



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 129

Thursday, October 3, 2024

Chair: Mr. Peter Schiefke



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• (1540)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 129 of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

Before we begin the meeting, I want to remind all in-person participants to read the best practices guidelines on the cards that have been distributed on the tables. These measures are in place to protect the health and safety of all participants, including, of course, our interpreters.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, and all witnesses have completed the required connection tests in advance of the meeting.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Friday, September 6, 2024, the committee is resuming its study of the passenger rail service and Via Rail Canada incident of August 31, 2024.

I'd like to begin by welcoming our witnesses.

As an individual, in person, we have Mr. Cédryk Coderre, who was a passenger on that train. Welcome to you, sir.

Joining us virtually from Unifor, we have Mr. Joel Kennedy, who is the director of the rail sector, as well as Jennifer Murray, who is the director of the Atlantic region.

We'll begin with opening remarks. For that, I'll turn it over to you, Mr. Coderre. You have five minutes.

Mr. Cédryk Coderre (Passenger, As an Individual): Thank you, Chair and members of this committee.

My name is Cédryk Coderre. I was a passenger on train 622. I was in car number 2. This is my recollection of what happened.

When the train first stopped, we were told that this was a mechanical issue. The first stop lasted, I would say, about an hour, and then we heard an announcement that they had fixed the issue and we would be able to move again, but at a slower pace. We started moving for, I would say, about 30 minutes, and then we stopped again. They made another announcement about this, saying that there was another mechanical issue.

The first time, the staff provided us drinks and pretzels. Unfortunately, after we stopped again, I remember that the staff told us that if we needed anything, we could go to the galley, so I went there.

We got chocolate and alcohol. I asked if they had anything else other than pretzels. They told us there were no more cookies or anything else. I would say that was about three hours into the train ride.

We received pretty frequent communication about what was going on. Eventually, we were told that train 24 was coming to the rescue. They were supposed to eventually push us to the station. At the time I was browsing the subreddit of Via Rail. There was a passenger actually on that train who had recorded what the train conductor had said. It sounded like it was his first time doing this, which was a bit worrying to me.

Later on, that really didn't end up working, so they decided to pull us to the side track to let the freight train pass.

While they were trying to connect the train, the power went out pretty frequently, which meant that the bathrooms did not work. People still went in there, but that got pretty smelly at one point.

Eventually, one of the updates we got was that they currently had no plans and they were trying to come up with one. In my opinion, that's pretty worrying when you have to go somewhere and you're being told that they have no plan.

Despite this, the staff in our car were pretty awesome. They kept coming through with the water, the pretzels and the chocolate whenever we needed it. About an hour or so later, the passengers in my car started to feel a bit restless, I'd say. Some of them were trying to look into getting an Uber out of there. Some were looking at the emergency exit.

There were rumours that there had been a fight on car 1. I'm not sure if it was related to the video that some of you might have seen in the media, but the police eventually came in. They escorted one guy off with his scooter.

I do remember catching the discussion of some staff members and some of the passengers. It sounded like the staff had it rough with some of the passengers in the other cars.

About an hour later, the staff eventually disappeared from our car for about 30 minutes. There was nobody to be found. Personally, I assumed that they had a meeting with some of the other staff in a different car, so it didn't really bother me.

Train 26 eventually came by, and the firefighters came on board and started securing the area to eventually transfer us to train 26. At that time, we also got pizzas. They were pretty generous with pizzas in my car. I think I got four slices, so that was good.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: Yes, we were quite hungry.

• (1545)

An hon. member: That's more than a snack.

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: Yes, it was a lot better than the pretzels.

We eventually got transferred to train 26. I saw that some of the passengers had to stand up because there were not enough seats on train 26. Before we got on train 26, I remember one of the staff members came to our car and said that this was the last water they had, which was shortly before we got the pizzas and the extra water.

Fortunately for me and my friend, we didn't really have anywhere to be that day. We were just planning to visit Quebec City. I know a lot of people on the train had a cruise to catch. One of the Via Rail staff was looking for those people. They were taking names. I'm not exactly sure what happened with that.

That's about it.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Coderre, for sharing that with us.

I'll now turn it over to Ms. Murray for your opening remarks.

You have five minutes, please.

Ms. Jennifer Murray (Director, Atlantic Region, Unifor): Thank you very much, Chair and committee members.

Unifor is the largest private sector union in Quebec and Canada, representing more than 320,000 members in all sectors of the economy. We represent more than 9,200 members in the rail sector, and 2,000 of those members are Via Rail workers, including maintenance workers, onboard staff, sales agents and customer service staff.

My name is Jennifer Murray. I'm Unifor's Atlantic regional director. I come from a history of railway workers, and I have been a proud Via Rail worker myself for 28 years. For nine of those years I have represented Via Rail workers as a union representative. I'm joined here today by Joel Kennedy, Unifor's rail sector director.

A few weeks back, we saw a stopped Via Rail train that delayed passengers for more than 10 hours. I would like to say these delays are a very rare occurrence; however, that would not be true. While delays this long bring attention from politicians, delays like this occur frequently. My comments today are not just about this single event but about the lack of planning for delays of all sorts along our rail system: delays caused by climate change-related weather events, breakdowns, train blockages and freight traffic.

Via Rail's mission recognizes that passengers must come first, but its focus has been on the impacts of potential crises on infrastructure and not on the passenger experience. Via's mission includes the line:

Our primary focus is our passengers. We work on improving our services and redefining VIA Rail to provide our passengers with the most enjoyable travel experience and to find better ways to connect Canadian communities. Safety is and will remain paramount.

