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Chair

Mr. Mike Wallace

Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC)): Ladies and gentlemen, I'll call this meeting to order.

This is the 69th meeting of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, on Monday, April 22. Our orders of the day are to deal with Bill C-444, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (personating peace officer or public officer).

All of you have the report from the subcommittee on agenda and procedure. I will accept a motion on it, but before doing that, I should inform you that although we had set aside two meetings for Bill C-444, we have only one set of witnesses provided, so we thought we could do it all today. That will leave Wednesday open. I will say that we will not be meeting this Wednesday. I'm sure you'll find that two hours helpful to do other things for your constituency.

We will start next Monday on Bill C-452. We have enough witnesses that it will actually be Monday, Wednesday, and an hour of witnesses on the following Monday, and then clause-by-clause consideration for that hour. Those are the three meetings for that private member's bill, Bill C-452. It's a slight difference because there's been different information since we had the meeting, but that's it.

I'll take a motion to approve the sixth report.

Mr. Robert Goguen (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, CPC): I move the approval of the report as amended.

(Motion agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we will move to today's order of reference.

Mr. Dreeshen, the MP for Red Deer, is here with his private member's bill, Bill C-444.

The floor is yours for 10 minutes, sir.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Through you, I'd like to express my sincere appreciation to each of my colleagues for this opportunity to address the justice and human rights committee regarding my private member's bill, Bill C-444, on personating a peace officer or a public officer.

I appreciate the support received during second reading, which allowed this bill to be sent to your committee, and the willingness of my colleagues from all parties to carry this discussion forward.

As you are aware, this is the second time that your committee will study this bill. It was Bill C-576 in the previous Parliament. The committee reported the bill back to the House for third reading without amendments, but it died on the order paper when Parliament dissolved. That was two years ago, but the issue is still very much relevant, and this additional sentencing provision is needed in section 130 of the Criminal Code.

I'm especially pleased to have the opportunity to present my bill to your committee this week, it being National Victims of Crime Awareness Week.

I am joined today by two of my constituents, a brave young woman and her mother, a hard-working registered nurse. Like too many families in our country, their family has endured the worst of our society. Victimized by an offender, at the mercy of the criminal justice system, and now facing future parole hearings, they are survivors and fighters. I am humbled by their courage to come to Ottawa and speak with you today, coincidentally during this National Victims of Crime Awareness Week. They have come here in support of my bill, and I am grateful for that.

I understand that committee members have the bill in front of them, so I'd like to cut to the chase by clarifying my intent and addressing some concerns that committee members might have. The very nature of my bill involves two or more charges, so when we're talking about multiple charges it's important to also discuss multiple sentences, concurrent sentencing, and whether or not my amendment would even apply in the case where the crown is unable to obtain a conviction for a second offence.

These are all important issues, and I appreciate the opportunity to have that thorough discussion with the committee, but I ask the committee to understand and remain focused on my intention to recognize the disarming effect that personating an officer has on a victim and the vulnerable situation that it puts them in. To support victims of this crime by strengthening the reparations provided to them, and to preserve the trust that Canadians have in peace officers and public officers, adding an aggravating circumstance to the sentencing provision for section 130 will achieve these goals.

In terms of the horrible crimes that occurred in my riding, we know that there were multiple charges, both aggravating and mitigating circumstances, and many convictions and many sentences, both consecutive and concurrent. It's probably a great case study for a criminal law student, but for the victims here today, it is a nightmare.

I understand that judges have the discretion to consider any factors they feel may have constituted aggression on the part of an offender, but there are also some circumstances that judges are explicitly required to consider when sentencing. They are in the code because we believe they should always be taken into consideration by a judge.

To expand the discussion further, there are aggravating circumstances defined in section 718 that apply to all criminal offences. There are also some special cases of aggravating circumstances attached to specific offences within the code. To be clear, my bill seeks to have a special aggravating circumstance in regard to the specific offence of personating a peace officer or public officer.

When we look at the aggravating circumstances that currently exist in the Criminal Code, we can see there is a common denominator: the vulnerability of victims. Crimes against children, crimes against the elderly, crimes involving firearms, or crimes that abuse a position of trust or authority in relation to the victim are all circumstances that Parliament has required judges to consider when sentencing.

They are legislated because offenders have taken advantage of the vulnerable position the victims are in. When citizens see a police uniform, they naturally trust the authority that comes with it. Personating a police officer is a serious breach of the public's trust and it has the same effect as using a weapon: it forces the victim to submit. This is why it is important for a judge to be required to consider it an aggravating circumstance to personate a peace officer or public officer as a cover for some other criminal activity. It would apply regardless of the age of the victim.

● (1535)

To address the issue of my amendment having any effect on actual time served, I want to stress that my focus is on amending section 130 to add the sentencing provision regardless of the length of sentences received for other convictions and whether or not they would be served concurrently.

We can only speculate on what type of crimes may be committed alongside section 130 violations, how individual cases would be committed, tried, and sentenced, how much evidence the crown may have in any particular case, or all of the mitigating or aggravating factors that may affect an offender's sentences.

Our role as legislators is to ensure that the maximum sentences and sentencing factors prescribed in the Criminal Code for each offence serve the purpose and principles of sentencing. I'm asking Parliament to add a sentencing provision to the crime of personating peace officers and public officers to ensure that future sentences for this crime serve section 718 of the code.

As for the types of crimes that are committed in concert with personation, what aggravating or mitigating factors might apply to an offender, or how an offender's total time served might pan out,

these are all hypothetical scenarios. Mr. Chair, I'm not a lawyer, as many of my honourable colleagues at this table are—I was a math teacher—so I suggest that there are numerous permutations along that line.

Could there be a case where my proposal results in a sentence for section 130 offences being the longest of multiple concurrent sentences? I argue that this could be a possibility.

Could there be a case where my proposal results in a lengthier than otherwise sentence for a section 130 offence while the crown is unable to obtain a conviction for a concurrent offence, or the concurrent offence is thwarted and not carried out? I would argue, Mr. Chair, that this is also possible.

