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Chair

Mr. Gary Goodyear

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• (1110)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC)): Let's begin the meeting, ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you very much again for coming.

I want to advise members first-hand of course that this meeting is being held in public. I don't think we're going to have too much trouble today with our timing, but we will need at least half an hour at the end to discuss committee business. So we'll all watch the time and hopefully we'll have a half an hour at the end to deal with other matters.

Monsieur Godin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

On Tuesday, my colleague Paul Dewar introduced a motion, and I would like it to be put on the agenda of the committee's future business.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Absolutely. That is on our agenda and it's okay; we'll just talk about that. I'll save time at the end. Thank you.

As discussed at our Tuesday meeting, the committee invited Mr. Kingsley to come today to discuss the response we've received from the government with respect to our 13th report at the end of session in June. We have that before us. Furthermore, on Tuesday of this week the government did introduce Bill C-31, which implements several of the committee's recommendations. That bill will ultimately be referred back to this committee after second reading. I'm hoping that members can maybe focus on the report, the response from the government today, and see whether or not we want to provide a response to the response, rather than getting sidetracked to Bill C-31. I would hope that members can keep focused on the response. That's what I had spoken to Mr. Kingsley about, and I'm quite sure it's the fair way to go.

Mr. Kingsley, I think if it's okay with you we would like to start with opening remarks from you. Perhaps you could introduce again your colleagues and then we'll open the floor to questions.

Colleagues, just so everybody is aware of the rules before we begin, we'll go in the usual round of questions starting with a seven-minute round in the usual format.

Mr. Kingsley, welcome, and thank you so much for agreeing to come again on short notice. I appreciate your cooperation and diligence for the committee. Please introduce your colleagues and then we can begin.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley (Chief Electoral Officer, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am pleased to respond to the Committee's request to discuss its June 2006 report, *Improving the Integrity of the Electoral Process: Recommendations for Legislative Change*—the name you have given it—and the government's recent response to that report.

I am accompanied today by Ms. Diane Davidson, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer and Chief Legal Counsel, and Mr. Rennie Molnar, Senior Director of Operations, Register and Geography.

The first half of my presentation will be in French, and the second half in English, obviously.

In preparing its report, the Committee considered the recommendations for amendments to the Canada Elections Act set out in my 2005 report to the Speaker of the House, *Completing the Cycle of Electoral Reforms*.

Several of these recommendations were endorsed by the Committee and included in its report, some with enhancements. In turn, in its response the Government agreed with many of the Committee's recommendations and has introduced legislation—Bill C-31 as you just mentioned, Mr. Chairman—to implement them.

A number of areas have been agreed by Committee or by the Government in its response as warranting further consideration. These include a simpler and fairer broadcasting regime; a general review of the Special Voting Rules; a more precise recommendation for an expanded authority for the Chief Electoral Officer to create mobile polls; the distribution of the annual and final lists of electors to all registered and eligible parties; the development of a simpler administrative process for securing time extensions for the filing of financial returns, and the right to strike by employees of Elections Canada.

I continue to think that these are issues worth pursuing by us all and I would be pleased to make available to the Committee such resources of my Office as it may require, respecting any work upon which it may embark in these areas, and to participate in your deliberations.

There are a number of matters raised in the Committee report or in the Government response that I would like to comment on further.

The 2002 decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in *Sauvé* restored the right of prisoners in federal institutions, penitentiaries, to vote, but the Canada Elections Act does not have a mechanism for them to exercise this right. The Government has rejected the recommendations for the expansion to federal institutions of the existing statutory process for voting in provincial correctional institutions. In the absence of the required amendment of the Canada Elections Act, I propose to continue to adapt the Act with each election—to the extent permitted by law—to provide the needed mechanism.

I would like to add a comment that is not found in the text that was tabled: I would like to know if this Committee has any objections to my actions.

I also urge Parliament to continue to consider this issue.

I will now continue in English.

[English]

In its report, the committee rejected the wording of my 2005 recommendation respecting a civil examination and inquiry authority for the financial returns required from political entities, particularly political parties, under the Canada Elections Act. I remain convinced of the need for such an authority in light of the importance of the public disclosure requirements of the act and the significant amount of the public reimbursements paid out to registered parties on the basis of those returns. I am willing, obviously, to look at the wording with you to see what wording you would find acceptable.

Following recommendations initiated by the committee, the government's response has proposed a requirement for electors to produce identification in order to vote.

Provision of ID constitutes a major change in the functioning of the polls. Should Parliament wish to proceed with this initiative, it must be very clear as to what is required. This requirement will be implemented by some 65,000 individual deputy returning officers across the land, whose judgment must be consistent: in Canada there's only one definition of a Canadian.

Before implementing this recommendation, it is important to know exactly which entities would be considered government or agencies of government and how many types of government identification have a person's name, residential address, and photograph, and to know what part of the elector universe has such identification. Furthermore, I would want to hear the views of Parliament before authorizing alternative types of identification. This is particularly important as deputy returning officers at the polls will have no flexibility respecting this identification once it is authorized for an election.

At the conclusion of its recommendations, the committee noted that it was awaiting a report from my office respecting the financing provisions of the Canada Elections Act. The committee indicated that upon its receipt it would address seven specific topics noted in the report in the context of a review of overall finance issues. These topics will include such things as membership fees, tax credits, and tax receipts for pre-election contributions.

In response to that request, I am preparing a report for the assistance of the committee that should be available within the next 30 days. That report will deal expressly with those seven issues. It will not go further into other financing provisions of the Canada Elections Act.

Elections Canada has data respecting the operation of the 2004 political financing regime, which it has provided to the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs in its study of Bill C-2—that relates to the 2005 financial year. If the committee wishes, I will be pleased to make that data available to it.

The data that is available now to Elections Canada does not reflect a normal electoral cycle because of the effect of general elections in each of the three years since the implementation of those initiatives. In other words, that's why I cannot provide you with a report on the full implications and full ramifications of Bill C-24, as it was then known.

I have already provided the committee, under separate cover dated October 5, in a letter that reached you during your committee deliberations on that day, with information respecting the implementation of different systems to assist candidates on polling day to identify electors who have voted. I would be pleased to answer any question the committee may have respecting that information.

I would also like to note that the government response has two recommendations to which it is asking the Chief Electoral Officer to respond. One of them concerns the warning that would be posted in the polls, which would add to the fact that we already post a notice to the effect that one must be a Canadian and one must be 18 years of age before voting. I'm asked to also add that it is against the law—that it is committing a crime—to do otherwise. I intend to start doing that as soon as possible.

The other one concerns providing instructions to electoral officials who are responsible for registration on polling day. We already do that, Mr. Chairman, so if there is anything I'm not understanding about this, I would appreciate further guidance.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That concludes my presentation.

