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• (1100)

[English]

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

Welcome to meeting number 50 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 or remotely using the Zoom application. I'll note that we have until 1:30 p.m., if it is the will of the committee to meet until that time. Of course, everyone has the ability to move adjournment earlier, if there is a will to do so.

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

I would like to welcome back the officials who are with us today. They are available for technical questions regarding the bill. From the Department of Justice, we have Marianne Breese, counsel, Public Safety Canada legal services; Paula Clarke, counsel, criminal law policy section; and Phaedra Glushek, counsel, criminal law policy section. From the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, we have Rachel Mainville-Dale, acting director general, firearms policy.

Thank you for joining us today.

We will resume clause-by-clause. Amendment G-4 has been moved.

I recognize Mr. Chiang.

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

In our previous meeting, there was a great deal of discussion surrounding the list contained in G-46. Therefore, I'm seeking the unanimous consent of this committee to release the list of firearms contained in amendment G-46.

To be clear, I'm not moving the amendment. I'm simply seeking the consent of the members of this committee to release the list contained therein, which includes all firearms contained in the definition we are discussing at this committee.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chiang.

Is it the will of the committee to do so? Is anyone opposed?

Yes, Mr. Lloyd.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): On a point of order, Mr. Chair, something that Mr. Chiang said was somewhat confusing. He said he's not moving a motion, but he's seeking unanimous consent. Would he have to move a motion on this before seeking unanimous consent?

The Chair: He's not moving G-46. He's just asking for the consent of the committee to release it publicly.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: But does he have to move a motion to ask the committee for unanimous consent to release this publicly?

The Chair: Strictly, no; it's his motion. It's his privilege at stake here. He's willing to give it up.

He has moved for unanimous consent, so that is the vote on the floor for us right now.

Is there any dissent?

Go ahead, Ms. Dancho.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): It's a question of clarification. If they're not moving it but they're introducing it for discussion, does that mean we can't say, for instance, "I move to remove X hunting rifle from this list"?

I just want to be clear on what our powers are. If we can discuss it now but it isn't technically moved, can we not amend it?

The Chair: We cannot amend it until it's moved. It can't be moved until later on in the bill. It is not being moved at this time.

There's a lot of concern about what's actually in the list and so forth. I know you guys are rightly concerned about that, and you were asking the officials about it. It puts the officials pretty much in a box. They can't really tell you anything. Mr. Chiang is releasing his privilege, but he's asking for the consent of the committee to do that.

Once again, I'll ask if there's any opposition to Mr. Chiang's unanimous consent motion.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The contents of motion G-46 are now publicly accessible.

I would also note that in the version of the motion that had been previously distributed to the committee, somewhere around page 417—it's going to be really good bedside reading—the formatting went awry. The clerk has arranged for a reprint of it. It will have been distributed to all the members at this point.

That being the case, I believe Ms. Damoff is next.

Go ahead, please.

• (1105)

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Thanks, Chair.

First, I want to get on the record that the Canadian Shooting Sports Association sent an email on Tuesday night that included a reference to the wording of the amendments that were submitted to the clerk and that have not yet been moved. As members know, these are supposed to be confidential until moved. This is a breach of parliamentary privilege. I have sent a message to the Speaker asking him to look into it. I just want members to know that our privilege was breached by these amendments being leaked. They have been shared publicly.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to make some comments on what happened on Tuesday. I listened to the Conservatives ramble on here, and I want to set the record straight. First, I want to make it clear that we are not going after hunters. We're looking to remove from our society weapons that were designed for the battlefield. This is something the U.K. did in 1988 in outlawing semi-automatic weapons. Australia restricted ownership of semi-automatic weapons in 1996, and New Zealand did so in 2019.

The amendment is not a back door, as has been suggested. It will codify in the Criminal Code assault weapons that were banned in 2020, and will make a clear definition for the specifications of these guns, which were designed for war. We're adding them to the Criminal Code to make sure that any future government will have to amend the Criminal Code to make these military-style assault weapons available again.

Right now, as they are listed through order in council, any government could add or remove firearms as they see fit. Now the list is public thanks to my colleague's motion this morning. The amendment that proposes paragraph 84(1.2)(g) is forward-looking. It provides an evergreen definition in the Criminal Code to ensure that new makes and models of assault-style firearms are unable to enter the Canadian market.

The reason we need this amendment is to ensure that gun manufacturers can't tweak designs of prohibited weapons and have them available in Canada again. Codification and clear definitions in the Criminal Code will ensure that manufacturers can't try to game the system to continue to sell weapons that by any other name would be prohibited. This also provides clarity. The Conservatives like to say that we ban guns because they look scary, which is not the case, but now we're providing a very clear definition not on the look of a weapon but on its very specific design specification.

Let's get into some specifics here. A firearm capable of discharging a projectile with a muzzle energy exceeding 10,000 joules is a high-calibre sniper rifle. A firearm with a bore diameter of 20 mil-

limetres or greater is a grenade-launcher. Hunters will still have firearms available to them to hunt. To say otherwise, as the Conservatives have been doing, is untrue. What will not be available are weapons designed for the battlefield. We're putting a clear definition in the Criminal Code for weapons that have no place in our society.

Let me remind the committee that we're less than two weeks away from December 6, the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, the anniversary of the day on which a law-abiding gun owner with a legally obtained semi-automatic rifle separated the men from the women and slaughtered 14 women and injured 14 others at École Polytechnique.

The gun lobby, when they were here, dismissed this attack as an outlier event. Sadly, it's not. The Quebec City mosque shooter had legally obtained weapons when he perpetrated an act of hate and opened fire, killing six and seriously injuring five others. In the Dawson College shooting, the perpetrator had a restricted firearms licence and legally obtained a semi-automatic weapon that killed one person and injured 19. My colleague Mr. Chiang mentioned the SKS that was used on two police officers in Ontario just a couple of weeks ago.

That's why since 2020 we have been taking action to ban these military-style assault weapons. That's why government amendment G-4 is essential in fulfilling our commitment to banning all military-style assault weapons. Now it's up to the Conservatives to justify why these weapons designed for war should be legal again.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1110)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Damoff.

I believe it's Mr. Lloyd, followed by Ms. Dancho.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Chair, it will be Ms. Dancho.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Dancho.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate that the Liberals have finally put some words on the record regarding their objectives. I have a couple of things to say.

There's a lot to unpack from what Ms. Damoff said. She seemed to be equating the vile killer at École Polytechnique with hunters, and blaming hunters for the deaths of 14 people. Perhaps she can clarify whether she's blaming hunters who have legitimate hunting rifles.

Is that what you're saying, Ms. Damoff?

The Chair: You may answer, if you wish, Ms. Damoff.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Then I'd like to respond.

The Chair: After a brief answer, we'll go to Mr. Lloyd and then Mr. Fortin.

Go ahead, Ms. Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thanks, Chair.

I am absolutely not equating hunters with the perpetrator of that shooting. However, the weapon that was used in that shooting and others are included in this legislation and in this amendment. They are weapons that are not needed by hunters. They are weapons that are designed for the battlefield.

There are still firearms that will be available for hunters, but I think it needs to be made clear—people seem to like to deny this fact—that the firearms used, the weapons used, at École Polytechnique were legally obtained.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Dancho.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you for the clarification.

We're having a debate about the fact that hunters have hunting rifles that have hurt people. What concerns me is that the Liberals are able to use that argument for every firearm. I believe they're introducing this argument so they can have the ability to carry it forward for banning every single firearm model in this country.

One that's on the long list they just now formally introduced and that we can now talk about is a model of .22 rifle. A .22 rifle is used for hunting birds or small rodents. This is possibly one of the most common styles of firearms. Anyone who has any knowledge whatsoever about hunting rifles, whether they're a hunter or not, knows that to put a .22 on the banned list and call it a military weapon is very deeply misinformed.

We're reviewing this list in detail, because there are so many firearms on here that are very commonplace. Ms. Damoff mentions the SKS. That is one of the most commonplace hunting rifles and is particularly popular in the indigenous community. She likened it to a weapon of war, like a fully automatic AK-47. The SKS is not that. It's disinformation to insinuate that it is. Fully automatic weapons, which are weapons of war, have been fully banned in this country since the 1970s.

I feel there is significant disinformation being spread. Equating hunting rifles, which have been used for over a century in this country, with weapons of war is straight-up lying. It's very insulting to insinuate that hunters in this country have weapons of war when they're perfectly legitimate tools that hunters have been using for well over a century—and much longer, in fact, particularly if you're talking about indigenous hunters, who have been hunting on this land for quite some time.

I'm not a firearms expert, though I would say that I know significantly more than Ms. Damoff about hunting. I have a lot of respect for hunters, coming from a hunting family. For her to say which rifles are good for hunting when she has no knowledge of hunting whatsoever, or respect for hunters, is something I find particularly offensive.

We have been fielding hundreds of calls in the last number of days. The definition provided in this amendment casts a very wide and significant net. It's the most significant hunting rifle ban in the history of Canada. That's what's being done here, in the most underhanded way. If the Liberals had any integrity, they would have brought this forward in the original bill. Then it could have been

debated in the House. However, of course they did not do that. There could have been expert testimony brought forward during the witness testimony phase, but they did not do that. Why did they not do that? Did they not want to face proper public scrutiny? That's what this seems to be about. This isn't about safety.

This is coming in light of new statistics that showing under the Liberal government, there's been a 92% increase in gang-related homicides in this country. There's been a 92% increase since Prime Minister Trudeau took office. There's been a 32% increase in violent crime, which equates to 124,000 more violent crimes last year than in 2015—crimes such as rape, assault, stabbing and shooting.

We know that with the firearm problem in this country, the vast majority of the issue, which is growing and of the utmost concern, is about the handguns that are being smuggled in illegally from the United States and being used by gangsters, gangs and criminals to hurt Canadians, particularly in our big major cities like Toronto and Montreal. Winnipeg is also experiencing this. We have a real and legitimate issue on our hands. We also know that there are 3-D-printed guns. We can't talk about it, but we know that in the debate in the days to come, various amendments may address that. We can have that debate when it happens. Unfortunately, we couldn't have that debate in the House.

I think the problem is that we are seeing a government that brings in successive soft on crime policies. We can talk about the bail reform from 2017 that contributed to the revolving door of criminals going in and out of jail. That's coming home to roost now, five years in. We can talk about Bill C-5, which was recently passed. The Liberals talk about gun crime, but they removed mandatory jail time for serious gun crimes. Firing a gun with the intent to hit someone with a bullet no longer means mandatory prison time.

They have no integrity when they come here and talk about wanting to keep Canadians safe from gun violence, because under Bill C-5, they are now allowing people who try to shoot other people.... They may not have to go to jail. They can serve house arrest from the comfort of their home.

- (1115)

It's very frustrating for me to hear Liberals attacking hunters, as I'm from a hunting community and have a hunting background and I care legitimately about solving the issue of violent crime involving illegally possessed firearms in this country. Again, for seven years we heard this Liberal government—the Prime Minister, the Minister of Public Safety, members of this committee—talk about how this isn't about hunters. We heard it today. However, on this list there are so many models of commonplace hunting rifles.

Take anything made by Remington, for example. Remington, Browning, Winchester and Benelli are firearm companies that specifically design hunting rifles. They cater to hunters. They don't cater to what Ms. Damoff called weapons of war. A Winchester gun is a hunting rifle. Many of those are being banned. Also, the back door permits all variants of them, so variants that aren't semi-automatic could be easily added. Many hunters own semi-automatic rifles—again, that's a very common, legitimate hunting rifle model—and many of them also own non-semi-automatic ones that are from Winchester or Remington. This allows a back door, but as she said, the Liberals are just coming for semi-automatics.

There is no buyback, by the way. There is no opportunity for anyone to be compensated for these very expensive hunting tools and farming tools. The Liberals are saying they're just coming for some of them right now, but the back door means they could come for all the variants as well.

I think the problem here is that the Liberal Party has lost all ability to be trusted by hunters. First it was the OIC. They said they were not coming for hunters. Then it was the handgun freeze. “Who needs a handgun?” That was their argument. Now it's legitimate hunting rifles. Again, if you get a group of hunters together, you'll see probably about half of them have some form of semi-automatic hunting rifle. It's very, very common. This is commonplace, to speak nothing of the heritage of many of these models.

I'll share an example with you. My grandfather recently died. He had a very difficult last few months in palliative care at home during the pandemic. In his dying months, he came to us with one of his firearms, for which he had saved up for a very long time when he was a young man. It would have been in the fifties. This firearm was probably his most prized possession, and it looked to be in mint condition despite being 70 years old. He bestowed it to my father.

So many Canadian families have the very same special cultural experience with passing down an heirloom firearm, whether it is semi-automatic or not. Again, these are so commonplace. Millions of Canadian families will have had this experience with their grandfathers, their uncles or their fathers. These are family heirlooms as much as they are tools.

What this government is saying right now, given what they're doing so underhandedly and with no integrity, is that you can't have that anymore, and they're not even going to pay you for it. There's no democratic debate, and there's a sneaky amendment here at the end stage of the committee process with no regard for what this does to Canadian culture. Hunting has been a part of it since long before the Europeans got here. Then firearms were introduced, and since then, firearms have been a thriving part of the hunting com-

munity in this country among both indigenous and non-indigenous people. As I mentioned, the SKS is a very popular hunting rifle in the indigenous community. I'm very interested to see what they think about this.

We have this experience that I feel is being completely spat on: Well, too bad for you; we don't care that this is part of your cultural identity as Canadians. We don't care that this is part of the freedoms you enjoy. We're taking them from you and you don't get a say in it. In fact, we're building the legislation in a way that's so broad we can take all your hunting rifles.

As I've said, based on the commentary and arguments the Liberals are making, you could apply this to any firearm. They are now establishing an argument to ban every single lawfully owned firearm in this country. I'd love to hear them actually deny that, because they have yet to do so. It's very clear. They said they would never come for hunters, and now they have. There is no more trust between anyone who has any sort of hunting background and this Liberal government given what it has done here.

I was actually personally shocked. I was naive enough to believe they wouldn't come for hunting rifles, but they are now. It's incredibly significant. There are even shotguns on here. Shotguns for hunting birds are being prohibited.

There's something that has been missing in this conversation, which really just started a couple of days ago. We haven't had a lot of time to talk about it. This bill has been on the floor for six months, and we're just now learning what the real intentions are here.

- (1120)

Something that hasn't been talked about is the raw utility of certain models of hunting rifles. I'm going to take Churchill, Manitoba, as an example, the polar bear capital of the world. We know polar bears actively hunt human beings. Polar bears are extremely dangerous wildlife in Canada. We are very proud of them, but they're very dangerous. The fact is that if you come across a polar bear, a cougar, an angry grizzly bear or a pack of wolves, for example, you'd better hope that you have a semi-automatic hunting rifle. It is your best defence against Canadian wildlife, which hunters come across often.

Thankfully, they have tools to protect themselves and their families, who they're hunting with. Thankfully, indigenous communities have tools to protect themselves. Thankfully, northern indigenous communities have tools to protect themselves. To say these are weapons of war, when they've been used as tools for hunting and protection against wild animals and to protect livestock, is disinformation. It is straight up lies. It is discounting the utility of firearms in this country that have been around for centuries.

We can also talk about wild boars, the very invasive and dangerous species that's spreading into southern Saskatchewan and Alberta. They breed very quickly and they're very sneaky. They can sneak up on you. Their tusks are deadly and they're very fast. If you are charged by a pack of wild boars, you'd better hope you have a semi-automatic hunting rifle with you. You'd better hope that you're able to defend your livestock, your farm dogs and your kids who are with you. Again, there is a utility factor in this that's being completely discounted.

The argument could be made that banning these versions of hunting rifles also puts hunters, farmers and those who live in rural and northern communities at risk. That should have been included. We could have had that robust debate in the House, with expert testimony, had we been given the opportunity, but now we have to do this in some filibuster because the Liberals are introducing this in an underhanded way.

I feel that if they were able to stand on their arguments, they would have welcomed this through the House and through witnesses, but they know what they're doing. This is hunting rifles now, hundreds of models of hunting rifles.

When we have a Liberal government in power, it seems to, as I've said before, look down its nose at rural Canadians, eastern rural Canadians and northern Canadians, shaming them for the way they live, shaming them for generations of hunting heritage that we in the Conservative Party are proud of.

Part of our Canadian identity is hunting, but now we have a government that is looking to ban hundreds of models of perfectly legitimate hunting rifles. They're calling them weapons of war. These are not AK-47s—fully automatic guns. Again, I am not a gun expert, but various Remingtons, Winchesters and, I believe, some models of .22s are in here, and those are wild chicken hunting guns. To call those weapons of war is a complete lie.

Again, we are fielding a lot of calls from people—from men, from women, from families who build their entire recreational life and all of their culture around hunting. Now they're just going to lose, what, half of their firearms?

I think what Ms. Damoff said is they can use other ones. Who is she to say that? She doesn't know anything about hunting. She doesn't respect us. I feel deeply disrespected by those comments. This is someone who does not respect hunters or the deep hunting culture we have in this country telling us what we need for hunting, for protecting our livestock and for protecting our families when we go for a walk in the Canadian wilderness. How could she possibly know what we need? It's very superior, condescending and paternalistic. Part of the reason that people get so fired up and don't trust

this government is comments like that. How would they know what we need when they know nothing about how we live?

We have a lot of different perspectives that would like to come forward. We have technical questions. I appreciate that we're now able to talk about the list. There are a lot of technical issues with that list.

I will soon turn it over to my colleagues on the speaking list, but I will just underline that this attack on hunters and the hunting community is completely unprecedented in Canadian history. If you want to talk about war, this is a declaration of war on Canadian hunters by the Liberal government. They're laughing, but that's how it feels. We feel that this is an all-out assault on how we live our lives. They are taking something from us with no democratic debate and barely any oversight. We have to filibuster just to get a word in edgewise about how this is going to impact people, because we were not allowed that opportunity in the House of Commons. We were not allowed that opportunity with expert witnesses.

● (1125)

They are attacking centuries-old heritage in this country, and they're scoffing and laughing as if it means nothing to them. It means something to us. It means something to me. It means something to me on a very personal and deep level, and to be very honest, this feels like a personal attack. I'm not an avid sportsman, but I did grow up in a hunting family. All the people I grew up with had firearms; it was very common. To see this kind of disrespect when we have done nothing wrong and when we have a 92% increase in gang-related homicides, and to see them coming for people like me and people like my family, speaks to misplaced priorities.

As I mentioned, there is no buyback in here. Unlike the OIC—and we have debated that issue at length—the Liberals are not providing even a penny to these folks. It's just “They're banned. You can't use them anymore. Too bad for you.” That's what we're looking at right now. If they do come back and change their minds and decide to have a buyback, right now some of the estimates are showing the OIC and the weapons ban will cost \$5 billion. That will easily double given the hundreds of perfectly legitimate hunting rifles that would be banned. We're talking about probably at least \$10 billion.

Do you know how much good \$10 billion could do if we actually targeted the problem, the 92% increase in gang-related homicides since Prime Minister Trudeau became the Prime Minister? The 32% increase in violent crime is notably focused in our urban cities and on our porous border, which is letting gangsters and criminal elements smuggle handguns and already prohibited weapons from the U.S. into our cities so they can use them in their drug rings to hurt Canadians. Do you know how much \$10 billion could do to stop that issue and their terrorizing of our urban cities? I think quite a bit. Ten billion dollars spent on hunters and people in rural Canada is not going to do a darned thing for that.

Given the gang activity, the criminals who are smuggling in those prohibited weapons from the U.S. are laughing at this. They're laughing right along with the Liberals because it's not going to make one modicum of difference to their lives. It will do nothing to impact them, but it will do everything to impact rural Canada and the culture that we hold very dear. This is just the beginning.

Again, we're just learning about this. We're trying to wrap our heads around the significance of it, but it is a fact that this bill comes after hundreds of thousands of hunters who are trained, tested and vetted and who are just as legitimate as any Liberal member here and just as patriotic. They love this country and they love the freedoms that it has provided them.

This is just the beginning of what we're doing. We will stand up for our hunting community. I will stand up for my family, for where I grew up. This is an all-out assault by the Liberals on the hunters in this country, and I look forward to the discussion we will have today and in the coming days. I look forward to hearing the thoughts of the millions of hunters in this community, because as I'm hearing right now, the anxiety is extremely high, the upset is extremely high and the devastation of families is extremely high, and we're only a few days into this.

Thank you.

• (1130)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Dancho.

On my list I have Mr. Lloyd and Mr. Motz, but I think I missed Mr. Fortin earlier, so if it's okay with you guys, I'll recognize Mr. Fortin first. Then it will be Mr. Lloyd, Mr. Motz, Mr. Noormohamed and Mr. Shipley.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fortin, you have the floor.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am pleased to address this important Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. I'm here to replace my colleague Kristina Michaud, who is on an overseas mission.

The Bloc Québécois believes that Bill C-21 is important. Like Ms. Michaud, I have had the opportunity on several occasions to talk about the importance of working effectively to prevent, among other things, shootings like those that took place in Montreal in recent months from happening in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada.

I think a lot of work needs to be done to counter the entry of illegal guns, the black market. We've talked about this a number of times. I have often criticized and continue to criticize the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Justice for their laxity when it comes to illegal weapons. In that sense, I think my view is consistent with that of my Conservative Party colleagues.

That said, I would like to return to Bill C-21. We have spoken on several occasions to ask for a clear definition of the weapons we want banned. That was part of the Bloc Québécois platform during the last election campaign. It's virtually impossible to understand if the definition isn't clear, and we certainly don't want people to be confused about the legality of a weapon. They need to know which weapons are legal and which are not.

I almost get the impression that the definition in G-4 was written by the Bloc Québécois. I know that's not the case, since it's a government proposal, but I must say that it meets the Bloc's expectations. Now, it remains to be seen whether the definition is satisfactory.

