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# Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

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Chair: Mr. Ron McKinnon





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• (1540)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.)):** I call this meeting to order.

Welcome, everyone, to meeting number 41 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

We will start by acknowledging that we are meeting on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin people.

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 by using the Zoom application.

Pursuant to the order of reference of Thursday, June 23, 2022, the committee resumes consideration of Bill C-21, an act to amend certain acts and to make certain consequential amendments (firearms).

Today we have two panels. For the first hour, by video conference, we have, as an individual, retired Lieutenant-Colonel John Schneiderbanger. From the Alberta Mounted Shooters Association, we have Julie Saretsky, president; and we have, back again, with the Coalition for Gun Control, Dr. Wendy Cukier, president.

We will give each group up to five minutes for opening remarks, after which we will proceed with questions.

We'll start with Lieutenant-Colonel Schneiderbanger. You have five minutes, sir.

**Lieutenant-Colonel (Retired) John Schneiderbanger (As an Individual):** Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and committee members. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to appear as a witness in regard to the review of Bill C-21.

I am Lieutenant-Colonel John Schneiderbanger. I'm a retired officer who served 30 years in the Canadian Armed Forces. Prior to retirement, I was the base commander of Canadian Forces Base Shilo.

I have been a firearms owner for 40 years and a competitive sport shooter for 30 years, having competed in various shooting disciplines with handgun, rifle and shotgun. I currently compete in 3-Gun and the International Practical Shooting Confederation, or IPSC.

I am an IPSC Canada national instructor and a chief range officer with the National Range Officers Institute. I have competed in two IPSC world championships and a European handgun championship.

There are between 1,200 to 1,400 world-class competitors at an IPSC world championship, representing between 75 and 85 countries.

Where do I stand on Bill C-21? My greatest concern is the freeze or ban on the importation, sale and purchase or transfer of handguns in Canada. I disagree with this. It will not significantly reduce violent crime committed with illegal handguns. The Firearms Act is in place to regulate the private ownership of firearms by licensed owners and does not regulate criminals and illegal handguns.

There are aspects in the Firearms Act that need to be better enforced, which would make a difference in strengthening and achieving the objectives of the act. Examples are prohibition enforcement and licence revocation. More regulatory legislation is being added to the Firearms Act. These additions do not address the fact that over 90% of all violent crimes with firearms are committed with illegal guns smuggled from the United States into Canada.

There are over 2.5 million licensed firearms owners who want the same thing that Canadians who do not own firearms want: We all want our communities to be safe. I believe in a logical, common-sense gun control regime. I believe it's required. The regulations must be reasonable and meet the aims and objectives of what the Firearms Act is meant to accomplish. The average Canadian does not know how strict our firearms laws are. There is a lot of misinformation and incorrect information floating around. I believe that all levels of government have a responsibility to ensure that accurate information is passed on to Canadians without bias and that their decisions on laws, regulations and policies are based on hard facts, supportable statistics and credible research data—academic and technical—and not on emotion.

Many Canadians don't agree that a firearms ban on legally owned firearms and/or tighter gun control laws will reduce violent crimes with illegal guns. They believe that there is a great need to address the root causes that contribute to violent crime: poverty, homelessness, lack of job opportunities and lack of mental health supports. These root causes must be addressed if a significant impact on reducing violent crime is to be achieved.

We have heard many politicians say they are not targeting licensed firearm owners and that sport shooters can continue to enjoy their sport. It is a fallacy to believe that Bill C-21 and its freeze on handguns will not affect handgun sport shooters.

Many sport shooting disciplines will cease to exist, as no new members can join. Levels of competition will dwindle. Provincial and national championships will not be organized due to the ever-decreasing competitor base. Without higher-level competition, we won't be able to compete at the world level. As sport shooting ceases to exist, fewer people will be exposed to sport shooting and fewer people will be interested in becoming Olympic shooters. Sport shooting disciplines such as IPSC are feeder sports to the Olympics. You don't become an Olympic shooter just by asking the Canadian Olympic Committee.

Shooting ranges are supported by handgun owners and sport shooting disciplines through competitions. The reason for the existence of ranges is primarily due to handgun shooters, as these are the only locations where they can practice their sport. The membership in the sport will dwindle, so the membership in the ranges will dwindle. The ranges will lose major revenue and will eventually have to close. Many municipal, provincial and federal police services rent civilian ranges to conduct their basic and advanced firearms qualifications. It is far less expensive for law enforcement to rent civilian ranges than to maintain their own range facilities. This will be an increasing cost to police services for municipalities.

• (1545)

When a handgun owner dies, their legally acquired property must be handed over to law enforcement or to the government without any compensation being provided to the family. This is deferred confiscation. Many families will lose thousands to tens of thousands of dollars when these handguns are confiscated. This is unacceptable. Many families pay the price—

**The Chair:** Excuse me, sir. Could you wrap up quickly?

**LCol (Ret'd) John Schneiderbanger:** I absolutely will, sir.

They pay the price for crime committed by others. The focus on legal handgun ownership as a way to reduce violent crimes with guns is misguided. Legally owned firearms are not the cause of increasing violent crime; gangs, drug dealers and smugglers use illegal guns and are the problem.

Finally, I am proud to represent Canada at the world level in IPSC. IPSC is an official member of the Global Association of International Sports Federations and the Alliance of Independent Recognised Members of Sports, AIMS. AIMS is recognized by the International Olympic Committee and has signed a memorandum of understanding with the IOC.

I ask that consideration be given to IPSC being added as a sport shooting discipline as part of the exemption to Bill C-21 in proposed paragraph 97.1(b).

I welcome any questions that you may have. Thank you.

• (1550)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We will go now to Ms. Saretsky with the Alberta Mounted Shooters Association.

You have five minutes, please.

**Ms. Julie Saretsky (President, Alberta Mounted Shooters Association):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and committee members. My name is Julie Saretsky, and I am the current president of the Alberta Mounted Shooters Association.

I'm here to speak to you about amending Bill C-21 to include the sport of mounted shooting under the elite sports shooter classification or to receive an approved status, similar to the film and television industry, that would allow us to continue to grow and develop our athletes. The recent implementation of the rule that prohibits the sale, transfer or purchase of restricted handguns in Canada has a detrimental effect on the continuation and growth of our sport.

For those of you unfamiliar with the sport, mounted shooting combines target shooting and horsemanship. A team, consisting of a horse and rider, navigates a course of targets against the timer clock. The rider carries two 45-calibre single-action revolvers loaded with black powder blanks that have a maximum distance of 20 feet or six metres. Please note there are no projectiles or bullets, thereby making it a spectator-friendly sport. Our horses are highly trained athletes, and our riders exhibit exceptional riding and gun-handling skills.

Mounted shooting is a family-oriented, multi-generational sport consisting of athletes ranging in age from seven to 77. Many families travel and compete together throughout the year. One example of the family cohesiveness this sport provides is the Litvak family from Stettler, Alberta. The grandparents, Don and Cathy, compete along with their kids and grandchildren on a regular basis.

Children under 18 years of age are called "wranglers" and ride the same pattern as the grown-ups, but mimic the engagement of the targets as if they were shooting real blanks. To help children learn safe gun-handling and sharpshooting skills, along with respect for a firearm, our wranglers ground-shoot, from a stationary position, 10 targets under the direct supervision of a range master and another qualified adult.

Mounted shooting is an important sport that helps youth develop shooting skill sets and proficiencies that help them transition to Olympic and Paralympic shooting events, such as biathlon or target shooting. Additionally, the horsemanship skills gained by participating in mounted shooting help riders go on to participate in Olympic and Paralympic disciplines, such as reining, dressage, vaulting and jumping.

In the demographics of mounted shooters across the world, we'll find mounted shooters in Europe, South America, North America, Australia and New Zealand. In Canada, mounted shooters come from B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia.

The sport of mounted shooting is dominated by women, who make up 65% of active competitors. Additionally, 60% of all competitors, male and female, are 50-plus years of age. In terms of occupations, mounted shooters consist of doctors, RCMP officers, veterinarians, college professors, ranchers, farmers, Canadian Armed Forces personnel, business owners, nurses, corporate executives, city police officers, government employees, mothers, fathers and students, to name a few.

Mounted shooters tend to live in suburban and rural communities. Many mounted shooting events take place in more rural areas. These events are important and contribute to the local economies where these competitions are located. A few examples of competition locations in rural areas are Creston, B.C.; Stavely, Alberta; Carrot River, Saskatchewan; Miami, Manitoba; Blue Mountains, Ontario; and Little Bras d'Or, Nova Scotia.

On the other side of the fence, we compete in, or are invited to demonstrate, mounted shooting at events such as the Calgary Stampede; the Ponoka Stampede; the Agribition in Regina, Saskatchewan; and the Selkirk rodeo.

We help local youth groups raise money for their activities by offering them a paid role in running part of our shooting competitions.

Canada is well represented on the world stage. Since Canadians started competing in mounted shooting in 2004, we have produced many world champions and reserve world champions. Each year, an average of 15 to 20 Canadian competitors attend the world championships.

- (1555)

We are a very safety-conscious group. Before we can become mounted shooters, we must complete training, testing and background checks to obtain our restricted gun licences. At our competitions, safety meetings are conducted at the start of each competition day, and a range master is in the arena at all times to ensure that safe riding and shooting are exercised.

We are a passionate group of competitors who value our community, and we refer to our community as our shooting family.

