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Chair: The Honourable Jim Carr



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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Jim Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Good morning everybody, from a very balmy Winnipeg. Everybody around here is in a good mood this morning.

Welcome to meeting number six of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of November 25, 2021. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application. The proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website, and the webcast will always show the person speaking rather than the entirety of the committee.

For members participating in person, proceed as you usually would when the whole committee is meeting in person in a committee room. Keep in mind the Board of Internal Economy's guidelines for mask use and health protocols.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. If you are on the video conference, please click on the microphone icon to unmute yourself. For those in the room, your microphone will be controlled as normal by the proceedings and verification officers.

When speaking, please speak slowly and clearly. When you are not speaking, your mike should be on mute. I would remind you that all comments by members should be addressed through the chair.

With regard to a speaking list, the committee clerk will advise the chair on whose hands are up to the best of his ability. We will do the best we can to maintain a consolidated order of speaking for all members, whether they are participating virtually or in person.

First, I would like to inform [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] of the motion last Thursday, February 3, 2022. After consulting with all parties in this committee, I have instructed the clerk to extend an invitation to representatives of GoFundMe and FINTRAC to appear before this committee this Thursday from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. Further information will be provided as it becomes available.

Pursuant to the order adopted by the House of Commons on Tuesday, December 7, 2021, and the motion adopted on Tuesday, December 14, 2021, the committee is resuming its study of gun control, illegal arms trafficking and the increase in gun crimes committed by members of street gangs.

With us today by video conference, from the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, we have Chief Evan Bray, [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] and from the Toronto Police Service, we have Myron Demkiw, deputy chief, and Lauren Pogue, staff superintendent.

Up to five minutes will be given for opening remarks, after which we will proceed with rounds of questions. Witnesses may split their allotted time for opening remarks with other witnesses, if they so desire.

Welcome to all of you.

I now invite Chief Evan [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] five minutes.

Chief, the floor is yours.

Chief Evan Bray (Chief of Police, Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and members of this distinguished committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. I co-chair a CACP special purpose committee on firearms that's been tasked to study growing concerns related to gun violence in Canada from a public safety perspective.

The debate on firearms, as we know, is a very polarizing one that can be highly divisive and emotionally charged on all sides of the issue. The CACP believes in balancing the privileges of individual Canadians with the broader rights of society. As police leaders, we place a priority on public safety and the protection of the most vulnerable among us. The committee is comprised of numerous experts from across Canada, working together to understand the complexities of firearm crime in our country. The CACP is working closely with organizations like Public Safety Canada, Canada Border Services Agency, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the Canadian Firearms Program.

Combining our expertise in guns and gangs, investigative firearms tracing, statistics and other things opens the door to enhanced collaboration and information sharing. The committee identified four key themes that will help guide our work over the next couple of years: strategic approaches, legislative initiatives, education and prevention, and data collection and information sharing. Over the past two years we've provided feedback on firearm-related legislation, such as bills C-71 and C-21, to improve what is a strict and responsible form of gun ownership in Canada.

While we should always strive for continuous improvement with legislation, we also need to find ways of reducing gun violence in our communities using the best evidence-based practices. How crime guns make their way into our communities, the types of guns being used for criminal purposes, the perpetrators using guns to commit crimes, and other areas related to firearms can differ greatly across Canada. To ascertain how, when, why and where firearms are being used to commit crimes in Canada, we need good data. To this end, the special purpose committee on firearms worked with the Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics to ensure that good firearms data was being collected consistently across Canada. For example, in 2021, we set new standard definitions for firearms terminology related to shootings and crime guns. We also amended the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey to include new firearm codes that distinguish between seized, stolen and recovered firearms. The first results will be expected in the fall of this year.

Two large areas requiring further work are the origin of crime guns and firearm tracing in Canada. With our partners, we're conducting a study on the origins of crime guns to monitor trends and examine the effectiveness of policies and interventions. In parallel, we are also working to increase the uptake in capacity to complete firearm tracing. We want to understand the benefits and challenges with respect to the existing process in Canada to better inform operational steps and address legislative gaps related to gun crime. The issue is not law-abiding Canadians who want to own firearms. The issue really is people who are involved in criminal activity who are obtaining firearms through illegal means, such as cross-border trafficking, theft from legal gun owners and straw purchases. The absence of purchase records effectively stymies the ability of police to trace non-restricted firearms that have been used in a crime. Firearm tracing can assist in identifying the suspect in a crime and the criminal sourcing of that gun and any trafficking networks.

The disturbing trend in gun violence is largely related to gangs, lower-level street gangs and more sophisticated organized crime groups, so to stop it requires a whole-of-society approach. It starts with education and prevention early on to address the root causes that lead people to the gang lifestyle in the first place. It's about exit strategies for people in those lifestyles and leading them towards a healthier path. Finally, it's about enforcement and ensuring that we're going after the criminal elements who are perpetrating violence in our communities. We want to use proper investigative techniques, have them in place and have appropriate consequences for those who commit acts of violence.

In conclusion, we respect the debate that is occurring and understand the various positions on this issue. It's not our goal to punish law-abiding citizens for the actions of criminals. Our goal simply is to ensure the safety and security of all Canadians.

Thank you.

• (1110)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Chief.

Chief Dale McFee, I now invite you to make an opening statement of up to five minutes.

Chief Dale McFee (Chief of Police, Edmonton Police Service): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would certainly agree with what Chief Bray said about the problem not being our law-abiding citizens in the disturbing trends on gangs and the data.

Here are just a few opening remarks to give you some of the statistics we're seeing, from both the Edmonton Police Service and the province. Last year we had 41 homicides. Fourteen of those homicides involved a firearm and one involved both a firearm and an edged weapon. The racial backgrounds of the 20 people responsible for these homicides were eight white, seven indigenous and five Black, so it's across the diversity of our community. Seventeen of the accused had a criminal record. In seven of the homicides, the victim and the suspect were not known to each other. In 21 of the homicides, the victim and the suspect did know each other. Twelve of the homicides were gang-related and 19 were not. In nine of the homicides that are currently under investigation, gang involvement is still unknown. Seven homicides, for sure, were related to the drug trade, which the statistics will show. For 12 of the homicides it's still not known if there was drug usage. One of the 41 homicides was domestic violence, and four were family-related violence.

In relation to the number of shootings that Edmonton had, in 2021 we had 150 shootings. In 2020 we had 158. We were down a bit last year. This year to date we've had 10.

We talk about firearms seized, which is also something we pay close attention to. In 2017 we had 1,016, and this past year we had 16,033 guns seized. You can certainly see a trend upwards in relation to that area.

In the province of Alberta, which we track, obviously, as all police services do, through our criminal intelligence service, 503 shooting events were reported, which is down 5%. The most common level of injury with shooting events was bodily injury in 35% of them, and 73% of these shooting events were believed to be targeted attacks.

In Alberta, 546 firearms were stolen and there were 114 break and enters. Obviously, a lot of these were being acquired through break and enters.

The other thing I will just highlight is that over the last year in Alberta we had 53 trafficking of firearms investigations, which was up 20%. Handguns were found to be trafficked most often, with 110 of those, followed by rifles and shotguns. There were 63 offenders identified as being either buyers or sellers of [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]. Seventeen potential straw purchases were identified as well.

One last thing is that we also did some research in relation to the drug patterns in the Edmonton area through our research team. We've seen a real shift. In 2007 the main drug was cocaine. You saw very little meth, opioids or heroin. It remained the trend until 2014. By far the drug we most often recognize now is meth, which as you all know is associated with some significant violence as well as being significantly attractive to our gangs. Obviously with that we've seen a real increase of opioids and increased use of heroin. Just for information's sake, it seems like cocaine is no longer very prominent in our community.

Although we continue to research this, those things are obviously closely related to some of the trends we're seeing. This shows some distinct changes from when the legalization of marijuana came into effect and those drug patterns changed. Not that it was the indicator; it just goes to show that the stronger drugs are certainly more involved than they ever were.

We obviously have lots of things to talk about in relation to things that also could be done, but I'll leave that for the questions.

I'll leave that as my opening comments. Again, thank you very much for having us all here today to discuss this very important topic.

• (1115)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Chief McFee.

I now turn to [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

Sir, you now have the floor for up to five minutes. It's all yours.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

Mr. Myron Demkiw (Deputy Chief, Toronto Police Service): Good morning, and thank you, Chair and committee members, for this opportunity to address you today.

I'll spend a few minutes speaking about the proliferation of illegal firearms—

The Chair: Hello. Is there a point of order? I'm hearing some voices.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Yes, Mr. Chair, I was the one who raised the point of order.

When you spoke, the sound was intermittent, which makes it difficult for the interpreters to do their job. The sound also cut out as Mr. McFee made his opening remarks. So there is no interpretation.

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. Michaud is reporting a problem with the translation. It is breaking up.

Clerk, could you please look into that and report back to us right away?

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Wassim Bouanani): Yes, sir.

• (1115)

(Pause)

• (1120)

The Clerk: Mr. Chair, it looks like there are some issues with the Zoom platform in the building. We are looking into it. We can proceed, if you wish. If there's a problem, we can stop again and check with our technicians.

The Chair: We'll try it. If there's a translation issue, then we'll have to suspend until it's sorted out. Let's hope that it has already been sorted out.

I will turn back to you, Deputy Chief Demkiw. Let's try again. You're starting from the top of the clock. Let's see how it goes.

Mr. Myron Demkiw: Good morning, and thank you, Chair and committee members, for the opportunity to address you here today.