Obviously, we are always willing to discuss, but we must take the opinions of experts into account. We have to make sure that we're working properly. I agree with my colleagues in the Conservative Party that there needs to be a clear and meaningful description of the weapons that need to be banned.

We must give a clear definition of these weapons that we want to ban in order to stop their proliferation in Quebec and in Canada. Many Canadians suffer the dramatic consequences of the use of these weapons.

The Bloc Québécois intends to vote in favour of G-4. We support all efforts to put an end to the unfortunate shootings and misuse of firearms throughout Quebec and Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fortin.

[*English*]

We'll go now to Mr. Lloyd, and then we will have Mr. Noormohamed, followed by Mr. Shipley.

Mr. Lloyd, go ahead, please.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for coming. I will have some technical questions for you, as I did yesterday.

Following up on the initial statement of my colleague Ms. Dancho, I really feel as though a red line has been crossed in this country with this amendment.

In this country, we don't have a Second Amendment—and I think that is appropriate—but we do have a social contract that has existed for decades and for generations. It is a social contract between the Government of Canada and society, and part of that society is law-abiding firearms owners. For generations, Canadians have accepted that regulation is an important part of cultivating a responsible firearms culture in this country and a very important firearms safety culture. Over generations, in response to exceptional instances and, in many cases, horrible tragedies, governments of all political persuasions have seen fit to put forward amendments and legislation to close gaps to try to prevent tragedies from happening.

However, whenever those laws were passed, there was always an understanding that there was no intention to target law-abiding firearms owners—hunters, farmers, sport shooters and gun collectors. There was always a great deal of deference put into legislative drafting, into having witnesses come and into creating legislation that ensured the social contract with firearms owners, with indigenous people and with hunters was preserved and protected.

I think one great example of that—and this is going to be a technical question I'll ask, so I'll put it on your radar—is section 117.15 of the Criminal Code. Section 117.15 of the Criminal Code gives the Governor in Council the ability to regulate firearms. A subsection of that was passed in 1995, nearly 30 years ago, so it isn't a recent law but an old law. It says:

(2) In making regulations, the Governor in Council may not prescribe any thing to be a prohibited firearm, a restricted firearm, a prohibited weapon, a restricted weapon, a prohibited device or prohibited ammunition if, in the opinion of the Governor in Council, the thing to be prescribed is reasonable for use in Canada for hunting or sporting purposes.

It is the law of the land in this country—and it hasn't been changed since 1995—that when the Governor in Council is in the process of changing the classification of a firearm to make it restricted or prohibited, they must consider whether that firearm could be reasonably used for a hunting or sporting purpose.

I am concerned and will ask this as a direct question to the witnesses: How does amendment G-4 interact with that provision of the Criminal Code? I think that's a very important question we have to answer today because, as I said, a red line has been crossed. As much as I appreciate the opening statement from my Liberal colleague, who said that it was not the Liberals' intention to target hunters in any way, a number of shotguns and rifles have been explicitly named in amendment G-46 that I think any reasonable person would see as hunting or sporting firearms. I think that's quite apparent.

For this government to put forward this amendment without giving any thought to the law of the land really draws a lot of concern for me. One of these hunting and sporting rifles is the Benelli M3. It has a wooden stock and doesn't have a detachable magazine. That's interesting because proposed paragraph (g) of this amendment, which we talked about on Tuesday as the evergreen definition, talks about any semi-automatic rifle or shotgun with a detachable magazine that has the capacity to carry more than five rounds.

• (1135)

It's been long accepted—this is part of the social contract that I talked about—that we do not want high-capacity magazines in

Canada, so there has always been a limit on centrefire ammunition: You cannot have a magazine that exceeds five rounds. Well, in Canada, we also don't have a huge firearms industry, and most hunting and sporting rifles and shotguns are manufactured in other countries. Other countries don't have this five-round magazine rule, so even though in Canada you are not allowed to have a magazine that exceeds five rounds, all the firearms that are being banned were originally designed, for the most part, as far as I know, to potentially carry six, seven or even more rounds.

In Canada, we currently have a ban. It's a criminal offence to have a prohibited magazine. It's a prohibited magazine if it carries more than five rounds. That has been a largely effective policy, and it has been accepted in this country for many years. We can use these rifles that carry more rounds, but a law-abiding person would immediately cease to be law-abiding if... No hunter would want to use any magazine that has a capacity higher than five rounds.

However, now the government is saying they're going to approach this from the other end. They're not just going to ban magazines that can carry more than five rounds. They're going to ban any gun that could carry a magazine that has more than five rounds. In the process of adding that amendment, they're capturing an immense number of firearms, many of which are used for hunting and sporting purposes. This is why I say a red line has been crossed.

Are they banning all hunting and sporting shotguns and rifles? Certainly they're not, but that's exactly how this starts. This Liberal government will take incremental steps forward. However, I would submit that this is not an incremental step; this is a massive step. It's a step that was not talked about in the last number of federal elections in specific terms.

The government has used very ambiguous terms, such as “military-style assault weapon” or “assault weapon”. I actually agree somewhat with my Bloc colleague, who said we all want a strong definition. However, at no time was there consultation with the public, nor was there an election platform stating that the definition of an assault weapon or a military-style assault weapon would include semi-automatic or centrefire shotguns and rifles. That was never contemplated. That was not something we talked about at this committee. It was also not in the original Bill C-21. It's not something we knew about, so we didn't know to ask witnesses about it and we didn't bring specific witnesses for it.

In a way, although this bill has a number of steps in the democratic process to go through before it potentially passes into law, the addition of this amendment at this stage impugns our democracy. It removed our ability at second reading, which took place and had a second reading debate and second reading vote, and at the committee stage in the House of Commons.... It has precluded our ability to bring in witnesses and experts to talk about this issue so we can debate it. It was just table-dropped as an amendment after we completed our vigorous study, a study that I would submit did not go very well for the government.

I think Bill C-21 was very poorly drafted. It was not well thought out. A number of the well-intentioned things the government put in it were later found to be extremely flawed. Witnesses from across the political spectrum noted that these things were flawed. I won't get into those specifics, but it became increasingly clear as we got to the end of the process that this bill would have to be amended significantly. When the government recognized that these significant amendments were likely coming, it chose to table-drop massive new amendments that, in the words of one lawyer, amount to the most significant revision to the Firearms Act since the Firearms Act was passed in 1995. This is the most significant revision to the Firearms Act in the history of the Firearms Act, and it's not even being debated as its own stand-alone motion. It's being debated as an amendment during the clause-by-clause stage at committee. This is not how our democracy is supposed to work.

If this bill makes it to the Senate, there will be an opportunity for senators to look into it. However, the Liberal government, because of this last-minute, Trojan-Horse manoeuvre, has precluded my right as a parliamentarian and my privilege as a member of the House of Commons to study this bill and to debate it on its merits.

• (1140)

I'm stuck here at the clause-by-clause stage, when the train is already leaving the station, trying to get answers about what this is going to do. I think that raises some very serious implications for the legitimacy and the credibility of this legislation, the credibility of this amendment. I understand that some colleagues will say that they want.... In other parties, they want to vote for this, but surely they can recognize that it is a very bad precedent to set to allow any party or any government to add an amendment that was not conceived of in the original legislation, that was not discussed at all in the witness testimony and that was not brought forward until this late stage in the process.

I'll move on from that and get back to the social contract. Canada is not the United States of America, and I think that is a great thing. My family left the United States—well, the 13 colonies—in 1783. We fled from upstate New York together with our brothers and sisters in the Six Nations, the Mohawk nations. We left the Mohawk Valley of upstate New York to move to the Belleville region of Ontario. We were United Empire Loyalists, and we came to this country because we rejected the political ideology of the American revolution. We're friends with the Americans. They're our allies. We share many common values, but Canada was founded.... One of the founding peoples of this nation were the Loyalists, who came from the 13 colonies as refugees to this country with the indigenous peoples of upstate New York and other places, and with the members of the francophone Quebec nation who also.... There were en-

treates from the United States to ask the Quebec nation to join in the revolution, and it rejected the revolution.

This country was founded as a rejection of the revolution. I think that is a great thing because I am a Canadian patriot. I believe in this country. I believe in the reasons for which this country was founded. I believe that we are a distinct society. We are distinct from the United States. That's why it actually offended me.... I do respect my colleague, Mr. Chiang, and his service in the police service, but it did offend me as a Canadian—when he moved this amendment and cited a Californian law—that we need to be implementing Californian, American-style laws in this country. I don't have the statistics in front of me, but I can bet that the murder rate in the state of California by firearms is far greater than the murder rate in this country. That's something I'm very proud of in this country. We're a safer country. We're by no means a perfect country, but we are a country that has better firearms laws than any state in the United States. For this Liberal member to come forward and cite an American law in the American context as a reason to pass a new law in Canada.... I think that's wrong because we are Canadians. We have our own way. We are distinct. We do not need American-style laws in this country. We do not need American divisive political rhetoric in this country.

Do you know what? I think, frankly, it does.... I'm a big fan of George Grant and his work *Lament for a Nation*. We have seen in his book that one of the theses is that the Liberal Party of Canada has always found political power by importing American cultural debates into this country. They are breaking the social contract. This has eroded the social contract in this country, and I'm going to say why this is super dangerous for our country, and why the result of the social contract being broken is so dangerous.

However, first off, why is this Liberal government breaking the social contract with hunters and law-abiding gun owners? Is it because of public safety? No, because we've seen from the witnesses, from police and from people who are working in our inner cities, that these firearms—and we're talking about handguns and about fully automatic firearms that are heavily restricted or illegal in this country—are being smuggled in from the United States, a country with far different gun laws than we have, and they are being used to commit crimes on our streets. These are not law-abiding hunters and sport shooters.

They're not using many of the firearms that the government has listed in G-46, like a Benelli M3 shotgun. It wouldn't be used by people who are committing crimes on our streets. For the government to list that is a clear violation of our social contract.

• (1145)

Why are they doing that? It's because they have recognized that this is a divisive political issue that they can use to divide Canadians between rural and urban, and divide between Canadians who own firearms and Canadians who don't know much about firearms, who don't own firearms and who are afraid of firearms. They've recognized that this is a way to divide Canadians for their own political success. I think that's wrong, because we are eroding something that is very fundamental about our country.

What is very fundamental to our identity as Canadians is that we have a social contract. Firearms owners do not have explicit rights written into the Constitution of this country, but this country respects the rights of law-abiding firearms owners who follow the law, who go through the process, who get vetted by the Canadian firearms program and the RCMP, and who could have their guns taken at any time by the police, even without a warrant. If anyone calls into a police station with a claim that somebody is a threat to themselves or to others, the police have the power to act.

That's something that doesn't exist in the United States. It exists in Canada, and I think that's a positive thing. Speaking as someone who comes from a family of gun owners, we never had to be worried that our government was going to pass legislation that discriminated against us. We knew that, as long as we followed all these rules, these reasonable rules that have been accepted for generations and decades in this country, we would be respected by our government. It's only under this Liberal government that this social contract has been violated, and not for public safety reasons, which I think we could look into, but for purely political division reasons. It's purely for their own political gain.

I think that's shame on the Liberal Party of Canada. I know they have lots of members who live in rural areas who probably own firearms and probably are concerned about this legislation. I don't know how much consultation they did on this within their own caucus. I won't speculate on that. I don't know. It's just so shocking to me that they would cross this red line and that they would delve into the area of shotguns and rifles.

Moving on, I see that the government.... Actually, it was one of my questions. When I first saw this list of guns, the 310 pages or so, and G-46 came out, I was just really curious as to why the government was putting this list as an amendment to Bill C-21. In looking at the list of guns, it quickly became apparent that a lot of these guns had just been copied and pasted from the May 2020 order in council. We have since discovered, based on testimony yesterday, that somewhere between 300 and 400 additional firearms have been added to the May 2020 list. Why would this Liberal government need to pass this as an amendment? If these firearms are a threat to public safety, they could have the authority....

I guess I'll ask a quick question here: Does the government have the authority to add these firearms to the banned list using an OIC immediately?

• (1150)

Ms. Paula Clarke (Counsel, Criminal Law Policy Section, Department of Justice): I'll start from first principles. The government has the ability to prohibit firearms through two means. The first means is through the power of prescription, which is set out in

section 117.15 and also set out in the definition of prohibited firearms. The second way is through legislation, which is what is being proposed here today.

In terms of what you mentioned earlier, I will proactively respond to your question about the limitation on the Governor in Council when prescribing a firearm by order in council. The Governor in Council must be of the view that the firearm is not reasonable for hunting and sporting purposes. Going back to the May 1 OIC, the regulatory impact analysis statement stated throughout it a number of times that the Governor in Council was of the view that these firearms posed too great a public safety risk to not be prohibited, to remain non-restricted or restricted.

Going back to your original question, yes, the government could prohibit the additional firearms that are listed by regulation, but what is being proposed is that those firearms be prohibited here today through motions that would amend legislation.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: It would be more immediate for them to do it through an OIC. Would you agree that it would be a faster process to do it through an OIC rather than through legislation?

Ms. Paula Clarke: It would be a faster process, but what's being proposed is that the process be part of the legislative process before Parliament.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I appreciate that.

That answer tells me that there is no urgent public safety need to ban these additional 400 firearms because the government has not banned them through an OIC, so it's willing to wait weeks and months, depending on how long before this legislation passes, to let these firearms be added to the legislation. That indicates to me that it's not because of any urgent public safety measure.

If you can say, what are the other...? Ms. Damoff stated that the reason they want to add this to the legislation is to prevent a future government—and, I think, a Conservative government, they said—from repealing it using an order in council. It is their intention to add this to legislation so that a future government would have to explicitly pass legislation to repeal it. Is that your understanding? Is that correct?

• (1155)

Ms. Paula Clarke: That's correct. Any amendment with a definition of "prohibited firearm" that is set out in the Criminal Code would have to be amended in the future through the parliamentary process.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Are there any court cases ongoing right now that this would have an impact on?

Ms. Paula Clarke: I cannot speak to any ongoing litigation.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Okay.

It's just interesting to me that you mentioned a regulatory impact statement that the government used to say that these firearms were too dangerous, so they were not considered reasonable for hunting and sporting purposes. Is that a public regulatory statement?

Ms. Paula Clarke: Yes, it is. It's attached to the regulations that were published on May 1, 2020.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Maybe you could send that to the committee. I'd appreciate that if you could.

Is there anything in that regulatory impact statement that says...? Did the government just come out and say that it is its opinion that these are too dangerous? Was there any consultation done? Did the government provided any evidence to back up its assertion that these firearms are too dangerous?

Ms. Paula Clarke: As my colleague mentioned two days ago, the government did undertake consultations in 2018. They were broadly based consultations, and there is a report that's published that sets out—

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I am aware of that. I read it yesterday—thank you—after you noted that to me.

Ms. Paula Clarke: Okay, so—

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I would note that in that legislation there were never any direct consultations on semi-automatic rifles and shotguns, though.

Am I wrong? Was there ever...? I saw there was a survey where they asked a number of questions. Were there any questions about whether or not the government should ban semi-automatic rifles and shotguns?

Ms. Paula Clarke: That is actually a question that I will defer to my colleague at Public Safety.

Ms. Rachel Mainville-Dale (Acting Director General, Firearms Policy, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): With regard to what was consulted on in 2018 and what made the basis of that regulatory impact analysis statement, I would refer you to that regulatory impact analysis statement.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I am having trouble hearing you. I did have my—

Ms. Rachel Mainville-Dale: I'm sorry. Can you hear me now?

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Maybe my thing isn't working. You were faint.

You were referring me to the regulatory impact statement, but are you aware of the government's consultation that took place, I believe, in 2019? Are you aware of that consultation?

Ms. Rachel Mainville-Dale: I am aware.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Are you aware of the contents of that consultation?

Ms. Rachel Mainville-Dale: Broadly.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Are you aware of—can you confirm or deny—whether or not the government asked those they consulted whether

they supported a ban on semi-automatic shotguns and rifles in that consultation?

Ms. Rachel Mainville-Dale: I cannot. I am here to provide information with regard to the motions that have been put forward, in terms of the impact of those.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Okay. Thank you.

Are you aware that one of the survey questions—and I think it was a very leading question because we don't have a definition of what an “assault weapon” is—was whether more action needed to be taken to ban assault weapons in this country.

Are you aware that 77% of respondents to the government's consultation said that they thought we had enough regulations or did not need more regulations for so-called assault weapons in this country? Are you aware of that statistic in that consultation?

Ms. Rachel Mainville-Dale: That's a question that I think I would invite you to pose to the minister.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Yes. It seems that we have about as much luck getting answers from the minister as we are having today, but I thank you for your efforts to do that.

A lot of concerns I have here are getting down into the consequences of this legislation should this amendment pass. How will the process work? Will they be immediately committing a criminal act by possessing these firearms?

Ms. Paula Clarke: No. The proposed amendments to the definition of “prohibited firearm” would not come into force on royal assent. They would come into force by order in council, which means they would come into force at a later date.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Are there a prescribed number of days that the order in council has to come into effect?

Ms. Paula Clarke: There are not.

• (1200)

Mr. Dane Lloyd: It's like a sword of Damocles for firearms owners once this passes. Basically, the government doesn't need to regulate these things right away, but they could be holding it over their heads at any time, and at any time they could decide.... It could be 30 days after this passes. It could be two years after this passes. It's something they can hold over their heads for as long as possible, perhaps something they could hold over as something to bring up during an election—but I would never want to accuse them of that. It would also demonstrate that, perhaps, this is less about public safety and more about politics.

When the order in council is triggered, what will be the effect of that? Is that something still to be determined by the regulations?

Ms. Paula Clarke: Future steps with respect to how the newly prohibited firearms would be treated have not been determined at this point.

I would remind you, though, when the May 1 OIC came into effect, there was an amnesty order. That gave lawful owners an opportunity to either dispose of their firearms or, otherwise, come into compliance with the new law.

They have a period of time during which they are not subject to criminal liability for unlawful possession, and then a decision would be made by the government as to how to move forward with the treatment of any newly prohibited firearms that would be included in this amended definition.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Without repeating everything you're saying, you're saying that the precedent this government has set, which is being implemented, is that there was an amnesty period following the May 2020...but you can't say for sure whether that is going to be what follows this one.

Ms. Paula Clarke: What I was saying was that for the OIC of May 1, 2020, an amnesty order was included the moment the firearms became prohibited. Firearms owners were not exposed to criminal liability. There was an amnesty order in place.

I cannot comment as to what would happen if there were an order in council bringing these provisions into force, but I can refer you back to what the government has done historically.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Thank you. I do appreciate that.

I'm not trying to put words in your mouth. I'm just trying to understand what you're saying.

There has been some concern that because the May 2020 OIC was passed via an OIC, it is subject to the laws of Parliament and it is below the law of Parliament, whereas an act of Parliament, which is what this proposed amendment would be doing, puts it on an equal step with other parliamentary laws.

If the government were to set the precedent that they're going to ban these firearms in legislation, would that preclude their need to provide a statement, as I mentioned, in 117.15, that they believe this is not reasonable for use in hunting? Would they no longer need to provide that justification if they were to pass this through legislation?

Ms. Paula Clarke: The justification that you're referring to applies to firearms that are prohibited by regulation. That's a limitation on the Governor in Council's ability to exercise their discretion to determine whether a specific firearm should be prohibited.

The democratic process is what would be used to debate whether these firearms should be prohibited through legislation.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I just want to confirm what you're saying. The Governor in Council rule does not bind the government, if they pass this legislation, from providing a justification about why these hunting rifles should be banned. It's a protection that exists only for the Governor in Council regulations, and not for legislation through Parliament. Is that correct?

Ms. Paula Clarke: The ability of the Governor in Council to prescribe firearms is a delegated power that comes from Parliament.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Of course.

Ms. Paula Clarke: When this provision was enacted, Parliament imposed a limitation on the Governor in Council as to what firearms could be prohibited.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Now the government is saying they don't want that limitation anymore because, as we have said, they want the power to ban hunting rifles. That's why they're circumventing this

very reasonable limitation, I think, that existed in the 1995 firearms law.

I think that just provides further evidence that this is really about giving the government the power to move forward and limit all sorts of new hunting firearms. They're just going to do this through a legislative process instead of through a Governor in Council, where at least they would be held accountable and have to justify why these hunting rifles could not be allowed.

Another follow-up is that the 1960 Canadian Bill of Rights is still a law of this land. We have the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which is very important. However, the Canadian Bill of Rights says very explicitly that Canadians have the right to life, liberty, security of the person and also the right to enjoyment of property, which cannot be deprived except with due process of law. Are members of the government, under the Governor in Council, bound by the Canadian Bill of Rights when they come up with policies to confiscate firearms? Are they bound by the due process of law in the Canadian Bill of Rights when depriving people of the enjoyment of their property?

• (1205)

Ms. Paula Clarke: What I can say is that the Supreme Court ruled—I think it was in 1991 or 1992, in the firearms reference case—that there is no right in Canada to possess firearms.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I don't disagree with you. However, in terms of property, if you are given the right to own a firearm as property—firearms are property as well—the government can't just seize that property except through due process of law. Would you say that is correct?

Ms. Paula Clarke: Go ahead.

Ms. Phaedra Glushek (Counsel, Criminal Law Policy Section, Department of Justice): I think one of the questions is with respect to the federal criminal power. The reference regarding the firearms decision by the Supreme Court of Canada determined that firearms and the regulation of firearms falls within the criminal law power versus the provincial power over property. It also indicated that there was no right to firearms in Canada.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: But this is the Canadian Bill of Rights. This is a federal law, not a provincial law. Are you aware of the Bill of Rights? Is it still enforced in Canada? Does it still have power in this country, the Bill of Rights?

