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# Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

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Chair: The Honourable John McKay





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• (1610)

[English]

**The Chair (Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.)):** Let me bring to order the the sixth meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

I apologize to our witnesses for this 40-minute delay.

I propose, colleagues, that we give some extension of time to them. They made some considerable effort to be here, and I think we should honour their effort to be here to tell us what they are concerned about with respect to systemic racism in policing in Canada.

I will also mention that there is a subcommittee report to be presented. I'll propose doing that towards the end of the meeting.

With that, I will invite Professor Roach, faculty of law, University of Toronto, to speak; along with Melanie Omeniho, president, Women of the Métis Nation.

I'll ask them to speak for seven minutes in the order they are listed on the notice of meeting.

Professor Roach, you have seven minutes, please.

**Professor Kent Roach (Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Toronto, As an Individual):** Thank you very much, Mr. McKay, and thank you for inviting me.

I'm going to make seven concrete proposals to address systemic racism in policing.

First, collect and publicize race-based data. Although we know that the problem of systemic racism has been with us for a long time, we need statistics to measure whether it is getting better or worse in terms of both those accused of crime and crime victims. The RCMP especially should work with Statistics Canada to collect and publicize data.

Second, Parliament should regulate police practices. Parliament has, in the last 30 years, largely left this to the courts. In the U.K., Parliament proactively regulates police conduct and then ties that to the collection of statistics. In the U.K., for example, you know each year how many stops and searches have been made by police officers and who has been subject to stop and search.

Third, I would change the law of self-defence and use-of-force policies. Indigenous and racialized people and people with mental health issues are overrepresented among those killed and injured by the police. In 2012, Parliament liberalized the law of self-defence so that on paper it is broader than section 25 relating to police use

of force. Parliament should make clear that reasonable self-defence cannot be based on racist fears, even if those are genuinely and subjectively held. We also need to revisit not only police use of force but also tactics and de-escalation.

Fourth, we should link policing with other social services and also make self-administered indigenous police agencies a priority and an essential service. We are asking the police to deal with intergenerational trauma, addictions and mental health issues. They should be required to work with other public and community agencies with more expertise and less coercive force. The number of indigenous police services has declined from 58 in 1992 to 36, whereas the number should be heading in the opposite direction. Such police services need resources and the freedom to work with others in the community, and hopefully to take over policing from the RCMP, OPP and the *Sûreté*.

Fifth, we must improve governance inside and outside of the RCMP. The seven-person Yukon Police Council, which has three first nations members and is chaired by the deputy minister of justice, is a model that you should look at closely. The RCMP, especially in its contract policing role, can no longer rely on top-down governance from a very busy Minister of Public Safety through to the commissioner. For example, Surrey is gaining much more local control over policing by opting out of contract policing. We need to find a way to have better local governance of the RCMP when it is involved with contract policing and also better governance of the RCMP overall. The new advisory committee is there to handle corporate risk, not to provide citizen input.

Sixth, we have to improve citizen complaints and review in general. As you know, the RCMP's review body is underfunded and underpowered as the ongoing travesty of not releasing the report on the RCMP's interaction with Colten Boushie's family illustrates. I really hope the RCMP's result is not released on a Friday afternoon or on a busy day. The RCMP act needs a fundamental rethink, and if that is not possible, then the federal agency should get out of the way and let the provincial agencies assume responsibility over police complaints and, as they have in many jurisdictions, assume jurisdiction over investigations.

Seventh and finally—this is probably the biggest ask—we need to abandon the paramilitary model of policing, which I believe is perhaps more entrenched in the RCMP than in any other police force. We need to move towards an educated, professional model. Police officers are educated professionals just like teachers, nurses and lawyers. They require continuous learning, hiring, specialization and easier licence suspension.

Right now we have a quasi-criminal disciplinary process. I fear that with the unionization of the RCMP, this will only become a more difficult instrument. Rightly, the police are educated professionals. They are paid as educated professionals, but they should also be subject to licence suspension just like teachers and lawyers are.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

President Omeniho, you have seven minutes, please.

**Ms. Melanie Omeniho (President, Women of the Métis Nation - Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak):** Thank you.

I represent the Métis Nation, one of the three distinct indigenous peoples in Canada. We have our own history, customs, laws, language, culture and tradition. Métis women are vibrant, strong, resilient and resourceful, and are the backbone of the Métis Nation. Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak, the organization I represent, is the voice of Métis women in Canada and across the homeland, which is Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia.

I'd like to remind the committee that today is a Métis day. It's the 135th anniversary of the hanging of Louis Riel, and it's today we honour. I'm honoured to be here today to present to you on this issue.

Discrimination is created and reinforced through government policies and practices. Canada has a long history of policies and practices that have institutionalized racism toward Métis women, girls and gender-diverse people. While the current government is working towards reconciliation, many discriminatory policies and practices still exist today and have not been addressed yet.

From 2001 to 2004, the Correctional Service of Canada released a series of research reports examining Métis men and women incarcerated in federal facilities in British Columbia and the prairie region.

As part of these studies, researchers surveyed the childhood and family experiences of offenders growing up. Most Métis respondents reported experiencing or witnessing violence and substance abuse in their homes and in their communities growing up. Most Métis respondents reported having family members involved in crime while they were growing up. Métis women continue to be one of the most at-risk groups in Canada for issues related to violence and continue to experience these conflict issues while also facing discrimination from police services.

For many Métis women, the circumstances leading to their involvement in the criminal justice system is the result of conflicting set of collective and individualized life circumstances, marked with systemic discrimination, silence and poverty.

Systemic racism in policing continues to exist because of the legislation, racism and policing practices that fail to recognize the full impact of the biases against Métis women.

One of the police practices that directly targets Métis men and women is carding. It has been proven by a multitude of studies that this practice targets racialized and marginalized communities disproportionately. The issue goes beyond carding though. The true reason is that Métis women are treated differently from other women within the system, and I continually hear how Métis women were targeted by police in many instances.

In their interactions with policing, Métis women are seen as a blemish on our society rather than a vibrant contributor to their nation and to who they are in their families and communities.

Police services in Canada refuse to recognize racial bias and racism as a problem in their practices and policies, and police are not required to record racial data in their reports, making it even more difficult for indigenous people and advocates to push for change within policing practices.

A complete re-education of the entire police system is required. This training must go beyond a tick box of cross-cultural training, but must cause the system and participants to fully examine their biases, both overt and unconscious.

Police services must develop a best practice protocol for their enforcement response to missing persons reports of Métis people, including steps that police should take upon receiving a missing persons report for any Métis person.

● (1615)

Along with the 62 calls for *miskotahâ* and our Métis perspectives in the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls report, the national inquiry had the following three recommendations specific to Métis people and policing:

17.12 We call upon police services to build partnerships with Métis communities, organizations, and people to ensure culturally safe access to police services.

17.13 We call upon police services to engage in education about the unique history and needs of [the] Métis communit[y].

17.14 We call upon police services to establish better communication with Métis communities and populations through representative advisory boards that involve Métis communities and address their needs.

Policing that builds trust with Métis communities is versed in Métis culture, is responsive to the distinct needs of Métis individuals, and is able to protect and meet the vulnerable Métis victims, which is so badly needed. Métis-specific policing holds the potential to address under-reporting, a particularly potent issue for Métis women; to protect Métis communities; and to reduce Métis over-representation in crime and victimization.

• (1620)

**The Chair:** President Omeniho, could you wind it up, please? We are close to seven minutes.

**Ms. Melanie Omeniho:** I just want to finish by saying that many of our women reported to us when we were working on the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls profile that many of them ended up being victims of police services as well, so they never felt safe accessing police when they were victims of violence themselves. Changing policing and how we do business is a very important part of what we want to see done.

I thank you for this opportunity.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I don't wish to interrupt people in the middle of their presentations because they work very hard on them and it doesn't work. We are challenged with time.

With that, I'm going to ask that the questioning round begin.

I have Ms. Stubbs, Mr. Anandasangaree, Madame Michaud and Mr. Harris for six minutes each.

Madam Stubbs, you have six minutes, please.

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate and thank both of the witnesses for being here. I certainly wish—and I'm sure other members agree—that we had more time with you.

I just have a couple of questions, primarily for Mr. Roach.

I note that in a joint article on June 17, you said that RCMP independence should be defined in the RCMP Act. I just want to invite you to expand a little bit more on that and on the details.

Also, attached to that is the Brown report's recommendation of an independent oversight and complaints review commission, independent from the RCMP commissioner and the minister. Could you also expand on the concept of having an independent oversight and complaints review commission, why it is important, what the key components are and what the impact is?

**Prof. Kent Roach:** Thank you very much, Ms. Stubbs.

Defining police independence, I think, is important because, frankly, there's a degree of—how can I put this nicely—reticence for a minister to direct or send directives to the RCMP. Police independence has sometimes been overinflated to incorporate all kinds of operational independence, where I think the minister really should take more responsibility and issue public directives.