**The Chair:** Excuse me; could you wrap up soon?

**Ms. Julie Saretsky:** Yes.

We want to continue our sport with more Canadians. We want to grow and develop skilled target shooters and equestrians. We want the ability to continue the legacy for our youth and produce more world champions.

Again we ask that mounted shooting be part of the exempt parties listed in Bill C-21. There are many shooting sports that should be given recognition and exemption from Bill C-21, not just Olympic and Paralympic sports. Perhaps strong consideration should be given to turning the approval process over to the provincial chief firearms officers, as they're most closely in touch with the competitors and the legitimacy of shooting sports within their provinces.

In closing, eradicating our sport and letting it die with the current legislation won't have any impact on crime. It just makes mounted

shooting and law-abiding citizens collateral damage. It takes away from a sport that encourages family involvement and community spirit.

Thank you for your consideration.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll go now to Dr. Cukier, president of the Coalition for Gun Control.

You have five minutes, please.

**Dr. Wendy Cukier (President, Coalition for Gun Control):** Thanks very much for including me. I'm joining you from the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit, Anishinabe, Haudenosaunee, Chippewa, and Wendat peoples.

I want to start by thanking you for rescheduling me and allowing me to speak. I will follow up with a written brief.

There are a few things I think are important to mention. The Coalition for Gun Control represents 200 organizations, including the Canadian Public Health Association, as well as community organizations, groups like the Canadian Labour Congress, victims organizations and more than 75 women's groups.

Our focus is public safety. Seventy per cent of Canadians support a complete ban on handguns and have for 30 years. In our view, this law is very important in addressing the issues of public safety that have been raised by experts as well as in translating the will of Canadians into action.

We've heard a lot about the cost to sport shooters and the cost to the gun industry. I'd like to remind the committee that the last analysis done of gun death and injury in Canada estimated the annual cost at \$6.6 billion, in an article published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal.

We support the provisions that strengthen licensing. We think some of the provisions, however, need to be reconsidered. If the government is responsible for issuing licences, the government should be responsible for removing licences and expecting citizens to go to court for emergency revocations. I think that's misdirected. We need to strengthen the responsiveness of the government and firearms officers to exercise their obligation to remove firearms from people who, in their opinion, are a threat to themselves or any other person. It's important that we recognize the legislation's role in suicide prevention, not just in preventing domestic violence, mass shootings and murders of police officers.

The second area in which we think the legislation could be strengthened is with respect to the ban on semi-automatic military-style weapons. We think that a definition should be included to make very clear the evergreen requirements for this legislation. We know from the 1995 orders in council that gun manufacturers will circumvent any lists that are provided, so it's important to have a clear definition, perhaps like those in the California laws, in the legislation along with the OIC.

We actually oppose anything other than a very narrow exemption to the ban on the sale and transfer of handguns. Again, the proliferation of handguns in the last 15 years has seen more than double the number of restricted weapons legally owned in Canada. We've seen a dramatic rise in gun-related death and injury. It's simply not true that all gun violence is a function of smuggled guns; the facts do not support that.

Finally, I would invite members of the committee to take a really close look at what sport groups like the International Practical Shooting Confederation do. While active members of the armed forces and police officers need to be able to undertake defensive shooting and to perhaps shoot at targets shaped like people in scenarios as part of their training, there's no need in Canada for civilians to be involved in such activities, and they are very much at odds with Canadian values and culture.

In closing, there is ample evidence in the peer-reviewed research from around the world that stronger restrictions on guns save lives. Canada, the U.K. and Australia have the same rates of murder without guns. They have problems with poverty. They have problems with drug abuse. Last year, the United Kingdom had fewer than 30 gun murders and Australia had one-fifth the number we had in Canada. It's very clear that restricting access to firearms has an impact on the misuse of guns as well as on the diversion of legal guns to illegal markets. Those things are worth sacrificing people's hobbies for.

Thank you very much.

• (1600)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We will now start our questioning. The first round will start with Mr. Lloyd.

Mr. Lloyd, please go ahead for six minutes.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My first question is for the Alberta Mounted Shooters Association.

Would you agree that not all handguns are the same?

**Ms. Julie Saretsky:** That is correct.

We use a single-action handgun that is simple technology—

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** You use a semi-automatic handgun. Is that correct?

**Ms. Julie Saretsky:** No, we do not. We use a single-action firearm. We have to pull the trigger back. It is simple technology designed in the 1890s.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** Would I be correct in saying that if an exemption were made so that Bill C-21 only applied to semi-automatic handguns, your sport would be allowed to continue and thrive?

**Ms. Julie Saretsky:** That's correct.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** Thank you.

My next question is for Lieutenant-Colonel Schneiderbanger.

As a veteran, how important was it for you, when you left the forces, to be able to participate in sport shooting?

**LCol (Ret'd) John Schneiderbanger:** It gave me an opportunity to remain connected with other veterans and current members of the armed forces, because many of them do take part in these sports.

It's a great outdoor sport. It gave me the ability to challenge myself physically and keep myself mentally fit as well. I found it very important. I took up the sport immediately upon retirement, actually, which was 12 years ago.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** Do you think that denying veterans, who will not be exempted under Bill C-21, the ability to participate in this kind of sport shooting will have a negative impact on their well-being?

**LCol (Ret'd) John Schneiderbanger:** Yes, I do. They have skills that they can immediately use in a sport activity, which is healthy. It's a very safe sport. It's highly regulated. IPSC is an example. I'll speak to that. It's highly regulated and it keeps veterans actively fit and mentally fit.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** Do you think it makes any sense for legislation like Bill C-21 that you can have a military member, a veteran or a law enforcement member who is mandated to use a handgun for their job day to day, but under this legislation will not be allowed to purchase, own or transfer a handgun personally?

**LCol (Ret'd) John Schneiderbanger:** I have a hard time with that. Yes, I think it doesn't make much sense. If you can't rely on veterans or former military members to be safe, responsible and law-abiding members, then I think we have a bigger problem.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** We know that handgun owners, as a condition of their licence, must be a paying member of a certified firearms range. Has this requirement been critical to the sustainability of gun ranges in Canada?

**LCol (Ret'd) John Schneiderbanger:** Yes. The reason for the existence of most ranges is the fact that handgun shooters can only shoot at the ranges. The vast membership of these ranges are handgun shooters, and therefore it's those sport disciplines that use handguns.

There are many many sport disciplines, including the International Defensive Pistol Association, 3-gun, cowboy action, mounted cowboy and IPSC. That's just to name a few.

• (1605)

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** Yes.

Do you believe that this legislation would lead to a mass closure of firearms ranges across this country?

**LCol (Ret'd) John Schneiderbanger:** I absolutely do foresee that.

It will have an unintended consequence in that law enforcement—that's Canada Border Services, conservation officers and police officers—will have to have their own firing ranges, which will be very costly for the municipalities.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** You're saying that law enforcement members across this country, with a few exceptions, currently need to use these private ranges in order to practice marksmanship, so that they can be good upholders of public safety.

**LCol (Ret'd) John Schneiderbanger:** Absolutely.

We see them here all the time at my local range. RCMP, border services and conservation officers are here, along with my own municipal police services. I actually have given a lot of shooting advice to many of those officers on our range.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** Are these officers required to get an authorization to transport when they are going to the range to shoot, or are they exempted from having to apply for that because it's part of their job? Are you aware of that?

**LCol (Ret'd) John Schneiderbanger:** It depends on the firearm they are using. If they are using their service firearm, they don't need an ATT, because according to the act, it's not required. If it's their personal handgun, they do need an ATT.

If it was their personal handgun, they would have gone through all the courses and so forth and applied for a PAL and a restricted PAL.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** Thank you.

Do you think this legislation will have a negative impact on promoting a culture of responsible firearms ownership and safety in Canada?

**LCol (Ret'd) John Schneiderbanger:** On ownership, I think the majority of these sports disciplines have national or world bodies, and they're regulated—highly regulated. At IPSC, we have the National Range Officers Institute, which is recognized by the national institute of range association. They stipulate all of the requirements of safety worldwide.

**The Chair:** You have 10 seconds left.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** Thank you. I'll give it to the committee.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Lloyd.

We'll now go to Mr. Chiang. You have six minutes, please.

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

I'd like to thank the witnesses for joining us today and for giving their precious time to this committee.

My question is directed to Dr. Cukier.

In 2020, there were approximately 1.1 million registered handguns in Canada, a 74% increase since 2010. Why do you believe that minimizing the number of handguns in Canada will help to reduce firearm violence and keep Canadians safe?

**Dr. Wendy Cukier:** Thank you for the question.

We know that while smuggled guns are a problem and more work is needed to address that—we have recommendations on that as well—a portion of firearms recovered in crime are legally sourced. The Danforth shooting was a legal handgun and the mosque shooting was done by a legal gun owner with legal handguns.

In fact, most mass shootings in Canada over the last 20 years have been done with legal guns by legal owners or with guns that were diverted through legal owners to illegal sources, as in the murders in Mayerthorpe.

It's important, in our view, to respect the views of Canadians. Only about 300,000 gun owners in Canada have restricted weapons. There are lots of hunters and farmers who support a ban on handguns. There is a big difference between firearms that are reasonably used for hunting and those that are used for other sport.

I think it's important that we draw a line. The fact that handgun imports doubled in the first six months of this year when the ban was announced tells you something about the drivers for this.

We've seen a dramatic increase of handgun violence in rural communities. While a lot of attention is focused on urban communities, with the proliferation of handguns, we've seen more handgun violence in rural communities.