I'll spend a few minutes speaking about the proliferation of illegal firearms and, in particular, illegal handguns and the violence perpetrated in Toronto using these firearms. I'll also touch on recent trends and highlight a number of recently implemented strategies to enhance our prevention, intervention and enforcement efforts.

Shootings and homicides continue to be a concern in Toronto. Just last year, we saw a 20% increase in the number of homicides, and of the 85 murders committed in 2021, 46 were shooting homicides. The traumatic impact of gun violence on communities is unacceptable and the number of firearms-related incidents far too high, and we are seeing emerging trends that are of concern.

There were 408 shootings in our city last year, resulting in 209 victims. In 2021, 86% of crime handguns that could be sourced were from the United States. The percentage of criminal handguns that are sourced in the United States has continued to rise since 2019.

There is increasing concern over the involvement of younger persons in shootings and the risk that our youth face from gun violence in Toronto. In 2021, the average age of persons involved in shootings, either as an accused or suspect, or as a person of interest, dropped from 25 years of age to 20 years of age. The number of shell casings seized at shootings has risen significantly in 2021. We have seized 2,405 shell casings at crime scenes, representing a 48% increase over the previous year.

The Toronto Police Service has undertaken a number of initiatives to respond in a more effective and holistic way to gun and gang activity. Our approach is rooted in our legal obligation to deliver community-centred policing, conduct investigations and enforcement and, importantly, prevent offences and assist victims.

We understand the social costs and unintended consequences that enforcement tactics can have on residents, families and communities. As a result, the Toronto police have focused on strategic enforcement, which is squarely aimed at the most impactful and violent offenders.

Community members and organizations have repeatedly called for greater coordination between police, community supports, city resources and all levels of government. Additionally, it has been recognized that getting upstream of the need for enforcement must be a continued priority of any sustainable policing model.

The Toronto Police Service has partnered with key city representatives and developed an executive leadership table to facilitate greater public safety collaboration. Additionally, we've introduced a strategic framework in regard to gun and gang activity to provide a coordinated, multisectoral approach in partnership with our communities and guided by the City of Toronto community safety and well-being plan, known as "SafeTO".

Introduced in 2021, SafeTO is a city-led collaborative plan that includes the development of a comprehensive multi-sector gun violence reduction plan, which is to address the complex challenges posed by gun and gang activity. The goal is to shift from reliance on a reactive and siloed response towards a model of integrated prevention and intervention that tackles upstream root causes.

The Toronto Police Service has committed to additional prevention and intervention initiatives with the creation of our integrated gang prevention task force, designed to offer those wishing to escape the gang lifestyle the proper resources, guidance and mentorship to do so.

In conclusion, gun violence and gang activity continue to be the most significant public safety concern of people in Toronto. This criminal behaviour has a direct impact on victims, their families and our neighbourhoods as a whole.

Community safety is a shared responsibility that requires coordination and collaboration between all levels of government, the police, communities and social services to address the complex root causes that lead individuals to use a criminal firearm in the first place. There's a need to not only stop the proliferation of illegal guns from the United States, but also address underlying causes of violence resulting in trauma in our neighbourhoods.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

• (1125)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I now would like to open the floor for questions.

At the top of the first round, I would call on Ms. Dancho.

Ms. Dancho, you have six minutes for your questioning slot. The floor is yours.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): I would like to thank all the chiefs of police and deputy chiefs of police for coming before committee today to discuss this critical issue impacting your cities and the residents of Canada. I thank you first and foremost for your diligence and your efforts, and for the efforts of your

officers in putting their lives on the line to keep our communities safe.

I have a number of questions for all of you. I will start with Deputy Chief Demkiw.

I was very impressed with your remarks in terms of your outreach to the community and looking at a community level. It sounds to me like you were really talking about youth diversion as a primary tactic to combat gun and gang violence. Could you comment a bit further on the resources the Toronto police and other police forces need to really go after youth when they're...?

What we're hearing at committee is that when you get a youth who's doing petty crime, maybe stealing a car or breaking and entering, they're as young as eight or nine or 10 years old when they're starting to do that. They kind of get on that path of gang violence. Can you comment on that? What resources are needed to invest in more youth diversion programs?

Mr. Myron Demkiw: Thank you very much for the opportunity to discuss this a little further.

We are fortunate to have partnered with our city subject matter experts, who are leading SafeTO, our community safety and well-being plan. This 10-year plan is really driving a change in thinking. It's a transformative change in how we approach these issues. It really is a collaborative process. We're bringing the key areas of social service, health care, justice and police business all together in a collaborative way. We are just in the early stages of developing what will be a comprehensive multi-sector gun violence reduction plan under SafeTO. It's literally at council now, getting the budget approvals necessary to make that happen.

In our learnings on developing SafeTO, particularly in the police involvement in some of the research and activities we have done along the way, I think you have really spoken to the key issue: We have to find a way to get to the youth sooner and in a way that's relevant to their specific needs. We know from our gang prevention work, in our town hall meetings and our engagement, that the community has spoken very clearly. There are some major strategies that they believe would help.

I can provide the top five strategies from the feedback we got. They include opportunities for mentoring, programs in recreation, job provision and job training. Certainly, there has been feedback on police being involved to provide a safe environment in communities. Tutoring is something that young people and communities have identified as being particularly necessary to help stop the path and the cycle.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you. I have only a few minutes left, but I appreciate the five-pronged approach.

You mentioned that this 10-year plan is to really work with the community, listen to their needs and collaborate across various jurisdictions—social health, police and others. Can you give us an estimate of how much that's going to cost? What is the ask to city council?

Mr. Myron Demkiw: The ask to city council on that is actually coming from city staff. Unfortunately, I don't have the specifics in front of me.

I can tell you that there is a need for sustained investment where we support the integration of effort between social services, city agencies, and police and justice practitioners.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Okay, so you would agree that this would be the best investment of resources. Is there anywhere else that you would invest resources? Would it be more police services, more social services...? We have a few minutes left. Can you perhaps outline a few areas that you think would best prevent gun violence now and in the long term? Where would you put taxpayer dollars?

• (1130)

Mr. Myron Demkiw: To start, as we have just touched on, it would be efforts to get at the front end or upstream of what leads young people to pick up a firearm in the first place. That we've covered. As it relates to some policing efforts, I think there certainly is a need, as we've touched on, for greater tracing, greater analysis and greater integration of data as it relates to what that teaches us, so that we can deal with the flow of firearms onto our streets from a law enforcement perspective. Then there is the provision of support for victims and those impacted after the fact in the recovery and sustainable recovery in our communities.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: I appreciate that very much. I really appreciate how much thought and effort all police associations across Canada.... Winnipeg is focusing on a very community-based approach as well that is having great results.

The reason I ask about the dollar value is this. We're seeing the federal government now looking to do the gun buyback program, so to speak, which will cost upwards of a billion dollars. Some say it will be three billion. They are proposing a provincial handgun ban, and a billion dollars to go along with that. I'm not hearing a single police association across the country saying that this is the best use of taxpayer dollars. They are outlining things that you're outlining as well.

Again, can you comment, in these last 30 seconds, on more where you think the best use of taxpayer dollars should be going?

Mr. Myron Demkiw: I'll address what you just addressed around where the guns that are harming our communities are coming from. They're not domestically sourced. They are internationally sourced. Our problem in Toronto is handguns from the United States.

Investing in what you described is certainly not going to deal with the crime problem we're facing in Toronto as it relates to criminal handguns and the use of criminal handguns. We believe an investment upstream is a very valuable focus of resources.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now, I would like to invite Mr. McKinnon to take six minutes to pose his questions.

The floor is yours, Mr. McKinnon.

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Thank you to all the witnesses for being here. We appreciate your testimony. It's most helpful.

You've offered a great deal of data. It's sort of like drinking from a firehose here.

Certainly some of our focus in this study is on gun crimes committed by members of street gangs, organized crime and so forth. It seems to me, from the testimony, that this is where the preponderance of the violence is coming from. I'd like to verify that. What proportion of gun-related violence arises from domestic situations, or people who were not previously involved in a criminal lifestyle but who suddenly take it upon themselves to make an ideological or religious attack on some group?

Perhaps we can start with the Toronto Police Service.

Could you give us some insight on that?

Mr. Myron Demkiw: When it comes to the gun violence the city's experiencing, I can tell you that we are seeing more guns being fired and the discharge of firearms in public spaces, not in people's homes and not in confined spaces. It's difficult to draw a clear line between what is a gang shooting and what is a shooting that's drug related or related to protection of turf or illicit business. We know we have a serious issue with respect to the proliferation of firearms among persons who are not readily known to be gang members or associated to gangs.

[*Technical difficulty—Editor*] more and more shootings and more and more firearms recovered from persons who are not necessarily directly related to gangs, as we identify gangs or have the intelligence to identify them. That speaks to one of the intelligence challenges we face—the ability to understand precisely who is legally to be identified as being in a gang. We know that the proliferation of guns is becoming more widespread, and we see from our demographics as it relates to age, that the age is dropping significantly. We've recently had shootings involving extremely young people. It's a very concerning trend.

As far as how many are domestic violence, I don't have it broken down that way, but I can tell you that the predominant problems are shootings out on the street between rivals or persons with no apparent connection to one another.

Mr. Ron McKinnon: I'll extend the same question to the Edmonton Police Service, please.

Chief, go ahead.

• (1135)

Chief Dale McFee: There is certainly an increase in relation to gangs, but as Deputy Demkiw said, sometimes the data and the correlation.... We obviously have to get this right. As I said earlier, 12 of our homicides in Edmonton were related to gang activity, but out of that, there are at least nine that quite likely could be.... There is also a strong correlation to the drug trade in relation to that as well. Those things are a big concern for us, for sure. It's a smaller number when it actually gets to domestic violence, as you've asked. I think we had only one particular case in relation to a homicide.

