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• (1100)

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC)): I call the meeting to order.

For those who may not be aware, there was a last-minute change. Our chair was unable to attend this morning, so this morning I was asked to assume the chair role as vice-chair of this committee.

As you are also aware, I am the lead for the Conservative team. I generally lead our questions, so I will be leading with my questions as well, unless there are any issues with that. I would like to say to the committee that I will ensure respect for the time and ensure that our standards are maintained in this committee during my questioning period.

Welcome to meeting number 32 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of June 23, 2022.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the committee is meeting on its study of allegations of political interference in the 2020 Nova Scotia mass murder investigation.

Just as a reminder, all comments by members and witnesses should be addressed through the chair. When you are not speaking, please ensure that your mike is on mute.

I would now like to welcome our witnesses for the first panel. From the Department of Justice, we have François Daigle, deputy minister of justice and deputy attorney general of Canada; and Owen Rees, acting assistant deputy attorney general.

Deputy Minister, I will now open the floor to your comments. Please go ahead.

Mr. François Daigle (Deputy Minister of Justice and Deputy Attorney General of Canada, Department of Justice): Thank you.

Thank you for inviting us to appear before the committee today. As introduced, Owen, who's joining me today, is the acting assistant deputy attorney general responsible for the national litigation sector in the department.

Before I begin, I would like to offer my deepest condolences to the families and loved ones of the victims of the shooting in Nova Scotia in April 2020. I want to acknowledge their loss and the impact of those events on the community.

My remarks today will focus exclusively on the process led by the Department of Justice to produce documents to the Mass Casualty Commission. The Department of Justice and its lawyers were not involved or consulted on whether to disclose firearms information at the April 28, 2020, press conference, nor were we involved in the teleconference with the RCMP commissioner that followed that day.

As a result, I really don't have any relevant information to provide on your questions on allegations of political interference in 2020. I will therefore focus my remarks on the role of the Department of Justice before the commission and on the document review and production process, including the disclosure of four pages of officers' notes related to that April 28, 2020, teleconference.

Given that our time is short and that document production processes are complex and detailed, I sent to the committee last Friday a letter providing more information about the document production process and our role before that commission.

[*Translation*]

Department of Justice lawyers represent the Government of Canada in the inquiry before the commission. One of the primary responsibilities of our lawyers and paralegals is to disclose relevant documents for the purposes of the inquiry, which is standard procedure in investigations of this kind, public inquiries or even civil litigation.

The disclosure of documents in any investigation is a significant task. The government has already disclosed over 75,000 documents to the commission. The magnitude of the work is significant, given the logistical challenges of collecting, reviewing and disclosing each of those documents. This is a technical and complex process that requires a great deal of effort and time. I would like to acknowledge the dedication of the Department of Justice employees who have done this work to date.

In the context of this inquiry, disclosure of documents is an ongoing process. The government began disclosing documents to the commission in February 2021, and as the commission continues its investigation, new issues are raised that result in new document requests. This is customary in this type of investigation.

As a result, our team of lawyers and paralegals receives new requests for documents from the commission on a regular basis, as well as new sets of documents for review from the various government departments and agencies. The departmental team sorts through these requests based on the commission's immediate needs and the priorities of upcoming hearings.

• (1105)

[English]

A standard feature of document production in this inquiry and in civil litigation generally is the review of documents for legally privileged information. Privilege can apply to entire documents or to portions of documents, according to common law or statute—for example, the Canada Evidence Act.

I want to be very clear with the committee that this document review and production process to the commission is managed by the lawyers and paralegals in the Department of Justice. The Minister of Justice and the minister's office are not involved in this process.

As part of the document production process in early 2022, we reviewed the handwritten notes of four senior RCMP officers in order to produce them to the commission. There were over 2,400 pages of handwritten notes. As outlined in my letter, our team flagged 35 pages among those 2,400 as containing potentially privileged content. Knowing that there were hearings coming up with these officers, we decided to authorize the disclosure of the 2,400 pages, with the exception of the 35 pages that we were still reviewing for privilege.

Unfortunately, we did not alert the commission to the fact that we had not produced the additional 35 pages because they were being further reviewed. We've exchanged letters and spoken to commission counsel. I think the oversight was acknowledged and understood.

Only four of the 35 pages relate to the April 28 meeting—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): You have 10 seconds, sir.

Mr. François Daigle: I'll finish in 10 seconds.

Only four of the 35 pages related to the April 28 meeting. These were in the notes of Superintendent Campbell. After our review, all of those documents were produced without redactions. They were produced on May 30 to the commission. The rest of the 35 pages, the 31, were also produced subsequently, some with redactions for irrelevant information.

We continue to work closely with the commission.

[Translation]

With respect to the disclosure process, the government is committed to fully supporting the commission's investigation.

[English]

I have full confidence in the dedication and professionalism of our Department of Justice lawyers and paralegals who are representing Canada before this commission.

I'd be happy to take questions.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, Deputy Minister.

Do you have any comments to add, Mr. Rees?

Mr. Owen Rees (Acting Assistant Deputy Attorney General, Department of Justice): No. Thank you very much.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you very much.

Colleagues, we will start our six-minute round of questioning with the Conservatives. I will begin that round of questioning for us, and I will start my six minutes now.

Colleagues, you are welcome to keep me on time as well.

I'd like to thank you both very much for being here today and also thank the deputy minister for being forthcoming with that information in his opening remarks.

You're aware that the Mass Casualty Commission has a public interest mandate to investigate the worst mass murder in Canadian history to get answers for the public. Is that correct?

Mr. François Daigle: Yes.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): The Department of Justice also has the obligation to assist the commission in achieving its mandate to serve the public interest. Is that correct?

Mr. François Daigle: Agreed.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): You're aware that Chief Superintendent Chris Leather recently testified at the commission inquiry that he received legal counsel from the Department of Justice, your department, to withhold evidence from the commission unless specifically asked. That is, your department, the lawyers in your department, the counsel, told him to provide evidence reactively and not proactively. Is that correct?

Mr. François Daigle: That is correct, but only with respect to what I guess is referred to now as this wellness report. I have three reasons, really, to explain why I think Chief Superintendent Leather misunderstood the advice he received.

First, our counsel met with Chief Superintendent Leather on July 5. It was during that meeting that we learned of the existence of this wellness report for the first time. From what I understand, it was a report that was commissioned a year after the events. What we counselled Chief Superintendent Leather to do was...because we hadn't seen the report yet. We didn't know the extent to which it was relevant—if all of it was relevant or if portions of it were relevant. It was obviously prepared for a different purpose.

So our advice to him was this: Don't raise it proactively, but if it comes up, answer the questions. That was the advice we gave to him. We gave no advice with respect to not being proactive with respect to two other pieces of information—one was about the April 28 meeting—because that information was already before the commission. As with all witnesses, we told him to be very forthcoming.

• (1110)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, sir.

Just to be clear, we've been hearing a lot about these misunderstandings, as I'm sure you are aware, during this investigation. You're saying that Superintendent Leather misunderstood but that in fact your department did advise him to be reactive and not proactive, but it was specifically in terms of this wellness study that was being undertaken for Nova Scotia RCMP. I believe he was under the impression that the reactive approach was to be taken at large whenever he was asked questions by the commission or otherwise. It's odd how that misunderstanding is quite significant, I would say, and he shared that at the commission.

Are you aware, then, that the Honourable Thomas Cromwell, counsel director of the commission, wrote to department lawyer Lori Ward?

Can we ensure we're all muted? Thank you very much.

Are you aware of this letter, sent to the Department of Justice on August 6 from the Honourable Thomas Cromwell, commission counsel director? He was not familiar that this was a misunderstanding. He is under the impression that your department in fact asked Mr. Leather to be reactive in his testimony. Are you aware of the letter I'm referring to?

Mr. François Daigle: I'm aware of it. The letter says that he is concerned to have heard of Chief Superintendent Leather's testimony and is asking us to confirm whether that's correct or not correct. We have responded to that letter. Lori Ward did respond to the letter on August 9 to explain what I just explained to you a minute ago.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Have you advised anybody else to be reactive in their approach to the wellness report, or the commission generally, anyone involved in this case, in the RCMP or otherwise?

Mr. François Daigle: No, this was a comment made to Superintendent Leather because it came up when our counsel was preparing him for an interview with the commission counsel the very next day. He brought it up at the prep and we had never seen this report. It was reasonable for us to say, "We'd like to see it and give you some advice before you raise it. But if questions come up, you have to answer the questions."

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, Deputy Minister.

To be clear, you have not advised anyone to be only reactive and not proactive.

Mr. François Daigle: No, and with every witness before the inquiry we have counselled them to be truthful and to assist the commission as much as possible.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): At any time since the 2020 Nova Scotia mass murder, was the department concerned

about political interference from government? At any time, did you advise anyone about political interference?

Mr. François Daigle: No. As I said in my opening remarks, we were not involved, or nobody sought legal advice on the April 28 meeting with respect to the disclosure of firearms information.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you.

You have not provided any legal advice to the Prime Minister's Office, the Minister of Public Safety's office, or any other ministerial office concerning the mass casualties.

Mr. François Daigle: We've provided lots of advice to the government, but I think the allegations are with respect to the firearms information at the April 28 press conference and the subsequent meeting with the commissioner. We have not provided any advice with respect to those.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Justice Canada's spokesperson Ian McLeod said that the final four pages of Chief Superintendent Campbell's notes were withheld until the end of May of this year because they required further assessment of whether they were privileged. We're very aware of this. What aspect of their content merited that further assessment, which took that additional three months to release Mr. Campbell's notes? Again, you will remember it's those four key pages that have really initiated this entire investigation.

Mr. François Daigle: As I said earlier, those four pages were caught up in another group of 35. There were 35 pages altogether that we had flagged. We flag things for further review. Some things are legal advice. That's easy to spot. Some things may be cabinet confidence. Some may be public interest privilege. Depending on the nature of the privilege, our counsel will have to consult other people. It takes time to review them, especially since they are handwritten and sometimes we have to go back to our clients to understand the context within which those comments were made. The privilege review does take some time.

• (1115)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you. Our time is up.

We're going to go to the Liberal Party, with MP Noormohamed for six minutes.

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

Deputy Minister, it's great to see you here today, as well as your colleague. Thank you very much for coming.

I just want to follow up a little bit on the questions that my colleague, Ms. Dancho, just asked. I want to start off where she ended. There was this comment you just made about the fact that these four pages were caught up in the 35 pages, and we want to be very clear with folks as to why, for those pages, it took a little bit longer to ensure they were reviewed. Could you give us a very brief synopsis of what that review process looks like and why that might have taken a little bit longer to do?

Mr. François Daigle: The privilege review process takes time, not just with respect to these 35 pages but with all of our review processes, depending on the nature of the information and the privilege that's been identified. You can imagine, for example, that if somebody mentions a Treasury Board submission or a cabinet document in their notes, we have to review it, find out what it's about and track down people who have information about it.

We usually consult the Privy Council Office to see if this is a cabinet confidence or isn't, depending on the tests from case law or from the Canada Evidence Act, section 39. That takes some time, and we have to consult others before we can complete the review.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: During your review, is there consideration for “politics” and whether there are going to be political implications for the government?

Mr. François Daigle: As I've said, for us it's a legal test. Obviously, we want to provide all the information we can to the commission, given its mandate and given the importance of getting to understand what happened.

It's really a legal process that's done by our counsel and our paralegals in the Department of Justice. As I said, our minister's office has not been involved in any of it.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Would it be fair to say that Department of Justice lawyers don't read something and say, “Oh, that might be damaging to the government so we should withhold it”?