For the research I'm doing right now, I have submitted an access to information request for all ministerial directives to the RCMP. I

have heard nothing for over three months. To me, all of these directives, minus any sensitive information, should be readily posted on the web.

With regard to police independence, we don't want the minister telling the RCMP to investigate Mr. X but not to investigate Mr. Y—or charge. However, with everything else, things like “Mr. Big” operations, which are a litigation magnet, I don't see any reason why the minister cannot say that from now on we're not going to do them, or we're only going to do them in these ways. I believe in democratic policing.

As for the Brown report, we need to think not just about oversight. I've already said that the existing RCMP complaints body is under-resourced and underpowered. It has no power to impose any sort of remedy, and frankly, most law faculties have three or four times the budget that it has. The people there are trying their best, but they're having to deal with or supervise complaints from coast to coast to coast.

I also think that we need a real police board for the RCMP. I think society now is more complex, and this idea that there's the minister here and the commissioner there and that somehow it all works out with the provinces and territories, I don't think is sufficient.

I also think we need to have the RCMP work with other parts of the federal government—Health, Indigenous Affairs and so on—to take a more whole-of-government approach to safety and security.

• (1625)

**The Chair:** You have about two minutes, Madam Stubbs.

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs:** I appreciate your comments. I also note your previous recommendations about the importance of civilian oversight and the democratization of the RCMP, as you touched on here. I think it's important in this context, because I note that the Prime Minister, the public safety minister, the justice minister, other members of this government, have said there is systemic racism in the RCMP. That's an extremely serious concern.

I happen to have a very close relative who has been a detachment assistant for more than four years. I know many front-line, dedicated officers and support staff who are good, and they're extremely frustrated. There are bad apples, as there are in every institution, and acts of racism must be stamped out and individuals who are racist must face full consequences.

However, it seems to me that if the Prime Minister and these ministers have made this indictment—and it looks like they might have pressured the RCMP commissioner into correcting her previous comments in saying the same thing—then where are the directives? Where is the concrete information and the facts and instructions from the minister to offer concrete solutions?

Would you like to expand on the importance of the transparency issue too, in terms of achieving outcomes and confidence in institutions among all Canadians?

**The Chair:** That's a very important question, but she has only given you about 15 seconds to answer it, so very briefly, please.

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs:** Sorry.

**Prof. Kent Roach:** Look, the RCMP has a very difficult job, and hopefully when they eventually release the Boushie report, they will come out with a plan. Every institution has to deal with institutional racism, so I don't think this should be seen as an indictment of the RCMP in particular.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Professor Roach and Ms. Stubbs.

We have Mr. Anandasangaree for six minutes, please.

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair and colleagues.

Thanks to both of you for being here today.

I also want to acknowledge Louis Riel Day. It's a very important day in Canada.

Professor Roach, I'm going to start with you. Hopefully, I'll get some more time.

With respect to addressing issues of systemic racism, can you give us some good examples of other police departments or agencies that have addressed it? What concrete steps, apart from the seven you've identified, should the RCMP be taking?

**Prof. Kent Roach:** Well, I think it's very important to empower racialized people within the RCMP so that there are support groups. I know that's in the Toronto Police Service and the Ottawa Police Service, where groups of racialized police officers not only can mentor but can also respond to problems that they have within the organization. That's one thing.

The second thing is that I think we need to have consultative community committees, but we also need to realize that speaking to two or three people in one community is never enough, and we need to have town hall meetings. I think that in some cases the commissioner needs to listen—and I know she's very busy—but she also needs to have people within various communities who she can have a continuing relationship with, but who then can also take her to different communities in order to have a town hall.

Policing has to be democratic, and the commissioner has to realize that. As with any police chief, the police chief works for the board or, in this case, the commissioner works for the minister, and if it's not working out, then, as in all cases, it's maybe time to find someone who has a different vision.

• (1630)

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree:** Professor, I'll just pick up on the democratization of policing. You've mentioned it a couple of times.

An agency like the RCMP goes from one end of the country to the other. How do you ensure that the needs of people in Surrey are addressed within a local context, as well as those of people in Halifax or Nova Scotia? Isn't it inherently difficult to be able to have both?

Also, there's a broader question I'm putting forward, and I want you to address it as well. Is it time for us or the RCMP to get out of contract policing altogether?

**Prof. Kent Roach:** Well, I think that would be a huge step. I'm not necessarily opposed to it, but I don't think it's going to happen overnight, and, as you note, Surrey is coming up with its own police.

You can look at the Yukon Police Council. That's an example of where, within one territory, they have taken proactive democratic steps.

If you look at the 2019 Ontario legislation, the Community Safety and Policing Act, you see that Ontario has a detachment board for each OPP detachment and the first nations served by the Ontario Provincial Police. When we have these detachment boards, we also have to train those citizens who are serving in a democratic capacity so that they're not completely dominated by the detachment coordinator, but I think we need something like that.

I look at the RCMP Act and it is the least democratic policing act in Canada that I'm aware of. I think the Ontario act is actually much better on the democracy front.

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree:** In comparison, let's look at the SIU, for example, and the Toronto Police Services Board. They're two essentially independent bodies that oversee, in some respects, the work of the Toronto police.

What mechanism do you think the RCMP needs? I know that you touched on some earlier, but in terms of the SIU portion, what do you think is required for investigation and charges to come forward when there's inappropriate or wrong behaviour?

**Prof. Kent Roach:** We obviously need some SIU-type mechanism for those provinces that do not already have one, but my understanding is that in Alberta, say, they have their own SIU and it handles the investigation. The problem in Nunavut, say, is that if the RCMP shoots someone in Nunavut, which has happened so often, it's the Ottawa police that are investigating.

I would go back to the fact that I'm a criminal law professor, and although I think the SIU is important, I also know that you have to give everyone reasonable doubt about guilt. That's why I talked about changing the self-defence laws and the use of force policies, because I actually think that it is even more important than simply having criminal prosecution [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

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

With that, we'll go on to Madame Michaud.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Michaud, you have the floor for six minutes.

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

Mr. Roach, thank you for joining us today.

You gave some other examples, including the measures taken in the United Kingdom.

To combat systemic racism in our institutions, specifically in the police, you feel that our involvement should be through legislation, including amendments to the use-of-force guidelines for the police. You also propose no longer using a top-down approach, where the governance comes from on high and moves downwards.

Can you tell us a little more about the legislative approach that the Minister of Justice and his department should be adopting?

• (1635)

[*English*]

**Prof. Kent Roach:** Unfortunately, I wasn't getting the interpretation in my ear, but I think I followed you, although I may embarrass myself, and I beg your pardon if I do.

I do think that with a top-down sort of approach, when the Minister of Public Safety came to you very recently on the mandate letter, I'm pretty sure he came with the heads of five or six different organizations. He has a huge portfolio, and I worry that this is beyond the capacity of any one human being. Maybe we need a minister for the RCMP, or maybe it should be taken out of Public Safety and put into some other ministry.

I think this is a real problem. We have a mammoth ministry, and we have the RCMP, which in itself has 20,000 people, some involved in contract policing, others involved in national policing. This is a huge issue, even before you get into the issues of corrections and CBSA. One of my concerns is that we're going to take the existing RCMP complaints and review body—which I think, of its own admission, is really struggling—and add CBSA to it. That's not necessarily going to make things better. I believe there are only two commissioners in that body, so I think it is important to recognize that the federal government has a huge presence.

If the federal government starts moving out of contract policing, I think it also has to think about recouping those funds, which are less, because the federal government is subsidizing contract policing a lot less, and I think that with unionization in the RCMP you're going to see more "Surreys".

Obviously COVID has thrown a spanner into the works, but if there is a withdrawal from contract policing, I would hope that the federal government would use its spending power to incentivize all existing police forces to partner with other public agencies and community agencies less coercively and without discrimination, or with less discrimination, to deliver essential policing services. As my co-panellist has talked about, that would also involve victims of crime, which is also another huge issue.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Thank you.

Before I ask my next question, I want to make sure that Mr. Roach has access to the interpretation.

Is it working, Mr. Roach?

[*English*]

**Prof. Kent Roach:** Just a second. Sorry, I'm still not getting the interpretation.

**Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.):** There's a globe at the bottom of the screen, and if you put that on "English" you should be able to get the interpretation.

**The Chair:** It's right beside "participants".

**Prof. Kent Roach:** A globe? No. I have a phone, a plus and a minus, and I have a microphone cut. I don't have a globe.

**The Chair:** Is it at the bottom of your screen?

**Prof. Kent Roach:** I'm afraid not, sorry.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Mark D'Amore):** There should be an "interpretation" icon at the bottom of the screen.

**The Chair:** You'll see "mute", "stop video" and in the middle, "participants". Next is "interpretation", then "restrictions" and then "leave", right across the bottom.

Now you're on mute.