Of course, within the parameters of the maximum sentence for personating an officer, the appropriateness of a sentence would still rest with that sentencing court, but it is up to us as legislators to establish sentencing provisions in the Criminal Code. We should recognize that this is a crime that can have varying degrees of harm, and therefore should be penalized accordingly.

We have legislated a new maximum for this particular crime. Now I believe we should give the courts this additional sentencing provision to ensure that the new maximum is exercised in the most serious cases.

Mr. Chair, during debate in the House, all parties remarked on the lack of credence that is given to this type of public deception. It was only in the preparation of comments that the prevalence of this deceit in the commission of crimes in Canada was brought to a conscious level for members. For victims, it's always at a conscious level.

In section 130, the crime is in the deception of the public about a person's status as a peace officer or public officer, whether or not it is for the specific purpose of facilitating another crime and whether or not another crime is actually attempted or committed. But in cases where the deception is intended to, and in fact does, facilitate the commission of other crimes, these are extremely serious instances of the offence of personating officers, and they therefore deserve appropriately high sentences.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and committee members, for your prompt study of this bill. I would be pleased to answer questions from the members.

● (1540)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dreeschen.

The first questioner on this is Madame Boivin from the New Democratic Party.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Dreeshen, thank you for introducing your bill. We support it.

But I do have a few quick questions, and if there's still time, I will hand the floor over to my colleague, Mr. Giguère.

Did you do a study? I am asking because whenever I try to get information, no one can give me any figures. Do you have any statistics on, for example, the number of peace officer or public officer impersonation cases that are heard by the courts? Who are the groups usually targeted by this kind of offence?

[English]

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Thank you very much.

Your first question has to do with the study. I missed a little bit of your second question.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: It was more about the stats, the cases that involved those types of infractions. We're all familiar with the Baumgarte case, but are you aware of other cases, and of where the deception is directed more towards a specific part of the population, such as elders or young people?

Perhaps you could give us a bit of the background that led to this bill.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Indeed the bill before us came about because of discussions I had with the victim in this particular instance.

During the study and the development of information with regard to the bill, I had a chance to go through some of the different cases. We had a stack of maybe 50 news reports that had come out on this type of thing in just the last couple of years. It didn't just happen and it wasn't in any one particular area. It was happening throughout the country. We saw many cases. I remember specific cases happening in Mississauga.

Shortly after Bill C-576 was presented, we also had a case of something very similar in Calgary. Someone said they were a police officer, and a young person was kidnapped. There was some quick response to that, and fortunately that was able to be solved.

We didn't do a study per se, but in the development of this, we certainly spent a lot of time looking at that. When we presented it both times, as Bill C-576 and now as Bill C-444, we found that people were starting to recognize that it occurred in their ridings and communities as well.

Targeting specifically is based on opportunity, whether that involves youth, who are often there...and again there are specific circumstances. If we speak to the concept of sentencing, aggravating circumstances include the offence being against a minor. Our elder abuse bill looks at that for the elderly and for those with perhaps diminished mental capacity. However, this thought is for all people who are involved.

The second part is where this fell apart.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: You covered it.

I don't know if there's time left for Mr. Giguère.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Giguère, you have two minutes.

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): I want to thank you for putting together this bill, which addresses an important matter. Clearly, we support the principle behind the bill.

However, there is a problem, that being the definition of a peace officer in the Criminal Code. That definition gives rise to a major problem because it is not exhaustive.

I will give you a very specific example. Emergency call dispatchers are not peace officers, even though it says "police department" on their uniform. They may perform police duties, such as the video monitoring of cells. They answer calls at the desk in small police stations. They are not peace officers. That is the problem with section 2 of the Criminal Code. This bill opens the door to a discussion on section 2.

Are you willing to have the problematic elements of section 2 of the Criminal Code amended through your bill? Emergency call dispatchers could be added to section 2. And may I point out that this group is very much in favour of receiving the peace officer designation. In the event they are assaulted, for example, this designation would empower them to tell the perpetrators that they are assaulting an on duty peace officer.

•(1545)

[English]

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: I'll try to respond to that as quickly as I can in the time remaining.

When I first introduced this as Bill C-576, it was just there as "peace officer", but because "public officer" specifically refers to Royal Canadian Mounted Police, we expanded it. We had discussions with the drafters when I was going back over this. They felt that was probably the best and most inclusive way. Just to remind you, there were many different entities involved, such as customs and excise, immigration, corrections, fisheries, and Canadian Forces pilots in command of aircraft. No doubt you've seen others: wardens, reeves, sheriffs, justices of the peace, and police officers. This was the rationale for putting the two of them together. This way police officers were in both sides of the definition as it was in section 130, but I do recognize what you're suggesting about other specific ones.

I still think that by stating what this is, the courts would also then look at this as something that is relevant if that was the rationale or the trigger that was used in order to commit another offence.

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

Next, from the Conservatives, we have Monsieur Goguen.

Mr. Robert Goguen: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Dreeshen, for bringing forth this important piece of legislation. It's pretty much unanimous among the parties as to its importance, obviously; you've talked about the 50 cases that you've studied in which somebody's confidence in the public authority has been undermined. There's little doubt that this brings an additional element of protection to the public, because in Canada we do trust public officers and we do trust peace officers.

Given the importance of this bill, I take it that you've talked to a number of the police associations throughout the country, and I'm sure they've expressed some interest. Could you share with us what their reactions have been?

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: In that this has extended over a couple of years, I've had quite an opportunity to speak to different groups. About a month ago, I was at an event in Red Deer. There was a ceremony where the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal was being given out to some of the police enforcement people for the great work they had done in the community.

A number of the different sheriffs there—and this was not RCMP—were talking about it and saying that they remembered that after that case, probably even six months afterwards, when they would stop a person, especially young girls, this event that had taken place in central Alberta had really affected them. They would see the types of things that were happening. These were people on the ground who were able to describe what was taking place.

Of course, I have had the opportunity to speak with police. We have police here and former police people who are part of the House of Commons, so I've had a chance to speak with them as well. We've had these frank discussions on that level. Also, with different police associations, this is something that we've talked about in a lot of detail.