Mr. François Daigle: Yes, of course. The only question is whether it's relevant to the commission. If it's relevant, it needs to be produced, subject to some privileged information that may have to be redacted.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Did you or your department ever instruct to withhold any information that should have been disclosed?

Mr. François Daigle: No.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Would you ever do that?

Mr. François Daigle: No.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Why not?

Mr. François Daigle: It's because the mandate of the commission is very clear. Our job is to assist the commission. We'll provide them with all the information in the government's possession that's relevant to their mandate so they can discharge their mandate.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: For further clarity, what is the relationship between Department of Justice lawyers and the minister's office, if any?

Mr. François Daigle: The minister is the Attorney General of Canada as well. He is accountable to Parliament for the work of our department. All of the employees in our department work on his be-

half to discharge the obligations under the Department of Justice Act, in sections 4 and 5.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: The act specifies that there cannot be political interference—or the act does not allow for political interference by the Minister of Justice. Is that correct?

Mr. François Daigle: There's nothing in the act that talks about political interference, no.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Just to clarify the question, would there be a circumstance in which the Department of Justice would be concerned in this situation? Was there a situation where the Department of Justice lawyers, the bureaucrats, were concerned that they were getting political direction from the minister's office to withhold anything?

Mr. François Daigle: As I said, our minister's office and the minister were not involved in any of the work being done by the department to support the government before this commission. I had no reason to be concerned about political interference. There were no discussions with the minister about this.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: There were no discussions with the minister, and you never instructed Department of Justice lawyers to withhold information.

Why do you think the misunderstanding Mr. Leather had came about? You talked about the circumstances around this. Why do you think he would have had that misunderstanding?

• (1120)

Mr. François Daigle: You'll have to ask Chief Superintendent Leather why, but I think you've already heard some testimony from the commissioner and others on that issue.

As I said, we were not involved at the time. We didn't provide advice, so I really don't have anything I can offer on that.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: You were comfortable with the way in which the Department of Justice lawyers provided information in a timely fashion, handled the redaction process where required, and consulted with the appropriate folks to ensure that nothing was being withheld unreasonably. Is that correct?

Mr. François Daigle: Absolutely. As I said, it's a very complex process with some tight timelines, and I think everybody is doing their best to support the government and support the commission and its work. I have full confidence in our counsel.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): You have 20 seconds, Mr. Noormohamed.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Thank you. I will yield the rest of my time to the chair.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, sir.

We will now go to the Bloc Québécois.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Normandin, go ahead.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Mr. Daigle and Mr. Rees, thank you for joining us today.

Mr. Daigle, I would like to start with a question about your letter of August 12. The letter describes the mechanism for producing documents at the Mass Casualty Commission, or MCC, the reasons for redaction and the redaction process. However, it does not describe the document analysis process, which is precisely what we are interested in.

We are interested in the fact that the four pages were withheld, not in the fact that they were redacted, since they were not. I am curious as to why your letter does not address the process related to the documents being analyzed for potential redaction.

Mr. François Daigle: I'm not sure I understand the meaning of the question.

We received documents from seven departments, including the RCMP. We usually received them electronically. They are entered into our document management system and grouped by category.

One of the categories related to requests from RCMP officers. There were approximately 2,414 pages in that category. We have looked at all of those documents.

During the process, we noted that some passages in those notes raised potential privilege issues we needed to analyze. Since the commission needed those documents as soon as possible, we decided to send some 2,400 pages to it immediately and to continue reviewing the remaining 35 pages.

Our lawyers and paralegals had the 35 pages in question, and they consulted colleagues about them before determining whether or not those documents were privileged. If they were not, we could disclose them to the commission. If they were privileged, partially or totally, we would redact those portions.

Ms. Christine Normandin: I am with you on that, but it is the withholding of those documents while they are under review that interests me.

As I understand it, you started analyzing these 35 pages in January and February 2022. They were produced to the MCC on May 30, 2022. So it took about three months for the documents to be submitted to the MCC, since you were analyzing them.

Is that correct?

Mr. François Daigle: That is correct.

We were not twiddling our thumbs during that time. We had other documents to analyze. The commission's priority at that time was the investigation files.

It was when we started preparing for the RCMP hearings that the commission told us that these documents were urgent. So we rushed and gave them the documents we could. It took about three months to review the remaining 35 pages.

Ms. Christine Normandin: I certainly wasn't accusing you of being lazy.

During those three months of analysis, I assume that you were providing updates to some officials in the Department of Justice, so that they would know how the analysis was progressing, whether there were any privileges to be respected and whether there was any case law. Surely, something was going on.

In that context, no one brought up the fact that the MCC was not aware that there were 35 pages missing from the submitted documents.

Is that right?

Mr. François Daigle: As soon as we sent the approximately 2,400 pages to the commission, we should have notified it that we were withholding another 35 pages that were still under review. We did not, and that is what raised questions.

We have exchanged letters with Mr. Cromwell of the commission to explain ourselves. We have agreed on a process to ensure that the commission would be made aware if we were to withhold relevant documents because they are in the review process.

• (1125)

Ms. Christine Normandin: That's great.

So it was upon receipt of these documents, on May 30, that the commission realized that 35 pages were missing. During the three months of analysis, it did not know that pages were missing.

Did I understand correctly?

Mr. François Daigle: The commission was not aware that we were withholding an additional 35 pages that we felt were relevant.

It was not until June 22 that Mr. Cromwell wrote us after hearing that four pages were missing. We then met with commission officials to explain what had happened.

Ms. Christine Normandin: In your letter of August 12, you reiterate that a party must disclose documents in its possession that are relevant to the proceedings and are not subject to privilege.

According to that letter, you began gathering documents for the commission around November 2020, right after the commission was created by order in council on October 21.

What is the process for document collection and production?

Do you automatically turn over certain documents to the commission or do they have to be subpoenaed before they are produced?

Mr. François Daigle: I will ask my colleague Mr. Rees to explain the process.

Mr. Owen Rees: After gathering the documents, Department of Justice attorneys and paralegals review them for relevance.

We began sending the documents to the commission in February 2021, before the subpoenas were sent. This is a process—

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): The time is up. Please conclude your sentence.

Thank you.

[Translation]

Mr. Owen Rees: This is an ongoing process, following a set timeline.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, Ms. Normandin.

[English]

We will now go to the New Democratic Party.

MP MacGregor, you have six minutes, please.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Deputy Minister, for appearing before our committee. I'd also like to thank you for the letter you provided to our committee just explaining the process before we held today's meeting.

In your letter, you mentioned the 35 pages that were held back and retained for further review. Those 35 pages actually contained four sets of notes. I think there were some from Superintendent Campbell. There were some from others. Out of the 35 pages, 13 were from Superintendent Campbell's notes that were held back. Out of the 13 pages from Superintendent Campbell, it's the four of his 13 pages that specifically referenced the April 28 teleconference with the commissioner.

What I would like to know from you, Deputy Minister, is this. When your officials were looking at those 13 pages from Superintendent Campbell specifically, were those 13 pages sequential in nature? Were they all written in one sequential line, or were they 13 individual pages that were sort of hand-picked out of the entirety?

Mr. François Daigle: I'm not exactly sure how they were...but from what I saw, we had the entire books of notes from the RCMP officers from a certain date to a certain date. We identified throughout what was relevant to the commission and, from that, what we thought needed a review for privilege.

As to whether they're sequential, I think they are consequential in the sense that the books start at one date and they go forward. When we get to April 20, there are some notes. When we get to April 28, there are some notes, and so forth. So—

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Just to be clear, you're not aware if the 13 pages that were held back from Superintendent Campbell specifically... You're not aware if those 13 pages were actually written sequentially in a specific timeline, like a journal entry. You're not clear on that information.

• (1130)

Mr. François Daigle: [Technical difficulty—Editor] journal entry.

Maybe Owen has had a look at this and can provide more information.

Mr. Owen Rees: My recollection is that they were in chronological order, as one would take notes in a notebook, and that the four pages were in chronological order in a—

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you.

You've taken some time to identify the kinds of privilege that might exist for why they're withheld. Would notes referencing a phone call with the commissioner constitute something that people in your department might take as privilege? Were they concerned that the handwritten notes of a teleconference might contain sensitive information?

I mean, four pages out of 13—that is actually a significant percentage to hold back. I'm just trying to get a sense of the thought process of your department's lawyers that led to those four pages being held back.

Mr. François Daigle: [Technical difficulty—Editor] pages of over hundreds of pages of documents, from Superintendent Campbell. Four of those 13 pages that we held back dealt with the April 28 meeting. So we didn't just hold back the four; we held back the 13.

In answer to your specific question, if it's just a reference to a phone call with the commissioner, there's nothing privileged about that on the face of an entry in a document, so we wouldn't have flagged that for a review. We would flag for review if there's a reference to a cabinet meeting or a reference to a Treasury Board submission or a reference to legal advice. Those would be—

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you, Deputy Minister. I'm sorry for interrupting, but my time is short here.

Can you explain to us who is the ranking person in the Department of Justice who makes the final call on whether information is to be considered privileged or not? What level of person in your department makes that final call?

Mr. François Daigle: For the work that we're doing for the commission, we have a team of lawyers. They're led by Lori Ward, who is our most senior counsel there, so she—

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: So Lori Ward would have made the call.

Mr. François Daigle: Well, it could be somebody within her team, depending on how they've sorted out the responsibilities within the team, but counsel are able to make a determination after consultation about whether a document is privileged or not. This is something that all lawyers do.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: But she would ultimately be responsible for the decisions made in her department on that final call, on what information is to be considered privileged or not. Is that right?

Mr. François Daigle: She's responsible. She's leading the team that's supporting the commission, so ultimately all of the decisions that the team is making she would have some accountability for, yes.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you.

In your letter, you also referred to times when there might be a conflict between the MCC and the Department of Justice. For example, if the MCC raises questions about determinations of privilege, there are meetings held between your department and the MCC to find a way through it.

I don't have a lot of time, but can you explain, generally, how those are resolved? Have they been resolved satisfactorily to date?

Mr. François Daigle: It's a phone call to Thomas Cromwell or somebody else on the commission counsel team.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): That's all the time we have. Thank you, MP MacGregor.

Now we're going to go to the second round. To start off with the Conservatives, for five minutes, we have MP Ellis.

MP Ellis, you have five minutes.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Deputy Minister, for being here.

As you may or may not know, I'm the member of Parliament for Cumberland—Colchester, and I represent many of the victims' families in this terrible occurrence in my riding.

The crux of this matter, of course, is related to not just accountability but also transparency and honesty. I guess the big question that I would suggest people really want to understand better is.... There are two parts. One, you said you were going to provide all of the information you can, which doesn't necessarily sound transparent to me. That's my judgment. Second, you talked about Chief Superintendent Leather being misunderstood.

Let's start with that, sir. Would you not expect that the lawyer cautioning Mr. Leather would make sure that he wanted to be understood, that that reactive versus proactive nature would be understood very clearly?

Mr. François Daigle: Yes, I think everybody wants to be understood, and the advice needs to be as clear as possible.

• (1135)

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Then, sir, how would you come to the conclusion that it was Chief Superintendent Leather who misunderstood the directions given to him?

Mr. François Daigle: As I said earlier, I have three reasons to believe that.