Certainly our target...and what we're seeing as trends here is a bit disturbing. In some of our homeless camps, certainly in Edmonton and in Calgary, we're seeing some gang infiltration in relation to the drug trade and in relation to firearms as well. That's another growing concern that seems to be trending upwards as well. It's something that we obviously monitor. We obviously have systems in place in relation to that.

Our ALERT model, a combined law-enforcement model for the province of Alberta, has made some big impacts here in relation to that, but it's a trend that has certainly caused the greatest amount of concern because it's organized and, as mentioned earlier, there are a lot of youth involved.

As we know, it comes back to that whole thing that when you deal with a gang, you also have to deal with the feeder system and ensure that you take that out as well. That is the one we probably pay the closest amount of attention to because of the random shootings. We know that when random shootings happen, obviously innocent victims often get hurt.

Mr. Ron McKinnon: I'm getting a sense of that, but I'll extend the same question to the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police and Chief Bray. If you wish to respond to that, that's great. Alternatively, or as well, perhaps you could address the question of the proliferation of firearms.

There's been some discussion that as we interdict firearms from the illegal market, the price goes way up. There's some thought that this might fuel the business, because it makes it much more lucrative to sell firearms. On the other hand, it's more difficult, perhaps, to buy them.

Chief Bray, I wonder if you could opine on one or both of those questions.

Chief Evan Bray: In general terms, in the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police work that is going on, we know there are gun problems across Canada. However, they somewhat vary by region. The types of guns being used and how they are being accessed or are falling into criminal hands varies throughout the country.

We need to work in ways whereby we can have laws and legislative change that makes it tough and prevents firearms from falling into the hands of criminals with safe storage laws, record-keeping and those types of things.

I think it's important to understand that you're hearing—

The Chair: I'm sorry. You're going to have to wrap it up in 10 seconds.

Chief Evan Bray: Okay. A very strong theme is that most people who are committing crime with guns are criminals who don't have the ability to possess them. It's not law-abiding gun owners who are committing the majority of these crimes.

The Chair: Thank you.

I would now invite Ms. Michaud to ask her questions. She has a six-minute slot.

Ms. Michaud.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the witnesses for being here today. We appreciate it.

I'll turn to Mr. Bray from the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police.

Mr. Bray, thank you for your address. It's always nice to have it a little bit beforehand, because we can follow the leads that you give us.

You mentioned that we need to find ways to reduce gun violence in communities “using the best evidence-based practices”. Could you elaborate on this a little more and tell us what those practices are?

[*English*]

Chief Evan Bray: It speaks again to some of the practices that work in areas that are sometimes geographically different from others.

I've referred to that because the Lower Mainland of B.C. or Metro Toronto might look different from the prairie provinces when it comes to the sourcing of these guns and the types of guns that are being used.

Handguns are a good example. We see handguns in Saskatchewan, but predominantly the crime is committed by long-barrelled rifles. It's very similar in Alberta and in Manitoba. A lot of those guns are coming from break and enters. The work we need to do there comes down to education on safe storage and not having those guns stolen from a farmhouse and then converted and used in crimes, whereas we're working closely with CBSA in the Metro Toronto area and Lower Mainland because of the high importation of guns from across the border.

It really is an approach that has to look at the region of Canada and the types of challenges we have there.

I'll just quickly say, too, that we can't overstate the importance of seeing the correlation between drugs and drug-related activity and firearms. They are intertwined. People are committing offences because they're involved in the drug world. The drug world drives a lot of violent firearms-related crime in our country. People committing the crimes often have a serious addiction problem, which obviously just perpetuates this and causes it to continue to be a problem in the country.

• (1140)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you.

When you talk about safe storage, are you referring to legal firearms? Do you think there should be laws around this storage and that the government and police should be involved? Where should the money come from to support this?

[*English*]

Chief Evan Bray: Generally speaking, a lot of laws place restrictions on legal gun owners. I'm not going to say that there isn't a problem from time to time with legal gun owners. We have straw purchasing, for example, which is a situation in which someone who has a licence to possess and purchase guns purchases a large number of them and then sells them illegally on the black market. That sort of thing does happen, but generally speaking, most of the laws we create are not going to be followed by the people who are committing the crimes with the guns. That's really what it comes down to.

I had this conversation on the notion of a ban with Chief McFee earlier today. A ban is only as good as the people who are willing to follow it. I said to Chief McFee that we have a ban on murders in Canada, yet, sadly, we still have homicides happening all the time.

We need to recognize and understand that we need to look at the element of people who are committing these crimes. Yes, we can stiffen and embolden the laws for law-abiding citizens, and we can try to limit access that way, but we have to look at the criminals, in some cases the root cause of why they are committing the crimes, and, on a higher level, what we can do to really come after them from an enforcement standpoint.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: You talked about a ban, and you also talked in your speech about bills C-71 and C-21. In your view, legislative gaps in relation to gun crime need to be closed.

In your view, what are these gaps?

As parliamentarians, how can we contribute to the debate and propose legislative solutions to the government?

[*English*]

Chief Evan Bray: I'll just speak quickly about the committee I work on. Firearm tracing is something that needs to be enhanced greatly in this country, yet, in most individual police organizations, the focus on firearms has to do with the offences that are being committed with them.

In Edmonton, any of our major communities or our smaller communities, when a firearm is used in the commission of an offence,

we try to solve that offence. We hold the offender accountable. We seize the firearm. We get it through court purposes, but on the notion of tracing the firearm and where it came from, its origin and all of that work that has to be done, most organizations aren't set up for that to be their focus.

Again, on the work we are doing from a CACP level, we need to have some federal funding and resources allocated to tracing so that we can make it mandatory across Canada. I think that will effectively allow us to dig into this problem and understand where they are coming from and what we can do to prevent it.

The Chair: Ms. Michaud, you have 20 seconds left to spend.

Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you. Your comments are very enlightening.

I will speak again later about screening and gaps.

I would also like to know if there is sufficient collaboration between the different police forces, the Canada Border Services Agency and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much. There will be other occasions.

Now I would ask Mr. MacGregor to take the floor.

Mr. MacGregor, you have a six-minute slot. The floor is yours.

• (1145)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Chief Bray, maybe I'll start with you. I've listened to your opening statement and some of the answers you have given to my colleagues, and you really made that connection between the illegal firearms trade and the drug trade. Two years ago, in 2020, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police came out with what I thought was a very bold statement calling for decriminalization of simple possession.

I need to give a shout-out to my colleague, MP Gord Johns, who represents the riding of Courtenay—Alberni. He has brought forward private member's bill C-216, which would amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, as your association called for two years ago, specifically section 4.

Can you maybe just talk a little about why the association made that statement two years ago? If we were to move toward decriminalization for small amounts of possession, how would that free up police resources to really tackle the more prominent issues we have been discussing at our meeting here today?

Chief Evan Bray: The position on decriminalization with regard to simple possession is trying to understand that putting handcuffs on someone who suffers with an addiction is not going to solve the problems. It's going to temporarily take them out of the stream, but that's all it's going to do. Unless there's a way we can get them the help they need, recidivism is going to happen and they're going to be back in that stream.

Often, people who possess the amount of drugs for simple possession are fuelling their own substance use disorder. We've said before that, many times, they're not criminals by nature. That's not to say they're not involved in crime or highly susceptible to being victimized, just by virtue of the fact that they're in that drug world.

If we can get them the help they need, which often means.... Drugs and addiction are not necessarily a root cause. The trauma that causes people to become addicted is the root cause. It is a big process and the people who need help have to want help as much as the people who are giving help, but if we can find a way to help them get healthy.... It's not even necessarily that it frees up resources to do something else, but what it does is lighten the load in the long run. People getting healthy means they're less likely to come into contact with police, which frees up police resources to continue to do the other work in the community.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: I appreciate that. Thank you, Chief Bray.

I'll turn to Deputy Chief Demkiw from the Toronto Police Service. You talked about the trend you're seeing in the increase in shell casings retrieved at crime scenes. Can you extrapolate from that what the evidence is pointing to?

Is it pointing to people using larger magazines? Are they trying to illegally convert weapons into automatic fire mode? What are you extrapolating from that type of evidence?

Mr. Myron Demkiw: There are a few things. First of all, the amount of ammunition available to illegal gun users is extraordinary, so each of those shell casings represents a projectile that flew in our city. That does not account for the use of revolvers, which don't produce shell casings at the crime scene. The amount of ammunition available is definitely an issue.

You mentioned overcapacity magazines. Our analysis shows that our seizure rate of overcapacity magazines has risen threefold, so there's definitely an issue on the availability of the prohibited devices. We have recovered handguns that were modified for automatic fire with some internal manipulation, which is a growing concern, because we're seeing those being seized as well.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Deputy Chief, you've talked a lot about the efforts the Toronto Police Service is making in gang recruitment prevention and so on. The communities where gangs find some of their most fertile recruitment have traditionally had a lack of trust with police services.

Can you talk more about how Toronto police officers are rebuilding that trust? Is it more of a presence and availability so that [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] of seeing your friendly neighbourhood police officer who is more open to being proactively approached?

• (1150)

Mr. Myron Demkiw: One of the key focus points we are engaged on is investing in our neighbourhood community officers. It's not as simple as placing an officer there. It's a lot more than that. We need the knowledge, skills and abilities in our police officers to work in those communities and to understand the unique needs of the individual communities.

This is a city of 140 neighbourhoods. Each of those neighbourhoods has unique needs and unique situations they are living with. We're identifying that our neighbourhood officer program is one of the most important things we're doing by investing in communities and providing a trusting relationship-building opportunity in an effort to rebuild the trust that we know is challenging.

