don't have data, we look at what public expectations are. That's true of any decisions we make regarding safety, whether it's a snow day or whether it's how we assess walking hazards so that we can make exceptions due to walking hazards. When we do route audits and determine whether an operator is in compliance with his contract, there's always an estimation and a balance between what our stakeholders would expect to be reasonable under the circumstances and what would be unreasonable.

When we start looking at the cost of any of these kinds of decisions, it still falls into what would be considered reasonable and what's unreasonable. At the end of the day, it's the parents and the government that will work together to decide whether safety belts are more important than the provision of transportation to a greater number of students.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: You're one student transportation authority. Would this be consistent across the board with your colleagues or counterparts at other authorities?

Ms. Vicky Kyriaco: I think our positions are very similar, whether it's driver shortages or how to approach seat belts. Some have seen positive experiences with using seat belts, but under situations where there's a bus monitor, where there's somebody who's actually attaching the belt and it's a small number of students.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: You said in your testimony that you would need 100 more buses. Why 100 more buses, if we're simply putting seat belts on existing buses?

Ms. Vicky Kyriaco: First, when we plan our routes, in order to be as efficient as possible, we maximize bus capacity utilization. Right now we try to put three to a seat. If you consider that the average seat is about 96 centimetres wide and we can seat three, we are concerned, especially with the snowsuit issue and trying to actually clip them in, that seating capacity might not be adequate.

Second, we also look at the time. We're trying to create runs where we are picking up students at their stops and delivering them to school in as short a time as possible, given traffic and other environmental conditions. The more runs we can put on a route, the more efficient that route will be. We may currently have triple routes, where we can service three schools. Because of the time it would take, for example, to attach belts and then pull over the bus to deal with students who detach their belts, that time element has to be built into the route design. We know that we won't be able to double or triple routes if we have that extra time element.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: I guess I can understand your second point, but from your first point I would draw the conclusion that right now it's not safe, then, to seat three kids to a seat. By saying that now you need 100 more buses to essentially make it safe.... As a dad of two little girls who take a school bus—not in your jurisdiction, but back home—that would worry me at the end of the day, that buses aren't safe the way they currently are.

I'll give you a chance to comment. Again, I'm speaking from the perspective of a parent who has kids in the school system.

Ms. Vicky Kyriaco: Actually, from our perspective, three to a seat meets the manufacturer's recommendations. For us, it is safe. We don't think that adding seat belts at three-to-a-seat is operationally feasible. That would reduce the three down to two snowsuited kids per seat. That's where that efficiency scenario comes into play. We currently have three kids to a seat on 630 buses, and it's working well.

•(1215)

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Then I would draw the conclusion that it would be about cost; it wouldn't be about safety, which was my first point.

Anyway, thanks.

The Chair: Mr. Hardie.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for being here.

You mentioned that you're aware that there are some jurisdictions where safety belts are being used on school buses.

Ms. Vicky Kyriaco: There are some, yes.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Are there any here in Canada, that you're aware of?

Ms. Vicky Kyriaco: Yes.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Can you give us an example?

Ms. Vicky Kyriaco: I know that Sudbury currently has a short bus for students with special needs that uses seat belts.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Okay, thank you.

It occurs to me that, depending on the characteristics of the travel, seat belts or other types of restraints might be more justifiable, for instance, when you have a school bus operating at higher speeds in rural conditions versus urban conditions, where traffic is moving at a relatively stable and slow rate, especially in the morning.

Based on your comments, would you suggest that safety belts might be unnecessary in certain applications, that the cost wouldn't be justified by any additional safety?

Ms. Vicky Kyriaco: What I want to clarify is that it's not about whether the cost is justified or not. Under the listing of requirements or studies that I've suggested, are seat belts on buses, under our conditions with kids in snowsuits, proven to decrease a very low probability of risk now to the extent that there is not an increased risk from the implementation of belts?

We see a lot of other issues that arise from using belts, other than the loss of efficiency. There is the possibility that kids are not clipped in properly. That causes more distress to us than the possibility of a potential accident at some point in the future, because we have 24 million riders a year in our system. To have to monitor the belting of each one of those riders to ensure that they are properly belted in, in the event of even a minor accident—because they do happen—would be a challenge. Then we'd also be increasing the potential for injury in minor accidents because they're wearing belts, whereas today they wouldn't have an injury.