• (1115)

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

We will begin our first round of questioning, for seven minutes again, with Mr. Owen, please.

Hon. Stephen Owen (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you all for being here, and Mr. Kingsley, for your presentation.

Let me just raise a few issues and we may come back to them in different forms, through our various questions.

I'm interested in the lack of response to the Supreme Court of Canada decision that confirms the right of inmates in federal institutions to vote and the somewhat of a standoff we seem to have in the ability to exercise that right. So I'm interested in your comment that you will be acting within the current act to provide that ability to the full extent that you're able. I'd like to know a little more about the barriers to that and whether they are absolute in some situations, or whether there is a way you can provide that opportunity.

Secondly, I'm interested in the government's response to our committee's report and the concern raised about what is termed "serial vouchers", which is an ominous term, at best. I'm thinking particularly about remote aboriginal communities where ID is often not in people's possession, and what impact that may have on their ability to vote. And I think it goes something like, a "vouchee" can't become a "voucher". I think that's the aspect of it. If you're vouched for, you can't vouch for someone else's identity.

And finally, this goes somewhat beyond the scope of your initial remarks. As you know, the Liberal Party of Canada has a leadership convention coming up, and there has been some confusion, if I can call it that, around how convention fees are to be treated, whether they're to be receipted and therefore provide a benefit to the person who is paying them, but also, therefore, a deduction on their allowable contribution for that year. I wonder if you can bring any more clarity at this stage to that. I know you've made recent statements on it, and I wonder if you have a definitive statement to make on it.

Thank you.

• (1120)

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: Mr. Chairman, with respect to prisoners in federal penitentiaries, I have, in light of the Supreme Court judgment, adapted the statute in accordance with my powers, which is the power to adapt in unforeseen circumstances or in cases of emergency. I have adapted the statute because Parliament had not had an opportunity to amend the law, based on the Supreme Court judgment.

What I am indicating here is that since it is not proposed to change the statute at this time, it would be my intention to continue to do so, unless I hear differently from this committee. That's what I'm asking, because that would be a bit of a stretch to the definition of "unforeseen" and emergency situation, which is what the statute allows me to do at this time.

Otherwise, what will happen is that the persons who are affected by the decision, if I do not adapt the statute, would have to go and seek redress from the courts to force the Supreme Court judgment to be enforceable for the election. That's why I'm seeking the guidance of the committee.

With respect to serial vouching, my understanding is that this is an issue that is of concern to all the parties represented in the House, which is the ability of a person to be registered on polling day, through a vouching, and then to vouch for the next person in line.

This has an impact all over Canada. It has not been particularly reported as an issue, that I can recollect, with respect to aboriginals. I think it would have an impact all over. I sense parliamentarians around this table felt this was a problem and therefore viewed the

response of the government to be something that reflected the will of this committee.

With respect to convention fees, I have nothing further to add to what I've stated before in terms of interpretation, and therefore I would not want to add anything.

Hon. Stephen Owen: Thank you.

With respect to the inmate right-to-vote question, it seems to me that you could be the subject of a mandamus petition to require you to provide a facility for them to be able to vote effectively.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: This is what would happen if I do not adapt the statute. These people are attuned to their rights. Mr. Sauvé is well attuned to his rights, other prisoners are attuned to their rights, as confirmed by the Supreme Court, and this is obviously one redress mechanism that they would attempt.

All that I would be striving to achieve is to make that unnecessary if I were to continue to adapt the statute, but I'm really feeling uncomfortable to do so without the *assentiment*, the *aval*, of this committee, and therefore the agreement of this committee that this is the thing to do.

• (1125)

Hon. Stephen Owen: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

On the government side, Mr. Preston, please.

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): I'll carry on where Mr. Owen was on the serial vouching piece. The whole purpose that the whole discussion centred around was the identification of voters. In your talks this morning, you also asked for some more information from us about what identification pieces would be permissible or how to get there.

Mr. Kingsley, I see in other areas you're certainly not shy at coming forward and making decisions on your own and bringing them to this committee. I would suggest that the same would hold true for the identification piece. You have an organization that is countrywide, and you would maybe be better at being able to research what identification is available countrywide. I'd like to suggest that you do that, that you look at what identification is available, and maybe, if you'd like advice from this, as you have asked for on a couple of other cases in your advice from this committee, then send it back to us as to what you've discovered, rather than this committee individually going around the different parts of the country we're from and trying to determine what piece of identification is correct.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: I certainly agree entirely with you, Mr. Preston. The text perhaps could have been clearer. I would intend to undertake this work immediately after this meeting and ascertain what government ID exists now, what is issued by different governments across the land.

If you look at the federal government, there is no photo ID, to the best of my knowledge, provided by anyone at the federal government level, except perhaps the passport, and maybe citizenship cards. But at the provincial level, I think it would be important to find out, because if it's drivers' licences, as in Ontario, for example, where I am a resident, that's one thing, but not everyone drives a car. What else is available? Well, there's a health card, but does the health card have a photo? My health card in Ontario doesn't, because I'm part of the group that wasn't done when they did that. So this is the type of thing I think you should be aware of as you proceed down that line, so that you know what the impact will be so that we avoid difficult situations at the polls.

Mr. Joe Preston: I understand that long before we go to the poll with an ID, we should have decided what ID is acceptable, and that was the discussion of this committee. Certain provinces of the land still don't have pictures on drivers' licences either, or it hasn't rotated through the citizenry that they all have pictures, as with the health card in Ontario. We can predict that those will be photo ID in the future to all or to some, but as I said, you need to come up with that list, perhaps a by-province list of what would be acceptable, and then we could certainly look at that.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: We'll undertake that immediately. That was the gist, the thrust of my comment, sir.

Mr. Joe Preston: Right.

The other piece on the serial vouching that we certainly talked about—it was discussed here—was that it wasn't about one citizen of Canada vouching for one citizen of Canada; it was a bus pulling to a poll and somebody saying, “These are all my neighbours, and I know them all and I'm vouching for them all.” That's truly what the serial vouching piece was about.

Then again, I think Mr. Owen brought up the other piece, that “I'll vouch for you, then you vouch for the next guy on the bus, and he vouches for the next guy on the bus.” Let's get real. If 40 people come on a bus without ID, I think alarm bells should go off, and that's truly what the whole voter identification piece was about. I'm not sure you answered Mr. Owen's question when he asked you, but was there some unclearness as to what we were talking about?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: Well, I did, and what I indicated in my answer is that I share the committee's views on this issue, and therefore I'm not in disagreement with the government's response. Okay? I'm not in disagreement. I'm in agreement with the government's response on this.

Mr. Joe Preston: Okay. In this response, have you answered to all of the government's response, other than the pieces that were missing from it?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: Nothing that the government responded was found objectionable by my office.