As I mentioned, we've also taken a look at strategic enforcement and recalibrated how we do our enforcement, recognizing the social costs. We are very much focused on our enforcement being geared towards the most impactful offenders and having the least impact on the community while we do our enforcement. We're very conscious of that.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Colleagues, we're moving into the second round of questioning. There won't be enough time to the top of the clock, so we'll have to divide the time as best as we can towards the end of the second round. Let's [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

Mr. Lloyd, you have five minutes. If you could make that a bit less, that would make the decision at the end of the hour a bit easier. The floor is yours now.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): I'll try, Mr. Chair.

My first question is for Chief Demkiw.

If the federal government announced a plan to spend a billion dollars to buy back hard drugs off the street, would that have an impact on the demand for hard drugs on the streets?

Mr. Myron Demkiw: I don't think that would necessarily solve the health issue that people are struggling with in their addictions. We need to get to the root issues, as was mentioned by others today, as they relate to why people are addicted. Safe supply and wraparound services are all part of that conversation.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Of course. If the government's policy was that they wanted to buy hard drugs off the street as a means to reduce the proliferation of drugs on the street, would that be an effective tool to get hard drugs off the street?

Mr. Myron Demkiw: I do not believe it would be an effective tool.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Then why should it be effective for gun policy?

Mr. Myron Demkiw: I would not suggest it was effective for gun policy. The City of Toronto's experience is that guns that are being used in crime are not from law-abiding citizens. They're guns being smuggled from the United States. Those engaged in handling those firearms are not law-abiding, licensed gun owners; they are criminals with no firearms licence.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I will pivot to my next angle here. We're talking about where best taxpayer money can be spent on preventing crime. I believe diversion is key, especially getting youth out of the system. We've heard previous testimony at this committee that, basically, our prisons are being used as gang recruitment and training centres.

I was wondering what some recommendations are on ways that we can disrupt organized crime's work in the prisons.

Mr. Myron Demkiw: If that's directed to me, I would suggest that one of the key elements is, again, information and intelligence to understand the relationships that exist in the prisons, to disrupt the ability of gangs to exert their influence within the prison system. It's the ability to understand the intelligence that we need to disrupt the dynamics that play out in the prison population.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Is there a role for sentencing? When people go into prison, if they're in prison for a shorter period of time.... If people are coming in and out of the prisons with more frequency because sentences are being reduced, does that increase or decrease the ability of organized crime to effectively train and recruit people in prisons?

Chief Dale McFee: I can take that.

I used to be the deputy minister in charge of corrections and policing as well, so I think the best thing you can do right there is sort intake. As Deputy Chief Myron has said, get the right people in jail and hold the people responsible. The whole thing we've talked about.... Edmonton Police Services reallocated \$38 million of their budget into community safety and well being, and partnered with social workers—we've hired social workers—and mental health workers and navigators to take out the vulnerable. The serious people, though, in relation to the trafficking, etc., actually need to go to jail and be rehabilitated in jail.

When you mix the two together, when you mix low-risk and high-risk, they all become high-risk, so sorting that intake is absolutely essential. Having a police service that's balanced on both approaches is absolutely critical, so you need investments—

• (1155)

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I am going to ask a final question, so I can give some time back to committee.

We heard witness testimony indicate that if sentences are very short it's very difficult to rehabilitate people. Is that your experience, that longer sentences make rehabilitation more effective?

Chief Dale McFee: It depends on what the offence is, but there is absolutely more time in a rehabilitation setting. The other piece to that, though, as you mentioned earlier, is that you also have to get the people out of the system who shouldn't be in jail, and let that system actually do what it was designed to do. Right now, it's just a mishmash of everything in there.

It's a real opportunity, for sure.

The Chair: Thank you, Chief, and thank you, Mr. Lloyd.

Mr. Chiang, I'm going to ask you to be equally generous, even a little bit more generous.

Why don't we say that you'll have three minutes? The floor is yours now.

Mr. Paul Chiang (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is directed to Chief McFee.

We know that positive relationships between police officers and the communities are important. Could you provide some information on gang prevention strategies and partnerships with local community organizations to link accused offenders and their families with various services in your city?

Chief Dale McFee: Yes, for sure. There are several. As I mentioned, we reallocated \$38 million to work in the community safety and well-being space. We just did a commitment to action to build that relationship. We've had thousands of interactions with a lot of our marginalized communities.

If you think about it on a different side, when you take out somebody who's drug trafficking in a gang, there's always a family member associated who will fill that vacancy. The reality is, what you need to do is deal with the offender, as mentioned in the last one, but you also have to deal with the feeder system with partners in the community who can help stabilize that environment to ensure the feeder system doesn't....

If you just tackle this all at one end, all on the enforcement side or all on the prevention side, there's absolutely no chance that you can make an impact in this.

What we're fighting.... What Edmonton has done, by hitting this on four different areas and getting the community involved in relation to some capacity building, is starting to pay off. Those relationships, to your point, are critical, but the other piece to this, equally as critical, is to take out that serious, violent disruption that is often gang-associated, as Chief Bray and Deputy Chief Demkiw said, which is most often the case. It's balanced enforcement with community safety and well-being.

Mr. Paul Chiang: My next question is for the deputy chief of the Toronto Police Service.

The Toronto Police Service conducted a gun buyback program. During this period, over 2,200 long guns and over 900 handguns were retrieved. According to a Global News article, officials said it was the police services' most successful program in Toronto's history. Could you speak about the success of this program and how other police services may benefit from a similar program, Deputy?

Mr. Myron Demkiw: I would say the success may be quantitative, in terms of the number of guns turned in. That may have made some tangible difference in collecting guns that otherwise were unsafely stored in attics or behind walls in the basement, but when it comes to the use of criminal handguns and the proliferation of handguns, that is not where the successes came from. It's not from that kind of buyback program.

The buyback program, frankly, was for the most part people turning in guns that were never going to be part of the criminal element to begin with.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Michaud, we're virtually out of time, but I want to give everybody at least time for one quick question. The floor is yours, Ms. Michaud, and you have 30 seconds.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Bray, what are the main obstacles to combatting illegal gun trafficking, as seen by you and the various police forces on the ground?

[*English*]

Chief Evan Bray: Very quickly, I would say we need to enhance the communication between organizations like CBSA, the Canadian National Firearms Tracing Centre and others that do this work. Also, we need to invest money in the more global issue of firearms in Canada.

Each police service does a good job of handling the crimes happening in its jurisdiction or community, but we need to also look at it globally and enhance good data so that we can make good decisions and try to restrict firearms and these crimes happening in Canada.

• (1200)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Evan.

I'm sorry, everybody. This is just the way it is. We could spend unlimited time, but we don't have it.

Mr. MacGregor, how efficient can you be with one minute?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: I can be very quick, Chair.

To the Toronto Police Service, we have seen in the news lately reports of people 3D printing components, of the use of ghost guns, etc. Can you talk a little more about what your intelligence services have found on that and what kind of trend we can expect in the years ahead?

Mr. Myron Demkiw: It is something we're certainly conscious of, but we're not seeing it in the volume we are with other issues. As that technology evolves, it's something for us to keep an eye on. It is something we're very much aware of.

The Chair: Thank you, all, very much.

Mr. Shipley, can you ask a question in one minute?

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): I'd already put my stuff away. I'm sorry. I thought we were ending it right there, Chair, but I could certainly do that.

As a quick question for Mr. Demkiw, acting deputy chief: You mentioned that 86% of gun crimes could be sourced. Why can the other guns not be sourced? What prevents that from happening?

Mr. Myron Demkiw: It's the obliteration of serial numbers, for example, where we're not able to recover the serial number—lack of markings, effectively. The criminal element takes opportunities to obliterate serial numbers from time to time, and we're not able to restore them.

Mr. Doug Shipley: Very quickly, if 86% can be sourced and you know they're from the United States, would you have any estimate—and I know it's a guesstimate—on what the total percentage would be that would be sourced from the U.S.?

Mr. Myron Demkiw: For us, it's 86% of all criminal handguns—

Mr. Doug Shipley: No, but those are the ones that could be sourced, and I'm saying the ones that couldn't be sourced.... If you had to guess at those other ones that couldn't be sourced—

Mr. Myron Demkiw: Oh. I would suggest that for the 14% that's left, the vast majority will likely be American. There might be some Canadian. I can't say that's not the case. We've seen that, but we know that the United States continues to be the issue.

Mr. Doug Shipley: It's very close to 100%.

Mr. Myron Demkiw: Yes.

Mr. Doug Shipley: All right. Thank you, sir.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Noormohamed, you have the luxury of 60 seconds, and they're yours, starting now.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.): I would like to give notice of a motion, please, as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study on the rise of ideologically motivated violent extremism (IMVE) in Canada; that this study include an investigation into the influence of foreign and domestic actors in funding and supporting violent extremist ideologies in Canada; that the study include the use of social media to fuel the IMVE movement; that the committee explore the impact of anonymous and foreign donations funding IMVE, including through crowdfunding sites; that the committee invite representatives from GiveSendGo to appear; that the committee further look at the role of payment processors in preventing the funding of IMVE and invite representatives from PayPal and Stripe to appear; that evidence and documentation received by the committee from upcoming appearances of representatives from GoFundMe and FINTRAC be included in this study; that this study include Canada's national security organizations and police involved in monitoring, countering and responding to IMVE threats; that the committee report its findings to the House; and that, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the government table a comprehensive response to the report.

