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Co-Chairs:
The Honourable Gwen Boniface Mr. Matthew Green Mr. Rhéal Fortin



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• (1830)

[*English*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP)): I'd like to call this meeting to order and welcome everybody to the 13th meeting of the Special Joint Committee on the Declaration of Emergency created pursuant to the order of the House of March 2, 2022 and the Senate of March 3, 2022.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format pursuant to the House and Senate orders.

We are having a bit of technical difficulty. I'm going to suspend the meeting for three minutes to get this set up. Thank you.

• (1835)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (1835)

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Given that time is of the essence, I will recall this meeting to order and welcome everybody to the 13th meeting of the Special Joint Committee on the Declaration of Emergency created pursuant to the order of the House of March 2, 2022 and of the Senate on March 3, 2022.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format pursuant to orders of the House and the Senate. Should any technical issues arise, as just happened, whether it be through interpretation, on the floor or virtually, then I would advise folks to let me know as soon as possible so that I can suspend for a few minutes to ensure that all members are able to participate fully.

Witnesses should also be aware that translation is available through the globe icon at the bottom of their screen.

We have with us today Sergeant-at-Arms and corporate security officer of the House of Commons, Mr. Patrick McDonell. We have, from Parliamentary Protective Service, acting director Mr. Larry Brookson. From the Senate, we have director of corporate security, Ms. Julie Lacroix.

You will each have five minutes for opening remarks.

Mr. McDonell, we will start with you.

I should let you know that if I gently intervene, it will be because your time is up. I will also put out there that when the members have their time in the rounds of questions, if you hear the members from time to time gently intervene, it's not poor manners. They're just trying to get to the next question, so they may reclaim their time and ask the next question. Please don't take that as a personal affront to your intervention.

With that being said, we will now proceed with the opening remarks.

Mr. Patrick McDonell (Sergeant-at-Arms and Corporate Security Officer, House of Commons): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

My name is Patrick McDonell, and I am the Sergeant-at-Arms for the House of Commons.

[*English*]

I hope the committee understands that I'll be careful speaking openly about sensitive security matters. Security matters, when discussed before the Board of Internal Economy, are legislatively mandated under the Parliament of Canada Act to be discussed in camera. Some information, if made public, could increase the vulnerability of the House of Commons security posture, the parliamentary buildings, parliamentarians and other persons within the parliamentary precinct.

As head of the Office of the Sergeant-at-Arms and Corporate Security, my team works in close collaboration with its partners to provide a secure environment for members of Parliament, employees and visitors on the Hill. Working with the Parliamentary Protective Service and the Senate corporate security directorate, we adapt our practices proactively and continuously while also responding to evolving security risks. We collaborate closely with our partners both on and off the Hill for a coordinated security approach.

[*Translation*]

I will reiterate: our primary emphasis has been to ensure the security of parliamentarians. We understand that prevention and early intervention make it possible to diminish the escalation of threats and harm.

As I mentioned, I am pleased to appear before you. However, I hope the committee can understand that I am limited in what I can say given this public format.

Thank you very much.

[*English*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Thank you for those remarks.

We will now move on to Mr. Brookson.

Mr. Brookson, you have five minutes.

Mr. Larry Brookson (Acting Director, Parliamentary Protective Service): Good evening, Mr. Chair, honourable senators and members of Parliament.

My name is Larry Brookson. I am the acting director for the Parliamentary Protective Service, an organization created by Parliament in 2015 as a result of legislative amendments to the Parliament of Canada Act. Our raison d'être is to provide physical security operations for the whole of the parliamentary precinct. Each day our dedicated team of protection officers and dedicated specialists proudly serve and protect parliamentarians, staff and visitors.

• (1840)

[Translation]

To achieve our objectives, we work closely with our partners in Senate corporate security and the House of Commons protective service, as well as with police and intelligence organizations. These relationships are of paramount importance to us.

[English]

Since the important work of the joint committee is focused on events and circumstances related to the government's decision to invoke the emergency measures act, I should note that PPS, as a parliamentary entity and a non-government organization, had no role in providing direction or advice to government with respect to its decision to invoke the Emergencies Act.

[Translation]

That said, I hope my comments contribute to the progress of your collective work.

I will be happy to answer any questions regarding the efforts of the Parliamentary Protective Service.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Thank you very much.

We will now provide the floor to Ms. Lacroix.

Ms. Lacroix, you have five minutes. The floor is yours.

Ms. Julie Lacroix (Director, Corporate Security, Senate): Good evening, senators and members of the House of Commons.

My name is Julie Lacroix. I'm the director of corporate security for the Senate of Canada. Thank you for inviting me this evening.

I'm appearing before your committee as part of your ongoing work to examine the decision to invoke the Emergencies Act.

[Translation]

For information, it might be helpful to provide the committee with some context as to the roles that I and corporate security play and the work we do to support the Speaker, senators, and Senate staff.

[English]

I report to the Clerk of the Senate and I'm accountable to the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration—CIBA—for all corporate security matters.