**Prof. Kent Roach:** I'm sorry. It just doesn't seem to be present.

**The Chair:** Well, that's a problem with being a professor.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** We'll have to plow on.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Michaud, you have the floor for two minutes.

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Mr. Roach, do you think you will be able to understand the question in French?

• (1640)

**Prof. Kent Roach:** I hope so.

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** What you said about the department's workload is interesting, with the load being probably too heavy to allow it to really handle the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the RCMP, and to find ways of eradicating systemic racism in the institutions.

You said that it is important to somewhat abandon the paramilitary model, in order to move towards an educated professional model. All through this study, we have talked about a solution that would have officers on the ground accompanied by social workers or mental health specialists, for example.

Do you think that it is a good idea? What should the federal government do? Should it provide more funding to those programs so that we have more of those people on the ground?

[English]

**Prof. Kent Roach:** As you noted, I do think we need a more flexible model. I was part of an expert panel commissioned by the Canadian council of academics on the future of policing. We heard evidence from around the world that policing needs to become much more specialized so that what works for cybercrime does not necessarily work for 24-7.

The idea that everyone in the RCMP or all officers have to go through Depot in Regina I think is anachronistic. Although there are financial challenges, which I believe your question alluded to, I think if we have a more flexible workforce in the RCMP, this could actually result in savings. On this idea that everyone has to be a police officer for the majority of their working life, I think that if we look at this in a 10-, 20- or 30-year horizon, it's not realistic. I recognize that the Supreme Court has allowed the unionization of the RCMP, but I worry a little bit that this as well as the paramilitary ethos, and the idea that everyone has to go through Regina in a kind of boot camp, will make the RCMP a less nimble police force.

Many municipal—

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, we have to leave it there. I apologize. It's what I do best, apparently. I will address our time limitations once Mr. Harris is finished.

With that, Mr. Harris, you have six minutes, please.

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to both of our witnesses today.

First, like Mr. Anandasangaree, I would like to recognize the Louis Riel anniversary today.

President Omenihio from Women of the Métis Nation, you talked about the importance of cultural understanding in terms of policing. I think I get that, very much so, but let me ask you if you have any opinion on whether there is any role in Métis communities for an indigenous police force and Métis involvement in the police force or the kind of oversight that Dr. Roach was taking about at the local level. Is that something that you would think would be helpful? Do you have any views on it?

**Ms. Melanie Omenihio:** Actually, our governing members are looking at the possibility. It's a lot more challenging, though, than for some of the first nation communities who have police services. The issue is that we don't have a captive audience in one particular spot. I do know that the Métis nation and the Métis nation governments want to look at developing or building some of their own justice processes.

We have many members who are involved and are RCMP members. Many of my friends and relatives over the years became members of the police services to try to change those institutions. I want to tell you, whether people like to hear it or not, that they tell me some of the stories: Racism is embedded within that system. It isn't about trying to say the whole system is corrupt, but about our making it a better system, if that's the system of policing we're going to be using.

I'd like to see at least a relationship between the various police services and the Métis nation and the Métis nation governments if we're going to move forward. I think without that, we'll always be a

victim of the service rather than be a part of increasing it and making it a strength-based place.

• (1645)

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Thank you very much for those insights.

Dr. Roach, I know we have a lot on our plate to undertake a study of systemic racism in policing in Canada. One of the focuses that you talked about was the oversight of the RCMP. I see two aspects to that. Is there room for a national board somewhere up there that has the same kind of role in policy, as well as local oversight, as you suggested, maybe as a default position in communities where the RCMP are acting? Can both of those models exist together and should both be covered in legislation?

**Prof. Kent Roach:** I think the answer to that, Mr. Harris, is yes. The Ontario legislation is moving now towards an advisory committee for the OPP overall, as well as detachment boards and first nations boards. I think that would fit in even more naturally with the RCMP, which does a lot of national policing.

So I would think the national board for the RCMP would deal with issues of both over- and under-policing that Muslim Canadians struggle with in part because of stereotypes associating them with terrorism, in part because of hate crimes that are unfortunately aimed at Muslims. I see the two interacting. But I also think it's important that the RCMP be less rigid and less paramilitary so that the local boards can have some power because, obviously, what's required for policing in Yukon is very different from what's required for policing in British Columbia.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** I'd also like to ask about the RCMP complaints commission. It seems to me that this is a broken system or is not very efficient. I still see 175 reports on the commissioner's desk, and that's not good for her and it's not good for the people who are waiting to hear their complaints. Is there room for some mechanism like an automatic release of these reports after two months or 60 or 90 days to clear the decks? Should that be the way to go or do we need to revamp the system? You shouldn't have to have a MOU between the commissioner and the chief of the complaints commission to get things moving. Yet, as you point out, what we have added to this is another agency, the Canada Border Services Agency, with the legislation that was tabled before prorogation. That seems to be going nowhere. What can we recommend to fix it?

**The Chair:** You have approximately 30 seconds.

**Prof. Kent Roach:** I think here of a drop-dead date that would allow the commission to release these reports, but the whole idea is that the commissioner should absorb and learn the lessons from the report.

The commission has done some very good work on systemic... Maybe one way to go is to leave it as a systemic body, but allow the provinces, when necessary, to have their own complaints bodies deal with the individual complaints against RCMP officers.



**The Chair:** Again, I apologize for cutting people off. We're already 20 minutes over the cut-off time. I'm proposing a second round of four minutes for the first two questioners and four minutes for Madame Michaud, and Mr. Harris will finish off this panel. I have a request from Madam May for a question as well, and I'm inclined not to allow it, only because we are so far behind.

With that, the second round is the Conservatives for four minutes, except I don't know who the Conservative questioner is.

**Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC):** Yes, Chair, I will be joining you and I do apologize for missing the opening comments by Melanie and Lisa, because of connection problems.

As you will know, today we're celebrating National Métis Week. I had an opportunity to recognize the Métis people and to thank those who are so involved in making a difference. So Melanie and Lisa, I do want to thank you for the personal contribution you have made over the years. We may be related, as I am Métis myself and my roots are in Villeneuve, Lac Ste. Anne, the St. Albert area, L'Hirondelle and Cunninigham. We sure are connected. There is no doubt about that.

I have just a few questions. First of all, what barriers do you see to Métis women taking up a career in law enforcement, or do you see barriers?

• (1650)

**Ms. Melanie Omeniho:** Honestly, there are many barriers to Métis women going into law enforcement. I do have some very good friends and allies who are Métis women.

By the way my grandfather's name is Cunningham. I know that's an aside, but there are women within that system. As much as I'm telling you that there's racism in the system, we also know there are a great number of gender issues within that system in how women are treated and how it's managed. It's not an easy system, and you have to be awfully tough. The barriers entail how well-received women are, and how they're treated.

This system is an old system. It's based on principles that are not in today's world when you're talking about things like feminism. We need to change how it's looked at. Back in the days when the RCMP was formed, we had stories from the 1800s of RCMP officers raping our women. This is not just starting now; this is already something from centuries ago.

We need to start looking at a system that is not based on the fact that women have no value. Back then, women didn't even have a vote or a say. We have to change these systems now, so that they're reflective of exactly what our future is going to be in order for people to be treated equally within that system.

**Mr. Marc Dalton:** Building on what you said, do you have any other thoughts or recommendations on what this committee should look for or ensure that it's included in a first nations policing act? Is there anything we need to avoid?

**Ms. Melanie Omeniho:** I'm not an expert on first nations policing, but what we need to avoid when we're looking at alternative policing is under-resourcing. We need to ensure that they are resourced well enough to actually do their jobs. They should not just

be a fraction of something else, but should actually have the authority to do their jobs and not be overseen by an authoritarian system of another police service.

**Mr. Marc Dalton:** Would a local more diverse and more accountable policing oversight at the local level increase the accountability and trust of the community in the police?

**Ms. Melanie Omeniho:** I believe it would. There are some models of community engagement, and oversight boards do help. I believe that some of them do have, or ensure there are indigenous people engaged. It helps people to have confidence in the police services, and it helps to ensure there is a healthy oversight within the system.

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Dalton:** Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** You'll have to open a separate chapter of ancestry.ca.

We now have Mr. Lightbound, for four minutes.

[Translation]

**Mr. Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I am also going to echo my colleagues' comments. I would be remiss if I did not highlight the anniversary of the death of Louis Riel today. His memory lives on across the country, but particularly in Quebec and in the hearts of Quebecers. So I want to highlight this important day.

My two questions go to you, Professor Roach. Allow me to ask them in French because I feel that we must not underestimate your ability to understand the language, as you have demonstrated for Ms. Michaud's questions. So I will follow somewhat along the lines of her last comment.

I very much like the approach you are advocating, that of professionalizing police forces, as an alternative to the paramilitary model that the RCMP and a number of other police forces seem to encourage. Could you tell us about the best examples you have observed, whether they involve municipal police forces or those abroad?

My second question is about contract policing. What are the greatest advantages in your opinion? Can you give us a quick overview?