Mr. Joe Preston: Super.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: So it's a form of negative consent, if you wish, but that's not the thrust of it. In my discussions with the chairman, the thrust of what I was supposed to do was to highlight those things left to be studied, and that's the thrust of what I did.

• (1130)

Mr. Joe Preston: The only point I'm making is that at some point in the future we won't say that we didn't talk about that. So by not

talking about it, we're saying we've responded that we didn't have anything to say about this.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: That is because the government, in its response, quite rightly noted that my office was consulted on what is in the bill, and what is in the bill or in the response we made sure we could implement.

Mr. Joe Preston: I have one further question on the identification piece. We have made provision in here should someone truly just not have identification—and there will be, we recognized at committee, that eventuality. We hoped that most Canadians would learn that they have to vote by showing identification, but some would not have it, and there would then be an affidavit they could sign that would be signed by the deputy returning officer stating that the person did not have identification but answered the question that he or she was a Canadian citizen and lived within the boundaries of that poll, or whatever other questions there are.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: There's also the requirement for vouching, which means that somebody else must be there who knows the person. I suppose that's a double whammy of a requirement.

Mr. Joe Preston: My question on that is whether it is our intent to then have a record of that.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: Yes. There will be a record—

Mr. Joe Preston: So there will be a trail to follow should—

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: There will be a paper trail. The person will have to sign in such an instance, and if there is any abuse of that, we will be able to trace the document, trace the handwriting, do the requisite comparisons, and prosecute if necessary.

Mr. Joe Preston: All right.

And you mentioned in your comments this morning that there are seven financial issues in a report that you're about to bring back to us, and you have that almost ready for us. Would you be looking for a response from us, or is this an informational report?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: You requested it, and therefore I will provide the information. How you react to it and why you would want to bring me back is really up to you. Of course, I will respond within two hours of notice, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Joe Preston: If you're in the country.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: And if I can be found.

The Chair: Thank you very much, and it is ten seconds too early.

We'll go to Mr. Guimond.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Kingsley, I would like to begin with a comment. We remain greatly perplexed as to the accuracy of the lists. The best evidence of this is that in your 2005 report, you asked that the deadline for distributing the lists be changed from October 15 to November 15. I doubt that this request was made simply on a whim. You no doubt realized that on November 15, the lists would be more accurate and would reflect the considerable number of moves in Quebec.

It explains why we put forward an amendment to Bill C-16 to change the election date suggested in the said bill, i.e. the third Monday in October. That is what is called “crying over spilt milk”.

When you appear again before this Committee after the next elections, we will again lament the inaccuracy of the lists. I warn you in advance that if the voters put their confidence in me once again and I am still a member of this Committee, I will say: “I told you so!”

That being said, I want to get back to the bingo cards. In your letter of October 5, I get the feeling you wanted to make things more complicated than they really are.

Has anyone from your office spoken to Mr. Blanchet or one of his representatives to have them explain this system to you? Do you consider that you have an in-depth knowledge of the bingo card system in Quebec?

For example, you said that a photocopier will be needed at each polling station. Are you aware of the NCR, or no carbon required forms? In Quebec, there is an NCR sheet. The party that shows up first gets the first copy, and the second gets the second copy. Why make it complicated when it's so simple?

You also said that it would cost between \$10.6 million and \$23.5 million to hire staff to manage it all. Why not ask the poll clerk already in the polling station to cross names off on the lists, while having the bingo card next to him or her? The poll clerk could indicate that voter No. 28 voted in the last two hours. There would be no need for additional staff.

If you say that this involves costs for employees, some people will surely ask if they are crazy, when it comes to the bingo cards. I asked, and in Quebec, the work is done by the clerk.

You say that the list is confidential. Well, they would not be handing out photocopies of the list, but a sheet listing 28, 128, 132, etc. We have the lists, and we can check and see that voter No. 28's name is Jean-Pierre Kingsley and that he voted between 9 a.m. and 11 a.m..

• (1135)

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Firstly, with respect to the accuracy of the lists, the letter I wrote to the Committee—on October 5, I believe, I referred to it earlier—clearly indicates that with a fixed election date, special arrangements can be made. However, even with these special arrangements, the list will not be as accurate as the list we would have prepared for November 15, even with special arrangements. I was very clear on the subject. The Committee was aware of this when it voted in favour of the Bill in its existing form.

I made other recommendations and suggestions to the Committee, but it dropped them; I have no problems with that. However, the Committee was clearly informed as to the accuracy of the list. It's written in the letter. So your decision is not a problem for me, but I will do everything in my power to have as accurate a list as possible.

Would it have been better to wait? I believe that suggestion was implicit in my letter.

Secondly, with regard to the bingo card, we shouldn't mix scenarios. We did not expect to need photocopiers for the bingo cards. We understand the system. In fact, your representative was kind enough to bring us a bingo card during an advisory committee session two weeks ago. So, I know the system, I have seen it. It has been explained to me.

Before answering, we contacted the office of the *Directeur général des élections du Québec* to understand how the system operates, obviously, because it is important that we provide information that is as accurate as possible.

Thirdly, if I could adapt it to the existing system, I would do it. If I knew how to do it, I would, because I always do everything I can to help the candidates, as well as the voters. In this job, it's my mission in life. So if we could find a way to do it, even by making modifications, I would be willing to pursue the discussion.

But when you refer to the Quebec model, you should know that it calls for the addition of two paid employees for this task. We have calculated that one paid employee per polling station costs \$10.8 million. That's the cost involved. Could we do it without paying someone?

I must also take into account the fact that the Committee wants to add identification papers to the electoral process, which will obviously create more work for the polling stations and clerks. But if there was a way to do it, let me say right away that I would agree, because I know that it would help you.

Mr. Michel Guimond: You would be open to having it done by the clerk?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: If there was a way of seeing if it could be done, I would consider the possibility, but at this point, I don't see how, because of the workload, especially if there are plans to add identification papers. There is a lot of uncertainty. That is what I am trying to point out.

• (1140)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

If we still feel that question needs some more answers, Monsieur Guimond, we can move to it on the second round.

If I may have the committee's consent, Ms. Davies would like to ask a question.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Davies, please.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Thank you very much, and thank you to my colleague Mr. Godin for allowing me to be here as well—I'm not usually on this committee.

I am very concerned about some of the proposals that have been put forward.

In your brief, Mr. Kingsley, you talk about the ID provision and that it will constitute a major change in the functioning of the polls, and I would certainly agree with that. You also talk about the judgment that would be applied and whether it would be consistent—we're talking about 65,000 people. But I think what you haven't referenced, and what I would have a huge concern about, is that if we move to this kind of system we are potentially disenfranchising thousands of people, mostly low-income people or homeless people, who for one reason or another don't have ID.