I'm responsible for programs and services that range from security accreditation to business continuity management, security project management, technical and physical security systems and infrastructure, security assessments and briefings for Senate and parliamentary travel, administrative reviews and investigations, fire prevention, Senate parking and locksmith services, to name just a few.

Along with my counterpart at the House of Commons, Mr. McDonnell, we represent both Speakers as co-chairs of the committee on the use of Parliament Hill, and I manage the administration of that program on behalf of both Speakers.

[Translation]

I am also the senior security advisor to the Speaker of the Senate and the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration on any security-related matters for which they have responsibility. However, the Senate's Corporate Security Directorate does not have the mandate to handle physical security operations on Parliament Hill. That responsibility rests with the Parliamentary Protective Service, managed by Mr. Larry Brookson.

[English]

Senators and members of the House of Commons, I want to highlight that during the convoy demonstrations in the downtown core of Ottawa, my role as director was to maintain regular communication with relevant security partners for the purpose of assisting the Senate's decision-making in respect of four key things: to ensure that access to the precinct remained unimpeded for the Speaker, senators and staff; to provide briefings, advice and guidance to the Speaker, CIBA and decision-makers; to provide regular updates on the security situation; and, when necessary, to instruct the Senate and its employees to work from home and to avoid the downtown core of Ottawa.

Finally, the committee should know that I did not receive any prior notification of the invocation of the Emergencies Act.

[Translation]

I will be happy to answer any questions members of the committee may have.

Thank you.

[English]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Thank you to all for the opening statements.

We will now open the floor to Mr. Motz for a five-minute round.

Mr. Motz, the floor is yours.

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

Thank you very much, witnesses, for being here. Most importantly, thank you for the work that you and your departments and services do for the parliamentary precinct and those who work in it.

By all accounts, the trucker convoy was organized well in advance. They reached out to city officials in attempting to coordinate well in advance, weeks in advance.

Mr. Brookson or Mr. McDonell, did either of you have any contact with organizers of the convoy itself ahead of them arriving here?

Mr. Patrick McDonell: I did not.

Mr. Larry Brookson: Nor did I.

Mr. Glen Motz: What about with the police service? Did you have any conversations with them in the weeks leading up to their arrival here?

• (1845)

Mr. Patrick McDonell: Larry was the contact point for the Ottawa police.

Mr. Larry Brookson: Yes, so there were ongoing conversations leading up, as things started to come in from information and intelligence to enable us to commence our preparations. There's always open dialogue with the partners.

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. McDonell, this is related to you and for you. Kevin Vickers, who is your former boss and a well-known sergeant-at-arms and a well-respected law enforcement officer of many years, has had some things to say about the convoy and the response to the convoy. I want to review some of those.

He called it the “Canadian way”. He tweeted, “We solve these things through a measured approach, #CanadianWay, dealing with public order and civil disobedience. It is a problem-solving model that includes all stakeholders...listening, education, communication, facilitation and enforcement, but it's founded upon respect and the dignity of all people. Bring these facilitators and stakeholders who have a mandate and responsibility to resolve the issue, together, sit down and try to talk to try to come up with solutions and a compromise.”

He went on to make many other comments. He tweeted that the Canadian way “involves recognizing, accommodating and reconciling differing perspectives and interests through informed, respectful debate and compromise.”

He also said that enforcement alone is always degrees of loss, a simplistic view of the rule of law, so it's naive to think that this is going to be at all resolved through enforcement.

He went on to say, “My friends there is another way. Enforcement! How is that working for you. Enforcement means degrees of losing for everyone. We are better than this Canada! Respect, dialogue, understanding [and] empathy....”

He also tweeted, “Respect actually means listening to something you'd rather not hear and listening must include the possibility of recognizing there may be a 'meaningful grievance' on the other side.”

Now, I respect the position you're in, and I'm not asking you specifically to weigh in on what could or should have been done, but these comments come from an individual I know you respect and who has a position. Can you provide any comments to us on

that position and your view of the response to the protest and the invocation of the Emergencies Act?

Mr. Patrick McDonell: Through you, Mr. Chair, Kevin was a respected police officer. I was a police officer for 31 years, and I've met lots of colleagues and worked with many I respected, but there's always a variance of opinion, and many have expressed their opinions about different incidents and occurrences in different forms. I'll let Kevin's comments speak for themselves. I will not weigh in on them.

Mr. Glen Motz: Fair enough. Thank you.

I will, because it appears obvious to me and to millions of Canadians that the convoy protest could have been concluded very differently from how it was concluded by the Prime Minister and his government. Rather than taking a heavy-handed approach with the invocation of the Emergencies Act, this protest could have been resolved, and significantly sooner, had the protesters only been shown some respect, offered some dignity and actually been listened to, something that maybe the Prime Minister and the ministers didn't want to hear.

Had they done that, I think they may have heard a meaningful grievance from the other side, and the situation in all probability would and could have been resolved significantly sooner, without the enforcement action.

Thank you for your comments.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Thank you very much, Mr. Motz.

We will now hand the floor over to Mr. Naqvi. You have five minutes.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Thank you very much. I will, of course, be addressing the witnesses through you.