• (1655)

[English]

**Prof. Kent Roach:** With regard to the second question, Surrey did a lot of work and found that by leaving contract policing, it would have its own police board where the mayor would be chair, and it could appoint people who represented the demographic diversity of Surrey. It also found that it would have much more flexibility in terms of hiring people and that there would not be this three-year cycle. A lot of RCMP officers will come into detachments that perhaps are 1,000 or 2,000 miles away from their homes, stay for three years and move out. The disadvantage of exiting from contract policing is that it obviously requires start-up funds. Although Surrey is estimating that it will save money, that is in part based upon projections that the RCMP is due for a raise. Now that they have a union, they will probably get one. Obviously, this was all done before COVID.

I'm not sure that I followed your first question exactly, but thank you for praising me for understanding French. I've tried throughout my career, but not with the greatest success.

The paramilitary.... I think this goes back to the problem that my co-panellist spoke about: police officers' experiencing sexism and racism within the ranks. One of the reasons why that festers is that there's a hierarchical structure. The RCMP was not even based on Sir Robert Peel's model of a civilian police. It was rather based on the Irish constabulary, which was a colonial occupying force within Ireland, and wore the red because that is what the military wore. I agree with my co-panellist that the roots of paramilitarism in the RCMP run extremely deep. They run from the start of the RCMP. They are reinforced in Regina where everyone trains, and they're reinforced within the command structure. It will take a brave and inspired leader to really fight that. We've had one civilian leader for the RCMP. That didn't work out so well. I think what you're seeing is that the institution and the paramilitarism of the institution are very durable.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Roach and Mr. Lightbound.

[Translation]

Ms. Michaud, you have the floor for one minute.

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

My question is for you, Ms. Omeniho.

You mentioned that Canada has gone through long periods of racism towards aboriginal and Métis women, and that is quite true. Nothing more needs to be said. You were saying that the women have never really felt safe or protected by police officers. That is a serious problem, because all Quebecers and all Canadians, whatever their origin, deserve to feel safe in their surroundings.

In your opinion, what can we do to reestablish that bond of trust between Métis women and police officers?

[English]

**Ms. Melanie Omeniho:** In my view, I believe that when police officers are dealing with individuals, instead of first seeing them as potential criminals, they need to hear their stories and be able to see what they can do and how they can address people. In a community.... I can give you example after example of where women very

often have been incarcerated when they've actually been victims of violence. They haven't been treated with the same values that maybe other racial people might have been. I'm not saying that I don't believe there haven't been white people who have been victims of issues with police, but far too often in our community there are women who do not get the same values or supports when police are engaged. If they have mental health issues, they're treated really horrifically. Just last week there was the video of an indigenous woman having her clothes stripped off in a police station—she was actually drunk and intoxicated—and they gave her a concussion and she had to go to the hospital.

Those issues are real. They're not something obscure that's going on. With the new video cameras available, we're seeing this stuff in the media and being horrified by it, but it's the life that we experience.

• (1700)

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, we're going to have to leave it there.

Mr. Harris, you have a final minute, please. Madame May will possibly have one minute after that, and then we'll have to close this session.

Mr. Harris.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Roach, in making your recommendations, you suggested that Parliament ought to regulate police practices, including the use of force.

Are you suggesting a standard that's in the Criminal Code or in the RCMP Act that would go into contract policing? Exactly how should the legislation of Parliament regulate these national standards or [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] outcomes?

**Prof. Kent Roach:** I think it should be done through the Criminal Code, perhaps with regulations that have a standard as they have in the U.K.

In the Golden strip-search case, the Supreme Court practically begged Parliament to regulate strip searches. We know that strip searches are a problem in some police forces and not in others.

It should also be tied to collecting data. In the U.K., when you use a stop-and-search power, the police have to record when they did it, who they did it to, and those statistics are published.

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

Madame May, you have one minute, please.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Given the shortage of time, forgive me, Professor Roach, for not bothering to say how hugely I respect your work and how grateful I am to you.

I want to go right to the question of the CBSA. We have inadequate review of the RCMP and none of CBSA.

What would you recommend we do about racism and abuse by CBSA officers?

**Prof. Kent Roach:** Well, I think you need to look at training. You need to create some sort of advisory board that would deal with people who are specialists with migrants and the issues that migrants go through.

I'm a bit skeptical about pushing it into the RCMP review body, which is already struggling.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madame May.

Unfortunately, colleagues, that is where we are going to have to end this session. On your behalf, I want to thank Professor Roach and President Omeniho for their contributions.

As you can see, members would really, really like to be asking more questions, but we unfortunately suffer the tyranny of time.

With that, we will suspend and re-empanel, so please don't turn off your computers.

Thank you.

• (1700) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1705)

**The Chair:** This is our second session. As you can see, we are unfortunately about 40 minutes behind where we should be, but it is democracy at work.

We have with us for the second session, Professor Samuels-Wortley from Carleton University; and Vice-President Gerri Sharpe from Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, along with Samantha Michaels.

Each of you has seven minutes, and I'll ask you to speak in the order that you're listed on the notice of meeting.

With that, Professor Samuels-Wortley, you have seven minutes, please.

**Ms. Kanika Samuels-Wortley (Assistant Professor, Carleton University, As an Individual):** Thank you.

I thank the committee for this invitation to speak on issues of systemic racism in policing in Canada.

Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge that I am taking space on the traditional territories of the Mississauga of the Credit, the Anishinabe, the Chippewa, Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples.

My name is Kanika Samuels-Wortley, and I am an assistant professor with the Institute of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Carleton University. My research centres on the policing of racialized communities as well as youth crime and victimization.

Today, I speak to you not only as a researcher but also as a Black member of Canadian society.

We, as Canadians, often view diversity as our strength. However, at this point in history, we can no longer ignore growing evidence that social inequality within our country is highly racialized. Black and indigenous peoples are more likely to live in poverty, thus creating barriers to social mobility.

The Canadian criminal justice scholarship has explored the intersection of social inequality in crime, but often neglects to consider the role of race and racism and how discrimination factors into criminalization, particularly given—

*[Technical difficulty—Editor]*

**Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC):** I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Yes, Mr. Kurek.

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Mr. Chair, we lost the audio, and I certainly don't want to miss any of the testimony.

**The Chair:** The audio is working fine for me.

Has anyone else lost the audio?

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** I think audio was lost in the room.

**The Clerk:** Can Ms. Samuels-Wortley speak a bit to see if we have sound?

**Ms. Kanika Samuels-Wortley:** Certainly. Can you hear me now?

**The Clerk:** Yes.

Can you go back about 20 seconds in your presentation? We should be able to capture what we missed.

**Ms. Kanika Samuels-Wortley:** Certainly. I apologize to those who are going to hear this again.

**The Chair:** Before you do, could you tell me where we are, Mr. Clerk? I neglected to stop the clock.

**Ms. Kanika Samuels-Wortley:** Would you like me to start from the beginning again?

**The Chair:** Normally I would say yes, but we are so far behind at this point.

**The Clerk:** We have lost about a minute of time. We should be good.

**The Chair:** If I start her at a minute, would that be good?

Okay.

You have six minutes left. Thank you.

**Ms. Kanika Samuels-Wortley:** I'll start with policing. It is one area that warrants specific attention in the criminal justice process simply due to the fact that it is the initial point of contact with members of the community. Police, of course, also have the discretion and coercive power to determine whether one's behaviour is criminal or not. Police are the gatekeepers to the justice system.

Some scholars and advocates will argue that the police only target individuals who commit crime, which thus explains the higher rates of offending among Black and indigenous peoples. However, there is a growing body of Canadian research that reveals how racially biased policing behaviours and practices also contribute to racial disparities in our justice system.

For the remainder of the discussion I will specifically speak to research pertaining to Black communities in Canada including concerns over racial profiling, police discretion and the under-policing of Black victimization.

For decades, Black communities in Canada have raised concerns that they are subject to higher levels of police surveillance. Racial profiling reflects the belief that officers often focus on the race of civilians rather than individualized suspicion or behaviour. These allegations are supported by a growing body of studies conducted in Toronto, Ottawa, Halifax, Montreal and Vancouver that reveal that Black people—more specifically, Black men—are grossly overrepresented in the official street check statistics.

Furthermore, a number of studies have shown that Black people are more likely to report multiple police stops and search incidents than respondents from other racial groups. Importantly, racial differences with respect to police contact remain even after controlling for other relevant factors including gender, social class, neighbourhood characteristics and criminal behaviour.

In other words, racial differences in police contact cannot be explained away by poverty or involvement in crime. Race matters. If you're a Black man in Canada, the question is not if you will be stopped, but when.

As a result of these practices, Black people are more likely to be caught for engaging in minor criminal activity than people from other racial backgrounds who engage in the exact same behaviour. This is a form of systemic racism.