There are big questions around why people are owning handguns. Many are not sport shooters, and we really need to turn off the tap.

● (1610)

**Mr. Paul Chiang:** According to Statistics Canada, “one in four...female victims of firearm-related violent crime was victimized by a current or former spouse or other intimate partner.”

How do you believe that newly proposed red and yellow flag laws, which will remove firearms from homes where owners pose a risk to themselves or others, will help keep women safer from firearm violence? Are there any changes to this legislation that you would like to see to more effectively support victims of firearm-related intimate partner violence?

**Dr. Wendy Cukier:** Thank you for the question.

Intimate partner violence is something that we really need to look at carefully, because it is a form of violence that is far more frequent in rural communities, where there are more guns in people's homes, just as we see more suicide in rural communities and murders of police officers.

The provisions in the legislation, which deal with restricting and removing firearms from people who have offences or protection orders against them, are all good moves. There are some nuances that we'll write about that some of the women's organizations have proposed. Remember that the law allows for a firearms officer to refuse a licence or remove firearms from anyone who is considered a threat to themselves or any other person, and the risks associated with domestic violence, suicide and mass shootings are all interrelated. It's very important that those provisions be understood as being broad and that the firearms officers be obligated to remove firearms when there is risk. This is partly legislative, but it's also partly implementation of the law.

However well-intentioned, the pieces of the legislation that we have concerns about are the provisions that require citizens to go to court for emergency prohibition orders. Our view is that it's the responsibility of the state. That's the responsibility of police. We would prefer to see a hotline that is served, serviced and acted upon in short order when concerns are brought forward.

We know from the Desmond inquiry in Nova Scotia, for example, that people raised concerns about the killer, who was a veteran and had access to firearms, but no action was taken. We've seen way too many inquiries and inquests that showed that people had information that someone was potentially a threat to themselves or someone else, yet action was not taken. We need to really tighten up not just the legislation but also the implementation of the legislation and the accountability that police and firearms officers have for keeping us safe.

Thank you for the question.

**Mr. Paul Chiang:** Thank you, Dr. Cukier.

We have been hearing from many organizations related to sport shooting and airsoft sports. In your view, what exemptions should be given to the national freeze on handguns for these groups and organizations? What would be viable?

**Dr. Wendy Cukier:** I think that we have to make a choice between hobbies and our children's lives. I see it that starkly, so I think that any exemptions that are provided need to be very narrowly defined.

With respect to the Lieutenant-Colonel, IPSC is not a sport that most Canadians and in fact most gun owners would believe deserves an exemption, given that it essentially promotes arming for self-protection.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Chiang.

[Translation]

I'll now give the floor to Ms. Michaud for six minutes.

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for being with us.

I'm going to pick up where you left off and continue with Dr. Cukier from the Coalition for Gun Control.

You say that if there are some exemptions, they need to be well defined or better defined. I quite agree with you that if we start ex-

empting just about every group that asks for it, we compromise the very essence of the national freeze on handguns.

I'm wondering how you interpret Bill C-21 as currently worded. The bill provides exceptions for high-level shooters, such as at the Paralympic or Olympic level, and their coaches. However, it seems unclear who would be exempt from the national freeze at this point.

• (1615)

[English]

**Dr. Wendy Cukier:** I agree.

[Translation]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** What I asked the officials from the Department of Public Safety about this a few weeks ago, they themselves didn't seem to know what that meant. It seemed hazy.

So I'd like to know your interpretation of the current wording of the bill on this point.

[English]

**Dr. Wendy Cukier:** I think it's going to be very difficult. I think that some narrow exemptions for Olympic shooters could be entertained. Certainly Germany, which has very strict gun control laws, does have some provisions for sport shooters.

I may be training for the Olympic gymnastics team, and I can tell you that, but how can I prove that I am an Olympic-class gymnast? I think those are the kinds of questions that are really going to have to be clarified in the application of this legislation. While I understand the arguments that people make that they're going to lose the feeders to our sport, again I'll come back to my basic point, which is that most Canadians want a ban on handguns and that we have to choose public safety over people's hobbies.

[Translation]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** I also have a question about the freeze on handguns. Again, there seems to be a bit of a grey area. The government would leave it up to the provinces to write and send letters to the shooting clubs to let them know that this or that person is exempt. That would give the provinces a lot of leeway. While this is already how it works for shooting clubs in Quebec, some provinces have already indicated their intention to challenge Bill C-21 or the various gun control regulations it would implement.

The federal government is implementing a national freeze on handguns that is ultimately not so national, because some provinces may decide to do things differently. In addition, the Prime Minister stated that the handgun freeze applies now, immediately. However, on the government's website, in the Canada Gazette, it says that the freeze won't be in effect until November 9.

What message do you think that sends?



[English]

**Dr. Wendy Cukier:** Thank you very much, again, for the question.

I do think that the federal government has to be very careful that it's not seen to be downloading its responsibilities onto the province. We opposed—as did the mayors of large municipalities across the country—the efforts to download the handgun ban to municipalities. We opposed the efforts to download it to the provinces.

You raise a very important point that needs to be addressed. We have to ensure that the exemptions don't become the rule. We know that some provinces are very opposed to stronger laws, and they will exempt everybody. It's critically important that the guidelines be very precise and explicit about who can and cannot be exempted. Minimal discretion should be allowed to the provinces.

[Translation]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** I have one last question, and it's about assault weapons.

You know as well as I do that the May 2020 order didn't ban all military-style assault weapons. Retailers can circumvent these regulations by bringing new weapons to market, for example.

When the government introduced its Bill C-21, it promised that it would amend its own bill to include a section banning all assault weapons.

Do you think the government will keep its promise and make that amendment to Bill C-21?

[English]

**Dr. Wendy Cukier:** I think that the government has introduced this legislation in good faith. I think it's true that it's the most significant legislation that has been introduced in the last probably 20 years. However, the opposition parties have a very important role to play in holding their feet to the fire and ensuring that the most rigorous interpretation of this law is contained in the regulations and that no amendments that weaken this legislation are allowed to get through the committee. That would be my ask.

[Translation]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** To sum up, I understand that you are in favour of Bill C-21. Obviously, everything can be improved. Are there any improvements you would make? Does it not go far enough in some respects? I don't think so, given your point of view, but do you think some elements go too far?

● (1620)

[English]

**Dr. Wendy Cukier:** I think that the obligations on the firearms officer to remove firearms when someone is identified as a risk to themselves or to any other person need to be strengthened. I think that any loopholes with respect to the ban on handguns need to be clarified, for reasons that you've identified. I think as well that we need a clear definition of semi-automatic military-style firearms in the legislation, not just in the orders in council, and I think that we have to ensure that it's well understood that firearms are a risk.

While there are legitimate uses for some firearms in hunting and for pest control—and obviously Indigenous peoples have a right to hunt—

**The Chair:** I'm going to have to cut you off there.

**Dr. Wendy Cukier:** —we need to address those things.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Michaud.

[English]

We'll go now to Mr. MacGregor for six minutes, please.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for joining our committee today as we go through the provisions of Bill C-21.

I'd like to start with the Coalition for Gun Control and welcome Dr. Cukier back to our committee.

I was reading today the updated brief from the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians on the red-flag laws in Bill C-21. They are still sticking to their point from the earlier version of this bill in the previous Parliament, in that they feel that placing the onus on a family person to go through the court system is the wrong way to go. They would prefer to have a system whereby emergency physicians have a process for reporting. Unfortunately for us, though, that is primarily under provincial jurisdiction.

The testimony on how the red-flag laws are written in Bill C-21 is kind of all over the map. I think there's an understanding out there that red-flag laws are important. They're just not sure that the way Bill C-21 is written is the correct way to do it.

I guess I'm going to ask my question in a different way. You've had it before. Can you see any way whereby the existing clauses of Bill C-21 can be saved, or do we need to just simply get rid of them altogether? Do you believe there is a place for a court system to be involved? We have a very high rate of suicide by firearms in Canada. Do you think there's a process whereby someone should be able to use the court system, or should it just always fall on our police services, primarily?

**Dr. Wendy Cukier:** As I said, I think the provisions were well intentioned. I do think they're based on the experience in the U.S., which is not relevant to Canada. We already have continuous eligibility checking built into the process. We already have a principle, which is that the firearms officer can remove a firearm or deny a licence to someone who is a risk to themselves or any other person. What we don't have are the provisions that require that to be done. What we don't have are the provisions that provide mechanisms whereby if a complaint is made, action is taken. From my own experience in reporting a case, I can tell you that I was on hold with the Ontario firearms office for 24 hours. I literally put the phone down, went home, came back the next morning and was still listening to music. That has to stop.

I think what we will do is provide some language, but in general we agree with the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians in their concerns that this could be perceived as downloading responsibility to citizens rather than holding police and officials accountable. We saw the consequences of that most recently with the mass casualty inquiry in Nova Scotia.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Part of the bill provides for Olympic and Paralympic shooting disciplines. You made the comment that there are many people in Canada who own a handgun but who do not engage in a shooting discipline. You openly wondered about the purpose of their owning a handgun if they're not part of a shooting discipline. I've heard suggestions that with the disciplines that are mentioned in the bill, there should be further requirements to demonstrate that you're an active participant and are actively training. There were concerns spoken to me about how someone could just say they were a member of a club, buy a handgun, get rid of the membership and then be left with a handgun.

• (1625)

**Dr. Wendy Cukier:** Well, that's my point. I'm a gymnast training for the Olympics. Do I have any chance of being a competitor in the Olympics? No, but I could say that.