In Vancouver East, for example, as you know, we have relied on statutory declarations and we have lawyers on election day who come from various organizations—it's very non-partisan—and that statutory declaration has been sufficient for the returning officer to accept that the person is who they are, they have an address, they have no other ID. Mr. Owen talks about remote communities, aboriginal communities, and I'm very concerned that with the requirements around ID, particularly if we're saying you need one photograph ID but otherwise it's got to be two pieces of ID, we will be in effect disenfranchising many people in low-income communities. So my question is, are we applying the right tool to the problem that's been identified? If the issue here is multiple voting or multiple vouching, then surely there must be a mechanism to deal with that, rather than penalizing people who legitimately don't have ID and spend hours in lineups waiting to vote.

I've sent you cases over a number of elections of problems that we've had, and it is a major issue. I'm very concerned that if we introduce this as a new principle in our elections we'll really be changing not just the functioning but how we enfranchise people. I'd like you to respond to that.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: The remarks I made were meant to stimulate exactly the discussion that you're precipitating by your comments. I think it's going to be very important for people to understand that when there are no pieces of ID that are available there will have to be an oath and they will have to be vouched for by someone else who is already on the list. And it will not be possible to have serial vouching to achieve that, in accordance with the changes that would be brought about. I think the committee needs to be aware of that. And there will be no judgment on the part of the DRO; the law will prevent them from making judgments that they'll accept this person anyway because they look honest. That will not be a possibility. There will have to be strict ID, as prescribed.

That's why I said I will send you recommendations of the pieces of ID that I would accept as part of the statute I would have under Bill C-31. I'll send you the pieces that I consider acceptable, and you can tell me if you find them acceptable. Because I intend to be swayed here by the will of Parliament, not by my own will. I run elections; I don't write the laws.

Ms. Libby Davies: Yes, but I can tell you already that whatever you come up with, there will be people who have none of the above

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: I agree.

Ms. Libby Davies: So we're basically saying that they don't vote. And what I'm trying to get at is your concern: is it primarily the vouching of people doing multiple vouching, or is it that you think there are people who are voting more than once? Because I think

there are ways to address that without having to get into the ID question.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: Frankly, it's the concern of the committee, more than mine. These are not recommendations that I made about serial vouching, even though I can see the sensitivity of that issue, and neither is double voting a concern of mine.

• (1145)

Ms. Libby Davies: Do we have any information on that?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: I have not seen proof of this. I've read the report, and apparently there were people who came here to testify from parties and they said that they had instances of this. Whenever I hear this, I tell people to provide me with the particulars of those instances, but they do not. I have received nothing from the parties. So it's very difficult for us to see where this is occurring. There are isolated instances that we identify through checking of the records of people who vote at advance polls and vote again at the regular polls and other similar instances. But they are very low in number, and we investigate those and the commissioner either prosecutes or comes to an understanding. It's called a compliance agreement, where the person recognizes that what they did was wrong, and some of them do it for a number of valid or what we would consider not illegal reasons.

What the committee is addressing is what the committee, as elected representatives, feel is an issue, not what I've brought to its attention.

Ms. Libby Davies: Thank you.

The Chair: You have one minute left, Ms. Davies.

Ms. Libby Davies: I was going to say that we need to see the evidence, but you're saying you don't have it. When the committee obviously gets into the debate, we're going to have to address this. If we're dealing with a mythical problem yet we're using a sledgehammer to address it in terms of potentially disenfranchising a huge number of people, that would be a very serious concern for us, and I hope other members would share that concern too.

This is a pretty fundamental right that we're talking about. If someone is entitled to vote—i.e., they're a citizen and they're 18 years of age—but we remove that right or diminish it because of the rule we've set up, then I already have lawyers who are saying they believe this would be worthy of a challenge legally, from what they've seen already.

So I'm just saying it's going to be an issue, and we would need to look at that very carefully.

The Chair: Thank you.

Starting on our second round, we're moving to five minutes now, starting with Mr. Bagnell, please.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Thank you.

I'm not normally on this committee, so I beg the committee's indulgence. Some of the things I want to put on record are related to elections, but may not be related to today's agenda, because I don't get that much access to the Chief Electoral Officer.

I'd like to talk about a couple of things that have come up in elections. One is related to ID, which we've talked about. I agree with the idea of having ID, but just to emphasize Mr. Owen's point, communities in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut don't have any roads to get there, so most people won't have driver's licences. Youths don't have driver's licences. There just isn't the ID available, so it's a problem for which we're going to have to figure out a solution.

The lists have been problematic in our area. I like a permanent electoral list. I just think we have to refine it better, because we go to every second house and there are people there who don't live there, they've moved, they have way more children than they're supposed to have, etc.

We have a big problem with hospitals in rural areas. It's true that if a person is in the hospital, they can vote. The problem is that for every person in the hospital, sometimes they have between five and ten visitors, especially if it's an acute thing. The problem is that you don't know when you're going to go into the hospital emergency ward. These people come from a hundred miles away because there's only one hospital in the entire Yukon, which is bigger than any country in Europe. People have to come from all over the Yukon, which results in them not being in their riding that day, so they're disenfranchised. They can't vote. There's no way they can get back a hundred miles to vote and there's no way they're going to abandon a person on their death bed who they didn't know was going to be there on election day.

I don't know if we still do voting cards. I don't get involved in the mechanics of the election that much, being the candidate, but there was an issue with this at some time in the past. A voting card came in the mail. In our area, there are a lot of these mailboxes. People go to their mailboxes and they throw out all their junk mail and anything that doesn't have their name on it, so you end up with piles of voting cards all over the place and people can just pick them up and vote with them.

Finally, my last point is on Bill C-16. As the Chief Electoral Officer, I'm sure you must be aware of the problems caused when there are two elections at the same time. That's not very convenient in Canada. It's very confusing for the voter. One election is confusing enough as far as enumeration, advance polls, and all that are concerned.

Unfortunately, we have Bill C-16, which doesn't make a provision that you're going to have elections. The first time there's an election, it's going to be three days away from a Yukon election. My suggestion is that we amend that bill so that there's an ability to change the time of elections by a month instead of three days, really, so that we don't have overlapping elections. I think everyone thinks that would make sense.

I don't know if you want to comment on any of those, but those are things that have come up in elections in my area.

• (1150)

The Chair: I have no problem whatsoever in allowing the time, but we have a minute and a half left. I think the comments on Bill C-16 might be best kept to another time, and maybe we can just focus on some of the other concerns in the minute and a half left.

Thank you.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: With respect to people in hospitals on polling day, the law is clear. For visitors or patients, there is no poll in a hospital. These people would have to have signified that they wanted to vote and stated where they were from. There's no poll in a hospital, which is a short-term facility. When former committees considered this, they recognized that in a hospital you're going to have people from different ridings. This may occur even at a Yukon hospital. If the committee wished to make an exception for hospitals in remote areas, it would have to amend the statute. This is something the committee should consider.

