



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 057

Tuesday, February 14, 2023

Chair: Mr. Ron McKinnon



Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

Tuesday, February 14, 2023

• (1535)

[English]

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

Welcome to meeting number 57 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. We'll start by acknowledging that we are meeting on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin people.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format pursuant to the House order of November 25, 2021. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Friday, February 3, 2023, the committee has commenced its study on the effects of the withdrawn amendments G-4 and G-46 to Bill C-21, an act to amend certain acts and to make certain consequential amendments regarding firearms.

Today we have two panels of witnesses. We'll delve into the first one right now.

In the first hour, we have the Centre culturel islamique de Québec and PolySeSouvient. Also, as an individual, we have Mr. Jim Shockey, who is a guide and outfitter. Each witness group has five minutes for a statement.

I understand that Centre culturel islamique and PolySeSouvient will share their time. You'll have 10 minutes among the group of you. I'll let you allocate that as you please, and we'll drop the hammer at 10 minutes. We'll start with you, and then we'll go to Mr. Shockey later.

Go ahead, please, for 10 minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Boufeldja Benabdallah (Spokesman, Centre culturel islamique de Québec): Good afternoon.

Mr. Chair, ladies and gentlemen, members of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, I'd like to begin by mentioning that we have here today a representative of the Polytechnique community, Mr. Serge St-Arneault. I represent the Quebec City Muslim community and the mosque in Quebec City.

Here we are before you once again. We agree that it's important to have these consultations, because the debate over the ban on assault weapons appears, and there's no point in trying to hide the fact, to have descended into purely political issues instead of focus-

ing on the importance of eliminating weapons of war from society. I chose my words carefully when I used the term weapons of war.

Allow me to remind you once again—it's very important to do so—that barely two months ago, in the presence of the people from the Polytechnique here with us today, and just two weeks ago for the people from the mosque I represent, we were once again commemorating the 20 people killed in the attack. These were 14 young women who today might have been engineers working on our behalf building bridges, working in aviation or other fields, and six fathers who could otherwise have been enjoying watching their children go calmly off to school. We're talking here about 20 dead, not to mention those who were injured, and the survivors with whom we share the pain, sadness and broken hearts caused by inhuman gunfire.

The victims of mass killings committed with these weapons have been fighting for a ban like this for three decades now. It's been 33 years for the Polytechnique. I feel ashamed when I think about the fact that in a country like this, after 33 years of struggle, we have still not managed to agree on this issue. We and they have been fighting for one thing only, and that is to stop the circulation of weapons to prevent incidents like the one at the Polytechnique, with all the pain that was caused, from ever happening again. We're talking about 16 years for Dawson College and six years for the mosque.

However, even though all our efforts are supported by the vast majority of Canadians who don't want these weapons in circulation, I'm sure we'll be back before you in Parliament again to emphasize the importance of banning assault weapons. This is lamentable from the standpoint of victims like us and ordinary citizens, who are still asking themselves why these weapons were not immediately prohibited following the massacres. New Zealand and Australia, on the other hand, have taken exemplary action. They banned these weapons right after the tragedies in Christchurch and Port Arthur, which you are aware of.

And yet Canada borders a country I won't name that has clearly demonstrated the inevitable outcomes and disastrous impacts of ready access to weapons, including assault weapons. In 2020, 647 mass killings were committed with weapons, including assault weapons, in the United States. That's almost two every day. Do we want the same thing here in Canada? No.

School children and teachers are murdered in their schools, people at their places of worship and others where they work. I need to emphasize what follows because, yet again, we need to wake up and understand that we are not an advocacy group. We are not lobbyists, but rather people who are demanding, in a heartfelt way, that these weapons should never circulate in our streets, that our children not be killed and that workers not be killed. We are doing this while respecting hunters and others. My friends here with us today will provide you with more details.

That's what we want to avoid in Canada, so that our children can have a better future. I'm convinced that if every political party did its share, we could happily see this bill being adopted; it's our only chance to ban assault weapons on behalf of everyone's welfare.

Please get to work on this. Let's all get to work on it. That's all I really wanted to say to you, in the hope that you would help us achieve the desired result.

I will now give the rest of my speaking time to my PolySeSouvient colleagues, Nathalie Provost and Heidi Rathjen, who are here with us today.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

• (1540)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Benabdallah.

Ms. Provost and Ms. Rathjen, you have six minutes left.

Ms. Nathalie Provost (Spokesperson, PolySeSouvient): Good afternoon, and thank you Mr. Chair.

In 1991 and 1995, the Conservative and Liberal governments, respectively, banned a list of assault weapons. However, owing to the absence of a comprehensive evergreen definition in the act, new models of assault weapons began to flood into the Canadian market.

Please listen carefully. Without a definition in the act, manufacturers will continue to produce new models, and backsliding would be much easier for a government that did not share the same public safety values. What we want is something permanent. We're tired of repeatedly reliving this ordeal.

Since 2015, the Liberal Party has been elected three times, having promised to prohibit assault weapons. The Bloc and the NDP shared this commitment, but progress has been slow. It's only now, in its third term, that the government is attempting to keep its promise. Amendments G-4 and G-46 in Bill C-21 have kept Canada from coming even close to a complete and permanent ban on assault weapons.

I'd like to remind you that this measure is the first demand by the students of Polytechnique Montréal and victims' families since January 1990. Heidi and I were at the first press conference when the initial demand was made. We supported the government's overall strategy announced in May 2022, because it included the compulsory buyback, the promise of a permanent ban and a tightening up of the regulatory framework for high-capacity magazines.

We have had the full support of the Bloc Québécois since 1990, and we now understand that the leader of the NDP has also supported what we've been asking for. Please, in committee, we are asking

you to respond to Canadians demanding a ban on assault weapons, to rework the withdrawn amendments in a way that would enable Canadians to actually understand them and the impact they would have. New clear and improved amendments, if they are developed around sound, scientific, rational and accurate fact-based information, could be adopted. That's what we really want.

• (1545)

[*English*]

Ms. Heidi Rathjen (Coordinator, PolySeSouvient): Good afternoon.

Our hope today is that these special consultations will, first and foremost, seek to clarify the true impacts of amendments G-4 and G-46, since any new amendments should be based on real and legitimate concerns.

While we are open to the possibility that the proposed amendments may have included legitimate hunting rifles, we have not seen any evidence of this as of yet. On the contrary, a detailed analysis of the claims made by one of the loudest gun lobby groups—an analysis that has been validated by the RCMP—shows that all of their claims about hunting rifles being banned are either false or misleading.

Indeed, of all the models they showcased in their memes, videos and posters, only one would be affected by an amended Bill C-21, and that is the SKS, which is clearly a military weapon. It was exempted from the 2020 orders in council because it was not of a modern design.

For all of the other models that you have seen on social media and in videos, etc., their classification would not change. That's because amendment G-46 incorporated the 2020 orders in council, including variants, for greater clarity, meaning models whose military calibre versions have been prohibited for almost three years now, and whose hunting calibre versions continue to be used for hunting and will remain legal and non-restricted. Government experts have testified before this committee to that effect and, as I said, our assessment has been validated by the RCMP.

We believe that such widespread misinformation has provoked massive and unfounded fear among hunters, who then inundated members of Parliament with emails, calls and letters. We believe this has likely led to the withdrawal of these amendments. I hope this committee will seek to debunk this disinformation to the benefit of all.

That being said, we recognize that a key challenge is the lack of clarity surrounding these amendments. The legislative proposals were particularly difficult to understand. Many believe that if a model is listed in amendment G-46, it means that all versions would be prohibited, even though government officials have testified to the contrary. We, therefore, fully support reviewing the language in both amendments to make it simpler and easier to understand.

We also remain convinced that the intent of the amendments was not to prohibit firearms reasonably used for hunting. We have publicly supported the idea of exempting specific models if some fell on the wrong side of that line. However, it should be noted that just because a gun is used by some for hunting, that does not make it a hunting firearm. As a case in point, the gun lobby considers the AR-15 and even handguns firearms fit for hunting. That is why the expression, “reasonably used” is key, and why it also exists in the Criminal Code.

We recognize that specific issues related to indigenous people's hunting rights must be addressed—

• (1550)

The Chair: Would you wrap it up, please?

Ms. Heidi Rathjen: At the same time, it should be noted that there is a distinction between the right to hunt and the right to hunt with an assault weapon, yet in that spirit, we were not opposed to the exemption for indigenous subsistence hunters that is part of the 2020 orders in council. We would accept similar exemptions in the case of a comprehensive and permanent ban on assault weapons.

In conclusion, our last point is that we continue to support the proposed evergreen definition in G-4. However, because of the importance of ensuring that manufacturers do not circumvent the intent of a ban on military-style, semi-automatic weapons, we respectfully request that the committee look into ways to adjust the evergreen definition in a way that minimizes such potential circumventions.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

In my haste to get started, I was remiss in failing to introduce you as individuals.

With the Centre culturel islamique de Québec, we have Mr. Benabdallah, spokesman. From PolySeSouvient, we have Heidi Rathjen, coordinator, and Nathalie Provost, spokesperson. I am sorry for that oversight.

We will carry on now with Mr. Shockey.

Please go ahead for five minutes.

Mr. Jim Shockey (Guide Outfitter, As an Individual): I was introduced as a guide outfitter, but in fact I'm a hunter.

To give you an idea of where I sit in the hunting world, I was given the Professional Hunter of the Year award in 2009, the International Hunter of the Year and World Conservation and Hunting awards in 2012, the Conklin award in 2016 for highest standards and ethical fair chase, and the Ovis award for fair chase and total integrity in 2018. I was also the winner of the Weatherby award in 2018, and I'm only the second Canadian in seven years to be given that award. I'm a hunter.

I've also produced over 500 episodes of outdoor television and work closely with first nations and Inuit communities in the north. I've written over a thousand articles and outdoor publications. On a personal note, I've been married for 38 years to my soulmate, and I have two children and four grandchildren. Most importantly for this

committee, I have a great and growing concern for the public safety of my family, here in Canada, and for that of my fellow Canadians.

However, speaking as a hunter, I want to make it clear to this committee that, although people like me live the field-to-table lifestyle—we go into the field and hunt what we eat—we're not your enemy. Hunters are not the enemy, in this case, and our firearms are not a threat to the security of Canada and safety of Canadians.