There are real concerns about that issue. We know that Colten Boushie was killed by someone who said they had a handgun for shooting coyotes, which is not a legal purpose for having a handgun. We know of many cases across the country of handguns being misused. When you dig into why the person had them, there is often a large question about whether they legally acquired them. The leader of the trucker protest, for example, obtained a handgun after he was prohibited from owning firearms.

There are a lot of gaps, a lot of questions and a lot of evidence that people are arming for self-protection, which is not based in Canadian law or culture. We have to nip that in the bud.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Thank you.

For my final minute, I'd like to turn to Mr. Schneiderbanger.

Over the summer I visited my local range. The Victoria Fish & Game Protection Association invited me to watch an IPSC competition. I was versed in the safety aspects of that, but for our committee and so it's on the record, can you talk about some of the safety procedures that are in place for all of the contestants who engage in the sport while they're actively on the range?

**LCol (Ret'd) John Schneiderbanger:** Absolutely, I can.

You have two levels of range officers. You have chief range officers and range officers. There are two range officers who follow the participant throughout the stage. There's a primary and a secondary officer. Each has their own specific job to do to watch for safety, while the chief range officer is watching the overall situation for safety as we go through the stage.

We run our black badge courses that you must take to be able to shoot IPSC, and it's all about safety for almost half of that course. Once we get out on the range and we do practical training, once again safety is continually—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, sir. I'm going to have to cut you off there.

**LCol (Ret'd) John Schneiderbanger:** That's no problem.

**The Chair:** Thank you all.

We're going to start our second round now. We won't have time for a full second round. I believe we'll have time for one slot for each party.

We'll start with Ms. Dancho. You have five minutes, please.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to the witnesses for being here.

My first question is for Colonel Schneiderbanger. It's nice to see you again, sir. Thank you for being with us.

You were mentioning in your remarks and past questioning today that there are police forces that utilize gun ranges that they don't own. They utilize community gun ranges. I have one of those in my community in West St. Paul, Manitoba, that the Manitoba RCMP use.

Can you reiterate your concern? Are these at risk of closing? What impact would that have on our police forces in our municipalities?

**LCol (Ret'd) John Schneiderbanger:** Yes, the ranges are at risk of closing. The vast majority of members who support these ranges are handgun owners in the sport shooting disciplines, as this is the only place they can practise their sport.

The RCMP here in my local area, my own municipal police force and border services come here to train because they don't have their own ranges. The expense to maintain their own facility would be significant, and municipalities will bear that extra cost.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Thank you, sir.

You're obviously a former military person. Did you grow up in a military family or a police family, or were you inspired on your own to join the military?

**LCol (Ret'd) John Schneiderbanger:** I was inspired to join the military on my own.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Thank you very much for your service.

Since you've retired, you've engaged in sport shooting. How has that supported you and other veterans in your post-army life?

**LCol (Ret'd) John Schneiderbanger:** It's been fantastic. It's given me a sense of accomplishment. It's given me a chance to meet with other people from around the world and a chance to mentor, coach and teach people about sport shooting and safety. It's great for my mental and physical health. I'm almost 60 years old, and I can keep up with the young 25-year-old people, whether they're female or male, on the ranges.

• (1630)

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Thank you very much.

My next question is for Ms. Saretsky.

You talked a lot about the legacy in your family and how your sport shooting competition has been multi-generational. You grew up in Alberta. Is that correct? Did you grow up around ranchers, farmers and other sport shooters?

**Ms. Julie Saretsky:** Interestingly enough, I'm from Manitoba, and I hadn't been involved with any sort of firearms and such until 2017. I was a show jumper prior to that, and I was introduced to the sport. I fell in love with the camaraderie and the ability to learn how to use a firearm correctly, and I coupled it with the riding and horsemanship portion of our sport.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Thank you very much.

You mentioned others you compete with. I want to go back to the legacy part. You said it was multi-generational. Where is that comment coming from? Are those you compete with...? You mentioned grandpas and parents.

**Ms. Julie Saretsky:** There are many families, especially in Alberta, who started mounted shooting and have been involved in shooting sports. We're a family. You'll have, like I said, multiple generations—as in grandparents, parents and children—who are involved in the sport, so it creates that family event, keeps the family together and creates family values.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Thank you very much.

The reason I ask is that certainly those I knew who engaged in sport shooting when I was growing up were often from hunting families. They were often ranchers and cowboys. It certainly is strongly part of the culture, I would say, in western Canada and rural Canada, which is where I'm from as well.

So often since I've come to Ottawa I've felt that some in Ottawa and some powerful people in the east and in certain political parties look down their noses at folks like us with our background. It seems to be a constant battle for legitimacy. Our culture has every right to exist, and western Canada has a firearm culture that hunts, to say nothing of the indigenous culture of hunting and sport shooting in their own right, which dates back far longer, of course, than my family has been in Canada.

I certainly feel that this culture is under consistent attack from the current administration, from the Liberal government. Can you

comment on your thoughts on that? Do you feel the same? Are you constantly having to justify the existence of the culture you engage in on a day-to-day basis?

**Ms. Julie Saretsky:** Yes. It depends on the part of the country, whether I'm in the city or it's rural. If I'm travelling and I get talking to somebody about what I do and I say I'm a mounted shooter, they ask what that is, so I explain that I shoot balloon targets off a moving horse with black powder blanks. There's not even a projectile. Depending on what part of the country I'm in, they may say, "My gosh, it's a firearm" and such, but when I start to explain to people that we're shooting blanks and that the firearms are single-action, just like in the John Wayne movies....

In my own family, until my mother saw the sport in person, she didn't change her mind. She had a preconceived notion that what we were doing wasn't necessarily correct, so until she saw it in person, she thought it was—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. I'm going to have to cut you off there.

**Ms. Julie Saretsky:** —something nefarious.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Thank you very much for your remarks.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We go now to Mr. Van Bynen, please, for five minutes.

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I also want to thank all our witnesses for adding their perspectives to this issue. There is much to be learned, and I'm eager to hear all the different perspectives.

I do want to clarify, though, that the national freeze on handguns came into force via the regulatory amendments to the Firearms Act on approval by the Governor General and registration on October 21, 2022, and that the regulations have been in force since then.

The text of the regulations will be published in the Canada Gazette on November 9. This is just a publication date, as the regulations are already in force. Until then, they are temporarily posted, for ease of reference, on the government's website.

I'd like to direct my questions to Dr. Cukier.

There have been some concerns raised with respect to the red-and yellow-flag items. I want to emphasize the context that these are in addition to existing regulations. I appreciate that much work needs to be done in the responsiveness, as you highlighted earlier, but as a supplemental or an additional avenue for people who feel like they are at risk of violence, would there be any additional amendments you would make to reflect that context in the legislation?

• (1635)

**Dr. Wendy Cukier:** I do think the context is important, because there is a risk that these will be viewed as an alternative, and instead of the police responding in a timely fashion to concerns, people will be directed to the courts, so we're still working on proposed amendments.

Some people, as you know, are simply recommending striking those provisions entirely. There may be some merit to that idea. To be perfectly honest, we're trying to figure out how to navigate the different views of organizations like the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians. I'm inclining towards their position, but there may be a way to retain some measures with the appropriate context.

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen:** Thank you.

Could you describe for the committee some of your research in relation to the correlation between firearms legislation and suicide rates, and do you believe that gun control is an effective suicide prevention tool?

**Dr. Wendy Cukier:** Yes. I co-authored a book called *The Global Gun Epidemic* with Vic Sidel, who is past president of the American Public Health Association. What it shows is that among industrialized countries, on a global basis, there is a very strong relationship between the availability of firearms, suicide with firearms and overall suicide. You can see that it's particularly pronounced even within Canada when you look at differences between, for example, urban centres, rural centres, the east and the west, and I have to say, with respect, that recent studies on suicide by military veterans do mention the availability of firearms being a factor that needs to be addressed.

The availability of lethal means is associated with what we call suicide completions, which means 93% of suicides attempted with a firearm will result in death, versus attempts by other means. I think the evidence is pretty unequivocal that the availability of firearms is associated with suicide rates and that legislation that reduces the availability of firearms to people who are at risk to themselves or others is associated with reductions in suicide.

If we look at Canada's track record, we see that after Bill C-68, we were on a trajectory that was very comparable to what we saw in Australia. Then when the laws were relaxed, we saw that trend reversed.

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen:** You mentioned earlier that there should be a very narrow definition of the weapons that are permitted, specifically with reference to semi-automatic and other items. Having said that, do you believe that the IPSC or the mounted shooters should be exempted in this law?

**Dr. Wendy Cukier:** Certainly IPSC should not be. I'm not familiar with the mounted shooters, but our position is for a very narrow definition restricted to Olympic shooting, with requirements that people demonstrate that they're actually legitimate, and that requires some work.

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen:** Okay. Now you mentioned earlier—

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Van Bynen.

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen:** Thank you.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Ms. Michaud now has the floor for two and a half minutes.

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

I'd like to thank my colleague Mr. Van Bynen for clarifying the issue of the publication in the Canada Gazette. That's not the information I had as of yesterday. Now we're on the same page.

I'll now turn to Ms. Saretsky.

I hear your concerns about Bill C-21 and the national freeze on handguns, as well as your concerns about your sport.

However, are there elements of Bill C-21 that you welcome? We don't just have to think about the increase in minimum sentences for smuggling or trafficking in firearms, or about revoking or suspending the firearms licence of a person suspected of committing wrongdoing, for example. There are a number of elements that seem to be welcomed by several groups.