So that's the testing, really, that we're looking for. Does the implementation of the belts lead to greater risks? If it doesn't, and if it actually is proven to lower risk, then great. We would say, "It definitely makes the bus safer. It's worth it to implement belts." However, that data is not available for us right now.

Mr. Ken Hardie: This also seems to be an issue that has come up even from our very first conversations with the Transportation Safety Board. It collects data only on bus mishaps involving another federally regulated mode, like a railroad train, etc. It would appear that the data may be out there, but nobody's responsible for aggregating it and teaching us what we need to know.

I'll now go to the issue of ejection, being ejected from a vehicle—a school bus or any other vehicle. This, obviously, increases the risk of very severe injury and fatality, but you've also raised the issue of entrapment in the vehicle. Are we looking at a kind of Hobson's choice here?

Ms. Vicky Kyriaco: I don't understand that expression, sorry.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Well, it's just a no-win. Are we looking at a no-win situation, damned if we do and damned if we don't? We avoid the threat of entrapment by not having people strapped in, but at the same time we're increasing the likelihood of ejection.

Ms. Vicky Kyriaco: I think that, as any insurance actuary would say, there's a probability of risk that needs to be assessed. What is the likelihood of an accident occurring where an ejection might happen? We have some data and some basis for that, but we have very little data that has been collected to see if there is an entrapment issue. We're looking at it anecdotally. There's no doubt about that. Really, what my presentation is about is saying that we need to collect more data. Let's test this out before we arbitrarily put in seat belts, which could actually be leading to other issues; then data would tell us, oh, that idea probably wasn't very good.

We want to at least be able to say that the studies have been done under the Canadian environment, with kids who are in snowsuits. What is the likelihood of injury or risk to those kids because they're wearing seat belts versus not wearing the seat belt and then potentially getting ejected? There's a balance there.

• (1220)

The Chair: Make it a very short question.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Kids have been actually teaching their parents about seat belts for a long time, because they learned about them in school and the importance of them, and it would be the kids who would be telling folks, "Hey, Dad, put your seat belt on."

Are you worried that a lack of compliance among kids is really that much of an issue, given that they've actually championed for all of society the use of safety belts?

Ms. Vicky Kyriaco: I think by the time they're nine or 10 years old, they can be champions. I don't think a three-and-a-half-year-old or a four-year-old who doesn't attach their own belt in their own vehicle with the mom there is going to be able to do it in a bus. Manually, their dexterity is not there, which then requires another adult to actually do that work for them.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go on to Monsieur Aubin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Ms. Kyriaco, for being with us.

Following on from what Mr. Hardie just mentioned, I'll tell you, without telling you my age, that I was born at a time when seat belts didn't exist. We didn't ask ourselves any questions in this sense, but over time, it became obvious. In fact, it is the younger generations who have always applied the changes. The rule existed, but we were reluctant.

Could we consider a different system for very young children who are supposedly unable to buckle their seat belts themselves? Based on your experience, at what age would you determine that a child can buckle a seat belt on a school bus?

Ms. Vicky Kyriaco: I used to be a teacher. That was before I even started working in the transport sector. In my opinion, at the age of nine or ten, they are able to fasten their seat belts and adjust the one that passes over their shoulders. These are really two steps.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Overall, we could say that there should be a different approach for the primary level and the secondary level.

Ms. Vicky Kyriaco: Yes, but the same bus is used to transport high school students and then elementary school students. We cannot change seat belts or the approach.

Mr. Robert Aubin: I understand that, but if there were seat belts, we could apply different standards—for example, with respect to the number of passengers on the bus—for secondary and primary schools. These are only avenues for reflection to try to find a solution. It seems to me that, more and more, the seat belt is becoming a matter of course. However, I understand the problems associated with this. Perhaps, for the time being, we shouldn't target the economic contingencies that would hinder security, but rather see how we adapt budgets to the standards that we consider essential.