I'll address some of the Bill C-21 issues that concern us, as hunters.

Are semi-automatic rifles popular? Yes, they are. They're commonly used for hunting many different species of animals, in many different conditions. To get a hunting licence, hunters have to pass tests and be vetted. They're the best at knowing the proper firearm to use. I don't use a weapon, because that's not what these are. I don't think they qualify as weapons in the Canadian Criminal Code. You can confirm that. Semi-automatic rifles and shotguns are commonly used.

Most of the outfitting I look after takes place in remote communities—mostly indigenous first nations or Inuit territories. The economic benefits from hunters who come in, mostly from the States.... Often, they use their semi-automatic firearms. My fear is that, if Bill C-21 goes through, you're going to see a boycott from down south. That will have a catastrophic effect on these remote communities, which require this input of foreign American dollars.

By the way, the meat from the animals taken in these communities goes to those communities—to the elders. In Rogue River outfitting territory, we donate several tons of meat to elders who can't go hunting. We provide them with traditional pieces of the animals—the nose, the caul fat, pieces they can't get yet rely on.

There are dangerous animals and other reasons why semi-automatic guns are the best defence. The Yukon government actually for AR-10s.... I think that's what they're called. I'm a hunter, not a gun guy, but I think they selected those for their conservation officers, after studies proved they were the best to use. They are in dangerous situations.

I don't want to take up a pile of your time. Again, I'm a hunter and obviously out of place among all of you here. Those are not elephant tusks, on that side, by the way. Those are woolly mammoth tusks. You mentioned respect for hunters. I think that's important. Everybody understands hunters are not a threat to your safety or the national security of this country. However, we feel vilified and marginalized. Recently, we've felt attacked. We're not the enemy. We love our country. The taking away of life is obviously a terrible and fundamentally wrong thing, but the taking away of a way of life is also wrong.

• (1555)

I'll go back to respect for hunters. I'm here because I would like respect. I'm speaking for hunters across Canada. We just feel like we've been turned into criminals with this. I think there are some serious flaws in Bill C-21. I recognize and I appreciate what the previous speakers have said, but there are some untruths in this.

The Chair: Could you wrap up, sir?

Mr. Jim Shockey: Speaking as a hunter and for the hunting community, as you saw when you tried to pass the amendments, we're fearful and we're not the problem here.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go to the first round of questioning. We'll start with Ms. Dancho for six minutes.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here.

Thank you, Mr. Shockey, for being online.

I'd just like to say that I appreciate the honesty. I feel that everyone is speaking from their hearts. I appreciate the very raw sentiments that are being brought forward.

I can certainly speak for our team that we are looking to have a very respectful dialogue and consultation today and in the coming meetings. I very much appreciate the tone put forward by all of you to start this consultation process today.

Mr. Shockey, I have a few questions for you to start off.

You mentioned the economic impact of hunting in the north. I'm not overly familiar. I'm not from the north. I'm from rural Manitoba, but my understanding is that a large part of the indigenous diet—tens of thousands of pounds of meat that they are provided—in northern Canada, particularly where your outfitter is, are in fact from the American hunters that your outfitter guides. Is that correct?

Mr. Jim Shockey: Yes.

What the Americans do for us up in the north in the remote communities is a very positive thing. The one fellow mentioned a name he doesn't want to mention, but I'll mention it. The Americans coming up are spending their dollars. The economic benefits are huge in the communities. The vast majority of Americans who come up donate the meat to the elders in those communities.

In my case, in the Rogue River outfitting territory in the Yukon, the elders of the band in Mayo receive the meat. As I said earlier, it's not just the meat as we know meat, like steaks and whatnot. They get the caul fat, the kidneys, the diaphragm, the nose.... The American hunters donate all these pieces to the elders. It allows them to maintain their traditional lifestyles, even though they're too old to go out.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you very much.

I appreciate that information. I think it's a very important part. There was no economic assessment done with these amendments. I think an important part, if there should be an impact on any band like this going forward, is to recognize what that might be and how to mitigate it.

What is the percentage of American hunters that your outfitter has? I know there are thousands of outfitters. I know very well that the outfitters in rural northern Manitoba, for example, are greatly benefited by American hunters. Certainly when the border was closed for COVID, they took a huge hit, as did the indigenous guides they employ.

Can you give me a ballpark percentage of the American hunters that you have?

Mr. Jim Shockey: I'd say it's 97%, as a ballpark. It's certainly over 95%.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: As you mentioned—and I have been hearing this from others—in the event this ban moves forward, we may see a complete decline or drop-off of American hunters coming up to Canada.

I just want to confirm that you mentioned that in your opening remarks.

Mr. Jim Shockey: Yes, absolutely.

I know most of the American players. If they got on the bandwagon to boycott Canada as a hunting destination, I think it would be catastrophic to the industry and to the northern communities.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you.

Of course, Canadian hunters—and many of my family members—engage in northern outfitters as well.

You mentioned semi-automatics. I previously shared with you the specific definition of those that would be banned by amendment G-4.

How common would you say those are? You mentioned it in your opening remarks, but it's just to reiterate.

• (1600)

Mr. Jim Shockey: They're common.

It's the personal choice of each hunter. If you put 10 hunters together, there will be 10 different opinions on what the proper firearm is for a given situation. As an outfitter for the last 30 years, I've seen many semi-automatics come up.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: It's not just popular with Americans but also with Canadians. Is that correct?

Mr. Jim Shockey: It's 100% true.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: You work a lot with indigenous hunters in particular. I do think this is a very important piece because we have heard from the Inuit community that there is the issue of polar bears and protection against wild animals.

Would a semi-automatic of the definition in amendment G-4 be the best tool currently available in Canada should a northern individual come across, for example, a polar bear? Can you explain that for the committee? Can you break that down?

Mr. Jim Shockey: Yes. It is the choice, and it's the choice in Africa of professional hunters going after dangerous game. For the average hunter, as well, there's no such thing as overkill in a situation when your life is in danger. In the Inuit communities, they'll even take the trigger guard off their firearms so that they can, in cold weather, hit the trigger with their mitt when they can't work a bolt because it's cold. Semi-automatic, to me, would be the choice that I would recommend if I was asked as a professional and, as I said, I'm considered to be one of the top hunters in the world.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Right, and of course I know that you're a very gifted hunter and that you're a very good shot, but not all hunters are necessarily capable of taking out a predator that is coming at them. My understanding is that, given the structure of a semi-automatic long gun, particularly a rifle, it just ensures the best-case scenario for you in the event that you come across a polar bear.

I think you've come across situations where you were under attack by a cougar as well as two bear encounters. Is that correct?

Mr. Jim Shockey: Yes, that's correct. I wouldn't be speaking here right now if I hadn't reacted properly in all three situations.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you very much for sharing this information. I'm out of time, but I appreciate your providing some understanding to the committee regarding the realities of northern Canada and the benefits, certainly the economic benefits, to indigenous communities and to the outfitter industry in Canada as well.

Thank you very much, Mr. Shockey.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Dancho.

We'll go now to Mr. Noormohamed for six minutes, please.

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

[*Translation*]

I'd like to begin by thanking you for being here. It's clear that the experiences and the tragedy that you've described force you to relive difficult moments. It's impossible for us to understand the scale of the hardships and sorrow that you relive every time you appear before us.

Nevertheless, it's very important for us to give consideration to your experience in our deliberations. Thank you once again for being here.

[*English*]

I just want to begin by thanking you for sharing with us and putting the time in to be here with us on what I know can only be extremely difficult.

I have said this many times, and we've heard this. The intention of this law was not to take away indigenous peoples' rights to hunt, and it was not to adversely impact hunters and farmers. One thing that I think is very important for us to talk about at the outset is how we ensure that, in that conversation, we are not losing the memory of victims and that we are not moving forward in a way that does not address the need to ensure that there are no more massacres like at the mosque in Quebec City and École Polytechnique. We have to figure out how to achieve this together, and I'm so grateful that it's the approach we're all taking today.

Perhaps I could ask Heidi—Ms. Rathjen, you and I have spoken about this before—how we best think about the issue of the rights of indigenous peoples and make sure that whatever legislation comes forward continues to afford them their right to hunt and does not make this unnecessarily difficult for them.

Ms. Heidi Rathjen: For sure the indigenous question needs to be addressed. We've been favourable to exemptions or special considerations for aboriginal people in the past, even under the Firearms Act that was adopted in the 1990s.

We did not oppose the exemptions for indigenous subsistence hunters to keep using the firearms prohibited under the May 2020 OICs, and we've communicated in different ways to the government and to opposition parties that we wouldn't oppose the same type of exemption for these 482 new models of assault weapons, as long as it's a well-considered process, as long as these weapons are grandfathered and it's not a blanket exemption where they can keep buying new assault weapons, but it's to keep those they have. In that circumstance, we'd be open to it.

● (1605)

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Thank you.

Mr. Benabdallah, a couple of weeks ago we commemorated the sixth anniversary of the massacre of six people at the mosque in Quebec City. As you mentioned, less than a couple of months ago we remembered the women killed at École Polytechnique. I'm always struck by the fact that in both of those circumstances a legal firearm, owned by a so-called lawful gun owner, was responsible for those massacres.

Many years after École Polytechnique, for someone to have obtained a gun legally, to come into the mosque and to commit that type of an act, what message did that send to you and what message has that left with the community?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Boufeldja Benabdallah: It's a memory that continues to haunt us, year after year.

The killer who went to the mosque had an arsenal, including several handguns and an assault rifle. When the assault rifle jammed, he used the handguns. The 48 bullets fired killed six people. One victim, who is still in a wheelchair, was shot six times in the neck and once more in another area that still causes pain.

If his assault weapon hadn't jammed, he would have killed at least 50 people. Everyone was at the back of the mosque. It was fortunate that the gun stopped working. He threw it onto the floor and pulled out his handguns.

The friends and families of those who were there can only imagine what would have happened if the assault weapon had worked and what would have happened to them. They know that they wouldn't be there commemorating the event, but rather buried in coffins. That's what we want to emphasize.

Do we want things like that to continue?

Do we want to be like the United States?

We have nothing against hunters, and have said so. We have nothing against indigenous people and have said so. You're an inveterate Hunter who has a great deal of experience. Never in our discussions have we said anything against hunters. It would be defamation to say otherwise. It's as if we, who suffered the consequences of the attack, were against the hunters. What impression does that give to people? We've never been against hunters, we have never been against indigenous people, on this land that we all share.