Research also suggests that when white Canadians are caught breaking the law, they will be treated more leniently by the police than Black people. My own research demonstrates that concerns over police discretion and its impact on arrest decisions are valid.

To illustrate, our Youth Criminal Justice Act not only advises, but also gives police officers the power to choose alternative measures to the court system when apprehending a youth who has committed a crime. This is rooted in research that suggests the court system is not only costly, but inappropriate for most young people who engage in crime. Yet my analysis of police data suggests that in comparison to youth from other racial backgrounds, Black youth are more likely to be charged and less likely to receive an alternative sanction.

Involvement with the court system can lead to an array of negative consequences including societal stigmatization. Furthermore, a criminal record can have a negative impact on both educational and employment opportunities and ultimately lead to further criminal involvement. Therefore, Black people are more likely to face criminal charges and experience court interventions, as my data suggests. They are also more likely to experience the negative consequences of criminalization and labelling.

The disproportionate racial charge rates suggests that bias has become embedded in police discretion. It is these systems that perpetrate systemic racism.

Finally, I would like to switch gears and turn to the topic of victimization. While Black communities are over-policed in many respects, members of the Black community have long raised concerns over police inaction or insensitivity when it comes to their own victimization.

While the research is scarce, what data do exist suggest that Black people are at a higher risk of victimization than people from other racial backgrounds. However, research also suggests that Black people in Canada are less likely to report crime, including their own victimization, to the police. My current research seeks to understand why. Having a better understanding as to why people fail to report to the police is of great importance. Civilian reporting is needed to identify community crime levels. Civilian co-operation with police investigations is also needed to solve crimes and bring offenders to justice.

My analysis of national victimization data demonstrates that Black Canadians have little trust or confidence in the police. My one-on-one interviews with Black youth in Toronto demonstrate that this lack of trust decreases youth's motivations to report crime. This lack of trust is directly related to experiences of harsh and inadequate treatment by law enforcement officials.

To illustrate, many youth report that when they did report a crime to police in the past, the police treated them as a crime suspect rather than as a victim. Others fear that reporting victimization to the police could lead to police use of force against them or their family members. This places Black youth in a vulnerable position due to their increased risk of violent victimization as well as a lack of trust in an institution that is meant to serve and protect them. This is not only an example of systemic racism, but an issue of public safety.

● (1710)

We are at a time when citizens are expressing concern over racial bias in Canadian policing. In fact, a recent poll suggests that 40% of Canadians believe that police treat Black, indigenous and persons of colour unfairly. For decades, police services and policy-makers have deflected concerns over racial bias, and have failed to conduct the appropriate research and reforms that are necessary. There is a vital opportunity now to demonstrate that you're listening to Canadians in general, and members of the Black community in particular.

As a researcher I argue that we need more transparency from police services in order to document racism and evaluate the impact of anti-racism initiatives. We require improved race-based data collection, access and dissemination. We also require a commitment to work with researchers, including researchers of colour, who are willing to make critical inquiries into law enforcement practices. We can no longer rely on researchers who just give police the answers they are looking for.

I want to end with a quote from a participant in my study, who stated:

Not every officer is bad but as an institution the police gives those with biases the space and a platform to target people within those groups and without recourse.

I find this quote powerful, because as a Black member of Canadian society these issues do impact my sense of safety and well-being.

I thank the committee.

• (1715)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Vice-President Sharpe, you have seven minutes, which I assume you will split with your researcher, Madam Michaels.

**Ms. Gerri Sharpe (Vice-President, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada):** Madam Michaels will be supporting me during the question period of this presentation.

*Qujannamiik*, Mr. Chair.

*Ublaahatkut*, members of Parliament, chair, co-chairs, guests and staff.

My name is Gerri Sharpe and I am the vice-president of Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada. I am pleased to be here with you today on behalf of our president, Rebecca Kudloo.

Most of the Inuit population live in 51 communities spread across four regions of Inuit Nunangat: Nunavut, Nunavik, Inuvialuit, and Nunatsiavut.

Violence is a leading cause of mortality among Inuit women, at a rate of 14 times the national average.

In Inuit Nunangat, policing is the responsibility of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, except in Nunavik, which has been policed by the Kativik Regional Police Force since 1996.

Official statements by the RCMP and the KRPf state that policing is carried out in a manner that provides justice and the safety and security of all citizens.

A number of elements call into question whether policing in Inuit Nunangat is successful in protecting women. Some concerns include staffing shortages and the short duration of RCMP postings, a lack of experience of officers regarding the population and the lack of cultural competencies, language barriers, lack of Inuit police officers, lack of resources and underfunding, and lack of wraparound services.

How did we get here?

In just a few decades, we underwent a profound transformation in our lives and livelihood, transformation that was organized by colonial forces outside of our control. The RCMP played a key role in these operations. They relocated us from permanent settlements to permanent settlements, transported Inuit children to residential schools and slaughtered Inuit sled dogs.

Simply put, in Inuit Nunangat, policing is a structure built on systematic racism. This is a culture with deeply held views resulting in failed responses to the violence that Inuit women and girls experience.

Inuit communities have an inclusive culture, but policing has another, built on colonialism.

In January 2020, Pauktuutit released a report entitled “Addressing Gendered Violence against Inuit Women: A review of police policies and practices in Inuit Nunangat”. It revealed some fundamental issues that all lead to normalization of gendered violence against Inuit women. Police encounter significant challenges in carrying out their roles, including working in a high-risk, violent situation with a lack of referral resources to support those who need to escape domestic violence. The lack of investment in Inuit-led social services, health services and general infrastructure such as housing and shelters has also created an extra burden of responsibility on law enforcement. Individual officers can, and do, make a huge difference. We've heard positive stories from encounters with police, but the overall picture that has emerged from our report points to a largely flawed policing model.

Officers are poorly integrated into the community and therefore are not seen as trustworthy. They hold a limited understanding of the history of Inuit communities and the root causes of problems, especially regarding drug and alcohol use and domestic violence.

As a police officer emphasized, communication is fundamental in policing, yet fewer than five of the 150 RCMP officers in Nunavut are fluent in Inuktitut. The dispatch system does not offer Inuktitut-speaking staff. The language disconnect sets up quite for a barrier for Inuit women when they report gendered violence. This fact alone hinders the trust in policing.

• (1720)

Our report also finds that several women needing protection from violence are removed from their homes—instead of the abusers. This is a further injustice they experience that creates further trauma. Court-imposed sanctions are not being properly monitored, which results in mistrust and puts women in harm's way.

Racialized policing persists with Inuit women's encounters. You may recall this summer's explosive investigation by CBC into the conduct of the RCMP serving Nunavut's 25 communities. The investigation revealed shocking details of more than 30 cases of alleged RCMP misconduct, abuse and inhumane treatment of Inuit, especially women.

We are calling for a fundamental shift in how northern policing is carried out. Our report details 15 recommendations. The following are highlights: cultural competency training, with training on Inuit history and culture as well as local Inuktitut dialect; female officers, with one female officer present, if not leading, the statement-gathering process; Inuit advisory committees composed of elders, community leaders and cultural facilitators to ensure that police practices and procedures are integrating Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit* principles; trauma-informed policing, with trauma training relevant to the historical and present-day experience of Inuit to de-escalate situations and build positive relationships; on the duration of postings, revisiting the RCMP policy of two-year postings in favour of longer postings; gender-based violence training, delivered at least in part by victim advocates and to include Inuit survivors of domestic violence; Inuit civilian positions that employ Inuit at each police department, such as interpreters, natural healers and community patrols or peacekeepers—

**The Chair:** Vice-President Sharpe, could you wind it up? We're past our seven minutes. I'm sorry about that.

**Ms. Gerri Sharpe:** No problem.

My last point is about police accessibility. We need urgent funding to provide that Inuktitut speakers are available to answer emergency 24-7 access across Inuit Nunangat.

We know that a whole lot more needs to be done. Every Inuk woman and girl deserves to live free of violence.

*Qujannamiik.* I look forward to your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We will now turn to the round of questions.

Mr. Motz, you are first up. You have six minutes, please.

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

Thank you very much, Dr. Samuels-Wortley, Ms. Sharpe and Ms. Michaels, for your testimony today.

I'll get to my questions quickly, because the chair always cuts me off early.

Dr. Samuels-Wortley, you have suggested that community policing is a common approach to improving relations with police in a community. But sometimes that just means you get more police who are not engaging, and then you're over-policing a community. It appears to be more over-policing than actually making the difference you want. How would you improve their presence in a community without creating that atmosphere of over-policing?

**Ms. Kanika Samuels-Wortley:** Certainly I appreciate that question, and I do agree with you on the fact that community policing seems to be a positive aspect of policing that can help bridge positive relationships with the community. It was specifically brought up by the youth I interviewed that the problem is that they're well aware of the particular officers who have been hired to do that job. Often there's a call for additional officers or additional training, but they all don't follow a community-based approach. I think the problem is that the idea that more officers need to be on the street gives the impression that it's simply more enforcement.