With respect to the VIC, voter information card, it is still being sent to people. Some are being thrown away. I'm having discussions right now with the president of Canada Post to see how we could prevent those cards from circulating. I'll come back to the committee once I'm advised by Canada Post about what they think they can do to help Canadian democracy in this respect.

The other question related to Bill C-16. I'll reply to it at the appropriate time.

The Chair: Mr. Hill.

Hon. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Thank you.

First of all, I have a brief statement to make. I have some difficulty with what Madam Davies was getting at. She said we were going to use a sledgehammer to fix some mythical problem. She's not even part of this committee. This committee had achieved relative unanimity in recognizing a problem with voter fraud. Now she comes in and pretends the problem is mythical and we're using a sledgehammer to address it.

Furthermore, I want to say on record that I agree with her that it's a fundamental right for Canadian citizens to vote. It's an important franchise, and we don't want to disenfranchise them improperly. However, there are certain responsibilities that come with being a Canadian citizen, and we all too often overlook them. One of the responsibilities should be that you have some way to identify yourself. Goodness gracious, where are we going with this? Are we going to suggest that people who can't identify themselves still have this unalienable right to vote? Anyway, that's my little rant in reply to Madam Davies.

I participated in a trip to South Africa this past summer recess, and we had the opportunity to meet with their electoral commission. I was amazed at how advanced their system is. They have a photo ID voters card. They went well beyond what we're suggesting in our report, or in Bill C-31. They went well beyond a driver's licence or two other pieces of non-picture ID. They actually instituted a picture ID card that people are required to have when they go to the polls. In addition, to prevent any potential fraud, they also ink the thumb of the individual. So there's no chance, unless you cut your thumb off, of voting more than once.

I'm asking you, in light of your response to our report, and by extension to Bill C-31, if you believe that what's contained in the bill goes far enough. How many other countries around the world have followed South Africa and taken the precautions to make sure that voters are actually eligible?

●(1155)

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: Mr. Chairman, Mexico has an alphanumeric card with photo, with fingerprint, with signature. It cost \$1 billion to institute, to install it in Mexico. Brazil has something similar. We've just come back from Panama. They held a referendum over the weekend. They have the same thing. The voters lists have pictures of the electors. They have this in Mexico as well.

It's really up to the committee to decide what it would like to do in terms of having ID or not having ID. Frankly, I don't have a magical solution.

What I'm concerned about is how one addresses all of the concerns at the same time. How does one address the concern that we need ID, and then address the concern that a person is honest but doesn't have ID? How do we reconcile this? I leave that up to you to do that. I don't have the answer.

Hon. Jay Hill: Ms. Davies was referring to the problem—and you just referred to it again—that obviously we want to avoid disenfranchising anyone who has a legitimate right to vote. I say that in all sincerity. However, we want to ensure that someone who perhaps is disenfranchised because they don't have the right to vote, since either they're not a citizen or they're trying to vote in the wrong riding, or for some other reason, may be disenfranchised from voting in the wrong riding, voting illegally, or voting multiple times. So we might be disenfranchising them more than once, and that would be a good thing.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Moving on, we'll have Monsieur Guimond, and then Mr. Godin.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Kingsley, before we get back to the bingo cards, I would like to refer you to section 4 of Bill C-31, and I quote:

(2.1) The Register of Electors may also contain [...] a unique randomly generated identifier [...]

Is it your understanding that this identifier follows the voter from one election to another, or is the identifier solely for the general election under way?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: The unique identifier is designed to follow the voter so that we, and the candidates from all the parties, can follow the voter and make sure it is the same voter.

Mr. Michel Guimond: From one election to the other?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: From one election to the other, permanently. In other words, there would be one unique number for each person.

Mr. Michel Guimond: Ok.

Mr. Kingsley, I seem to have detected in you some openness towards bingo cards.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that apart from Mr. Proulx, Ms. Picard and me, most of our colleagues here do not know the Quebec system of bingo cards. You have been very polite, you appear to be listening, but in my opinion you do not know specifically what we are talking about.

I propose that at a future meeting, we invite someone from the office of the *Directeur général des élections du Québec* to come explain to us how the system works. I don't mean to say that you aren't smart enough to figure it out, but I have been living with it since it became law in Quebec. In my opinion, it would help the Committee members to better understand the process. In any case, that's what I'd like to see.

[English]

The Chair: I think part of the reason for today's meeting is to see whether or not we want to move forward on some of the things the government has chosen not to move forward on at this time. I actually have a question for Mr. Kingsley about the bingo cards. I'm just waiting to finish this round.

I will start your time from where you stopped.

●(1200)

Mr. Michel Guimond: Are you taking into account my proposition to invite...?

The Chair: Of course I am. Absolutely.

Mr. Michel Guimond: Okay, thanks.

[Translation]

Mr. Kingsley, I understand your role very well. One of your objectives is the integrity of the process. In other words, you want everyone to have an equal opportunity and that there be no form of partisanship. You also have a secondary and related objective, the fluidity of the voting process. You do not want waiting lines, which was a complaint in previous elections. You want things to keep moving. I think that the bingo card could be integrated without hiring staff. Here's how.

There is a deputy returning officer and a poll clerk. A voter—let's say she's called Diane Davidson—shows up to vote. She is asked for photo ID. She presents her Quebec driver's licence, which has her photo, date of birth, and address. While she is behind the curtain, in the booth, no one else can come to the table. Do you agree? The other voters are in line, at the entrance to the polling station. While Diane Davidson, voter No. 28, votes in polling division 326, for example, the clerk or the deputy returning officer can make an "X" next to number 28 without any new staff having to be hired.

The fluidity of the voting process is thus preserved. No confidential lists are handed over, there is no need to photocopy NCR cards. With regard to additions at the bottom of the list, if numbers were given—for example, 622 to 630—Diane Davidson would have been added during the revision. Additional lines would have been provided and number 622 could be added by hand to indicate that she came to vote. No additional people would be hired, privacy would be respected, and the voting process would remain fluid.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: Mr. Chairman, I would like to be present when the Quebec election office representative is invited.

Mr. Michel Guimond: I am certain that you or your henchmen will be present.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: I will send Ms. Diane Davidson to attend the session.

On a more serious note, it is important to examine this issue. I would like to be present at this presentation, if there is to be a discussions on how things will be done at the polling station. I consider that to be very important. As you said, I do not want any delays to be created. Earlier on, I heard Ms. Libby Davies say that people had waited hours. I find it difficult to believe that people waited for hours. I would like to see some proof to that effect.