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Benabdallah, but that's all the time we have.

We'll move on to Ms. Michaud now.

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

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

Thank you to the witnesses for being here. We are very grateful for their willingness to appear before the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

Here you are again, even though you've already said several times just how important it is to legislate on firearms in general, and on handguns and assault weapons in particular.

You're here once again because I suggested to my committee colleagues that we should rehear witnesses following the introduction of the amendments tabled by the government in its firearms legislation.

The committee was not necessarily making any progress after these amendments were tabled, because they had changed the bill in all kinds of ways. As you know, at the outset, Bill C-21 had mainly been about handguns. The government proposed new amendments in November, after the bill had been tabled in May, with substantial amendments applicable to assault weapons added on.

You are in favour of a ban on assault weapons. So is the Bloc Québécois, and we've said so repeatedly. But here we are in what amounts to a deadlock. That's why we proposed hearing other wit-

nesses. In the meantime, the government withdrew amendments G-4 and G-46 a few days ago, saying that it had not sufficiently consulted the groups involved and the population.

My understanding is that when the bill was tabled, there was media coverage. The government appeared to have promised certain groups that it would include the assault weapons ban in the act. The government had approximately five months to put together a well-structured bill, but unfortunately, that's not what we got in the end.

I have a question for the witnesses from PolySeSouvient, and then for Mr. Benabdallah.

Given that the government had promised to prohibit assault weapons, do you see the withdrawal of amendments G-4 and G-6 as a broken promise?

• (1610)

Ms. Heidi Rathjen: Our understanding of it is that on the day the amendments were withdrawn, the government, or at least Mr. Trudeau and the minister, were committed to trying again. The manner in which it was done was problematic, which doesn't bother us, because they still wanted to work with the other two parties that had also, in the three previous elections, promised to support or adopt a ban on assault weapons. We believe that the willpower is still there and that it's still being worked on.

We are now relying on the committee, particularly to get an understanding of why the amendments were withdrawn. I think it's largely because of the disinformation that got the hunters worried. What we heard was that the bill was going way too far, but that's only according to certain members and certain groups. We analyzed it all ourselves, and we now know, after getting corroboration from the RCMP, that all the information out there to the effect that hunting firearms would be prohibited in the amendments is false. The hunting firearms category mentioned by those who were opposed to the amendments would not change.

So the amendments were misunderstood, and the time has come to stand back in order to figure out how it happened, so that they can perhaps be improved where appropriate and reintroduced into the bill. They certainly need clarification and simplification. I'm thinking in particular of amendment G-46, because when hunters saw the model number of the gun they owned on the lists, they thought that all versions of the model were prohibited, which was not the case. It was only applicable to models with muzzle energy greater than 10,000 joules. These are firearms that can pierce military vehicles. For comparison, the muzzle energy for projectiles fired from an AK-47 is 2000 joules. The purpose of the amendments was to limit this energy to 10,000 joules. It is in fact a criterion that is already there and that doesn't affect hunting firearms at all.

Unfortunately, because the bill was 309 pages long and you couldn't see the top of the paragraph, people did not understand that only military grade models were being prohibited. As it turns out, that was already covered by the current regulations. Models designed for hunting are allowed and nothing changes. And yet those were the weapons they mentioned in their campaign.

Ms. Nathalie Provost: A definition is required. It's essential for the bill, because once adopted, it will be evergreen.

Since 1990, there have been many lists, but the market is huge and corporate innovations are endless. Without a clear definition, we'll be chasing our own tail again. It makes no sense for us to still be in the same position after 33 years, discussing a legitimate demand supported by the majority of Canadians.

I hope that the Liberals will table a new amendment and that it will be looked at objectively, based on the facts. We are no longer doing an emotional analysis because of the harm caused at the Polytechnique. We are analyzing a proposal on the basis of scientific evidence.

• (1615)

The Chair: Thanks you, Ms. Provost and Ms. Rathjen.

[English]

Mr. Julian, you have six minutes, if you please.

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Shockey, Ms. Provost and Ms. Rathjen, thank you for being here. I was a student at the University of Sherbrooke when the misogynistic massacre happened at the Polytechnique. It's burned into my memory, and there is no doubt about it.

Mr. Benabdallah, a few weeks ago on Parliament Hill, we commemorated the Islamophobic massacre at the Centre culturel islamique de Québec, another incident that we simply can't forget.

My first question is for you. You raised the issue of weapons of war and hunting weapons. I'm new to the committee. It's my first meeting. Needless to say, all these matters of definition are extremely important.

Please excuse me if you've already answered this question, but do you have any recommendations to make about how to make a distinction between weapons of war and hunting weapons?

Mr. Boufeldja Benabdallah: The Mr. Benabdallah before you comes from a mosque; the Mr. Benabdallah before you is saying that we don't want the tragedy that occurred to ever happen again. However, Mr. Benabdallah is not a technical expert in this area.

If you were to ask me questions about forestry, I could probably hold my own if we were arguing over some point.

We are arguing over the weapons issue. They have 33 years of experience, Mr. Julian. They've now decided to say that if we need to redefine things to make them more precise, more structured and more understandable to everyone, that they can do that. I'm with them. I don't want to sidestep the issue, but I'm not a technician. My colleagues here today are the technicians.

I don't want to see any more weapons of war in circulation. There was one weapon of war at the mosque. If it hadn't jammed, there would have been at least 45 or 50 people dead in our mosque. I wouldn't wish that on anyone.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you. You speak very eloquently on the subject.

I'm going to address Ms. Provost.

You raised the question of the manufacturers that are using loopholes at present. We know that PolySeSouvient has often had to inform the government about new models coming on the market. The manufacturers have found a way to circumvent the existing list. PolySeSouvient has often had to inform the RCMP. There's something disorganized about it.

Do you have recommendations to make to us about the responsibilities of the manufacturers and the process we have now?

Ms. Nathalie Provost: If we have a definition, the manufacturers will not be able to lie about what they are proposing to Canadians. Today, there is just a list; the manufacturers put a new firearm on the market and they include in the description of the firearm the characteristics that mean it can be sold in Canada. They explain whether the firearm has the characteristics of a non-restricted firearm, a restricted firearm, and so on.

By having a definition, we pull the rug out from under the feet of the ones who want to use that strategy. The list that accompanies the definition might be imperfect and may have to be adjusted, because a list will never be complete and perfect, but there can at least be exemptions for less dangerous firearms. Today, we have to go chasing after the danger, because there is always someone who adds something riskier or more powerful that we do not want to allow in Canada. We have to chase after the merchants. I think we have to be tougher.

Firearms can be exempted when we have been too tough. I would feel much safer as a Canadian if it were done this way.

• (1620)

Mr. Peter Julian: Ms. Rathjen, do you want to answer the two questions?

Ms. Heidi Rathjen: You asked about providing a definition. I don't want to go into detail, but essentially, we're talking about firearms that can fire in rapid bursts, semi-automatic firearms.

However, I would like to correct a false impression that some people have, including the witness beside us. We are not targeting all semi-automatic firearms. We are targeting only military-style semi-automatic firearms that are designed with magazines that hold more than five bullets and are not used for hunting. They have military characteristics, including extremely powerful initial energy that is too high for the purpose that an ordinary person would use a firearm for.

As Ms. Provost explained, it requires a permanent definition in order to include new models that might subsequently come on the market.

At the same time, we think it is important to have a list, because a permanent definition may not include all assault weapons. There are assault weapons that have different mechanisms and can only be identified using a case by case process in which the military characteristics are examined. In the criteria in the 2020 orders in council, a factor was added to the description that shows the intent of Parliament. It talks about firearms designed for military purposes that are not acceptable for civilian use.

So it takes both things.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Julian.

That brings our first round to a close. We'll start our second round. The second round is going to have to be abbreviated. We'll have to end this with Mr. Julian at the end of the day.

We go now to Mr. Calkins.

Go ahead, please, for five minutes.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses who are here today. It is a very important discussion that we're having.

I'll ask questions to Mr. Shockey. I too am a hunter, but I have produced zero television shows. I have not had near the success in the hunting world that our guest and witness here, Mr. Shockey, has had. I would be the individual who watches Mr. Shockey's shows.

I want to thank you for coming here and testifying today with respect to the impact that it has.

I have been a guide in the north. I have been a conservation officer and a national park warden. I have been issued firearms as a matter of my duties in that capacity.

Mr. Shockey, you did allude to this in your opening statement. Rogue River Outfitters is located in the Yukon. For their conservation officers, the Liberal government of the Yukon implemented the AR-10. An AR-10 is a .308-calibre semi-automatic rifle. That's for their conservation officers. They did this, actually, after the order in council in May of 2020, which moved the AR-10 from the non-restricted to the prohibited category. The Yukon Liberal government at the time said that this was the best option available for the protection of their conservation officers in dealing with human-wildlife conflict and interactions, and to protect the general public in a situation of dangerous wildlife.

This is my question to you, Mr. Shockey, given the fact that you've hired numerous indigenous guides as part of your operation and you've worked with folks in those communities. Is the life of a conservation officer more or less on par with the life of a hunter, guide or anybody else working in these dangerous situations? Should they have access to the same type of stopping power that a conservation officer does, since conservation officers can't be everywhere?

Mr. Jim Shockey: All lives are equal.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: I'm sorry, but I didn't hear the answer.

Could you repeat that, Mr. Shockey?

Mr. Jim Shockey: All lives are equal.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Thank you very much.

Now, you said in your opening remarks that there would be a significant impact on the indigenous communities should the tone... Could you give us an indication of what tone this debate and discussion are creating in the hunting community right now?

Your fear is that the tone would actually keep the vast number of guests who are from outside of the country from coming to north-

ern Canada. What would the economic impact be? Who are the communities and what are the job opportunities in these northern remote communities, if lodges and outfitters that offer hunting opportunities lose a significant portion of their clientele because of the confusion that's being caused by this debate?

• (1625)

Mr. Jim Shockey: On the first part of your question, the feeling or the sense from hunters, we feel fear that we're being attacked. As I said earlier, we feel vilified, marginalized. We feel that we're not respected, and there's a measure of distrust.