A couple of days ago I was at an event in Red Deer where the police were part of a torch relay taking place for the Special Olympics. Every time we get a chance to talk to each other, they talk about this. They talk about the significance, and they talk about the concern in regard to losing trust any time you see this occur.

Mr. Robert Goguen: You spoke briefly about Bill C-576, which I guess died on the order paper in the previous Parliament. It had worked its way almost to adoption. I'm led to believe that the only difference between Bill C-576 and this bill is that this bill is more encompassing. It takes in as an aggravating factor the personation of a peace officer and a public officer.

I know that Mr. Giguère asked you a question about this, but I sensed your answer was that the reason it covered both of these, both of which are defined under section 2 of the Criminal Code at great length, was to make it consistent with section 130, to which this is an appendage. Am I correct in saying that?

● (1550)

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Yes, that was the case. It was looking at all of the definitions that were there and recognizing that “police officer” and “RCMP” were actually in two different sections; however, the intent was the same.

As I say, in Red Deer for example, we are covered by the RCMP. In the province of Alberta, the agreement is with the RCMP, so there's a great RCMP presence that we have in central Alberta and throughout our province, but we didn't want to lose the fact that this is something that is for all of Canada. We wanted to make sure that we were using the terminology that was for both.

Mr. Robert Goguen: Various forms of authority, all of which must be protected and the confidence of the public restored....

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Yes, absolutely.

Mr. Robert Goguen: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you for those answers.

Our next questioner, from the Liberal Party, is Mr. McGuinty.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much, Mr. Dreeshen, for your work in this area. It's extremely important.

I'd like to go right to the bill and the way in which you've worked this. First, I'd like to give you incredible credit for not seeking to attach mandatory minimums to your bill and not trying to eliminate or circumscribe judicial discretion, understanding the importance that judges play in looking at the full facts of a case and taking decisions that are often very difficult.

I want to ask first, is your purpose primarily to ensure that anyone found guilty of these offences would spend more time in prison, or is your primary purpose to try to prevent this from happening again?

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: In terms of the intent, there are a couple of things. As I said in my speech, part of it is recognizing the disarming effect. When you're talking to a victim, they'll say, “I would not have been in this situation other than because of this occurrence”. If someone comes up to you and pulls a gun out, you're going to stop.

The same type of thing occurred there. That was the rationale for it, to look at it and say that people have to realize that when all of the sentencing aspect of this is done, whether we're talking about mitigating or aggravating circumstances, what caused this was not their being in the wrong place at the wrong time, but somebody actually going out there with the intent to do harm. That's really what my main focus was—awareness.

Awareness is part of it. People then would ask, “Does that mean being an aggravating circumstance will mean the general public will say that they'd better not do that, because it is in the Criminal Code?” I don't think that, and I don't believe that is what aggravating circumstances are intended to be. But it is a case of giving this tool to the courts so that they are able to take it and during the sentencing hearing say, “No, this is serious. This breach that you have here, this was the disarming factor. This was the type of thing that was done, and that is the reason you had this opportunity to do even further harm.”

Mr. David McGuinty: In your work, in your research and analysis.... For example, in my experience in dealing with the Canadian Police Association, they're always looking for very strong and robust analysis on what might work to improve the situation.

Had you come across anything, or was any analysis conducted for you, that would demonstrate, for example, that this would lead to longer prison terms?

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: I really hadn't. I mean, I've gone through the report that we have here, but did I discuss whether or not this would be the rationale and that therefore we would expect that it would be longer? No, but again, that wasn't my intent.

My intent is that the courts are the ones that are charged with this, and I wasn't seeking anything beyond that. I have respect for their jurisdiction. But we do need to make sure that there is this tool. When you look at the way it is presented, it simply says that if you have this authority, then it's an aggravating circumstance; if you pretend to have that authority, you don't have it. You therefore have to make sure that you spell it out.

That was the point for it.

• (1555)

Mr. David McGuinty: Did you come across any evidence, or advice, or front-line experience that said if we took more preventive measures in Canada, for example, if we limited the availability of authentic-looking police uniforms and accessories or looked at other jurisdictions that have taken these actions, what effect that might have?

I think we agree that what we're trying to do here is to prevent this from happening in the future.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: I know that when we were discussing Bill C-576, this was something we talked about: how people can get a hold of this type of material. Setting up another series of rules and so on was certainly not something that I looked at, but it was something that people did discuss.

No doubt when the judges talk to people and take a look at how they managed to get hold of this equipment and go from there, that might be something later. But that certainly was not the intent of my bill. It was simply to give the tools to the courts to be able to deal with this.

Mr. David McGuinty: The maximum sentence under the code for personating a peace officer in 2009 was taken from six months to five years. That is longer than the sentence allowed in American states like New York and Michigan, or longer, for example, than in the United Kingdom, where it's six months.

I'm trying to get a handle on this. In your estimation, do you think the five years allowed presently under the code is an inadequate penalty, or are you trying to give the judge...?

Is it really about extending the penalty, extending incarceration?

The Chair: You have 30 seconds, Mr. Dreeshen.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Thank you.

I guess one of the things that one should recognize is that in the discussions at that particular point in time, when it occurred, it was under the old regime, which was six months. Certainly taking a look at that, I have no question that this being the same as using a gun in order to commit a crime certainly was woefully inadequate. Taking it to the five years, which it is, based on what had happened with Bill S-4, certainly does change the dynamics of that, but again, we're still leaving that to the discretion of the courts.

The Chair: Thank you for those questions, and answers.

Our next questioner, from the Conservative Party, is Ms. Bateman.

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to ask a question continuing along the lines of the aggravating circumstances piece, and then I'm going to be sharing my time with my colleague Blaine Calkins.

It's very nice to see you in this role, Mr. Dreeshen. This is a treat.

Following on the discussion you've had on aggravating circumstances, as you know, Parliament recently passed Bill C-36, which was our Conservative government's bill on elder abuse. With that passage into law, a very important amendment to the Criminal Code, adding a new aggravating circumstances piece to section 718.2, applies to any offence against elder Canadians.

Bill C-444 would require a sentencing court, upon conviction of the offence of impersonating a peace officer or a public officer under section 130 of the Criminal Code, to consider as an aggravating factor the fact that the offender impersonated the officer in order to facilitate the commission of another offence.