One, because we didn't know what this report was, our advice was not to raise it unless the commission raised it. That was the extent of our advice in terms of being reactive, or not proactively talking about this. Remember, this was July 5, and he was only appearing on July 27, so our view was that we would have time to get the report, look at it, determine its relevance and figure out whether it could or couldn't be.... Our advice to him was, "It's the first we've

heard of this. We haven't seen it. Don't raise it if they don't raise it, but if they do, you'll have to answer."

The other reason we think he misunderstood is that he suggested during his testimony that we also told him not to provide information about the April 28 meeting, and that makes no sense, sir, because all of the information about the April 28 meeting was already before the commission, so there was no reason for us to suggest that.

There's also his reference to his call to the commissioner on April 22. We learned about that when he testified on the 27th. It's not in his notes, and so for him to suggest that we told him not to talk about a meeting that we'd never heard about doesn't make sense.

That's why my conclusion is that he misunderstood the advice. Our advice was only specifically with respect to the Quintet report, because we didn't know anything about it at the time, on July 5.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Sir, do you think it's possible that Chief Superintendent Leather understood the direction he was given and perhaps that there was interference here in getting the truth out? Are you saying you don't believe that, sir?

Mr. François Daigle: You'd have to ask Superintendent Leather. I don't know what he was thinking. All I know is what he told the committee on the 25th.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: It's interesting, sir, that you know that he misunderstood his directions—that's the unusual thing—but you don't know what he was thinking.

The second part of the question is this: How can the families of these victims be certain that there are no other documents being withheld by your department?

Mr. François Daigle: We gather documents from seven departments and agencies and we review them for relevance. If they're relevant, they are produced, unless parts of them, or all of them, have to be retained for privilege based on the Canada Evidence Act or other legal privileges.

How can they be assured? We've produced 75,000 documents already and we keep responding and have a very good relationship with the commission and its counsel to produce everything that is relevant so that this commission can get its job done.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Sir, we also know that you didn't report back to the committee originally. When you withheld documents, you didn't make them aware of that fact. Of course, you continue to talk about this voluminous number. That's fantastic. We understand there is a lot of documentation, but there is absolutely no assurance here for the victims' families to say that, yes, all of these documents have been produced and are going to be made available to the MCC.

How can you reassure us, sir, that this is going to happen? Can you?

Mr. François Daigle: I'm reassuring you that every document that we are provided with at the department will be reviewed for relevance and if they're relevant, they will be produced. This happens on a weekly basis.

In terms of information that came out at the hearings of this committee on the 25th, we learned some new things and we've tracked it down and produced.... For example, Chief Superintendent Brennan's notes were raised for the first time at committee, and we've since tracked those down and produced them. Anything relevant we will be producing to the commission.

With respect to the 35 pages that we held back for review, yes, we should have told the commission that we held those back for review until we were done, but our intent was always to review them and to produce them. That's a process we followed with the commission before, and now we have sat down with the commission and set up a new process to make sure that there are no surprises going forward.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): I'm sorry, MP Ellis, but your time is up.

We're now going to the Liberal Party, with MP Chiang.

Go ahead. You have five minutes.

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

Good morning, everybody.

Thank you to the witnesses for taking the time to be here with us today.

My question is directed to the deputy minister of justice. Is it true that some documents, such as handwritten notes, take longer to review because they cannot be machine-read in any way and require a person to directly review the handwritten documents? Could this have affected the disclosure of documents to the Mass Casualty Commission?

• (1140)

Mr. François Daigle: Yes. Handwritten notes do take longer to review because they have to be reviewed in person and they can't be machine-read. Most of the other documents we get electronically, so we have a system that reads them and codes them. That obviously has an impact on the speed with which we can get documents to the commission.

In this case, the handwritten notes were identified as some important information that the commission needed to have, which is why we've produced them as soon as we could.

The ones that we didn't produce and that were being reviewed were going to be reviewed and redacted, if necessary, and produced well before the appearance of the officers before the commission.

Mr. Paul Chiang: Thank you for that, Deputy Minister.

Can you elaborate on the relationship between your department and the minister's office? How do you coordinate with the minister's office, and what boundaries are in place to prevent any sort of political interference?

Mr. François Daigle: I'm the deputy minister to the Minister of Justice. We have the same relationship that any deputy minister has to a minister of the Crown. I provide the minister with information and with briefing notes to make decisions. If I ever thought that there was some political interference in a matter where there shouldn't be, I would raise it with the minister and have a discussion with him.

As I said earlier, the Minister of Justice, and his entire office, had no involvement whatsoever in the department's job to review and produce documents before the commission in Nova Scotia. In this case, sir, they would have no involvement whatsoever.

Mr. Paul Chiang: So there are guardrails in place to stop any political interference. Are there specific guardrails, or is it just an unwritten rule?

Mr. François Daigle: There's no buzzer or anything like that, or specific guardrails. We have to look at that in our department, because the minister is accountable not just for the Department of Justice but also for other agencies, including the public prosecution service, where there's clear legislative independence. We have processes in place to make sure that the information the Attorney General gets from the PPSC, for example, follows what's called the section 13 process.

In this case, our minister's office had no involvement. If I thought there was some interference, I would flag that issue with the minister and have a discussion with him.

Mr. Paul Chiang: Thank you so much.

Can you discuss the steps taken by legal counsel to review documents and ensure non-partisanship in their decision to release these documents to the public?

Mr. Owen Rees: Once documents are produced by the originating department, our counsel and paralegals review those documents for relevance. They also review them for any legal privileges that may attach to them. They are then produced to the commission. There are ongoing productions over the course of the inquiry, both in terms of the timetable and priorities set by the commission and in response to specific requests by the commission and questions that may arise in the course of interviews or at the hearing. And—

Mr. Paul Chiang: Thank you so much.

I'm sorry. Did you want to elaborate on that? I cut you off.

Mr. Owen Rees: You had a second part to your question, sir, which I didn't quite hear.

Mr. Paul Chiang: Yes. Is there non-partisanship in the decision to release these documents?

Mr. Owen Rees: These are decisions that are taken by the litigation team working on the inquiry. These are not decisions taken at the political level.

Mr. Paul Chiang: Thank you so much.

I will return the rest of my time to the chair.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, MP Chiang.

• (1145)

[*Translation*]

We now go to Ms. Normandin, of the Bloc Québécois.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much.

Mr. Rees, I would like to come back to what you explained to us earlier.

You said that the production of documents could be done automatically by the Department of Justice or it could be done through subpoenas. We know that 39 subpoenas have been produced.

Were the documents produced in bundles that contained the four pages in question produced automatically or pursuant to a subpoena?

Mr. Owen Rees: Unfortunately, I don't remember. I feel like the commission requested the documents.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much.

So it was about three months from the time the notes were analyzed to the time they were produced.

Is it possible for the commission to complete its mandate while documents are still being analyzed to determine whether or not they should be redacted?

Could that happen? How can we ensure that certain documents are never produced?

Mr. François Daigle: Our team members and the commission's counsel have regular discussions during the process. The commission could decide to complete its mandate at the end of August and request that documents one to 2,000, for instance, be forwarded to it. If that were the case, we would work to produce the remaining documents on a priority basis.

The two legal teams consult on a regular basis to ensure that the commission gets what it needs from the government to fulfill its mandate.

Ms. Christine Normandin: I take it, then, that it would be virtually impossible for the commission to complete its mandate while documents are still under analysis somewhere and will never be produced.

Mr. François Daigle: If we had documents under review that may be relevant to the investigation, we would advise the commission. If the commission told us that it intended to conclude the investigation in three weeks, we would tell it that we had documents to produce.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Chair, I don't think I have enough time to ask another question.

Thank you very much, Mr. Daigle and Mr. Rees.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, Ms. Normandin.

[*English*]

Now we're going to the NDP.

MP MacGregor, you have two and a half minutes.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you, Madam Chair.

My question is very much related to the last one.

Deputy Minister, at the end of page 5 of the letter that you provided to the committee, you say, "The Department of Justice recognizes that not advising...that the 35 pages were retained for further review was an error." You also went on to say that justice counsel have "explained how the oversight occurred", that you've "provided a full accounting of the 35 pages" and that you're "also engaged in extensive discussions with MCC counsel regarding the...document production processes".

I know you've touched on this a bit, but given the term "extensive discussions", what our committee would like to know is what tangible processes are now in place to ensure these oversights don't occur any further. Can you elaborate a bit on what's changed within the Department of Justice to ensure that this isn't going to be happening in the future?

Mr. François Daigle: I'm happy to do that. There's an exchange of correspondence between Mr. Cromwell and Ms. Ward on exactly that. I'm happy to share those letters with the committee so that it's clear for everybody.

The commission suggested that we provide a list of the Government of Canada numbers for documents containing additional pages, and that if there's future disclosure of the additional pages contemplated in the letter, we identify them using those numbers. We've written back to Mr. Cromwell to explain to him exactly how that process should have applied and what the government numbers are.

Going forward, we do have a process, and I'm happy to share those four letters that explain this to the committee.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: If you could table them with the committee, it would be appreciated.

Madam Chair, that concludes my questions. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, MP MacGregor.

Now we're going to the last round, beginning with the Conservatives.

MP Lloyd, you have five minutes.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the witnesses.

Earlier today in your testimony, you stated that you didn't see any problem with Chief Superintendent Leather releasing information about the April 28 call because that was already in the public domain. Is that correct?

• (1150)

Mr. François Daigle: We had already produced documents relevant to that at the commission, yes. I don't understand why Chief Superintendent Leather would say that we advised him he couldn't talk about that, when those documents were already public. In fact, we were all talking about that. That was part of what this committee heard and what the commission heard as well.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: You also said you were not aware of the April 22 call that Chief Superintendent Leather had with Commissioner Lucki until he spoke about it at the inquiry. Is that correct?

Mr. François Daigle: That's correct. I heard him mention it, I think at this committee, on the 25th. Our counsel, who are working in Halifax on the team, were in hearing that day and didn't hear it, but they heard it from him when he testified at the commission on the 27th, in 2022.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Okay, so your officials did not hear about the call on the 22nd with Commissioner Lucki and Chief Superintendent Leather when he spoke with the justice department.

Mr. François Daigle: He did not raise it on July 5, when our counsel met with him. He raised it for the very first time when he testified before this committee.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I find this very interesting, because in a CBC interview, Chief Superintendent Leather stated.... Did he reach out to the department? He reached out to you seeking legal advice. Is that correct?

Mr. François Daigle: We meet with every witness to help them prepare for their testimony. It's part of the service we provide as the Department of Justice. We prepare the RCMP and other departments for their testimony before the commission.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Chief Superintendent Leather stated in an interview with CBC that he specifically raised the issue of the April 22 call with the justice department because he was concerned about the relevance of that in regard to the later April 28 meeting. Are you saying that Chief Superintendent Leather basically just imagined that he brought up the April 22 call with your officials?

Mr. François Daigle: I've spoken with the two counsel who met with him on the 5th. They tell me that he did not raise it. It is not in the notes he submitted as part of the 2,400 pages of notes. Nothing in his notes mentions this call to the commissioner on the 22nd.

During his testimony, our counsel were surprised to hear for the first time that there had been a call on the 22nd, because it had never been mentioned before he testified on the 27th.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I just think it's very interesting, because Superintendent Leather stated that that was the whole purpose he wanted to talk to the Department of Justice: It was about that April 22 call. So if that was the whole purpose of the meeting.... Like, he didn't mention that it was about a wellness report. He mentioned that it was about the April 22 call and what he could and could not share.

The main reason he reached out to you guys was about the April 22 meeting, but you're saying that you don't have any evidence that he brought it up at the meeting.