Ms. Phaedra Glushek: Yes, it does.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: What I'm getting at here is that it seems like the government, through the buy-back program and the May 2020 OIC, is trying to respect the bill of rights and say, "We're going to confiscate your property," which is a violation of the bill of rights, "but we're going to make it up to you because we're going to compensate you for that property." That happens all the time in this country through eminent domain laws. When people have their property seized to build a highway, the government has to compensate them for that. That's the due process of law.

However, if the government passes this amendment we're talking about today, G-4, is it notwithstanding the Canadian Bill of Rights? Is the government saying that this will be notwithstanding the bill of rights protections for property rights?

Ms. Phaedra Glushek: The criminal law falls under the criminal law power that is under federal jurisdiction. That's what I can point to when we speak about criminal law and this legislation that is being amended through the bill and the motions. It is under the federal criminal law power.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Yes, I understand that. I guess what I'm trying to say is that, because this will be an act of Parliament and not a regulation, as we've already cleared up, this bill will be on an equal playing field with the Canadian Bill of Rights and, therefore, will not necessarily be subject to the Canadian Bill of Rights protections on property.

What I'm submitting is that another additional reason the government is submitting this through legislation is not only, as they said, to prevent any future government from repealing these OICs, which they would have to appeal through legislation, but to relieve the government of any responsibility to compensate people for their firearms.

That's something that I think is very worrisome because, as I'm going to get into here in my next line of questions, it's very clear from a Conference Board of Canada report that the hunting, trapping and sport-shooting sectors were responsible for upward of \$13.2 billion of GDP in this country in 2018. That represented about 0.6% of Canada's GDP at the time. That is an extremely significant amount of GDP.

Hunting and sport shooting are a tourism industry. A lot of these people come in from the United States. Can you tell us how this amendment would impact Americans who want to bring, let's say, a firearm that was listed under this amendment? Would they be able to bring that firearm up? Do they get an exemption?

Obviously, they don't need to have a Canadian firearms licence to come up here as a tourist to shoot, so would they be required not to bring any firearms that would be covered under this amendment when they come here to sport shoot?

Ms. Rachel Mainville-Dale: Thank you for the question.

If the bill passes and it receives royal assent, the same rules that apply today would apply if you're bringing in a non-restricted firearm in terms of the processes and procedures. It's the same thing for restricted firearms. I believe you cannot bring prohibited firearms into the country. An American, for example, coming in to hunt would need to bring in a firearm that they could legally bring into Canada.

• (1210)

Mr. Dane Lloyd: What you're saying is that, if this legislation and this amendment pass, and if a tourist was coming to this country to spend tens of thousands of dollars to hunt big game and only had these prohibited firearms, they would not be allowed to bring these prohibited firearms into the country. They would have to find a non-restricted firearm to bring into the country. Is that what you're saying?

Ms. Rachel Mainville-Dale: They would have to bring one in that they can bring in, or they would have to make arrangements to use another firearm.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: You mean to use a non-restricted or non-prohibited firearm. Is that correct?

Ms. Rachel Mainville-Dale: They would have to use whatever is legally allowed here in Canada.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: That's interesting.

That's very concerning if the definition we're bringing in here is any semi-automatic rifle or shotgun that is capable of carrying a magazine of over five rounds. I know a lot of tourists who come to this country spend tens of thousands of dollars on one trip alone. They wouldn't be able to bring in their firearms, so they would choose not to come to this country in the first place.

Has any economic analysis been done by the government on the impact that this amendment would have on tourism, like sports and hunting tourism?

Ms. Rachel Mainville-Dale: I don't believe there has been.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Okay. Thank you.

The government hasn't even done an economic analysis on the impact of this sweeping new legislation, and that's just talking about tourists. Let's talk about Canadians. Over 1.3 million Canadian hunters in this country contribute to our GDP. They are taxpaying citizens and abide by the law. This generates economic activity in our country. We're talking about upwards of \$13.2 billion. I believe this legislation could take a significant chunk of that out of our country, and the government hasn't even provided an economic analysis.

It just speaks to the fact that this has come very late in the committee process. We could have had witnesses. We could have asked the minister questions. We could have had people bring in economic analyses and we could have studied this. Unfortunately, we haven't.

With that, Mr. Chair, I'm going to cede my time to my colleague Mr. Motz. I know you found what I had to say very riveting and very educational. I thank you for giving me this time to speak to the committee.

The Chair: Indeed, I found it intensely riveting and fascinating.

Mr. Motz is recognized.

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

I'm going to start by going back to the opening statement made by Ms. Damoff.

For Canadians who are watching online right now or who will watch this at some point later down the road, I want you to go back to the very beginning of this particular meeting. I want you to listen to the comments made by Ms. Damoff.

With all due respect to Ms. Damoff, the statement, which was obviously prepared for her, identifies the—

Ms. Pam Damoff: On a point of order, Chair, I wrote every single word of what I said. For someone to imply that I didn't...I take great offence to that.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Go ahead, Mr. Motz.

Mr. Glen Motz: That's perfect. You're aware of the comments I'm about to make then.

The statements that were made—now, admittedly, by Ms. Damoff—suggest the absolute and utter ignorance of the laws that we have in this country already and of the whole historical perspective of firearms and the use of firearms for hunting. It absolutely makes zero sense.

It identifies, again, the lack of understanding that this member has—and the Liberals, for that matter, because they're the ones pushing this misguided legislation—on the firearms that are used for military applications. It flies in the face of common sense. I can't imagine the emails we're going to get now, based on that statement. People are so frustrated with this government already and its misguided approach.

I want go back to the reason why we're debating this particular issue. For those of you who may not be aware, or need to be reminded, we are dealing with a government amendment. It's called G-4 in our package. It's a government amendment to a bill. They wrote the bill and obviously found out that there were a lot of mistakes with the bill. They decided to add some things to it that they didn't want to have covered off at the front end. That would be my perspective.

When a bill is presented, it is able to be debated in the House before it comes to committee. Before this bill even came to the committee, we had an opportunity to debate the substance of the bill. This amendment, for example—I'll get to it in just a minute—was not able to be debated. It was not even included in the bill. No one knew it was even coming. However, I believe the Liberals knew exactly what they were doing. This is a backdoor process. It was done deliberately, in my estimation.

I have an initial question for those officials who are here.

You were involved in creating Bill C-21. Is that correct?

• (1215)

Ms. Paula Clarke: That's correct.

Mr. Glen Motz: In your initial creation of Bill C-21, were there any conversations about this particular amendment in those initial conversations?

The Chair: I would suggest to Mr. Motz that he's asking for probably confidential and privileged information.

Mr. Glen Motz: They don't have privilege on that matter. They can answer the question directly, Chair, on when they were asked for information and when they started preparing these amendments.

The Chair: I believe that the development of legislation at the cabinet level is subject to cabinet confidence.

I'll certainly allow the witnesses to respond, if they wish.

Mr. Glen Motz: Like on Tuesday, I believe the chair has a misinterpretation of what is and isn't allowed.

I'll ask it a different way, then.

When you prepared C-21, the original version that came before Parliament, did you have, in the background, amendment G-46 and G-4, for example, that would expand the definition of a prohibitive firearm? Was that something that you were already working on then?

Ms. Paula Clarke: I can't answer that question. That falls within solicitor-client privilege.

I can answer any question related to the bill as presented in Parliament and any question related to the motions.

Mr. Glen Motz: Again, as I told you before, with all due respect, if I'm pushing, it's not going to be on you. It's going to be about the government. You need to understand that.

Ms. Paula Clarke: I understand that.

Mr. Glen Motz: I sit on another committee, and I always find that when things get a little too hot, the government likes to hide behind this privilege that they've identified. It's rather interesting.

I guess I can come to my own conclusions, and the Canadian public certainly will come to their own conclusions, about when this was actually thought of: Do you know what? Let's not put it in right away. If we put it in right away, we're going to have a huge debate on our hands. The Canadian public is going to be up in arms—pardon the pun—about expanding the definition of prohibited firearm to include hunting rifles and shotguns that are, right now, before this passes, non-restricted firearms in this country.

I think it was a deliberate attempt to mislead the Canadian public and mislead Parliament. This was planned.

At any rate, this is for the public at home to see what we're talking about and why this is so disconcerting. In G-4, which is a government amendment, one thing they're adding there is that they want to change the definition in subsection 84(1) of the Criminal Code to expand the definition of a prohibited firearm. They want to expand and add to the definition to include the following:

a firearm that is a rifle or shotgun, that is capable of discharging centre-fire ammunition in a semi-automatic manner and that is designed to accept a detachable cartridge magazine with a capacity greater than five cartridges of the type for which the firearm was originally designed

In effect, this eleventh-hour backdoor change to the definition of a prohibited firearm will render hundreds of thousands of firearms that are currently in circulation in this country—legally acquired, many of them non-restricted—to now be not restricted but completely prohibited.

On a personal note, my grandchildren hunt. Their father has passed on some incredible legacy to them from his father about hunting. They hunt for food. They don't have regular beef in the fridge. They have antelope, deer, elk, moose and bear. Everything else that they can hunt, they hunt. It's a great legacy. I'm so proud of what my grandchildren are doing and how my son-in-law is teaching them these skills. This year they got an antelope and a moose. They have other animals that they are seeking to fill up their fridges with.

The firearms they use, legally acquired and legally possessed, are now going to be prohibited. Why? The suggestion earlier was that these firearms that exist and that we have on this list now are military. Strangely, they're using a military firearm for that. My grandson has a semi-automatic rifle, and I asked him recently why he has one. He said, "Papa, I care about my animals. I don't want them to suffer. If I take an animal and he doesn't go down right away, I need to have access to make sure I can take him down in a humane way." I find that to be pretty remarkable for a 14-year-old little boy.

It just shows, again, the absolute and utter ignorance of this government and the members of this government with regard to this whole process of trying to identify these big, bad people who are the Canadian firearm owners who are somehow a risk to the Canadian public, and of having firearms that, in some cases, have been passed down for generations now all of a sudden be illegal.

• (1220)

I find that to be incredibly problematic, and it is an example, again, of how ideology trumps common sense.

Again, this is not directed at you folks.

I want to pick up on a comment that my colleague, Mr. Lloyd, spoke about with respect to the Canadian Bill of Rights in 1960. Section 1 says:

It is hereby recognized and declared that in Canada there have existed and shall continue to exist without discrimination by reason of race, national origin, colour, religion or sex, the following human rights and fundamental freedoms, namely,

(a) the right of the individual to life, liberty, security of the person and enjoyment of property, and the right not to be deprived thereof except by due process of law;

That's the key. Because as I understand what will happen, the fact that this deceptive Liberal government intends to try to push this through means that they won't have to then compensate anyone if they make all these firearms illegal, because that's the due process of law in this country. Would that be a fair assessment?

By listing what originally was a non-restricted firearm as a prohibited firearm, and this is now prohibited, would mean that the government could take that property, because that follows the due process of law. Would that be a correct assumption?

Ms. Phaedra Glushek: The government can bring before Parliament a bill that can prohibit within the federal sphere of jurisdiction. Compensation is a matter of policy and whether or not to compensate owners.

Mr. Glen Motz: That's right, and I appreciate that, but let me try to ask this in a different way. The government will do this under the guise of public safety and due process. They're going to pass the

legislation. It's going to be forced through without the proper debate in the House that should have and could have occurred. They're going to have support, I'm sure, from other opposition parties. Therefore, it becomes law. Then, because it becomes law, that property, which five minutes before becoming a law was able to be lawfully enjoyed in a non-restricted manner, now becomes prohibited. That property can be seized by the government because it is no longer lawful, and it is seizable, if you will, because it was done through the due process of law.

Am I correct in assuming that?

• (1225)

Ms. Paula Clarke: Due process of law includes the parliamentary process by which Parliament decides which firearms may or may not be prohibited. Whether or not the government decides to compensate owners in the future is....

Mr. Glen Motz: I don't want to get stuck on compensation, because that's a red herring. All I'm trying to get at is that contrary to the bill of rights, the way for the government to get around that is to make what was previously legal to possess, to own, and was lawfully purchased by millions of Canadians in this country.... Many hundreds of firearms listed here are non-restricted. They're using this due process law to actually prohibit a firearm, and that's how they're getting around the whole process of forcing people to lose their property.

Would that be a correct assessment?

Ms. Phaedra Glushek: If you're asking what the impact is of the legislation, its impact is that, once it comes into force, these items would be prohibited and would no longer be legal to possess or use.

Mr. Glen Motz: That's fair, and I get the coming into force.

I'm going to keep on my point a bit. I would make the suggestion that the government is using the due process of law to otherwise take and cause Canadians' lawfully obtained property to become illegal, and they're using that avenue as a way to circumvent the Canadian Bill of Rights.

Would that be a fair assessment?

Ms. Paula Clarke: I think as we've already answered, the Canadian Bill of Rights applies to federal legislation. Once federal legislation has been passed, that authorizes or permits that property rights are subsumed by the federal legislation. Then following that passage of legislation that could or would prohibit future firearms, anything that follows is done as a policy decision made by the government.

Mr. Glen Motz: I understand.

Ms. Paula Clarke: I don't think there's anything else we can add to your question.

Mr. Glen Motz: Right, so I won't ask the question. I'll just make the statement.

The Government of Canada has circumvented the Canadian Bill of Rights on lawfully obtained property by making that lawfully obtained property now prohibited and unlawful. That would be the fair way to say it.

Let me ask you again a previous question about G-4 and G-46. On what date did you start working on G-4?

Ms. Phaedra Glushek: That particular question we would not be able to answer because it's subject to solicitor-client privilege, but what I can say is that the original bill that was tabled in 2019 did not have these amendments in it.

The next thing I can say is that there were public commitments to ban further assault-style firearms by the government following Bill C-21 and, I believe, on the reintroduction of Bill C-21. That is what I can advise committee members in terms of conversations and public statements that have been made by the government.

Mr. Glen Motz: Thank you.

You made a very interesting statement. The government now had conversations about banning additional assault-style rifles. We all can show pictures of the list here. They're not.... I mean, the definition.... What is a military assault-style rifle? I know that's going to be coming up in some magic definition that's coming forward, but it's never been identified. What I find interesting is the fact that, as legislation writers, you are asked to find firearms that are currently non-restricted in this country and make them prohibited administratively by the stroke of a pen and not with evidence that suggests that they are a danger to the public, not with evidence to suggest that the Canadians who own them are now a danger to the public but only because of some ideological push.

You can choose to answer this or not, and you're wise enough, have been around long enough, to know whether you will or you won't. However, those of you who may or may not have a PAL or an RPAL, those of you who may or may not hunt, do you not find this to be in conflict with what actually goes on in real life in this country, or do you have to put that aside?

• (1230)

Ms. Paula Clarke: We're here to answer questions regarding Bill C-21 and the motions before us.

Mr. Glen Motz: That's a pretty definitive Bill C-21 question.

Ms. Paula Clarke: You're asking me a personal question.

Mr. Glen Motz: That's fair enough.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The officials are here not to give their opinion and not to justify policy made by the government. They're here to answer questions—

Mr. Glen Motz: They'd have a tough time doing that. Wouldn't they?

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Motz, please don't interrupt me.

They're here to answer questions—

The Chair: Mr. Motz, Ms. Damoff is recognized on a point of order.

Please carry on.

Ms. Pam Damoff: They're here to answer questions on the legislation, not to offer personal opinions and not to offer opinions on the policy of the government. If Mr. Motz is going to ask questions, I will say that Mr. Lloyd was very much on point when he was do-

ing that. Perhaps Mr. Motz can take some lessons from Mr. Lloyd on how to ask specific questions.

The Chair: Thank you for your intervention, Ms. Damoff.

I would certainly remind Mr. Motz that our witnesses today are here to answer technical questions on this bill and on the amendments as we are addressing them. They are, of course, government lawyers and are bound by solicitor-client privilege as well as cabinet confidence by times. Please try to keep within those boundaries and recognize and respect our witnesses on that basis.

Mr. Motz, you still have the floor. Go ahead.

Mr. Glen Motz: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I very much do respect the witnesses who are before us, and I appreciate the refereeing from the sideline, from across the way.

I do have a couple of questions.

I was pleasantly pleased to see that Premier Scott Moe and our Alberta Minister of Justice Tyler Shandro have issued statements that in the coming weeks they will explore options on actions against this particular legislation and the government.

We heard Minister Mendicino at the beginning of this study suggest that Bill C-21 relies heavily on provincial co-operation. How does the government plan to enact the sweeping ban, if you will, which will impact hundreds of thousands of Canadians all across this country, without assistance from the provinces? How do you envision seeing that happen?

Does anybody have any ideas?

Ms. Rachel Mainville-Dale: Thank you for your question.

In terms of how the legislation would be implemented with respect to a prohibition, if it is passed, it receives royal assent and it comes into force, there will be legal ways by which to dispose of firearms, including surrender to police, legal export and deactivation.

Mr. Glen Motz: I know you can't determine when the government is going to have this come into force, and I get that. That would indicate that maybe this is going to be a long-term process, and they're going to need to get their ducks in a row—pardon the pun—with respect to how to deal with potentially millions of now prohibited firearms. Would it be fair to say that is going to take time to do?

• (1235)

Ms. Rachel Mainville-Dale: I think it would be difficult for us to comment, given that there are a lot of theoreticals and hypotheticals when we are trying to answer that question.

Mr. Glen Motz: That's fair enough.

I don't remember if my colleagues asked this on Tuesday, but given the sweeping changes this would make to Bill C-21 and the idea that all legislation is supposed to be charter-compliant.... Bill C-21, I'm sure, has a charter-compliance component to it. Is that correct?

Ms. Paula Clarke: That's correct.

Mr. Glen Motz: Has a charter-compliance analysis been done on the amendments to this particular legislation?

Ms. Phaedra Glushek: I believe that on Tuesday I answered the same or a similar question. There was a charter—

Mr. Glen Motz: I'm old. I have a bad memory.

Ms. Phaedra Glushek: That's okay—me too.

A charter statement was tabled with the bill in June 2022.

With respect to any legislation that the department brings forward, the Minister of Justice has a responsibility to ensure that it is compliant with the charter and in accordance with the Department of Justice Act.

Mr. Glen Motz: Now my memory has come back, and your answer is almost identical to what it was on Tuesday.

However, my question was whether a charter-compliance analysis has been done specifically on amendment G-4 and then in reference to amendment G-46, because G-4 proposed paragraph (i) talks about the firearms listed in that schedule.

Has a charter-compliance analysis been done on the expansion of Bill C-21?

Ms. Phaedra Glushek: Again, for any legislation or motions the government brings forward, any amendments to legislation that are before Parliament, the Minister of Justice is responsible for ensuring compliance with the charter.

Mr. Glen Motz: Has one been done on the amendments? I am asking because I haven't seen it.

Ms. Phaedra Glushek: Any analysis that would be done at an official level would be subject to solicitor-client privilege and cabinet confidence, in terms of the drafting and advice with respect to motions, etc., on legislation.

Mr. Glen Motz: Can the Canadian public ever expect a charter-compliance document to be released on the amendments?

Ms. Phaedra Glushek: There is an obligation to release a charter statement with the introduction of a bill only.

Mr. Glen Motz: That's rather convenient; don't you think? It is very convenient. We can have a charter-compliance document prepared for a bill, and then we can completely change the bill. This is a firearm-freeze bill or a handgun-freeze bill—that's how it started—and now we're prohibiting hundreds of thousands of previously non-restricted firearms.

The scope has completely changed. We're—

Ms. Pam Damoff: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, the list was made public this morning. To say “hundreds of thousands” does not reflect what was in the list this morning, so let's be clear and stick to facts here.

Mr. Glen Motz: There are hundreds of models, but it impacts hundreds of thousands of firearms across this country.

The Chair: Ms. Damoff has the floor.

Is your point complete?

Ms. Pam Damoff: Yes, Chair, but when I'm speaking I would appreciate it if Mr. Motz would let me finish. I'm not interrupting him when he is speaking, so perhaps he would just give me the courtesy and respect of letting me finish my statement.

There are not hundreds of thousands of firearms on the list that was made public today with Mr. Chiang's motion.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Damoff.

I would urge Mr. Motz to recognize the speaker when it's appropriate.

Carry on, please.

Mr. Glen Motz: Thank you.

Let me rephrase. There are hundreds of thousands of firearms impacted by the hundreds of models listed here. Is that correct?

You guys in Public Safety probably have the firearms reference table memorized—don't you?

Ms. Rachel Mainville-Dale: With respect, my memory is good but not quite that good.

The evergreen definition reflects the government's policy objective of enhancing public safety and ensuring that all assault-style firearms are treated the same in law. The definition captures many firearms that are already prohibited by regulation, but would also be forward-looking and capture ASFs that may come to market in the future.

No list exists that identifies all of the firearms that would be captured only by the proposed definition in proposed paragraph 84(1) (g). However, I'll provide some examples of firearms that are already prohibited in regulations by make and model that would be captured by the proposed qualitative definition. Those include the AR-15 rifle, the Ruger Mini-14 rifle, the CZ858 rifle, the Beretta Cx4 Storm carbine and the Norinco M305 rifle.

I'll also provide some examples of firearms that are prohibited in the regulations by make and model but would not be captured by the proposed qualitative definition. For example, the Armi Jager AP74 is not centrefire. The DPMS A-15 Panther Pump Rifle is not semi-automatic. The Mitchell Arms M16/22 is not centrefire. The Rock River Arms LAR-15 pistol is not a rifle nor a shotgun, and the SIG MCX Rattler Pistol is neither a rifle nor a shotgun.

● (1240)

Mr. Glen Motz: I will ask the question in a different way. The order in council from May 2020 prohibited most of the firearms that you have already listed. Is that correct?

Ms. Rachel Mainville-Dale: It captured about 1,500 named makes and models.

Mr. Glen Motz: There have been hundreds of firearms added to the firearms program in the two and half years since the order in council was put out.