The key to putting passengers first is to ensure employees can not only provide the services that passengers pay for and need in transit but that they can also do so in the face of unexpected interruptions to service. Unfortunately, implementing regressive billing changes, charging people for additional baggage, limiting access to free amenities, attempting to cut back on employees who serve travellers and providing minimum support in case of delays are hardly practices we would say put "passengers first".

Via Rail also claims its current operational safety management system exceeds compliance standards and that it is a leader in industry practices. If this is true, industrial regulations in the rail sector need a major revision. Via's environment plan for 2030 focuses on potential climate and environmental impacts on operations but focuses entirely on infrastructure. Safety and security should include not only injury prevention and infrastructure upgrades but also how it is going to respond to those crises at the time they are happening.

Resilience is a word we use these days to define the goal of responding to impacts on rail infrastructure. At Via Rail, where we rely on those who own and operate the tracks we run on, we have limited room to provide a service that is actually resilient. As such, Via Rail must focus on ensuring there are always resources available to deal with interruptions in service caused by underinvestment in the rail sector that results in low levels of resilience in our rail infrastructure.

For these longer interruptions, ensuring passengers and crew have access to food, water, temperature-controlled areas, working facilities and alternative transport options falls solely on Via Rail. It was disappointing to hear the CEO say that there would be a review of training requirements "to ensure that all employees are better equipped for difficult situations." Via Rail is constantly pressured to reduce costs rather than have consultations to improve service, and the decision was made in the past to reduce staff and cut services on board. They operate very lean.

We don't have proper plans in place to address food, water and facilities in the face of a crisis. Training is not the fix when Via Rail has not properly stocked the train. This type of situation leaves workers facing harassing-type behaviour from understandably frustrated passengers. It is the frontline workers who know the issues and what passengers are saying in these desperate times, and they should be consulted when decisions are being made and actions are implemented.

For years, frontline workers have been asking Via Rail for back-up plans for times when staff is lean and they know they will be busy, but this dialogue always seems to fall on deaf ears. It is no secret that our rail lines in Canada were built to support freight trains. They run through some very remote areas, causing challenges when breakdowns occur. However, there must be proper protocols in place for when these situations arise, because they will.

The lack of communication and lack of food and water has always been a problem. The faces that must endure these decisions are the people who choose to travel with Via Rail and the workers, and this leaves a lasting effect on everyone.

We do not have control over the tracks, the weather or other trains on the system. We do have control over the resources put into ensuring a safe experience for passengers and crews. Unifor has long called for priority for Via Rail and for investment in track twinning, so that disruptions like this can be avoided or routed around.

● (1550)

We know Canadians were promised and deserve a passenger rail system that is accessible, reliable and affordable. Unifor believes this can be achieved by implementing a Via Rail act.

In the medium term, it is essential that the government provide the resources to make these recommendations a reality and make the investment expected by the public to ensure a resilient, on time, safe and comfortable experience for travellers that plans for potential crisis situations.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Murray.

We'll begin our line of questioning today with Mr. Lawrence.

The floor is yours. You have six minutes, sir.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Thank you.

Before I start the questioning, I would like to thank both witnesses for being here.

I have one brief but important request of the committee. I'm hoping we can dispense with this quickly with unanimous consent.

I'm sure we all saw and were greatly troubled by the news article that came out with respect to the Chipewyan First Nation. According to the article, the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, the Mikisew Cree First Nation and the Fort Chipewyan Metis Nation were never told that the environment around "the big dock", as it's colloquially referred to, was contaminated, despite a report com-

missioned by the government in 2017 that found elevated levels of arsenic, nickel and hydrocarbons.

My request is simple. We thought about maybe holding an emergency session, but before that, in order to not upend the schedule, what we would propose to do, with unanimous consent, is request from Transport Canada all documents, including the 2017 report and any reports since 2017, relating to, as it's colloquially known, "the big dock" in the Chipewyan First Nation.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank very much, Mr. Lawrence.

Looking around the room, there are a lot of confused and questioning faces. If you'll permit me, I will suspend for five minutes while everyone confers.

I would like to thank the witnesses for their patience as we discuss this.

The meeting is suspended.

● (1550) _____ (Pause) _____

● (1600)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order.

Thanks to our witnesses for their patience.

We'll now turn it back over to you, Mr. Lawrence, for your line of questioning. You have six minutes, sir.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Thank you very much, Chair. I really appreciate that.

Thank you to the witnesses for coming here today.

Mr. Coderre, first, thank you for taking the time to share with us. I want to go through some of the details a bit. It seems as though you handled the situation better than other passengers. Did you feel that you were adequately communicated with during the delay?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: I would say so, but it kind of depends on how you see it. They would give frequent updates, but some of the updates were "we don't have an update" or "we don't have any news" or "we don't currently have a plan". That might introduce a bit more stress for other passengers. I've gone through a lot of delays. I travel a lot, through trains or planes, so I'm used to it. It doesn't really stress me that much.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Actually, that twigs something else for me. If you don't mind my asking, you said you travel quite a bit. Is that internationally or domestically? That's only if you're okay sharing that with us.

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: Yes. It's actually both. I go to Vancouver every month, and I do about two to three trips internationally every year.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: How would you compare your experience in Canadian airports and Canadian trains with some of the counterparts around the world, if you'd be so kind as to share that with us?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: Around the world, from what I've noticed, there are not really any delays compared with what we're used to. I fly frequently with Air Canada, and there are very often delays. It's the same thing with Via Rail.

I recently went to South Korea and took the train there. They were always on time. It was quite impressive. They have about 30 trains a day from every city, and they were always on time.

• (1605)

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Thank you for that.

Just to sum it up, you've had more delays in Canada than what you've experienced on average internationally. Is that a fair statement?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: Yes.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Perfect.