I'm just giving notice. We don't have to debate this today. I'll send it to the clerk in a few minutes. I want to thank Mr. MacGregor for his contributions and his partnership in helping to put this together.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Notice has been given. The motion then has to be translated and will be up for discussion at our next meeting, which is on Thursday.

Thank you very much. That ends this round of questioning, and it ends this hour, plus a few more minutes, but not very many more.

On behalf of members of the committee, I want to thank the witnesses. Know how grateful we are for the work you do on the front lines, how difficult it is in a moment when tempers are pretty high and anxiety is on the rise in our country, and you see it, you feel it, you know it and you have to cope with it. Thank you, on behalf of all members of the committee and, through this committee, all members of Parliament, for the wonderful work you do. We appreciate it.

Colleagues, we need to take a short break because the panel is changing. That means the clerk and his technical people will have to do some sound checks.

We'll suspend for—I'm hoping—only five minutes.

• (1200) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1210)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order.

With us for this second hour we have, by video conference, as an individual, Robert Henry, assistant professor, department of indigenous studies, University of Saskatchewan; Dr. Caillin Langmann, assistant clinical professor, department of medicine at McMaster University; and Stan Tu'Inukuafe, co-founder of STR8 UP: 10,000 Little Steps to Healing Inc. I'm sorry, I probably did not do justice to that beautiful name. I'll try to do better next time.

You have up to five minutes for opening remarks, after which we will proceed with rounds of questions. Witnesses may share their time with other witnesses if they wish.

Welcome to all of you. I now invite Mr. Henry to make an opening statement of up to five minutes.

• (1215)

Mr. Robert Henry (Assistant Professor, Department of Indigenous Studies, University of Saskatchewan, As an Individual): Good afternoon, everybody.

First, I just want to say thanks for the opportunity to come to talk to you today about these issues. I am Métis from Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, and as was stated, I'm an assistant professor in the department of indigenous studies at the University of Saskatchewan here. I'm also the executive director of the nātawihowin and mawiiikikayaahk health research networks, which are part of the CIHR's network environments of indigenous health research. I'm also part of international research partnerships that are looking at examining prison violence in New Zealand. I have been invited to speak at the United Nations on issues related to gender and transnational organized crime.

I'm a community-engaged researcher who works closely with community partners and with indigenous peoples engaged in street lifestyles. My research has taken me to examine the complexities and issues related to the term “street gang” itself, the problematic issue of data collection, and why and how individuals engage in and exit street gangs. Research has shown that we actually know very little about street gangs because of the ambiguity of the term itself. A street gang in one community is not a street gang in another. Therefore we have a lack of national datasets available to us.

Also, when we are talking about street gangs, are we looking into biker gangs and other organized criminal organizations when we do this, or are we just focusing within street spaces? Do we focus here on hate and ideology groups? How does this impact the ways in which we engage in these discussions, and what is gang crime or street gang crime?

These are questions we need to examine and ask ourselves. For example, when we start to use the “gang” term loosely, we create gang talk, which looks to create fear and use fear for political agendas. As such, this is why I try to stay away from the term “gang” itself and use “street lifestyles”. Individuals are moving in and out of street gangs; however, they are connected to underground, illegal or untaxed economies.

To move back to my work specifically, we have to understand violence. Why is violence used, and how does it escalate to a point where firearms and shootings become necessary and normalized within different spaces? Through my research as well as research conducted internationally, we see that masculinity becomes a focal point. A hypermasculine performance is promoted within the street, and challenges to their face, status, respect or power become a primary reason that an individual may act out with specific violence and a hyperviolence that leads to an increase in gun violence.

We also have to understand, however, that the violence is framed within localized street codes and street justice. These codes then frame how violence is used and the level of violence that needs to be used to protect oneself, or protect one's face, if you will. Again, because of the connection to masculinity, going to the police, whether to help or support individuals, is actually problematic. They're not going to go to them for help, as they will be labelled as unable to look after themselves, which actually increases their victimization for later in life.

Finally, I want to move to the idea of addiction and how we examine this within criminal justice. Most often, addiction centres on substance misuse. However, we need to move beyond this simplistic understanding, because we have to look back to the spaces where power, respect and status are also addictive. When individuals are provided with a space where they feel power over themselves and others, it becomes addictive. Violence creates trauma. Trauma without proper supports moves people to find alternatives to deal with the trauma. This then moves to substance misuse, with substances used to numb the trauma and pain.

In the end, we want to see a decrease. First, we need to look at how we build healthy relationships that are community led, not led by police, because of the negative relationships in some communities. Rather, police need to come in as partners. Second, we need to look at moving from punitive and criminal justice approaches to more of a public health approach, since the discussions continue to focus—as they did with the panel before—on the idea of addictions being the root cause of this violence that's happening.

We cannot arrest our way out of it. We cannot incarcerate our way out of it. We need to look upstream.

With that, I will cede the floor. Thank you.

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

Dr. Langmann, you have up to five minutes for your opening statement, sir. The floor is now yours.

Dr. Caillin Langmann (Assistant Clinical Professor, Department of Medicine, McMaster University, As an Individual): Thank you, Chair.

Members of the committee, thank you for letting me present my research regarding Canadian firearms legislation and its association with homicide, spousal homicide, mass homicide and suicide in Canada.

I am a professor of medicine at McMaster University and an emergency physician in Hamilton, Ontario. I serve as an academic peer reviewer in the areas of firearms control, homicide, suicide, violence and gang deterrence for academic journals such as *Violence and Victims*, *JIV*, the *American Journal of Public Health*, *Preventative Medicine*, and *Nature*.

I would also like to agree wholeheartedly with Dr. Henry and what he just said.

I have submitted three of my peer-reviewed articles to the committee for review. I'll summarize those findings and the implications.

The first article, "Canadian Firearms Legislation and Effects on Homicide", examines multiple legislative and regulatory interventions, such as whether bans of certain semi-automatic firearms and restrictions of military-appearing firearms, certain types of handguns, magazine capacity restrictions, registrations and background checks were associated with reductions in homicide and spousal homicide.

Three statistical models were used. To summarize the results, no statistically significant beneficial associations were found between firearms legislation and homicide by firearms, spousal homicide or a criminal charge of discharge of a firearm with intent. Bans of military-appearing firearms, semi-automatic rifles and handguns, short-barrelled handguns and "Saturday night specials" in the 1990s have resulted in no associated reduction in homicide rates. Rather, social and economic factors were associated with higher firearm homicide rates. For instance, an older population was associated with a lower rate of homicide using a long gun, while an increase in the unemployment rate was associated with an increase in spousal homicide.

Homicide by handgun, usually used by people involved in criminality, was associated with an increase in the unemployment rate, poverty rates and immigration. As well, the overall increase in incarceration was associated with increases in homicide rates, likely reflecting an increase in crime rates overall. These results would suggest further areas to study, as well as beneficial areas to target by public policy to reduce homicide rates.

My second paper, "Effect of firearms legislation on suicide and homicide", expanded on the previous study by looking at homicide rates over an expanded time frame, as well as suicide. It also applied new statistical methods.

This study confirmed previous research findings that legislation and regulatory efforts such as bans had no associated effect on homicide rates. As well, the study demonstrated that while suicide rates fell in males over the age of 45 in association with firearms legislation and regulations, there was an equivalent substitution of suicide by other methods, resulting in no overall difference in the rates of suicide. Factors such as unemployment, low income and indigenous populations were associated with suicide rates.

Other studies have demonstrated agreement with my study findings that laws targeting these restricted firearms, such as handguns and semi-automatic and fully automatic firearms, have had no associated benefit on homicide rates in Canada.

As demonstrated in a recent review article I was asked to write by *Preventative Medicine*, "Suicide, firearms, and legislation", nine Canadian studies were found that demonstrated a switch from suicide by firearms to other methods such as hanging, resulting in no overall changes or benefits.

Data on mass homicide in Canada was obtained from Statistics Canada between the years of 1974 and 2010. Using a definition of mass homicide as a single event with three or more victims, no associated reduction in mass homicide rates was found with bans of military-appearing firearms and semi-automatic firearms, or with background checks.

Methods that have been shown to be more effective in reducing firearm homicide involve targeting the demand side of firearms prevalence in criminal activity. As demonstrated by StatCan, a significant percentage of firearms homicide involves gangs. In 1995, as youth violence increased, a program called Operation Ceasefire was launched in Boston that involved reducing the demand for weapons by targeting gangs, specifically in terms of warnings and legal interventions, as well as working with community groups and workers to reduce youth membership in gangs.

• (1220)

The other arm of Operation Ceasefire involved reducing the supply of weapons by legal interventions. Braga et al. 2001, examined both aspects of Operation Ceasefire and found the demand side had significant—

The Chair: I'm sorry, Dr. Langmann. I'll have to ask you to wrap it up. Take 10 seconds to do so, please.

Dr. Caillin Langmann: Okay.

The demand side had significant effects on reducing violence and homicide, while the supply side had no statistically significant effect.

Hence, I would recommend that, going forward, we focus on programs that reduce the demand side of firearms acquisition in the future, especially in youth. Targeting them before they enter significant criminal activity would be beneficial in reducing firearms homicide in Canada.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I would now like to turn to Mr. Tu'Inukuafe.

Did I do better that time? I'm so sorry.

You have up to five minutes for your opening remarks, sir. The floor is yours.

• (1225)

Mr. Stan Tu'Inukuafe (Co-Founder, STR8 UP: 10,000 Little Steps to Healing Inc.): Good morning, everyone. I too would like to thank this committee for the invitation to be here today.