I keep hearing "weapon, weapon, weapon". I don't have a weapon. That's a subjective opinion based on every situation where a firearm is used. I don't have a weapon, but I keep hearing that I have these weapons. I don't.

I keep hearing that they are firearms for military purposes. My classic English double rifle, break action, two bullets in, close it up, shoot it, Turkish walnut engraved, is worth \$90,000. It's on this list. It's going to be prohibited. It has never been used in any type of a crime and certainly not in any military application.

As a hunter, I hear this—I'm listening—and I appreciate the emotions involved. It's a terrible tragedy. That can never be understated. On the other hand, like I said earlier, a way of life is also important to many people, especially us. I feel like, from *The Hunger Games*, I'm from District 12. I'm a tribute and you guys are the Capitols. You don't understand us.

In the communities in the north, if there is a ban or there is a protest against coming to Canada—a boycott—it would be catastrophic. Where will the money come from to these communities—from tourism? That's not realistic. It doesn't happen in most remote communities. Most of the money that comes into the communities from outside sources is from hunting and outfitting—the jobs that are there. Our television show on the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, *Yukon Harvest*, has all first nations people and Métis.

Like I say, a boycott would be catastrophic. That's just the passing of Bill C-21 and not getting into the individual amendments and whatnot. You cannot underestimate the effect and the lives it would cost. They are already struggling in these communities, and to throw this on top of it...?

It's well intentioned, but I have a feeling that there are going to be unintended consequences because of it.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Shockey. Thank you, Mr. Calkins.

[Translation]

It will now be Ms. Bendayan's turn.

Ms. Bendayan, the floor is yours for five minutes.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Outremont, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the witnesses.

It is a pleasure to see you again, Mr. Benabdallah. Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me at the mosque in Quebec City two weeks ago, at the commemoration of the attack.

Ms. Rathjen and Ms. Provost, from PolySeSouvient, we have been talking since the meeting started about a fact that you actually referred to in your opening statement: that several parties have committed to prohibiting assault weapons in the past.

It's a pleasure to see Mr. Julian and Ms. Michaud asking excellent questions during this committee meeting.

Personally, I'm very hopeful. I am a fighter, but I am also someone who thinks we can change the world.

I am pleased and truly relieved to have heard the leader of the NDP, Jagmeet Singh, say in an interview yesterday outside the House that he was in favour of the amendments that would incorporate a definition of prohibited assault-style weapons into Bill C-21.

More specifically, I thought it very important that Mr. Singh said he was [*Translation*] "always open to finding ways to have amendments that really will protect the community and respond to the needs and concerns of organizations like PolySeSouvient."

Ms. Rathjen and Ms. Provost, what message do you want to send the three progressive parties that share this intention and conviction?

What's the rush?

Why do we have to do this by proposing amendments to Bill C-21?

• (1630)

Ms. Nathalie Provost: Preparing, tabling, analyzing and studying a bill is a lengthy and painstaking process. At present, we can't take advantage of the favourable circumstances brought about by Bill C-21.

We have appeared before the committee on several occasions, and we are well aware that the process is very lengthy. If we let the opportunity to propose a definition pass by, we don't know whether we are going to be able to do it later or whether there will also be the political will to do it.

We think it is essential that all parties who agree that assault weapons must be banned in Canada get to work.

As well, I think it is essential that we concentrate on the facts, the data, and the objective analysis of an amendment. It has to be a strong amendment.

My grandfather and my uncles are hunters. Personally, I don't live in a rural area, but that is where I come from, and I recognize the importance of hunting for some Canadians, for communities, and for the First Nations of Canada. It is part of our history and our foundations.

PolySeSouvient has never called for an end to hunting or a ban on all firearms. What we want is to find a way to clearly define what an assault weapon is, based on firm, scientific criteria. That is how to ensure that this type of weapon will no longer be in the hands of Canadians. There is certainly a rational approach that is not based on emotions, that would allow hunters to feel respected and all Canadians, who want to live in a safe country, to have the protection of a firearms law that respects that fundamental need.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you very much, Ms. Provost.

I think disinformation plays an enormous role in this tale.

I would like to thank PolySeSouvient for the work it does, both on social media and with the media, to clarify things and answer Canadians' questions.

Mr. Chair, I leave the rest of my speaking time to my colleague Ms. Damoff.

[*English*]

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Thank you.

The Chair: You have 20 seconds.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you to all of our witnesses for being here today.

I just want to clarify something that Mr. Shockey mentioned.

If the amendments had been passed, there would have been 19,000 models with over 100,000 variations of firearms available. My understanding is there are 20 million AR-15s in the United States. They've been restricted since 1977 and banned since 2020 in Canada, so the doom and gloom for the industry seems quite misplaced.

I just want to say that guns commonly used for hunting are very different from trophy hunting in Africa to bring home trophies for your trophy wall, or bringing Americans to the north to get trophies for their trophy walls.

I'll leave it there, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Shockey, if you wish to respond, go ahead.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Chair, it wasn't a question. My time is up.

The Chair: I think, in fairness, he should get to respond.

Mr. Jim Shockey: I think that's an untruth.

The firearms they use in Africa and the firearms we use here are virtually the same. There's no distinction, and it's not trophy.... It's about hunting. It's the process, the journey, not a kill, so trophy hunting is a little bit of a derogatory comment when it's used like that.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Michaud, the floor is now yours for two and a half minutes.

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

I would like to come back to what my colleague Ms. Bendayan was saying. I thank her for her kind words.

To be honest with her, if my colleague wants the NDP or the Bloc Québécois to support what the government is going to present, it would have to present something else. At the moment, we are taking four meetings to hear the witnesses again, and that leaves very little time for the government to rework anything. I am concerned about that, even if our intention is the same, that being to ban assault weapons.

Ms. Rathjen and Ms. Provost, you certainly recall that when you testified the first time, I told you that if the government did not keep its promise, the Bloc Québécois would do it by introducing an amendment to ban assault weapons.

I consulted legislative counsel and she told me that it would be out of order because it went beyond the scope of Bill C-21, that the bill dealt with handguns, and that it would be extremely surprising if the chair of the committee brought it forward. Ultimately, the chair did bring it forward. My amendment was rejected, but there was the Liberals' amendment.

This is all to say that I believe that behind the fact that the government has withdrawn its amendments there is a fear that the Speaker of the House of Commons would then decide that the amendments were out of order. That fear is still present.

How should we do this, do you think?

Should the government propose something different in a bill separate from Bill C-21? Should it do it directly in Bill C-21?

You talked about a definition, and I agree that we should have a good definition that includes weapons before, during and after.

We should therefore not do it by using a list. The lists that were in the orders in council showed that there were holes and that it didn't work. The definition should therefore take in all of the weapons, including future weapons.

What do you propose? What should the government do, going forward, considering that the committee only has a few weeks before resuming clause by clause study of the bill?

• (1635)

Ms. Heidi Rathjen: We are obviously not experts on parliamentary procedure, so I can't express an opinion on what is in order or out of order.

Nonetheless, one thing is certain. We believe that the government must consult the two opposition parties that support it, the Bloc Québécois and the New Democratic Party, and work with them.

We encourage the government to work with you so the amendments can be introduced again and have the approval of all parties that are in favour of banning assault weapons.

I reiterate, looking from the outside, our impression is that big steps backwards are being taken. What we see is that there have been three elections in which these three parties have promised to ban assault weapons.

You are talking about procedure and technical things here, when that is not our field. We are members of the public who have experienced mass killings; we bring the message from the 80% of Canadians who want to ban these weapons and we are asking you to do what you can to achieve that objective.

There must be special procedures, but we don't know what they are. It is up to the committee and the government to find them.

Certainly, at the end of the day, we are asking and we hope to see a bill adopted that will include a permanent definition, a permanent and complete ban on assault weapons.

The Chair: Thank you, madam.

[*English*]

Mr. Julian, if you please, go ahead for two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You have delivered a very clear message today. Nonetheless, we have to say that what Ms. Michaud said is extremely important.

The government should have sent this bill to committee before second reading. The fact that this was not done meant that these amendments were not in order. That is one of the problems the committee is currently examining.

It is the committee's job to do it, not yours. We will do it as best we can, of course. We have understood your message today. It is very clear.

[*English*]

Mr. Shockey, I have a question for you. Again, I apologize if this is something you've already answered. I believe you have appeared before the committee before. I'm the new guy on the block, so I will ask this question even if you've answered it.

You mentioned that your estimate was that 97% of Americans were clients of outfitters. I wasn't sure whether you were talking about your business or, in a broader sense, the regional businesses.

Can you quantify what you feel would be the impacts of these two amendments and what that would mean in terms of either your business or the impact on outfitters generally?

• (1640)

Mr. Jim Shockey: I didn't hear that you were speaking to me, but I assume that because I'm the expert in those areas, you asked me.

Mr. Peter Julian: Yes. I was directing it to you.

Mr. Jim Shockey: The amendments were, from what I understood, and again, I'm a hunter. I'm not a gun guy and I'm certainly not a politician. The firearms that were banned or that at least were on that list were.... I mean, it was the majority of the guns. People say it wasn't, but if you know firearms.... I hear a lot of people talking here who don't know a lot about firearms, honestly. They know that firearms cause great pain and, as I said before, that's a terrible tragedy. The firearms that were on the amendments are why I'm here—

Mr. Peter Julian: Yes, and I apologize. I only have a few seconds left. I just wanted to know if you could quantify. You talked about 97%, but you hadn't quantified what you believe to be the impacts. I wanted to know if you had figures that you could share with the committee.

Mr. Jim Shockey: Well, for instance, in my outfitting territory in the Yukon, we probably have a gross revenue of \$1.2 million. From what I understand of the studies that have been done—and these are polls, so I don't know if they're scientific, peer-reviewed studies—when outfitters in British Columbia years ago were being attacked as well, they found that the multiplier effect was about 25 times the revenue from each outfitting operation.

There are 217 outfitting operations in B.C. and 19 up in the Yukon, so you could probably use that study, I would imagine. I'm not a pollster.

As I said, I'm not a politician. I'm a hunter. I can tell you from my side as an outfitter that it would be catastrophic, and it would be for the community as well.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Julian.

Thank you as well, Mr. Shockey.

That brings this panel to a close.

I'd like to thank all of you for your time here today and for your testimony. It is all enormously helpful. It will help us in our work. I appreciate all of you being here and sharing with us your expertise and your perspectives.