I want to move on to a bit more of your experience. I apologize as a member of Parliament here, on behalf of the federal government, that you had to go through this.

You said they had food, but it was relatively limited to pretzels and stuff. At the beginning, did they have sandwiches or anything? Were you just on pretzels for 10 hours or so?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: I was actually in business class, so I got a breakfast earlier on, while the train was fine. I imagine for the people in economy, they probably had only pretzels the whole time, but I couldn't speak to that.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: I don't want to get too far down the line in grossness here, but you mentioned that the washrooms got a bit stinky.

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: Yes.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: From what you remember, how long were they not working? I assume there was a point where they were just not usable, for obvious reasons.

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: I would say that it was about an hour. The bathrooms were never closed, so even if they were stinky, people kept going there. I guess they really needed to go there.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Yes. Perfect.

Ms. Murray, you mentioned a couple things that directly contradicted, at least to my understanding, the CEO of Via, who was here a couple of weeks ago. He said a number of times that this was an "isolated incident". Would you agree with that?

Ms. Jennifer Murray: I have worked with the railway for a very long time. These super-long delays I wouldn't call isolated. I would say they were less rare than other delays.

I would never call this an isolated one-off. This happens more than it should, in my opinion.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Thank you very much.

You said something that I had thought about. I was a little surprised when the CEO seemed to indicate that it would have been difficult or impossible to put enough food on a train for a prolonged delay. I'm just wondering if you, with your considerable experience, would agree with that analysis, or whether it would be possible to

just have granola bars or something a little more nutritious than pretzels.

Ms. Jennifer Murray: Let's be honest: There is probably not enough space for there to be full meals put on the train, but, like you said, we could have granola bars or something with sustenance, so that, if you are delayed—because this is not the first time—you are prepared in the event that there are going to be long delays. Pretzels are not going to hold you over.

At the end of the day, for somebody to be walking through a car and saying, "This is the last bit of water we have on this train," I think is quite revealing. If there isn't room, we need to make room. We have to find a way. There has to be a way. We're transporting humans here, and there has to be a way to provide them with the necessities that they need when there are significant delays such as these.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: On your comment, "We are transporting humans here," I think that's very fitting.

I would like to thank both of you for being here today.

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

[*Translation*]

Go ahead, Mr. Iacono. You have six minutes.

[*English*]

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

Mr. Coderre, thank you again for being here today.

In your opening remarks, you mentioned that the train stopped on three occasions. During these three occasions, you also mentioned that you heard some notices. To get a better understanding of that, how often did the notices come? In your first hour, when did you hear the first notice of what was happening?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: I would say that about five minutes after it stopped we got a notice.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Can you give us a better understanding of when the next notices were? How frequent were they?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: Early on, they were about every 30 minutes or so.

• (1610)

Mr. Angelo Iacono: In the first hour you had only two notices.

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: Yes.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: In the next half hour, you said the train stopped again. How many notices did you get?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: I think we got two as well.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: How many did you get in the last half hour?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: We got one.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: At any time during those notices, were you given any indication of safety measures, any indication as to being able to get off the train or any indicators that, if you needed help, you could call somebody? What were the messages that you were getting?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: The first message was about the cause of the train stopping. Then most of the other messages were either, “We have no updates,” or eventually it became, “We have no plans yet.”

Mr. Angelo Iacono: You mentioned that the staff on board were great, were helpful. Did you notice any incidents or any wrongdoing among the staff in car 2?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: No, they were all great.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: How about the other passengers? What was the reaction with respect to the situation?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: The other passengers seemed to be on edge. It sounded like they were pretty stressed about their obligations and when they would get there. Some of them were trying to figure out a way to get off the train to get an Uber. They were looking at the emergency exits and thinking of calling 911.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Did you ever feel in danger at any point in time when you were stuck?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: No.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you for your responses.

I'll direct my next questions to the union.

You've been with Via for 25 years. Is that right?

Ms. Jennifer Murray: Yes.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: I am an ex-employee. I was in labour relations, and I dealt with collective agreements 1 and 3, with maintenance as well as onboard personnel.

When it came to safety management plans and protocols, were they respected?

Ms. Jennifer Murray: They kept them on board because, according to my understanding, it wasn't safe for them to detrain to transfer them to another train until they secured the scene and that situation.

It's never a safe experience when they're running out of water and facilities.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: What communication practices were exercised that day?

Ms. Jennifer Murray: I wasn't on board, as far as communications went.

You know, we always struggle, especially at our call centre, with people calling and looking for information. It's never easy for workers when they have to deal with these types of situations.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: I know you were not on board, but after the event, you must have had some conversations with the employees on board. You may have also gotten wind of some documentation with respect to practices that day.

Do you have any idea about what types of communications were going around?

Ms. Jennifer Murray: Well, what Mr. Coderre outlined is what we are hearing about. They made frequent announcements, as they do. They made announcements to the passengers with the information they had, which was very limited.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: As a union representative, what measures have you taken, or what have you done, since the incident with respect to the employees concerned, especially the employees whose conduct was questionable?

Ms. Jennifer Murray: I didn't hear that any conduct was questionable among any of the employees.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: We heard in our testimony here today that there may have been an incident in the other car. As well, we saw a video going around of one of the Via employees lashing out at a passenger.

What action was taken by you or Via? What disciplinary measures were taken?

• (1615)

Ms. Jennifer Murray: I'm not certain what disciplinary measures were taken.

All I can say is that it's a true indication of what happens in situations like this, when they're not prepared for what they are about to face.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Are you trying to say that you're not aware of any incident occurring that day?

Ms. Jennifer Murray: I'm not aware of any disciplinary measure.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Not disciplinary measures.... Was there any incident between the employees and passengers?