I think essentially where we need to begin is right from the beginning, where training begins. There needs to be a community-based approach in the way that any police officer interacts with the community. It isn't simply racialized communities they need to focus on in building a community relationship; it needs to be how they interact with all individual they are meant to serve.

• (1725)

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

I'll try to get in another question for you, professor, and then I have another couple for the other ladies, if I could, just quickly.

You indicated in an article back in June your support for a move away from contract policing and a focus on national policing services. In a minute or less, can you provide in more detail why you think the RCMP should be removed from contract policing and what ongoing role you think they should play in our national policing services?

**Ms. Kanika Samuels-Wortley:** Certainly. I appreciate that question and will do my best to answer that within a minute.

The reason I answer to that is because I recognize that all communities are different. As my fellow attendees have indicated themselves, when you're dealing with particular communities, they have their different issues and different concerns that need to be dealt with. That's why I do believe that the RCMP is not best suited to policing areas about which it might not be well-informed as to the particular areas of concerns that are applicable to that community on the whole. As a result, I think it is best if we start incorporating police services that are more attuned to the issues within that particular community.

**Mr. Glen Motz:** Thank you very much. That was a very succinct answer for what could have been a days-long response, I'm sure. I appreciate it.

Ms. Sharpe or Ms. Michaels, there is a report entitled "Addressing Gendered Violence against Inuit Women: A review of police policies and practices in Inuit Nunangat". It was authored by your organization and a Dr. Comack. There are a number of recommendations that came out of that particular report, and the recommendations have provided improvements to policing services in Inuit communities.

Are there any recommendations in that report that you feel should be prioritized immediately? I know that one of your organization's chairs met with Commissioner Lucki recently about it. Is there anything there about which you're saying, "This is critical. We need this recommendation looked after ASAP"?

**Ms. Gerri Sharpe:** There are a few recommendations that I would say need to be acted upon urgently.

In my view, it is of the utmost importance that the length of the RCMP posting in the communities be reviewed. In order for the members to be integrated into the community, they need to be present. They need to be seen. They need to participate in the community. No sooner does that happen than they are removed from the community after two years. It is wonderful when the officers are seen in the community, partaking in things like jamborees or playing basketball or hockey. They become part of the community, and they become trusted. No sooner does this happen than they're removed to another community, and it starts all over again. That trust needs to be there. They need to be seen as part of the community.

One thing about Inuit communities that is much different from the south is that our communities are holistic. The whole community operates together. I often tell people that what happens in Inuvik or what happens in Iqaluit will affect what happens here in Yellowknife. It's fact because this is how families operate. This is how communities operate. It's all encompassing.

I'm going to ask Samantha if there's anything that I've missed because I'm sure that there is.

**The Chair:** She has about 30 seconds.

**Ms. Samantha Michaels (Senior Research and Policy Advisor, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada):** Thank you so much for that, Vice-President Sharpe.

I would also say that one very tangible recommendation is that more funding must be made available immediately to address the lack of formalized and local dispatch services. We're talking about how if someone's calling from one of the five communities in Nunatsiavut after hours, that call is being sent to dispatch in St. John's. The time that it takes to get an officer to the home could be the difference between life or death for a woman, especially in situations of gender-based violence.

• (1730)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Unfortunately, I have to cut you off.

**Mr. Glen Motz:** See, I told you. He always cuts me off early. That's not even close to six minutes.

**The Chair:** Mr. Motz runs a very slow clock.

[Translation]

Ms. Michaud, you have the floor for six minutes.

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

[English]

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Mr. Chair, I think it's supposed to be the Liberals next.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. I apologize.

Mr. Motz got me so upset that I forgot Madam Damoff. How could I possibly have done that?

Sorry about that. Please, go ahead.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to both our witnesses.

Both of you, I want to go back to contract policing because what we've seen in a number of recent issues—the Wet'suwet'en issues with the RCMP and the Mi'kmaq fishers right now—is that those RCMP officers are contracted by the province. As federal representatives, it's very frustrating because they actually report to the provinces. In the north, the reporting is to the territory. You touched on it.

Professor Samuels-Wortley, I'll start with you and give you more than a minute. If the RCMP were to get out of contract policing, it would allow them to do other policing priorities that are actually under federal jurisdiction. I'm wondering if you could perhaps expand a little bit on the whole issue of the federal government's being involved in contract policing and the benefits. We know that Surrey has just implemented its own police service and is moving away from contract policing.

Professor, I'll start with you, and then we'll go on.

**Ms. Kanika Samuels-Wortley:** Certainly, and going back to what I mentioned before, and where I support the RCMP no longer having to be contracted out to communities, again what is being demonstrated by my fellow representative at this moment is that within our communities there are many that are grossly underfunded. There might be an idea or a sense that if the RCMP is not contracted out to those areas, that funding then can be used to support particular programs that are necessary to a particular community.

I also can see why at the moment there is a level of interest in the defund the police movement, and I'm careful and I'm not saying that I support that wholeheartedly, but I do support a focus on community, simply because when we demonstrate that there is a focus on building a healthier community, you do find that the level of crime that happens in that community dissipates. Thus, I think it is important for us to explore, to truly explore, how we can use an allocation of funding to help support a community to be a lot healthier in order for its citizens to thrive, as opposed to potentially turning to criminality.

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

Vice-president Sharpe, you haven't specifically said “ending contract policing”, but as you know, Minister Blair, in his mandate letter, is to “co-develop...First Nations policing...as an essential service”. I'm just wondering about expanding that to include Inuit and Métis—but in particular Inuit—in that policing model. Rather than having the RCMP policing in the north, it would be an essential service provided by the people who actually live there. Do you have any thoughts about that?

I know that you haven't used “ending contract policing”, but it's kind of what you've been talking about. I'm just wondering if you could comment on that as well.

**Ms. Gerri Sharpe:** Before I pass it over to Samantha for a more complete answer, I just want to say that “defunding” is not a word that I am really familiar with. I will say that reconciliation is the way towards anything, and that starts with conversation. When I say “conversation”, that means working together towards a common goal in the way that we currently live.

I'll ask Samantha to finish that for us, please.

**Ms. Samantha Michaels:** Again, there are four regions in Inuit Nunangat. Of course, Nunavut, Inuvialuit, and Nunatsiavut are all policed by RCMP, and then there's Nunavik, which is policed by the Kativik Regional Police Force, which makes this a sort of unique situation in spanning such a large land mass.

But that is true: I don't think we've had the time or the opportunity to consult and to really come to an answer about contract policing. I think what came out loud and clear through the report was the need for more Inuit civilian positions within the RCMP. I'm not sure that the RCMP and the Kativik Regional Police Force...or actually, I should be more definitive: I am sure that it's not working. It's just not.

Again, I think what we need to do is that we really need to start rethinking policing, and by “we” I mean “Inuit”. I think that our next step would likely be to hold mass consultations with Inuit, centring the voices of women and youth at the forefront and understanding how they perceive or how they want to perceive further policing, but our report does speak to the need to have Inuit civilian positions made available.

• (1735)

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

Professor, I only have about 45 seconds left.

On the issue of body-worn cameras, there was a study in 2019—the largest to date—that said these had minimal to no impact on ending systemic racism. I'm wondering if you have views on the use of body-worn cameras.

**Ms. Kanika Samuels-Wortley:** Certainly, I can speak to that. The research that has been done on body-worn cameras is inconclusive. You'll find studies that do support its use, and others that don't, such as the one you're raising.

I would believe that ending systemic racism is not going to begin once police start using body cameras. This can be demonstrated with a number of misuses of force that have been caught on camera, and nothing has been done.

I think we need to speak more to accountability as to when there is an issue or a concern over the way that a police officer has interacted with a member of the community. How is that officer being held accountable? Simply catching this on video doesn't seem to do much. There's that evidence there, but the other issue is that the police often have the upper hand in how that evidence is used. As—

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, I'm going to have to cut you off there. I apologize for that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Michaud, you have the floor for six minutes.

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

My thanks to the witnesses for joining us, particularly Ms. Samuels-Wortley.

Ms. Samuels-Wortley, you are currently working on a study that is exploring how perceptions and experiences of racial discrimination from peace officers can contribute to victimization and delinquency among young Black and Indigenous people, and how it contributes to their feeling oppressed and marginalized in society. Our present study does not deal with young people at all. We often focus on indigenous women, and rightly so, but young people are often also the target.

I am the Bloc Québécois' critic on youth matters, hence my interest in this. Could you provide some more detail about the way in which perceptions of injustice can lead to victimization or pro-criminal values among young people from the Black and Indigenous communities?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Before you answer that question, Professor Samuels-Wortley, I want to make sure that all of our witnesses have translation. Is that working?