With that, we will suspend and bring in a new panel. Thank you.

• (1640) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1645)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order.

In person in this panel today we have Mr. Mark Ryckman, manager of policy for the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters. By video conference, we have, as an individual, Dr. Caillin Langmann, assistant clinical professor, department of medicine, McMaster University.

Welcome, gentlemen.

When we commence, each of you will have up to five minutes for an opening statement.

We will start with Mr. Ryckman for five minutes, please.

Mr. Mark Ryckman (Manager of Policy, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters): Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and mem-

bers of the committee. On behalf of the OFAH, thank you for the invitation to appear at this committee.

The OFAH is the largest non-profit, conservation-based fish and wildlife organization in Ontario, with 100,000 members, supporters and subscribers and 725 member clubs, with 55 of those clubs operating 122 CFO-approved licensed ranges. Our organization is 95 years old so we have a long history of advocating for the hunting community in Ontario.

While there are provisions in Bill C-21 we have concerns about, I will keep my comments scoped to the impact of the amendments G-4 and G-46 on the hunting community.

Hunting is an ancient tradition passed down through generations and remains a way of life for many indigenous and non-indigenous Canadians. Hunting today makes important social, cultural and economic contributions to our country. It remains an important way to put food on the table, connect to nature, create and foster relationships, relax in the outdoors and contribute to the conservation movement. Indeed, some take offence when hunting is referred to as a sport or hobby, because it is so much more than that.

Hunting isn't just for rural Canadians. Hunters come from urban, suburban and rural Canada. They are judges, lawyers, teachers, dentists, plumbers, mechanics and even politicians. Hunting provides information and funding for wildlife management, can help control populations and address human-wildlife conflict, and can foster a sense of obligation to give back to nature with conservation activities.

In 2018, hunting spending totalled \$5.9 billion and the resulting contribution to Canada's GDP was \$4.1 billion. Hunting supported 33,000 jobs and generated almost \$2 billion in labour income. The importance of our hunting heritage is even recognized in federal legislation.

There is no such thing as a hunting firearm type. Firearms primarily used for hunting are also frequently used for plinking, shooting at the range or even competition. There are no hard line thresholds for labelling firearms as hunting or non-hunting, particularly when only looking at the appearance or overall design of the firearm itself. It requires the comprehensive examination of multiple features and functions of a firearm, like the action and calibre, but will also be influenced by non-firearm considerations like the cartridge, the user, environment, target species and jurisdiction.

We are pleased that the amendments have been withdrawn and I applaud this committee for studying their impact. In addition to the nature of the amendments, we were also troubled by their unexpected introduction and the lack of consultation. In proposing amendment G-4, the government jumped directly to prohibition, skipping over less extreme alternatives that would have helped achieve its goal without the infringement on hunters and other legal gun owners.

A stepwise and adaptive approach creates better policy and is much fairer for Canadians than the unnecessarily blunt prohibition of guns by make and model. Take the attachable magazines as an example. The Criminal Code already prohibits the possession of any magazine that holds more than five shots for a semi-automatic centrefire long gun. If it can hold more than five rounds, it must be pinned so that it can't.

Bill C-21 proposes to go further and make unpinning a specific offence as opposed to a lesser included offence. We had a proposed new offence that hasn't even been enacted yet, let alone being given a chance to work, when the amendments were introduced. Even if the government felt compelled to go further, they could take targeted measures like banning the import and sale of new magazines that have the potential to exceed five rounds.

Our opposition to the amendments is not partisan or emotional or predetermined on principle. It was only after a thorough, critical analysis that we arrived at this conclusion. It won't enhance public safety. The evidence simply doesn't support it.

Firearms are not the disease, particularly in a nation like Canada with robust gun laws. Gun violence is often symptomatic of much bigger societal issues. Taking firearms away from law-abiding Canadians will not reduce the upstream issues that fuel criminal activity and the demand for illicit firearms. Therefore, model-based firearm prohibitions will continue to fail as they won't be able to have a detectable impact on reducing gun violence or enhancing public safety.

If political discourse remains fixated on finding the firearms that should be banned or saved, then we will continue to underinvest in the resources and time we need to address the critical issues we have.

Thank you.

• (1650)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ryckman.

We go now to Dr. Langmann.

Go ahead, please, for five minutes.

Dr. Caillin Langmann (Assistant Clinical Professor, Department of Medicine, McMaster University, As an Individual): Thank you for letting me present my research regarding Canadian firearms legislation and its association with homicide, spousal homicide, mass homicide and suicide in Canada.

I am an assistant clinical professor of medicine and an emergency physician in Ontario. I serve as an academic peer reviewer in the areas of firearm control, homicide, suicide, violence and gang deterrence for academic journals. I have four peer-reviewed publica-

tions on legislation and the effects on homicide and suicide in Canada.

In 2022 I presented and submitted studies and a report regarding Bill C-21 to the committee. The research demonstrated that previous bans in the 1990s of a large number of handguns had no effect on homicide rates.

Currently a definition of "assault rifles" and subsequent bans has been proposed. My research on previous Canadian legislation is applicable in answering the question of what the effects of this legislation may be. Since 2003 the number of owned restricted firearms has doubled from 572,000 to 1.2 million; however, the rate of overall firearms homicide has not increased, nor has the rate of homicide by handguns. There have been recent fluctuations, similar to levels in the early 2000s, but the rate of homicide has actually fluctuated about a steady mean when statistical analysis is performed.

In the 1990s, legislation prohibited over 550,000 firearms, including military-style firearms and handguns. However, my studies have demonstrated that there was no statistically significant benefit on homicide, spousal homicide or mass homicide rates in Canada. Restrictions of magazine capacity in 1994 were not associated with decreases in homicide or mass homicide rates. Prohibition of fully automatic firearms in the late 1970s was also not associated with decreases in homicide or mass homicide rates.

Other jurisdictions such as Australia and England have also applied significant controls to handguns and semi-automatic rifles, and in multiple studies no statistically significant changes in homicide rates were detected. Studies from the United States examining assault weapon bans have also revealed no significant benefit. Blau et al. and Siegel et al. found that these legislations were not associated with a decrease in victims.

Interestingly, when looking at 30 years of incidents, Blau found that shotguns were more associated with an increase in victims than semi-automatic rifles. Webster et al., using similar quasi-experimental methodology as I, did not find an association between assault weapon bans and public mass homicide incidents or deaths.

In summary, the evidence so far demonstrates that the proposed handgun and semi-automatic rifle bans would have no associated reduction in homicide rates or mass homicide rates. Methods that have been shown to be more effective in reducing firearms homicides involve targeting the demand side of the firearms prevalence in criminal activity. As demonstrated by StatsCan, a significant percentage of firearms homicide involves gang violence.

To reduce the violence that is currently occurring in Canada's cities, the evidence suggests that you need to act early to reduce youth gang involvement. A research report by Public Safety Canada in 2012 gathered evidence from programs operating in Canada to reduce the gang participation rate and demonstrated beneficial effects in the range of a 50% reduction in participation.

Targeting legal firearms owners, who rarely commit crimes, with new legislation already shown to have no significant statistical benefit will not change Canada's death rates by firearms. The likely billions of dollars forecasted to be spent on confiscating firearms would be better spent on youth diversion and gang reduction programs.

Thank you.

• (1655)

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Langmann.

We'll start with Ms. Dancho.

Please go ahead, Ms. Dancho, for six minutes.

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

Thank you to both witnesses for being here. I have a question for each witness.

Dr. Langmann, your résumé is quite extensive. I know you are a very humble person, but I would like to highlight some of it. You have a Ph.D. in biochemistry and molecular biology. You received your MD from Queen's University. You received your specialty in emergency medicine at McMaster University. You're also a fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. You were the chief trauma fellow in 2011. You are currently an ER doctor at St. Joseph's. You are also assistant clinical professor of medicine at McMaster University, and the director of the clinical teaching unit at St. Joseph's hospital.

I could go on, but those are just some of the highlights. You've also studied a number of peer-reviewed papers, and you are certainly one of the foremost experts in Canada, from the research I have been able to do, on the issue of gun violence in terms of homicide, domestic homicide and mass homicide, and the impact, if any, of various governments' gun control legislation.

Is that, in brief, a summary of your qualifications and the research that you do?

Dr. Caillin Langmann: Yes.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Okay.

I've reviewed your papers. Just to conclude, it would seem that, as you mentioned in your opening, the gun control measures brought forward in the last number of years by this government and other governments have had no impact on homicide, domestic homicide or mass homicide.

Can you confirm that?

Dr. Caillin Langmann: That's correct.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Again, your research is heavily peer-reviewed and you have also been asked by various medical journals to review other research papers in a similar field. Is that correct?

Dr. Caillin Langmann: That's correct.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Okay. Again, you have found no statistical significant beneficial association between firearms legislation and homicide by firearm, as well as spousal homicide by firearm, as well as the criminal charge of discharge of firearm with intent. Is that correct?

Dr. Caillin Langmann: That's correct—in this country, in Canada.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: In this country, thank you, and your conclusions are based on sound statistical analysis, specifically in particular from the Government of Canada. Is that correct?

Dr. Caillin Langmann: Yes. I use a lot of the Statistics Canada data. However, my studies have been peer-reviewed. They've also appeared in review articles, including in a recent Canadian Medical Association Journal article and rated the highest evidence that was available for examining this issue.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: That's a very strict evidentiary standard with very high scientific analysis. Your latest peer-reviewed study included statistical data up to and including 2022. Is that correct?

Dr. Caillin Langmann: That's correct.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Okay. I appreciate your coming very much. I know there are a lot of questions for you as well, but as we all agree, it's important to make evidence-based decisions, so I appreciate your bringing this evidence to the forefront once again at our committee.

With my remaining time, Mr. Ryckman, I did want to ask you about the trust factor with hunters. What I'm hearing a lot is that they've seen a number of their commonly used firearms being banned under these two amendments that have temporarily been withdrawn.

You were very eloquent in your opening remarks about the hunting culture in Canada. There's a bit of a debate that goes on, I know, and criticism of the hunting culture around trophy hunting, but I want to share something with you. Feel free to share with me what you've heard from your 100,000 members.