If these buses, which carry both secondary and elementary school students and can seat three students per bench, operate at 50 kilometres per hour in urban areas and an accident occurs, we know that the impact will be relatively contained. However, these are exactly the same school buses that carry our students—I too used to be a teacher—when they go to see a play in another municipality, when they go to play winter sports or when they go on a summer outing. These are the same buses that take the highway.

Do you think this could be another avenue? It could be determined that, for urban traffic, things can be thought of in one way, but that, for all cases where the vehicle is travelling at high speed on the motorway, seat belts must be worn.

Ms. Vicky Kyriaco: We should really look at the statistics to see if there have been more fatal accidents or other—

• (1225)

Mr. Robert Aubin: Let me ask you a more specific question.

Ms. Vicky Kyriaco: Please.

Mr. Robert Aubin: If you organize a snow lesson with your elementary school students, do you stick to the standard of three students per bench, even if the trip is long?

Ms. Vicky Kyriaco: Yes.

Until the end of grade 6, students sit three per seat. From grade 7 to grade 12, there are no more than two.

Mr. Robert Aubin: That's based on average height and weight, I suppose?

Ms. Vicky Kyriaco: Exactly.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Some manufacturers and school boards have installed video cameras on buses to monitor what happens on them. Indeed, a school bus is also a place of socialization and initiation for students who change schools. In your opinion, who should ensure that students wear their seat belts, if that was the choice made? Should it be the responsibility of school bus drivers or schools? Should it be up to parents to teach it at home?

Ms. Vicky Kyriaco: Currently, it's the responsibility of drivers, who may receive demerit points if one of the children on their bus doesn't wear his or her seat belt. Drivers are responsible for children under 16 years of age on their bus, even if another person is on board to help the students buckle up. Provincial legislation should therefore be amended to exempt school bus drivers from this responsibility.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Who would you give this responsibility, though? That was what I meant with my question.

Ms. Vicky Kyriaco: We're asking ourselves the same question.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Do you think it should be the responsibility of the parents or the school?

Ms. Vicky Kyriaco: Ultimately, it should be the responsibility of the person responsible for transporting the children. Even if a monitor were on board the bus, the responsibility would remain that of the driver.

To meet the liability requirements of insurance companies, it is necessary to ensure that a child's seat belt is properly fastened if required. If the seat belt was not fastened, the person, school or school board responsible should then explain why they failed to fulfill this responsibility.

Mr. Robert Aubin: You are aware of a number of accidents involving school buses. In light of your experience, are most collisions head-on or rear-end? Is the concept of compartmentalization really working, although it isn't unanimously accepted, and are you aware of any side-on collisions that have caused significantly more damage?

Ms. Vicky Kyriaco: Most collisions occur at the back of the school bus when cars collide with it. Some side-on collisions involving cars or vans were slightly more serious because they caused the school bus to move, but no children were injured.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Monsieur Aubin.

Thank you, Ms. Kyriaco, for coming and sharing that information. I think it was very helpful to have an additional perspective on this issue. Thank you very much.

We will suspend for a moment until our other witness comes to the table.

• (1225)

(Pause)

• (1230)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

We have Tony Di Benedetto, Chief Executive Officer of Drone Delivery Canada.

You were here several years ago, within the three and a half years that I've been the chair. You sent in a letter asking to update the committee. We found a few minutes, so I'll turn it over to you for five minutes, please.

Mr. Tony Di Benedetto (Chief Executive Officer, Drone Delivery Canada): Thank you very much.

Madam Chair, members of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, Madam Clerk, first of all I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk to you about Drone Delivery Canada, provide an update on the considerable commercial and technological advances we've made as a company in the last two years, and share new information regarding the sector and our latest mandate regarding service delivery to northern, rural and remote communities.

Since my last appearance at the committee, in November 2016, a lot of water has flowed under the bridge. For those who were not present during my last visit, I will remind you that Drone Delivery Canada is a pioneering technology firm based out of Toronto, with a focus on designing, developing and implementing a commercially viable drone delivery system within the Canadian geography. Our group consists of highly seasoned technology professionals who have successfully built, owned and operated ventures in the Canadian marketplace. Drone Delivery Canada is one of the first federally certified drone delivery operators in Canada, and the first Canadian drone cargo operator recognized by Transport Canada as a compliant operator.