Ms. Rachel Mainville-Dale: As to the criteria that were put out, as they were reviewing the Canadian firearms program and reviewing the firearms reference table, they performed a manual update of that table to reflect the same criteria for identifying firearms that meet those criteria.

Mr. Glen Motz: It's interesting that in what you read, which is a department position you have at Public Safety, there's an arbitrary definition that seems to suggest the firearms now being considered for prohibition are somehow military-style assault rifles. Is that true? That's the wording you read to us. There are two or three sentences on that. Can you just reread them for me, please?

Ms. Rachel Mainville-Dale: Do you mean the definition that is being proposed in proposed paragraph (g)?

Mr. Glen Motz: No, not in proposed paragraph (g). I have that in front of me. I'm talking about what you just read about your department's position on why you're prohibiting some of these weapons or firearms or why you have them on your list. It's specific to Public Safety.

Ms. Rachel Mainville-Dale: The evergreen definition proposes a qualitative definition that would prohibit firearms that meet the definition. The definition includes a rifle or shotgun.

Mr. Glen Motz: No, I'm not talking about what's in proposed paragraph (g). I'm talking about the statement you read from the department at the very beginning of your intervention in your response back to me.

Ms. Rachel Mainville-Dale: Proposed paragraph (g) reflects the government's policy objective of enhancing public safety and ensuring that all assault-style firearms are treated the same in the law.

Mr. Glen Motz: That's the one I'm looking for. Thank you.

A firearm that right now is a non-restricted firearm is going to be classified as a prohibited firearm because some ideologue somewhere said that it's a military-style assault weapon. That's really what we're saying here. Is that right?

Ms. Paula Clarke: There is no definition of "assault-style firearm" in law.

Mr. Glen Motz: I didn't think so.

Ms. Paula Clarke: What there has been, to date, is the ability of the Governor in Council to establish criteria on which the OIC of May 1, 2020, prohibited a list by make and model of firearms.

This criteria, which was publicly stated after the introduction of the bill, made clear that the factors that were looked at were that the firearm was capable of sustained, semi-automatic rapid fire. It had to be of a tactical or military design with the capability of accepting a large magazine, which would be an oversized magazine—therefore, above five.

• (1245)

Mr. Glen Motz: Okay, but having a magazine in a firearm like you described, over five, is a prohibited device in this country already.

Ms. Paula Clarke: You are correct. The magazine itself is a prohibited device. What the May 1 OIC sought to prohibit is the firearm that can receive the prohibited device.

Mr. Glen Motz: Wow. I know what it's asking for, what it's suggesting. Do you not consider that a significant overreach, really, of what the design is?

Firearms need to be classified, like I said on Tuesday, by what they can do, not by what they look like. You said they look like....

Ms. Paula Clarke: No, I didn't. What I said was that the firearms were prohibited according to what they can do, which is the semi-automatic, sustained rapid fire, based on a military or tactical design and capable of accepting a large-capacity magazine.

Mr. Glen Motz: What you're describing, really, is a fully automatic firearm.

Ms. Paula Clarke: What I'm describing is a semi-automatic version of a military or tactical design firearm.

Mr. Glen Motz: In Canada, that semi-automatic firearm right now has a maximum capacity magazine allowable under law of five.

Ms. Paula Clarke: One way in which public safety is taken into consideration with respect to firearms is that limitation on magazine capacity. The government has made a decision to further ban assault-style firearms to further protect public safety by also prohibiting the firearms that can accept oversized cartridge magazines.

Mr. Glen Motz: In preparation for this bill, which began a couple of years ago, I'm sure, was there any evidence provided that supports the government's decision?

We always hear this government brag, in words only—not necessarily in action but in words—that they base their decisions on evidence. They call it evidence-based decision-making. What I think they probably adhere to mostly is actually decision-based evidence making.

There are 400 firearms now on this list. On the other list that came out in May 2020, there were 1,500, plus hundreds more since then. Did they provide you with any factual evidence that all of them pose a significant risk to public safety?

Ms. Paula Clarke: That's the determination based on the ability of these firearms to perform sustained rapid fire based on the semi-automatic capability combined with—

Mr. Glen Motz: That's not sustained rapid fire.

The Chair: Mr. Motz, please—

Mr. Glen Motz: When you look at a—

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): On a point of order, Mr. Chair, he should allow witnesses to finish their statements. It's rude to interrupt them.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Van Bynen. I was just about to say that.

Mr. Motz, if you ask a question, please wait for the answer.

Mr. Glen Motz: Thank you.

What I'm hearing you say is that, because we don't have a definition of a military-style assault weapon, which is a made-up term by this government, we will now try to fit firearms into that definition. In so doing, we have identified non-restricted firearms in that list because of someone's misunderstanding of firearms and the laws that we have in this country.

I've talked to Canadian military and American military folks who laugh at this definition. A military-style assault rifle is a rifle that is capable of fully automatic fire and has large-capacity magazines. That's a military-style assault rifle by any definition. What this government is trying to do through this legislation is to go from a handgun-freezing bill to an all-encompassing bill of "let's just eliminate all firearms". That's basically what they're doing. They are including now a whole brand and a whole type of firearm that otherwise was non-restricted, with little thought to the impact that has on the culture and heritage of many Canadians.

I wanted to ask you a question specifically about variants, if I could.

Ms. Paula Clarke: Sure.

Mr. Glen Motz: How does the department, or you as the drafters, define a variant?

• (1250)

Ms. Paula Clarke: The way a variant is interpreted is based on a plain-language interpretation of the meaning, which is then applied by technical experts as they examine a firearm to see if it comes from the same family as a firearm that is already prohibited pursuant to the regulations. There is no definition in the—

Mr. Glen Motz: There is no definition in legislation.

Ms. Paula Clarke: No.

Mr. Glen Motz: Yet it's used throughout the firearms reference table.

Ms. Paula Clarke: Yes.

Mr. Glen Motz: You said it was common.... What was the term you used? It wasn't common knowledge—

Ms. Paula Clarke: It was the common uses of the term.

Mr. Glen Motz: How did we get from a designed firearm, manufactured the way it is, to its being all of a sudden on this prohibited list? How do you get a variant of that? Is it from a manufacturer, or is it from individuals themselves doing the variant? How would that look?

Ms. Paula Clarke: This technical question is outside my lane. That's a question that's best directed to the Canadian firearms program. What I can tell you is that they do look at a range of factors when making their technical determination, including manufacturing information and marketing.

Again, I would indicate that this question should be answered by the Canadian firearms program.

Mr. Glen Motz: That's fair enough.

From your earlier testimony, and the way this act reads and what this government's history has been, of the 500-plus firearms that are

listed in government amendment 46, what you're telling me, basically, is that all the variants, every possible variant known to mankind now or into the future, will be prohibited in terms of anything related to those 500 firearms here. This list is not exhaustive. Am I correct in saying that?

Right now this is an exhaustive list, but that doesn't mean the government can't continue to keep adding firearms to this, as they've done with the order in council. Is that correct?

Ms. Paula Clarke: The list is exhaustive to the best of the knowledge of the Canadian firearms program. The term "variant" would capture any firearms produced by manufacturers in the future that would be essentially from the same family as the firearms currently prohibited. That is to prevent manufacturers from changing the name of a firearm that is essentially the same as a firearm that's prohibited.

Mr. Glen Motz: What that effectively does in legislation is this. Of the 500-plus firearms listed in this particular amendment, which the Liberals are adding now to the already couple of thousand firearms that are prohibited under the order in council, every possible variant moving forward is automatically prohibited. You used the word "manufacturers", so this is mostly related to manufacturers.

Hunting rifles and that whole industry, that whole practice as we now know it, will basically end under this legislation if it passes. Is that what I'm hearing you say?

Ms. Paula Clarke: I can answer legal questions.

• (1255)

Mr. Glen Motz: Yes, please do.

Ms. Paula Clarke: The proposed schedule—the firearms that are listed—that you have in front of you, schedule 1, lists all of the firearms that are currently prohibited in the regulations. Added to those are all of the known variants. Those were included for transparency, so that when Canadians look at the schedule, they will know what firearms are prohibited based on the best knowledge of the Canadian firearms program.

That's what's been done so far with respect to variants. Moving forward, in the future, should a manufacturer choose to produce a firearm that is essentially, for all intents and purposes, the same firearm that is prohibited in the schedule, that would be captured by the term "variant", and then that firearm would be prohibited. That's to ensure that manufacturers are not able to manufacture a firearm that is essentially the same as a prohibited firearm.

Mr. Glen Motz: The bottom line here again—and I'll use the term, and this is not necessarily a question, to give you a break, but a statement—is that the government is not looking at the function of a firearm. It's looking at what it looks like. I guess a case in point about why we ask about the variant is that the Mossberg 715T. It's a .22 calibre rifle. It's identical in structure and operation to the Mossberg 702 rifle. The one difference is that, where the Mossberg 702 has a traditional wood-looking stock on the exterior, the 715T has a plastic shell that's designed to look like an AR-15. We've effectively said that this government is classifying firearms by how they look. If they look scary, we're going to make sure that we prohibit them. That was a lot of what the order in council was about, and it certainly is something that causes consternation now.

What's interesting is that, on Tuesday when this was released to the public by the fact that the motion was made here at committee, there were a significant number of people from around the country who went out and shared the concerns of the public. I know that my phone calls and my emails have certainly picked up about this issue. The Canadian public feels deceived. We had many ministers and members of the government speak in Parliament, at this committee, and elsewhere about how they're not going after hunters and sport shooters, how they're not going after any of these, how there would be no impact on them, how they're trying to make the public safe and how they're trying to deal with gangs and criminals. I don't know how many gang members are worried about this legislation. We don't seem to be focusing any attention on what gangs are doing.

I know Ms. Dancho mentioned earlier the billions of dollars that this particular bill will actually cost if the government considers any confiscation plan whatsoever. I don't think it will. I think it'll just ram this through and screw the public. Forget the Canadian Bill of Rights. It will take property, make it illegal and, in that way, circumvent any responsibility it has to compensate people for this.

However, just think of what that would do. If we had even \$1 billion that we would give to legitimate programs that make a difference on.... Kids get involved in gangs. My friend Marcell Wilson from the One by One Movement, who we had here in committee on.... They're making huge inroads in the Toronto area.

The porous areas of our border, law enforcement knows right now, are the main vehicles by which smuggled firearms enter this country. We need to have those resources deployed there to deal with the smuggled firearms out of the U.S. and to deal with kids' getting involved in gangs in the first place.

You know, a couple years back, the now Minister of Public Safety Marco Mendicino and I were on—and, Pam, I'm sure you'll love this—*Political Blind Date*. I know it's an odd couple, but Marco and I were on a blind date together. I'm not too proud to say it, but he's actually not a bad guy if you get rid of his politics. Anyway, the idea was that TVO did this particular program, and we talked about firearms. I had the privilege of having Marco out in my riding in Medicine Hat, Alberta. We went to a certified firearms instructor, and he provided an abbreviated lesson on what firearms are about, how safe the industry is, what rigour people have to go through to get a PAL, and how much increased that rigour is when you get to an RPAL, a restricted possession and acquisition licence. I have both, by the way.

• (1300)

Marco went through this, and even during our presentation, the firearm instructor had students handle firearms so they would have familiarity with them. Marco refused to participate, and that was his choice.

Then we went out to a gun range, the Medicine Hat Rifle and Revolver Club, a great club in Medicine Hat run by a great group of people. We had some people from industry, some hunters there. We had some gun shops there and we had some individuals who participate in various sport-shooting disciplines there. The idea was to show Marco Mendicino what rigour they go through for safety on the range. It was great.

Then I had the privilege of going down and seeing Marco in his riding. We went down to a number of different areas. Lawrence Heights was one of them. We played a little basketball with some street kids and we had a great time.

There was one thing that really struck me. We went to a housing project where a young mom recounted the story of her two young daughters. I believe they are both under the age of eight, and they were shot in a gang shooting. Thankfully, they were not killed, but I'm sure they will both have trauma for a lifetime.

I asked this lady what we, as legislators in Parliament, should be doing to make a difference for public safety in this country, seeing as she and her family were front and centre in being victims of this. Unfortunately, this particular dialogue wasn't aired. They still have it on their tapes, but it didn't air, which I'm not surprised about. She said, "You know, the gang bangers in this city are not afraid of law enforcement. They are not afraid of the law. Nothing happens to them." I said, "So how do we change that?" Marco was getting very nervous by this stage. She said, "There needs to be serious accountability by those people in this country who use firearms in the commission of an offence, and there is not. There is no accountability for them."

I find it rather disconcerting that, again, we have a bill in front of us that does little. It's like lipstick on a pig. It looks as though it does something beautiful, but it actually makes no difference to public safety.

That's not your fault. You have to do the dance to the music that your masters play, and I get that. However, as I said on Tuesday, I'm very concerned about what this will do to an industry that contributes, as has been indicated by my colleagues, significant dollars, billions of dollars, to our GDP and that impacts the lives, careers and businesses of a multitude of Canadians, tens of thousands of Canadians. Millions of Canadians who have the exact firearms that the government is trying to prohibit here, which have now become worthless, will overnight be turned into administrative criminals.

That's what they should be called. They will become administrative criminals. Why? They didn't commit an offence. They didn't go out and harm anybody. They are not a risk to anybody, not at all. It's because, on a piece of paper, somebody said they didn't agree that these firearms should be owned by anyone. They can't find any evidence to show that the 514 firearms and their variants listed are a danger to the public. Guns aren't a danger to the public. People are. The people's use of them is. That's what we have to try to do.

I would be joining government in supporting any legislation that we could work together on that would say that we have a problem with gangs, we have a problem with smuggled firearms, we have a problem with reduced sentencing, and gun crimes aren't taken seriously. We have a revolving-door justice system that keeps people out of jail more than it keeps them in.

• (1305)

I remember when I started policing in 1980—that's probably before you were born, Paul—we had a thing called the Bail Reform Act that actually did something. It was called reverse onus. Paul would remember that. If I charged somebody with a criminal offence, and that person was able to get out on bail, they had conditions and those laid out a whole series of—

The Chair: Mr. Motz, this is all very interesting, but you're wandering around. Could we get back to G-4?

Mr. Glen Motz: Absolutely.

What the Bail Reform Act did back then was provide that a criminal be accountable. If they were released on a condition, whatever that might be, and they reoffended, the onus was then on that criminal to show why they should be released. Now that whole system seems to have shifted so that the criminals no longer have to show why they shouldn't remain in custody if they reoffend. It's up to the Crown—the police—as to why that individual should remain in custody. It's gone backwards.

When we get in government, I'm anxious to see you ladies working to try to change some of those things, so stay tuned for that. That's something I look forward to.

Anyway, I will cede my remaining time to Mr. Shipley.

The Chair: Thank you.

You don't have time to cede.

I will recognize Mr. Noormohamed, followed by Mr. Shipley.

Mr. Noormohamed, please go ahead.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

There's a lot to unpack from this filibuster that we were promised we would not have to sit through, because we were told by our Conservative friends that they intended to move forward on this and not delay it unreasonably. It's good to know where we are.

I want to begin at the very beginning, in fact, with what Ms. Damoff said at the beginning. On January 29, we're going to be marking the anniversary of the shooting at the Quebec City mosque. I want to remind everyone that the weapon that was used for the heinous murders committed there was acquired legally. Despite those who may believe that's it's okay to consider these things outliers and that we shouldn't legislate to stop outlier events, that attack and others like it have caused irreparable damage to communities, not just in Quebec City but Muslim communities across this country. When we do talk about the impact of firearms violence, we can't forget why this legislation is so very important.

Ms. Dancho spoke about her grandfather, and I want to express my condolences to her. I was very close to my grandfather. These are important memories for us to hold on to.

I want to share something that my grandfather taught me, as somebody who was very lucky to have come to this country. He said that the beauty of Canada is that Canada evolves. Canada is a dynamic country, and Canada's evolution as a country has made it better. When Ms. Dancho talks about Canadian culture, I think it's

very important to know that Canadian culture evolves over time, as we embrace the richness of its diversity, as we embrace the richness of the diversity that we learn from indigenous communities in this country, from those who have been here since Mr. Lloyd's family came from the 13 colonies, and from when my family came 50 years ago.

When we talk about the evolution of this country, let us remember that there was a time in this country when women couldn't vote, when indigenous people couldn't vote, when indigenous people needed passes to come off reserves, when we imposed head taxes, when same-sex marriage was not allowed and when racial segregation was the order of the day. I think it's really important for us to understand the importance of evolving, and that we learn from the past to make a better future.

In my opinion, this legislation and this amendment do that. The beauty of our legislative process, Mr. Chair, is that, if the Conservatives think this is a terrible amendment, they have the ability in this minority Parliament to work with two other parties to defeat this amendment. That is their right. That is the beauty of this parliamentary process. It is not to hold up the will of Canadians. It is their opportunity to work with other parties to defeat this amendment if they don't like it, but my goodness, Mr. Chair, we are here to try to save lives. We are here to try to do what is right. We are not here to take away weapons from hunters who use the weapons that, as Ms. Damoff rightly stated, are available for the purpose of hunting.

This may be a surprise to many on the Conservative side, but there are hunters who support this legislation. There are those of us who may not be gun owners who understand that, for those gun owners for whom this is important, their rights are important as well.

What this bill does is very different from what the Conservatives are asserting it's doing. I also want to note the glee with which Conservative staffers were literally bouncing around in the hallways thanking people for how much fodder this was going to create for fundraising opportunities. I am surprised and disappointed that the party that purports to be in support of law and order would use a debate around keeping Canadians safe as an opportunity to raise money. I think we should all take a good, long look and reflect on what that actually says about the nature of the conversation here.

Mr. Lloyd rightly spoke about the importance of freedoms, but it's very striking to me that, when Mr. Lloyd spoke about being a Canadian patriot and about rejecting revolution, I didn't see him speaking about rejecting the convoy, rejecting his colleagues who were there—

• (1310)

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Mr. Chair, this is a direct response to what Mr. Lloyd said.

The Chair: Mr. Lloyd is recognized on a point of order.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I don't see any relevance to this, Mr. Chair. This isn't related to the amendment at all. Now he's talking about the convoy.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: If I might be allowed to finish, Mr. Chair, you'll see where I'm going with this.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lloyd, for your point of order.

I think we've seen considerable latitude to talk about our origins and our connection to this country, so I will certainly let it—

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I have another point of order. I would never deem to question the patriotism of any member of this committee. I would just urge my colleague Mr. Noormohamed not to make any implication that I, who also serve as a member of the Canadian Forces, am not a patriot of this country.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you for your intervention.

Mr. Noormohamed, the floors is yours again. Carry on.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to be clear that at no point am I questioning Mr. Lloyd's patriotism. It's quite the opposite. I know him to be a proud Canadian. I share many of the things he holds dear, but I do want to make a point here that I think is important as we talk about this amendment. When we speak about rights and we speak about the importance of rejecting revolution, we need to be clear that this is something we hold true on all the things we talk about. Whether or not it is rejecting those who sought to overthrow the government, we should be standing firm. What I want to say is very much about the idea of why, when we talk about freedoms, it's important that we understand limitations sometimes.

The Conservative Party was prepared to launch a niqab ban against women who chose to wear the niqab. They have been adamant in their fight against a woman's right to choose. Whatever we want to talk about when it comes to freedoms here, let's be very clear that this is not about that. This is about something very different. If we're going to go down the rabbit hole here of talking about freedom, I think it's really important to say that freedom is not a licence. We have to be very deliberate, when we are talking about guns and the violence that is perpetrated by those who choose to use guns as a tool of violence, to actually realize what some of these weapons are.

There was a lot of debate about the innocuous nature of the SKS. I think it's important for us to understand that in fact the SKS is a weapon that has been used in military conflicts. Let's take a look at what some of those military conflicts might be. This is by no means an exhaustive list. If people would like, I'd be happy to provide them with a much longer exhaustive list.

That exhaustive list, which I'll just pull up here, Mr. Chair, involves everything from the Donbass conflict that we've seen very recently all the way back to the Boer War. It's been used in Vietnam. It's been used in the Suez crisis. It's been used many times. It was used in 1990 through to 1995 in the Tuareg rebellion. It was used in the Soviet-Afghan war. It was used in the war in Abkhazia. It was used in the Algerian civil war. Therefore, it is patently untrue for people to say that this is not a weapon of war. It has been used

by forces in war. Let's be very honest with people about what is actually going on here.

What I find remarkable, Mr. Chair, is that we have not heard one single speaker from the Conservative side look at this list and acknowledge any weapon on there that deserves to be banned. I'm listening to this and wondering, for folks who are so concerned about public safety, why they haven't gone through this list and said, yes, we actually agree that a large number of these should be banned. Is it because they believe every single weapon on these should have free and fair licence on our streets? I'd love to know that. I'd love to know if that's the case. If it is, I think that would give us something more to reflect on.

When we think about this view that we should be tougher on crime and that we should be tougher on weapons at the borders, let's just remind ourselves of the record. During the last Conservative government, over \$1 billion—over \$1 billion—was cut from law enforcement agencies. RCMP labs that were reviewing firearms and tracing evidence for police forces were slashed. Entire proceeds of crime units were disbanded. Resources were taken away from CBSA along with their ability to control the flow of illegal goods, including firearms at the borders, that our Conservative friends are so concerned about.

They talked about the crime prevention programs. In terms of the programs they talked about, before the 2015 election and the national crime prevention strategy, they let money lapse from those programs. They didn't fund \$28 million of the money they said they were going to put into crime prevention. We sit here listening to how we've done this terrible job of not protecting our borders when in fact we've been trying to make back the ground that was lost under the Conservatives. In 2021 we put over \$656 million back into the budget to keep this country safe, with \$123 million for CBSA. We put money into tracing. We put money into making sure there was a mandatory tracing policy. The things we have had to do to reverse the total ignorance around law and order of the Conservative government of the past continue to work, and Bill C-21 is part of that.