Mr. François Daigle: I'm saying that our counsel are telling me that he did not bring it up at the meeting and he didn't reach out for us to talk about the April 22 call. He met with counsel in order to be prepared on his entire testimony, not just the question of the April 28 meeting or the call of April 22. He didn't raise that, and there's nothing in his notes for us to have raised it with him either. We didn't know that there was that call. We learned about it for the first time when he testified about the call on April 22 at his testimony before this committee and then the commission two days later.

The wellness report either...because it was commissioned a year after the events; I'm not sure by whom, but by the RCMP. He raised it for the first time on July 5. We had never heard of it, and so—

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Have you had time to review this wellness report, now that you bring it up?

Mr. François Daigle: I have not reviewed it myself, no, but our counsel have, and the redacted version—

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Does the Department of Justice consider that this is privileged at this time?

Mr. François Daigle: We have produced a copy of the report for the commission. The commission has not yet decided whether to make it public, in part or in whole—

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Is it redacted in any way?

Mr. François Daigle: It is redacted for personal information. That is my understanding, but I haven't seen it myself.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Is your department responsible for the redactions on Lia Scanlan's testimony that we've seen the commission release?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): You have time to respond, and then we have to wrap up.

Mr. Owen Rees: I'm not sure which redactions you're referring to, so I'm afraid I don't know the answer.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, MP Lloyd.

We're going to have to move on to the Liberal Party.

MP McKinnon, you have five minutes.

• (1155)

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Thank you, Chair. I'm actually going to take MP McKinnon's time.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Okay.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you very much.

Deputy Minister, I have just a few questions, because I think we've gone over this quite extensively.

Can you just confirm that the Minister of Justice and his office had no involvement in the decision to retain the 35 pages of senior officer notes, including those of Superintendent Campbell?

Mr. François Daigle: That is correct. They've had no involvement in the decision to disclose the 2,400 pages or to flag the 35 pages for review. In fact, they've had no involvement in any of the productions of the 75,000 documents that have been produced so far.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you.

In terms of the determinations of relevance and privilege and redactions, those are made strictly by Justice lawyers and paralegals in consultation with relevant departments and agencies. The Minister of Justice and his office are not involved in these decisions.

Mr. François Daigle: That is correct.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you.

Finally, Deputy Minister, you provided the committee with a six-page letter. I thank you for doing that. Is there anything that you provided in that letter—you had only five minutes for your opening, and I know that you've been testifying for an hour—that you have not had an opportunity to speak to and that you'd like to speak to now?

Mr. François Daigle: I don't think so. I'll just quickly go through it, but I think we've covered everything that's in the letter.

No. I have nothing else. Thank you.

Ms. Pam Damoff: You're welcome.

That letter is public. Anyone watching this is able to access the letter that was provided to us for more information.

Based on your testimony, Deputy Minister, I think it's pretty clear that the Minister of Justice and his staff had no involvement in decisions that were made in terms of what was turned over to the Mass Casualty Commission.

Chair, I would imagine that we'd want to take a short break while we change panels. I'll turn the rest of my time back to you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, MP Damoff. You are correct that we will suspend the meeting while we change panels.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

Thank you very much.

• (1155) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1200)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): We're resuming the meeting. Thank you to the witnesses for being here today. I'm normally the vice-chair of this committee, but I'm assuming the chair position today. My name is Raquel Dancho.

I will remind committee members to keep their mike on mute when they are not speaking. I am going to begin the first round of questioning myself, and then we're going to go to the other parties.

I'm so sorry. We have opening statements and we're going to go to those first. We'll start with Ms. Whelan.

We would like you to start for five minutes. Please go ahead.

• (1205)

Ms. Alison Whelan (Chief Strategic Policy and External Relations Officer, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you today before the committee on the traditional territory of the Algonquin people.

Before I begin, I would first like to express my sincere condolences to all those who lost loved ones, neighbours and community members, and those who were hurt in Nova Scotia on April 18-19, 2020.

My name is Alison Whelan. I am the chief strategic policy and external relations officer for the RCMP, based at the national headquarters in Ottawa. I have held this position since mid-July 2020. During the time period being examined by this committee, I was the executive director of national security and protective policing,

which is situated within the federal policing business line at RCMP national headquarters. Given my position at the time period in question, I was neither aware of nor involved in the internal RCMP meeting on April 28, 2020, nor was I engaged in the request for or the sharing of information with government officials, or communications with the public during the spring of 2020. That said, of course, I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, Ms. Whelan.

Mr. Campbell, you have five minutes.

Chief Superintendent Darren Campbell (Criminal Operations Officer, "J" Division, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, New Brunswick): Thank you, Chair and members of the committee.

My name is Darren Campbell, and I'm a serving member of the RCMP. My policing career began in September 1990, when I was sworn into the RCMP. On that day, I swore that I would faithfully, diligently and impartially execute and perform my duties, and to obey and perform all lawful orders that I receive without fear, favour or affection of or towards any person. That was an oath I took very seriously on that day, and one that I continue to take very seriously to this day.

My 32-year career with the RCMP has taken me from the Pacific coast to central Canada and to the maritime provinces. The bulk of my career has been focused in the area of major crimes, major case investigations and criminal operations. As part of my duties, I've been operationally deployed across our entire country and internationally. I'm committed to serving Canadians and the communities I've served and continue to serve.

I'm a proud member of the RCMP and at the present time I am the interim criminal operations officer for the RCMP in the province of New Brunswick.

In April 2020, I held the rank of superintendent and I was the support services officer for the RCMP in Nova Scotia. In that role, I was responsible for a number of specialized policing resources, including, but not limited to, the provincial major crimes unit and the critical incidents program.

As you are well aware, on April 18 and 19, 2020, the RCMP in Nova Scotia responded to a mass casualty incident where Gabriel Wortman took the lives of 22 innocent people and injured many others. This incident became known as the worst mass murder in Canadian history. The perpetrator's actions devastated the victims' families and survivors, and forever changed the lives of many.

This unprecedented massacre spurred a major case investigation entitled Operation H-Strong. The objectives of H-Strong were clear: to fully investigate the murders and attempted murders, and to gather sufficient evidence to determine Gabriel Wortman's involvement in these horrible crimes. Further, the objectives also set out to determine if anyone had assisted Gabriel Wortman in any way before, during or after the crimes, and if so, to gather sufficient evidence to successfully prosecute those believed to be involved.

I'm aware of certain allegations of political interference directed to the RCMP with respect to the investigation of the mass casualty incident. At the heart of the issue is my recollection of a meeting that I was called to attend on April 28, 2020. This meeting took place immediately after I completed a lengthy national press conference, which relayed the facts that could be disclosed to the public at that time. To that point, I had provided more than two hours and 15 minutes of live national news conferences about what the police knew and what we could share with the media and the public.

The meeting had been called by the commissioner of the RCMP and was attended by representatives from the RCMP in Ottawa, as well as Nova Scotia. Prior to that meeting, I did not specifically know why the meeting had been called. However, once the call commenced, the purpose of the call became very clear. The commissioner expressed in no uncertain terms her clear disappointment that I did not release specific information in my news conference related to the firearms used by the gunman. What was relayed to me and others during that call is at issue here today.

I made notes, as is my practice, specific to that meeting. I advised several of my colleagues that I had made notes about what had transpired in that meeting. I disclosed all of my notes as required to the Department of Justice for dissemination to the Mass Casualty Commission. I was not aware that my notes from April 28, 2020, had not been disclosed to the Mass Casualty Commission until recently.

I stand by the notes that I made on April 28, 2020. I have a distinct recollection of the content of that discussion between the commissioner, my colleagues and me. In my view, the purpose of the call was to allow the commissioner to express her disappointment with the fact that I did not relay specific or detailed information about the firearms used by Gabriel Wortman.

On several occasions during that call, the commissioner stated that she felt disrespected, that she was sad and disappointed with the fact that I had not released the information about the firearms used, and that she had been advised that I would release that information. The commissioner also said that she had promised the minister and the Prime Minister's Office that information about the firearms would be included in the press briefing.

As detailed in my notes, I attempted to explain to the commissioner that I could not and would not release that information at that time, as a premature release could have a negative impact on the investigation. It was at that time the commissioner told my colleagues and me that we didn't understand that this was tied to pending legislation that would make officers and the public safer. I left that meeting feeling deflated and, to borrow the commissioner's words, sad and disappointed.

• (1210)

My position was firm. I would continue to protect the integrity of the investigation by not releasing any information that could have a negative impact on ongoing investigative efforts. We owed this to the victims' families, to the survivors, to the public and to those tasked with completing an impartial, competent and professional investigation. There are very good reasons for that.

The approach to not releasing specific information related to firearms remained in place by the investigative team until information related to the firearms used by Gabriel Wortman was released in November 2020 through an access to information and privacy request directed at the Prime Minister's Office, not the RCMP. Within the disclosure of that information via ATIP was specific information related to the firearms used by Gabriel Wortman in the commission of the offences. The release of the unedited information would eventually have a negative impact on individuals and could have harmed the ongoing multi-agency investigation.

In summary, it was never my intention to enter into a political or public disagreement or discussion as to what took place in that meeting, nor was my response to the meeting based on any personal issues with the commissioner or indeed any other individuals, nor was it based on politics. At the heart of the issue was a matter of principle and sound investigative best practices related to protecting the ongoing investigation, which at the time was in its early stages. The principle was the oath that I swore to uphold as a young recruit over three decades ago. I could not and would not break that oath, which is sworn by all members of the RCMP.

Chair, this concludes my opening remarks. I wish to thank you and the committee for the opportunity to speak with you today. I welcome any questions that committee members may have on the issue.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, Mr. Campbell.

Ms. Scanlan, you have five minutes.

Ms. Lia Scanlan (Director, Strategic Communications Unit, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): Thank you.

Good afternoon, Madam Chair, honourable members of the committee and colleagues. My name is Lia Scanlan. I'm a 14-year civilian member of the RCMP. As of January 2022, my position is that of strategic adviser to the commanding officer of Nova Scotia. In 2020, I was the director of the strategic communications unit for the Nova Scotia RCMP.

Before I go any further, it's important to acknowledge at the outset that we must maintain sight of what took place in Nova Scotia on April 18 and 19, 2020. It was the worst mass casualty in our country's history. Twenty-two people lost their lives, including a colleague. None of us will ever understand what the victims and their families have experienced and continue to go through.

Honouring the victims' lives and keeping their children and families at the forefront is what's most important. Countless others are injured physically and mentally and they must remain in our thoughts as they face a lifetime of healing. What took place forever changed Nova Scotia. It has been indescribable and far-reaching. The strength and resilience of our Nova Scotia communities have been obvious for all to see in the aftermath of this tragedy. People have rallied together in countless ways, a demonstration of the true maritime spirit, and it makes me very proud to call myself a Nova Scotian.

The tragedy of April 2020 and its aftermath has been a very challenging two and a half years professionally and personally. On April 19, 2020, I was involved in the operational response. The provincial strategic communications unit led the communications during the incident and in the weeks and months following, until the completion of the investigation in December 2020. Our focus centred on the victims and the families, the public and our people. I have participated in and respect the work under way by the Mass Casualty Commission, having engaged honestly and wholeheartedly in two separate interviews and again on June 9 of this year at my appearance at the inquiry.

