



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

# **STUDY ON CRIME IN RURAL AREAS IN CANADA**

**Report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and  
National Security**

**Honourable John McKay, Chair**

**MAY 2019  
42<sup>nd</sup> PARLIAMENT, 1<sup>st</sup> SESSION**

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# **STUDY ON CRIME IN RURAL AREAS IN CANADA**

## **Report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security**

**Hon. John McKay  
Chair**

**MAY 2019**

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## **NOTICE TO READER**

### **Reports from committee presented to the House of Commons**

Presenting a report to the House is the way a committee makes public its findings and recommendations on a particular topic. Substantive reports on a subject-matter study usually contain a synopsis of the testimony heard, the recommendations made by the committee, as well as the reasons for those recommendations.



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# **THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY**

has the honour to present its

## **THIRTY-THIRD REPORT**

Pursuant to its Order of Reference of Wednesday, May 30, 2018, the Committee has studied M-167, rural crime in Canada and has agreed to report the following:





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# M-167: STUDY ON CRIME IN RURAL AREAS IN CANADA

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## MANDATE OF THE COMMITTEE

On 30 May 2018, the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security (the Committee) was instructed by the House of Commons to undertake a study of crime in rural areas in Canada and to report its findings to the House.<sup>1</sup> The Committee heard from 19 witnesses over the course of five meetings in June and October 2018 and received seven briefs.<sup>2</sup> Witnesses provided their perspectives of events and expertise on the issue of crime in rural areas. The Committee heard testimony from several individuals who shared their challenging experiences with crime in rural areas and the difficulties they faced.

## CRIME IN RURAL AREAS

The Committee recognizes that crime in rural areas is of growing concern to rural residents across the country. The Committee heard that while crime in rural areas is more acute in western Canada, eastern provinces are also experiencing high crime rates in rural areas.<sup>3</sup> Incidents reported by witnesses to the Committee were related to property crimes such as a break-ins, thefts and, in some cases, violent assaults.<sup>4</sup> The risks of sexual violence, violence towards women and suicide in rural areas were also underscored by witnesses.<sup>5</sup>

Edouard and Jessica Maurice, Fredrick Priestley-Wright, Alicia Bedford and Geraldine Dixon explained to the Committee how rural residents are sometimes left on their own

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1 Extract from the [Journals of the House of Commons](#), Private Members' Business, Wednesday, 30 May 2018.

2 A list of witnesses can be found in Appendix A and a list of briefs in Appendix B of this report.

3 See Statistics Canada, [Police-reported crime statistics, 2017, The Daily, 23 July 2018](#). See also Statistics Canada, [Police resources in Canada](#), 2017, 28 March 2018. See also House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security (SECU), Shannon Stubbs (Member for Lakeland), [Evidence](#), 12 June 2018.

4 SECU, Fredrick Priestley-Wright (As an Individual), [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018.

5 SECU, Christina Johnson (Executive Director, Southeastern Alberta Sexual Assault Response Committee), [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018; Wendy Cukier (President, Coalition for Gun Control), [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018; Dr. Alan Drummond (Co-Chair, Public Affairs Committee, Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians), [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018.



because of long police response times, which can be hours or even days in some cases. According to Scott Newark, this is the core of the crime problem in rural areas, which is causing an erosion of public confidence.<sup>6</sup> The Committee heard of innovative solutions that could help address the issue, such as the crime reduction strategy that has been implemented by the province of Alberta.<sup>7</sup>

The Committee recognizes the feelings of helplessness of the witnesses, and their desire to take matters into their own hands. However, the Committee discourages this kind of intervention by citizens. The Committee agrees with Nick Cornea who said: “Be Vigilant and Not Vigilantes.”<sup>8</sup> While community watch groups and rural crime groups should be encouraged, they should not be an alternative to professionally trained police officers.