● (1315)

The idea that the Conservatives are good on crime and law and order is absolute nonsense. Their record speaks for it. I will take no lessons from Conservatives who talk about the importance of protecting every single one of these weapons because it is somehow part of Canadian culture that we should be able to do this.

Let's talk about Canadian culture for a moment. Let's talk about the importance of Canadian culture. Yes, absolutely, hunting is a big part of people's lives. I want to take nothing away from Ms. Dancho's family or families like hers. They have a right to hunt, as do indigenous communities. Nobody is questioning that, but let's talk about this for a moment in the spirit with which Mr. Motz and others have spoken about it.

The Conservatives proposed a barbaric cultural practices line. Had that come through when they were in government, I wonder if today people who oppose hunting could say that hunting should be reported through their snitch line as a barbaric cultural practice.

Is that the road that we're trying to go down here? I don't think so. We're trying to be reasonable. I invite my Conservative friends to go through the list of weapons that is there and acknowledge, perhaps, that there are weapons on that list that should be banned. However, this idea that we should go to a world in which every single weapon should be on our streets because "guns don't kill people, people do" is absurd.

We heard from law enforcement that the wrong types of guns in the wrong types of hands kill people. Sometimes guns in the hands of people inadvertently end up killing people. Let's get to the facts here. The facts are that the Conservatives are using this to raise money. They are using this to advance fear among Canadians and to divide Canadians. They talked about not having these politics of division, but that is exactly what this is about. When people are running through hallways, gleeful that this provides fodder for fundraising, we have a real problem.

I would argue that we have an opportunity here to actually, as we have done in this committee in the past, work together, to work together as we did on the ghost gun amendments—the first couple and the parts, rather—as I know we're going to because I know that Mr. Shipley and others on this committee believe strongly that we need to deal with some of these issues. We may have disagreements, but the beauty of this committee is that, if they disagree with an amendment, they have the right to work with other parties to defeat this amendment. However, they should not hold up the process of debating this and having meaningful conversation on this just because it serves a political agenda.

There are people in my riding who support this. There are probably people in my riding who oppose this. However, the overwhelming number of Canadians sent us to this place to deal with this in the way we have agreed to deal with it. I would really encourage the Conservatives, if they are opposed to this, to see if they can get the support of other parties. If they can't, let the will of Canadians move this bill forward. Let's actually get to the parts of this that we can agree on. Let's get some good legislation passed.

Let's not waste Canadians' time. Let's not create moments here for social media clips that allow people to go and raise money. Let's not use language like "Canadians are going to be up in arms" and "this is a declaration of war" because it's not. Using language like "it's a declaration of war" is not what Canadians want to hear from people who are elected. They want to hear that we can find ways to actually communicate with one another in a way that does not heat people up, that does not cause further friction or further animosity, and that does not cause people on social media to start to vilify people. That's not why we are here.

Again, as we think about what is the best path forward, I don't doubt that every single person on this committee actually cares about moving forward in protecting Canadians' lives. We may have different means. However, I take great umbrage to use of language like "this is a war against people" or "Canadians are going to be up in arms over this". This is not right. We have seen the consequences

of that when people like Ms. Damoff have been threatened. That is not okay.

If we are going to look at these amendments and talk about them thoughtfully, I would really encourage us all to, instead of questioning officials and asking for them for their personal opinions, ask them technical questions, as Mr. Lloyd did.

When I look at this list, I want to hear from my Conservative friends which of the weapons they actually think should be banned, which of the guns they think should be banned, so that we can actually start to save lives.

Let's have a conversation about substance. That is, in my view, the most important thing we can do. Canadians, frankly, deserve it. This should not be a database-building exercise for Conservatives. This should not be a fundraising exercise. This should be something that we look at as we have so many other things before this committee, something we should look at for ways that we can find common ground.

● (1320)

I want to be very clear. I speak for myself, here.

There is no sinister plot—at least that I have seen or that I am a part of—to take reasonable hunting guns away from those who have a right to hunt. This is not some sinister plot to punish indigenous communities, as the Conservatives assert. This is not some insidious plot to destroy the rich culture and heritage of Ms. Dancho's family. That is not what this is about.

To stir Canadians up into thinking that we are coming for the things that they hold dear is not right. What we are trying to do here is to take weapons that are used in wars and mass shootings to kill innocent people of all races and faiths.

We've sat quietly and listened to Mr. Motz wax poetic about how Minister Mendicino might have felt.

Let me tell you what I have heard from the victims of the mosque shooting and from other shootings like it. They felt that it was the responsibility of a government—Liberal, Conservative, New Democrat, Green, Bloc or otherwise—to protect them from the very tools that were used to murder them. That is what families of victims keep telling us. That is what our responsibility is, whether it is ghost guns, illegal guns at the border or many of the weapons on this list. Our job is to make sure we are protecting lives. Our job is to do our part—

Ms. Raquel Dancho: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair. I apologize for interrupting.

I do have a few logistical questions about committee that I need to ask before we wind up for today. I don't know how long Mr. Noormohamed's going to speak. I do have some legitimate technical questions about meeting times to ask you about.

The Chair: We are coming up to the end of our time. It is 1:25 p.m. We turn into pumpkins at 1:30.

I don't know, Mr. Noormohamed, if you're ready to pause there and maybe resume in our next meeting, or whether you want to carry on for a little bit longer.

● (1325)

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: I'm happy to pause and then continue at the beginning of the next meeting, if that is the will of the chair.

If there are logistical questions to be answered, then I'm happy to pause for those. I would, then, like to begin my time at the beginning of the next meeting.

The Chair: All right.

Ms. Dancho, let me just pre-empt, perhaps, what you have to say. The next couple of meetings will certainly be on this bill. They'll be in the regular timeslots at the regular time.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I apologize, Mr. Noormohamed, for interrupting.

I just want to address a few things, Mr. Chair. On Tuesday, and then today, there was additional time scheduled for these meetings. I recognize that we have those capabilities, and there certainly can be legitimate reasons for scheduling additional time.

As the vice-chair and the lead for the opposition on this committee, I would ask that you consistently reach out to me when you plan to schedule extra time. I do believe I deserve the dignity of being asked or at least made aware. I believe you mentioned it at the beginning today, although you did not do so on Tuesday, that if it's the will of the committee, then we can go over time. Again, I believe we should be making that formal and voting, if need be, to expand the time.

Mr. Chair, I know you've been the chair now just for a little bit.

I would appreciate that respect provided to me. If you're going to schedule extra time, then please check with me. I know that I can't veto your decision, but at the very least I would ask that you give me as much heads-up as possible. I'm not talking about the morning of or right before the notice goes out. I would like the dignity of being provided it as the vice-chair of this committee and the lead for the opposition.

I would ask that you provide me the respect of giving me a heads-up for that and ample discussion time. Then, if we have issues, we can vote on extending the time. If we don't, we can just carry on as we did today. I believe that is standard procedure.

I would just ask that you honour that, when it comes to me. I can't speak for the other vice-chairs, but perhaps they would like to be provided that respect as well.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Dancho, for your intervention.

Sometimes these things happen on very short notice. I know there are often delays in this place. For example on Tuesday, we were delayed by votes for half an hour. When time becomes available I'm inclined to take it. That time became available, actually, because I was in the process of trying to find time for the Russia study.

I take your points. I will try to do better going forward.

With that, we have two minutes left. I won't adjourn this meeting. I'll suspend it so that we can continue where we left off at the next meeting.

Mr. Noormohamed, you will have the floor at the beginning of the next meeting.

Is there any other business we need to hear?

An hon. member: No.

The Chair: The meeting is suspended.

[*The meeting was suspended at 1:28 p.m., Thursday, November 24*]

[*The meeting resumed at 3:52 p.m., Tuesday, November 29*]

● (13550)

The Chair: Good afternoon, everyone. I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to the continuation of meeting number 50 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 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 regarding firearms.

I will remind you all that our meeting last Thursday was suspended. This is why no new notice was published and distributed.

Mr. Noormohamed was speaking, and the next name on the speaking list was Mr. Shipley. Mr. Ruff has put up his hand to speak following Mr. Shipley. Madame Michaud is after that. Then it's Mr. Zimmer. Let me update my list here.

Before we go further, I will now welcome the officials who are, once again, with us today—I thank you, all, for hanging in there with us. They are available for technical questions regarding the bill.

From the Department of Justice, we have Marianne Breese, counsel, legal services, Public Safety Canada; Paula Clarke, counsel, criminal law policy section; and Phaedra Glushek, counsel, criminal law policy section. From the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, we have Rachel Mainville-Dale, acting director general, firearms policy.

Once again, thank you all for joining us today.

We shall resume clause-by-clause. We are undertaking the debate on amendment G-4.

Mr. Noormohamed, the floor is yours, please.

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

I'm getting the French translation through the English channel.

I don't know if anybody else is.

The Chair: Could we check that?

We'll suspend for a couple of minutes while we get that sorted.

• (13550) _____ (Pause) _____

• (13555)

The Chair: I believe that has been corrected.

Does anyone have a continuing issue with that? I think we're good.

Mr. Noormohamed, if you please, go ahead.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll continue where I left off last week. It feels like quite a long time ago.

I think a lot of us need to take a moment. We're all here, regardless of which political party we belong to, to do what we think is best to keep Canadians safe, to do what we think is best to get guns that are causing harm to people off our streets and guns that are causing pain and hardship to families out of homes without infringing on the rights of hunters. We want to make sure that indigenous communities have the right to hunt, as is, of course, their right.

I think we all took time this weekend to speak to our constituents, as I did. Many are very supportive of this, and many had legitimate questions based on some of the fearmongering that we heard from some members opposite last week.

I want to be very clear about something. We have a list that we have begun discussion of, and I think it's important for us to identify on that list which of those guns people are concerned about so that we can have meaningful conversation on those.

I want to begin by clarifying a few things with some questions to officials.

In the last meeting, Mr. Lloyd expressed grave concern about the Benelli M3. I'm wondering whether officials could let us know when, in fact, the Benelli M3 was listed as prohibited.

Any official who wants to take that question can.

Ms. Paula Clarke: I'm going off the top of my head. The Benelli M3 was prohibited, I believe, in the 1990s.

Just give me a second.

It's section 7 in schedule 1 of the existing regulations. These firearms were initially prohibited in the 1990s, but there is a list of firearms from the Benelli family that were excluded. That was done in the 1990s.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Just to confirm, this new amendment and this legislation are not being added net new. These were there in the nineties, just so we're clear.

Ms. Paula Clarke: There are new Benellis that are added in the schedule, if you look at, for example, clause 7, I think.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: But speaking specifically to the M3, which was raised the last time by Mr. Lloyd, that was a pre-existing listing. Is that correct?

Ms. Paula Clarke: Yes.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Okay. It would be incorrect, then, to say this was new.

Ms. Paula Clarke: The family itself is prohibited. There are new ones. There are new makes and models that are included in the schedule too.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Okay.

Ms. Paula Clarke: But as a family, they were initially prohibited in the 1990s.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Perfect. Thank you.

I would like to turn our attention to the Ruger 10/22. People have expressed concern that among the many weapons that people feel somehow might be caught in this.... Is the Ruger 10/22 on the list?

Ms. Paula Clarke: We're just trying to locate where it is on the list, whether or not there's a specific firearm included in the regulations. There are some 2,000 that are listed right now.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Perhaps I can save you the trouble. As far as my research is concerned, it's a rim-fire, so it's not going to be caught in the evergreen clause. My understanding is that it's not on the gap list since it's not a military-style firearm. I just want to make sure, when I say it's not on the list, that it's not on the list. If somebody could check, that would be great, but my understanding is that it's not.

There's been discussion that we are taking a blanket approach and coming after all of everybody's shotguns and all of everybody's hunting rifles. Do you think that's a fair characterization?

• (13600)

Ms. Paula Clarke: I appreciate that the list does include a significant number of firearms that may be used for hunting and sport shooting. However, with the 2,000 firearms that are being prohibited, there would still be, I think, roughly between 19,000 and 20,000 firearms that are non-restricted—

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: It would be 19,000 to 20,000 that are non-restricted. Is that correct?

Ms. Paula Clarke: That are non-restricted and that may be used for hunting and—

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: For clarity's sake, somebody who wanted to hunt would be able to use one of those somewhere between 19,000 and 20,000 choices. Is that correct?

Ms. Paula Clarke: Yes.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Okay. I just want to make sure, because we heard a lot this weekend, and we've heard a lot that we are coming after all hunting rifles and all shotguns. I just want to make sure we clear up any misinformation out there in that regard.

I just want to share a little bit of information, if I might, and I want you to verify it.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: We have Mr. Zimmer on a point of order.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: I just wanted to know. Is the member actually acknowledging that they are banning some hunting rifles?

The Chair: That's not a point of order.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I decided that I would look at the Cabela's catalogue, because I was struck when my colleague said that all hunting rifles and shotguns were being banned. So I thought it was my responsibility as a member of Parliament and a reasonable human being to go and verify if that's true. I looked at the Cabela's catalogue of guns that are available—some of which, by the way, are on sale right now—and I noticed that the Benelli Super Vinci X semi-automatic shotgun is not on the list of guns that are being banned.

Is that correct?

Ms. Paula Clarke: I'm sorry. You're asking me about a specific firearm. I'd have to come back to you with those answers.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: If I were to tell you that the RCMP had confirmed that it is not on the list, would you believe the RCMP?

Ms. Paula Clarke: Yes.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Okay. I can confirm that the RCMP has confirmed to me that the Benelli Super Vinci X semi-automatic is indeed not on the list.

We also note the Beretta Xtreme Plus semi-auto shotgun; the Stoeger M3500 semi-auto shotgun; the Beretta 1301 Tactical Gen2 semi-automatic shotgun; the Benelli Super Vinci X, which we talked about already; the Weatherby Element Tungsten Synthetic semi-automatic; the Browning Maxus Stalker shotgun; the Browning Silver Field semi-auto shotgun; the Weatherby Element Waterfowler Max-5 semi-automatic shotgun; the Stoeger M3020; the Charles Daly CA612 M4, and the list goes on.

Is it reasonable to assume that this list of weapons that are available at Cabela's, as an example, would be some of those 19,000 to 20,000 that would be available to those who want to continue hunting?

Ms. Paula Clarke: I can't speak to any specific make and model.

I can answer questions for you with respect to the schedule and what's on the schedule. Whether or not it's reasonable to assume they are not captured.... That's a technical determination that could be made by the RCMP and the Canadian firearms program.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Right.

If the RCMP and others are coming back.... If these guns are not on the list—

Mr. Bob Zimmer: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The firearm that is being referred to by the member is actually on page 98—the Benelli Super Vinci—under the prohibited firearms list.

The Chair: That's a point of debate. You can raise that in debate.

Carry on.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: I want to speak about the accuracy of what the member is saying.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: We can debate that.

I received my information from the RCMP, Mr. Chair. If the RCMP is telling me that the Benelli Super Vinci X semi-auto shotgun is 100% good, I don't know what else to say on that matter.

The Chair: Thanks.

Carry on with your remarks, please.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: There was some concern about the Ruger No. 1 single-shot being on the list. I think it's important to note that this single-shot is on the high-energy list but is prohibited only in circumstances where it's been chambered for a cartridge capable of generating 10,000 joules of muzzle energy. If it's chambered for a standard calibre, a standard-calibre rifle is not restricted.

I decided I would speak to one of my friends who is a hunter. I ask what would happen if you were to hunt a moose or a deer using this—which is, effectively, a long-range sniper rifle—if you were to take a shot at a deer or a moose. I asked what would actually happen to that deer or moose if you were to use something that generated 10,000 joules of muzzle energy. The response was that there wouldn't be very much deer or moose left. I fail to see why that would be needed for hunters for the purpose of hunting, other than if one wanted to obliterate an animal.

It's important to note that other versions that do not generate 10,000 joules are not banned.

I just want us to be very clear about what, in fact, is banned and what, in fact, is not. There are weapons that were banned in the United States in the 1990s that are on this list finally being banned. There are items that were on this list from the 1990s that a decade of Conservative governments saw fit not to reverse. There must have been a reason for that.

I want to go back to the principle here. If there is a list that we are all working from—which there is—what would be extremely helpful, Mr. Chair, is for the opposition to acknowledge that there are weapons on this list that should be banned. If they are concerned, then let's talk about those that are concerns, and let's understand why. That's why we have the officials here. Let's go through that in detail.

However, we were subjected to the gun lobby, the Canadian Coalition for Firearm Rights, making a statement today that says, "If you think they are not coming after ALL of your shotguns or [rifles and] they're not going to come after your bolt-actions, you're wrong.... If you think you will be left with anything, when the Liberal, the NDP and the Bloc are done with you, you're wrong. THEY WILL LEAVE YOU WITH NOTHING."

I think it's really important for us, all of us here, to clarify that misinformation. At no point does a list that allows 19,000 to 20,000 guns that could be used for hunting, as the officials said today.... That should give us no reason to believe we are "coming after all of your shotguns". We have gone through a list of what is available on the open market today that will continue to be available.

There will be those who will say that those should be banned. It's their right to say that, but that's not what we're doing. I think it's important for us to take the step to understand that on this list, indeed, are weapons that should be banned because they have been responsible for taking life, for killing human beings. However, there are a lot on here that are not. Fearmongering and trying to vilify is not the answer. Nobody is trying to vilify hunters.

I know Ms. Dancho feels this is funny, but it's actually not. It's really important. Trying to vilify hunters is not what anybody is trying to do. What we are trying to do is make sure that there is a comprehensive list of weapons that should be taken off our streets. Because this is a process in committee where we have the right to debate amendments, if there are items on this list that the Conservatives feel strongly about, there is a process. There is a group of people here who are looking to work together to ask what should be taken off this list. Let's have a good discussion about it. Let's all, among parties, agree. Let's move forward.

To get in front of cameras and say that we are coming after every single hunter, that we're coming after every shotgun and every rifle in this country, is both incorrect and inaccurate. All it really does, frankly, is stir up unnecessary conflict where that's not necessary.

We've gone through a number of guns that we know are going to continue to be available. The officials have told us that there are close to 20,000 options available to folks. We know that there are guns that are on this list that have been banned in the United States in decades past that we are now getting to. We also know that there are many that were referred to in committee by others that have been on this list for many, many years and that are not new.

• (13605)

I would encourage us to go back to what this committee has done so well in the past, which is to find where we agree and disagree based on fact. Let's go through this list together. If there are areas of debate, let's debate those, but let's not make blanket statements that we are coming after every single shotgun and every single rifle, that we are trying to take away people's right to hunt and that we are taking away indigenous communities' right to hunt. That's not what this is about.

Mr. Chair, I just want to be on the record saying that, as we continue debate today.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Noormohamed.

We go now to Mr. Shipley.

Go ahead, please.

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

Thank you to Mr. Noormohamed for those leading remarks.

I can commit to him and promise him there will be no fearmongering from me today. There will be no vilifying.

Believe it or not, most things I'm going to say today aren't even going to be my words. I have a lot of words from other people because, as I have said here many times, I am not a hunter, I am not a

firearms owner, and I don't know a lot about firearms. I've learned a lot more over the last while.

Getting back to his words a little bit, if I may, this weekend I received in our office over 2,500 emails. That's a lot of emails. Thankfully we have good staff to go through a bunch of them. I'll be referring to a bunch of them here today, which I'm sure you'll enjoy hearing, Mr. Noormohamed.

The fact is, I think what has people concerned is that this was originally... We had some great witnesses in here, and we were talking about Bill C-21. It was all about handguns. Then it came here, and it turned into an issue of long guns or, more precisely, a lot of hunting rifles, a lot of firearms.

As I said, it's not going to affect me. I don't own a gun. I don't have even the slight inclination to want to have one. I don't hunt, but a lot of my friends do. A tremendous number of people in Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte do own hunting firearms and do hunt.

I have a split riding, where Barrie is obviously a very urban area, and Springwater—Oro-Medonte is very rural. It's all farms, quite frankly, a beautiful area. Come up and visit us sometime, Mr. Noormohamed. We'll show you a nice area.

A lot of them do hunt. A lot of them also own firearms for the protection of their livestock. I have heard a lot from them, more so than I even thought we were going to hear, but it has resonated, and this has concerned many residents.

One thing that was mentioned by you is that you're not banning all firearms. I don't think we've ever said that you're banning all long guns, but you're banning perhaps all the long guns that someone owns. Are you saying, "It's okay. Right now you own those two or three or four hunting rifles. You can't own those anymore. Give them up. Go to the store"? As you said, some of them are on sale. Some of the people right now are struggling. Some of the people feed their families with hunting. Are you saying, "Get rid of those ones you have now and go buy some more firearms because they're on sale"?

I don't think that's fair, and I don't think it's going to do anything for crime that's going on. That's really what we're talking about here—crime. No one wants to see anybody getting hurt, especially with a firearm.

I have done a little bit of research. Actually, I didn't do it. I am going to give some credit to my great staff, my new staff especially. She deserves a round of applause. She has gone through and found a lot of quotes from a lot of members of your party, Mr. Noormohamed, who have discussed what this bill is supposed to be about. I am going to read a few of these now, and I'm sure we'll all enjoy these, so I'll take a drink, and we'll sit back and have some fun.

The first few are from Minister Mendicino:

I spoke directly with municipal leaders and mayors, who represent rural Canada. And it is important we come up with gun policy that does reflect the varying experiences of Canadians from coast to coast to coast. I've had some conversations with hunters and recreational sport shooters, who indicate as you did that they use long rifles to keep some of the wildlife away from their properties.

I quote Mr. Mendicino again, at our own committee:

We're listening very carefully to indigenous leaders to make sure that for those who hunt as part of their tradition or who hunt to eat, this bill will be consistent with those principles of reconciliation. I assure you that those conversations are ongoing.