I also respect the work of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, and I'm here in person prepared to answer questions in relation to my experience, and specifically the following: a phone call and email correspondence hours before the press conference on April 28, 2020; a phone call I received after the press conference; a subsequent meeting I attended called by Deputy Brennan on behalf of Commissioner Lucki on the evening of April 20, 2020; a letter I wrote to Commissioner Lucki on April 14, 2021, within days of the one-year anniversary of the tragedy; and any other relevant emails or notes I have, as I've taken much time reviewing the material produced during this period.

I look forward to answering your questions. Thank you very much for having me.

• (1215)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, Ms. Scanlan.

We go over to you, Ms. Bradley. Go ahead.

Ms. Jolene Bradley (Director, National Communication Services, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): Thank you, Madam Chair, and good afternoon to members of the committee.

My name is Jolene Bradley. I'm currently the director general of communications at the Royal Canadian Mounted Police here in Ottawa. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today on my role during the largest mass shooting incident in our country's history. It was a very difficult time. My thoughts and prayers continue to be with the families and friends of loved ones who have been left behind trying to heal.

In April 2020, I was the RCMP's director of strategic communications for the operations team at the national headquarters in Ottawa. I provided strategic communication advice and support to the communications team in Nova Scotia in the days and weeks following the shootings. As part of the ongoing and routine collaboration between the national headquarters and our colleagues in Nova Scotia,

our support included reviewing speaking notes and messaging for media. My goal was to assist our colleagues in Nova Scotia during this significant event.

Our support from Ottawa consisted of coordinating translation and assisting with the creation of visuals for press conferences. I was also responsible for ensuring that communications products, such as talking points and media lines, were shared with communications colleagues at Public Safety Canada and with the RCMP's analyst at the Privy Council Office. This is standard operating procedure with our communications colleagues from both organizations.

To be clear, documents shared with Public Safety and PCO were final communication products, such as speaking notes intended for delivery by RCMP spokespersons during press conferences. Operational information is never shared through communication channels. I also want to emphasize that material is shared for informational purposes only, not for comment or input as it relates to an ongoing investigation. The lines are clear and reinforced through years of collective experiences.

I have worked for the RCMP for 23 years in various communications positions. Managing communications and public affairs around the shootings was difficult and very demanding. I would like to commend the RCMP team in Nova Scotia for their steadfast commitment to the organization and desire to share as much information with the public as possible at the time. We are lucky to have such talent in Nova Scotia, and quite frankly in all communication shops across the country, supporting the RCMP on a daily basis.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you very much for your opening remarks, to you and to all the witnesses today.

We're going to get started with the rounds of questioning. I will begin with six minutes. We'll go to the Liberal Party, then the Bloc Québécois and the NDP, and then back around again.

To begin, Chief Superintendent Campbell, have you ever sought any legal advice from the Department of Justice to answer our questions or the questions of the commission reactively rather than proactively, given Mr. Leather has indicated he received that advice?

C/Supt Darren Campbell: I have not.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you very much.

I'm looking at an email, dated April 23, sent by Commissioner Lucki to Chris Leather, Lee Bergerman and Brian Brennan. The commissioner said in her email that the Government of Canada and the Minister of Public Safety were "anxiously awaiting" information about the weapons involved in the mass murder.

Were you aware that the government and the public safety minister were anxiously awaiting this information?

C/Supt Darren Campbell: At that time, I wasn't aware that the government was anxiously awaiting it. I wasn't part of that email chain. However, I was aware of the fact that the commissioner's office was really looking for some detailed information specific to the firearms.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): You mentioned in your opening remarks that you believed releasing the information was "premature" and would have had "a negative impact on the investigation". Is that correct?

C/Supt Darren Campbell: Yes, that is correct.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): At this point in the investigation, it was only a few days after the incident had happened in Nova Scotia.

C/Supt Darren Campbell: Not only was it only a few days after the incident happened, but there were several other agencies, including the Canada Border Services Agency, the FBI and the ATF, that were conducting investigations in parallel with our investigation. It would have had a negative impact, definitely.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): On the same day that Commissioner Lucki mentioned in an email, on April 23, that the government and the public safety minister were anxiously awaiting this information, there were consultations with the Serious Incident Response Team, which you know is essentially an oversight body for the Nova Scotia RCMP. It advised Lee Bergerman, who said in an email to Chris Leather, Brian Brennan and Commissioner Lucki, "We have permission to release [the information about weapons] internally".

Were you aware of this email, in which Commissioner Lucki was advised that the information should only be released internally?

• (1220)

C/Supt Darren Campbell: I wasn't aware of that specific email. However, I was aware of the SIRT investigation and the sensitivities in and around what they wished to protect related to the firearms. I had awareness of that.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Ms. Bergerman was advising Commissioner Lucki that this was to be released internally, and then within half an hour, the commissioner released the information outside of the RCMP. She sent it to the Minister of Public Safety and the national security adviser to the Prime Minister. Were you aware of that?

C/Supt Darren Campbell: I'm now aware of that. However, at the time, I wasn't aware that it was released outside of the RCMP.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Do you believe it was appropriate for the commissioner to release this information at that time to the Minister of Public Safety?

C/Supt Darren Campbell: I don't believe that it was appropriate at that time. However, I do expect that there would be conversations. From my understanding, the direction was fairly clear that it could not be shared outside of the RCMP.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you.

You mentioned in your commission testimony that you decided to make the notes on April 28 because "this was going to become a problem for us", referring to the April 28 meeting, the infamous meeting. What specifically seemed inappropriate about the com-

missioner's remarks or conduct that sent off these sorts of alarm bells in your mind?

C/Supt Darren Campbell: Chair, as I mentioned, there were investigative objectives, which included the investigation of any other individuals who may have assisted Gabriel Wortman in any way. The release of that information would have had a negative impact on the ongoing investigation, outside of the investigation into Gabriel Wortman's activities.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): You wrote in your notes, as we know, that the commissioner said she had promised the Minister of Public Safety and the Prime Minister's Office that this information would be released. Did she say "promised"?

C/Supt Darren Campbell: I believe that she did say "promised", yes.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): You went on to write that the commissioner said you didn't understand—you mentioned this in your opening remarks as well—that this was tied to the pending gun control legislation. She, then, was specifically tying this to the government's legislative agenda. Is that correct?

C/Supt Darren Campbell: Yes, that's correct.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): She went against expert advice. She's also been a member of the RCMP for 30 years. She was aware that this was not to be released outside of the RCMP. She did release it to the government. Is my understanding correct?

C/Supt Darren Campbell: As I understand it now, it was released outside of the RCMP to government, which was contrary to the directions that were provided.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Specifically, it was related to the pending gun control agenda of the government.

C/Supt Darren Campbell: I can't speak to that because I was never part of any of those conversations between government and the commissioner's office.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Yes, but in the April 28 meeting she related those two; she tied them together.

C/Supt Darren Campbell: That is correct.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): She made that very clear.

C/Supt Darren Campbell: It was clear to me.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): When the commissioner attended the committee a few weeks ago, she made it seem that that meeting was not so much about specifically this issue. It was just generally about unhappiness of communication with the Nova Scotia RCMP. How much of this meeting was about this gun control legislation and releasing the weapons information versus other things?

C/Supt Darren Campbell: Chair, if you refer to my notes, they also explain that I left the meeting at one point in time. I would say I was probably in that meeting for around a 20-minute period of time. The information during the period of time that I was actually in that meeting was only specific to the non-release of the firearms information. It did not include any other information related to any displeasure the commissioner had in terms of our communications. In fact, I would even say that I have emails from the commissioner recognizing the efforts that I had specifically made on April 24 where she references the Minister of Public Safety wanting to express his thanks for the information I had provided to the public.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Would you be willing to table those for the committee, provide those emails to the committee?

C/Supt Darren Campbell: Yes, I will.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you very much.

With my remaining 30 seconds, Ms. Scanlan, who were you speaking with in the government, the public safety minister's office, the Prime Minister's Office? Can you provide the names of the individuals you were speaking with?

Ms. Lia Scanlan: I wasn't speaking with anyone in those offices.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Ms. Bradley, were you speaking with anyone in the public safety minister's office or the Prime Minister's Office? What were the names of those individuals?

Ms. Jolene Bradley: I had no connection with anyone in the minister's office or the Prime Minister's Office.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Who was the connection between Nova Scotia and the public safety minister's office? Was that solely Commissioner Lucki, then, to your knowledge? Ms. Whelan, do you have anything to add?

Ms. Alison Whelan: No, sorry, I wasn't a party to those interactions.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you very much. That concludes my time.

We're going to go over now to the Liberal Party for the opening remarks. We have Ms. Damoff for six minutes.

Please go ahead, Ms. Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you.

I will start by again expressing my deepest sympathy to the Nova Scotia families about the shootings.

I also want to thank the witnesses who are here today and recognize that this is very difficult for each of you and it can be very triggering to be reliving what happened before us, so I want to sincerely thank each and every one of you for being here today.

Superintendent Campbell, you mentioned in your remarks that you were not part of any conversations with the government. Can you just clarify for us that you did not have any conversations with the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister's Office, Minister Blair or his staff?

• (1225)

C/Supt Darren Campbell: That's correct, Chair. I did not have any direct conversations with anyone from government on this issue.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you.

I imagine you've seen the testimony from both Minister Blair and Commissioner Lucki. Minister Blair indicated that he did not ask the commissioner to make any promises in terms of releasing the weapons that were used. Commissioner Lucki was also very clear that she had not made any promises to the government.

You heard their testimony when they appeared before us in July. Would it be fair to say that your interpretation was different from the commissioner's, Superintendent Campbell?

C/Supt Darren Campbell: To be clear, I haven't actually watched the entire testimony of the minister or the commissioner prior to this.

What I can say is that my recollection of the meeting I had with the commissioner is reflected accurately within the notes that I made and the testimony that I provided, both at the Mass Casualty Commission, under oath, as well as before this committee.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Okay, thank you.

Minister Blair said:

I did not ask the commissioner to release that information, and nor did she promise me that she would.

Then the commissioner said:

Regarding my use of the word "promise" during the meeting I had with my team following that press conference, at that time and in that context, I was trying to convey that I had confirmed to the minister that the information about the weapons would be released during the press conference—a confirmation that was made based on information that I had been provided.

One of the things I was curious about was the testimony we heard from Lee Bergerman, who said, "it should have never been shared with her"—"her" being the commissioner—"that we were going to release details of weapons and calibres or whatever".

I'm curious about this, Superintendent Campbell. Why would the commissioner not have been given that information? Why should that not have been shared with her?

C/Supt Darren Campbell: I think what Assistant Commissioner Bergerman was referring to was any promise being made to the commissioner that we would release that information. That's how I interpret that passage from her testimony. It wouldn't necessarily be about not wanting to release information about the guns to the commissioner, to stay within the organization. It was about making a promise to release it publicly—that's how I interpret that—and that should not have happened.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Okay. That wasn't my recollection of her testimony, but we'll leave that as it was.

When was the information released to the public about the weapons, and how did that become public?

C/Supt Darren Campbell: I'll refer to my opening remarks.

I think it was on November 20, 2020, that the information was released, not by the RCMP but actually via an ATIP request to the Prime Minister's Office. I would assume that it was a briefing note that was prepared for the Prime Minister's Office, which outlined the details on the guns, as well as the name of one of our officers who was actually involved in the fatal officer-involved shooting of Gabriel Wortman.

Ms. Pam Damoff: But it was never released by the government, the RCMP commissioner or yourselves. It was only released as a result of the access to information request. Is that correct?

C/Supt Darren Campbell: That is correct.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Okay, thank you.

In terms of your interactions with the commissioner and those of the commissioner with the government, it is her.... As she's the head of the RCMP, at the end of the day, she makes the decision on what she shares with the government of Canada.