Witnesses also emphasized the importance of partnerships between police forces and community groups, who can be the eyes and ears of front-line officers.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the Committee heard that rural communities are generally very respectful of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) due to their long-term presence and responsibilities within the communities they serve.<sup>10</sup>

## POLICING IN RURAL AREAS

Policing is primarily the responsibility of provincial governments. Ontario, Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador manage and fund their own provincial policing services. Some municipalities and First Nations and Inuit communities choose to have their own police services as well. However, the RCMP is contracted by several provinces, municipalities and First Nations and Inuit communities to provide policing services, including Alberta and Saskatchewan, the most represented provinces in the witnesses appearing before the Committee. The provinces and municipalities who enter into these

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6 SECU, Scott Newark (Policy Analyst), [Evidence](#), 30 October 2018.

7 SECU, Peter Tewfik (Superintendent, Crime Reduction Strategies, Core, K Division, Royal Canadian Mounted Police), [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018.

8 SECU, Nick Cornea (Founder and President, Farmers Against Rural Crime), [Evidence](#), 30 October 2018. On the subject of the complex nature of the self-defence provisions, see SECU, Solomon Friedman (Criminal Defence Lawyer, As an Individual), [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018.

9 SECU, Trevor Tychowsky (President, Alberta Provincial Rural Crime Watch Association), [Evidence](#), 18 October 2018; SECU, Lane Becotte (Director, Citizens on Patrol - Edam), [Evidence](#), 30 October 2018; see also Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Request to Appear, 17 July 2018.

10 SECU, Shannon Stubbs (Member for Lakeland), [Evidence](#), 12 June 2018; SECU, Fredrick Priestley-Wright, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2018.

policing arrangements with the RCMP establish the level of resources, budget and policing priorities of the contract police detachments in consultation with the RCMP.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, the Committee strongly encourages provinces and territories to increase investments in policing and innovative solutions, including emergency response and dispatch centres. In addition, the Committee believes that every Canadian should have equal access to policing, victim services and programs,<sup>12</sup> and that the RCMP should consider ways to partner with other policing agencies and make greater use of the auxiliary and reserve programs in rural areas.<sup>13</sup>

In conclusion, the Committee believes that effective crime reduction measures should have at least four components: adequate police resources, partnerships with the community, robust victim support and a justice system that inspires public confidence.

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11 Royal Canadian Mounted Police, [Contract Policing](#).

12 SECU, Georgina Jolibois (Member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River), [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018.

13 SECU, Byron Boucher (Assistant Commissioner, Contract and Aboriginal Policing, Royal Canadian Mounted Police), [Evidence](#), 16 October 2018.



## APPENDIX A

### LIST OF WITNESSES

The following table lists the witnesses who appeared before the Committee at its meetings related to this report. Transcripts of all public meetings related to this report are available on the Committee's [webpage for this study](#).

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Shannon Stubbs, M.P., Lakeland	2018/06/12	121
Georgina Jolibois, M.P., Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River	2018/10/16	130
<b>Royal Canadian Mounted Police</b>	2018/10/16	130
Byron Boucher Contract and Aboriginal Policing		
John Ferguson, Criminal Operations Officer Core, "K" Division		
Peter Tewfik, Officer in Charge Crime Reduction Strategies, Core, "K" Division		
<b>As an individual</b>	2018/10/18	131
Alicia Bedford		
Geraldine Dixon		
Edouard Maurice		
Jessica Maurice		
<b>Alberta Provincial Rural Crime Watch Association</b>	2018/10/18	131
Trevor Tychkowsky, President		
<b>Southeastern Alberta Sexual Assault Response Committee</b>	2018/10/18	131
Christina Johnson, Executive Director		
<b>As an individual</b>	2018/10/23	132
Solomon Friedman, Criminal Defence Lawyer		
Fredrick Priestley-Wright		
<b>Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians</b>	2018/10/23	132
Dr. Alan Drummond, Co-Chair Public Affairs Committee		



<b>Organizations and Individuals</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>
<b>Coalition for Gun Control</b> Wendy Cukier, President	2018/10/23	132
<b>Government of Saskatchewan</b> Dale Larsen, Assistant Deputy Minister Policing and Community Safety Services, Ministry of Corrections and Policing	2018/10/23	132
<b>As an individual</b> Scott Newark, Policy Analyst	2018/10/30	133
<b>Citizens on Patrol - Edam</b> Lane Becotte, Director	2018/10/30	133
<b>Farmers Against Rural Crime</b> Nick Cornea, Founder and President	2018/10/30	133

## APPENDIX B

### LIST OF BRIEFS

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The following is an alphabetical list of organizations and individuals who submitted briefs to the Committee related to this report. For more information, please consult the Committee's [webpage for this study](#).