Ms. Jennifer Murray: I'm not aware of any misconduct on that day.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Murray.

Thank you, Mr. Iacono.

[Translation]

Over to you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval. You have six minutes.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome to the witnesses.

It would've been nice to hear from more passengers today, but at least we were able to get Mr. Coderre, so I thank him for being with us. The passenger perspective is very important in a study like this. We heard what management had to say, we heard some of the workers' account from their representatives, and we heard the passenger view. Each account is a bit different, but I think we're getting closer and closer to the truth as we overlay the different versions of the events.

Mr. Coderre, do you travel on Via Rail often? Do you take the train regularly?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: Yes.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: When the Via Rail executives were here, they called this an isolated incident.

Would you say it was an isolated incident? Do you often encounter these kinds of long delays when you take the train?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: Certainly, a 12-hour delay isn't a common occurrence on a Via Rail train, but delays of an hour or two are fairly common.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you.

The reports show that delays are a major issue for Via Rail. I realize that this was an extreme case.

You talked about what staff gave you. Trains 622, 26 and 24 were involved. You said you were on train 24. Is that right?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: No, I was on train 622.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: You were one of the passengers who waited more than 10 hours, then.

You said you were given a meal at the beginning of the train ride. During the delay, you were given snacks, pretzels and chocolate. Then, towards the end of the delay, you were given food when train 26 arrived.

About how much time was there between the breakfast you were given and the pizza you got with train 26?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: I would say six or seven hours.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: All right. Thank you.

I find something odd. We were told that railways were supposed to keep a supply of food and water in stock for passengers in the event of an incident or delay, which only seems sensible and appropriate. That's why I'm having trouble understanding why, for a period of seven hours, people were offered only pretzels and chocolate.

Do you think Via Rail should have given passengers more than that?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: Yes, I think we should have been given something more substantial than pretzels and chocolate.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: You said the water would have run out after 10 hours. Obviously, a railway can't be required to keep six months' worth of supplies on board. I'm not referring to the slogan, here, but what does common sense tell you would be logical or appropriate in terms of the supplies a railway should have in reserve for passengers? Basically, what would you expect?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: I think it should have enough supplies on board to cover at least 12 hours. You never know when something like this will happen.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you.

Now I'm going to turn to the union representatives.

Ms. Murray, I believe you said you didn't think this was an isolated incident as the Via executives claimed. Do you have any data or information on the number of incidents involving extended delays?

I think it's important to distinguish between delays of a half-hour or hour and delays lasting four, five, six, seven, eight or 10 hours. Delays like that are simply unacceptable. The company has to take responsibility and do something about those.

Do you, as a union member, have any data on that, internally?

• (1620)

[English]

Ms. Jennifer Murray: I don't have numbers per se, but I can say.... I worked at Via Rail here in the east coast, in the Atlantic. That train is notoriously late—many hours. Although I don't have data, I would agree that in the corridor region, delays of 10 to 12 hours are less rare than in the long service trains, but I would argue that they're certainly not isolated.

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: It happens fairly regularly, then.

I'm having trouble understanding something. First off, it's unacceptable for incidents like this to happen on a regular basis. Second, how is it that the company didn't have enough food and water in reserve to give passengers in a situation like this? Were there any internal discussions on that?

[English]

Ms. Jennifer Murray: I understand what the CEO has said—there's not a lot of space on board to keep huge reserves. It's not only long delays where they're running out of supplies. I don't think that they're properly stocked anyway, let alone for delays of a significant number of hours.

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: I have one more question for you. It was quite a stressful situation for all of you. Staff on board the trains worked very hard.

Were they compensated in any way? Were the employees paid? I assume they were paid for the overtime hours.

[English]

Ms. Jennifer Murray: They would have been paid, as per the guidelines in the collective agreement. It's not something that I have asked—as far as how they were paid—but it is covered in the collective agreement how they are compensated.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Murray.

Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[English]

Next, we have Mr. Bachrach.

The floor is yours, sir. You have six minutes, please.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all of our witnesses for being here today.

Mr. Coderre, you and I were speaking just before the meeting, and you told me that you had reviewed some of the testimony from the previous meeting with Via Rail. I hope you don't mind if I ask you a question regarding your impression of that testimony.

In Via Rail's characterization of the incident and their handling of it, was there anything that stood out to you as being inconsistent with your experience on the train?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: That is a good question. How can I say that? The one thing that really stood out from the testimony was....

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): You can answer the question in French, Mr. Coderre.

[*English*]

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: I know. I'm just trying to remember. Is it okay if we come back to that question later?

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Yes, that's fine.

I'm curious as well—when you talked about how some of the updates on the train were updates to say, “Hey, we don't have a plan right now. We're trying to come up with one,” and how that might have alarmed some passengers—about the fact that the company responsible for the train didn't have a plan at that given point in time.

I think there's potentially another view, which is that the more honest, transparent and forthcoming the company can be, maybe the more trust can be built among the passengers that they're going to get updates, regardless of whether it's good news or bad.

As a passenger, which of those would you prefer? Would you prefer frequent updates, even if it's bad news, or no news?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: Yes, probably. Ideally, I would say, if they can avoid getting to the point where they have no plans, that would be ideal.

Voices: Oh, oh!

• (1625)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I think we all want to avoid getting to the point where we have no plans. That's certainly my approach.

How did Via Rail compensate you for the inconvenience?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: I had a 100% travel credit, and I also got refunded.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I don't know, Mr. Chair, if this was news to other members of the committee. I hadn't heard in previous testimony about the police escorting someone off the train.

You said this occurred in a different car. I was wondering if this was something you heard second-hand, or if there is any information about it that you can share with us.