COVID had just started, and I think the entire country was in shock. You testified that you had just been through two hours of a press conference, which must have been absolutely gruelling for you, sir. I can't imagine how difficult that was.

Would it not be fair to say that tensions were probably a bit high? I guess that's not the right term. It was very emotional for everyone at that time and during that phone conversation.

• (1230)

C/Supt Darren Campbell: I would agree that emotions were high during the incident, and to this day they continue to be high. That was reflected within that conversation as well, on April 28.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Okay.

I only have 10 seconds left, Madam Chair, so I will turn it back to you.

Thank you very much for your testimony, sir.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, MP Damoff.

We're going to go now to the Bloc Québécois.

[Translation]

Ms. Normandin, go ahead for six minutes.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I want to begin by thanking the witnesses for joining us today. I would also like to acknowledge the quality of their opening remarks.

I would like everyone to keep the following in mind as they answer. In her June 2022 press release, Commissioner Lucki said that she would never take any action or make any decisions that would compromise an investigation. I would like you to refer to the April 28 conversation.

Mr. Campbell, at that time, did you feel that the commissioner understood the scope of her request in terms of the risk that it could pose to the investigation?

Did you feel that she was aware that disclosing the type of weapon could compromise an investigation by the Canada Border Services Agency or the FBI, for example?

[English]

C/Supt Darren Campbell: Thank you for your question.

I do believe that the commissioner, as a seasoned police officer, would understand that certain information should be protected, particularly if there are multiple-agency ongoing investigations. I can't speak for the commissioner; however, I think it's reasonable for me to answer that question in that way.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: At the time of the discussion on April 28, you yourself raised the issue of compromised investigations with Commissioner Lucki.

Is that correct?

[English]

C/Supt Darren Campbell: I did, in terms of not just the investigation that was being handled by the RCMP at that time but also, as I stated earlier, multiple investigations by multiple agencies, including international agencies as well. That was made clear to the commissioner. That was made clear to my colleagues.

In fact, leading up to that press conference, I had been asked by my colleagues within strategic communications in Nova Scotia if I could say more about the firearms. I explained to my colleagues in Nova Scotia the reason that I could not. That was clearly communicated to everyone. It was actually quite simple.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: How did Commissioner Lucki react when you reminded her of the importance of not releasing that information, especially because of ongoing investigations?

[English]

C/Supt Darren Campbell: Chair, as I explained in my opening remarks, the commissioner was upset. The commissioner made me feel as if I was stupid and I didn't seem to understand the importance of why this information was important to go out, the information specific to the firearms as it was related to the legislation. She didn't seem to appreciate or recognize the importance of maintaining the integrity of an investigation.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Approximately, how long was the portion of the discussion that dealt specifically with the risks of revealing the type of weapon used?

[English]

C/Supt Darren Campbell: Well, of course I'm going back more than two years, since that conversation took place, but I would say that my comments to the commissioner and others who were in that meeting probably lasted at least two minutes of me trying to explain. It was on the heels of that explanation that I was provided information or I was told that this was very important because this was about legislation that was going to make officers and the public safer. That was the response I received to my rationale provided for not releasing the information.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: At any point, did Commissioner Lucki attempt to refute your arguments regarding the risk that may be posed by revealing the type of firearm used?

Did she try to convince you that there was no risk?

Did she want to disclose the type of firearm used for other reasons?

• (1235)

[English]

C/Supt Darren Campbell: My recollection is that the commissioner did not dismiss what I had said in those terms, meaning that she didn't believe that it would have a negative impact or try to provide a different perspective. She immediately linked it to ongoing efforts to bring forward some new legislation.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: In summary, the conversation about the risks of revealing the type of weapon was very short. The commissioner did not make an argument to refute that there was a risk. The question of risk, she argued, would therefore have been irrelevant to the disclosure of the type of weapon.

Am I summarizing the conversation in question correctly?

[English]

C/Supt Darren Campbell: If you're asking for my opinion, I would say that the commissioner felt that the release of the information was more important, in her view, because the focus of that discussion was around the fact that I did not release that information specific to firearms.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you.

Madam Chair, I think my time is up.

I thank all the witnesses, as well as Mr. Campbell.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, Ms. Normandin.

[English]

Now we have the New Democratic Party and MP MacGregor.

Please go ahead, Mr. MacGregor. You have six minutes.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'd like to echo my colleagues in thanking all of the witnesses for being before our committee and helping guide us through this inquiry of ours.

Chief Superintendent Campbell, I would like to start with you. Can you just reiterate for the committee how long it's been a practice of yours within the RCMP to use handwritten notes?

C/Supt Darren Campbell: I've used handwritten notes from the time I was a young recruit in Regina, which would have been in 1990.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: You stated quite clearly that you stand by your notes. I would say the same about my notes. I frequently use them for committee hearings like the one we're having today.

Could you also explain to the committee, when members of the RCMP are using handwritten notes, what's the process whereby they are logged? Do they go into an official logbook? How are those records kept? Are there some examples where there are personal handwritten notes only for the officer in question's recollection, or are they logged with the detachment? I just want to know a little bit more about that process.

C/Supt Darren Campbell: Notes are used by all police officers. They are not the property of the officer. They are the property of the RCMP. Those notes are disclosable for any type of inquiry, investigation, any kind of legal proceedings. Those notes can be produced at any time. They are kept specific to those officers. They are not logged into a general notebook. Each officer would keep a notebook of their own. Specifically, for larger investigations, my practice would be normally to keep a separate notebook on that investigation.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: To be clear, when you wrote the notes on the April 28 conference call, this was simply a normal course of your duties, something you've done since you were an RCMP recruit. You really had no idea that the notes from that time would result in what all of Canada knows today.

C/Supt Darren Campbell: Not specifically in relation to where I find myself today... However, I was concerned about what transpired during that meeting on April 28, 2020. I did make notes that reflect my recollection specifically of that meeting. Also, as I testified earlier, I was fully aware that those notes would become disclosable and that could become an issue at some point in time during a multitude of proceedings like this or the Mass Casualty Commission or other criminal trials related to this investigation.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you for clarifying that.

In the previous meeting that our committee held at the end of July, we did hear from a number of witnesses. The previous minister of public safety, the Honourable Bill Blair, was very clear to point out that there's a hard line that he's never crossed in terms of giving operational directives to the RCMP. I think, however, there might be some confusion over whether this was an operational directive or a communication directive.

In your view, could you help clarify what your interpretation was during that conference call, or was it a little bit of both?

• (1240)

C/Supt Darren Campbell: I do believe that it was a bit of both. Any release of information that could have a negative or detrimental impact on an investigation falls into the operational side. I also believe that there was a potential benefit to releasing this information, so that's on the communication side. To answer your question, I would say it is both.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you.

When Commissioner Lucki stated on the call that this was tied to pending gun control legislation, we know with the benefit of hindsight that the order in council came in May 2020. Was any clarification given on that particular point on gun control legislation? Did anyone ask for further details, or was it just simply announced that it was tied to impending gun control legislation?

C/Supt Darren Campbell: Chair, it was an announcement that was made, and quite frankly I didn't want to hear anything more about it, and I didn't ask.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Was that the reaction around the room? Was there a similar reaction around the room with other participants on the conference call?

C/Supt Darren Campbell: I can speak to my observations of the reactions of others in the room. One of my colleagues is here with me today, Lia Scanlan, and perhaps she can answer your question as well.

I would say my perception was that the reactions were fairly consistent for those who were in the room with me.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Finally, Chief Superintendent, our committee is at a crossroads. We have, as you know now, wildly different interpretations of the same conference call. I'm trying to look forward to the future. When you look at the federal statute that governs the RCMP, specifically subsection 5(1), which really describes the role of the commissioner, there are some who say that this clause is sufficiently vague so there can be very different interpretations of what direction the minister is able to have on the commissioner.

Do you have any suggestions on how we, as legislators, can tackle this issue going forward?

C/Supt Darren Campbell: I think it's simple. I don't necessarily want to get into a policy debate specifically. However, allowing the police a level of independence—and that includes the commissioner of the RCMP and those who work within the organization and for the commissioner—and respecting that independence is important, because we do have a job and we take it very seriously. We wish to share information as much as we possibly can. That's always been our practice, although there are many who feel differently about that. There are very good reasons, as I explained, why there is certain information that we don't release.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Unfortunately, you'll have to wrap up.

C/Supt Darren Campbell: It's about independence.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you very much.

Now we will go back and start the rounds again. We go to the Conservative Party with MP Perkins for five minutes.

MP Perkins, please begin.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Thank you.

I'd like to thank the witnesses, and in particular the Nova Scotia RCMP officers and civilian employees, for doing such an amazing job and having such great integrity for us through this process.

My first question is for Superintendent Campbell.

In my understanding, Minister Blair testified before this committee that on April 23 there was a cabinet meeting. We also know from emails that later that day Commissioner Lucki emailed the Nova Scotia team seeking the list of firearms found in the vehicle and said that the government was anxious for this. We also know that later that evening she provided that to a number of civilians and the chief of staff, the minister and five other government officials, none of whom work for the RCMP. My understanding is also that the SIRC clearance was to only share that information within the RCMP.

Do you have any idea what kind of political pressure the minister was under in order to go around the SIRC requirement and provide that information, contrary to the directive, outside the RCMP?

C/Supt Darren Campbell: Just to clarify the question that was asked, what type of pressure the minister was under.... Could you just clarify?

Mr. Rick Perkins: No, sorry, I meant the commissioner.

C/Supt Darren Campbell: As I already testified, I wasn't present at or party to those conversations. I don't know how much pressure, if any, was being placed on the commissioner, because I wasn't part of that, but I do believe that because of the emotions and the need for answers, there were many people who were asking a number of questions, and I would imagine that would have placed a considerable amount of pressure on the commissioner of the RCMP at that time.

• (1245)

Mr. Rick Perkins: Thank you.

Ms. Scanlan, in your testimony, your interviews with the Mass Casualty Commission, you mentioned that you had regular contact with Dan Brien, who was media relations and issues management for the RCMP. Is that correct?

Ms. Lia Scanlan: That's correct, yes.

Mr. Rick Perkins: In that statement, you said about Mr. Brien that he has tons of experience with government and people he knows. He was a connection into the government. Is that correct?

Ms. Lia Scanlan: Yes.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Did he ever mention to you in the discussions you had with him, either before the mass casualty incident or afterwards, that he was talking regularly with people in government?

Ms. Lia Scanlan: No, he did not.

Mr. Rick Perkins: So you're not aware that he may have had any discussions directly with the minister's office, where he had worked previously to this job in the RCMP.

Ms. Lia Scanlan: Correct, I am not aware of that.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Okay.

Ms. Scanlan, in your notes or your letter, you're quite descriptive of your experience with the situation on April 28. Also, you mentioned earlier that two hours beforehand, I believe, you had been informed that they wanted the details released. Who asked you that question?

Ms. Lia Scanlan: It was Deputy Brennan.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Okay. Thank you very much.

Is the recollection in Superintendent Campbell's notes of that meeting accurate, from your perspective?

Ms. Lia Scanlan: Absolutely.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Thank you.

Did the minister say that she promised the minister that she would provide that information?

Ms. Lia Scanlan: I believe you meant the commissioner.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Yes, I meant the commissioner, sorry.

Ms. Lia Scanlan: I don't recall verbatim the exact words that were used, but I would never dispute Darren Campbell's notes. I just think that, at the end of the day, whether we're saying "promise", "pressure" or "influence", they all lead to the same end result.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Thank you.