I grew up hunting with my dad. There's a record book for your trophy buck, and it's a huge honour to get in there. My dad hunted for many years and finally, to the great pride of my family, he got a 165 typical. It was a really big moment for us. I'll never forget it. It's pretty impressive. When I was in high school, I got a special award from the local hunting association. They gave me a plaque for the biggest buck for my age category. It was a proud moment for my dad.

I know that your association does a lot of that work encouraging young people. It's just very natural when you're going hunting. Everyone wants the biggest buck—or the biggest fish when they're fishing. It's a very important part of the culture. Would you agree?

• (1700)

Mr. Mark Ryckman: Yes, absolutely.

The concern about trophy hunting is that nowadays simply the use of the term can be somewhat misleading. We don't really have a huge culture of trophy hunting in Canada, by any means, at least not the way that some people tend to interpret that term. Generally that is restricted to travelling on African big game safaris, for instance, where the meat is left with the local communities and the hunter, the person who harvests it, takes part of that home with him, the trophy if you will.

When it comes to trophy hunting or even trophy fishing here in Ontario, in Canada, it's very different.

The trophy fish in my family is my daughter's first fish. It was a small fish.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Wow. I got a master angler carp when I was a young girl. That was a proud moment too.

I appreciate that and I think it really brings a sense of competition and encouragement. I know that your association does a lot of that Canadian work and that there's a huge pride element to that.

With my concluding minute, can you speak to the trust factor? Again, there has to be a lot of trust between the government in charge of the Firearms Act, which is the federal government, and the 100,000 members and subscribers that you have. I'm very concerned. Trust in government is very important. We need to be law-abiding citizens. I am very concerned about this. This is what I'm hearing.

Can you speak in the remaining 30 seconds about what you're hearing from your members? Again, that's 100,000 members and subscribers.

Mr. Mark Ryckman: Yes, from the hunting community at large, we're hearing very much the same thing, in that a bill that originally started as a handgun ban very quickly and unexpectedly was expanded to include some hunting rifles and shotguns. That moment alone was enough to.... I wouldn't say it completely eroded trust in the government from the hunting community, but it certainly did make them pause and wonder what exactly they are trying to do here and what the government's ultimate goal is.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you very much.

I believe I'm out of time. Again, thank you both for coming.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Dancho.

We go now to Ms. Damoff.

Ms. Damoff, please go ahead for six minutes.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you.

Thank you to our witnesses for being here.

Obviously, we're here having these additional meetings because we acknowledge that there were organizations like the hunters and anglers of Ontario who were not heard on what was in the bill. I very much appreciate your being here today and offering your testimony and your expertise. It does mean a lot to us to hear the perspective of hunters. It was never our intention to ban the rifles that are commonly used in hunting, so your appearance here today is very much appreciated.

I do have a question, though. There has been a lot of misinformation that has permeated the hunting community, such that many people feel that the guns they own will now be banned. We have to take some responsibility for that, because the list was not easy to understand or interpret.

Do you know how many models would have still been available in the Canadian market if amendment G-46 had actually passed?

Mr. Mark Ryckman: I don't actually know the number of units or even the number of different models that would still be available. I can certainly say the amendment, at least as it's written now, would not ban every single commonly used rifle or shotgun right now.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I had a few people reach out to me and I checked with Minister Mendicino's office because I personally couldn't interpret the list. For every one that I checked, even though they thought it was banned, it was not. My understanding is that there are about 19,000 models that will still be available.

Do you know or have you heard from your members about ones that were on the list that you feel should be excluded? Did people contact you about them?

Mr. Mark Ryckman: Sure. I suppose my response would be in two parts.

A direct answer to your query is that the SKS is probably one of the more ubiquitous hunting rifles, and it is clearly on the list. I think everybody missed that at this point. That is a rifle that is perfectly legitimate for the purpose of hunting in Ontario, in Canada, and that is on the list. It would have been prohibited if amendments G-4 and G-46 had passed and had not been withdrawn.

The broader concern is that at some point, if the government has to create a laundry list of exempted guns, it starts to make us question whether the legislation was crafted properly in the first place. It's one thing to present a single model or two of firearms, but if you start having to exempt 15, 20, 30 or 50 models because the hunting community is concerned about their being prohibited, then perhaps that's more of an indication about the wording of the legislation.

• (1705)

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you.

Certainly we have heard about the SKS. I would say, though, it's been used in 11 shootings of police officers over the last six years, most recently here in Ontario. It was originally designed for the military. I do understand, but there are models other than the SKS that could be used. The intent was to take a look at how these have been used and how they were designed, and that was one that was originally designed for the military.

I understand that you have quite a large membership in your organization and I applaud you for that. There's been a pretty big increase in PAL owners over the last two years. Have you seen your membership increase over the last few years as more people have obtained their PAL?

Mr. Mark Ryckman: Our membership fluctuates all the time. Sometimes it fluctuates greatly. There are some nuances about the insurances we provide to member clubs that actually dictate that sometimes. Some of our member clubs are four-person hunt camps that have incorporated. Others have several hundred people.

Just speaking hypothetically, if we were to lose one of those clubs, that could make a big difference in our membership from month to month.

We certainly haven't seen a linear increase along with the increase in the number of PAL holders in Canada. Obviously, the possession and acquisition licence is required, not just for hunting, for instance, but even for handgun owners or target shooters, competitors. You wouldn't necessarily expect every PAL holder to be a hunter. You certainly wouldn't expect every member of a conservation organization like the OFAH to be, because they're not necessarily hunters.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I only have about 30 seconds left, but I would ask a favour. We could probably.... I think everyone would appreciate it if your organization and those like yours helped disseminate factual information and tried to dispel some of the misinformation that did get out there. We would be very grateful for your assistance in making sure that people are dealing with facts and not misinformation when they're looking at this really important legislation.

Thank you for what you're doing and for being here.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Damoff.

We go now to Ms. Michaud.

[Translation]

The floor is yours for six minutes.

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

I want to thank the witnesses for being here.

I have invited the Fédération québécoise des chasseurs et pêcheurs myself to testify a little later, in the next few days, but I'm very pleased we are hearing from the Ontario federation. I'm sure you speak to each other and you have substantially the same positions, but it is still interesting to hear your views.

If we scroll through your website a bit, we see that there was a call to action concerning Bill C-21. You described the reasons why you disagreed with the amendments proposed by the government. You said you were worried about the impact they would have on hunters, because many of these firearms were used by hunters in Canada.

I'm going to reiterate what my colleague Ms. Damoff said before me. Obviously, you are talking about the SKS, which we have heard a lot about.

You say that many of the firearms in question are used by hunters. Can you give us examples of firearms that are commonly used for hunting that appear on this list? Have your members let you know what firearm they use that is on the list, for example?

[English]

Mr. Mark Ryckman: Yes, certainly some did. I don't have a list in front of me, unfortunately. I will call back to a report that a col-

league of mine authored. It was actually in response to the May 2020 OIC, so it's a little bit further back than the amendments and the new firearm models that are in G-46.

We surveyed a large number of hunters across Canada and asked them, "Of these newly prohibited firearms, which were non-restricted a day ago, which models are you currently using or were you using for legitimate hunting purposes in Canada?" At that time, the survey respondents identified, I believe, about 64 models.

Of course, the currency date is a little bit different. The impact of the amendment and, obviously, whatever final wording would be imposed or would be adopted would dramatically affect what is actually on that list. A Plinkster, for instance.... You know, we can go through model by model. The concern and some of the uncertainty, I will admit, is in your interpretation of some of those proposed amendments.

I listened to hours of standing committee testimony and the experts from the RCMP and Public Safety Canada and the Canadian firearms program and so on and so forth, and they were very forthcoming about what they intended the interpretation of those amendments and those provisions to be. They're not the final arbiters of the legal interpretation of those amendments. The final arbiter is a court of law. If there is that much confusion in the interpretation of an amendment, at a bare minimum it needs to be looked at again and almost certainly reworded. If it's that bad, it needs to be withdrawn. That is, ultimately, what is going to drive the makes and models that are in G-46.

• (1710)

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: If I understand correctly, you are disappointed with how the government has gone about this. Understanding what models were or were not banned was complicated.

I'm going to let you answer. I think the answer is yes.

[English]

Mr. Mark Ryckman: Yes.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you.

We received a detailed explanation, which is very short.

At a committee meeting, we heard from some officials and we asked them to provide us with an explanation in writing of the proposed amendments.

It's fairly easy to understand, but we had a lot of trouble understanding the explanation, which is still not entirely clear.

It's interesting to see that Schedule 1 to amendment G-46 deals with firearms that have been banned since the 1990s, since the Order Declaring an Amnesty Period (2020).

Then, in Schedule 2 to amendment G-46, the focus is on paragraphs 97 to 232, which deal with firearms that would be banned by adding these amendments. It talked about approximately 480 makes and models of firearms that are currently not banned, which added only a small number.

I agree with my colleagues about the enormous amount of disinformation that has circulated. For example, if you pressed Ctrl+F to do a search in the document and came to a model, you immediately got the impression it was banned, when it was talking about a model with a totally different power. On top of that, if you had not read the introductory paragraph first, you missed the information that said "with the exception of these models". That created a huge amount of confusion.

To try to unravel it all, I tried to see what is being done elsewhere. Sometimes, it's a good idea to compare ourselves to other countries to see what they have done and how they went about things.

The analysts at the committee and the library were kind enough to quickly prepare a little document for me.

I'm going to give you the example of New Zealand.

The way New Zealand went about it is fairly similar to what the government proposed with amendments G-4 and G-46 to Bill C-21. However, one passage particularly caught my attention, in which it says that the bill was also intended to preserve access to lower-capacity semi-automatic firearms recognized as being used by hunters and farmers.

We see that New Zealand went about this in a similar way, but paying attention to farmers, hunters and maybe even indigenous people, who use certain models.

We understand that the government is going to start over from zero with its examination of the issue and is going to try to propose something.

In this new proposal, do you think the government should give the same attention to hunters, farmers and indigenous people as New Zealand does?

[English]

Mr. Mark Ryckman: That's an excellent question, and thank you for that detail.

I would have to think about that a little bit harder. I will say, though, that going back to the trust concerns that Ms. Dancho echoed, even if something like that were written into this legislation, the government has lost the trust of many people in the hunting community so those people might not trust the government to actually say, "You know what? You've identified this as a legitimate hunting rifle so as promised, we will not prohibit it."