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: It was from car 1. I actually saw the person get escorted off. I couldn't say why or what happened, but I did see someone get off the train with the police.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you, Mr. Coderre.

I would turn now to Ms. Murray.

Ms. Murray, I should preface this by saying and just reflecting on Mr. Coderre's comment that he felt that the staff did an awesome job under the circumstances, and certainly that's been my experience on Via Rail. However, I'm curious whether your members, who were involved in this very stressful incident, who were respon-

sible for dealing with it, reached out to the union afterwards to convey any concerns.

Ms. Jennifer Murray: I don't want to say that they didn't, but it was certainly not to our offices directly. I don't know for sure. I would say that this incident wasn't as off the wall as we're led to believe. I can't say with great certainty, Taylor, how to answer that.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Okay.

Your point about the need for Via Rail's planning to include how they handle situations like this in the moment and how passengers and employees are taken care of is very important. Is Unifor engaged with Via Rail in its climate resilience planning, and to what extent?

Ms. Jennifer Murray: I'll defer this to Joel. He's our sector director, so he will have more information on this than I do.

Mr. Joel Kennedy (Director, Rail Sector, Unifor): Thank you, Jennifer.

Mr. Bachrach, as the national rail director, I have not been consulted by Via Rail in regard to their plans as of yet.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Obviously the committee has the ability to make recommendations to inform the government's role in preparing for these kinds of incidents. What would be your recommendation on the part of Unifor when it comes to improving Via Rail's response, specifically to the government's role? How can the Minister of Transport ensure that Via Rail is better prepared in the future?

Mr. Joel Kennedy: Certainly, for different entities that are regulated under the Canadian rail scheme, when changes are being made, there are consultations that happen, and it's mandatory through changes to the railway act or any of our regulations. We're consulted as stakeholders, and we bring a very good perspective in that regard. If we were consulted in an instance like this, we would have an expert like Jennifer available to provide her recommendations when it comes to food, when it comes to training and when it comes to emergency preparedness. However, we've been cut out of this process with Via at this point.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Ms. Murray indicated earlier that she didn't feel like training was the issue as much as investment in adequate personnel and human resources on board the train.

Is that a fair characterization? Have I understood that point correctly?

Mr. Joel Kennedy: You understand that point crystal clear. From the feedback that I've always received, it's our members that are really holding the train together in these types of situations. When we talk about lack of water or lack of storage space, this is a train. We can couple another car onto it that's possibly refrigerated or has some space to allow the storage that is needed.

This is a funding problem, not a training problem. I will emphasize that our members are the ones who are holding this train together in these types of situations, with very few resources.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Bachrach, and thank you, Mr. Kennedy.

Next, we have Mr. Vis, for five minutes.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Coderre, thanks for being here today.

Would you support a similar type of passenger bill of rights that we've seen passed for the airlines in Canada, to ensure that when a situation like this happens again, passengers know that it's not okay for a service provider not to meet a specific service standard for passengers in Canada?

• (1630)

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: Yes, that would be pretty useful.

Mr. Brad Vis: Thank you.

I'll put the same question to Mr. Kennedy or Ms. Murray.

Mr. Joel Kennedy: Can you repeat that?

Mr. Brad Vis: Would Unifor support a passenger bill of rights, similar to what we have passed for airlines in Canada?

Mr. Joel Kennedy: Certainly.

Mr. Brad Vis: Ms. Murray, in your opening comments you talked about climate or environmental impacts on service disruptions in Canada.

Can you give us some specific examples, please?

Ms. Jennifer Murray: We have to be aware of what climate change is bringing. For example, washed-out tracks and those types of situations will cause great delays. Our infrastructure goes through some very remote areas. We've seen it up north. We've seen it in other places where climate, certainly, has a definite impact on our infrastructure.

Mr. Brad Vis: You mentioned infrastructure, and the need for track twinning.

Would Unifor have any specific examples where we could twin our tracks to avoid further service disruptions for Via Rail or rail companies?

Ms. Jennifer Murray: I'll hand this over to Joel, if you're good with that, Joel.

Mr. Joel Kennedy: Certainly. For a long period of time now, Via Rail passenger services have been borrowing freight tracks. That's a problem for us. We talk about twinning tracks. It's not necessarily saying that we need twin passenger rail tracks, but we need dedicated passenger rail tracks. Right now, we're running on freight tracks. We're a second priority when it comes to passenger rail. We need dedicated trackage in Canada. For emergency situations, those tracks ought to be twinned for situations just as we've seen and that we're talking about here today.

Mr. Brad Vis: Just to conclude, what would Unifor see as the biggest takeaways from the delay we witnessed this summer?

Please reiterate what we can be doing at this committee in terms of specific recommendations to avoid further service disruptions for Canadian passengers.

Mr. Joel Kennedy: I'll take that one.

We've focused on track infrastructure, but what we're not focusing on is passengers. Jennifer outlined that in her presentation to

day. We seem to be lacking passenger emergency response plans and preparedness. I will use the example of a Greyhound bus. If a Greyhound bus breaks down, another bus is immediately dispatched. That's not what happened in this case. We look at trackage, and that type of infrastructure. What we need to be looking at are the company and government regulations surrounding emergency preparedness, emergency plans and these types of situations. In our view, that is lacking.

Mr. Brad Vis: Do I have any time left?

I'm good.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

Next, we'll go to Mr. Rogers.

You have five minutes, sir.

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

Welcome to our witnesses today.

First off, Mr. Coderre, I guess I'll come to you for a couple of questions.