All those were discussed before all these long rifles and hunting rifles were put into place.

I have some quotes here from Mr. Scarpaleggia from when we were debating it in Parliament:

Mr. Speaker, I left off by acknowledging that I recognize the cultural value of hunting in many communities and for many Canadians. Having visited a community during moose hunting season in particular, I understand and have seen first-hand the value that local citizens attach to that time of year.

I also understand the sentimental value, if we want to call it that, attached to certain heirloom firearms. I believe it was the member for Kildonan—St. Paul who had, at one point in her speech, talked about a rifle, a shotgun, that had been handed down from generation to generation in her family. In a sense, it represented the efforts of the family, going way back, to carve out a living in a harsh environment in Manitoba.

• (13610)

When I hear it like that, maybe I do want to take up hunting. That sounds nice, doesn't it, Mr. Chair?

It continues:

I understand the sentimental value of that heirloom firearm, but what I do not understand is the sentimental value of, for example, a Saturday night special or an AK-47. The rifle the member for Kildonan—St. Paul was talking about was used to carve out a space in the wilderness, I presume, but some of these weapons are used to carve up neighbourhoods through gun violence.

This bill is not about the cultural value of hunting. It is not about persecuting duck hunters or deer hunters, who do not use handguns to hunt their prey, in any event.

I would like to know if they still feel the same after this amendment—if it isn't going after hunters and prey.

During second reading, Mr. Gerretsen, on June 22, says:

As I said, all those in my family and extended family who I know have hunted for generations, have never once, during our own individual discussions about this issue around the dinner table, talked about the need for a handgun. Yes, there are concerns from time to time about weapons, and in particular those used for hunting. I can respect that, but I just do not think handguns fall into that category, nor has any hunter I have ever spoken with agreed with that sentiment.

Ms. Sgro, on June 21, says:

This is certainly not about hunters, God bless them, who can go right ahead and do their hunting. I have family who hunt deer, moose, and all of that, as well. That is not what we are talking about with this bill. We are talking about gun violence, handguns. That is what is doing the killing in my riding and throughout the city of Toronto.

Again, all those quotes were before the amendment. We'll get in some quotes regarding the amendment after this.

Mr. Gerretsen, again, on June 22, says:

I guess it really comes down to what they determine to be an impact on somebody. Would it have an impact to tell people that we do not think it is appropriate to be carrying a firearm? If that negatively impacts them because they have a passion for doing that, then I guess it would impact them. However, I do not think it would impact those who are using a firearm for the purpose of hunting, in particular, which is the example I have been using.

Mr. Turnbull, on June 20, says:

Bill C-21 is targeting handguns, not firearms used for hunting or sport shooting. However, as the Prime Minister has said, there is no reason other than these activities that the general public should need guns in their everyday lives...

Firearms owners can rest assured that, as always, we will consult with Canadians before finalizing and implementing regulations.

Mr. Fragiskatos, on June 9, says, "Hunting, as I said before, is a fundamental Canadian tradition. I do not dispute that at all. I have hunted."

Again, Mr. Fragiskatos, on June 9, says:

Canadians who have a registered handgun, for target shooting, for example, could still use it. I emphasize that. I also emphasize that hunters are not the focus. Hunting is a Canadian tradition. People practice it, particularly in rural communities, but I have a number of constituents in my community of London, an urban area, who hunt...

In case there is any confusion, and I know that if there is confusion...let me just reassure Conservative colleagues that Bill C-21 is not about hunters.

Patty Hajdu, on June 9, says:

Madam Speaker, our government has been very clear that this is legislation that does not target hunters and sport shooters. In fact, in my own riding, I have a community of both hunters and sport shooters that are thriving and that are honoured by many of their neighbours, friends and colleagues.

This is about creating safer communities for all Canadians. Sport shooters can rest assured that we would not eliminate sport shooting nor prohibit new sport shooting enthusiasts from using business-owned handguns. In my riding, hunting has a long tradition amongst many families. The hunters I know do not use handguns to shoot a deer. Today's announcement will not affect hunters and farmers.

Well, I think the new announcement and the amendment definitely will.

Once again, Ms. Hajdu, on June 9, says:

In my riding of Thunder Bay—Superior North many people own firearms for hunting and sport shooting. The proposed legislation that was introduced last week would not restrict guns used for these purposes.

As we all know now, it does.

On June 1, MP Irek Kusmierczyk said to the Windsor Star, "We are not seeking to prevent hunting or law-abiding sportsmen".

Those are all quotes that were taken before the amendment—before this came out. I'm sure some of those would have changed now, because if I have received 2,500 emails over the weekend, I will guarantee you that some of those rural ridings especially have received many. I know the riding of my colleague beside me is very rural, northern Ontario. I'm sure he has received many. Mr. Noor-mohamed says he has received them too.

Something has changed, and I think it's the amendment we are all here to talk about.

● (13615)

I received, as I said, a lot of emails from hunters. I'm going to read some of their emails because I don't hunt, and I don't own a gun. I'm not here to vilify. I'm not here to fearmonger. I'm here to do my job, which is to speak for our residents and to speak for Canadians.

I received this, and I'll say the first name. This is Steve's email: "Yesterday, the Liberals tabled an amendment to C-21 that would prohibit hundreds of thousands of common hunting rifles that have detachable magazines. The rifle that just a week ago I used to shoot a deer will now be the subject of a forced confiscation scheme. I just want to touch base with you about how ludicrous this is, nothing more than a punitive move against lawful owners and hunters, also a complete joke in the law enforcement community, as was the handgun freeze. The federal government has now frozen more than \$35,000 of my lawfully owned assets. I can no longer use my now prohibited rifles, and my handgun collection is now worthless. If this amendment passes, that amount only increases. Thank you."

That's one. I have another, from Andre:

I'm writing to you today as a Canadian, firearm owner, and hunter, as I am extremely concerned about the last-minute amendment the government is seeking to Bill C-21; the handgun freeze.

The amendment in the proposed bill that the Liberal government is trying to pass will ban all commercially available semi-automatic rifles and many semi-automatic shotguns, as well as currently owned and used firearms used by Canadian hunters and sport shooters.

As a hunter I want to explain the importance of this style of firearm for hunting in Canada. Semi automatic firearms including shotguns and rifles, are especially important for accessibility of those with disabilities in Canada who currently or intend to participate in hunting. These firearms are especially useful for hunters (including those with disabilities) because they allow for easier second shots if the animal is wounded, and their actions also reduce recoil significantly, which makes them especially useful when a larger, heavier-recoiling calibre is required. This is important when hunting big, or dangerous game—of which, Canada is home to. Additionally they are also easier to operate for those with disabilities and thus, safer.

Another important consideration to note is that there are millions of currently non-restricted individual firearms that meet the proposed definition of a prohibited firearm based on this amendment, and likely over a million licensed gun owners in possession of a firearm that would be prohibited by this legislation. Over a million people will see their property rendered worthless, unable to be inherited or passed down to remind future generations of past traditions; their owners having done nothing more heinous than passing the RCMP-mandated training and testing to obtain a gun license and purchasing a firearm legally.

This new proposed bill unjustly targets hunters who are made up of law abiding citizens from various walks of life including the First Nations (Indigenous) who have long participated in the lifestyle of hunting. Many of these individuals and families rely on hunting to sustain their food supply, and heading into a global recession is only going to put undue stress on these Canadians.

Bill C-21 is clearly wrong and should be stopped, even if only so as to allow proper debate through the proper democratic process. So please examine Bill C-21, the amendments being sought by the government, and please consider myself and the thousands of other constituents this legislation unfairly impacts and oppose these changes.

I look forward to hearing a response and having a discussion on this matter.

Well, he got more than a response. He got his letter read into the record, so that's nice.

We have another one here from Gordon:

I am not feeling very well today because my country, Canada will be calling me a criminal because of the firearm that I own. I have been a hunter before 1980. I was gifted the firearm in 2007 and our Uncle relived all the stories of the Moose

and Deer harvested with it. I have taken Deer with it and my son has used it with me sighting it in and always referred to the firearm as the "Heritage Gun". But my government wants our History to stop. My government does not want him to pass it along to his Son and Daughter. Why does our government feel this 42 year old firearm and other large bore bolt action rifles that my fellow hunters use are a threat to society?

Do you have heirlooms to pass along to family members? A side table, a chair, a picture or a tea pot. Well when they get destroyed or taken from you their history is gone. Even if replaced with another the history can not be replaced, as the new one was not held in the hands of your ancestors.

If we go away for a vacation, will an American style SWAT TEAM show up at our home or will the RCMP break into our home like they did in High River Alberta. The magnitude of this amendment and its late introduction at such a late stage lacks transparency and seems under handed. Does someone have a vendetta against firearms or firearm owners? Because there is no opportunity for individuals or groups to submit evidence about the amendments.

To the Senators, the chamber of 2nd thought. Consider what they just want you to rubber stamp. Please confer with your colleagues and consider the ramifications of this law, how it was crafted and the impact on the families of all involved.

● (13620)

I won't read all 2,500. In case you want me to, Mr. Noormohamed, I have a few more, but not 2,500; I promise.

This one's from Corey:

As a long standing hunter I am concerned about these changes to Bill C-21. I learned to hunt as a teenager and enjoy time in the outdoors with family and friends who hunt. We all have shotguns that are maintained and stored properly. None are automatic or have magazines that store more shells than what migratory bird or other hunting regulations allow. We eat what we harvest. However, the direction of gun restrictions in Canada is going down a path that will soon impact the average safe hunter. Please do not allow this to happen. I would not want this part of our heritage of Canada to be destroyed.

Moreover the potential impact of adding hundreds of models adds significant cost to the proposed buyback program already in place for more restricted firearms.

This Bill impacts many hunters, as many of these firearms are used by hunters across the country.

Finally where is the transparency—there is no opportunity for individuals or groups to submit concern for or evidence about the amendments.

There's another one from Zachary:

My name is Zachary Peck, I am a 22-year-old wildlife biologist and a lifelong hunter. I have been hunting since I was 13 years old and it has been a long-standing yearly tradition that I have taken part in with 3 generations of my family and hopefully more to come, as well I have met some of my best friends through the sport. Since I started hunting I have also come to supplement my diet with purely game meat that I harvest. So naturally, you can see my concern when I read about the amendments to bill C-21 which included several firearms used for lawful hunting every year in our country. Further, this bill was originally put forth as an action against handgun violence and was said to have no effect on hunting or firearms used for hunting. These amendments show an extreme lack of transparency on behalf of the government and have shown that this bill is a means to an end for legal firearm owners, sportsmen, sportswomen, and other outdoor enthusiasts alike. I urge you to oppose this bill as it would be detrimental not only to me and my lifestyle but would have deleterious effects on Legal Law-abiding gun owners across this country.

This one's from Cindy:

I write to you today in response to the egregious introduction of the recent amendment to Bill C21, and its subsequent impact on the country, provinces, communities, individuals and my family. From the beginning the whole Bill C21 has been a disastrous piece of legislation that will do nothing to stop actual gun crimes, which has already been proven by the continuing amount of handgun crimes currently happening after the handgun freeze came into effect. And now, you have decided, on a whim, to add in the property that my family and I have worked extremely hard for, have procured the proper certifications for, take great care and respect for, and most importantly use it as a tool to educate ourselves about many aspects of life. We have a strong relationship with the history of Canada, our Heritage and our environment due to our relationship with our property. And now, the government wants to forcibly take this from myself and my family? With no opportunities for individuals or groups to submit evidence about the amendments? What kind of Transparency is this? The introduction of an amendment of this magnitude at such a late stage reeks of deceitfulness. Although, based on the track record of this government, I am not surprised.

I would also ask if anyone within this government has questioned what kind of impact this Bill will have? What is the impact to law enforcement who will be diverted from actual crime, to confiscating law abiding citizens property? What is the added cost of these buybacks? I am sure you will have zero people who will hand over hard earned property for free. What about the economic impacts? Gun Ranges? Outfitters? Hunting Stores? Gun Shops? What are you planning to do with all the people you force out of work with this Bill?

Why are you potentially putting law abiding citizens who have never been on the wrong side of the law into a position where they have to give up their passions? Their life's work?

I expect these questions to be answered for such a strong piece of legislation to even be considered, with the vast amount of lives and livelihoods this will affect.

Thank you in advance for your efforts in putting together answers to my questions above for such a serious matter.

Sincerely,

Cindy.

I have one more:

- (13625)

My name is Cade.... I am 16 years old and a third generation hunter. I would first like to thank you for reading my message, it means a lot. Now that you know who I am, I'd like to explain why I'm writing to you. I am a third generation hunter from Ontario and like many Ontarians, hunting and shooting is a very important part of my life. Bill c-21 would completely put a stop to hunting and sports shooting with their illogical and senseless laws being proposed, that will prohibit ownership of semi auto shotguns and rifles with detachable magazines. Most if not all responsible gun owners here in Canada and around the world own semi automatic rifles with detachable magazines. With bill c-21, these hunting and big game sporting rifles will be illegal (as stated before) and will not only upset Canadian firearms owners but will cause poverty stricken gun owners to give up hunting completely due to not having money for a new rifle/shotgun. These laws are discriminatory not only to the poor gun owners of Canada, but to the rest of the owners. Imagine, if you will, a world where you spend a substantial amount of money, an amount that you had to save up for years, for a new car only for it to be taken away because of someone who stole a car which happened to be the same make and model and went on a rampage with it. That's how we felt when we heard the news of this new bill being proposed. Due to the system's

own shortcomings, criminals running loose with illegal firearms, either stolen from the United States or Canadian homes, we will lose our hobby, source of food, source of employment, source of joy, our sense of community and way of life in Northern Ontario.

Statistically, this bill will not stop shootings, In fact, they will most likely increase. The stats show that murderous shootings happen more with illegal firearms than legal ones. Firearms and handguns that are already prohibited, like the Glock 42 which could fit in one's pocket, and restricted in Canada are smuggled into our Country. To put a stop to firearm related death we must drop this bill and instead put our resources into tighter border security and much stricter sentencing for firearms related crime instead of loosening the sentencing times....

In 2021, we had 297 deaths due to gun violence. The year prior, 2020, Trudeau banned over 1500 firearms due to the Nova Scotia massacre which claimed 22 lives. I think it's important to note in 2020 we had 278 deaths from firearm related incidents. So even though he banned over 1500 firearms, we had an increase of almost 20 deaths due to firearms. If that bill did nothing to stop criminals from committing these terrible crimes, why would this new bill work?

Being from a family of hunters the ban would affect my family, community and myself more than anyone since the Bill will be banning semi auto external magazine fed rifles and shotguns and some single shot rifles. When hunting for game we are taught to make a clean shot to decrease pain and eliminate suffering for the animal. At times a clean shot is not made, but with a semi automatic the hunter can get off another round quickly to alleviate their suffering. With the banning of these types of guns, the time it would take to reload the gun, the game could have fled. If you have ever been hunting you know a fleeing wounded animal is very dangerous not only for the hunter but other people in the area and other game. I feel a fleeing wounded animal poses more of a safety risk than the guns being banned in the Bill c-21.

Thank you for your time and please support us 642,000 Ontarian hunters in this fight for our firearm rights.

It's signed "Cade".

As I said, that's just a little snippet of the emails we've received. Everybody's nodding their head. I'm sure everyone around this table received as many as I did over the weekend, or more. As I said, we received 2,500, and that was over the weekend. I'm sure it's more now. We're hearing from regular Canadians. Again, we're hearing from people who use these hunting rifles to feed their families, to support their lifestyle.

The heirloom thing, I didn't know much about that. I'm understanding that now. As I said, not being a firearms owner, I didn't understand it all. I'm beginning to understand it a lot. These are real people. These are messages from Canadians. I think, around this table, this is what we need to think about more often. This is what we need to hear.

I'll leave it there for now, and I'll allow my colleagues to carry on.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

- (13630)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Shipley.

We go now to Mr. Ruff, then Mr. Melillo, and Madame Michaud after that.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to clarify. Mr. Zimmer made the comment in that there was misleading information provided to the committee. I just want to be very clear. If he were to refer to page 7 and page 75, the weapon that he spoke to, saying it was banned, is specifically exempted. I would encourage him to check the record, correct the record and indicate it as such so that we can move forward.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Noormohamed. I believe that is debate and not a point of order, but thank you for the intervention.

We go now to Mr. Ruff.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Thanks, Chair.

Thanks for allowing me to participate today in this important discussion. It really should be centred around public safety and making Canada a safer place versus, in my opinion, measures and in particular the amendment that has been table-dropped at the last moment for Bill C-21. It was focused on a handgun freeze but has now turned into a bill focused on arguably the most law-abiding demographic in Canada.

In fact, the statistics show that firearms owners are three times less likely to commit a crime than the average Canadian. In particular, I am here to defend people from my riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound. This is a huge issue in my neck of the woods. My own brothers and friends of mine, not many of whom, as far as I know, have had a speeding ticket in their life, harvested three deer during hunting season, just a few weeks ago. Every single one of them will be impacted by this ban because they all own hunting rifles that are semi-automatic with detachable magazines.

I'm here speaking not just on their behalf but also on behalf of the constituents of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound. I've had so many law enforcement officers reach out to me and critique this bill. The fact is, they do not believe that anything within Bill C-21, especially with the amendment, is going to actually reduce gun crime and gun violence in this country. It's focused on the wrong aspects.

I'm also hearing from veterans and even current members of the Canadian Armed Forces who feel the same way. I would challenge every member, as I have done in previous interjections, to talk to some of the PPS workers who protect us so well and keep us secure here in Parliament. They feel the same way, so this isn't just me.

I will offer a point of appreciation. I think we need to have a discussion around proper definitions and around the classification of firearms. For decades, the gun community has been calling for a complete review, a proper review with all proper consultation.

We heard Minister Mendicino speak during a media scrum just a couple of days ago, and he said he's been consulting with everybody. I'm going to get to that, because to me we should be basing every discussion and every decision around firearms in this country

on data and evidence, not political science. It has to be based on the facts.

There is something else I'd like to point out. My predecessor, the Honourable Larry Miller, former member of Parliament for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound for 15 years, actually tried to solve some of this. In the 42nd Parliament, he introduced Bill C-230, an act to amend the Criminal Code (firearm—definition of variant), to try to get some clarity around this. Unfortunately, it did not get past second reading. With the exception of one Liberal MP, the Liberals, the NDP and the Bloc all voted it down. It didn't even get a chance to be studied at committee and get through. Again, for decades we've been calling for the proper classification of firearms, so we're going to get into that here, right now.

I've been asking questions literally since a few months after being elected in 2019, at that time to then minister Blair and since then to Minister Mendicino. I have submitted written questions to try to get some clarity on the data, especially around the clause that speaks about military-style assault rifles.

For the record—and I think everybody in this room knows—I spent 25 and a half years in the Canadian Armed Forces as an infantry officer. I have carried fully automatic firearms and handguns pretty much my whole career. I slept with a fully automatic firearm as a pillow—fully loaded with a 30-round magazine on it and a round up the spout—in Afghanistan, and the gun never went off. Guns do not kill people. People kill people, not the firearms themselves.

I have a question for the officials here. I asked a question shortly after the OIC came out—which is what this amendment is now adding to legislation—on the firearms that were banned, the over 1,500 models. At that time, I asked specifically what the formal technical definition of an assault-style firearm was and when the government had first used it.

• (13635)

They referred to—and I just want to verify this—the consultation process and the report that was provided to the government. Was that the Hill+Knowlton Strategies report “Reducing Violent Crime: A Dialogue on Handguns and Assault-Style Firearms”? Is that the report being referred to?

Ms. Rachel Mainville-Dale: Thank you for the question. The consultation report is available on Public Safety's website, and if you prefer, we can send a link to the clerk.

Mr. Alex Ruff: Is that a different report from this one?

Ms. Rachel Mainville-Dale: I'm sorry, but I don't know the title of the report offhand.

Mr. Alex Ruff: That's all right.

Anyway, that's the report Public Safety and the parliamentary secretary at the time, Joël Lightbound, signed off on, and it referred to the government choosing to use that principle. I just wanted to share that with the committee.

I'm sure everybody who's been studying this has gone through some of it, but there was actually a fairly significant and detailed consultation process. I'm going to cover a bit of the executive summary and some of the key themes that were received based on the submissions from a number of Canadians right across the base. In fact, there were over 1,200 written submissions. That's a lot of information and a lot of data and evidence that we should be taking into consideration. Also, they did an online questionnaire, and over 134,000 Canadians participated and provided data.

Here are the key themes that came out of those written submissions. Rightly so, there was a mixed reaction to the potential of banning or limiting access to firearms. However, there was broad consensus about the need to collect relevant data on crime involving firearms, to address the risk factors underlying firearms violence, to focus on the illicit firearms trafficking, to enhance enforcement capacity, to consult with the firearms community and industry, to provide more mental health supports and screening, to provide more education—

• (13640)

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: Mr. Chair, on a point of order, has this report been submitted to the committee or are we just reading off any old article we want to read off?

The Chair: It's his debate. He can read basically whatever he likes.

Mr. Alex Ruff: I'm more than willing to table this if it's not already before the committee, Chair. I can do that after the fact. I can even leave the printed hard copy here for the clerks.

I'll continue.

There was also broad consensus to provide more education on safe and secure storage, to address the impact of gun violence on women and to provide clarity—

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, is evidence on this not closed? Is it acceptable for the member to table a report in clause-by-clause?

The Chair: We're past that stage. However, the member may use the information he wants. As long as he stays pertinent to the amendment at hand—

Mr. Alex Ruff: That's what I'm talking about, Chair, and again, I'm not too worried. It was Mr. Van Bynen who was asking about the report. If you don't want me to give it to the committee or if that's somehow against the rules, I'm more than willing to email it to every single member of the committee so they can read it for their own viewing pleasure.