That trust is gone and it's going to take a long time to rebuild that trust. While on paper it seems like a very logical compromise, I'm not sure it would go nearly far enough to assuage the concerns of the hunting community.

• (1715)

The Chair: Thank you.

We go now to Mr. Julian.

Go ahead, please, for six minutes.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Thank you so much to our witnesses. This is all part of the feedback we need to get as a committee as we look to next steps after the withdrawal of the amendments.

Dr. Langmann: I would like to start with you. You have stated that, even with the increase in firearms, the rate of homicides and suicides did not change between 2003 and the last year of the study.

Dr. Caillin Langmann: Yes. There's a fluctuation that appears, but statistically there isn't an increase associated with an increase in the rates of firearm ownership.

Mr. Peter Julian: Okay. As part of your study, or as part of your work in analyzing other countries, you referenced Australia and England, and Ms. Michaud just referenced New Zealand. Have you also done analysis in terms of the rise of untraceable ghost guns—firearms that we're not able to register or trace? Has that been part of the study work that you have done?

Dr. Caillin Langmann: All firearm homicides are included in the research. Unfortunately, Statistics Canada doesn't label guns as ghost guns. They'll label them as "other" sometimes, if it's difficult to identify or they just were not identified in the report. Currently, there's no real record of specifically ghost gun homicides or ghost guns used in crimes.

Mr. Peter Julian: As Statistics Canada treats ghost guns, it's kind of a ghost in terms of the statistical follow-up.

Dr. Caillin Langmann: It's a new era. It's a new thing we're starting to see. It is going to have to catch up with its methods, and so will the police services that report these to Statistics Canada.

Mr. Peter Julian: Anecdotally, in terms of the news in the United States, I understand there has been a 1,000% increase in the use of ghost guns. I understand the statistical problem, given that it's not actually something that is tracked by law enforcement on this side of the border as much, or by Statistics Canada.

Moving forward, is this part of something that you would like to study or quantify? It appears to be an increasing problem. Obviously, as you point out, it's something we have to catch up on.

Dr. Caillin Langmann: It's definitely something I would like to look at. Unfortunately, right now, the data doesn't exist.

Mr. Peter Julian: You referenced gang violence. I know you have provided recommendations on anti-gang strategies, which has been really important.

Do you see a link between the use of ghost guns and gang violence. Though I understand that you can't quantify that, is this something that should be of increasing concern to all of us who are looking at public safety?

Dr. Caillin Langmann: Anecdotally, it is. The rates have increased. Of course, as measures are taken to restrict firearm ownership, a black market will exist. We're starting to see that. These things are being printed, and 3D printers are also becoming a lot more common across North America.

It's one of those things where you're going to start needing to target the demand side of the equation. You're trying to control the supply side right now by banning firearms based on spurious definitions. Really, if you don't start targeting the demand side, you're not going to see any benefit.

You're usually targeting legal gun owners who are going to comply with the regulations. They are the least most likely to be involved in criminal activity in this country. They have already gone through screening. It's no wonder that, when I look at this legislation, I don't see any benefit, because you wouldn't expect to get any marginal benefit on a group that is already such a low risk.

That's probably where you should start directing your work. It should be towards the demand side.

● (1720)

Mr. Peter Julian: Given that, do you have recommendations that you would make to this committee on the demand side, and specifically—understanding the difficulty in quantifying the extent of the ghost gun problem—how as a committee we should be looking at that issue as well?

Dr. Caillin Langmann: The difficulty is that, for many criminals, they just need the gun for one purpose at one time and then they can throw it away. Even a printed polycarbonate barrel would be for one use, and then it's done.

The recommendations I would give you would be to start targeting youth at risk, very early at risk, who are starting to get involved in criminal activity. I would recommend to start youth diversion programs, diverting them away from that activity, and cognitive behavioural therapy. We should start work on the significant methamphetamine problem we're seeing in all our communities across the country. Apparently, my emergency department, right now, behind me is full of patients who are intoxicated or suffering from psychosis from methamphetamine abuse.

This focus on a small segment of society that uses firearms for generally legitimate purposes is maybe diverting your attention from a significant need right now, which is to start looking at diversion right away and funding those areas.

As I said, there was a 2012 report by Public Safety Canada—

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Langmann, but I'm going to have to cut you off there.

Thank you, Mr. Julian.

We will start our second round now with Mr. Lloyd for five minutes.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The whole premise of why we're here today is because it was believed a group put forward the argument that we needed an evergreen definition of what an assault-style weapon would be. The argument was made that gun manufacturing companies are attempting to circumvent Canadian laws by introducing new models into Canada that are not covered by our existing laws.

Mr. Ryckman, you are well versed in firearms. Is there any evidence that gun manufacturing companies are attempting to do this as has been claimed?

Mr. Mark Ryckman: Unfortunately, I can't speak intelligently on behalf of the gun manufacturers, although I will say that, generally speaking, any business responds to the market.

Generally speaking, the concern that we have with the evergreen definition in general.... Our position is that any attempt to adopt an evergreen definition of a prohibited firearm—expanded in such a way that it tackles or includes semi-automatic, centrefire rifles and shotguns—will impact the hunting community, plain and simple.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Thank you for that.

To rephrase, as a hunter myself and for the hunters I know, the firearms we use are firearms that have been used in this country for decades and decades.

Would you say that the vast majority of firearms used by hunters you represent are models and makes of firearms that have been used for a very long time in this country?

Mr. Mark Ryckman: Certainly, currently yes. That would be the case.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Are you seeing new models of firearms coming out for the purpose of circumventing Canadian laws? Are people using these firearms for hunting?

Mr. Mark Ryckman: Unfortunately, I don't have an answer to that question, Mr. Lloyd. I'm sorry.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Dr. Langmann, I have a similar question.

Are you seeing evidence that there are new models of firearms being manufactured by firearms companies for the purpose of circumventing Canadian law? Are these being used in crimes? Is this something that is truly an issue?

Dr. Caillin Langmann: Criminals will use any firearm they can obtain. There's not a firearm, specifically. They're mostly looking for handguns, but they will use whatever they can get.

The SKS was brought up earlier. It's a firearm that's been around since the 1940s. It's commonly used. It was very cheap and was sold broadly in this country after the collapse of the Soviet bloc. We've seen a lot of those being used because they're widely available, but it's due to a commonality reason. Something that is common will be used.

All types of firearms are extremely dangerous. The bolt-action rifles, what we're calling hunting rifles, have been used to kill police officers. Those have been used to kill patients I've seen. They are extremely dangerous. They are more dangerous, I think, than what's commonly called an assault rifle, because the calibre and the energy from the projectile are a lot higher than most assault rifles like the AR-15.

To me, it doesn't make sense.

● (1725)

Mr. Dane Lloyd: That was another interesting thing.

Some previous witnesses made the distinction between military calibres and hunting calibres.

Mr. Ryckman, is there such a distinction? Are there truly such things as military calibres and things that are hunting calibres?

Mr. Mark Ryckman: I would argue that most people are talking about military firearms more than anything. There is so much overlap, and not just in calibre, as you mentioned, between true military firearms and the civilian versions that evolve from some of those military firearms.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: A NATO standard is a 7.62 millimetre calibre round. Is that smaller than what most hunters would use for hunting?

Mr. Mark Ryckman: Unfortunately, the variation, even within Ontario and within the Ontario deer hunting population.... There is significant variation in preference for the calibre and type of firearm, and so on and so forth. I don't think I can speak accurately about the variation across Canada, but I imagine it's significant.

The choice of a firearm, the choice that a hunter—

Mr. Dane Lloyd: There are commonly used calibres that are larger than what the military uses.

Mr. Mark Ryckman: It's very common, yes.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: By classifying military calibres as “large calibres”, we're capturing more hunting calibres than we're capturing calibres of cartridges that are used by the military.

Mr. Mark Ryckman: It's quite possible, yes.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I was reading—

The Chair: You have 15 seconds.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Statistics Canada came out with a very interesting...back in December 2021. It's on firearm violence. Of all violent crimes, 0.47% had a rifle or a shotgun present. They were not necessarily used, but present. We're talking about a very small amount. Out of that, a significant number of those were gang-related.

When we're talking about legal firearm owners and the legislation we're bringing forward here today, we are talking about a fraction of a fraction of half a per cent of total violent crimes in this country. We're missing the whole boat on 99% of crimes in this county.

The Chair: Do you need a quick answer for that?

Mr. Mark Ryckman: I would like to answer. It probably won't be quick, though.

The Chair: Do what you can. I will cut you off if you go on too long.

Mr. Mark Ryckman: Sure.

You're absolutely right, in that ultimately we need to be helping the people who need help. We need to take guns away—whatever guns they are—from people who shouldn't have them, plain and simple.

We need to ensure that our enforcement bodies have the funding, the training and the tools they need to deal with things such as organized crime and gun violence. That includes the upstream determinants of involvement in crime and so on and so forth.

Finally, we also need to ensure that the justice system treats violent crime, including gun crime, with the severity it deserves.

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

We go now to Dr. Hanley.

Please go ahead. You have five minutes.

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Thank you.

Thank you for the chance to appear before this committee. I'm speaking to you from the Yukon. I want to thank all the committee members around the table for the tremendous work you've done on this bill.

Consider me as somewhat of a newbie to the committee, but nevertheless, I will spend maybe a minute and a half with Dr. Langmann.

Thank you for your work, Doctor. I think you have a long history of careful work on this.

I just want to know what your confidence is in the data, because I've also heard that there is actually a lack of data and that we really don't have enough data to be able to correlate the association between particular firearms—whether legally or illegally acquired, for example—and incidents. I'm also worried about the perception that, in what we've achieved so far with gun control as one aspect of the prevention of gun violence, maybe we've gone too far.

I want to know how confident you are in the amount of data we have, and if you believe we should have more data in order to be able to really understand what's going on.

Dr. Caillin Langmann: You're asking someone who is a statistician if they'd like more data, and the answer is yes. We always like more data.

The good thing is that actually there is a very low number of mass homicides in this country, so that alone speaks to something. Partly, it's a population issue. However, in terms of analyzing the data, I do what are called data sensitivity tests to see how good the data is at predicting something. The answer is that it's actually fairly good at predicting whether, for instance, certain legislation has had any beneficial effect. In terms of homicide, spousal homicide, mass homicide and suicide, etc., I can say that.