I'd like you to talk about these elements. Do you find that there are still good things in Bill C-21?

• (1640)

[English]

**Ms. Julie Saretsky:** I feel that if somebody is a danger to society or is a proven danger to society, and possibly suspected of being a danger to themselves or to the public, we should be able to flag that individual.

For us, we are most concerned that our single-action firearms not be included under that definition of a restricted weapon that we would not be able to use. Although there are positive aspects of Bill C-21 and we would like to ensure that nobody gets hurt, we really are looking to having our heritage considered and so on.

[Translation]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** I understand. In fact, several groups have similar concerns.

We often hear the argument made that Bill C-21 won't address the problem of illegal arms trafficking, for example, when illegal guns are involved in the majority of shootings. This is true in part for the majority of shootings. However, we must also be aware that, in the past, terrible crimes were committed by people who had legal weapons and valid firearms licences. These practices need to be better regulated.

As for the sport, there's no doubt that enthusiasts use devices that are still dangerous—

[English]

**The Chair:** Could you wrap up quickly, please?

I'll give the witness about 20 seconds to respond.

[Translation]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Actually, my question is too long, so I will stop here.

Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. MacGregor, please go ahead. You have two and a half minutes.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll turn to Lieutenant-Colonel Schneiderbanger.

Sir, you've heard the testimony, and we have verifiable evidence that having firearms in the home of someone contemplating suicide most often leads to the successful completion of it. I'm not sure, though, that enough has been talked about. As a community that's involved in the shooting disciplines, you must have experienced some times when someone you know was having a down day.

Does your community check in with one another? Are you doing wellness checks? Are you often having those meetings to ensure that everyone is not having a bad day?

As you know, everyone there is a licensed firearms owner. Can you inform our committee about that?

**LCol (Ret'd) John Schneiderbanger:** Thank you for the question.

I can give you a personal anecdote. We had one gentleman who was rather old, and we noted that he was acting oddly. We immediately had him stop shooting. We started talking to him to find out what was going on, and guess what? We determined that he had the onset of, potentially, dementia. That's an example. He no longer shoots. We informed his family and so forth, and appropriate action was taken.

Most certainly, there's a lot of camaraderie in our sport, and we all want to remain safe.

By the way, we do not shoot at targets that represent human beings whatsoever. It is not the purpose of the IPSC to be training for defence using a pistol. It would be contrary to everything we do in this sport.

Absolutely, we check on our membership.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Thank you.

My final question is to Ms. Saretsky. In your opening statement, you said that you would like an exemption like the one that is allowed for the film industry. In about 30 seconds, can you expand a bit more on that, please?

**Ms. Julie Saretsky:** In cowboy mounted shooting, the blanks that are used are very similar to what has been used in the film and television industry in creating westerns and such. It makes a lot of smoke, but you're not going to be gravely injured by a blank being discharged and shot from a single-action revolver.

We do a lot of entertainment in the form of public appearances as well. Our single-action revolvers and blanks are very similar to what is used in the film and television industry.

• (1645)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. MacGregor.

That wraps up the questioning for this panel. I'd like to thank all the witnesses for sharing their time with us today, as well as their knowledge, expertise and concern. It is certainly a help to our study.

With that, we will suspend in order to bring in the next panel.

Thank you all.

• (1645)

(Pause)

• (1645)

**The Chair:** I now call this meeting back to order.

For the second panel with us today, we have two groups.

We have, as an individual, Lynda Kiejko. She's a civil engineer and an Olympian.

We also have the International Practical Shooting Confederation. We have Medha Russell in person today. She is an athlete, instructor and official. Online, we have Mr. James Smith, president of the National Range Officers Institute.

Thank you all for being here today. We will start by giving each group up to five minutes to make opening remarks.

We will start with Ms. Kiejko.

• (1650)

**Ms. Lynda Kiejko (Civil Engineer, Olympian, As an Individual):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

My name is Lynda Kiejko. I'm a professional civil engineer. I'm a mother to three young children, a two-time Olympian in the sport of pistol shooting and currently the president of the Alberta Handgun Association.

This is a sport and an organization that I feel is now at risk from the proposals in Bill C-21.

I'm a medallist at both the Pan American and Commonwealth Games. Currently I spend a lot of time when I could be training or with my family applying for additional permits. This is on top of the process to be able to get an authorization to transport when I'm leaving the country to represent Canada.

I've represented Canada on the world stage for over 20 years. Quite honestly, I can say that there's no greater honour than being able to wear the maple leaf and represent my country.

Recent changes and the implementation of the handgun ban have done nothing to reduce violence, in my opinion. They've done nothing to increase public safety. However, they have added several weeks to my preparation for international competition. Since the ban on the import of handguns was placed into effect on August 19, I've spent more than two weeks communicating with a government department, only for them to realize that they were not able to process my export permit, which usually takes up to about six weeks to attain. I now have to pay to bring my own firearms back into the country when I represent Canada on the international stage.

I have just recently returned from Cairo, Egypt, after competing in the world championships. I will shortly depart for the Championship of the Americas in Peru. Instead of being mentally prepared for these competitions, I am now concerned about whether I'll receive my permits in time to be able to enter my own country and come home with my competitive equipment.

The advertised purpose of Bill C-21 is to increase public safety. I really would like someone to explain to me how my firearms are a hazard to public safety. I have young children in my home, and there is no way that I would jeopardize my own children's safety, let alone anyone else's.

I'm concerned about changing rules and regulations while I'm away from home representing Canada, which literally has just occurred. Last week, I was out of the country when the new announcement came out. I really don't want to become a criminal while I'm away from home representing the country because those rules have arbitrarily been changed. I don't want to be a criminal. I do want something done about criminal activity to actually increase public safety.

I compete internationally under the auspices of the Shooting Federation of Canada, which is a government-funded recognized national sports governing body for the target shooting sports of Canada. We are also an active member of the International Shooting Sport Federation, which is recognized by the IOC.

The ISSF oversees many target disciplines involving air rifles, air pistols, small-calibre rifles and pistols, and shotgun shooting sports. There are more than just the Olympic and Paralympic events and disciplines that are recognized by the ISSF. There are a lot of events that shift over time, but they're still recognized at that international level.

Bill C-21 is an attempt to manage criminal violence. It may have some components that help do that, but my concern is that components of this bill really strangle the large portion of our sports resources.

It's competitively practised by people who are 13 to well into their 80s and 90s. It is one of the most gender-inclusive, age-inclusive and physically inclusive sports that you could possibly find. Shooting sports of all types are very inclusive. It doesn't matter your age or ability. Achieving excellence in target shooting sports is something that is a common ground for everyone.

There are numerous highly competitive shooting sports that use pistols that are not in the Olympics. We really depend on these sports to identify talent. They help to create a pathway for athletes to become Olympians. I can say that this is true. I started straight into the Olympic disciplines when I was a child. However, I know several of my teammates, competitors and people whom I have met internationally started in those non-Olympic events to be able to become Olympians and internationally recognized competitors.

As the sole shooting Olympian representing Canada in Tokyo at the 2020 Olympics, I can say that attracting new shooters and identifying potential is already becoming very challenging. With the proposed new regulations, without any increase to public safety, there's economic hardship on law-abiding citizens and shooting ranges in Canada that host multiple shooting sports events.

● (1655)

Without these types of events, without these types of opportunities, our shooting ranges are also going to be at risk, which means that I now no longer have a place to train to be able to get to the Olympics.

**The Chair:** Could you wrap it up, please?

**Ms. Lynda Kiejko:** Sure.

Competitive shooters in any event are highly focused and trained individuals. We really respect our equipment with the same regard as any other athlete, be it skiing, cycling or basketball. Shooting sports have the highest rating for safety of all sports.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll go now to the International Practical Shooting Confederation. I don't know whether it's Ms. Russell or Mr. Smith who will be speaking.

**Mr. James Smith (President of the National Range Officers Institute, International Practical Shooting Confederation):** I'll start.

**The Chair:** You have five minutes, please.

**Mr. James Smith:** Good afternoon.

I would like to start by thanking the committee for the opportunity to present today. I'd also like to introduce my co-presenter, who is there in person, Medha Russell. She's a long-time competitive athlete and a six-time Canadian national champion.

I am presenting on behalf of the International Practical Shooting Confederation of Canada. Our purpose today is to have the committee consider amending Bill C-21 to have IPSC added as a sport discipline under proposed paragraph 97.1(b)(i).

Even though Bill C-21 is not an outright handgun ban, it will result in a slow demise for our sport in Canada. Having no new athletes introduced to replace the existing competitors and being unable to replace equipment as it wears out will result in the end of our sport over time. It will also close the ranges for police officers and other agencies that use our ranges for training and result in no shooting for Olympics.

IPSC was first introduced in Canada as a sport in 1976. It has continued to expand since then and currently has over 5,000 participants in every province and territory in Canada. From the inception of the sport, Canada has been a world leader by implementing a mandatory requirement for a two-day safety course in order to participate in our sport via the black badge program. In addition to the original course, the athletes must participate in regular matches to maintain their status and compete in the sport.

IPSC athletes in Canada compete and train at their local clubs, and the best from each province qualify to compete at the national championships, where the best are then chosen to advance to the World Shoot. The World Shoot is like the Olympics and is held every three years. We have proud Canadian athletes representing Canada at these international competitions every three years, typically with a minimum of 60 participants. In addition to the athletes in our sport, we also have a cadre of over 600 internationally respected coaches and officials who participate in Canada and are in demand in the rest of the world.