In the near future, drones will be able to deliver products faster, more easily and more cheaply, allowing organizations to grow their revenues and bottom lines. Regulatory bodies continue to move forward on the regulatory frameworks of commercial drone use, and we are seeing a willingness on the part of Transport Canada to work towards the industry and embrace innovation.

Industries that would utilize drone delivery services are endless. They can include logistics providers, postal delivery providers, first responders, parts distribution, medical supply delivery, and overall distribution.

DDC's drone service operates between fixed end points called depots. The drones are highly automated and are controlled through a centrally managed software system at a mission control centre, which can be located where the aircraft is operating or at DDC's main operation centre near Toronto. Trained and licensed supervisory pilots located at mission control oversee all flights and can intervene at any time should there be a need to do so.

In February 2018, DDC was granted a compliant operator special flight operations certificate by Transport Canada, allowing us to operate across Canada. DDC's first commercial aircraft, the X1000 Sparrow, was deemed compliant with Transport Canada's standards in December 2017. It is capable of carrying 4.5 kilos of payload over a potential distance of 20 kilometres.

Our recently announced heavy-lifting Condor drone will soon start testing and will be able to carry up to 180 kilos of cargo with a potential range of 150 kilometres.

It is also important to note that we have completed a significant amount of "beyond visual line of sight" testing under the supervision of Transport Canada. We have signed a \$2.5-million commercial agreement and are currently in advanced negotiations for multiple commercial agreements in 2019. We are in discussions with 50 customers, including retailers, cargo networks, hospital groups, couriers, logistic service providers, as well as various remote communities in Canada. We have agreements with the Moose Cree First Nation, NAPA Auto Parts, Peel region paramedics, and many more. We're in partnership with Toyota Tsusho, and in advanced discussion with several cargo carriers.

We are working on a second drone cargo network in the Northwest Territories. We see tremendous opportunities to address the needs of remote communities, including transportation of goods deemed essential for economic growth, such as food and medical equipment. Our intention is to serve 200 northern and remote

communities across the country over the next five years. This is very good news for Canada, especially for communities in the north that continuously struggle hard with the lack of roads and other transportation modes.

Those communities, with mostly indigenous people, have access to food and goods; however, it is at prohibitive prices. The high cost of food is unacceptable in a country like ours, where everybody should be equal. I saw a CBC news article the other day that a mother of four in Iqaluit had just purchased a 24-pack of bottled water for \$29.99 at a grocery store. Meanwhile, in Winnipeg a 24-pack costs just \$4.49. This is not acceptable. I've seen this also in Moosonee, where we are working closely with the Moose Cree First Nation to build the first affordable year-round cargo delivery service to operate in the region.

Affordability is a key component of our value proposition. The customer value of using low-cost, highly automated drones over short flight paths would be substantially better than that of competing services using helicopters. The service will begin by offering small-package delivery service on fixed routes, but it is expected to add increased distances and payload capacity as new, heavier-lifting drone models become approved by Transport Canada.

● (1235)

The business is to be community-owned and operated by the Moose Cree First Nation. Although financial forecasts show the potential for profitability as the service expands, the primary objective of the business is to create social benefit to the community. The benefits to the community from the creation of a new year-round transportation infrastructure include better communication, new employment opportunities, a platform for new businesses to serve the community, better health care and more education options for the youth.

Through increased productivity and technological innovation, growth within the Canadian supply chains and well-paying job creation in communities, as well as social, health and environmental benefits, projects in northern and indigenous communities will bring public economic and innovation benefits. Finally, Drone Delivery Canada will also contribute to reduced gas emissions. It will help to reduce diesel use in remote indigenous communities.

We ask Transport Canada and the federal government to work with us to help communities in the north have a better life.

To conclude, I will say that just like a railway in the sky, Drone Delivery Canada brings a new dimension to transportation. The 19th century was that of trains, and the 20th century was that of cars. The 21st century will be that of drones.

Thank you for your attention. I'm ready to take your questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Di Benedetto.