While the sentencing court—and I just want clarification—already has the discretion, as you spoke to in your opening remarks, to consider such a circumstance as an aggravating factor, do you think making consideration of that factor mandatory would enable Parliament to specifically denounce such crimes?

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Further to the comment on denouncing the crimes, I think that's up to all of us as parliamentarians. I think that is the work each and every one of us will be doing if this bill is supported and it goes to the next stage, and then we can convince the Senate to move it on. I think that's something all of us as parliamentarians have a responsibility to do.

The other aspect is that when I took a look at Bill C-36, and we talked about the elder abuse aspect of it, in the discussions we had on Bill C-576, people said to me that this was dealing with something where people are vulnerable. I believe there was support all throughout with that. This is simply another case of assessing vulnerability and moving our legislation so the courts can make those decisions and that determination.

I think it's important. Bill C-36 was a shining example of what we can do when we work together. When we saw this gap that I've described, based on the difference between perceived versus real as far as the authority of abuse of power is concerned, that was something I tried to address.

• (1600)

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Thank you very much, Mr. Dreeshen.

The Chair: Mr. Calkins.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Earl, I want to thank you for the great job you do. You're a great MP for central Alberta, the constituency of Red Deer, and the great surrounding communities, like Sylvan Lake, Innisfail, Delburne, and the county and so on. It's great to have you as a neighbour in central Alberta.

I also want to thank the good folks of Red Deer for helping the Bentley Generals host the Allan Cup this year.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: They did well.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: I'm pleased to say that the Bentley Generals brought it home. They are our senior men's triple A hockey champions. All the volunteers and everybody in Red Deer did a great job in helping support the smaller surrounding communities, which is excellent.

I'm a former law enforcement officer, former peace officer, according to the provincial legislation we have in the province of Alberta. I served as a national park warden and a provincial park ranger, and a conservation officer.

The question I have is on how your bill differentiates the provisions that are already in the Criminal Code. Insofar as interpretation and past decisions, where a person in a position of authority is already a factor in sentencing, how does your bill seek to further strengthen or make amendments to the provision that's already there? If you could remind me of it, that would be very helpful.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: When a person has a type of authority, myself as a former teacher, for example, if I abuse that position of authority, or if a police officer or a peace officer abuses that authority, then it is considered as an aggravating circumstance.

If I pretend that I am a police officer, and I come in with all of the trappings of that—and there are so many different situations where that occurs—then it is not an aggravating circumstance. The judge has to take a look at it to see where it's going to go from there. That's really what I'm looking at. It's to try to make sure that particular aspect of it, that gap, is being filled. It's also to take a look at—and, again, it's something we hadn't particularly spoken of before—the respect we do have for those people who have that authority and let them know that is also important to us as legislators.

The Chair: Thank you.

You have 30 more seconds, or are you done?

Mr. Blaine Calkins: That's a great example.

Wouldn't it then follow, Earl, that anybody who impersonates a teacher or any other person of authority at some point in time should be subject to the same changes that you're proposing here with changes to the peace officer and law enforcement officer component?

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: I've never had anybody who really wanted to impersonate me. I have done impressions.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Blaine Calkins: I didn't say that.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: I have done impressions.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: I was a teacher, too.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: I know that.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: It also logically follows that any person in a position of authority like that would probably have the same impact on their victims, wouldn't they?

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: If we take a look at it from the outside in, I suppose when you specifically drill down and say what the trappings are—I mean, it's the uniform, it's the vehicle, or that type of thing—then it's a little easier.

One of the questions earlier asked how a different role would tie into this. When the courts are looking at it, and it comes right down to the judge making decisions on that, I'm sure that if it became a serious item, if you were phoning up and saying you were a teacher from this college or whatever and you were going to meet someone, and an issue occurs from that, I'm sure that the judges could look at what we've talked about here and even consider that as significant.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dreeshen.

Our next questioner is Mr. Mai from the New Democratic Party.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Dreeshen, thank you for being here and for introducing your bill. You really fought for this measure, and we thank you. The fact that we can work together is a positive sign. As Mr. McGuinty mentioned earlier, we feel that your bill is balanced.

Furthermore, you resisted the temptation to impose a minimum sentence, an effort we don't always see from your Conservative colleagues. So we think how you handled that is very positive.

You've also left it to the judge's discretion to interpret certain definitions and to apply the bill.

But perhaps you could elaborate a bit on the interpretation aspect, particularly as regards the definitions. You've got the peace officer and the public officer. It would be a good idea to have a better grasp of what those designations cover. I looked at the excellent analysis that the Library of Parliament researchers prepared for us. It says that the lists are not exhaustive. The definitions could be broader and open to interpretation.

Could you please tell us what you would like these lists to include?

● (1605)

[*English*]

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Thank you for the question.

Again, you have to remember that I'm not a lawyer, but when I had the discussions with the drafters, we were trying to find a way to make sure that we looked at those two entities, the peace officer and the public officer, to be able to bring them together. I don't know what the different codes would be or where they would be in the Criminal Code—I have them written down somewhere but I'd have to dig for them—but they are tied into other sections in the Criminal Code. It seemed as though they were being covered under those sections. Therefore, by specifically stating the two of them—and they have some that are together—that's probably the best way of dealing with that. Again, that was the reason. That's why I didn't go any further with some of the other suggestions such as if we do that, then what about this? Here's another possibility, and so on. I guess you have to start somewhere. Since we were specifically talking about the public officer and peace officer that was part of section 130, and that's all I wanted to make a change to, it seemed most logical to stick with that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai: I'd like to share my time with Mr. Giguère.

[English]

The Chair: Absolutely.

Go ahead, Mr. Giguère.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Giguère: Thank you.

I appreciate what you're trying to do. You are basically trying to impose a stiffer penalty on those who discredit peace officers. Restoring the reputation of our public safety forces is important.

But I see a problem, even though I fear someone will point out that ignorance of the law is no excuse. When someone commits a crime, they know they are doing so, but do they know they are violating section 130 of the Criminal Code by impersonating a peace officer or an authority figure, such as a public officer?