I want to continue on here, in particular about some of the key things on the relevant data and the classifications, because one of my questions to the minister, back when I asked about the definition, was where this was defined. That points to this report. If you read the report, it states quite clearly that the government really needs to define this. Now here we are, two and a half years later,

bringing forth a definition at the last minute with no feedback or consultation. In fact, we're doing it here at a clause-by-clause review versus by hearing evidence and testimony from all the relevant stakeholders.

Again—

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, the member made a statement in respect of consultation. Did we not hear from the firearms lobby? Did we not hear from the police? Did we not hear from victims?

I just want to be clear that we are all being honest about information that's been provided.

The Chair: I believe that's debate, not a point of order.

Mr. Alex Ruff: I guess as a rebuttal there, I believe we likely did hear from them in reference to the original Bill C-21, which was about a handgun freeze, not about this amendment.

The government has now tabled an amendment that would significantly change the scope of the bill. That was debated in the first committee meeting. I don't want to get into a debate about the scope, but my point is that it's relevant information about the fact that the government has now introduced, through a table-drop amendment, a fundamental change to what the bill is about, and we haven't had the appropriate consultation on that.

Regardless, let's go—

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, were these amendments not submitted in accordance with process? Did we not meet the guidelines and requirements for these amendments?

The Chair: All amendments were in fact submitted appropriately.

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: So it's not just a table-drop amendment, as is being referred to.

The Chair: Again, that sounds like debate, so we'll carry on.

• (13645)

Mr. Alex Ruff: Thanks, Chair.

I'll get back to some of the unsolicited submissions that went into this report. Of the submissions that were received through this public consultation to the government, 64.84% opposed any further limitations on firearms.

Let's get into the online questionnaire portion of it. As I said, over 130,000 Canadians provided feedback, roughly just over half of whom did not own a firearm. Fewer than half indicated that they owned a firearm.

Let's see what they said about whether more should be done to limit access to handguns. Of the total submissions, 81% said no. That was specifically on handguns.

Here is a very misleading question, I would argue, and we got this from testimony when I was at this committee a little while back and was able to ask a question of one of the lawyers: “Should more be done to limit access to assault weapons?” Again, it’s a very badly worded question. Assault weapons, as we know, are not properly defined in a legal sense. They are defined in a technical sense. An assault weapon is a firearm that is select-fire capable and fully automatic.

Should more be done to limit access to that? Again, of 130,000-some Canadians, 77% said no. That is the response.

This is the data the government itself got on the need to reduce gun violence.

What are some positive measures that can be taken? When asked, “With respect to limiting handguns, assault weapons, and other firearms in the illicit market, in which of the following areas do you think efforts should be focused?”, 86% of respondents said smuggling. I agree 100%: Let’s go after illegal firearms and the illegal trafficking of those firearms.

There’s more in there. I’m not going to waste more time by going through this report, but this is the data and consultation the government refers to that was done to gather their evidence.

The other thing that was referred to was the public consultations. I’ll give Mr. Blair credit: He showed up in my riding before I was even elected. As I was in the midst of transitioning out of the military and joining this illustrious place—if that’s what we call it—I attended a public consultation in my riding in the town of Durham. I can say quite honestly that not a single person who interjected in that two-hour-plus round table had anything positive to say about anything the government was discussing or proposing. Mr. Blair took it fully on the chin for a couple of hours, and I give him credit for at least showing up.

Let’s get back to the prohibition, because that’s where some of the definition goes and where specifically these amendments were listed.

I asked a question of the government as part of an OPQ that I submitted, and one of the aspects of it was how the list was determined—under what sort of functionality or capabilities. My understanding of the answer I received at the time was that characteristics and functionality were not used to come up with that list. There were three key principles.

Is it a fair assumption to say that this was about principles, not the actual functionality or capability of the firearms.

Ms. Paula Clarke: For the OIC of May 1, 2020, the criteria set out in the regulatory impact analysis statement said there were three aspects considered in establishing the list. The first was that the firearm must be “semi-automatic” with “sustained rapid-fire capability”. That was meant to include tactical military- designed firearms with large magazine capacity.

Mr. Alex Ruff: Let’s pause on the first one, because that’s exactly what I want to address.

Is a high sustained rate of fire for a semi-automatic not somewhat of a contradictory statement considering that the rate of fire of a semi-automatic is controlled by the shooter and how fast they can

pull the trigger? If it’s a fully automatic, 100% you pull the trigger and rounds go off as fast as the firearm can cycle, recoil and put the next round down range. However, a semi-automatic’s rate of fire is completely controlled by the shooter and has nothing to do with the firearm, unless you want to get into the technical aspects of trigger pressure and so on, which are not even part of this discussion.

Ms. Paula Clarke: I think your question is an important one, and I hope I don’t come across as dismissing it, but these were the parameters set out in the regulatory impact analysis statement. These were the principles used to guide the determination of what was listed in the order in council.

The technical aspects of each firearm were examined by the Canadian firearms program. When we get down into a granular discussion, it probably would be helpful for the committee to have representatives from the Canadian firearms program here to answer questions about specific firearms and more technical questions as well.

• (13650)

Mr. Alex Ruff: I couldn’t agree more.

The first principle you identified was large magazine capacity. I just want to make sure this is on the record and that everybody here in the committee understands it: Magazines for long guns of greater than five rounds have been illegal in Canada since 1992.

Do I have the date right?

Ms. Paula Clarke: Yes, you do.

Mr. Alex Ruff: Good.

What is the second principle?

Ms. Paula Clarke: The second one is that it has to be “of modern design”.

Mr. Alex Ruff: Can you please explain for the committee what modern design is?

Ms. Paula Clarke: It’s post-World War II.

Mr. Alex Ruff: As long as the firearm is 70-plus years old or newer, we should ban it. That’s basically one of the principles used to come up with the list.

Ms. Paula Clarke: That’s right, but there are three criteria, and all three criteria had to be met in order for it to be included on the list.

Mr. Alex Ruff: That’s perfect.

What’s the third one?

Ms. Paula Clarke: It has to have a large or significant presence in the market.

Mr. Alex Ruff: It has to be “present in large volumes in the Canadian market”.

Ms. Paula Clarke: That’s right.

Mr. Alex Ruff: I'll ask a logical question here. It may be a little rhetorical. Let's say there are 100,000 of firearm X—one of the firearms listed here. It has been used in zero gun crimes in Canada, but it meets the other two principles. It's now being banned and added to this list, or it has potentially been put on this list. Is that correct?

Ms. Paula Clarke: The list is determined by these three criteria. Whether or not a specific firearm has been used to commit an offence is not one of the criteria.

Mr. Alex Ruff: Got it. It could be on the list, with 100,000 of them in Canada. It has never been used in a gun crime, but it meets these three principles. I don't want to use the word “criteria”, because to my understanding, that's never used in here at all. It's three “principles”.

In a separate situation, we could have firearm Z. There are only 10 of them in Canada. All 10 of them have been used in gun crimes in Canada. There's no guarantee that they're going to be on the list, even though they might have been responsible for killing lots of people. Is that correct?

Ms. Paula Clarke: As I indicated, the list for the May 1 OIC was based on the technical capacity of the firearms to discharge ammunition in a sustained way. Whether or not a specific firearm is used to commit offences was not a criterion for establishing the list.

Mr. Alex Ruff: Another thing the government has said, which has been brought here in testimony, is that these firearms were designed by soldiers for use by soldiers. One of the questions I asked the minister previously was about the list. We're almost, I would argue, at over 2,000 different models and variants if we include the order in council of May 1 and the new list we're debating now, which has been included in this amendment.

How many of the firearms that are listed—there are over 2,000 of them—are currently used or were ever used in the past by the Canadian Armed Forces?

Ms. Paula Clarke: I don't have that information. This information could perhaps be provided to you by the Canadian firearms program. I would invite you to submit that question—

Mr. Alex Ruff: Well, I asked the minister that question a year and a bit ago. Unfortunately, he didn't determine that it was worth answering.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Van Bynen.

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I thought the witnesses were here to answer technical questions, not to speculate on other items.

Mr. Alex Ruff: That is a technical question, Chair. I'm asking, out of the list that was provided—

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: The number of people—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Van Bynen.

It is true that the witnesses are here to answer technical questions. They're not here to speculate or conjecture on policy matters.

Mr. Ruff, the question you asked the minister would not necessarily be in their purview.

I know that both sides have been pushing the limit a bit here, but out of respect for the witnesses, let's keep it in their proper lane.

Thank you.

• (13655)

Mr. Alex Ruff: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

That's why I asked the question, and it was a specific question. Out of the list of firearms that has been brought forward, one of the criteria the government has continued to use in the discussion is that these are military firearms.

As somebody with past experience on this, who has been involved in reviewing and helping draft statements of requirements and specifications for firearms in the Canadian Armed Forces, I would not support many of them here, nor would I support their purchase by the Canadian Armed Forces because they're not appropriate for military use. There are a couple on the list that are. Well, there is at least one, from what I can determine in trying to read through it. It's one of the sniper rifles the Canadian military is currently using. That doesn't get into the specifics around the definition aspect, but there is a sniper rifle—a bolt-action sniper rifle—listed here. Again, I will point out that it's not one of the firearms that meet the semi-automatic criteria.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

If the member could specify which weapon he's talking about, that would be helpful to the debate.

Mr. Alex Ruff: It's the Prairie Gun Works Timberwolf. It's on the list.

Mr. Chair, I'll just leave my comments here. I want to get back to them, but unfortunately I have another commitment to get to.

I want to state that I really think, going forward, it would be beneficial for this committee, on this specific amendment, to hear from law enforcement, from the RCMP's Canadian firearms program, from the experts and from stakeholders in the industry, because fundamentally, this amendment changes what the purpose of this bill was interested in. It would be to everybody's value that we get this right going forward.

I'll leave my comments at that, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, before the honourable member leaves, I'll clarify—

The Chair: I'm sorry. Wait a minute.

Thank you, Mr. Ruff.

Go ahead, Mr. Noormohamed.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Before the honourable member leaves, I'll clarify that the weapon he's talking about has been prohibited for two and a half years, since 2020, so he shouldn't be concerned about it being on this list.

The Chair: That's a point of debate.

We'll go now to Mr. Melillo, followed by Madame Michaud.

Mr. Melillo, go ahead, please.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure for me to be back at this committee. It's been some time since I've had the honour to sub in. It's an honour to see members from all sides whom I have had the honour of working with on a number of matters, not least of whom is Mr. Shipley, of course.

Like everyone else here today, I'm concerned about the amendments we are presently debating. More important than that, many constituents in my riding of Kenora, in northwestern Ontario, have expressed their concerns to me.

My region is home to many hunters and trappers. For a long time, this has been a major industry and a major way of life for people across the Kenora district, and that's why today we continue to be home to many sport shooters and many hunters and trappers who are continuing with this way of life.

Frankly, the proposed amendment, in my opinion and in the opinion of folks I've been talking to in the Kenora riding, may be one of the most out-of-touch amendments that has been proposed by this government, and it is currently being entertained by the committee. I question whether there has been consultation on it.

We heard some comments from Minister Mendicino, which were read out by the member beside me, indicating that there had been some consultation, especially with people across the north and indigenous communities. I represent 42 first nations in the Kenora riding, which crosses three different treaty territories as well as the Métis homeland, where hunting, fishing and trapping really are a way of life. I haven't spoken to anybody who feels they were consulted on this amendment specifically. I think that is a great cause of concern. I feel that if the government had actually consulted on this, they would not have put it forward because they would have heard the concern expressed by those individuals, particularly indigenous leaders and indigenous people across the country, that this will impact them and their right to hunt. I will get back to that in just a bit.

I want to talk about trapping first, because that's something we often lose in the discussion when we're talking about firearms.

Obviously firearms are used for hunting, but trappers need firearms as well. I don't trap, but many people I know do. I know that many trappers carry a firearm when they're checking their lines just in case they encounter a predator. Having that firearm means they're able to defend themselves if necessary, especially when they have, in some cases, semi-automatic firearms to fire off rounds more quickly. For many people, this could be the difference between life and death when they're out on their traplines.

Trapping isn't something new, of course. It's one of the longest-standing activities in Ontario. Commercial trapping dates back in the Kenora riding to the 16th century and maybe even before, with subsistence trapping dating back even further. Many indigenous people across the Kenora riding continue to do that primarily. I'm worried that if we're going to ask trappers to give up their firearms, as proposed by some of the members opposite, and purchase new firearms, it could be to their detriment. It could be a risk to their safety, especially in the northern parts of my riding.

Mr. Chair, if you don't know, I come from Kenora, which is a big city of 15,000 people in the southern portion of my riding near the U.S. border. However, my riding does extend up to Hudson Bay and includes many remote first nations, as I mentioned, and communities like Fort Severn. Fort Severn is one of the few communities—and maybe the only—in Ontario where you will frequently encounter a polar bear. When people are out, whether hunting, trapping or just in their community, this is something they need to be cognizant of. These bears can be very dangerous. Not having the proper weapon to defend yourself would be very problematic and very concerning.

● (13700)

That's what I've heard from the people of Fort Severn and Weagamow Lake, in my riding. I was speaking about it this morning with an individual from Grassy Narrows First Nation. All are concerned about how this is going to impact not only their ability to hunt but their ability to protect themselves when they are doing so.

In that regard, my office was recently contacted by an avid hunter, someone from my riding who was out hunting relatively recently and who encountered a number of wolves. I've never gone toe to toe with a wolf. I'm not sure if you have, Mr. Chair, but it's definitely not a situation any of us would like to find ourselves in. We would want to make sure we have the tools at our disposal to deal with that properly and to fend for ourselves. This constituent is legitimately concerned because the firearms he uses are on this proposed prohibition list. As alluded to by the member for Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, it's not necessarily as easy as just buying new firearms. This individual is very concerned for his safety.

I recognize that this might seem a bit far-fetched for members from larger urban centres, but that truly is the reality many people across northern Ontario and many other northern and rural parts of the country face. They're not necessarily day-to-day concerns, but definitely concerns that are very real and very probable.

I'll just go back to the point, if I can, about northern Ontario being a hub for hunting and fishing. It's not just the individuals who rely on them to provide for their families, which is important, especially in the north, where there may be one store in many communities, like the Northern store, and where there are inflated prices. Even with nutrition north subsidies and different things like that, which are attempting to bring costs down, many people still can't afford to go to the grocery store, and they rely on their firearms to hunt and provide for themselves.

It's not just that. There's also a major economic component of this across the Kenora riding. Tourism is one of our biggest economic drivers in northwestern Ontario, as we saw during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the depths of the pandemic, we saw just how valuable that industry is, because it was lacking and we weren't seeing those visitors and dollars coming into our region. Hunting is at the forefront of our tourism. Most of our tourism is made up of people coming in from the northern states—Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota, Illinois and others. They come to stay at camps, to go fishing, to go hunting and to enjoy the beautiful scenery we have in northern Ontario. If this amendment were to move forward, it would impact the overall economy of my riding and of many others across northern Ontario.

The concern with this, of course, comes back to public safety. It's not just about the impact this is having on people in my riding, the very real impacts and challenges they will face. It comes back to the question of public safety. After all, that's why we're here. We're at the public safety committee.

We have a government under whose watch violent crime has increased. They've also taken many steps to remove mandatory minimum sentences in a number of cases for a number of crimes, including violent crimes. We're in a situation where they are so focused—perhaps for political reasons; I'm not sure—on restricting firearm rights for a lot of hunters and sport shooters when we're seeing a rise in crime and lesser penalties for those crimes.

With all due respect to my colleagues across the way, I think there are some misguided priorities there, and moving forward on an amendment like this is not actually going to address the issues they're hoping to address. I truly don't.

● (13705)

My comment to folks in the larger cities—places like Toronto and Vancouver—would be that taking guns away from hunters and sport shooters, and the indigenous people in my riding who are hunting just to put food on the table and provide for their families, is not going to make cities any safer. It is not going to address the issues we're seeing of guns, which are being primarily smuggled in or otherwise illegally obtained, coming into our cities. I think that's where the focus should be. I want to put that point on the record.

I'll wrap up here shortly. I know many people have comments.

As I alluded to, there are 42 first nations in my riding. The Treaties 3, 5, and 9 that are encompassed in my riding guarantee indigenous hunting and fishing rights. I won't reiterate it, but I have heard from many indigenous people and indigenous leaders from my riding who are concerned that this proposed amendment will infringe on those rights.

I want to point to a study. I won't table it of course, but it's a first nations food, nutrition and environment study that was released in October of last year, 2021. It found that access to traditional food for indigenous people is better than access to non-traditional food, and many barriers to traditional food sources continue to exist.

I worry that moving forward with this amendment we're debating will create yet another barrier that stops indigenous people from having access to traditional foods. For example, someone from Weagamow Lake in my riding emailed me expressing his frustration with the amendment. He knows, which was alluded to by the member for Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, that many hunters, particularly in the north, have to go out and get more than one animal to feed their family or their community. They are worried that a single-action firearm may not be enough to give them the ability to take down two animals.

There is also the welfare aspect that my esteemed colleague beside me mentioned. He took a lot of my talking points, actually. Although they strive to, hunters don't always take down an animal with the first shot. Having the ability to ensure that it does not suffer and does not continue to run through the woods is an important aspect of this. That's what I heard from the constituent from Weagamow who wrote to me to say this was a concern.

I want to share a few more comments that people wrote to me.

With regard to this amendment, Aaron wrote that he's tired of seeing policies being passed when every single expert in the room says they're a bad idea. In fairness, I don't know if every single expert has said this is a bad idea. I'm sure if you get enough experts on any single topic in a room together, you'll find some disagreement.

The point I take from this is that we've heard from the RCMP, from police associations and from experts from across the country for a number of years now, not just with regard to this amendment but with regard to the original Bill C-21, if I can put it that way, and with regard to the order in council. There are many experts lining up to say that the issue is not long guns. It's not hunters or rifles. It's the smuggled firearms that need to be addressed.

Tim wrote in on that note, saying this bill and amendment will do nothing to deal with the criminals committing gun crimes. I would agree.

Mark wrote, "Please stop Bill C-21. It will take my hunting rifle and shotgun from me."

Pam reached out about the impact of hunting and the ability to feed her family, saying “People hunt to put food on the table and feed their family, and they want to take that away.”

• (13710)

Mr. Chair, that's the human aspect that I'm hoping to get across, from people in northern Ontario. It's not just necessarily for sport; it's a way of life. It's about providing for their families.

Gordon from Sioux Lookout also asked how banning the sale of handguns in Canada stops criminals who do not acquire them from the local sporting goods store. He believes that this is the equivalent of banning Ford Taurus sedans to stop DUIs, Mr. Chair.

Again, these are misguided priorities. I would agree that this really is a misguided amendment and something I believe is out of touch, perhaps one of the most out-of-touch proposals that the government has brought forward.

I know there are many members who aren't from rural ridings here, but I can assure them that if they ever came to visit—I hope they do, because Kenora's a beautiful area—if they came to the gun range, or if they came to an indigenous community with me and met with some of the countless hunters, trappers and sport shooters, they would understand just how off base this current proposal is and how important it is that we—back to the first point that we heard from the Liberal member—get this right, that we have a wholesome discussion about it. I hope he and his colleagues will be faithful to those comments and work with us on this side to ensure that the proper legislation can be put in place rather than continuing down the road we're currently on.

Again, Mr. Chair, the government knows that violent crime has been on the rise. It knows that action needs to be taken, but this is not it. Maybe I'll close with that. I believe hunters, sport shooters and indigenous people across the country need to be consulted. Their voices need to be heard. I urge the government to withdraw this proposal and to go back to the drawing board and back to the consultations that very clearly need to happen.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Melillo.

• (13715)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Michaud, the floor is yours.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's good to see you again.

I was unable to attend a few meetings last week. As my colleagues know, I was on a diplomatic mission abroad, so I missed some of the discussion on G-4. I do have several things to say about it.

But first I'd like to know what time the meeting will end today, Mr. Chair. Are we going to have to finish at 5:30 p.m., or will we be able to finish later?

[*English*]

The Chair: Because of the vote, we started at 52 minutes past the hour, so we will end at 5:52.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: That's perfect. Thank you.

I'd like to pick up on my colleague Mr. Melillo's comment. Coming from a rural riding as well, I don't need to go to a shooting club or hold a gun in my hands to understand how important it can be for some people.

I don't hunt, but I know more and more about firearms. I didn't know much about them until I was given that responsibility. We learn more every day. I don't think you have to be a hunter or a sports shooter to understand that this issue can be very important to a lot of people and that the amendment in question can therefore affect many people in all ridings, in Quebec and in Canada.

I have concerns about this particular amendment. I won't reveal what was said in my private discussions with my Liberal colleagues, but this amendment was presented to me as a provision that would prohibit ghost guns, guns that can be made from parts. They wanted to include some of these parts in the bill or even in the Criminal Code to ensure that this new practice, which seems to be becoming very popular, would be eliminated. I fully agree and find it regrettable that the original wording of the bill didn't already provide for the prohibition of these firearm parts. I agree wholeheartedly that this ban is a good idea.

However, I think that G-4 went further than what the client was asking for. It really goes very far and proposes a list containing hundreds of firearms that would be banned. However, as I understand it—and I'm having trouble understanding this—some of the weapons on this list would already be prohibited since the coming into force of regulation SOR/2020-96 of May 1, 2020.

My first question is perhaps easy, since I'd like to know why these weapons are on this list.

Mr. Chair, can I ask questions of the person who moved the amendment and continue my questions once they have answered me?

[*English*]

The Chair: It might be better to ask the officials how the list was put together.

[*Translation*]

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

To the officials, are any of the weapons already prohibited under the May 1 order in the list we're talking about?

[English]

Ms. Paula Clarke: Yes.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: May I ask why?