On for our first round of questioning is Mr. Kmiec.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Thank you very much for your presentation, and thanks for returning to the committee. I'm not a regular member of the committee, but I understand that you have requested to return. When Minister Garneau put out the original rules on drones, in my riding I had a lot of push-back from people who were unhappy, both businesses and individuals. I wrote petitions. I helped my constituents. I wrote letters.

Unfortunately, today I've come here to move a motion on behalf of one of my constituents. Notice was given on November 22, 2018. I'm going to read it quickly into the record, because I want this to come to a vote on behalf of my constituent Tim Reed.

That the Committee undertake a study on allowing Canadians to bring their legally owned, U.S.-registered and plated passenger vehicles into Canada for a defined temporary period, in the same manner that U.S. citizens may do in Canada, without having to pay any taxes, duties or importation fees; that the committee report its findings to the House no later than 90 sitting days following adoption of this motion; that the committee make recommendations on actions the Government of Canada should undertake to adopt a border control system that allows for the temporary use of American-plated vehicles by Canadian citizens; that no less than two meetings of the Committee be dedicated to this study; and that the Committee request that the Government table a comprehensive response to its report.

I did give notice of it. I understand that there have been conversations outside of the committee about potentially doing this already. The reason I'm bringing it is that.... It's a small niche issue, and I recognize that. I'm going to reference a few letters and responses I have actually received from the minister and from the Library of Parliament, as well as a petition response I got, just to show you that I don't come here randomly proposing a committee study. I have done my homework. I have looked into different avenues, including private members' business, to try to address this issue. Every single avenue has been blocked off to me, so to speak, because I think only this committee could actually resolve the problem I have.

My constituent wrote to the minister and received a response—

● (1240)

Mr. Ken Hardie: On a point of order, we have a witness here. We have a subject, and we really do need to respect the witness who is present. Is there another time we can do this? Can we add some time at the end of our meeting to give you that opportunity, Mr. Kmiec? We have Mr. Di Benedetto here.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: No, I've moved the motion, so it's tabled. It's before the committee now. That's my understanding of the rules.

The Chair: Those clearly are the rules that are there. Mr. Kmiec has the floor and he's speaking to the motion.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Can I just say this? I think it's an interesting motion. I'm not sure everybody truly understands it, so maybe your comments could be to help the committee understand it.

I'm sorry, Mr. Di Benedetto, but this is a process.

Mr. Tony Di Benedetto: That's fine.

The Chair: If you could help us understand it better, you'd have a better chance of success.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: I'll give you an example, based on Mr. Reed's experience. This would be for a Canadian who owns an American vehicle.

I live in Alberta, and there are a lot of Albertans who own cottages in Montana. For example, you own an American-plated Montana Jeep. You decide you are going to do repairs on it and put it on a trailer and try to drive it back to, say, Lethbridge or Calgary, to your own shop perhaps. There are quite a few people in my riding who like to do that.

You're not allowed to bring your Jeep into Canada without formally importing it and then paying a 6.1% import duty as if you are going to bring it into Canada and keep it here. That's not what many of my constituents and Mr. Reed want to do; they want to temporarily bring their vehicles into Canada.

Currently, there are no rules that allow someone to do that without paying the full import fee. That has been confirmed to me by the Library of Parliament, and by the Minister of Transport and civil servants in Transport Canada.

As I said, it's a very niche issue—very, very unusual. If it's a Canadian citizen who owns the vehicle, they should be allowed to bring in this American-plated vehicle for just a few days. I don't imagine that people bring them in for months on end for regular residential or commercial use. It would just be for doing repairs or upgrades to the vehicle and then sending it back across the border.

You could impose a system of fines on individuals who break the rules. It would be very easy to track the vehicles, because at the border you'd collect all the regular information.

Mr. Reed proposed a few systems on this. The minister responded to him and said that non-compliant vehicles—these are older vehicles, typically pre-1979—wouldn't be allowed into the country because they're not considered safe. I reminded the minister in a separate communication that we're talking about compliant vehicles.