The International Practical Shooting Confederation is the largest shooting sport association in the world, with 109 member countries. This includes some of the countries that have banned handgun ownership, such as the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia, all of which allow athletes to compete and train in IPSC competitions.

Internationally, IPSC has been working toward recognition and possible inclusion in the Olympics and has recently been added as a full member of the Global Association of International Sports Federations, or GAISF, which is the umbrella organization for all Olympic and non-Olympic sports internationally. IPSC is a member as well of the Alliance of Independent Recognised Members of Sport. IPSC has also joined the World Anti-Doping Agency and has implemented its practices as well as policies on ethics, conflict of interest and gender equality.

In summary, the addition of IPSC as an exempted sport in the legislation would allow existing and future athletes, coaches and officials, who currently devote hundreds of hours a year in pursuit of excellence, the ability to continue in our sport.

Thank you. I'll turn it over to Medha.

**Ms. Medha Russell (Athlete, Instructor and Official, International Practical Shooting Confederation):** Mr. Chair, and members of the SECU committee, thank you for inviting the IPSC community to your meeting to present what we do, who we are and why we do it.

First of all, who am I?

I'm a Canadian who came here at a very young age, and who was taught from a very young age the three Rs, which, as we know from school, are reading, writing and arithmetic. I was also taught by my parents, again at a very early age, an additional three Rs, which today I and the IPSC community follow. These are responsibility, respect and recognition.

What do those three Rs represent in my sport of IPSC?

Responsibility means that there are good and bad consequences for your actions. I joined the sport of IPSC only with one key understanding—safety must be and is number one.

Respect means that we are inclusive and diverse and that we tolerate and understand differences. Regardless of age, sex, orientation, culture or religion, people from all walks of life are members. Like everyone here, we are all members of the same race, the human race.

Recognition means that we emulate, admire and strive for excellence. What you put in is what you put out.

I learned all these things at an early age from my parents, who were teaching professionals.

I'll roll it forward to 31 years.

● (1700)

**The Chair:** I'm sorry; I'm going to have to ask you to wrap it up in 15 seconds.

**Ms. Medha Russell:** Okay.

I joined because we need more women in our sport. I'm an athlete. I represented Canada proudly in our opening ceremonies. I am now also an official, chief range officer, an instructor and the first coach in Canada.

At the age of 62 years, I am the only woman in North America to win an international level 3 championship. This sport has allowed me to strive for this excellence, to do the best I can, to have safe fun in a controlled, regulated organization that is international, has governance, has a code of ethics, recognizes diversity, and above all places safety at number one.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll start our questions now.

Our first round is with Mr. Motz for six minutes, please.

**Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC):** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here.

Thank you to Ms. Kiejko and Ms. Russell for representing us as well as they have on the international front. We too are very proud of you.

Let me start by apologizing for another misguided attempt at public safety by this government, which is out of touch on public safety in firearms issues. I apologize on behalf of them for the impact that it will have on your sports.

Ms. Kiejko, would you say that banning legally owned handguns, owned by those who have a licence and are law-abiding sport shooters and handgun owners, will prevent gun violence in this country?

**Ms. Lynda Kiejko:** Banning law-abiding citizens from having firearms I don't think does anything for public safety. I don't think it does anything to reduce violence.

When you look at statistics for violent acts within Canada from Statistics Canada, we're talking about 3% of violent acts within Canada that are done with firearms. If you want to deal with violence in Canada, then you deal with the 97%, and it will likely also include that 3% of firearms activities. Of those firearms activities that have violence in them, I'm going to say that the majority are not by law-abiding citizens.

All of us who have firearms are competitive; we go to the range and we train. To be able to attend any sort of a range or to take our firearms out or transport them, we have to go through rigorous safety protocols and courses. We have continual safety checks—24 hours a day—and reference checks all the time.

When it comes to public safety, I don't see how limiting my use of firearms and limiting law-abiding use of firearms actually affects anybody's public safety.

**Mr. Glen Motz:** Thank you.

I'm sure both of you—Ms. Russell and Ms. Kiejko—woke up one morning and all of a sudden you were Olympians, international sports shooters. It just happened.

We know different. Ms. Kiejko, you started at age 11, and it took you many, many years—as it did you, Ms. Russell—to acquire the skills.

With Bill C-21, how is it possible to pass on the legacy and tradition that have been instilled in both of your families in this way of life?

• (1705)

**Ms. Lynda Kiejko:** I don't think that it is, honestly.

The regulations in place right now call out Olympians and sport shooters, but I think they should be expanded to be more inclusive of sport shooters. There are many more disciplines than just the Olympics.

However, in terms of getting new people into the sport, to bring more talent in, to be able to coach, to possibly teach my children the shooting sport, this is a huge barrier to being able to pass that on, to be able to have them do the safety courses and to compete as well.

I think it was asked in the previous panel how you prove that you are an Olympic shooter. I have the same question. How are we supposed to prove who is in competitive shooting and who is not? I don't know the difference between the safety of an Olympic shooter and a recreational shooter, quite honestly. The people I train with are just as safe.

**Mr. Glen Motz:** I'm going to cut you off because I want to move on to another line of questioning.

Obviously there's a significant difference between a sport shooter—a licensed firearm owner who is law-abiding—and a criminal who would commit offences with a firearm. We know that. We also know, again, that this legislation will do absolutely nothing to improve public safety. Unfortunately, it will not deal with the issues we're trying to deal with on illegally obtained firearms and illegal use of firearms.

Does either one of you see anything in Bill C-21 that would prevent gun crime?

I'll start with you, Ms. Russell.

**Ms. Medha Russell:** We need legislation, regulations and policy. We have them in our sport. We recognize they are critical and important. Therefore, safety is number one.

Bill C-21 has provisions for public safety, but what the people making these laws need to recognize is that they need to address the 90%—or whatever that exact percentage is—of criminals or illegal persons who have no respect for life. Respect is very important in our sport. They are the ones this bill needs to address.

We are legal, law-abiding firearms owners. I don't know the exact number—hundreds of thousands. We are vetted 24-7 by the federal CPIC system. Therefore, if I were to do anything, a law enforcement officer will flag that and go to investigate, which they should. Safety is number one. We don't deny that. Therefore, through our governance and structure and the way we organize our sport, we and other shooting sports that exist in Canada ensure that this is critical and number one.

**Mr. Glen Motz:** Thank you very much, both of you, for your comments.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Motz.

We go now to Ms. Damoff. Ms. Damoff, go ahead for six minutes.

**Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.):** Thank you so much.

Thank you to all our witnesses for being here today, and to the ladies here who have represented Canada on the international stage. I want to thank them for representing our country.

Mr. Smith, it's nice to see you. I have a question for you.

The United Kingdom has much stricter gun control laws than we do here in Canada, yet they put a team in the Olympics every year. I've been on their website and they talk about their long history of success in shooting sports at the Olympics.

Can you explain to us how Great Britain continues to encourage people to be in the Olympics while also having a handgun ban in the country?

**Mr. James Smith:** I can only speak to the idea of C competitors, but at the World Shoot, the U.K. always has a team, as does Northern Ireland.

We have a gentleman from the U.K. who comes to Canada to shoot, and he has explained their laws. The handgun ban isn't complete in the U.K. The Channel Islands and Isle of Man both allow handgun ownership, as does Northern Ireland. The people in our sport who want to participate travel to those locations, train and compete there, and then compete on the world stage.

• (1710)

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Thank you.

Mr. Smith, you were quoted as saying that should IPSC be granted an exemption, “We will become the gateway to handgun ownership in Canada and can expect a huge increase in membership. This has been brought up because they do not want to end up with IPSC being used for general shooters to acquire handguns and not truly be competitors.”

I think that gets to the heart of the issue we have. I have heard from constituents and advocates. Their concern about opening this up further is that IPSC could become, as you said, “the gateway to handgun ownership”.

I'm wondering how we can ensure that's not going to happen—IPSC becoming the gateway to circumventing the freeze we put on handgun ownership.

**Mr. James Smith:** That would be an issue of trust, but through the regulations, as we currently have them, you can't just start shooting at IPSC. You have to take the black badge course and maintain a certain amount of participation to maintain it. If you do not participate for two years, you lose your black badge qualification and have to either retake it....



As far as an influx is concerned, if we are the only handgun sport in Canada, we would presume that people who want to go to the Olympics and preliminarily do other sports will join. That statement came based on the fact that at this point our instructors are flat out. We'd need a larger group to start doing it, and we would probably need accommodation. The ranges would not be able to handle such a great influx.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Is that monitored, then? You talked about the training and having to compete every two years, so how is that tracked and how do you ensure that records are kept? How do you ensure that this is kept up to date, and who enforces that?

**Mr. James Smith:** Every section in Canada is responsible for their members, so that would be mostly every province. Every province keeps a database on who participates and monitors it. If you go past the two-year mark, you would get a notice and you would be able to recertify. If you don't recertify at that time, you'd have to start at zero and come back and take the black badge course again, and you'd lose your membership.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Is IPSC funded or sponsored by gun manufacturers?

**Mr. James Smith:** Not as a rule. They may sponsor the nationals and they may sponsor a prize or two, but there's no direct funding to the athletes. There are prizes at the international and national competitions, but not very much.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** What exemptions would you like to see written into the law, into Bill C-21?

**Mr. James Smith:** I'd like to see Bill C-21 not take place at all, but if it is going forward, as it seems it is, we would like to have IPSC added under proposed paragraph 97.1(b)(i) as equal to the Olympics and Paralympic sports.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Okay, thank you.