[English]

The Chair: I think that when the discussions come up on Bill C-31 as well, this subject is going to be beaten.

Perhaps I may ask for clarification on the bingo card. In the government's response on page 7, it does indicate that "implementing such an obligation at this time could cost as much as \$23.5 million". Is that your feeling as to the cost of implementing only the bingo card, or does it include other implementation recommendations?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: Mr. Chairman, I alluded to this in my earlier response, but not as directly as I could have. This was based on the fact that under the Quebec model... This is the only jurisdiction in Canada that has bingo cards, as Mr. Guimond has defined it, to the best of my knowledge. They have hired two people to do this job in the polls.

Apparently, it may not be necessary to have two. If it's only one, then it's \$10.8 million. If it's two, it's \$23 million, effectively double. We double the number. That's all that it is.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond: If no one is hired, how much more will it cost?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: It should not cost anything more.

Mr. Michel Guimond: Exactly, the work can be done by the clerk, without delaying the voting process.

[English]

The Chair: Monsieur Guimond, thank you very much. I think that helps clarify it. We certainly will have further discussions on this.

Monsieur Godin, please, then Ms. Redmond.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is unfortunate that I must use my allotted time for this, but I would like to begin by commenting on the remarks made by Mr. Jay Hill concerning Ms. Libby Davies' representations. She is not a member of the committee, but she asked a question. It must be remembered that she was given permission to ask this question. It should be remembered that she is a member of the House of Commons and this is not the first time that a member who is not sitting on a committee is heard. New Conservative members are heard quite frequently, and no one makes such comments. I believe that she expressed her opinion in a respectful manner.

The problem raised by Ms. Davis is that in our country, perhaps the most beautiful country in the world, there are many homeless in some regions. This is an ever-present reality in the riding of Vancouver-East.

I too went to South Africa and saw what happens there. They don't take fingerprints, they mark the thumb with dye, and the dye remains visible for a week. But if they use it during the two weeks previous, it's too bad, but the thumb gets washed. They don't need to cut it off. We have the same problem. We talk about the problem of people who may have voted in the advance poll and who vote again on election day. That could be one of the problems.

I'd like to get back to Ms. Davies' question. It is true that we discussed certain things and we made recommendations. However, we report to members of the House, who may have a different opinion. I believe the question she asked you is clear. Has there been a problem with regard to the people who voted? You say that no one made complaints or none of the complaints were substantiated. I believe the question was a legitimate one. I would like to hear your comments.

● (1205)

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: I have already answered the question, Mr. Chairman, and I will repeat my answer. I have no evidence that would lead me to believe that there has been any fraud in this country, based on the testimony heard. I have no evidence. That is why I agreed with Ms. Davies when she expressed her concerns.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I just want to make sure that it will be recorded in the committee minutes and that Ms. Libby Davies knows she didn't dream it. She reported a fact and you, the Chief Electoral Officer, responded that you had no proof that there had been fraud. She then asked you why so much effort was being put into trying to solve a problem that may not exist.

If a decision is made to ask for an identity card, what do we do to help certain people? Not everyone has had the opportunity to start working young, to buy an automobile and to own this and that. We must recognize that if there is a problem in our society, it must be resolved. I'm sorry, but that person has just as much right to vote as someone in prison.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: I agree, Mr. Chairman. That is what I said when Ms. Davies asked her question. How do we reconcile all these objectives that may appear contradictory? How can we require proof of identity, and then identify people from whom we do not require proof of identity? That is the question.

Mr. Yvon Godin: From what I understood, to help voters in Vancouver, lawyers would take oaths from people saying where they came from, what their addresses were.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: In addition, if I understood the government's response, which may be included in the Bill—I have not had an opportunity to examine it yet—someone, a voter already on the list, will have to testify on behalf of the person.

Mr. Yvon Godin: We are not discussing the Bill here. Let us stick to the government report we are working on. A voter can only testify on behalf of a single person.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: Exactly, a person can only swear to the identity of one other person.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Ms. Davies isn't here to answer, but I believe she was saying that people waited for one or two hours. It may be because they had to verify the identity of many people in that same category, and that slowed down the line. It doesn't mean that it was the same all across Canada.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: That may very well be. That may be what happened. I'm not saying it didn't happen, but I know it wasn't widespread.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I don't believe she said that the situation was widespread. She was talking about the riding of Vancouver-East and its problem.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: I would like to examine this with the returning officer, because it concerns me.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kingsley. I appreciate that.

We'll move to the third, and potentially last, round. We'll stay with five minutes.

Ms. Redman is up and then Mr. Reid, please.

•(1210)

Hon. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Can you just clarify something for me? I'll split my time, because Monsieur Proulx wants to ask a question too. Will there be another round, or should I split my time?

The Chair: We probably will have time for another round, but it will be pretty tight. You might want to do that.

Hon. Karen Redman: I actually have two questions.

I'm looking for a workable solution, Mr. Kingsley. I appreciate you are saying that maybe you haven't found fraud, but anecdotally I've had many interventions from my members. To take an airplane,

which I realize may not be consistent with the lifestyle of someone who's homeless, you need photo ID. I know that in the province of Ontario, people who don't have a driver's licence can go to the Liquor Control Board of Ontario. That is recognized as a photo ID for the age of majority. And I appreciate your offer to bring those forms of ID here.

You say in Mexico that it was \$1 billion to institute their photo ID, but Mexico City has as many citizens as we have in all of Canada. The scale isn't quite the same. I'm wondering if we could maybe look at those third-party IDs as a possibility.

The serial vouching was a problem. I think it was Mr. Preston or Mr. Lukiwski who said somebody shows up with a busload of people and says they know all of these people and they'll vouch for all of them. I come from a large urban area in Kitchener. People who are homeless still go to shelters. There are people they interact with daily, whether it's in the St. John's kitchen or elsewhere, who can say this is person X. It seems to me that there are ways to work around this, notwithstanding some of Larry's comments about remote Canada.

I want to underscore—and I wish Libby were still here—there were instances in downtown Toronto where they were showing up with a *Time* magazine or a *Maclean's* magazine with a label on it that was passing as some kind of corroboration: "I'm one of the Scott Reids, and this is my address." I think it is really important that there be a more legitimate way to validate, for everyone.

You mentioned earlier, in response to Mr. Owen's question, about the federally sentenced population. How many people in prison, as a percentage, are you reaching? Notwithstanding that you feel that it's not adequately addressed at this point in time, how many prisoners would get the opportunity to vote now?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: In answer to the last question, all of them have the opportunity to vote now because of the processes we've put in place since the Supreme Court passed its judgment. We reach out to them. We establish a poll in the federal penitentiary.

Hon. Karen Redman: So everybody has the opportunity—it's just who avails themselves of it.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: Every prisoner has the opportunity.