Let's pretend someone wearing a Canadian gas company's uniform knocks on your door and says they are there to inspect a gas leak. This is an authority figure because they represent a public service. But, will the judge consider them to be a public official in a position of authority or a peace officer? Since the individual is in a position of authority, your definition could include it. Judges may have reservations about that, given that how they interpret a very broad text may lead to a stiffer penalty being imposed on someone.

With respect to section 2 of the Criminal Code, it may have been preferable to name everyone we want to protect. We would do well to make it clear that we want to prohibit people from impersonating those protected individuals, instead of having such a broad definition. Do you see what I'm getting at?

I would like you to enlighten me and explain why you opted for such a broad definition, when, in essence, you are trying to protect the public service and punish those who impersonate public officers.

● (1610)

The Chair: One minute left.

[English]

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Thank you.

I understand what you're saying in this regard. Because section 130 speaks specifically of the peace officer, it is because of the fact that it is where it lists these. Therefore, all that one could do at that particular point in time was to try to make a change there. It is Bill C-55 that is seeking to define a police officer in the code in response to the Supreme Court's constitutional analysis of other professions that have certain powers that only police officers should have. There is a discussion, however, that's not in that part. I believe that is in part VI of the code, so that definition only applies there.

Again, I suppose one has to look at the knowledge base of the judges in question who are going to look at it and ask if this is similar. They can make decisions as to what might be an aggravating circumstance when they are going to make their judgments, but this is simply saying that for this case, and for these particular circumstances for these types of officers, there is no question that they must consider it the aggravating circumstance.

I hope that answers that part of the question.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Thank you for those questions and those answers.

Our next questioner from the Conservative Party is Mr. Wilks.

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Dreeshen, for being here today.

As well as Mr. Calkins, I too am retired from the RCMP. My question is more specific to the impersonation of a police officer in plain clothes. I did three years of plain clothes drug work. In some instances you don't carry any ID with you because problems might occur if someone were to find out that you were in an undercover position.

That leads to another opportunity within the bill that you brought forward. That is, a person impersonates a peace officer in a plain clothes scenario such as a person who is going to do a drug rip-off. They identify themselves as a police officer, and for whatever reason someone believes that the person is a police officer, and as a result of that a drug rip-off has occurred. Then you go to court and you have an unwilling witness from the perspective of the drug charge, but not the impersonation of a police officer. Would your bill allow the judge to move forward with an impersonation of a peace officer even though there may not be aggravating or mitigating circumstances that a witness would be willing to provide?

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: That's a very interesting way to look at it. It's a different way of getting a two-for-one.

I suppose if you look at it, and it doesn't matter what the situation is, this is someone who is trying to gain advantage of someone else and they are using some form of a ruse to try to gain that advantage. Whether they are gaining advantage of a victim—and so many of us are taking a look at it and saying that we want to be able to protect victims—versus gaining advantage.... I suppose that at that moment the other drug dealer is the victim.

Maybe the courts would be interested in having them both there to discuss what they're up to.

I can see that.

Mr. David Wilks: The reason I bring this forward, Mr. Dreeshen, is I think that this portion of your bill is so important to undercover operators, because they're left in the lurch in a lot of instances. It's very hard to protect them. They'll have a cover person, but other than that, they're on their own.

If someone decides that they're going to take advantage of a portion of the Criminal Code that allows a person to simply walk up in a suit, or in jeans and a T-shirt, and say "I'm a policeman", and for whatever reason the person believes the other person, it brings it into a totally different realm.

I think that's where the seriousness of this is. If you're in a uniform it's one thing, but if you're taking advantage of it through plain clothes, that's another thing altogether. I fully support your bill and I hope that the judges take a look at that.

● (1615)

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Is there anybody else?

Mr. Armstrong, do you have a question?

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): I have a couple of quick ones.

Mr. Dreeshen, first of all, thank you very much for bringing this bill forward.

Like you, I'm a former teacher, and I've taught several math classes. It's the best subject to teach, and I'm sure you were a tremendous mathematics teacher.

When I was working at the elementary level, one of the first things we would teach young children when they entered school was what a peace officer is, what a police officer is, and how you can trust them. They're a person in your neighbourhood who you can trust.

We have had cases in this country where people have misused that trust and taken advantage of young people. I know you're aware of those instances. That's one of the reasons I fully support your bill. I think it's going to provide added protection. It's an added vehicle for the courts to hold people to account.

Are those circumstances some of the things that would have driven you to put this bill forward?

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: As I said, my intent was threefold.

Certainly, there's that innate trust we have of the police and others, the firemen, to protect us, to be there.

As we get older, we find ourselves in different situations. I've come upon accidents where I know that I've had to call the police, and they come, and you're there to help them do a job, one which not very many people really want to be part of. It's then you get to understand how serious their job is.

Then when someone takes that and turns it upside down and because of that type of activity destroys the trust that you have, I think that's important.

When I've been discussing this with different individuals, that's what they were talking about, that they work so hard to try to do their job, which is a very difficult job, and then they have this type of a ruse that's coming in and destroying that. Maybe it's not destroying it from the point of view that so many people know about it—they're only going to hear about some of the really major cases—but it's also destroying it for that individual.

That's really what we're talking about. We're talking about it here during this the National Victims of Crime Awareness Week. I think this is really significant.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: We're going to go now to Mr. Jacob, who has a question.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being here to discuss your bill with us.

I'd like to make a comment. I want to start by saying that this bill respects the victim and judicial independence, while adequately punishing the criminal. We believe in the importance of bringing justice to victims, and we are happy to be able to work with the government on this bill. When a balanced approach is taken and a sensible solution is chosen, as in this case, we are happy to support the measure. And, no doubt, that will lead to the bill's moving through Parliament more efficiently. I like to think that the Conservative Party will revisit its stance on minimum sentences in future bills.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Would you like to comment on that, Mr. Dreeshen?

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: I'm fine.

The Chair: You're fine, okay. That's a good call.

Our final questioner is Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I'd like to thank the witness for being here today.

Mr. Dreeshen is a very committed member of Parliament. Certainly he's a person who clearly recognizes that his constituents have asked for this legislation. There are so many cases of this across Canada.