In a previous meeting, we had the Via Rail management people here, who apologized profusely. I just want to acknowledge that. This kind of thing is unacceptable and shouldn't be happening, even though Transport Canada has previously invested some good dollars in Via Rail. The train that you were on, I understand, was a relatively new train. For that new infrastructure to fail like that is certainly unacceptable.

As a passenger on the train, there was some compensation offered, as you referenced. It was a cash refund and the price of a one-way ticket or whatever to some destination. Was that enough compensation, in your mind, to satisfy you and certainly the other passengers on the train, whom you might have talked to?

It just seems to me that the compensation is kind of lacking.

• (1635)

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: I would say it was lacking. At first, it felt generous, but when you think about it, most of the passengers who were on the train are probably not going to use the travel credit within 12 months.

The unfortunate part of those credits is that they expire within 12 months.

Mr. Churence Rogers: Really?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: Yes.

Mr. Churence Rogers: You also referenced the circumstances that you endured for those 10 hours, with the lack of food and just basics like drinks, pretzels and that kind of thing. That was, I guess, something that you would have appreciated at that time, before you were later served some pizza.

Was there was no opportunity, in your mind, when passengers may have been able to be unloaded from that train?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: It didn't seem like there would have been. I remember that when they transferred us to the other train, it looked like we were pretty high up on the highway. A lot of the passengers would not have been able to easily get off the train.

Mr. Churence Rogers: I'm assuming that there were probably people with disabilities on that train as well.

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: Yes.

Mr. Churence Rogers: That would have made it extremely difficult.

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: Yes.

Mr. Churence Rogers: How did they endure that 10-hour period, in your mind? Were they really challenged?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: I would say it was probably rougher for them, yes.

Mr. Churence Rogers: Ms. Murray, of course you saw the previous testimony by Via Rail officials and so on.

Following this event, did your union get any kind of comprehensive report or suggestions from all of the staff from that particular train about how to deal with this kind of similar event in the future?

Were there any suggestions or recommendations coming in from your staff about what they endured, how to possibly avoid this situation or how to give them more support to be able to deal with the passengers?

Ms. Jennifer Murray: I personally haven't seen anything directly from the staff.

I would say this is probably not the first time some of these folks have experienced this type of delay.

I have not seen any report or anything that has come through from the membership from that particular train.

Mr. Churence Rogers: Don't you think that might be something that your union would want to engage in with all of these staff members, to see if they have some future recommendations or suggestions for dealing with this kind of situation?

Ms. Jennifer Murray: I think it's a great idea.

I also think it's a very good idea for Via to engage in this type of conversation with our staff and with their workers. It is really important that they hear how this can be approached and done better. It is Via that will be implementing these things, and it should certainly demonstrate to the workers that it cares enough to hear from them.

Mr. Churence Rogers: Mr. Coderre mentioned that there didn't seem to be any plan to deal with this kind of situation, and, as things developed, there didn't seem to be any coordinated effort to deal with the folks on the train.

Perhaps it's something your union or Mr. Coderre could make a recommendation on to us as a committee, along with any other suggestions or recommendations that we could use in a future report.

Ms. Jennifer Murray: We would love to put something together for this committee.

Mr. Churence Rogers: Thank you.

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

Thank you for that, Ms. Murray. We look forward to receiving any suggestions you'd like to share with us.

[*Translation*]

It's now Mr. Barsalou-Duval's turn for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Murray, two years ago, a situation involving a train occurred during the holidays, and it was all over the news. In December 2022, a train was stopped for 14 hours. The issues were similar to those during the September 2024 incident: The toilets weren't working, communication was poor, food was lacking and so on.

In December 2022, the committee heard from Via Rail's leadership. They told us they were going to investigate the incident and make changes to their protocols.

Were any changes made, yes or no? If so, what were they? What was the reaction of staff?

• (1640)

[*English*]

Ms. Jennifer Murray: I don't know of any changes. From many years of these long delays, I know a decision has come in for more frequent communication, which Mr. Coderre has explained. Even if there was no information, there was still an announcement made.

However, I can't say I am aware of any changes that have come as a result of those delays around the holiday period, because I think there was actually more than one.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you for your answer.

My next question has to do with the more recent incident, the one that happened on Labour Day weekend. It was a difficult situation for staff and passengers alike. They were stuck between a rock and a hard place, so to speak.

Have you gotten any feedback from staff or passengers about the level of communication with management? Can you tell us more about that?

[*English*]

Ms. Jennifer Murray: I think what was communicated on the train was what was being communicated to the staff. There was no plan, so that's what would have been communicated to the passengers on board. It was likely frustrating, but that's what the staff would have been aware of as well.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: All right. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[*English*]

Mr. Philip Lawrence: I have a point of order.

Just because we're truncating it, I was wondering if we wanted to be extra fair to the Bloc and the NDP and give them five minutes as opposed to two minutes, as this is their last round—if you need it. If you don't, that's okay.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Barsalou-Duval, would you like more time? If the other parties are okay with it—

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: I, myself, have asked all the questions I had, but I'm not sure whether Mr. Bachrach was able to ask all of his questions.

The Chair: Great.

Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[English]

Mr. Bachrach, would you like additional time?

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: It's hard to say. Once I start talking, Mr. Chair, I could go on for quite a while.

An hon. member: Never mind.

The Chair: It's a dangerous proposition, Mr. Bachrach.

If you need additional time, just give me the signal and we'll be glad to give that to you.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Okay. Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Thanks again to our witnesses.

I have a couple more questions. One is related to the 2022 incident that Mr. Barsalou-Duval referenced in his last question.

This question is for Ms. Murray. I'm curious to know whether Unifor was engaged substantively in the aftermath of that incident and whether your employees were part of providing input that could inform the government's response. I understand that the minister required certain changes, and Via made certain changes based on those requirements and its own assessment of the incident.