My name is Stan Tu'Inukuafe. I am the co-founder of an organization called STR8 UP: 10,000 Little Steps to Healing Inc., whose main office is located in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

Many might not be aware that Saskatchewan had the highest number of gang-related homicides in a rural area in 2020, making up 40% of the country's gang-related homicides, or that the homicide rate among indigenous people in Saskatchewan is more than 17 times higher than the rate among non-indigenous victims, even though indigenous people make up only about 10% of the province's population. These statistics and others are reflective of the 95% indigenous members STR8 UP works with. As mentioned, I'd like to thank this committee for undertaking this important study to address these and other alarming statistics related to this topic.

The topic of gun control, illegal arms trafficking and gun crimes committed by members of street gangs is something that our organization's clients have experienced in many degrees. STR8 UP's unique approach in addressing these issues are the following.

First, with regard to who we are, STR8 UP's mission statement is to assist individuals in mastering their own destiny and liberating themselves from gangs, addictions and criminal street lifestyles. STR8 UP is an independent, member-driven organization. It was conceived at the request and the involvement of two active gang members wanting support to abandon gang membership that for them had become destructive and dysfunctional. For the first individual, the mother of his daughter had been murdered by a rival

gang member. For the second, he had two younger brothers following in his footsteps.

In the last 20 years of working with street gang members, STR8 UP has developed a methodology and approach based on the indigenous medicine wheel that is applicable to both rural and urban communities.

Regarding our impact, in the last 20 years STR8 UP has worked with over 800 male and female individuals wishing to abandon their addictions and gang lifestyles. STR8 UP has facilitated over 2,000 workshops and presentations regarding addictions and gang exit programs throughout Saskatchewan.

Regarding the hiring of former gang members, STR8 UP has hired several recovered gang members to work as mentors. This approach is unique to our organization. Their life experiences have been essential in educating STR8 UP staff, the community and professionals involved with active gang members.

Regarding the Saskatchewan provincial gang strategy, in 2018, in collaboration with the University of Calgary and the Students Commission of Canada, STR8 UP completed the most comprehensive research on street gangs in Saskatchewan. Two reports, entitled "Building Healthier Communities: Final Report on Community Recommendations for the Development of the Saskatchewan Prevention/Intervention Street Gang Strategy" and "Provincial Gang Strategy: Forum & Community Consultation Reports", were developed with over 100 communities who participated in the process. Copies of these reports are available if requested.

Regarding the gang violence reduction strategy, in 2019 STR8 UP was contracted by the Saskatchewan provincial government and funded by the federal government to develop and implement the community intervention model to support active gang members who wished to leave their gang association. The original contract was to work with up to 57 individuals. However, due to the high demand for these supports, to date STR8 UP has received over 220 referrals to this program and is actively working with over 97 individuals.

Given 20 years of experience, we understand the need for further discussion and research. We are appreciative of being involved in the process. STR8 UP looks forward to further involvement in this process.

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir.

I will now open the floor to questions in our round of six minutes each. We'll have to do a bit of division for the second round, but we'll have a complete first one.

Ms. Dancho, you're up first. You have the floor for six minutes.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you to the witnesses for being here today. I appreciated all your opening remarks and the hard work you're all doing to support those on the front lines, both youth in gangs and those impacted by gang violence. Thank you very much for your efforts.

I have a few questions for Dr. Langmann. Thank you for being here today. As was mentioned in your opening remarks and the chair's introduction, you are a professor. You are an ER doctor. You have done groundbreaking research. I believe you're one of the few in Canada who has done the type of research that you have done, which is to look at the effect, if any, of various gun control pieces of legislation from the 1970s to the present. I found your research fascinating. It's a very good read for all policy-makers. I highly recommend it.

When we last spoke, Dr. Langmann, you mentioned to me in very plain terms, because I'm not an academic, that overall there was no correlation between a decrease in homicides or suicides from gun violence and gun control.

Can you confirm that this is what your three studies found?

• (1230)

Dr. Caillin Langmann: Yes, that's correct. There doesn't seem to be any association with reductions in homicide from any of the legislative efforts that have been produced by Canada's C-51, Bill C-17 and Bill C-68.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: That is very frustrating for all policy-makers, because we want to make a difference in ending gun violence in Canada, and different parties have different philosophies on how to go about doing that. I appreciate your extensive research on that.

The long-gun registry from almost two decades ago cost several billion dollars—it was \$2 billion. Did you find any correlation between a reduction in gun violence and the long-gun registry?

Dr. Caillin Langmann: Absolutely not. Unfortunately, all that money appears to have been misspent.

We are currently heading into the next round, and many firearms are going to be confiscated or banned. That's probably another billion dollars.

The best focus would be to spend this money on deterrents and reduction in the level of gang violence by reducing the number of youth who are starting to get involved in gang activity by comprehensive methods like Operation Ceasefire and other programs, like the comprehensive gang strategy and Wraparound Milwaukee. All of those methods use scientific methods to reduce youth involvement in gangs. There have been several successful studies, both here in Canada and in the United States, showing that these methods work. Unfortunately, they are largely underfunded.

A lot of it is from psychiatric issues. A lot of the people who are deterred from gang activities suffer from ADHD. They suffer from depression and anxiety, and they've had no help reducing or dealing with those issues. Once these programs, which are comprehensive, start involving those members in cognitive behavioural therapy, etc., they do see a significant reduction in recidivism and a significant—almost 50%—reduction in attending and being [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] level of attendance at high school, and some even go on to university.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: We heard various numbers from the Winnipeg police, and I met with them as well. They mentioned that youth diversion is critical and one of the best things for us as policy-makers to invest in.

They're saying that they're seeing kids as young as eight years old being brought in. They're almost romanced into gangs and the gang lifestyle. They're often from broken homes or deeply difficult economic situations without proper role models or stability in their lives. All members of this committee are very aware of the socio-economic impacts on youth and the path they often find themselves on toward gang violence. It provides almost a new home for them. That's what we're hearing from some police officers. That's what I've heard.

When we met last night, you spoke about youth diversion. You're speaking about it now. What does that mean for people who may not understand? From my understanding, it's a young person starting to commit petty crimes and getting pulled into gang violence.

Is that the spot where we should be reaching out with resources to help them get on a better path? You spoke a bit about that, so you can elaborate if you have more to say.

Dr. Caillin Langmann: No, I think you summed it up quite well.

There are several strategies. Most of them involve a comprehensive network. Often they will have a primary person in charge of the program who will assess the youth in need and then determine which are the best programs for them to attend. [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] the cognitive behavioural therapy and psychiatry, as well as training in terms of giving the youth a forward-looking approach. If they have job training or training in anger management, they are often able to deal with the issues that turn them to gangs.

A lot of them come from broken homes where they are not getting support at home or the support at home is lacking because of low income. They look at a comprehensive method of diverting youth from gang or criminal activity, especially when they start young.

Some of the other methods, like Operation Ceasefire in Boston, involve police targeting. They found that only a small percentage of actual gang members were involved in a significant percentage of the violence.

• (1235)

The Chair: I'm sorry, Dr. Langmann, but you're going to have to wrap up. Take 10 to 15 seconds to wrap up, please.

Dr. Caillin Langmann: They would go out to the gang leaders and inform them that there would be serious crackdowns if they were involved in violence. That led to a significant reduction in violent activity from these gangs.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Doctor.

Ms. Damoff, it's your slot. You have six minutes. The floor is yours.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Thank you so much, Chair. Thank you to all of our witnesses for being here today.

I just want to acknowledge that I am in Ottawa today, so I'm joining you from the unceded traditional territory of the Algonquin people.

Mr. Tu'Inukuafe, we heard at our last meeting from Bear Clan Patrol and Mitch Bourbonniere from OPK. I've spoken to Liberty for Youth from Hamilton. They're going to be coming to committee. You're doing terrific work in Saskatoon, getting young people out of gangs or stopping them from getting into gangs.

What are your thoughts on bringing organizations like yours and others across the country together for a bit of a summit to share best practices and give the federal government some ideas on how we can effectively deal with young people getting involved with gangs or leaving them? Also, how we can effectively [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]?

Mr. Stan Tu'Inukuafe: Community agencies who work at the grassroots level would really appreciate that idea. Part of the reason I say that is that the families we work with, especially in the prairie provinces, do move back and forth between different provinces. There are many opportunities where I would work with the family and if they decide to move to Winnipeg, I would want to connect that family to another agency—you mentioned Mitch—that the family could become involved with. Also, because we have built relationships with these families, when we send that referral families are more likely to engage with that other community agency when they move to that province.

That's an idea that I think would really benefit the type of work we do. I really hope we do it.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you so much.

I've been to your lovely town. I quite like Saskatoon.

For both you and Dr. Henry, we know there's a connection between.... We're seeing that young people getting involved in street life are looking for a sense of community. We also know that mandatory minimum sentences have seen people sent to prison who probably would be better dealt with in addiction treatment or other programs.

I'm just wondering if you could speak a little about the connection between sending young people to an institution and the impact that has on their involvement in crime and gangs.

Mr. Stan Tu'Inukuafe: I'll let Dr. Henry start.

Mr. Robert Henry: We have to understand that prison really isn't a place for people to go to for addiction issues. It's just not a conduit in the way it's set up; the supports are not set up in that way. We need to understand that if individuals are heading there for those issues, we have to either reframe the way in which we see prisons, how we're working within prisons, and the programming within prisons, or find alternative measures to keep people out of prison.

This is something we're doing in northern Saskatchewan in a lot of communities. There are diversion programs, youth circles, and so forth, where youth who are involved in petty crime, if you will, are being diverted out of those systems and moving out because it's those networks that they build within the system that allow them to become further entrenched in it.