**Alberta Members of Parliament Rural Crime Task Force**

**Coalition for Gun Control**

**Newark, Scott**

**Quigley, Tim**



# REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this Report.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* ([Meetings Nos. 121, 130 to 133, 142, 153 and 162](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. John McKay, P.C., M.P.  
Chair



# M-167: Rural Crime in Canada

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Dissenting Opinion from Conservative Members of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

When Alberta Member of Parliament Shannon Stubbs introduced a motion to study the rising crime rates in rural and remote regions of Canada, she noted that her constituents “feel unsafe in their homes and at work because of escalating robberies, thefts, and break-ins in small towns, family farms, and businesses.”<sup>1</sup> Numerous victims of crime in rural areas shared the same sentiment. Statistics Canada data show rural crime rates are 30% higher than urban communities.<sup>2</sup>

The Liberal government’s response to this study is intentionally short to prevent members of the opposition from sharing a thoughtful dissenting opinion. Their report is an insult to all Canadians, especially victims of crime in these rural areas who are asking for help from their government. To add insult to injury, each of the Liberal members who participated in the study represents an urban riding. None of these members were willing to step aside to let their rural colleagues be heard. From the outset of the study, this was concerning.

The evidence presented showed critical gaps that are clearly within the mandate and scope of the federal government:

- A lack of police resources in RCMP detachments leading to response times delayed by hours – sometimes days
- Ambiguity in the Criminal Code surrounding property rights and self-defence
- The absence of Emergency dispatch (9-1-1) in rural and remote areas
- Significant financial hardships, mental and physical health challenges and lack of services for victims of physical and sexual violence

*The Liberal report is silent on these issues.*

Testimony provided to the Committee noted that criminals preying on rural Canadians are coming primarily from urban areas. Criminals understand that police response times in rural areas can be slow, neighbours can be miles away, and rural regions are easy prey. Repeat offenders should face serious consequences for their actions, have access to addiction counselling, and demonstrate that they have reformed before rejoining society. Canadians deserve to live in safe communities and not be re-victimized by these criminals.

*The Liberal report is silent on these issues.*

Communities have started to respond by forming their own rural crime watches and conducting volunteer patrols in absence of a police presence. Some rural victims, who took steps to defend themselves and their property, faced more serious police response and prosecutions than the

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<sup>1</sup> Speech before the House of Commons (date, time)

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada, *Police Reported Crime Statistics, 2017*, The Daily, 23 July 2018

criminals who attacked them. As noted in the Committee, numerous court decisions have called for Ottawa to clarify self-defence laws.

*The Liberal report is silent on these issues.*

### **Actions Instead of Words**

There is an imperative to act, and this government cannot ignore the plight of rural Canadians.

Canada is a country that often rallies to help each other in our times of need. Canadians rallied when a terrorist attacked Parliament, when an individual shot innocent people in Toronto, and when an attack was carried out at a mosque in Quebec City. Canadians come together and support one another – just as many in rural areas donated to help with legal fees of Edouard Maurice when he faced a trial for defending his family and property. A government that fails to help Canadians in their times of need is undeserving of its position.

The government could act now to reduce crime rates in rural areas. It could act to prevent repeat offenders from returning to victimize a community again and again. It could improve bail release and custody conditions, and it could increase the use of electronic monitoring. These policies would put the focus back on the criminals, not on victims.

The Liberals could act to clarify self-defence laws, raised since 1995 by the Courts as being inadequate. They could commit to providing support for police and prosecutors on charges against individuals who defend themselves and their families.