**Ms. Kanika Samuels-Wortley:** Sorry, no.

**The Chair:** Go to the globe at the bottom of your screen, and press it. That will give you the English translation.

**Ms. Kanika Samuels-Wortley:** I apologize for that. I did not have it there.

**The Chair:** I'll ask Madame Michaud to re-ask her questions in a truncated fashion.

Madame Michaud, please go ahead, for 15 seconds.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Does my time start again from zero, Mr. Chair?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I'm going to double up your time. I stopped the clock.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Thank you, that is kind of you.

Ms. Samuels-Wortley, let me thank you for the work you are doing. You are currently working on a study that explores how perceptions and experiences of racial discrimination by peace officers can contribute to victimization and delinquency among young Black and Indigenous people, thereby contributing to their feeling oppressed and marginalized in society.



I am the Bloc Québécois' critic on youth matters. I find that we are not talking about youth a lot in this study. We talk a lot about indigenous women and it is very good, indeed necessary, to do so. However, could you give us some more detail about the way in which perceptions of injustice can lead to victimization or procriminal values among young people from the Black and Indigenous communities?

• (1740)

[*English*]

**Ms. Kanika Samuels-Wortley:** That's a great question, and I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this further.

Yes, perceptions of injustice are now being explored to be considered as a criminogenic factor. There's a perception of a level of unfairness, particularly for Black youth. When you look at every social indicator, the Black population is at the lowest levels of employment, income, housing and health, as we are seeing now with COVID-19.

There really is a sense of alienation and hopelessness within the Black community. As a result of these perceptions of injustice, when it comes to policing—and we're now discussing more about systemic racism within policing—there's a sense that society is unfair.

As a result, some youth may develop pro-crime attitudes. This increases and puts them at a vulnerability, because if they do not trust the police, who are meant to serve and protect them, there's a chance they will develop self-help strategies. They may engage in criminogenic behaviours when it comes to carrying weapons for protection, or developing their own sense of vigilante justice, because they do not believe that police will be on their side or protect them when in need.

This is an area that I am looking to explore further. I believe it is something that we need to explore, because even with a criminal record, it creates an additional barrier to achieve many of the social factors that lead to mobility. As a result, there is an extreme sense of alienation within the Black community, particularly with some Black youth.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Thank you.

It's often in the way in which people interact with each other. In your opinion, how should officers interact with youth from the Black and Indigenous communities? Is there a way of reducing the negative perceptions towards them?

[*English*]

**Ms. Kanika Samuels-Wortley:** Again, that's a great question.

I simply ask all of the youth I interview what a police officer can do for them to feel some type of connection, or not to feel negatively towards them.

I do want to make clear that every youth understands the importance of having an officer. Not one has stated that they want to defund the police or don't believe there is a sense of utility in having officers.

It literally comes down to being treated with respect. Every single one has said that all they want, when they encounter an officer, is to feel they are being treated fairly and with respect. You would think something as simple as that would be easy to achieve, but clearly it's not.

I do believe this needs to start within the police culture and to change the way that police feel they need to interact with the community. There needs to be more of a focus on community development and positive community engagement.

As my fellow attendees have mentioned as well, there are positive instances where they've had members of their community state that they have had positive interactions. I believe these do exist, but one negative interaction can completely dismantle that positive interaction and can completely change the way that one perceives the police culture and the police institution.

I really think we need to start back at square one as to what it means to be a police officer and not view it as soft policing but as essential policing.

**The Chair:** You have about a minute and a half.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** In your studies, you are working with young people and you are listening to them. Do you think that they should be given a greater place in developing strategies designed to improve relations between themselves and police officers? If so, how would they be able to act as agents of change, so that we are able to improve policing systems in Canada?

• (1745)

[*English*]

**Ms. Kanika Samuels-Wortley:** I certainly do. I agree that youth need to be at the table. They are the ones who are interacting with police, and I honestly am in awe whenever I speak with a number of them when I'm within the community and talking to individuals and hearing their insights and perception.

I believe that youth advisory committees exist. I just don't know how much power they have. They really should have a great deal more power for coming up with solutions on the way to bridge a more positive relationship with the police. I think it really comes down to making sure that their voices are heard, and definitely having a stronger role in building a stronger community.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We're going to have to leave it there.

Mr. Harris, you have six minutes, please.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to both of our main witnesses, and to Ms. Michaels as well for your contribution.

Vice-president Sharpe, I was listening intently to your description of the role the RCMP played and the cultural role they played in your communities historically and whatnot, and then to the list of very fundamental portions of the 15 recommendations your report of last January made.

Conjuring up images that we've seen over the last number of months, which led in part to this committee's study, it all seems to beg the following question. In your view, is the RCMP a body that is capable of gaining the trust, with all of the things they would have to do to ensure that, to overcome all of this history, or should we be looking at perhaps another way out?

Ms. Damoff touched on it in a way, talking about contract policing, but is there hope for that organization to be the vehicle for proper policing in Inuit communities?

**Ms. Gerri Sharpe:** At the Pauktuutit level, we've not had a discussion as to whether or not the RCMP is the body to do that. Any body that needs to police Inuit communities will need to have specialized police training, which needs to happen in the communities, so whether they are Inuit or whether they come from the south, non-Inuit people, the amount of—

**The Chair:** You're not the first witness who's had that problem. It's mostly members, though.

**Ms. Gerri Sharpe:** What I'm getting at is the fact that along with the training that's needed for the population base that we have and the services that would be required, there are still going to need to be non-Inuit who do this. Whether it be a contractor or the RCMP, it still needs to happen. What needs to happen, along with that, is the cultural competency part.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** If you had an alternative on the table, with an Inuit governance model under your control, would that be something your communities would be interested in exploring?

**Ms. Gerri Sharpe:** Samantha, do you want to try to take this one?

**Ms. Samantha Michaels:** Yes. Again, I think it comes back to the fact that there hasn't been that thorough consultation or opportunity to do that. I think that's the next step, stemming from our report. Our report clearly points to a number of ways that policing is not effective, or even equitably funded.

There is a need to do this consultation. I think it's urgent.

The second part, too, is that there needs to be massive investment into communities. We're talking about 51 communities. There are only 15 shelters serving those communities that are fly-in.

In situations of gender-based violence, which we know is arising often, what are the couple of RCMP members who are in the communities to do? There are such limited community resources. I think there's so much that needs to be done that will involve policing, but it goes beyond it as well.

• (1750)

**Ms. Gerri Sharpe:** I will add to that. Please keep in mind that when I talk about Inuit Nunangat, I'm talking about across the top of the Northwest Territories, all of Nunavut, all of Nunavik. Basically, Inuit Nunangat takes up one-third of Canada.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Oh, yes, in Labrador, we have Nunatsiavut as well, which I'm more familiar with, although I've been to Nunavut as well. It is a big territory, there's no question about that. There is a big series of problems that we've been talking about today. Let's see.

I don't have much time left, but I did want to ask Professor Samuels-Wortley about something she brought up about police discretion. I know it's something that's very powerful in the hands of police officers in dealing with any members of the public, and in particular it influences how a systemic bias might take place.

How do you control that, aside from better training? Is there another way of ensuring, perhaps at the court level, that if discretion is not properly exercised, the kind of diversion or alternative to ending up with a criminal record, which is further stigmatizing, etc...? Is that absent, or is that a way to go? Is that something we could recommend?

**The Chair:** You have about 30 seconds, please.

**Ms. Kanika Samuels-Wortley:** That's another great question. How to answer that in 30 seconds?

In this sense, I would say that the police are clearly a product of our environment. We need to deal with issues of systemic racism within our own society.

Again, that can be dealt with by starting right from the beginning with training and demonstrating that individuals who come from racialized communities do have to deal with additional structural barriers that have an impact on behaviour. As a result, we do all want to feel that we should be treated the same, but there needs to be a recognition that there are certain segments of our population who are not afforded that. The police need to be well versed on our colonial past as well as our enslavement past in Canada. Perhaps that might increase the level of understanding of the social context of Black and indigenous communities.

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

Colleagues, as you can see, we are way past the time. I propose to have a second round and to do the same thing we did in the first panel of witnesses, with questions of four minutes, four minutes, one minute, one minute. I'll point out that we do have to do a little committee business and accept the subcommittee report.

With that, I'm going to ask Madam Stubbs to speak for four minutes, please.

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs:** Thank you, Chair.

I'll try to do this quickly and also split my time with my colleague Damien, if there's time.

I want to thank all of the witnesses for being here today.

I think there a couple of key issues that are very clear and striking from your testimony: trust, confidence and, in some cases, fear in dealing with policing. On the one hand, it's quite concerning to hear that people are fearful and less likely to report crimes because of victimization. On the other hand, because of generations of experiences, lack of cultural knowledge, language barriers and other things, there are obviously these issues of trust and confidence and fear.

In order to make some improvements in that regard, and also to increase accountability, to all the witnesses, if you were to have a revised oversight model of the RCMP, what elements would you include in light of the fact that the complaints process is so backlogged and overly complex, often requiring a lawyer to even get into it? Are there any best practice models, either in Canada or around the world, that would be necessary, and have any of you been consulted on any or all of these issues by the current government?