When we look at this I also want to bring in the idea that it's not just prisons; it's also looking at the child welfare system and CFS as well. When we look at individuals engaged in street gangs, especially with indigenous people, we see very high rates of individuals who have been multiply placed within child welfare systems. A lot of individuals say that was their first taste of understanding institutionalization. That's where they started building their relationships, going through there with like-minded individuals.

I'll leave it at that for now, due to the time frame.

• (1240)

Ms. Pam Damoff: I'm going to be able to give you only about 30 seconds, Mr. Tu'Inukuafe.

Mr. Stan Tu'Inukuafe: Yes.

I would like to build on what Dr. Henry mentioned.

One of the requirements we have in STR8 UP is that people who want to join write an autobiography. I've read a variety of these autobiographies, and one young person's autobiography that I read said the following: "When I was 8 and 9 years old, running the streets of Saskatoon, stabbing and shooting people, I wanted others to feel the pain that I was feeling inside."

When a young person is in jail, as Dr. Henry mentioned, the issue of the emotional challenges they have is not being dealt with, because this young person is locked up 23.5 hours a day, seven days a week. Without any programming they become even more entrenched, because they're able to build networks.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Dr. Langmann, can you clarify something for me?

Your research ended in 2016, so you did not actually look at the impact of Bill C-71, which included extended background checks and forfeiture of firearms to the crown under a prohibition order. Can you confirm that your legislation ended prior to the introduction of Bill C-71?

Dr. Caillin Langmann: Bill C-71, in terms of [*Technical Difficulty—Editor*] in 2016, this recent study.... There's not enough data to look at any effects from any newer legislation.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I would now invite Ms. Michaud to use her six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the witnesses for being here.

It is extremely interesting to have people from all walks of life here. We have heard from government officials, police chiefs, and now we have you, who are looking at the issues in much more detail. It shows that we can act on several fronts at once.

With regard to the illegal trafficking of firearms, we think that we need to invest more at the border, for example. We need the different police forces, the different organizations and the Canada Border Services Agency to work better together and perhaps invest more, provide more resources, but also invest in prevention. I think that's your area of expertise.

I will start with you, Mr. Langmann. Your research has shown that homicides are linked to social factors. I would like you to tell us a little more about this. In light of your research and your studies, what should be the role of the government, other than the one I mentioned at the beginning? I think it can do many things at once. In terms of prevention, social or human factors, how do you think government can act?

[English]

Dr. Caillin Langmann: I'd like to echo what Dr. Henry and Mr. Tu'Inukuafe said. We are seeing a lot of people in the emergency department. Methamphetamine addiction has become a significant issue, as well as fentanyl, and street trade drives a lot of this crime. We're seeing people released from prison into the community again with no psychiatric treatment. They're often not competent and able to take care of themselves, and they quickly revert back to criminal activity as well as drugs.

What I saw in the research, in particular with handguns, is that the unemployment rate and the poverty indexes were all associated with handgun homicide. This is not surprising. It's the weapon of choice of gang members; it's easy to conceal. In most crimes, when the police find firearms afterwards, it is handguns that are being used.

If we want to target some of these issues, I would suggest diverting youth at an early age, when we know they are starting to run into problems with the criminal justice system, as well as when we find mothers who are reaching out for help, either in the emergency department or in the community. When they have no support for their children, when the children have no psychiatric support, it takes sometimes months for a referral from me to a psychiatrist for these patients to be seen.

I would strongly recommend that you divert money towards psychiatric care as well as some of these anti-gang initiatives. I would suggest you speak with the directors of Wraparound Milwaukee for further information as to how to successfully set up these anti-gang and youth programs in Canada.

Once some of these people are entrenched and become older, they are no longer receptive to a lot of these programs, so I would suggest we target an early age.

• (1245)

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you.

I would like to hear the opinion of the STR8-UP representative on what Mr. Langmann just said.

Mr. Tu'Inukuafe, do you agree with what he has just said? If so, can you give us examples of effective prevention programmes? Can you tell us about the ones that already exist, the ones that should be emphasized more, or the ones that would need more investment?

[English]

Mr. Stan Tu'Inukuafe: What I'd like to add is to kind of show you in practical terms. Because we work with individuals involved in both the provincial and federal systems, it's not uncommon that I would get a random phone call from someone saying, "Hey, Stan, I'm at the airport. Can you pick me up?" They've just been released from doing federal three to five years; they get a plane ticket and fly to Saskatoon, and no one is there to pick them up. I pick them up and take them to a homeless shelter. The question becomes: Could something have intervened for better case planning in that process? That's one piece.

Another topic that I feel is not discussed often enough is that, if I was to give a general idea—this is very general—of the individuals we work with, they probably stopped going to school at grade 9 or 10. That's very general. I don't have statistics, just my interactions with them.

The question becomes how schools can play a better role in keeping these young people in the school system instead of kicking them out. As everyone knows, once they leave school, their opportunities become more limited.

This program that I mentioned at STR8 UP is unique. We started in Saskatchewan. As I mentioned, we've been there for 20 years, but we're very underfunded. The provincial gang violence reduction strategy was funded just two years ago, but prior to that, for 18 years, we did volunteer work. Funding programs that already exist in this province would be a start.

The Chair: Thank you very much. The timing was absolutely perfect.

Mr. MacGregor, the floor goes to you. You have a six-minute slot to proceed, please.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Maybe I'll start with Dr. Henry and Mr. Tu'Inukuafe. You could each take a turn at answering this.

Dr. Henry, in your opening statement you talked about how the police really need to be partners in effectively addressing this. As you may be aware, in the previous Parliament, this committee released a pretty comprehensive report on systemic racism in policing in Canada. The many recommendations included having the Government of Canada provide increased funding for restorative justice programs, to make sure they're effective and widely available. It recommended that the RCMP work with indigenous communities to make sure we had advisory committees in each of their communities and also that we prioritize the recruitment of indigenous people and women into indigenous police services.

On the theme of some of those general recommendations, do you have any other thoughts that you would add on how we rebuild a lot of the trust between indigenous communities and policing services? Do you have anything more to add that this committee needs to include in its recommendations?

Mr. Robert Henry: First, I think it's a start. One thing we see within the research is that hiring more indigenous police officers without changing the culture of policing itself does not actually make a bit of difference, because they have to frame within that culture.

Second, when we start looking at these programs that everybody has been talking about a bit here—Milwaukee and everything else—I think we have to be very cautious when we're saying we have to get programs for these youth. If we create programs for the youth, but we don't actually create spaces for the youth to feel like they belong in our communities, no program is going to work. No matter how much we put in there, if the community itself is not engaged in anti-racism and trying to deconstruct or decolonize individual spaces, and if individuals who are living in racialized poverty do not have opportunities for jobs because business owners don't trust indigenous people or the Black body, nothing is going to work. They have to live in a capitalist society, so where do they go to get their money? They have to go to the streets.

When we're talking about programs and we're looking at prevention, education and all these things are important, but if there are no opportunities for individuals to see a livelihood for themselves, why would they go that way? We have to look at the street as a space where individuals can actually go to survive. Within this sort of space, how do they provide for one another?

When we look at the development of all of this, one way it has to happen, which I see as positive in working with gang members and communities, is the reshaping of the relationship of the police within the community. The police don't come in as the ones who know what to do, but rather ask how they can help, using their job and resources. It's that reshaping of it.

For too long, police have taken the main lead in all of this, which has fragmented the relationships between the community and policing. There's a long history, especially within indigenous spaces, of the police being used to hypersurveil and hyperincarcerate indigenous bodies. If we look at the statistics across Canada, the indigenous body is hyperincarcerated. It's not mass incarceration; it's hyperincarceration on racialized bodies, especially in the Prairies.

I'll just leave it at that for now.

• (1250)

Mr. Stan Tu'Inuqaefe: The only other thing I would add is that in the provincial gang strategy report, especially in indigenous communities, one thing they overwhelmingly mentioned is that a lot of the time, RCMP officers will come to their communities and they're generally there for two to three years. Because they're kind of viewed as experts on gangs, they start the program, but when those RCMP officers leave, the program is dismantled.

More of a focus, as Dr. Henry mentioned, on how the community takes the lead.... That's why it's important for the community to take

the lead and for the RCMP officers to come in as partners to that. I'd just add that piece.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: You both have illustrated quite adeptly just how a study on guns, gun trafficking and gangs really has just so many threads and cannot be looked at in a silo. It really touches on so many different areas.

Dr. Henry, you mentioned the Correctional Service of Canada and its current inadequacy at providing programs for the safe reintegration and transition of people who have served their sentence into the community.

Are there specific recommendations for the Correctional Service of Canada that you would like to see in our report and that touch on what our study is looking at—gun trafficking, gang recruitment and so on?

Mr. Robert Henry: If we're actually going to look at.... I just see all of this as reducing violence, and how we reduce this hyperviolence. It's all connected to hypermasculinity. When we look at programs, we need to re-engage with this idea of what it means to be masculine within society. It doesn't mean emasculating individuals, but how do we engage with this toxic hypermasculinity that is favoured within street and prison spaces? It's that sort of connection that's there.

If we're going to look at programming, Dr. Langmann talked about CBT. CBT is good at reframing individual thinking, but we need to look at reframing and ask what it actually means to reframe the use of [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] behaviours. This means that women also engage in this sort of behaviour too, because it's not just a male thing.

This behaviour that we're looking at can be identified as hypermasculinity, and the way in which it's brought out within street spaces is what needs to be addressed. That's what needs to be in programming, not just within jails within the CSC. That's what needs to be started to be addressed at a very young age as well. What are those mentorships in the mentoring programs, and what does it mean to...? How do we move individuals in how to deal with issues related to stress?