I should also mention that I notify the Elizabeth Fry Society and the John Howard Society all over Canada so they can watch what we're doing as electoral officials.

So all of them have the opportunity. The take-up rate is somewhat less than 50%, if I remember correctly. I don't want to be pinned on that, but it's not more than 50%.

With respect to the ID, it is third-party ID that's contemplated now. This is what is before the committee. Therefore, that's the answer to your question. It's not a separate card. If the committee ever wishes to discuss a separate card.... Obviously in Mexico, I was there, so I know what happened. I've been there since 1993. I know in detail why it cost \$1 billion. It wouldn't cost \$1 billion in Canada, but it would cost a lot of money. That's why you're not contemplating it at this time. So let's go with the third-party ID and find out.

With respect to vouching, I didn't want to belabour the point, but one person cannot vouch for everybody on the bus. One person has to vouch for one person on the bus; the next person in the bus has to vouch for the next person. That is what this serial vouching really is. The concern you had is that it may appear fishy. All of those people coming in with no ID, what's going on here? That is what you're trying to address, and I have no problem with that. But one must remember that the person doing the vouching has to be there. It's not a letter you sign that you know this person and sorry you couldn't make it to the polls. That doesn't satisfy. The person has to be there. So that's a factor to take into account.

Hon. Karen Redman: Okay.

Marcel?

The Chair: You only have 30 seconds left; how about we get back to you?

• (1215)

Hon. Karen Redman: He's fast.

The Chair: You can't possibly do it. You're down to ten seconds now.

On a lighter note, I am sure the folks in prison aren't going to have a problem with the photo ID.

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Are you telling me you just took my 30 seconds?

The Chair: I took your ten seconds, Monsieur Proulx.

Mr. Reid, please.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Thank you.

I'm not sure whether the chairman's point was that your picture on a wanted poster qualifies as photo ID. There are any number of good ideas coming out of Cambridge nowadays.

I want to make an editorial observation and then I have a question for the Chief Electoral Officer.

We are talking in this country about going to fixed election dates. This, if it occurs, will give people extra time to get photo ID—those who are in a position to get it, if they don't already have it. While that won't resolve all problems that relate to photo ID, it does mean, first, that people will have the opportunity, and second, that we can work on ensuring the opportunity is taken advantage of to the widest extent possible. That's, I think, a responsibility we as parliamentarians would have.

I want to talk a bit about the whole concept of voter ID and the concerns of people with no fixed address—homeless people—and how this relates to them, because of course we're not doing this in a vacuum in this country. It has been done in Quebec, and my

impression is that, as with many things when it comes to electoral law, Quebec is doing a very good job.

I'm not a Quebec resident, but my understanding is that what they've done is recognize the fact that homelessness as a large-scale phenomenon tends to occur more in some areas than in others. They're able to ensure, in certain polling stations where you're likely to get a large number of homeless people—at a federal level one could identify an area like the area Libby Davies represents—that you could set up polling stations that deal with this. You essentially take people who don't have the proper ID and don't have fixed addresses and stream them towards elections officials who have special training.

In an area such as the area I represent, there is a small amount of homelessness, but it tends to be people who are couch-surfing—teenagers who can't live at home with parents who are abusive, and that sort of thing—and it's much more small-scale.

What I'm getting at is I think there is some beneficial experience from Quebec. The question, Mr. Kingsley, to you is whether it would be possible to identify the areas where this is likely to arise and to deal with this problem in a manner that ensures that the kind of concerns Ms. Davies has expressed can be minimized as much as possible.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: Mr. Chairman, it must be kept in mind that in Quebec they don't have polling day registration, so the issue is not a timing one, as it is under the federal regime, where you have it.

The solution that is alluded to by the member of Parliament is one we could look at, because we can identify the places where the homeless are likely to vote. We can identify the homeless shelters. That is something we do now. That's why we sometimes authorize returning officers to hire special persons—community relations officers—to go out specifically with the idea that they reach out to the homeless. That is something that could be worked at.

In Quebec they have to do it before polling day. We could also be doing it before—we do it now before polling day—but we don't see the need to get them to do anything before polling day, because we rely on the fact that where they slept the last night before the polling day is the important date. But it's something we could be working on.

I will make one further comment, and that is to say—I forgot to mention this—that when we come to fixed election dates, I indicated when I appeared before you that the quality of the list will be significantly enhanced if we do targeted registration before, if we know it's going to happen. We could be doing it in the month leading up to the start of the election, and that would increase the quality of the list very significantly.

Mr. Scott Reid: This raises the question, with targeted enumerations—I always think of them as being done in new subdivisions, for example, for that's where it happens in my own constituency—whether a kind of enumeration could occur, for the sake of argument, in an area where there is homelessness.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: Yes, it could occur there. As a matter of fact, we do it when we do targeted revision. We're changing the term, because revision can only occur during an election. It would be the same thing, but it would occur before. We would call it targeted enumeration.

We would do high-rise apartments and student residences. We would do the same thing we do during the election, but do it before, so that the preliminary list you get would have all these changes.

• (1220)

Mr. Scott Reid: Right, thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Madame Picard is next, please, and then Monsieur Proulx.

[Translation]

Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Kingsley, I'd like to ask you a brief question. What do you think of the possibility of providing lists of electors to the parties that include dates of birth?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: I had recommended that, on the lists provided to the parties, the year of birth and not the date of birth be included. That is a problem for me. I have been made aware of the fact that many people, when verifying our identity, ask us for our birth date. That is a very important piece of personal information. If we need to give something to the candidates, I would prefer that we indicate the year of birth and not the date of birth. That is what I had recommended.

To judge by its answer, the government has decided to not do this and to include the full date of birth on electoral lists for election officials only.

Ms. Pauline Picard: Thank you

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Is there anything further, Madame Picard? Okay.

Monsieur Proulx, what do you think?

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Fantastic. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It was a good idea of yours to keep my minutes. Now I have five.

[Translation]

Good day, Mr. Kingsley, good day, Ms. Davidson, good day, Mr. Molnar.

Mr. Kingsley, it is my understanding that you had already been told that the decision you made regarding what is commonly called, in electoral jargon, bingo cards, was a problem for us. If you will permit, I will proceed in English regarding my complaints. With all due respect to the interpreters, I believe our English-speaking colleagues have difficulty grasping the details when they listen to the simultaneous translation, and I will be using highly technical election-related terms.

[English]

When we talk about bingo cards for the province of Quebec or elsewhere, we are talking of our voter tracking system. In other words, Madame Tartempion goes to the poll. She happens to be voter number 33 on the list. Somebody checks off a little card. We call it a bingo card because originally it was a little piece of paper with numbers from one to 300, or the number of voters in the poll. It was numbered with little squares from one to 300, let's say, so it looked like a bingo card but it wasn't a bingo card. You don't win anything, except maybe your election.