On that particular aspect, you did...whether you call it a formal study where data was collected or a study just to ascertain if this was a Canada-wide problem, you did say in earlier testimony that this was something that you saw from coast to coast to coast. Is that correct?

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Absolutely.

Mr. Dan Albas: I would like to be mindful that if you check the interpretation of both “peace officer” or “public officer”, because there have been considerations when people have questioned whether this should be expanded to include other professions.... Given your testimony that you wanted to focus on where the problem was, based on your experience from listening to your constituents and also from your study, that is why you are focusing particularly on personating a law enforcement officer. Is that correct?

● (1620)

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Absolutely, yes.

Mr. Dan Albas: When you began your testimony, Member Dreeshen, you mentioned specifically that this week is the correct week to bring this bill forward to this committee, obviously because this is a week for remembering and becoming more aware of the issues that victims face, so I'd like to focus my questioning specifically on victims.

Section 130 of the Criminal Code is a hybrid offence and it's punishable by a maximum of five years' imprisonment on indictment. Prior to the enactment by the Conservative government in 2009 of Bill S-4 for identity theft and related misconduct, it was a straight summary conviction offence punishable by a maximum of six months' imprisonment.

Obviously your work here on Bill C-444 is a little different from Bill S-4, but do you think that both these bills will ensure that victims are better protected in our country? How do you think that will work?

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Thank you, Mr. Albas, for that question.

When we were looking at this, there was that transition. At the beginning, and based on the sentence that was meted out, it was only six months, but then as we were discussing it, the change had taken place so that it was the hybrid offence, so we were caught in the middle.

However, when we took a look at it, we recognized that the focus was still there. It was still a case of recognition that this was what the courts were going to be looking at. They would be looking at the five-year maximum, I suppose, under these circumstances. However, we would still have this opportunity to let a victim know there was a serious reason that they were stopped and what happened and why they were put in that particular position.

I think in a lot of ways, if we imagine ourselves in that case, lots of things happen to us that we wish didn't and are unseemly and so on, but to think that you were put in that position because of some type of an activity, that, I think, is the critical part. Again, it's the idea, the concept of using a gun to stop somebody. You're not going to stop. If somebody comes up to you and starts waving, sneaking up on you, you know you're going to lock the door. You're going to take all the precautions you possibly can, and then you can stand up and say you're doing what you can to protect yourself under these circumstances. But when you give yourself up openly because you're wondering why the police are coming to you, and that maybe they need your help... I look at it from that perspective. Usually, if I'm driving, I have an idea why they might want to talk to me, but there are a lot of other circumstances like donations to the policeman's ball, that I get along the road.

Nevertheless, it is a situation where you don't want to be duped and you don't want other people thinking that you did something improper to put yourself in that position, because that certainly isn't the case. It wasn't the case in the incident that was the impetus for this particular bill, and it certainly isn't the case for anybody else who has had something happen to them either.

Mr. Dan Albas: Do I have any time?

The Chair: That's your time, Mr. Albas. I'm sorry.

Mr. Dreeshen, thank you very much for your presentation on your bill and your defence of it. We're going to take a two-minute recess while we get the witnesses who have joined us today ready to talk to us for the next 45 minutes, and then we will go to clause-by-clause study on your bill.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Thank you very much.

The Chair: We'll recess for a couple of minutes.

• (1620) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1625)

The Chair: We're going to call this meeting back to order. We've been joined by our guests, Ms. Laurie Long and Ms. Jordan Knelsen-Long. I want to thank you for joining us as witnesses to Bill C-444.

I'll give the floor over to you for approximately 10 minutes, and then there will be questions from committee members.

Ms. Long, the floor is yours.

Ms. Laurie Long (As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon. My name is Laurie Long, and this is my daughter Jordan. We are from Penhold, Alberta.

Thursday, February 26, 2009 at 9:30 p.m., Jordan went to gas up her truck and get some juice for a sore throat. She had been feeling unwell all day but had determined she was not going to miss school the next day. She was 16 years old. She had been driving for about three months and enjoying some of the freedoms that go along with that milestone in life.

That night was the start of a horrendous ordeal for her and our family. She was observed at the gas station by a man who followed her back to our home and, while dressed as an RCMP member, forced her out of her vehicle and into his at gunpoint. He covered her eyes with blacked out ski goggles, cut her face with a knife while shouting, "You're under arrest. You're under arrest", and ultimately bound her and put her in the trunk of his car and drove her about 30 kilometres away on a -32° Celsius night.

He approached her in our backyard not 25 feet from my bedroom window where I was. She was bound, blindfolded, and assaulted multiple times. She was missing for about 47 hours. It was terrifying, a parent's worst nightmare, certainly a young woman's worst nightmare.

On Saturday, February 28 at about 8:45 p.m. we received a call from a payphone to our home. Hoping against hope it was Jordan, my husband answered. It was Jordan. While he tried to figure out where she was, he told her to stay there and that the police were coming. What she replied stunned us. She said, "Dad, a policeman did this to me". We found out the next day that the man was not a police officer, but he had dressed like one with the coat, the fur hat, and the flashes on the shoulders. He had borrowed his mother's white car and had a police light in it. He had pulled in behind Jordan in our backyard and told her that she had an insurance violation. Later a member of the major crimes unit in Edmonton stated that he felt the man's uniform was authentic enough that his own wife would have had trouble knowing whether the man was RCMP or not.

The major point here is that he never would have been able to get as close to her as he did without her using her cellphone for help or attempting to run into the house if he was not dressed as law enforcement. During the criminal trial for this man, he faced one count of personating a police officer. We were stunned to learn at that time that the maximum penalty for this offence was six months' jail time. That has now been changed to a hybrid five years maximum. Making the personating of a police officer an aggravating circumstance would allow judges to impose penalties befitting the crime.

In 1954 Abraham Maslow published his research and findings on the basis of motivation and referred to it as the hierarchy of human needs. This simple idea has become a fundamental framework for understanding how people are motivated and how they become successful and productive. The hierarchy is represented as a tiered triangle in which each tier must be achieved before the next tier can be reached. The triangle consists of a base of basic physiological needs like air, food, water, etc., followed by safety. The next levels are social, ego, independence, and self-fulfilment.