I will say that I'm not going to apologize in any way for this legislation coming forward, in spite of what my Conservative colleagues said. I would just comment that 75% of people who die in Canada by firearms are dying by suicide, and if there's a gun in the home, they're five times more likely to die.

In a previous panel, my colleague Mr. Chiang quoted the statistic that one in four women in a home with a firearm is at risk. I don't think we can forget about intimate partner violence and we can't forget about people who are dying by suicide. I respect people talking about their sport, but I'll go back to what Dr. Cukier said earlier about it being a choice that we're making between a hobby and people's lives.

I know I only have about 15 seconds left, Chair, so I'll leave it at that.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Damoff.

[*Translation*]

I will now give the floor to Ms. Michaud for six minutes.

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I would also like to thank the witnesses for being here.

I'll pick up where my colleague left off. I want to come back to what the British Columbia Section of the International Practical

Shooting Confederation said. I will repeat it in French, as this is rather important, even disturbing. A message to the region's members states that, if the bill grants the International Practical Shooting Confederation's requested exemption to the handgun freeze, it would become a gateway to handgun ownership in Canada and can expect a huge increase in membership.

It's disturbing to see the reasons behind the request to obtain an exemption. Is it really to continue to practise a sport, or is it to become a recognized institution in Canada for handguns? There is enough here to raise questions.

Mr. Smith, I heard your answer to my colleague, so I would now like to hear what Ms. Russell has to say about this.

Does the International Practical Shooting Confederation agree with that statement? Is that what you think as well? Do you think that it may have gone too far? I'd like to hear from you on that.

• (1715)

[*English*]

**Ms. Medha Russell:** Thank you for the question. I would like to respond in my role as a coach and instructor, the first female instructor in Canada.

To get into the sport of IPSC is not very simple. It can take six to eight months. You need a Canadian firearm safety course. You need a Canadian restricted firearms safety course. You need a restricted possession and acquisition licence, an RPAL, and those holders in Canada, who number hundreds of thousands, are monitored 24-7.

You need membership with a shooting range or a club. You need to take the club-level safety training or their new member course. You need insurance coverage. That's a federal requirement. It is mandatory. Then you proceed to take your black badge course, but as a coach, I will not have you come into this sport if attitude is an issue, regardless of your age. Your age doesn't matter. You could be a junior, a senior or a super-senior. If you have an attitude, we ask you to leave, to exit.

You have to have basic minimum skills and basic minimum equipment, the right attitude and the willingness to learn and train. As coaches and instructors, we will put you through several drills, an intensive course of two days or more to ensure that you first of all meet safety standards and then, secondly, that you are ready to compete in our sport. By the way, an elongated paper and steel stop sign is out target, which sometimes I equate to looking like a snow cone. Those are what we engage with as athletes in our sport, and as a coach and an instructor, I ensure that people are ready to come into this sport.

It is a long process. It is not something that comes *tout de suite*. You don't get in because you decide that you want to get into this sport. No. There are lots of hoops and steps that you must follow.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** You talked about attitude, respect and safety, and I truly respect that. You make sure that all these values are respected in your sport, and I think it is indeed your duty to do so.

Unfortunately, there are always exceptions to the rule. Your sport is based on realism, and uses stages to try and fully duplicate real situations, such as alleys or buildings. This could lead people to take training the wrong way. I may be expressing myself poorly. As I was saying earlier, people who owned legal firearms committed crimes, and they trained in shooting clubs. We need only think of the shooters in the Québec City mosque, at Concordia University, at Dawson College and in Moncton.

How can we guarantee that there will never be an exception to the rule? I know you hold to the values you talked about, but how can we guarantee that everyone will be truly responsible, in the end?

• (1720)

[*English*]

**Ms. Medha Russell:** What I can say on my role as an official is that we have a very strict no-tolerance policy to safety violations. We have a process that is followed such that if anyone is found in a safety infraction or breaking a rule, they will be visited by our coordinators. Our NROI, National Range Officers Institute, will review it. The instructor coaches and the director that put on the match will review the situation to see why this happened.

To answer your question about bad people and how you prevent and stop that, I wish I had the answer, because then maybe I could try to help you as elected officials solve world problems.

I will repeat that we do not tolerate any form of bad behaviour. We have governance in place. The organization itself has a structure that has a code of ethics about conflict of interest, gender equality and long-term athlete development, but involved in there is the fact that safety is number one, and it is totally not tolerated if you don't follow that.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, but I'm going to have to cut you off there.

**Ms. Medha Russell:** We do what we can to stop bad behaviour.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Michaud.

[*English*]

Mr. MacGregor, please go ahead for six minutes.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all of our witnesses for coming here today. Your testimony is appreciated.

Mr. Smith, I'd like to start with you, because what I've seen with Bill C-21 is that we seem to be presented with an either/or situation when it comes to shooting disciplines and public safety, especially

with the handgun freeze—that is, no more exemptions can be made because they're going to lead to public safety issues and so on.

Concerns have been raised that if an exemption were given, people would join IPSC just so they could go and buy a handgun and then they might forget about their membership with IPSC because they would have their handgun. Do you have any thoughts on whether there's a middle road here, whether Bill C-21 could be strengthened so that a requirement for continuous eligibility would be written into the legislation so that people would have to demonstrate they're active and ongoing participants in IPSC just to satisfy some of the public safety concerns that are out there with the handgun freeze and so on?

**Mr. James Smith:** We do have the maintenance. Currently we do monitor who is shooting and whether they're still active and they have to go. I wouldn't see any problem if we had to do something in the regulations that monitored that in order to keep our sport in existence. Maybe the CFOs would be involved.

In the Australian model, they've totally banned handguns, but IPSC is still a sport there. They do a preliminary licensing there. In order to introduce new people to the sport, they require you to do six months under a preliminary licence. Then you're fully licensed and you move on to being a full member and you're allowed to acquire a handgun. Through the regulations, I think we could come to some kind of terms. I don't know if it needs to be written right into the bill. Some of the discussions I've had with some of the members of this committee have included suggestions that those details be worked out at the regulation level.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Mr. Smith and Ms. Russell, I'd like to have both of you chime in on my next question.

As has been correctly pointed out, especially when someone is contemplating suicide, when there is a firearm in the house, there is a 90% success rate of a suicide attempt resulting in death. That is a very real concern. The mental health of many Canadians is a worrying thing. We've seen mental health concerns go up in this country, especially over the last couple of years.

I know that the IPSC community is quite close-knit and I've seen the camaraderie first-hand. Could you talk a little bit about how your members are checking up on each other? I'm sure you've met some people who participate in the sport who have had bad days. Within the theme of safety, can you talk about how you're checking up on each other to make sure everyone is doing okay?

• (1725)

**Mr. James Smith:** Yes. Earlier, IPSC was referred to as a hobby, and I don't really see it as a hobby. Most of the people who are shooting in IPSC are fully dedicated. Some spend up to 10 or 15 hours a week. They go to the range weekly. There's a lot of camaraderie, and certainly we all look after each other. I know of instances of divorce in which people volunteer to take the firearms out of the house to make sure there are no complications. There are mental health issues in which people intervene to make sure a person gets looked after. To my knowledge, we've never had any instance of an IPSC shooter in Canada involved in any kind of suicide. Maybe I shouldn't speak to that, but we are a giant family of people who look after each other.

I have friends nationally. If I get stranded in Toronto, I put it on Facebook and I get six offers for a place to stay. If I'm in Vancouver, people take me to dinner. I've been to every province, and it's more of a lifestyle than it is an actual hobby.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Ms. Russell, would you comment?

**Ms. Medha Russell:** Thank you for the question.

You actually bring up a very good point. What we need in Canada—and of course you have the ability to see that Canadians get this—is more money for mental health. We need more money for education at the grassroots level and in that family structure, which is where you're going to learn the three Rs—respect, recognition and responsibility—and at the same time learn to look out for your fellow people.

The IPSC community, as Mr. Smith has said, I consider to be my family. I am also an IPSC club rep, so I am responsible to put on sanctioned IPSC matches.

By the way, I don't just decide I'm going to throw on a match just like that. It involves informing my section with 30 days' notice, setting it up, getting everything organized with the club, meeting the club rules, and meeting the municipal, provincial and federal rules and regulations before I actually can put on that sanctioned match.

In Ontario, our statistics show that we have over 2,000 members. The attendance rates at the matches that we have held number over 10,000. At these matches, range officials like myself—I'm a chief range officer—and fellow members look out for each other. If we see that someone is not exactly in a good place, we pull them aside. There's a camaraderie. We work together. We look out for each other and we respect each other.

Yes, mental health is a very important issue in this country, and it needs more funding.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. MacGregor.

That brings our first round of questions to an end. We'll start our second round.

We have a hard stop again today and once again we're a little short of time for the second round, so I'm going to have to cut the time back.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** When's the hard stop?

**The Chair:** It's at 5:45, and we always go over because I hate cutting people off.

I'm going to cut the time down to four minutes each for the Liberals and the Conservatives and two minutes each for the Bloc and the NDP.

With that, we will start with Mr. Shipley for four minutes, please.

**Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC):** Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to start with Ms. Kiejko, please.

First of all, thank you for being here today. Also, thank you for your representation of Canada and for representing our country so proudly. I can only imagine what kind of pride you must have felt walking into an Olympic stadium representing your country.