For the Jeep example I gave you, a regular vehicle used on the road.... If you're like me, you like going to the back country where there is no cellphone service and nothing really out there. You take your Jeep. You might damage it while going bogging. You're going to bring it back to your place. If you do it in Montana and you don't want to pay exorbitant mechanics fees or don't have the tools to do it there, you'd perhaps bring it back to your home in Canada, fix it there, and then take it back to the United States, where it belongs, because it's plated in an American jurisdiction.

I mentioned the response from the minister, from February 26, 2016, which mentions this. I just want to read to you a short paragraph from the minister:

As you pointed out, the temporary use of a U.S.-certified and registered vehicle in Canada by a Canadian citizen is an infrequent occurrence. However, as this option may be of interest to some Canadians, Transport Canada officials will review options to possibly address this situation. Any potential solution would require legislative changes and would take time to develop, approve, communicate and implement.

However, I have had no news whatsoever, and there is no information available anywhere on whether that review has taken place. The minister has not told me—

The Chair: Tom, what was the date on that?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: It was February 26, 2016.

I've written notes on it, but I could table a fresh copy with the committee, if that's something the committee would like.

The Chair: Yes, you might want to do that.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: I then tabled a petition on September 25, 2017. The petition number is 421-01658. The minister provided only a four-line response. I was looking for information about this review being done by Transport Canada. As far as I can tell, there was no response. It's not much of a response; it just tells me that the motor vehicle safety regulations will need to be amended in the future in order to make it possible.

If you're a regular Canadian citizen, you can't do this, but if you are a Canadian business, like U-Haul, you can bring American-plated vehicles into Canada and use them for an expressly commercial purpose. That is because they have an apportioned plate system that allows them to be moved across states and also allows them to be used in Canada. This apportionment system already exists, and it could be a model used for Canadian citizens. This is where I have a problem with how the current rules are and the responses I've been getting from Transport Canada. If there is a specific rule for business and a different rule for Canadian citizens, that seems patently unfair; citizens should have the same rights as business.

U-Haul can do this right now, and we see these Arizona-plated U-Haul vehicles. If you've moved in the last 10 or 15 years, you've noticed they're all plated in Arizona. They are being used on a regular basis in Canada.

If I had a Jeep that's plated in Montana, at my cottage at the lake or just in a friend's driveway, and it needed to be fixed up with perhaps new tires and I wanted to put it on a trailer and bring it into Canada, I would pay an import fee as if I'm trying to bring it into the country and keep it here, which is not something I want to do.

I've looked at potential avenues. I thought I could do a private member's bill, and this would avoid having to come to the committee here. I could just propose a fix for this. I asked the Library of Parliament how this would work and whether I could make it happen. Their response to me was that I'm not allowed to do this, because the tariffs come under the Customs Act, and it's a certain provision within it. It's passed by an order in council. Private member's bills are not allowed to interfere with the determination of a tariff and whom it applies to. It would have to be done by order in council, so I can't do a private member's bill.

I did table motion 197, which addresses this issue. I thought it was an elegant way of dealing with it, but unfortunately, because we're running out of time in this Parliament, with the potential election as late as October 21, 2019, I've exhausted the means of getting to a resolution through this motion that would have instructed two committees of the House to look at this issue.

This is why I'm asking this transportation committee to devote no less than two meetings to look at this issue. This is really for government officials who could come here and explain the mechanics of how an amendment to legislation could be done. I would need that information. The committee could then provide recommendations and a report on how to address the matter and the types of legislative changes that would need to be made so that Canadian citizens would have the same rights as American Canadian-based businesses that have this right. U-Haul has this ability right now.

● (1245)

The Chair: Can I interrupt for a second? I'm trying to figure out how to....

This is a suggestion to the committee here. If we could defer the voting on this motion until Tuesday and allocate another few minutes for you to speak to it, all of us would have the chance to give you all due respect and a full hearing on your motion.

I think there's a lot in here, and I'm not sure everybody's fully grasped it. Rather than not support it, we could hold it down and put a 15-minute slot on Tuesday's agenda so you can come back and speak to it again. We would vote on it at that time.

Is that something acceptable to the committee? Then we'd be able to get back to our witness here.