Was Unifor engaged in that work?

Ms. Jennifer Murray: It wasn't, to my knowledge.

Obviously, I would have just been starting in this role. To my knowledge, Mr. Bachrach, Unifor wasn't engaged. Perhaps it was engaged at the local level, but certainly not at higher levels within the union.

Joel, if I'm mistaken, you can certainly jump in and correct me here.

Mr. Joel Kennedy: No, we were not consulted.

Generally, in our history, we haven't been consulted unless the companies were compelled to consult us. There's no voluntary consultation when it comes to these types of situations.

This leads me back to my previous comment to you. As stakeholders, we need to be part of this process. It's important. We bring valuable information up from the ranks. We have access to it through our health and safety committees when we're consulted. The problem is that there's nothing compelling these companies to consult with the union. That's problematic for us.

• (1645)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I'll shift gears a little.

There are points being made about how Via Rail could have been better prepared for this kind of incident.

My question is this: Given the constraints, which they couldn't change in the moment.... Based on the provisions available and the circumstances as you understand them, did Via Rail's personnel do the best they could, given the limitations? Do you feel the company should have responded differently, even given the constraints?

Mr. Joel Kennedy: I will say that staff on those trains are trained only for limited times, situations and scenarios. We can talk about a two- or three-hour delay, which should be on the high end of things. That's what our members are trained to deal with.

When we deal with large emergencies or longer delays, our members often look to management in the company for direction on how to govern those situations. Again, I would point to the resources coming from the company's perspective to assist our members in these types of unique situations—the planning, training and proper resources.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I have a final question.

We talked about the need for greater investment to ensure there are adequate human resources available on board the trains.

Is the issue the magnitude of investment that the government is making in Via Rail writ large, or is it Via Rail's allocation of the resources they're provided by the government?

Mr. Joel Kennedy: That's a very good question.

I would say it's allocation, because there's been a major push for and expenditure on infrastructure. Obviously, we're not seeing that in their plans, training and passenger-related systems. Yes, they bought trains. Yes, they may be looking at some high-frequency rail. What else have they done to support their passengers and for their emergency preparedness?

This incident happened in a very populous part of the country. What if it had happened in northern Manitoba, where there is nothing around and it could be -40°C? I think we got very lucky in this situation. We need to learn from this situation, and we need to look at the internal planning and emergency preparedness of Via Rail.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bachrach.

Next, we'll go to Mr. Lawrence.

Mr. Lawrence, the floor is yours for five minutes.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks, again, to the witnesses for being here. I really appreciate it.

I'm going to start with a question for Unifor.

Not too long ago, in my riding of Coburg, a Via Rail train broke down under different circumstances. It wasn't mechanical but rather from the weather, this time. There was a commissioned independent report with a number of recommendations.

I wonder if Unifor has a position on whether those recommendations have been adopted satisfactorily, or whether there's still work to be done.

Mr. Joel Kennedy: I haven't been privy to that report as of yet.

I apologize, but I cannot answer that question.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Ms. Murray, are you aware of it? Is there anything you would like to add?

Ms. Jennifer Murray: I have not seen that report, so I'm unable to respond either.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Thank you for that.

This is something that I think Via Rail should be sharing with you, and hopefully working collaboratively with the workers who keep the trains going. I'm a little surprised they haven't.

I'll have another question for Mr. Coderre in a second.

I want to say that it was definitely awful for the passengers, and it must also have been very difficult for the employees stuck in the middle. It can be very difficult to be in a position where you're expected to help people but don't have the tools.

First of all, I would like to say thank you to the Via Rail workers, who conducted themselves professionally, and to all rail workers who do that.

Perhaps I'm putting you in an unfair position, but that's what politicians do: Do you believe Via Rail set your workers up for failure by having a lack of resources and planning with respect to this delay?

Mr. Joel Kennedy: I will comment. Jen might also have a comment on this.

It is the employer's responsibility to keep the health and safety of our members in check. That is their responsibility under the labour code, under the law, so yes, I would say that their lack of investment absolutely put our members in harm's way that day.

• (1650)

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Thank you.

Mr. Coderre, I believe that another member asked you questions with respect to what you received as compensation. I believe you received a refund and then a ticket or a free pass as well. Could you clarify that?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: Yes. It was a travel credit.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Okay. That's perfect.

Were you made aware of, or is there, to your knowledge, a complaint resolution if you had wanted something more than that? Did Via advise you that there was any right or any process that you could go through to acquire a greater compensation for your 10-hour delay?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: No, they did not.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: They gave you the refund and I guess what you could call a ticket pass. What was it?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: It was a travel credit.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: It was a travel credit, and that was that.

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: Yes.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Okay.

I also want to go back briefly to some of your testimony with respect to the international travel you've done. You said that in South Korea the trains were rarely not on time. You also had some testimony with respect to Via.

I want to ask you a specific question here. Just in your own estimation, in your own anecdotal experience, how often is a Canadian train late, whether it be Via or otherwise? Is it 50% of the time, 20% of the time or 10% of the time?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: When I took it, I would say that about 40% of the time it was late.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: About 40% of the time it was not on time, right?

I have to imagine that it's pretty challenging for you and for all passengers to be that late. Does that maybe discourage you from taking Via? This time, I understand, you were visiting Quebec City, but if you had an important business meeting, would you think twice about getting onto a Via train?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: I typically take the train to get to the Montreal airport. What I do is that I take the earliest train. I try to have a buffer of six to eight hours in case they have a big delay.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: You have to put in an additional six to eight.... I mean, it's good planning—

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Philip Lawrence: —and you're obviously a smart guy, but you have to add six to eight hours extra if you want to take the train to hang out at the airport.