Conservative Members of the Committee call on all rural Members of Parliament to make their voices heard. Speak up for their constituents and ensure that all Canadians have access to emergency services and police protection for their communities. It is only when we put Canadians ahead of political allegiances that we can address the need of the many victims of crime in rural communities.

*“I know that we're a long distance apart, but when you're making your findings and doing your report, think of my family. Think of my four-year-old-son, my one-year-old daughter, my 13-year-old brother and my 15-year-old sister and the fear that we have in our area with criminals and theft. It's not only the properties that we're worried about losing—it's our family members.”*

– Nick Cornea, Farmers Against Rural Crime



NDP supplementary report to the SECU committee tabled by MP Christine Moore  
on Motion M-167

The New Democratic Party believes that this report is incomplete because it does not take into account all the rural issues highlighted by the testimonies.

We want to propose certain concrete measures to adequately respond to the specificities of rural Canada and stop crime.

We think that the federal government should play an active role and help the provinces and territories to ensure security in rural areas.

We recommend that the current report address the following measures:

1- Rural specifics related to the RCMP

1.1. Rural situation

The first RCMP assignments disseminate new recruits to rural areas across Canada.

Although the committee has been informed of a transition period and training to familiarize recruits with their new environment, it is clear that they have an incomplete understanding of the territory and the specifics of the regions where they are posted.

Assistant commissioner Byron Boucher stated that rural assignments were filled by young recruits and only for short periods of time. In addition, RCMP recruits receive no specific training to prepare for life in rural areas or for remoteness and isolation. New recruits should not be assigned to rural areas unless they are familiar with the environment. The federal government cannot only *“encourage provinces and territories to increase investments”* but should also collaborate with provinces and territories and help ensure the safety of rural Canadians.

1.2. Indigenous situation

The current report does not address the situation of Indigenous people in the police force. MP Georgina Jolibois, suggested revising the RCMP requirements and adapting them culturally to support the recruitment of natives. According to her testimony, the indigenous application process for the RCMP is too long and tedious.

2- Peacekeeping program in remote communities

The positive experience of Pelican Narrows community succeeded in implementing a peacekeeping program. Through this program, trained individuals who are not police officers, oversee surveillance activities and can respond to emergencies. These agents, follow a six-week community-funded training program and make their community safer.

### 3- Awareness raising and suicide prevention in rural areas

In rural areas, the majority of those killed by firearms are suicides and almost exclusively men. Due to the focus on crime instead of mental health in the discussions surrounding gun control, we struggled to reduce the death by guns and prevent them. In Canada, 80% of firearm deaths are suicides.

We know that plans and strategies can save lives: in Québec the strategy to prevent suicide has radically reduce the number of suicides in the province. To better understand suicide in rural areas, we want to add concrete measures related to suicide prevention.

Motion M-174 of new-democrat MP Charlie Angus asks for the formation of a national action plan to prevent suicide. Canada is the only G7 country that does not have such a plan, which is why motion M-174 asks the federal government to define national strategies for suicide prevention, to invest in adequate programs for indigenous communities and to distribute information through the creation of a national online platform.

### 4- Support for victims

The current report does not sufficiently address the situation of women victims of sexual or marital violence in rural and remote areas.

Mrs. Christina Johnson mentioned the silence that surrounds sexual violence against women. Because of the closeness of individual in rural areas, they fear being confronted by family members or friends of their abuser in the reporting process of that abuse.

In addition, they face a lack of resources and a *“culture of acceptance and normalization”*.

Christina Johnson also deplored the lack of individuals supporting victims of sexual violence, specifically the lack of women rights defenders and the lack of individuals trained to work with trauma.

### 5- Access to 911 service

The government should play a role in collaboration with provincial and territorial partners to ensure universal access to 911 emergency service everywhere in Canada in the two official languages.

We believe that these additional remarks complete the current report to better understand the problems of crime and violence in rural and remote areas. The testimonies showed the necessity to act and implement concrete measures at all levels of government, especially at the federal level.