Mr. Badawey.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Madam Chair, I don't want to leave any false hope. I don't want to lead Tom on.

The Chair: Okay, just a second.

Tom still has the floor.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: I just want to see clarity. I haven't ceded the floor, so I can continue.

Mr. Vance Badawey: I thought you were here to get something done, so if you want to do that, may I suggest we expedite that?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Am I hearing agreement on a potentially—

Mr. Vance Badawey: I'm trying to work out some kind of... I don't want you to leave with any false hope. The bottom line here is that we do have a full agenda going into the end of the session, so I'm not sure where we would fit this in. However, I think it's a great idea. I think you're bang on here. May I suggest that it possibly go to another committee that may have the time? Probably a more appropriate committee would be public safety versus transport. Frankly, it's probably going to hit on three or four different ministries: Public Safety, Transport and possibly even Global Affairs.

I don't want to lose it, because Tom is moving in the right direction here and, quite frankly, I agree with him. But there is a reality attached to the time that we have available, number one. We just had a debate with Mr. Aubin at the last meeting with respect to what he wants to see on the floor, which is also, by the way, in the queue, if we have any time. The agreed-upon queue was decided at the last meeting.

Having run out of time, in fairness to Tom, I think we should try to punt it over to public safety to see if they have any time. When we come back, regardless of what manner we come back in, we can then do it at this committee, when time allows.

• (1250)

The Chair: Mr. Jeneroux.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: I would like to clarify one point as a follow-up to Mr. Badawey.

There is no full calendar. We have, I believe, up to about April 11, and then it's a prospective calendar. We're not privy to a full calendar on our end.

Mr. Vance Badawey: I might differ from that.

The Chair: We have lots on the agenda, including the two ministers coming and so on.

I think the idea is to have a little more time to look at this before making a decision one way or the other. Possibly between now and Tuesday we might be able to find a solution to what you're trying to achieve. I'm not sure.

You still have the floor, Tom.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: I understand, Madam Chair, but I think Mr. Aubin wanted to speak.

The Chair: Mr. Aubin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Basically, I recognize the value of the motion, but I too think that our committee already has too much to do. We already have three or four studies under way that we are struggling to conclude. In addition, other topics are emerging that I believe will be of greater importance to the public.

I am thinking in particular of the charter of air passenger rights that the minister will table in the coming weeks. We put in very long hours of work on this issue, even before Parliament resumed. Since we have been involved throughout the process, we should review the proposed regulations and provide our advice to the minister. It would be the least we could do.

So I don't see how we could add what my colleague is proposing to our work by the end of June, even if the subject is relevant.

[*English*]

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Perhaps I can retake the floor then.

To address Mr. Badawey's point that public safety might be the better committee, or several other committees could look at this, it's actually the Motor Vehicle Safety Act that needs to be amended. I can list the subsections for you: subsection 7(1.1) to subsection 7(1.4) of the Motor Vehicle Safety Act. I have them here. They were amended in 2012. These are the subsections that allow U-Haul to more easily transfer their trucks across the border. They have the apportionment system, and this creates a temporary entrance into Canada. This is why only this committee can take a look at it, because you can seek clarity around here from officials on the government side on how this could be amended for temporary entry of American-plated vehicles by a Canadian citizen.

As I said, I looked at different avenues. It's not strictly an import or customs issue, because there should be an import duty on American vehicles that are coming into Canada. The issue is a Canadian citizen who is not trying to import the vehicle. They just want to put better tires on their Jeep and they're putting it on their trailer. Then they get blocked at the border by border guards, who are rightfully trying to apply the law by saying, you can't do that.

I understand it is a niche issue. On the other hand, niche issues almost never get taken care of, especially when they hit several different potential departments. This one is very complex. That is why it has taken me so long to sort out the best avenue for fixing it, once the avenue of using a private member's bill simply to amend the law was taken away from me.

I do think this is the committee to do it. If you're telling me that you would consider this for an extra 15 minutes at another meeting, or that perhaps you have an amendment you want to make, for example to reduce it to one meeting, I'm pretty friendly and easy-going. This isn't the finance committee. I don't want to blow up your committee. I'm more than happy to—

Mr. Vance Badawey: You're nothing like Ron, then.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Tom Kmiec: No, I'm not. I'm the nice one from Calgary.