Ms. Rachel Mainville-Dale: Some weapons were banned by regulation in the 1990s. What is changing with this amendment is that the weapons prohibited by regulation will now be in the Criminal Code, which will also include weapons prohibited by regulation in May 2020.

Instead of listing these 1,500 weapons in regulations, they will be listed in the Criminal Code. The place they're listed changes, but the effect is the same: these weapons are prohibited.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you for your response.

It gets a bit confusing to determine which weapon was already prohibited and which would become prohibited if G-4 were adopted in its current form.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the analysts, who have done an extraordinary job, a painstaking job. They worked over the weekend to try to distinguish the weapons that were already in the May 1, 2020, order from the new weapons to be prohibited. It's not easy to navigate, even for a firearms expert.

• (13720)

The Chair: Excuse me, Ms. Michaud.

[English]

The Chair: I would like to clarify that the list itself is under amendment G-46, which hasn't been moved yet; however, the mover, Mr. Chiang, has revealed it publicly, so that we can talk about it. You weren't here for that discussion, so that's just to clarify the situation here.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you for the clarification, Mr. Chair. It's just that these lists of firearms are in amendment G-4. I don't see myself voting in favour of that amendment knowing that it's going to have an impact a little later. I certainly have some questions about it, and I think everyone does.

First, I'd like to know why the Liberals chose to proceed in this way.

The Bloc Québécois has long been calling for a ban on military-style assault weapons. Horrific killings have occurred in the past with legally acquired military weapons. We're not talking about weapons that are used to kill a deer or a duck. I think it's reasonable to take military-style assault weapons out of the hands and homes of civilians.

We have asked the government to define in the Criminal Code what a military-style assault weapon is, so that it's clear which model should be banned and which should not. We also told the government not to proceed by lists, as the government had done in the May 1, 2020, order, because it isn't clear. There could be a dishwasher model in these lists that I wouldn't even know it. These are numbers and words that we don't necessarily recognize if we're not

a firearms expert. How can we make sense of it and reassure our constituents?

I did a little survey on my Facebook page to find out which guns Quebec hunters use. I don't know, and I want to know, to make sure they aren't on the lists referred to in G-4. I received several responses in just a few hours. Unfortunately, there is a lot of misinformation out there, and people are really concerned and affected by this issue. They are following the work of the committee, the progress of the bill and G-4, so it's legitimate to ask questions.

It would have been much simpler not to proceed by model lists, because some guns might fall through the cracks with that approach. I agree that all guns are dangerous, but some are less so, such as those used specifically for deer hunting. If we ban weapons that shouldn't be banned, we won't achieve the goal. So it's much more the approach that I'm questioning today.

This issue affects a lot of people. I have people around me who are more knowledgeable than I am and who help me navigate this.

Let's move quickly to what may or may not be in these lists. Amendment G-4 proposes to add the following:

(1.2) The definition "prohibited firearm" in subsection 84(1) of the Act is amended by striking out "or" at the end of paragraph (c) and by adding the following after paragraph (d):

(e) a firearm that is capable of discharging a projectile with a muzzle energy exceeding 10 000 Joules...

The schedule in G-46 could include firearms whose power of up to 10,000 Joules. My question is, what are these weapons doing in this schedule?

Amendment G-4 then proposes adding the following definition element:

(f) a firearm with a bore diameter of 20 mm or greater...

Once again, it could be in the schedule of weapons with a diameter of less than 20 millimetres.

So I don't know how we can get answers to these questions. In order to get to the bottom of this before we vote on G-4, are we going to have to go through all the weapons in the schedule one by one? I don't know why that was done. It's kind of a shame, because if the bill—

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: A point of order.

I just want to clarify that the definition is just the main purpose of the amendment.

• (13725)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Noormohamed.

I think that's part of the debate, but perhaps it's a clarifying point.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: That didn't really clarify much, Mr. Noormohamed, but thank you.

I don't want to talk about what's coming, but the Liberals have tabled several amendments to Bill C-21. It's curious, since this one came from the government. If this bill had been so good when it was introduced, the government wouldn't be making so many amendments.

As my colleagues mentioned earlier, there is a legislative and democratic process. We knew that the main purpose of the bill was to ban handguns, so we invited experts to appear before the committee to give us their position and explain why it was a good idea or not, and we talked a lot about handguns with them.

Now the government is proposing amendments to deal with semi-automatic weapons and hunting rifles. If we had known that the government was interested in these weapons, we would have invited experts to come and talk to us about semi-automatic weapons and hunting rifles. We would have had some indication of which models should or should not be on which prohibition list. We would have had some guidance on how best to legislate.

At this point, Mr. Chair, I must admit that we were caught off guard. That's unfortunate, because we're learning it as the public has learned it, and we're trying to navigate by sight, which isn't easy.

There are a lot of things I'd like to say, so I'm having a little trouble getting my head around it.

I would like to reassure the people in my riding and in Quebec who write to me and my fellow members of Parliament a lot about their concerns. We didn't really expect this when we saw the original wording of the bill. We need to look at what's in there and ask questions before making decisions.

The Bloc Québécois' position has always been clear: we want better gun control in Canada. I think that's ultimately what everyone wants, for our cities and neighbourhoods to be safer. There are various ways to do this. Is G-4 the right solution? I would tend to say no, but it will have to be debated.

So we're going to try to make sure that people aren't disappointed in us. Obviously, we can't please everyone. I know a lot of people are concerned about this bill. It's a very emotional issue. I think my colleagues would agree that it's not always done in a polite way, as we see on our Facebook pages, but I can understand that people feel concerned. So we will do our best to debate it.

Personally, I would like to know which firearms that are already prohibited will be included in the schedule and which non-prohibited ones will be included. Second, of the non-prohibited ones, I would like to know which are hunting weapons that are commonly used in Quebec and Canada. That would help me make a decision.

I would also like to know what will happen to people who have guns that are going to become prohibited overnight. We've heard about a buy-back program, but it's still not confirmed. People have told me about weapons they had before the May 1, 2020, order that they still own. They know they have been illegally in possession of this gun since the order in council came into effect, but they have never heard from the government about what to do with it. Should they turn it over to a police officer or the government? No one knows. We also don't know what will happen to these weapons that

they want to ban. It would be beneficial for us to know that, so that we can also reassure our constituents.

• (13730)

As I said earlier, we support better gun control. To be honest, I don't see why anyone should have a military-style assault weapon in their basement. That's not the way it should work. However, I don't see why someone who hunts should be prohibited from doing so.

I don't know if you had any other speakers on your list, Mr. Chair. I'll give my place to my colleagues and speak again a little later.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Michaud.

[English]

We now have Mr. Zimmer, followed by Mr. Martel, followed by Mr. Johns.

Mr. Zimmer, go ahead, please.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I look forward to the opportunity to ask some questions here and to speak.

My questions will be for our experts here, technical questions specifically. There is also one that is kind of on the floor, which was asked previously about the Benelli Super Vinci. Is this firearm listed in the prohibited list, yes or no?

Ms. Paula Clarke: As to the content of the schedule, I'm going to defer to the Canadian firearms program, because they are going to be able to provide you with accurate answers and more detail. They're truly the technical experts, and I think it would benefit the committee to have their views, knowledge and expertise, which would better enable committee members to have constructive conversation and debate over the content of the schedule.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Thank you.

I want to get back to some of the questions being asked around the new proposed paragraph (1.2)(g) in government amendment G-4. I want to make sure I understand correctly.

Proposed paragraph (1.2)(g) essentially establishes a three-part test with respect to whether a firearm is prohibited. Is that correct?

Ms. Paula Clarke: That's correct.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: That test is separate and apart from the schedule made in reference to part 1, in amendment G-46.

Ms. Paula Clarke: That's correct.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: To be clear, there is no language in proposed paragraph (1.2)(g) that requires a firearm to be listed in this schedule for proposed paragraph (1.2)(g) to apply. Is that correct?

Ms. Paula Clarke: That's correct.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Thank you.

Now, I want to walk through the three-part test relatively quickly.

The first is that a firearm is designed to fire ammunition, meaning, generally speaking, it fires a cartridge larger than a .22 calibre, which would be a rimfire cartridge. Is that correct?

Ms. Paula Clarke: I don't know if that's correct, but we can come back to you with an answer.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: There are .22s on the list, but that particular criterion isn't, so that's where some of the confusion begins.

Ms. Paula Clarke: Right.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Okay.

Now, the second test is that it fires the centre-fire round in a semi-automatic manner. That means that for each pull of the trigger, one projectile is issued down the barrel. This is distinct from other actions, such as pump, bolt or lever, which require the operation of a part other than the trigger to move around from the magazine into the chamber. It is also distinct from an automatic firearm, which has long been prohibited under Canadian law, which fires many projectiles with one pull of the trigger. Is that correct?

Ms. Paula Clarke: That's correct.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Thank you.

The last portion of the test is that the firearm is designed for use with a detachable magazine that could hold more than the allowed five rounds. Is that correct?

• (13735)

Ms. Paula Clarke: That's correct.

The magazine has to be designed for that firearm, so it wouldn't be an aftermarket cartridge magazine. When the firearm is designed originally, the cartridge magazine that goes with that firearm has to be capable of holding more than five cartridges.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Therefore, to follow up on that question, we know of many firearms that are designed with a wood stock. They have aftermarket stocks that can be changed to a plastic stock with a magazine that can possibly hold more than five. Are those particular stocks and magazines exempted from this, as you seem to allude to?

Ms. Paula Clarke: What would determine whether or not one of these firearms falls within this definition or these qualitative criteria is this: When the firearm was originally designed, was it designed to accept, at the time it was manufactured or designed, an oversized magazine cartridge or a cartridge magazine that's capable of holding more than five cartridges? If another cartridge magazine or another magazine was developed not specifically for that firearm but was capable of being used in that firearm, then that firearm would not fall within the definition, unless—I know it's really confusing—there was a cartridge magazine designed for that.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: It is confusing. I agree.

Ms. Paula Clarke: The intent of this is to ensure that there's a static definition and that the classification of the firearm, as being prohibited, doesn't change based on aftermarket magazines.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: However, you just said it possibly could, or that was my impression. If somebody were to add another part to that particular firearm, it potentially would be under the prohibitive

restriction, where it wasn't previously. If it's designed with a five-round magazine maximum capacity and somebody puts on an aftermarket stock and magazine, it sounds like you're saying that it is exempted from this prohibition.

I want this to be very clear. There are thousands of Canadians watching right now who are looking for these specifics. They're very concerned with what's going on. There are enough hunting firearms that are already on the list that we know are straight-up hunting firearms.

I'll move on to my next technical question, but I'd appreciate an answer to that.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair. It's just a friendly point of order.

The Chair: Ms. Dancho, go ahead on your point of order.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you, Chair.

We have experts here. We're very thankful that they are here, but they've been unable to answer a number of questions for us. Given many of the questions from Liberals and us and the Bloc, we've been restrained in our access to information. I'm just wondering if my honourable colleague would like to move an amendment to call for, I don't know, firearms program people who manage the firearms reference table and the schedules, or those who could more quickly provide that advice, such as those who drafted or crafted the list, for example.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Yes. I would be—

The Chair: That would not be an amendment to this amendment.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: No. I'm calling for a motion, perhaps.

The Chair: We have a motion on the floor, so we can't move a separate amendment. I can certainly work with the clerk to see if we can arrange for someone from the—

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Yes.

Maybe I would ask the witnesses, if some of the questions are unable to be answered, especially the technical ones that you're supposed to be here to answer...

I can't fault somebody for not knowing what they don't know, but I would highly suggest that you have somebody here, as my colleague Ms. Dancho has requested, who can fully answer some of these very technical questions.

Ms. Paula Clarke: Agreed. We're here to answer questions related to the motion and the legal aspects—

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Are you going to make the move and have those witnesses, as requested, come and help testify, or—

The Chair: Mr. Zimmer, that's really not up to the witnesses.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Okay.

The Chair: I will work with the clerk to see if we can invite someone from the Canadian firearms program to attend in future.

Mr. Glen Motz: On a point of order along those lines, Chair, if you will, I think Ms. Dancho's point is well taken about the questions from both sides.

In fairness to our witnesses, they were given information. They don't necessarily understand "why". That's not their role. If we could have technical experts from the Canadian firearms program join this group at our next meeting, that would be ideal.

The Chair: I believe I just said we would seek to do that.

Mr. Zimmer, carry on.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll go on to my questions. I have many more.

This is kind of the same question, but here we go. I'm sure that the way magazines in firearms interoperate is based on the size of the magazine port. Being a firearms owner myself, I know this is the case. In other words, could a firearm that has a magazine port of a certain size in theory accept any magazine that is the same size, including the ones not pinned or otherwise limited per Canadian law?

Ms. Paula Clarke: There's no prohibition in the Criminal Code for using a firearm that's not prohibited. For using a cartridge magazine that's non-prohibited, there are no restrictions on how these magazine cartridges are used in other firearms.

• (13740)

Mr. Bob Zimmer: I'm going to get into a question about variants. It's kind of on the same topic, but maybe it will become more clear.

The reason I ask is that it appears that the limit of five cartridges is redundant if the third part of the test simply bans firearms with detachable magazines, because there could be, at any time or place, a magazine that is larger than five rounds that fits the magazine port. That's the premise of what we're asking. There were similar questions asked about Butler Creek magazines a few years ago in terms of other similar magazines. Butler Creek magazines were prohibited, but these other particular and almost identical magazines were not.

It's a very confusing situation for firearms owners.

Ms. Paula Clarke: It is. The way cartridge magazines are determined to be prohibited or not is based on the firearm for which they were designed.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Yes, I hear that.

Ms. Paula Clarke: Sometimes there are dual-use magazines, or there will be a magazine that's designed for a rifle but that can be used in a handgun. It depends on the firearm the magazine was designed for.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: I'll go to my next question.

We've established what proposed paragraph (1.2)(g) would do; namely, it would ban firearms that discharge centre-fire ammunition, that do so in a semi-automatic manner and that have a detachable magazine.

I'm going to ask you another question.

Are you familiar with the firearms reference table?

Ms. Paula Clarke: I am.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: For those who are not, the firearms reference table is a database maintained by the RCMP in the Canadian firearms program and firearms verifiers, which outlines the details of all types of firearms that have been imported into Canada or have been built in Canada. It includes details like the three-part test for the gun ban in proposed paragraph (1.2)(g), on ammunition-type action and magazine design.

Have you run a report on the FRT to determine the number of models of firearms that will be impacted by proposed paragraph (1.2)(g)?

Ms. Paula Clarke: That is a question that is best answered by the Canadian firearms program.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Are you able to answer it now?

Ms. Paula Clarke: No, I'm not.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Okay.

I've come into possession of a report from the FRT, produced by a firearms business I am familiar with, which searched for precisely these criteria and found that there are 514 models of firearms that are prohibited by this amendment.

Can you comment on that?

Ms. Paula Clarke: Again, I would refer you to the Canadian firearms program because it has technical experts who are best placed to answer those questions for you.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Yes. I can provide that information to you, if you wish, or the committee.

We understand that there are many types of firearms, mostly non-restricted, that meet this new criteria, but to understand the scope of that change we actually need to dive in further. The term "variant" is often used in relation to firearms classification, but it is undefined in legislation, despite the best efforts of my former colleague Larry Miller, which were previously brought up in this committee meeting by my colleague Mr. Ruff. It is used throughout the FRT, ironically.

Could you provide a definition of "variant" to this committee?

Ms. Paula Clarke: There is no definition of "variant" in law. It is a term of art.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Could you tell us how many variants of the 514 models of firearms will also be prohibited based on this amendment?

Ms. Paula Clarke: I cannot provide you with that information, but I would redirect you to the Canadian firearms program.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Once again, I hope they will be present to answer these very important questions. I asked because it seems that “variant” is a very loosely defined term, and you said it’s not defined even in legislation.

I’ll give you an example. The Mossberg 715T is a .22-calibre rifle. It is identical in structure and operation to the Mossberg 702 rifle. The one difference is that where the Mossberg 702 has the more traditional-looking wood furniture on the exterior, the Mossberg 715T has a plastic shell.

I mentioned this because for years and years the 702 and 715 were non-restricted. Then, a few years ago, the government decided the 715T was a variant of the AR-15, which is restricted even though the exact same firearm without the plastic shell was non-restricted.

Further, the government listed the 715 in the May order in council, making it a prohibited firearm and putting it in the bizarre position of having the guts of the firearm simultaneously being both non-restricted and prohibited. The government has attempted to address this in amendment G-46 by making the Mossberg 702 Plinkster a listed prohibited firearm, a .22. I know the Liberal Party is saying there are no .22s affected by this legislation. There absolutely are, and that is one example.

As an aside, I’m sure that banning firearms designed for shooting pop cans and squirrels is exactly what will stop the 92% increase in gang homicides under this particular government. It’s not funny.

All of this is to ask whether you can comment on the situation in which, without a legal definition, the term “variant” seems to have been stretched to include having such a tangential and superficial connection as a similar physical appearance?

● (13745)

Ms. Paula Clarke: It is an important question.

What I can tell you is that the term “variant” is used by the Canadian firearms program experts to guide their own technical analysis as to whether or not a specific firearm is a variant of a listed or otherwise prohibited firearm.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: That’s even though you’ve already acknowledged that there’s no legal definition.

Ms. Paula Clarke: It’s a technical criterion.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Okay. Another example under this proposed amendment is the Remington 870 DM. The 870 is a very common shotgun used by many duck hunters and farmers across this country—I had one previously—but with a detachable magazine that is centre-fire, which would fit this definition.

Would this mean that all Remington 870 shotguns would be prohibited as variants, even though the rest of the 870 variants are pump-action shotguns?

Ms. Paula Clarke: It’s not possible for me to comment on a specific make and model of a firearm. I would again refer you to the Canadian firearms program.

What I can answer for you is that the schedule lists firearms by make and model, and it also lists all known variants.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: However, we already discussed that even amendment G-46 isn’t necessarily exhaustive, based on the three criteria. Is that correct?

Ms. Paula Clarke: I’m sorry—can you repeat that?

Mr. Bob Zimmer: We’re just about done, so I’ll keep going.

I have more important questions that need to be answered, and I’ll try and get through them today.

In a similar vein, many centre-fire semi-automatic rifles are also chambered in the .22 calibre rimfire ammunition. Would all rimfire variants of a centre-fire rifle become prohibited?

Ms. Paula Clarke: Do you mean under the definition?

Mr. Bob Zimmer: I mean under this legislation, Bill C-21 and its amendments.

Ms. Paula Clarke: The definition—in proposed paragraph (1.2) (g)—does not apply to rimfire firearms.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: That’s except the Plinkster, which I already just mentioned. It’s actually in amendment G-46.

Ms. Paula Clarke: Is it attached to the schedule, then?

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Yes.

Ms. Paula Clarke: The schedule does include some rimfire firearms.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Okay. That seems inconsistent with what we’ve been promised by the government.

I’ll go to my next question.

If the definition can be stretched in that way, can you confirm which variants of firearms that meet this new three-part test will be captured? I think that’s what the mystery out there is for Canadian firearms owners and hunters: If what they have is not on the list, will it be the next thing put on the list?

Ms. Paula Clarke: Right.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Are they okay?

Ms. Paula Clarke: Most of the known assault rifles that are in Canada would be captured currently in the schedule. The criteria set out in proposed paragraph (1.2)(g) overlap with most of the firearms set out in the schedule but don't include all of them, because in the schedule there are some rimfire firearms that would not be included in—

Mr. Bob Zimmer: I'll move on to my next one before I run out of time. You're a bit confused. We're a bit confused in this room. You can just imagine the folks who own firearms and who don't have the expertise that we possibly do in this room, so I had better keep going.

Given that many, if not most of the firearms that are banned under proposed paragraph (1.2)(g) were previously non-restricted, it will certainly be a challenge to inform individuals of the new obligations and the status of their property. As was mentioned, with the end of the long-gun registry, presumably there is no way of contacting any individuals based on the firearms they own. However, under the system established by Bill C-71, which required all transfers of non-restricted firearms, even between two individuals, to be recorded with the RCMP, will that data be useful in tracking down the owners of newly prohibited firearms?

• (13750)

Ms. Paula Clarke: I can speak to Bill C-71 and the transfer requirements for individuals, which are that—

Mr. Bob Zimmer: I'm asking specifically whether that data will be useful in tracking down the owners of newly prohibited firearms—yes or no.

Ms. Rachel Mainville-Dale: Bill C-71 includes a licence-verification requirement, which means people have to verify with the RCMP before they transfer—

Mr. Bob Zimmer: I know what the data is. I'm asking whether it will be useful—

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Zimmer, please let the witness answer the question.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: I just see that my time, Mr. Chair, is very limited.

Ms. Rachel Mainville-Dale: There is no information on the firearm that is being transferred. It is simply about the individual, in terms of verifying that their licence is still active.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Just yes or no, will that data be useful in tracking down the owners of the newly prohibited firearms?

Ms. Rachel Mainville-Dale: As I indicated, there is no information about the firearm that is being transferred; therefore, no, there is no information being held at the RCMP. It's all about the individuals and whether their licence is valid. There is no information about the firearm.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Thank you for the answer.

Mr. Martel is next on the list. I will pass the rest of the time to him.

The Chair: Mr. Zimmer, you don't have any allocated time. It's a debate.

We have reached the end of our time tonight. With the consent of the committee, we will adjourn with the understanding that we will take up where we left off.

Is the committee in agreement with that?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: We will resume the next scheduled meeting where we left off. Since Mr. Zimmer is done, we will start with Mr. Martel.

That being said, thank you, all.

Thank you to the officials for being here. We will invite the Canadian firearms program to attend as well.

With that, we are adjourned.

[The meeting was suspended at 5:52 p.m., Tuesday, November 29, 2022]

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