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: Yes.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Okay.

Thank you.

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

[*Translation*]

The next and final questioner today is Mr. Lauzon.

You have five minutes, Mr. Lauzon. Go ahead.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you all for being here today, Ms. Murray, Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Coderre.

I'll start with Ms. Murray.

You talked about the many service interruptions on Via Rail trains and the issues that arise as a result, especially when remote areas and climate change are involved.

You started in the railway industry 25 years ago, so given all your experience, can you describe how the issues have changed because of climate change?

[English]

Ms. Jennifer Murray: There are a number of factors, I believe. Climate change is one of those things that I think we have to recognize. Certainly, it's difficult to control the weather. However, we do have infrastructure that we need to upgrade. We've been very vocal about that here at Unifor. That is infrastructure as far as tracks go and infrastructure as far as our train cars go.

We've had many issues in the northern part of New Brunswick, where there are tracks that are in ill repair. They're not our tracks. They're not Via Rail's tracks. They're owned by CN Rail. We are very reliant on the people who own the tracks to keep them upgraded and then, obviously, there's the infrastructure with the cars and the problems we have there.

I know that you've asked about climate change, but I think we're facing it, and we just can't deny it. Things like washouts and those kinds of things are things that we're going to see more frequently.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: You mentioned flooding. Storms and weather events are also an issue because they can cause trees to fall on the tracks.

Have you had any experience with train service being interrupted because of a storm?

• (1655)

[English]

Ms. Jennifer Murray: A few years ago—and I apologize that I don't know the exact year—when I was working as the union representative for Via Rail workers who travel on the ocean between Halifax and Montreal, there was an ice storm. Many of the trees had fallen on the tracks, and it was a very difficult time for our passengers and for our crew members trying to keep people safe, keep people away from windows and all of those things. Many of the trees were just lying over the tracks, and the train was passing through at a slow speed, which delayed the train greatly as well.

At that time, I do want to say that the union went to the company and begged it to listen to the workers and to what their experience was. We sat down in a room, and we actually did that. The workers were able to actually talk to the employer, express their concerns and discuss how we could improve upon things in the future.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you, Ms. Murray.

Mr. Coderre, you said in your remarks that you felt as though the employees didn't really know what to do. There was no plan.

At what point did you get that feeling? Was it when the train stopped, started and then stopped again, or when the transfer happened?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: I'd say it was about four or five hours in.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: For the first four hours or so, things were fine. The service you received was good.

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: That's correct.

On the whole, we received very good service, in spite of the situation.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: All right. The service you received was good overall.

You also said that supplies were a problem. There were few snacks initially, but you were able to get some pizza.

How did you get that pizza? Did the train that came to your rescue bring it, or was it delivered to you by car?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: I think it came by car. I didn't see how exactly it was delivered.

I think that, going forward, Via Rail should plan to order pizza, water and other supplies sooner, instead of waiting eight hours to do so. That would be one solution.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Very well.

I want to revisit the water situation, just to be sure I understood correctly.

You said that there weren't enough supplies but that you were given water until almost the end of the trip. Did you run out of water only at the end of the trip?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: Yes.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: All right.

In the train car you were in, did you hear about any fellow passengers in need of special attention, medical assistance for example, who were tended to by members of the staff?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: I didn't see that in car number two.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: All right.

You said you noticed a change in staff behaviour. You said that you received good service from staff for the first four hours of the trip, but that they didn't know what to do after that.

Do you think staff were responsible for that change?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: I would say it wasn't so much staff as it was the company.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: All right.

You're saying the company was responsible for the change in behaviour, according to the information that was communicated to you.

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: That's correct.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: All right.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lauzon.

[English]

If colleagues will permit it, I had a quick question to follow up on Mr. Lauzon's question regarding food. There was mention of the fact that sometimes these trains could be stuck in areas where they don't have access to be able to order pizzas. This past summer, I was able to tour the Gagetown training facility in New Brunswick, and they showed me the storage area where they store the food packets provided to our soldiers as they're going through their training. These last six months to a year...their freeze-dried foods. They fit into very small packages.

To you, Mr. Coderre, and then to you, Ms. Murray, do you think this is perhaps a solution, where every train can have freeze-dried meals for every single person in there? They don't have to be heated. They are able to just be opened up and eaten. Is that something you think would have been a good solution to have in place during your incident?

Mr. Cédryk Coderre: I think so. Something with more substance would have been better, and that would probably have done the trick, yes.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Murray, do you think that is something that would have been helpful for the staff and the team who were on the train?

Ms. Jennifer Murray: I think being able to offer anything with any sustenance would have been very helpful. We could find space for something like that without needing refrigeration, etc., and it's not a terrible idea to look at, for sure.

The Chair: Thank you very much, and thank you, colleagues, for allowing me the opportunity to ask that question.

On behalf of all members of our committee, I want to thank you, Mr. Coderre, as well as you, Ms. Murray, and you, Mr. Kennedy, for appearing before us and providing your feedback on how we can ensure that this does not happen again or that we are better prepared when it does.

With that, I'd like to ask the witnesses to log off. You can be dismissed now.

We will stick around to have a discussion relating to the motion put forward by Mr. Lawrence. I will suspend for two minutes as we do that. Thank you.

● (1700) _____ (Pause) _____

● (1700)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order.

Colleagues, thanks for your patience with this. I want to confirm with everyone that the motion put forward by Mr. Lawrence has been now distributed in both official languages, so that's out of the way.

I believe now that that's been done, we actually might have unanimous consent to adopt the motion.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: That's wonderful. Thank you very much, colleagues. You made that easy.

The meeting is now adjourned.

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