Mrs. Tartempion goes in the poll. She's number 33. She votes. Somebody checks off number 33, and so on. Then every hour or two these little cards are sent to our headquarters through our representatives and runners. Once they get to our organization office we know that in the poll voter 33, who turns out to be Mrs. Tartempion, has already voted. Therefore our telephone operators, our election workers, our candidate do not need to continue asking, phoning, or sending somebody to Mrs. Tartempion's door for her to vote. It's what we call the voter tracking system. It's the progression of votes during the day.

You said in your reply that to do this you first need a photocopier in every polling station. You don't need that. Second, in our reply you referred to the list of voters we'd be circulating and a certain danger for personal information. You don't need that. It's totally different from that. It's a piece of paper with numbers only, so somebody who does not already have the list of voters has no clue who belongs to that particular number. So you don't need a photocopier; you need NCR paper. You don't need to worry about the personal data. It doesn't go anywhere. It's strictly the numbers that travel.

I recommended to this committee that we invite representatives of the City of Gatineau, because it is just across the river. They have a system where on election day candidates don't need representatives in the polling station. As the day goes along, they automatically check on the list for the numbers that correspond to the voters. Every hour or two they hand it out to all of the candidates' representatives so that everybody knows about it. This is very inexpensive. They're just across the river, and if they want to charge you cab fare I'll go and get them myself. They could come to explain it to you.

I understand now that the committee will be inviting the Province of Quebec to send their election.... The committee will have to decide on this, and maybe we can have you here at the same time so everybody is on the same wavelength, as far as what the score is on this, to see if there's a possibility for you to accommodate this request.

If it's a multi-million-dollar expense you will not want to do this, the government will not want to do this, and I can appreciate that. But I think if we copy either the Province of Quebec or a municipality like Gatineau, we could do it for just about no additional cost. It would help, and it would make sure we wouldn't need all of these representatives at the polling stations.

Thank you.

• (1225)

The Chair: Do you want to comment?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: I've already addressed all of these issues this morning.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: That's fine. I'll look at the transcript. But I just wanted to make sure that my colleagues, without going through translation, would understand exactly how this would work technically.

Thank you very much, Mr. Kingsley. I know you're going to help us.

I apologize for being late, but it's getting cold and I had to help some homeless people fight our government.

The Chair: Mr. Preston, please. He's the last questioner.

Mr. Joe Preston: Thank you very much, and I won't take all of the time.

My questions are about voter ID cards. I wanted to ask in what size font we will be putting on the voter ID card that this is not identification. We've had many instances in this committee when we talked about voter identification cards going out and people going to the polls and using them as identification. Obviously, now, if there's a change in identification, they'll have to show something else.

You said you were talking to Canada Post, or attempting to talk to Canada Post, about the security of the cards. That is needed. We've talked about high-rise apartment buildings and super-boxes and the security there, but you didn't tell us what you're doing about multiple cards being sent to individual voters. We heard many, many comments from people who received more than one card, in any one of their aliases. I believe that Mr. Reid received four.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: First, we have responded to Mr. Reid, Mr. Chairman, to explain to him what had happened and how this had happened. Of course, it will continue to happen in isolated instances.

What we also make clear is that you can only vote once, and that the voter information card is a voter information card. But we're going to be instituting procedures that are even clearer, whereby the people at the polls will ask for the voter information card to be handed to the poll officials, and not used as ID, before they go to the deputy returning officer. And the returning officer will have to follow the procedure and ask the person to state his or her name and address.

Mr. Joe Preston: Perfect.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: And we will be reinstating this no matter what happens to Bill C-31. We'll be making sure that this happens, as it should have been happening. And where it has not been happening, we want to make sure it happens.

Mr. Joe Preston: Okay, that was one question.

I have one last thing on the voter identification cards. They are first-class mail. We pay an awful lot of money to send them out to everybody in this country who's a registered voter. And as we've seen, there are stacks of them that may collect. Are they returned to you? Will you now institute a program of having whatever is returned to you deregistered, or will you assume that the person no longer lives at that address or...?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: We can give you more of an answer. There are cards that are returned to us as unmailable by the

postperson—the postman or the postwoman—and we pursue that with the returning officer. The returning officer has an obligation to pursue that to find out where that person is, because if the person is on the list, they're supposed to be an elector. So we exhaust all those possibilities. I could even present to you statistics, if you wish, at some moment, on how we do that, how many cases there are, how many we don't resolve, and what happens to those cases. Okay?

But we try to get to the electors. It may be a bad address, but the elector still exists, so we have to do that.

• (1230)

Mr. Joe Preston: Yes, it's not always the fact that it's not a person; it could be the fact that we have a typo on the card.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: Yes. Our information—and I don't have complete information—is that our lists are as good as or better than what the private sector has when they rely on that address. But no one in the private sector, no one anywhere, will tell you that there is 100% accuracy. I'll never achieve it, and if I'm held to achieve it, I'm going to tell you right now that I'll never achieve it. Never.

Mr. Joe Preston: I'm looking for excellence, not perfection.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: You have excellence, but we want better than excellence. You have excellence.

Mr. Joe Preston: All right. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, members.

I think we've pretty much covered everything with respect to the government's response.

Sir, you have agreed to get back to us on various forms of identification that you want the committee to consider as acceptable.

There was one issue that came up in the report that we did not cover today. If you want to respond, then mail it in. That happens to be about simpler and fairer ways of paid and free political broadcasting, which was something that did not come up at today's meeting.

What I'm understanding from the committee is that we want to follow up on the bingo card forum, and we will do that at some future date, just so everybody's clear and the records are clear.

I think that summarizes and completes our meeting today.

Mr. Kingsley.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'd like to correct what I said to Madame Picard, in response, and I'll do it in French.

[*Translation*]

I did not recommend that candidates' representatives be provided with lists of electors that would include the year of birth. I did not make that recommendation. I only recommended that such lists be given to the people in charge, to election officials. I would like to clarify this.

With regard to radio and television broadcasting, I consulted the political parties before making the recommendation, the first time. The second time, I repeated the recommendation. I simply want to straighten this out, because according to your committee minutes, you were under the impression I had not done so.

However, I did consult the broadcasters and, in my opinion, you should do so.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you very much for coming again today on short notice; it's appreciated. It was very informative.

Thank you as well to the others, and you're dismissed.

If the members could just stay seated, we'll move straight into other business while our colleagues leave.

Hon. Jay Hill: Are we going in camera for this discussion?

The Chair: I'm going to leave that up to the committee. Does the committee wish to go in camera for the discussions?

Hon. Jay Hill: We normally do when we talk about committee business.

The Chair: Then we'll go in camera.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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