I'm more than happy to entertain an amendment that could be brought forward at a different meeting on this subject, but it is the Motor Vehicle Safety Act that's applied here. I'm convinced that if amendments were made to those sections that I listed, Canadians with American-plated vehicles would have a means of bringing them in without paying an import fee for vehicles they are not trying to import.

Maybe you have 15 minutes at another meeting that you'd like to dedicate for this. I know that my committee, finance, is completely booked in May, every single day of the week from Monday to Thursday, because we're going to be doing budget. You can always schedule more meetings, I think. You are the masters of your own domain. You can do that. You have the power to do so—

Mr. Jeneroux: As long as it's in public.

Mr. Kmiec: —as long as it's in public, obviously. Thank you very much. That would be nice.

I could list other sections of other acts that apply, but those are all customs issues, and you could avoid that entirely by making amendments to those sections.

I'm going to cede the floor now and hope that we either have a recorded division on this motion now or, if there's agreement on this side to perhaps return to it in another meeting, next week on Tuesday, I'd be happy to return here.

•(1255)

The Chair: I'm going to go to Mr. Badawey before I comment.

Mr. Badawey.

Mr. Vance Badawey: To his point, we could set some time aside, as you mentioned, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Are we all in favour of holding off further discussion and putting in a 15-minute block at the end of our Tuesday meeting, if Mr. Kmiec can come and speak to it? We'll all try to put our heads around it and see if there is a way to make that work.

Would that be all right? Would everybody be in agreement with that? Okay.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Just to confirm, that will be in public.

The Chair: Of course.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: That's wonderful, thank you.

The Chair: We'll go back to Mr. Benedetto.

We have four minutes. Does anybody have any questions for Mr. Benedetto?

Mr. Kmiec, you have 44 seconds left.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Since I used up so much time, I'll give it to my colleagues on the government caucus side.

The Chair: Everybody at transportation works really well.

Gagan, do you have a question?

Mr. Gagan Sikand (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): I sure do.

Thanks for returning to our committee. I was at Nav Canada, at their facility at Pearson. My riding is right next to it. They were

showing me how Aireon is going to work, because I guess they have a share in Aireon. It's pretty exciting stuff. Can drones be fitted with the technology that Aireon uses?

Mr. Tony Di Benedetto: We've spent the past several years developing technology. For us, it was all about getting regulatory approvals to do this. Our system is called Flyte. I'm not 100% sure what Aireon has built, but ours has been tested. It's been proven that it works.

Mr. Gagan Sikand: What is it called, sir?

Mr. Tony Di Benedetto: It's called Flyte. We flew in active flight paths.

Mr. Gagan Sikand: Okay. You mentioned the word "dimension", which I find pretty interesting. After seeing how the screens work in tracking the planes, I wonder, wouldn't those screens get overwhelmed, because drones are small and there are hundreds of them? How would you monitor them?

Mr. Tony Di Benedetto: An air traffic control system is what we built. It's happening around the world. Canada is not unique. The reality is that Canada is actually leading in this space today.

It's a matter of risk mitigation. We work on predefined flight paths versus having a drone fly rogue. It's a railway in the sky. Think of putting tracks in the air and you're flying to and from, back and forth, all day long. There's a lot of technology that has been incorporated to mitigate the risk.

Mr. Gagan Sikand: Thank you.

The Chair: All right.

Thank you all very much.

Mr. Jeneroux, we have one minute left.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Just before you adjourn the meeting, can I confirm that we have the minister confirmed for April 11?

The Chair: April 11 is Minister Champagne for 90 minutes, and at a later date we have Minister Garneau. We have both of them.

Mr. Vance Badawey: That's the second time you've asked that question. You'd better have a whole slew of different questions.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: I'm going to keep asking it until he shows up.

The Chair: April 11 is the date.

Thank you very much. I'm sorry for the interruption. I'm glad you had a chance to come back. If committee members have any additional questions, they can reach you directly.

Mr. Tony Di Benedetto: Thanks for having me.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

The meeting is adjourned.

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