I would love, of course, to have data regarding where the guns were obtained and specifically how they were used, as well as the background of the perpetrator in terms of whether or not they have a criminal background and whether the gun was used in a family and those sorts of things. Unfortunately, a lot of that data is also private and protected. Statistics Canada has certain controls in terms of keeping that information, but of course that would be something for the government to mandate and work on.

● (1730)

Mr. Brendan Hanley: Thank you.

We'd love to have you elaborate on that, but I want to move on. I want to just point out the CMA policy statement on gun violence, where they point out through international review that civilian access to firearms with rapid-fire capability does result, or appears to result, in an increased incidence of mass shootings. It's really to point out the overall correlation between poor control availability of firearms and mass shootings, which is I know one of the intents of this Bill C-21.

I want to quickly turn back to Dr. Ryckman.

Dr. Ryckman, you've written quite eloquently. I've read some of what you've written on your website about trying to find common ground, so maybe in an attempt to find some common ground here, I'm sure you're aware of many of the concerns expressed from my constituents in the Yukon. I haven't yet met anyone in the Yukon who does not deplore gun violence. I also want to commend what I just heard in the previous hour in the testimony of the witness from PolySeSouvient: a powerful testament to the value of hunting.

I see that there is a possibility to converge on some common ground. Do you see gun violence in Canada as a urban issue, a rural issue or both or neither?

Mr. Mark Ryckman: Thanks for the question.

I'll admit that I am not an expert on gun violence. I will say that I think you'd be hard pressed to find any Canadians who don't think the government can do more to reduce gun violence, even though we are not America by any stretch of the imagination, despite the onslaught of American media stories we get every day. Canada does have very robust gun laws, a very robust legislative framework that dictates the use and ownership of guns, so we are not America in that regard. There is always more that the government can do.

The question becomes, what is the threshold? What is the goal of the policy that the government is trying to enact in this case? It started out as a handgun ban and, as I said earlier, unexpectedly morphed and evolved into something that was a direct impact on the hunting community. While I agree with you that gun violence is an issue, I think everybody would agree with you as well.

Mr. Brendan Hanley: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Hanley.

[*Translation*]

I will now give the floor to Ms. Michaud for two and a half minutes.

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

I'm going to continue with you, Mr. Ryckman.

You are probably aware that after the amendments were introduced by the government, members from all parties received hundreds and hundreds of communications in the form of emails, letters or calls from people who were angry of felt they were not understood.

Obviously, people talked to us about this at official dinners in our ridings, and over meals with family and friends. Everyone has an opinion about it, and that's fine.

I was surprised to see, speaking of hunters, that they sometimes reacted like this: if the firearms they use for hunting is banned tomorrow morning, they will just buy a different one.

We understand that not all hunters reacted that way, and that's also fine. It's also quite reasonable that hunters be able to make themselves heard. I understand that the government didn't consult hunters before introducing these amendments and so it's quite legitimate for them to make themselves heard.

Do you think that the fact that hunters feel they have to do something and they don't know what the next steps will be may have fuelled the discontent?

Hunters don't know what will happen the day after the bill is passed, particularly if these amendments were adopted and included firearms commonly used for hunting. Are they going to get arrested by the police because they have a banned item in their home? Is there going to be a buy-back program or not? Are they going to be able to sell their firearms back to the government? Are the police going to enter their house to search for their firearm?

There were no answers for them when the amendments were introduced.

Do you think that may have added to the discontent, somewhat legitimately, I would say, among hunters?

• (1735)

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Ryckman: Yes, absolutely. It's been mentioned a couple of times already, in that not only was there some disinformation but there was some misinformation. There was simply a lack of clarity, and the responsibility for that lies mostly on the government for the way it was introduced.

You're absolutely right, in that the OFAH did not provide comment on Bill C-21 originally. Even if we had, we would not have been speaking about the amendments because they didn't exist at the time. We would have been speaking about the content of the bill in front of us, which was entirely different from what I'm here to talk about today.

Uncertainty is absolutely a driver of concern. It's not just uncertainty about how to interpret some of these provisions that are being proposed, but uncertainty about whether or not the RCMP was going to be knocking on somebody's door and taking their gun, or whether they were going to be properly compensated for property they legally owned the day before.

You're correct, and I would agree that confusion drives some of that concern—absolutely. We made a concerted effort to get as much information as possible from Public Safety and the government, and we put that out there.

I will say before I finish that you're welcome for all of those emails. We did not create this issue. We did not create the anger and the distrust in the hunting community. The process did, and the content of the amendments did. We simply gave people a very straightforward and easy way to contact their members of Parliament.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Michaud.

[*English*]

Mr. Julian, please go ahead. You have two and a half minutes.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to go to you, Mr. Ryckman.

Just so I understand where your organization was prior to the amendments being tabled, what was the position of your organization on Bill C-21?

Mr. Mark Ryckman: That's a great question.

Without going into a huge summary of our submission, there were some concerns about Bill C-21—for instance, impacts on people having their firearms taken away through the red and yellow flag laws without a proper hearing or without notice. It was not necessarily anything that couldn't be assuaged through amendments.

I will also say, though, that the amendments I'm here to talk about today are clearly an impact on the hunting community, and that is our mandate. Part of our mandate is to promote hunting in Ontario and to do what we can to protect that heritage. A lot of the content of Bill C-21 itself lies outside of our charitable mandate. While we may have some concerns, there isn't a whole lot of lobbying that we would necessarily do on some of those provisions.

Mr. Peter Julian: The amendment certainly changed that.

Mr. Mark Ryckman: Absolutely.

Mr. Peter Julian: I may have misunderstood, so please correct me if I'm wrong. You said you had done a survey and there were 64 models that members of the organization had indicated were impacted by the amendments.

Mr. Mark Ryckman: I'm sorry. Just to be clear, I was going back a little bit in time to say that this survey was conducted in response to the May 2020 order in council, which banned a bunch of firearms.

If we were to conduct a similar survey today or, let's say, a month after those amendments would have passed, for instance, the answer would have been much different because the list of firearms is much different from what it was as a result of the OIC.

Mr. Peter Julian: Okay.

Let's come back to the 64 models with the OIC. Can you extrapolate or do you have an idea of how many of your 100,000 members would have been impacted?

There's the model side and then there is the actual number of the people who have those models.

Mr. Mark Ryckman: That's a great question.

I don't have those details off the top of my head. I do have a copy of the report. It's fairly extensive. I could provide it to the clerk if there's interest in me doing so.

Again, I would just add the caveat that it was in response to the May 2020 OIC. The response would be different as a result of the amendments.

• (1740)

Mr. Peter Julian: Yes, I think it would give us a better idea of the impacts.

The Chair: That's three seconds. That's good.

We'll go now to—

Mr. Peter Julian: I'll take the three seconds. My time was up on my side, I thought.

The Chair: Well, I appreciate the three seconds back.

Mr. Motz, we'll go with you for four minutes, followed by Mr. Chiang with four minutes. We'll cut it back a little bit.

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

I'll go to Dr. Langmann.

Doctor, the government tries to convince the Canadian public that they employ evidence-based decision-making. Based on your testimony and extensive, credible, non-government-funded research, there is no evidence to support that firearm prohibitions have any impact on public safety, homicides or suicides. It seems to me that the government is rather involved in decision-based evidence-making.

I think the committee really has to ask itself if we would rather have fewer firearms in our community—as they are proposing—or if we would rather have fewer criminals committing crimes with illegal firearms. It seems to me that the lazy approach is to just outlaw firearms, as they're trying to do.

In your research, this would have a corresponding effect. You say, it has nothing to do with ending gun violence, homicides, mass homicides, suicides and domestic violence. In the time that's left, can you please explain your thoughts on that?

Dr. Caillin Langmann: Sure. The current proposals even confuse me because they're talking about assault weapons. In terms of research, it's really hard to know what that even means. In my mind, they're probably talking about semi-automatic rifles.

If you look at all the research, including what I've done and from other countries—actually, Australia and Great Britain did ban a majority of these—there's no evidence that it has reduced the homicide rates there. The fact is that people can still use other types of firearms, like bolt-action rifles. In 2010, Derrick Bird drove around Great Britain with a shotgun and a bolt-action rifle and killed 12 people. It's possible to commit these acts with any type of gun.

What the legislation seems to do is target legal gun owners. It doesn't seem to target...although it did in terms of some of the mandatory minimums. For the most part, it seems to target legal firearms owners with a variety of legislation and restrictions. You're targeting a group of people who are rarely involved in criminal behaviour.

It would seem to me that your best target would be to try to reduce demand in the criminal area. It would be to try to reduce the movement of youth—usually male—into gang behaviour and to try to deal with some of the proliferation of street drugs that have accrued in this country. We are at a dangerous level in terms of methamphetamines now. This is what I see in the emergency department all the time.

All I hear is that we're targeting a bunch of hunters. It doesn't make any sense to me. It almost seems like we have our blinders on to what's going on around us.

I could go on, but I think that's—

Mr. Glen Motz: Please do. I have a minute left. The floor is yours.

Dr. Caillin Langmann: Very well.

To go back to this assault weapon, it's no wonder to me that we have this strange list and we have some guns on it, some not, and it doesn't seem to make sense to anybody. It doesn't make sense to me as a researcher, because to me, it would be based on the action of the actual rifle: Is it a semi-automatic rifle or a bolt-action rifle we're concerned with? Then are we concerned with the fact that

most hunting rifles actually use high-calibre, high-velocity, high-energy projectiles that can cause serious damage? We're talking about those as if they're not a concern, yet these assault rifles, like an AR-15 that uses a small calibre, are somehow our big concern.

You need a better definition if you're going to do anything, and if your definition is whether semi-automatic rifle bans result in reductions in homicides, the answer is no. There's no good research that shows that from the United States, from Australia or from this country, so choose something else.

• (1745)

The Chair: Thank you, Doctor. Thank you, Mr. Motz.

We go now to Mr. Chiang.

Mr. Chiang, go ahead please, for four minutes.

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

I cede my time to the committee. If you'd like, we can adjourn the meeting.

The Chair: Very well.

Thank you, all, for your time here today.

Thank you to the witnesses. It's been most helpful. Your expertise and experience will help us a lot, so thank you.

With that, we are now adjourned.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>