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Did you direct that question to anyone in particular?

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs:** It's for all of them, and I'll let you call on each.

**The Chair:** Okay.

We'll start with Professor Samuels-Wortley.

**Ms. Kanika Samuels-Wortley:** Certainly.

I think where we really need to start is with accountability, the sense that the community should be able to feel that when concerns are raised, they're going to be dealt with. We're very much in the dark as to the process. There is definitely a lack of transparency, so we need to have an increased sense of transparency with regard to what occurs with officers who do engage in police misconduct, including a higher level of use of force or whatever it may be.

I know this is particular to Ontario, but we continue to have officers who are paid even if they are suspended. That doesn't sit right with many individuals who may have had their lives literally changed from an encounter with an officer, while that officer is then suspended but continues to have a salary. The community really needs to feel that, if something has been done, police will be looked at with a sense of higher accountability, as they really do have the ability to damage someone's life.

• (1755)

**The Chair:** Ms. Stubbs, you're almost through your four minutes and you wanted to split your time with Mr. Kurek. Do you want a second answer, or should we go to Mr. Kurek?

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs:** I think it would be important to hear from the other witnesses too. Damien is saying yes.

**The Chair:** He's fine with that. Okay.

Vice-President Sharpe, go ahead, please.

**Ms. Gerri Sharpe:** Thank you for that.

I actually want to point out the fact that you mentioned generations of RCMP misconduct. I'm going to tell you that here in the north, the RCMP have been around only for a little more than my lifetime. While you can count that as generations, it was when my grandfather was younger than I am now, shortly before I was born, that the RCMP were introduced to the north. I'm not that old; I'm a young grandmother.

I will tell you a story about Simon Tookoome who was from Baker Lake. He wrote a story about the first time he saw a wooden house, and it was the RCMP wooden house. He saw a cat in there, so he went in, and he said that it felt too loud and too noisy, because he was used to being in an igloo.

When it comes to mistrust, the members who are being sent into our communities.... You can probably look this up in records from Deline, where members were sent who had had stayed convictions of assaults. These members are going into our community to police our community. That is a problem. We need to trust that the officers who are being sent into communities are above reproach, so they cannot be convicted of the offences they are arresting people for.

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, we're going to have to leave it there. I apologize.

Either Mr. Iacono or Madam Khera, go ahead for four minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

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

Ms. Samuels-Wortley, this evening, so many things have been said about the public's trust in the police. If we had to do three things as quickly as possible to bring about change, what would they be?

[*English*]

**Ms. Kanika Samuels-Wortley:** I would certainly say that there needs to be a level of accountability, and by that, I mean that when an officer.... Following what the last colleague mentioned, if officers have been charged with something, they can't switch from one policing service to another. Officers need to be held accountable. Once they're charged with something and there is enough evidence to demonstrate sufficient reason for dismissal, they need to be dismissed and no longer be a part of law enforcement, as officers are held to a higher standard.

There also needs to be training, starting right from the beginning. There needs to be a focus on community engagement, not simply on how to use a weapon or to do chokeholds. There needs to be a complete overhaul and a change in what a police officer is meant to do in the community.

Also, when it comes to the third, I believe it is also about having a better sense of our colonialist past and our history of enslavement in Canada. We tend to think that this was never an issue here. It's quite surprising that many find it surprising that we have systemic racism in Canada, and this really needs to be changed right from the beginning. Therefore, this needs to be started right when an officer is sent into training.

• (1800)

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Madam Khera.

**Ms. Kamal Khera (Brampton West, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you again to all of our witnesses for being here and your very important testimony.

Professor Samuels-Wortley, I want to pick your brain. We know that race-based data collection within policing could be extremely helpful for improving public accountability and informing police policies. Perhaps you could touch a bit on why that's so significant, and perhaps also talk a bit about any considerations—how we collect that data, how it can be used—and certainly any concerns in ensuring that it's not further used to tarnish the community or to reinforce any racist stereotypes. If you could shed some light on this, that would be great.

Thank you.

**Ms. Kanika Samuels-Wortley:** I appreciate that question, as that is absolutely something that needs to be implemented as well, so there are not just three but four. It is important to collect sufficient race-based data, as this gives us an opportunity to see how different racial groups are experiencing policing. It can also be an opportunity for us to identify potential areas of discrimination in how officers are dealing with certain communities.

Within my own research, it is very important to get the voices and experiences from individuals who have experienced the police; however, with sufficient race-based data and that quantitative data, we're able to see trends and have a more nuanced understanding as to how the police and the community interact.

I do understand that there are concerns over how race-based data can be used to further stigmatize certain communities. My colleagues Dr. Akwasi Owusu-Bempah and Scot Wortley can speak to this a lot more eloquently than I can, but it is important for there to be a disclaimer as to how there are contextual factors that can demonstrate why there might be a higher level of offending within particular communities. That's why we need to have deeper discussions as to the structural factors that lead to criminogenic factors.

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, your four minutes is up.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Michaud, you have the floor for one minute.

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

This time, my question is for you, Ms. Sharpe. In a report on gendered violence against Inuit women, your organization recommends creating protocols to fight against gender-based violence, training about that violence, and trauma-informed policing. This is in order to better respond to the needs of Inuit women in the face of increased levels of violence, gender-based victimization and the experience of colonialism among Inuit.

Can you give us more details about the best way of implementing those recommendations?

[*English*]

**Ms. Gerri Sharpe:** Thank you for that.

I'm sorry, but I was disconnected. I did catch all of your question, but I would like Samantha to answer this first.

**The Chair:** Answer very briefly, please.

**Ms. Samantha Michaels:** I believe that recommendation speaks to police understanding gender-based violence and the impact it has on Inuit women. A lot of our suggestions around this include having a family violence liaison officer in each of the communities,

given the disproportionately high rates of violence that Inuit women experience, as well as having a female officer present and leading questioning. There are a lot of different factors.

I think it comes down to, again, cultural competency training and who's developing this cultural competency training, especially as it concerns the impact and the experience of violence against Inuit women.

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

Mr. Harris, you have the final minute, please.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Thank you, Chair.

Professor Samuels-Wortley, you talked about the need for anti-racism initiatives that cover a broad field. In order of importance, are there any specifics that you would put at the top of the list of things that would address systemic racism? I hate to oversimplify it, but we only have a short period of time.

**Ms. Kanika Samuels-Wortley:** Of course.

Again, these initiatives need to be evaluated. There needs to be a demonstration that they're working, whatever it may be. I think the issue at hand is that training is often thrown at police services and there's this idea that once training is done, all is fixed. But it clearly shows that there isn't any change in the interactions within the community, so I can't specifically say what particular form of anti-racism training works. A better evaluation is needed as to what potentially may have an impact in the way police serve their community.

● (1805)

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

Unfortunately, colleagues, we're going to have to leave it there.

On behalf of my colleagues, I want to thank Professor Samuels-Wortley, Vice-President Sharpe and Ms. Michaels for your effort to be here and for your testimony and thoughtfulness.

As you can see, the committee is completely engaged in what you had to say.

I see that Mr. Dalton is quite pleased. I think he's going to be reaching out to you Vice-President Sharpe to see whether you're from the same family tree, which is not such a bad thing.

With that colleagues, I'm going to bring the meeting to an end. I'm going to look to the clerk as to whether we have to go in camera to be able to accept the report of the subcommittee.

**The Clerk:** How you wish to proceed on that is up to the committee.

**The Chair:** Unless there are wild and crazy objections, I'm going to carry on and ask our witnesses to sign off.

I'm going to assume that colleagues have the report of the subcommittee. Before I ask for a motion and discussion, when we did the report we anticipated that Minister Blair would be available next Wednesday. He is not available next then, but will be available on the 25th, the following Wednesday. Other than that, the report is pretty well as was discussed in the subcommittee.

Is there any discussion on the report? A benefit of presenting a report right at the end of a meeting is that nobody wants to talk about it.

With that—

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Are we still on with David McGuinty on the 23rd?

**The Chair:** Yes.

Pam.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** I move that we adopt the report.

**The Chair:** I'm sure Mr. Oliphant would be delighted to second the motion.

**Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Yes.

Do you miss me?

**The Chair:** Is there any other discussion?

**Mr. Robert Oliphant:** It sounds like you miss me at the public safety committee.

**The Chair:** I do miss you. I think everybody misses you, Rob.

Hi Rob, I didn't know you were here. The invisible Rob.

And thank you, Elizabeth, for hanging out.

Is there any other discussion?

Those in favour of the report as submitted?

(Motion agreed to)

Thank you very much, colleagues.

We will try to get started at 3:30 on Wednesday, but probably will be sidelined by some—

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** My deep thanks to all members for being so welcoming, and particularly to the chair for squeezing me in for a minute. I desperately appreciate it.

**The Chair:** You're welcome.

The meeting is adjourned.

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