I'd like to start off by asking you about this. Your father was also an Olympic pistol shooter. You mentioned in an interview once that while growing up, your father talked to you a lot about the sport of pistol shooting and stressed the importance of gun safety and responsible gun ownership.

Perhaps you could tell the committee a little bit about how old you were when you started shooting with your father, some of the lessons he taught you growing up around gun safety and how much of a family issue this was to you.

**Ms. Lynda Kiejko:** Those are actually two separate questions.

What age did I start shooting? I was 11.

What age did I start learning about gun safety? I can't tell you, because it's been for as long as I can remember. I was a very young kid. My dad didn't even let us point our fingers at each other and make the "pew pew" sounds. He kind of just folded them up and said to put that away because it's not safe and we don't do that in our house.

My dad took gun safety very seriously, and I also take it very seriously. You don't aim a gun at something you don't intend to shoot. That's ingrained in me at all times. My guns are always pointed in a safe direction, which is downrange. My kids aren't allowed to play with guns or toy guns either.

When it comes to gun safety, I think it's about respect. It's about understanding safety of all aspects and making sure that it's always safe.

Gun safety was always paramount in our house. Quite honestly, while growing up I didn't even know where my dad had his firearms stored, because they were so well secured and put away. I didn't know where they were until I was much older.

• (1730)

**Mr. Doug Shipley:** Thank you. I'm sorry to interrupt you, but I only have four minutes, so I'm very tight on time.

I'd like to ask you the next question very simply.

If Bill C-21 is enacted as it sits presently, do you feel that this would cause the end of the Olympic sport that you participated in for Canada?

**Ms. Lynda Kiejko:** Yes.

**Mr. Doug Shipley:** Thank you.

I'd like to jump to IPSC, please. There has been some discussion today about exactly your sport. I don't know anything about your sport. I've never seen it. There's definitely been a little bit of talk, and some conflicting talk, about the targets and the set-up.

Could someone please explain to me—whoever would like to from your organization—what the targets are and what the set-up is?

**Ms. Medha Russell:** Thank you for the question.

If I may, I am, again, not only an athlete and a coach but also a club rep. I put on the matches. As I said earlier, our target that we engage at is paper and steel, and the paper is literally an elongated stop sign. Many years ago, when IPSC started, it was a different target, and some people equated it to looking humanoid, but it was changed when we were looking into.... The organization said that this is a sport and we are strictly engaging paper and steel, so they changed it to the elongated target. I am very happy about that, because it's a sport. I'm engaging at paper and steel.

As far as the course design is concerned, it is an obstacle course. I can give you no better explanation of it. It challenges me physically and mentally as far as multi-tasking goes. If there is a problem, I make sure that I can in the shortest second correct myself and go through that obstacle course—we call it a “course of fire” or a “stage”—in the fastest and most accurate time possible.

It's incredible that at 62 years of age, I can still compete in this sport and tell you proudly that I have the opportunity to represent Canada, because I'm in the top 25 in Ontario. I got there because, like people such as Lynda, we worked, we strived and we trained for excellence.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Shipley.

**Mr. Doug Shipley:** I have many more questions, but I know my time's up. Thank you, Chair.

**The Chair:** We'll go to Mr. Noormohamed, please, for four minutes.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.):** Thank you so much.

I must say I hope that when I am 62, I'm in a position to be in the top 25 of anything athletic, though the prospects are not good.

I've been hearing a lot about the importance of what you do as a sport. I think that's important to understand.

This is to the folks from IPSC. Do you think that people who are not engaging in sport shooting in a structured environment such as yours should have guns in their homes?

**Ms. Medha Russell:** I've been doing this sport for 31 years. When I started, my husband was already in the sport, so I joined so that I could do something with my husband, travel the world and go all across Canada. I was basically just doing target shooting. I was at the Stittsville ranges, where they have MP days at the range once a year. I was engaging at steel chickens and pigs—

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** I'm sorry to interrupt.

My question was more that you were doing this because there was some kind of sporting interest or endeavour related to it. Do you think that people who don't have that interest, who just want to buy a gun because they want to have a gun at home, should be buying guns?

**Ms. Medha Russell:** We do not have the right in Canada to have firearms for self-defence. That is my understanding. A legislator could correct me if I'm wrong. In Canada, we legally own firearms for recreational shooting sports.

• (1735)

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** Right. What I'm asking you about is somebody who is not engaging in that. They buy the gun and they say they're going to engage, but they don't. Should they be allowed to have that gun?

**Ms. Medha Russell:** If they are purchasing it for target practice and target shooting, I would say, why not? Not everybody gets into golf to go to the Masters. They get into golf so that they can go to the range and have a recreational outlet.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** Since we've used the golf analogy, I don't know how many people have died as a result of legal golf clubs.

The question I want to ask you is this: Are you concerned about the fact that legal gun owners were responsible for the mosque shooting in Quebec, the Concordia shooting, the Dawson College shooting and the Moncton shooting of three RCMP officers? Those were all legal gun owners who trained at gun ranges.

Does that concern you?

**Ms. Medha Russell:** Any violent and tragic loss of life concerns me. All I can say to you is that we have in place steps to make sure that the people who join our sport as athletes are vetted, and we do not let them pass go if they do not demonstrate attitude and safety.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** Let's take a minute to lean into that.

I appreciate your comments earlier about safety and making sure you're doing those checks on people. Let's say somebody owns a gun. They've gone through your process. They come in one day to the range and you can tell that something isn't right with them. They go home, and God forbid that something terrible happens.

Do you have any process in place to make sure that this person doesn't leave? Do you call law enforcement and say, "Hey, listen, we are concerned about a member of ours who may be leaving with a legal firearm"?"

Is that a general practice for you, or do you send them away and that's it?

**Ms. Medha Russell:** As a previous gentleman who was interviewed by you earlier today said, what we do is take steps to intervene when we see that there's a concern—a safety concern, a health concern. We take steps to intervene. Our officials are trained. We are there.

Number one, we are taught when we go through the National Range Officers Institute that safety is number one. When you take our black badge course to do this sport, you are taught that safety is number one.

All I can respond to is that we as human beings cannot control the fact that there are people who have bad intentions, who will go and rent a vehicle and run it through a group of people. You cannot control the bad things in life, but you can do what you can to make sure you regulate it within your organization and ensure that safety is number one.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** I would submit that one of those things is to have fewer guns available.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Noormohamed.

[Translation]

I will now give the floor to Ms. Michaud for two minutes.

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I have another question for you, Ms. Russell.

I'm trying to understand it all, and sometimes it's difficult to navigate. Earlier, I said the current version of the bill includes a little grey area regarding which people could get an exemption to the current national freeze on handguns.

I know that your organization is also asking for an exemption. What would such an exemption mean to you? What would it change for you, as opposed to a situation where there is no national freeze on handguns? From what I understand, any shooting club can host competitions for the International Practical Shooting Confederation. Normally, anyone with a license can compete, regardless of their level, whether they are a beginner or a person who practises more professionally.

How do you determine who can compete or not? Have you evaluated all these options? What does the exemption you are requesting mean to you?

[English]

**Ms. Medha Russell:** Thank you for the question.

As far as getting into our sport goes, and with the IPSC organization's request to be exempted from this legislation, what does it mean to me? It means to me that when I die, I can bequeath my firearm that my husband gave to me on my 25th anniversary to perhaps a young aspiring female who wants to excel in my sport. It means that if my equipment breaks down, I can replace it and con-

tinue in this sport to 72 or 82, as long as I am mentally and physically able, because age has no bearing. It does not matter as long as you're safe.

How would it have been different? Would any shooting range just apply for this...? As I said earlier, there is a process to get your black badge, and it starts with getting the licensing and getting vetted and becoming a member with a club. All of these steps can take, as I said earlier, anywhere from six to eight months. It is not a quick *tout de suite* process—

• (1740)

**The Chair:** I'm going to have to cut you off there.

**Ms. Medha Russell:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. MacGregor, go ahead, please, for two minutes.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Russell, I want to continue on Mr. Noormohamed's line of questioning.

I think what he was trying to get to was that if we're going to create some exemptions here, and a person wants to buy, sell or transfer a handgun, do you believe that they should show they need this handgun because they belong to a shooting discipline? Do you think that for the purchase of a handgun, they need to demonstrate a need, rather than just saying "I like to go to my range recreationally"?"

I think that if we're going to arrive at a compromise position here, that's probably the narrow laneway we have. It would mean tightening up the eligibility requirements further so that you have to demonstrate that you are an active participant, that you are engaging in matches and have some kind of recorded demonstration of the need for the handgun, rather than "I just want to go and buy one so I can go to the range every couple of months".

**Ms. Medha Russell:** Thank you for that question. It's an excellent point.

Yes, we do need to dialogue with this committee at the point where you are going to review the regulations and any amendments such as what we are requesting. Yes, we need to put steps into play, because, again, the IPSC organization already has steps in play to make sure that the athlete is where they need to be at the right place and the right time.

In terms of this legislation, yes, we need to dialogue. We need to put steps into place with something like a graduated licensing system. You crawl, you walk and then you can run. Basically it would be steps to ensure that the person is safe to compete with a firearm in this sport, in recreational shooting in Canada.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. MacGregor. You have five seconds left.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** I will donate it back to the committee.

**The Chair:** Thank you. I appreciate it.

That brings our meeting to a close. I would like to thank all the witnesses for sharing their time, expertise and concern with us. It's a difficult subject, and you have helped us with our study today.

Thank you to all the members of the committee.

With that, we are now adjourned.

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