The Chair: I'm sorry, but we're going to have wrap it up.

Colleagues, we're moving into the second round.

My quick calculation is this. We have six minutes left, and it would be a 25-minute round. If I cut everybody in half, we would go only a few minutes over the appointed hour. Does that sound like a reasonable way to proceed? Do I have agreement to do that? Okay.

Mr. Van Popta, you have two and a half minutes. The floor is yours.

• (1255)

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Thank you to our witnesses for being with us here today and informing us on these very important topics.

I'm going to start with the STR8 UP organization.

Stan, thank you for your comprehensive evidence that you gave to us, and for the work that you and your organization do for the community.

My question to you is about helping young people get out of gangs. What are some of the challenges they face and you face as you help them to transition out of gangs?

Mr. Stan Tu'Inukuafe: When I think of the challenges, just because of time I'll try to make it...

It's all at different levels. For one individual, it might be getting them into a school program when they're 13 or 14 years old. To give you a sense, a lot of the individuals I've worked with have been to 10 different elementary schools before they reach grade 9. Think about it—10 different elementary schools before they're 13 or 14 years old. Think of the academic gaps that student has. Once they become involved in the justice system, getting a young person into a school program could be challenging. That's one piece.

Another challenge is employment. Yes, they could be 18 or 19 but never really have had a job, so that could be another challenge for that person.

The challenges depend on the individual, but they affect the education piece, the employment piece and the life skills programming that they need.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

You have another 20 seconds, Mr. Van Popta.

Mr. Tako Van Popta: I'll cede it, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Zuberi, you have two and a half minutes. The floor is yours.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): I want to thank all the witnesses for being here, and acknowledge that I'm speaking from the island of Montreal, also the traditional meeting space of the Kanyen'kehà:ka nation of Mohawk peoples.

Dr. Henry, you really highlighted—and all the witnesses have done this actually—important aspects around moving from punitive to public health. You were about to expand upon programming. I'll give you about two minutes or less to talk about that, please.

Mr. Robert Henry: When we look at programs, STR8 UP and OPK with the Bear Clan are examples of the ways in which community partnerships work, working where people are. When we're building programs and moving forward, it needs to be done in a way that is reshaped by the realities of individuals that are actually facing..., and we need to engage in that sort of space. When we're engaging with programs, it has to also be the community itself.

When we focus on just the individuals who are committing the crime and not the environment in which it's being created—this also includes the broader community within this... If we focus on gangs as being individuals who are searching for belonging, we have to ask why they are searching for a sense of belonging and how we as a community are pushing them for another place to belong.

We need to start reframing the way in which we ask those questions, and I think that's where we get change.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Can you touch upon the hypermasculinity that you were speaking about?

Mr. Robert Henry: Sure. When we look at this idea of hypermasculinity, this is the way it's connected to street codes and street justice.

When we look at the ways in which violence is being done, in order to protect my face, I create a face. I create a mannerism with which I go out there. My name now becomes Stan. I'm Stan; I'm the tough guy. I get respect and status with this. When violence comes to me I have to look after it myself, but it has to be with violence that's associated with the code of the street. The code of the street says if I get beat up, I have to find balance in order to do that. Once this violence becomes escalated, if I show people that I'm going to go above and beyond the violence that was done unto me, it will give somebody a second thought about doing violence unto me or those around me at the same time.

However, the violence gets transmitted. That person who got violence will look for retribution and will up it. That's why we see low levels of violence. When we look at violence between gangs in particular, there's hardly any violence for a while, then all of a sudden there's this huge escalation that happens right away. It's just one over the other until there is a de-escalation, which is usually a bunch of gang leaders coming together and saying they need to calm it down because it's interfering with their business.

• (1300)

The Chair: That's great. Thank you very much.

Ms. Michaud, my calculation is that you have about 75 seconds, but that sounds like a question to me, so go on and ask it.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Henry, if you had a proposal to make to the government to curb illegal gun trafficking and gun crime, what would it be?

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Henry: That's a huge question. I don't think I can answer it right away in 40 seconds.

It would have to be a multipronged approach, examining what the street economy is, how much money is going to the street economy and how we put money equivalent to what's going to the street economy into a legal economy, so that individuals aren't moving from one place to what some scholars—Venkatesh and Levitt—have called “McJobs”. They're not at this low-level place, but they're actually.... How do we equate this? That's sort of [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] losing and replacing it with that, so it has to focus on that.

It needs to engage in the idea of reshaping street code and street culture, and building healthy relationships within the communities.

It has to focus on addictions. Again, it's addictions, not just substance use, which is a by-product of the violence and trauma within the streets. It needs to focus on addictions to power and everything else at the same time. It's the behavioural addictions that need to go on.

When we look at violence and guns and everything else, we need to find ways to slow down the trafficking and movement of illegal firearms, and how that works.

I'm not 100% sure within this short amount of time for my question. It is a bigger question.

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

Now I will move to Mr. MacGregor. You have a minute and change. You can change the world in a minute. Go for it.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Sure thing, Chair.

Dr. Langmann, in your opening statement, you went over a lot of the research you have done regarding the relationship between employment rates and crime occurrences and so on. Very quickly, I'm looking at the case of people who have criminal records and their employability.

Do you have any thoughts on what we can proactively attempt with the Parole Board of Canada? A lot of people who have criminal records find it very hard to reintegrate into society. If they are demonstrating a willingness to try to reintegrate, do you have any thoughts on that?

Dr. Caillin Langmann: To answer that in a few seconds is hard.

The main thing I've seen directly, and I want to echo exactly what Dr. Henry is saying, is people discharged to the community from prison with significant drug addiction and mental health issues, with no care facilitated after their discharge. They come to the emergency department. This is an emergency for them, and I can give them appointments only three or four months later. That's utterly ridiculous. You cannot expect someone to hold down a job if they are suffering from significant psychiatric or addiction issues. That's number one.

As Dr. Henry said—

The Chair: You have five seconds, please, Dr. Langmann.

Okay. I don't blame you. You can't get into that complexity in five seconds, and I'm so sorry we don't have more time.

There will be two more questions. The first will come from Mr. Lloyd, who has two and a half minutes.

Mr. Lloyd, are you there?

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I don't have any questions. I thought maybe one of my colleagues would take that. Raquel?

We're already over time.

The Chair: Yes, but we had an agreement that, to be fair to the roster, we would go a few minutes over time, so it's your slot.

Ms. Dancho, do you want to take it?

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Yes. I would like to give some of the floor over to Dr. Langmann to talk a bit more about Operation Ceasefire. I think this is a model in the United States that this committee should be looking at for best practices about how we divert youth going into gangs.

Dr. Langmann, could you illuminate us a little more on your knowledge of Operation Ceasefire and its successes?

Dr. Caillin Langmann: Operation Ceasefire is one of the older programs. Like I said before, the police went to the gang leaders and tried to get agreements among them all. As Dr. Henry said, when they meet, they can sometimes solve some of the issues. They got agreements to cease the violence, and they warned them that if they continued to do violent activities, there would be significant crackdowns. There was a significant benefit from that.

There was no benefit in terms of the supply-side issue. There was no benefit in the actions of targeting traffickers, banning certain firearms or working on trying to trace firearms. It's extremely difficult.

One issue that Dr. Henry spoke about was the hypermasculinity. That's a definitive factor. I just reviewed a paper which described a lot of the young men as carrying firearms in order to present that image of being masculine: "Don't mess with me. I have a gun." Then, their friends are carrying them too. Perhaps we can start working in that area.

In that study they worked on changing the attitudes towards violence and handling their anger, as well as behavioural therapy and other methods. They did see a reduction in the carrying of firearms. Unfortunately it was over a short period of time, so we don't know if this was sustained, but certainly those are the areas we need to move in.

• (1305)

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you very much, Dr. Langmann.

Again, thank you to all the witnesses for your hard work. It sounds like there's a lot that the witnesses shared in common today from all different sides of the spectrum. I think that's very promising for our report and our research, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

The last question, for two and a half minutes, goes to Mr. Noor-mohamed.

The floor is yours, sir. Go ahead.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: I'll try to keep my question brief. I really just wanted to dig in to so much of the value that we've heard of in terms of mentoring programs, in terms of support for youth and in terms of training and creating safe environments for young people to thrive in.

Dr. Henry, could you spend whatever time is left sharing with us your perspective on the importance of making sure we are making the right investments in those types of interventions at the same time as we're thinking about the public safety elements? How do we ensure that the human safety elements are top of mind?

Mr. Robert Henry: I think that if you're looking at reducing violence, you're doing it from a community-based perspective rather than applying a program into a community and telling the community to fit it. That's where we begin to see real change. I agree with Dr. Langmann that when we look at these other programs and the law—the ceasefire program, Roca, and everything else—what we need to do is look at them and their structure, but then localize them to specific issues in the community. Before, we saw five-gold-star programs being implemented into communities, and the community having to fit them. Those models do not work.

I will refer to OPK and STR8 UP as programs that work from the grassroots up, where it takes long-term commitment for the change

to happen. Again, these are very underfunded programs; they're not seen as five-gold-star programs because they haven't been evaluated within those spaces.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: I suspect that's all the time I have, so I'm going to say thank you.

The Chair: Thank you all very much for agreeing to go a few minutes over the scheduled time. I think it was worth it because of the valuable insights that we have heard from these witnesses, whom I would like to thank on your behalf. We understand how stressful and how tough your work is, whether you're researching it out on the streets, or through your own observations from all of those experiences. On behalf of the committee, and of the House of Commons, thank you very much.

Colleagues, do I have an agreement to adjourn the meeting?

Seeing agreement, this meeting is adjourned.

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