I have a lot more questions, Madam Chair, but I do have a motion I'd like to move at this time, if I could.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): MP Perkins, it's your time, so go ahead.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I would like to put this motion forward: "That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee hold a three-hour meeting on the allegations of political interference in the 2020 Nova Scotia mass murder investigation study, including 30 minutes of committee business, no later than September 16, 2022, to hear from the following witnesses: Zita Astravas, chief of staff to the Minister of Emergency Preparedness; Felix Cacchione, director of Nova Scotia Serious Incident Response Team; Ken MacKillop, assistant secretary to the cabinet (communications and consultations), Privy Council Office; Dan Brien, director of media relations for the RCMP; Cindy Bayers, director of strategic communications, RCMP; and that the calendars and phone logs from April 18, 2020, to April 22, 2020, of the Minister of Emergency Preparedness and his deputy minister and his chief of staff be provided prior to the meeting."

I believe that has been provided to the committee for the clerk to circulate.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, MP Perkins.

May I suggest that we pick this up after Mr. Noormohamed, Mr. MacGregor and Ms. Normandin ask their questions? If it's the will of the committee, we can pick this up at the top of the hour and let our witnesses go following the questions.

Mr. Rick Perkins: That's fine with me.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Is there any objection from the rest of the committee members to finalize our questions?

Go ahead, Madame Normandin.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Chair, can we ensure that the motion is sent in both official languages to all committee members?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, Ms. Normandin.

[*English*]

My understanding is that the motion is being passed around in both languages to committee members as we speak. Thank you for that question.

Mr. McKinnon, you had your hand up, but I see it's been lowered. Do you have anything to say?

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): I was going to speak to the motion, but if we're going to take it up later, I'll take it up later.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Okay.

Let's get back to our questioning, and we will pick this up at the top of the hour after we let our witnesses go.

We're going over to the Liberal Party for five minutes.

MP Noormohamed, go right ahead.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I want to thank the witnesses for being with us today. I also want to thank you for the kindness and compassion that all of you have shown, in particular in dealing with the victims and the victims' families. As someone who has had the privilege of working as a public servant, in many cases alongside the RCMP, I know that after a tragedy where lives were lost, the work you do is incredibly important. I can only imagine the toll that it has taken on all of you. I want to thank you for what you have done and for the work you have been doing.

I want to begin by asking a question related to the ATIP process. Ms. Whelan, could you very quickly explain to us who handles the ATIP process and whether political offices can dictate what is and is not released?

• (1250)

Ms. Alison Whelan: In this case, it was an ATIP from the Privy Council Office. In general, the ATIP shop would contact the office of primary interest and they would identify potential redactions. The ATIP shop would then confirm, and the information would be released to the requester.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Thank you.

If I could switch gears a bit now, I'll start with you, Chief Superintendent Campbell. When you were describing your recollection of the events, you noted that you had never heard from the minister or from any other political office, whether it was the Prime Minister or the Prime Minister's Office, a direction to the commissioner to demand the release or instigate the release of any information. Is that correct?

C/Supt Darren Campbell: That's correct. I did not.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Ms. Scanlan, was it the same in your case?

Ms. Lia Scanlan: That's correct.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Okay.

The commissioner came before us and testified that she did not experience any political pressure. The minister came before us and said that he did not exert any political pressure on the commissioner to release information and that she did not promise him that she would.

Minister Blair was a long-time police officer, and he explained to us very clearly that he understood the chain of command and the lines that could not be crossed. If the minister's office, the minister and the commissioner have all said that the minister didn't ask for this information, what was prompting this request?

C/Supt Darren Campbell: Can we just determine who the question is directed towards?

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Sorry, that was for you.

C/Supt Darren Campbell: Okay, sorry.

Could you just repeat the last part of your question, please?

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Yes. We had the minister say he didn't ask for the release of this information, and the commissioner said she did not feel pressured by the minister or other political offices to do anything. Why do you think, then, there was the sense of pressure?

C/Supt Darren Campbell: As I testified earlier, Chair, there was pressure for information from all sides, whether it be the public, the media, government, or within the organization itself. However, it was clear during the meeting that the commissioner had said that she had made a promise and that it was tied to the legislation.

I can't speak to who it was who might have had those conversations. I can only speak to the fact that I was involved in a meeting on April 28 and that's what I heard and that's what I made notes of.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Then you never heard the minister or the Prime Minister's Office or any minister's office direct her to do anything. Is that correct?

C/Supt Darren Campbell: No, I didn't. In fact, it would be very inappropriate for me to have those conversations at that level. That would not happen at my level whatsoever.

• (1255)

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: This is what I'm struggling with a little bit. I want to make sure that we are all very clear. One of the things that I think we all hate is the idea that the work the RCMP does becomes politicized, because what you do is incredibly important. All Canadians should be able to see that the work you do is independent and in the public interest.

Then at no point did anyone in the RCMP we've spoken to see or hear the minister or the Prime Minister's Office or the minister's office demand a particular action in this regard. What we're struggling with is this: How do we make sure the public understands that the RCMP's work was not compromised? How was your work not compromised?

C/Supt Darren Campbell: Is that question directed towards me?

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Yes.

C/Supt Darren Campbell: I'm not sure how to answer that question in terms of how we make the public understand that our work was not compromised. Our work could very well have become compromised. That's a very difficult question for me to answer.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: But you are here before us saying that the minister's office never directed...or you never heard the minister's office direct anyone to do anything. You never heard the Prime Minister's Office direct anyone to do anything. You never heard the Prime Minister direct anyone to do anything. Is that correct?

C/Supt Darren Campbell: That's correct. I never heard the minister or the Prime Minister's Office directing anyone to do anything. However, there has been evidence before this committee of emails that would suggest a certain or a significant interest in that information from the minister's office to the commissioner of the RCMP's office. Whether those conversations took place verbally, I can't speak to that, but what I can say is that I think the evidence is clear that there was interest by the minister's office with respect to specific information on those firearms via email.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Would it be reasonable—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): MP Noormohamed, I believe your five minutes are up. We have a bit of a timing issue, so feel free to correct me if I'm wrong. It's a little bit over five, I believe. Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Ms. Normandin, go ahead.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Ms. Scanlan, I would like to ask you questions about the discussion of April 28. I ask that you keep in mind Commissioner Lucki's statement that she would never take any action that could compromise an investigation.

Do you agree with Mr. Campbell that Commissioner Lucki fully understood the risk of disclosing the type of firearm used?

[English]

Ms. Lia Scanlan: Yes, my takeaway, my experience from that conversation, was that the risk seemed irrelevant.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: So you feel that Commissioner Lucki fully understood the risk involved, but that seemed secondary to her willingness to disclose the type of firearm used.

Is that correct?

[English]

Ms. Lia Scanlan: I can't speak on behalf of the commissioner, so it would be unfair of me to say that. She can speak to what she understood. As a police officer, I think she would have a clear understanding of what it means to compromise the integrity of an ongoing investigation, especially one of the largest mass casualty in Canadian history.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: I would like to talk to you about an email you sent to Ms. Tessier, in which you requested that your team be given the responsibility to decide what information could be released.

In response, she asked you to talk to Commissioner Lucki about it.

What are your observations about the scope of Commissioner Lucki's decisions on what was and was not to be released to the general public during the investigation?

[English]

Ms. Lia Scanlan: My communication is not with the commissioner directly. I communicate with national communication services, so Sharon Tessier, Dan Brien and Jolene Bradley, my colleague. I can't determine exactly what the commissioner's scope was.

I can only speak to what my experience was. In the early days, on April 19, we had done a press conference where we indicated a number of victims. Later that evening, the commissioner released a separate number, and again that evening, she released another number in one-off interviews, unbeknownst to us in Nova Scotia. I actually found out from the media. We at Nova Scotia RCMP had committed to doing a press conference the following day, where the first order of business would be updating a number of things, including the number of victims.

Again, that's publicly available. In terms of issues thereafter, the commissioner's... I'm making assumptions, and Sharon Tessier or Jolene could speak more appropriately to this, but at the end of the day, that's who I deal with and I would make the assumption that they're taking more direction directly from the commissioner, as that would be the most appropriate.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Ms. Scanlan and Madame Normandin, time's up. Thank you very much.

We're going to go into our last two-and-a-half-minute round with MP MacGregor.

Please go ahead.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I would like to direct my questions to Ms. Scanlan. In reference to the last line of questions I had to Chief Superintendent Campbell, you went into some great detail in your letter and he did reference that it might be more appropriate for you to answer for yourself, and I agree with him.

When Commissioner Lucki made reference to this being linked or tied to pending gun control legislation, first of all, could you just reiterate your reaction to that? Second of all, given all of your experience in the RCMP, I would also like to get some of your comments on the actions you think legislators need to take, specifically with the RCMP Act, subsection 5(1), which lays out what the commissioner's powers are, because we have seen instances in previous decades where there has been political interference and direction of the RCMP. It happened under the Chrétien government. It happened under the Diefenbaker government. Do we as legislators need to make an effort to reform a section of the RCMP Act so that those legislative guardrails are firmly in place?

Thank you.

• (1300)

Ms. Lia Scanlan: As I stated in the letter that I wrote...and I do have notes also from that day. I have notes from April 20 that were disclosed to the Mass Casualty Commission and the federal DOJ that I haven't seen yet publicly, but I do have notes. As I stated, it was a feeling of disgust. I was embarrassed to be a part of it. I was embarrassed to be listening to it and message received, I understood exactly what was being said.

With regard to the latter part of your question, I don't know the act specifically, but I just think it's important, yes, that it be examined. There needs to be a level of independence so that from the selection process all the way through there's a very different...a mandate letter. Keeping our partners informed or providing information to the Minister of Public Safety or the minister's office, that's very different from interfering, influencing or exerting pressure.

I think that words need to be carefully examined, and if it's vague, we should be more specific so that we're never in this situation again, especially those on the ground who are dealing with the investigation.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you very much. I think that's an appropriate time to conclude.

Witnesses, thank you very much for being here today. I recognize how very difficult this is to discuss. I very much commend your bravery and your courage in being here today, being forthcoming with your responses, and on behalf of Canadians, we very much thank you for bringing your testimony today, and we wish you all the best in the upcoming weeks and months.

Thank you very much.

Committee members, we will take a brief two-minute recess while we allow the witnesses to vacate the room.

• (1300) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1305)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): All right, colleagues, our two-minute recess is up and we're going to resume discussion about the motion that was introduced by MP Perkins.

If you have thoughts on the motion, please raise your hand.

MP Ellis, go right ahead.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I think it's exceedingly clear that there continues to be an evolving story here. Certainly on behalf of the families, which are mostly my constituents, I would suggest that as the story evolves, there are others out there who know the answers to these questions. Even though perhaps at the current time it is becoming about the integrity of the RCMP officers who were on the ground, made notes and provided them very graciously to the public at large, it's very clear that there's more to this story that is not coming forward.

I also believe, to Mr. MacGregor's point, that there are other things that need to be elucidated in terms of the independence of the RCMP. I think Mr. MacGregor tried multiple times to get towards that today. Obviously, we need more information to better understand exactly what happened and, perhaps equally important, how we're going to move forward with respect to ensuring that this type of political interference is not allowed to continue.