For all intents and purposes, safety forms the base of this triangle. If there is no safety, there is nothing else. Jordan has had this sense of safety torn away from her by someone who she thought was there to keep her safe, because that is how he represented himself. We depend on the police to keep us safe. We trust that they will. We tell our children that if they get into trouble they should find a policeman or they should call the RCMP.

An individual who dresses as a policeman in order to victimize someone or control them is abusing the public trust. I cannot tell my children not to trust the police. Police serve a valuable and needed purpose in society. The uniform and the office are sacred, and we as citizens of this society require it to be sacred. Because of how small this world has become in the wake of social media and 24-hour news, an episode like this does not affect just one person or our family; it affects thousands of people.

This is why we approached Mr. Dreeshen in May 2010 to bring to his attention the importance of this issue. He did not let us down. He drafted a piece of legislation that asked that the Criminal Code be modified to make personating a police officer an aggravating offence.

I would like to thank Mr. Dreeshen for working so hard on his bill, and thank this committee. It is a profound privilege for a citizen from Penhold, Alberta to come to Ottawa to be heard by the leaders of our country, so thank you.

● (1630)

Jordan continues to have issues regarding anyone wearing a uniform, be it the RCMP, the police, security, or a peace officer. It is likely that she will have these issues for the rest of her life. As another RCMP member said to us when we were talking to him about this issue, it's understandable that she would, because even as members, he said, they feel a little jolt when faced by the flashers in the rear-view mirror. For her, it's a whole other story.

RCMP members worked with us to flag Jordan's registration so that in the event she was stopped on a traffic violation they would be aware that she would be calling for confirmation of identification. Members were as distressed as we were that someone would commit such a heinous crime while representing themselves as law enforcement.

She was actually pulled over about three months after her abduction, which sent her into a panic attack; however, she said that because there were two policemen and she had three friends in the car, she was able to talk herself down. She never speeds now. She never disobeys the rules of the road. She never wants to give a policeman any reason to pull her over, because of her deep mistrust of the uniform.

This is not how we need the police presence to be viewed in this country. We ask those people to go out and possibly give their lives to protect the citizenry of this country. By that fact alone, the penalties for personating an officer of the law need to be strong. They need to approach the maximums more often than keep the minimums.

About five months ago, Jordan and her boyfriend Jimmy were driving home from bringing me a drink at work, and not an alcoholic drink, but an iced tea. It was late at night. I work night shifts. I'm an RN in the emergency room in our local town. On their way home, they came upon an accident involving a single vehicle, with a driver who appeared to be drunk. They did the right thing, and they called the police.

For whatever reason, five RCMP cruisers arrived in a short amount of time, lights flashing, and Jordan experienced a full-on flashback and began panicking and crying uncontrollably. The very people who we as a society are supposed to turn to in times of crisis sent her into an exacerbation of her post-traumatic stress disorder.

Thankfully, a kind policewoman asked Jimmy what was happening, and when he told her that Jordan was the girl from Penhold—they all know who she is—and had been abducted by someone dressed as a police officer, she went around, got all the flashers turned off, and let Jordan go home in Jimmy's car, later giving him a ride to our house.

My point is that this is ongoing, this fear of the RCMP and law enforcement persons in general, and it hasn't eased up. I very much doubt that it ever will.

Because our society is based on laws and those who protect and uphold the law, it is doubtful that Jordan can go through her life never seeing a member of that profession. That man and all others who commit crimes dressed as law enforcement abuse the public's trust. Our society cannot function if we do not trust law enforcement.

We need to make it clear that personating a member is not only an offence under the Criminal Code, but it's an offence against society as a whole, and that is why it should be an aggravating offence, so that justices may penalize accordingly and make the punishment fit the egregious nature of the crime.

Thank you.

● (1635)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Long, for sharing your story with us.

We have some questioners.

Our first questioner is Madam Boivin from the New Democratic Party.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: I'm not yet sure that it's a question. It's more a comment, because when we have to study these bills and the sad and really terrible, terrible ordeal you went through, it breaks my heart to know that what you should be having the most confidence in... That sense of confidence has been totally violated and is something that never comes back.

It's good for politicians to hear this, because we deal with paper, and some of us are lawyers and we deal with words. Although I don't wish this to happen to anybody, it's good that we have had your testimony here today. I'm sure that it's not easy to come here to share this story with us. For that, I really thank you.

This is one of those occasions when I'm proud to be an MP, in the sense that we can all work together to try to do something better, although I do take into account the fact that you still have your doubts, and I still have my doubts, in that even legislation like this will not solve everything. There are always going to be people trying to do something bad to people. I'm not sure that even this will...but if it can help, make it move forward, and maybe help Jordan get some—I don't know how you say this in English—solace, I guess you could say, with regard to the whole ordeal, I think that just for that it will be worth it. I really commend you for taking the time to come in front of us to share this very important story so that we can now put a face to it, even if not all the faces.

Jordan, you're going to be the face of all the others who have had to live through this, and for that you should be very proud of yourself. I do hope that one day you will be able to—not to forget, because you never forget—feel a bit more confident. There are some ex-cops at this other table. It must hurt them probably even more to know that somebody's actions give a bad name to what is such an important job for all Canadians.

That's all I wanted to share with you. Thank you for your courage.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur Goguen.

Mr. Robert Goguen: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much for having the courage to come and testify here today. I can't think of a worse trauma to live through, but certainly you approached this in a very rational fashion in going to Mr. Dreeschen, who took your concerns very seriously and brought forth this bill, a bill that basically has been viewed as very important and unanimously accepted by all the parties because of its importance, because of the trauma you suffered.

It's certainly not a negligible thing to be the poster child for this bill, but I'm wondering if you've had occasion to talk to other victims' groups, if others have approached you to share this horrible story with them. Certainly there are other victims who'd like to hear about this. I know there's compensation for victims of crime, and I suspect you've had to have some sort of treatment, and that's only normal. I wonder if you could comment on whether they've been of any assistance to you and whether or not you've been approached by others to speak about this horrific event.