I thought Ms. Scanlan made an interesting remark with respect to the choice of the commissioner. How the commissioner is chosen at the current time is of course, as we know, through a political appointment, and they serve at the pleasure of the minister. Obviously, there's more to be understood. There are more stories to be told. I certainly think that continuing on with the appropriate witnesses is absolutely imperative, not just for the families and constituents who are affected in my riding but for all of Canada, so we can continue to understand that we can have faith in the systems of policing that we have.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, MP Ellis.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Normandin, the floor is now yours.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much.

I would like the member who moved the motion to clarify something for me.

I would like to understand what type of information we are seeking from these witnesses that may not have already been disclosed in the last two committee meetings.

Ministers often have to answer these types of questions rather than officials, since officials are not always aware of the facts.

In this context, can someone explain to me what information we are seeking?

How could the suggested witnesses answer those questions?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, Ms. Normandin.

[*English*]

Perhaps MP Perkins can respond.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Hopefully I can. I had my hand up to speak anyway, so I think it's timely.

Primarily, when you look at the witnesses, we've already asked for several of them and we're asking for them again. There seems to be some confusion about the issue of providing the firearms list to the political level. From emails, that appears to have happened through the minister's chief of staff, so there's a question as to where that direction came from. Even some Liberal members have raised that issue in questions today when asking about where the request for this information was coming from. We know from the email stream that it was provided to the minister's chief of staff, and from the text of that we also know that it appears to be a response to a request.

Second, we have had various testimonies, both here and at the Mass Casualty Commission, about the role of SIRT, what SIRT said and the rules for SIRT in providing information to civilians, at the Mass Casualty Commission and again here today. Those who were provided it on the 23rd were not members of the RCMP, and that seems to be contrary to the SIRT's request, so it's important to have a clear understanding of that process and whether or not rules were breached.

As well, Mr. Brien has been mentioned in the Mass Casualty Commission testimony by various people as intervening on things like the messaging around how many victims there were, so he was involved in the communications decision-making process. Obviously, he has some background in his life before that, which leads to his connections with the government at the political level.

Ms. Bayers was also mentioned during the Mass Casualty Commission as asking whether or not on the 28th they were going to release the information, so she was clearly contacted by someone suggesting that this should be done. We need to get to the bottom of those issues.

There's still a lot of mystery, in my mind, as to where the request came from to send this information outside the RCMP. I know it wasn't released publicly, as some people have said, but in essence, when you're releasing it to civilian people such as the chief of staff, the minister and the government officials who were listed on Commissioner Lucki's email of April 23, it's clear that the release was beyond the limits of what SIRT said. We need to delve into and understand why those requests were made, who made them, when they made them and why they were requesting to go around the normal police procedure in this terrible incident.

I think there's a lot of clarity we still need to get from these witnesses, and that's why I put them forward.

Thank you.

• (1310)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, MP Perkins.

Go ahead, MP Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you very much, Chair.

I respectfully disagree with my Conservative colleagues that there are still a lot of questions that need to be answered. I think the information we've received in the two meetings we've held already with the minister and the commissioner, who were both very clear in their testimony that there was no political interference, the testimony we heard today from the Department of Justice that there was no political interference in what was released to the Mass Casualty Commission, and even in the testimony we heard in the last panel here today....

I also want to stress that in the new motion we received, only two of the witnesses were on the list previously. My understanding is that they were invited by the clerk and were unable to attend today.

I would like to propose an amendment to the motion that was put forward. The amendment would keep "That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee", and then everything after the word "committee" would be removed and replaced with "convene a meeting of Committee Business to determine if it wishes to continue the current study, and if so, what witnesses should be heard from, and that meeting be held after September 19, 2022."

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, MP Damoff.

Are you able to send that amendment to the clerk, please?

Ms. Pam Damoff: I can, but I do not have it in both official languages. It's not very long, so I'll send it to her in English.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): While you get that done, I'll just ask for a point of clarification. Since you've only read it once, I want to make sure I'm clear on what the amendment is looking to achieve.

We would convene a subcommittee meeting, which would be an in camera meeting, to determine if we wish to continue and, if we do, what witnesses would be invited, and we should have the in camera subcommittee meeting following September 19. Is that correct, overall?

Ms. Pam Damoff: I did not specify that it was the subcommittee, Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Oh, okay. Pardon me.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I did say after September 19, so it would be up to the chair to call a meeting of committee business. Normally, we do it in camera. I would be open to that if someone wanted to add it to my amendment, but at this point it just says to convene a meeting of committee business after September 19 to determine if we want to continue.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Okay. The motion does not specify in camera, so otherwise it's in public, then.

Ms. Pam Damoff: That's correct.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Okay.

This amendment is officially moved, and we are debating it now.

Go ahead, MP Lloyd.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Thank you, Madam Chair.

My concern with the amendment, and perhaps Ms. Damoff can clarify this, is that while the chair can call a meeting after September 19 to discuss committee business, there's no timeline that forces him to call a meeting right after September 19. He could delay it. Also, I don't think there's anything in the motion that states the committee business has to prioritize a discussion about what we want to move forward with on this. We could have a meeting about committee business and somebody could put up their hand and totally change the subject of what we're discussing.

I would like some assurance that if we did have this committee business meeting, committee business would be primarily about and would prioritize this study and that it would happen in a timely manner, as soon as possible—even before September 19, possibly, or right after September 19, not in October or November.

Second, given the original motion, which is now being amended, I think it's very important to have email evidence that shows the chief of staff, Zita Astravas, was in communication with the commissioner on the subject of the public disclosure related to the mass casualty event. We've explored a lot of different sides of this issue. We've explored the Department of Justice, obviously, the RCMP and the minister himself, but what we haven't explored is the connection in the minister's office that we know exists. I think it behooves us to look at every corner of this. It's not a fishing expedition. We do have evidence that there was discussion between the chief of staff and the commissioner, so this is an important link.

I'd like to see something productive come out of this study so we can say, "Here's where there was a mistake", whether it was political interference, a misunderstanding or a breakdown in the protocol, or somebody was responsible for a severe lack of judgment, which I think is the case here. We need to have those witnesses so we can have a comprehensive report.

Those are my concerns with the amendment. I'll rest it there. Thank you.

• (1315)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, MP Lloyd.

Go ahead, MP Perkins.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I think MP Ellis was up before me.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): My apologies.

Go ahead, MP Ellis.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the recognition.

That being said, I can't underscore enough the seriousness of these allegations and the seriousness they create in my riding of Cumberland—Colchester. People do not have any faith at the current time in the Mass Casualty Commission. To continue to use the testimony we have already heard, with written notes from a very reputable member of the RCMP...and to question his integrity is an absolute travesty. We also had corroboration today from Ms. Scanlan with respect to what she heard in that meeting, also with notes, which obviously we will have access to.

That being said, I think it behooves us all as parliamentarians, in the worst mass shooting in Canada's history, to take this very seriously and, obviously, to understand, in the vernacular, that somebody is not telling the truth. That is very disappointing to me and I think it's very disappointing to Canadians at large.

For that reason, I am certainly not supportive of this amendment. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Go ahead, MP Perkins.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The amendment to my motion seems to delay what we're doing here today. The reality is that we know we are missing key links in the chain of potential political interference in the largest mass shooting in our country's history. This would delay until after September 19—for those who are watching, September 19 is when the House resumes—the discussion we can have today. We've given adequate time for these witnesses, who have already been mentioned twice in motions before this committee, to find the time to come here in September. If we wait until September to discuss this, given committee business on other studies, it's going to be further delayed.

There is a bit of urgency. The Mass Casualty Commission does have a deadline this fall and it has reporting deadlines. We need to continue our study as soon as we can and get these folks here, particularly given the confusing testimony and what we've seen from the chief of staff's clear requests on April 22 and April 23, all around the cabinet meeting that was held that day on this issue, asking for details that the civilian level was not entitled to.

The only people who can answer for that are the people on this list, and they have not been allowed or able to appear. We need to hear them, or the committee's study will be questionable in any conclusions it comes to.

• (1320)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, MP Perkins.

Go ahead, MP Noormohamed.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: I have to confess, in listening to all of this.... I have a reflection. First of all, we've now heard the commissioner of the RCMP say she wasn't pressured. We've heard the minister say he never pressured anybody. We've heard that no political office pressured anybody. We've also heard two reputable members of the RCMP, in particular Chief Superintendent Campbell, say they never heard the minister or political offices, such as

the Prime Minister's Office, pressure or direct the commissioner to do anything.

With that backdrop, and given the fact that we now seemingly have this desire to replace the work of the Mass Casualty Commission, which we should not be doing, I move that we adjourn debate.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, MP Noormohamed. I will say that it's disappointing not to allow the NDP to speak.

We'll call the vote.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 5; nays 4)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): The debate is adjourned.

MP Lloyd, go ahead.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Am I to understand—maybe the clerk can answer—that the adjournment of the debate is on the amendment by Ms. Damoff, or does this dispose of the debate on the amendment and the motion together?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): The clerk's opinion or professional advice is that it deters debate on the motion in its entirety, with the amendment.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Understood.

Madam Chair, I'd like to move a motion.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): MP Lloyd, go ahead.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: The motion is—and I think that maybe there's a bit of a compromise here—that, pursuant to the meeting, the committee agree to hold a meeting to discuss future steps with this study, and that this meeting be held between September 19 and September 30, 2022.

Mr. Ron McKinnon: I have a point of order.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, MP Lloyd.

MP McKinnon, go ahead on a point of order.

Mr. Ron McKinnon: I believe that is repetitive business. We've already dealt with this issue substantially with the motion that has now been adjourned, so I think Mr. Lloyd's motion is out of order.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): I'm just going to take a moment to consult with the clerk.

MP Lloyd, just a point of clarification, you've proposed new dates, September 19 to September 30, that the committee meet. Can you please just repeat that? The clerk wants to see if it is substantively different from the other motion.

• (1325)

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I'm proposing that the committee meet to discuss committee business between the dates of September 19 and September 30 to deal with the question of how to move forward with this study.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): I think that is substantial, and it is different from the original motion, Mr. McKinnon, so your point of order does not stand.

Mr. MacGregor, go ahead.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I was just going to object to the point of order. I did think it was substantively different, and I congratulate Mr. Lloyd. I think a good compromise has been reached, which actually echoes a subamendment I was going to move.

I think this is something we can all agree to, and I'll leave it at that, with the hope that we can get to a vote.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Thank you, MP MacGregor.

MP Damoff, go ahead.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thanks.

Just before I speak, Chair, I'd like to commend you on what you've been able to do today. I know you were put in a position of taking on the chair at the last minute, so I'd just like to thank you for valiantly leading us in this meeting.

To my colleague, Mr. Lloyd, that's essentially what I was trying to get to with my change to the original motion. We would be supportive of a meeting being held between September 19 and September 30, so we'd support your current amendment on the floor.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): It's a motion, but I believe your point stands.

Ms. Pam Damoff: It's a motion on the floor, yes. Sorry about that.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): I see a few hands up, but I think they're just holdovers from when the individuals spoke.

Are there any other comments?

There seems to be agreement. We don't need to vote if there's general agreement. Are there nods that we can have this motion pass? I'm seeing nods from all parties, so the motion is passed.

Madame Normandin, go ahead, please, and then Mr. Schiefke.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: I would like to know if it is possible to get the motion in writing, even though we just passed it. That way, we could know exactly what it says. I understand its essence, but I would like to have the exact wording.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): Absolutely. The clerk will provide that in short order, within the next day, I would think.

MP Schiefke, go ahead.

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mine was just a simple motion to adjourn, Madam Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Raquel Dancho): I think we can all agree on that. I see nodding and thumbs-up.

The meeting is adjourned.

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