Ms. Jordan Knelsen-Long (As an Individual): I did go to the crisis centre in Red Deer to talk a lot about what had happened to me, and then I ended up getting a referral to Dr. Magill, who's a PTSD specialized therapist. After that, I've gone to the CASART team for the Red Deer nurses, that's the sexual response team at the emergency hospital there, and I've talked to them about it as well. For anybody who wants to reach out to me, I'm willing to do that. I've got lots of Facebook messages and e-mails and whatnot, and so

far that's been my response. It's only been recently that I've been able to actually come out and speak about it.

• (1640)

Mr. Robert Goguen: Thank you.

As a result of your courage, society as a group will be better because of the strengthening of the Criminal Code. The Criminal Code is basically about public order and this is certainly off the map. So thank you.

Ms. Jordan Knelsen-Long: You're welcome.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Goguen.

Mr. McGuinty.

Mr. David McGuinty: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to also thank both of you for being here today. It takes a lot of courage and a lot of guts to be here to testify. So on behalf of all of my constituents and on behalf of my two daughters and my two sons, thank you for doing what you're doing. This is very important, to come forward and make a change, make a difference. There's something good in all of this here today, so thank you for being here.

I'd like to ask both of you to comment on the difficulty of survivors of situations like this in participating in the justice system. We have a lot to learn from your experience. It's often very difficult. We know, for example, that many survivors don't come forward. We know that the prosecution rate is relatively low, and should be higher.

I wonder if you have any ideas you can share with us about how to make this whole process easier, more conducive to the participation of survivors and their families. How can we do this better in Canada to make sure that we get more people feeling more comfortable coming forward, and also, more prosecutions?

Ms. Jordan Knelsen-Long: First of all, we need to stop thinking that women deserve it because they wore too short of a skirt or they drank too much or they took a ride home with the wrong.... That's why I went to my mother's CASART team, because she had come home and said one of the women on the team had said, "She deserved it".

Women need to not feel ashamed. It seems that if a man sexually assaults a woman it's not...whatever, we'll keep going, but when it happens to a woman, then we're supposed to hide and not tell anybody and not share. Before this had happened, I had no idea how many people I knew it had happened to, but afterwards I've had a lot of people come to me and say, "This happened to me, but I never reported it because I was scared".

Ms. Laurie Long: I think what we can put forward to survivors of sexual assault is that there is no statute of limitations on reporting. They can always report. They can go when they want to. They can make use of victims services. They can make use of crisis centres in their respective places, if they have it.

Our emergency rooms are getting better at having sexual assault response teams and at referring people for psychological help. We've found that the quicker people get mental health help afterward, the better the results are and the quicker they can resume their normal activities.

As Jordan has said, the attitude of shame that surrounds a rape victim is ridiculous in this country. In what other situation would a victim feel embarrassed for having had something happen to them? We've just had this crime happen in Nova Scotia with that girl, right? It's the same issue. If we can come together as a society to promote wellness among our people who have had this happen to them, and promote that it's okay for them to say what happened to them....

Why should they be ashamed of it? They didn't do it. They bear no shame. I'm not sure where that came from, or why that attitude exists, but that is part of what we're working on here.

Mr. David McGuinty: You've given a lot of thought to this situation, and I want to get your advice or insight on another idea.

Many countries have moved to restrict access to fake police uniforms, to deal with the strobe lighting for cars that some folks will try to pass off as police lighting, and to deal with badges and so on and so forth. Do you think it would be helpful for us to consider restrictions in Canada on access to this kind of dress, for example, to people dressing up as police officers for Halloween?

Would that kind of thing be helpful?

• (1645)

Ms. Laurie Long: I do think it would be. I don't even like the thought—it's so ridiculous to say this in front of a House committee—of a bachelorette party where a stripper is dressed up as a policeman. I don't like that either. I think it's disrespectful to the uniform. We ask those folks to do a job where they can lose their lives every day, and I think that's wrong.

Do I think they should be restricted? Yes, I do. I do think they should be restricted. I am a nurse, and people tell me stuff all the time that you would never think anybody would tell you about their personal life. I can't take that and go use it against them. I could, but that's against my code of ethics and my practice. I can't do that.

It's the same with a policeman. These fellows here who are ex-policemen would not do that either. It's part of your code. It's part of the people's code, I think just human beings' code.

If there are people out there who need to have things restricted because they just don't understand that it's not right, then yes, it should be restricted.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Mr. Mai.

Mr. Hoang Mai: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll just add to what Ms. Boivin said. For us, having you here is a privilege. Often in the justice committee we read bills, we look at things, and we hear from witnesses, but when we hear from witnesses who are actually behind a bill and who have gone through the whole experience, for us it's really deeply moving. I really thank you for sharing your story and for bringing this to life, if you will. It helps us to understand.

I would also like to commend both of you for sharing your story. It is important that we hear from you. You are role models in terms of going out there and sharing your story. If some other victims are also going through this, maybe they will share that with you. Hopefully this will make us better understand what's happening and also understand your views more.

Thank you very much for coming.

The Chair: That's all the questioners.

Thank you very much for your presentations. Obviously, it's a very moving story for us. It's important that it was here on victims week and it was very coincidental that it happened. We really appreciate it. As a father of two daughters, I believe it was an important message you gave, and it's very important for us to hear it. We read about it in the paper, but unless you're a lawyer in the criminal court you don't experience this very often, thank God. When we do, we need to have a better understanding. You've done a fantastic job of that today.

Thank you very much.

We're going to recess for a couple of minutes and then we'll do clause-by-clause study.

Ms. Laurie Long: Thank you.

• (1650)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order.

We're joined by Ms. Markham from the legal department in case there are any questions. Thank you very much.

Are there any questions for the Justice department on this one-clause bill?

Seeing none, I'll proceed.

Shall clause 1 carry?

(Clause 1 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the title carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Shall the bill carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Shall the chair report the bill back to the House on Wednesday?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: That's it, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you very much.

We don't have any agenda items for Wednesday so I'll cancel Wednesday's meeting.

We will start Bill C-452 on Monday.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Yes, it will be on Monday.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

This meeting is adjourned.

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