Let me first of all start by also extending my gratitude to all the members of the Parliamentary Protective Service for the incredible job they do every day to keep this place safe, especially during the very difficult time during the occupation.

Let me just start broadly from the aspect of protests. We often witness peaceful protests that take place on Parliament Hill. Can you just in general terms give us the process that people have to go through in order to be able to protest on the Hill?

Mr. Larry Brookson: There is a process to make application for use of the Hill, as Ms. Lacroix stated in her opening remarks. That's governed through both Speakers, through her and Mr. McDonell. My only comment is that the service ensures that there are safe and open demonstrations. There are demonstrations that happen every day, and that's why the service trains itself to ensure that those who want to come to Parliament Hill can, and they can be in a safe environment to do so.

• (1850)

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Was the process followed in the instance of the convoy protest that we are discussing in this particular committee?

Mr. Larry Brookson: I'm not aware of any submission of a permit request to protest during that time.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you.

In your experience and the experience of PPS, would you characterize the protest that we saw as safe or peaceful?

Mr. Larry Brookson: It had moments of concern.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Can you elaborate on that, please?

Mr. Larry Brookson: As the acting director, it's my role in leading the organization to ensure that parliamentarians, staffers and members of the public have a safe place to come to work. It's also my job to look at what's happening, particularly on the exterior, and to ensure that a proper posture is in place to ensure the safety of parliamentarians.

As I've said before, during those days of the occupation I had some concerns about safety, particularly that of our parliamentarians crossing Wellington Street and coming up to West Block. I was happy in the end that nothing major came to play, but it's one of those things that I can't... I will always have to err on the side of caution when it comes to protecting Parliament.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'll pose this question to all three of you. Perhaps all of you can answer this question in my limited time.

In your experience and the experience of the Parliamentary Protective Service or its predecessors, have you ever seen a protest of the magnitude and the nature that we witnessed in January and February of this year?

Mr. Patrick McDonell: No.

Mr. Larry Brookson: No.

Ms. Julie Lacroix: No.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: So it was quite a unique event. How concerned were you for the safety of PPS officers, who are responsible for keeping all of us and the staff safe?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Every day I had that concern about the safety of my protection officers.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Was that a live issue that was discussed among the leadership?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Every advancement we do in delivering the mandate takes everything into consideration, including the safety of our protection officers and staff.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Mr. Brookson, in your comments you mentioned that the mandate of PPS is to protect members, staff and visitors. Let me focus on visitors. Were you concerned for the safety of visitors who usually frequent Parliament Hill?

Mr. Larry Brookson: During that time of the occupation, there were moments when we had to close down access for certain moments. There was never a closure that was extended for an indefinite period of time. It was a finite period of time, just until the concern that I may or may not have had at that moment was alleviated.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Where were visitors who were visiting Parliament Hill during that period?

Mr. Larry Brookson: I'm not aware of any visitors who were attending Parliament during that time.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Did you have reports filed by members and staff of harassment and intimidation during the occupation?

Mr. Larry Brookson: I'll defer that to Mr. McDonell, because that's where the complaints or notifications of that would have come in.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: From staff as well?

Mr. Patrick McDonell: Yes. We had lots of complaints from staff—so many that they stopped filing them; they'd just speak with their manager.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Thank you. That is the time.

We will now go to Monsieur Fortin for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ)): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank all three of you for being with us. Your testimony is important, considering the purpose of our proceedings.

During these events, all three of you had important security-related duties on Parliament Hill. Yet I understand that you began holding discussions about this event a week or two before the Wellington Street blockade took place.

Is that correct?

• (1855)

Mr. Larry Brookson: Yes, you are right.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Thank you.

When you had this security concern, did you discuss it with representatives from the Prime Minister's office?

Mr. Larry Brookson: No.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): You did not discuss this at any time.

Mr. Larry Brookson: No.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): With whom did your discussions on security issues take place?

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, my accounts on how....

[*Translation*]

I'm sorry, but I'm going to answer in English.

[*English*]

Any change to the posture or any briefings come up through me to both administrations. My direction comes from both Speakers, and they are who I'm accountable to.

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): So you had discussions with the speakers of the Senate and the House of Commons. Is that correct?

Mr. Larry Brookson: I did not have discussions directly with them, but I provided updates to representatives from both administrations.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): To whom did you provide them?

Mr. Larry Brookson: This was with Mr. McDonell and Ms. Lacroix.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): So Ms. Lacroix and Mr. McDonell were the only people you spoke to.

Mr. Larry Brookson: Yes.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): At some point, did you ask for security assessments to evaluate the scale of the event, to see whether it was going to be worse than expected?

Are there any safety issue assessments related to the events?

[English]

Mr. Patrick McDonell: We were aware of the scope, and I think a lot of people watching or in this room were aware of the scope. What was approaching Ottawa was live on national television. We started monitoring that on January 11 and—

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Mr. McDonell, I apologize for interrupting you. I know it's not polite, but my time is limited.

Maybe my question was poorly put. I want to know if you received any assessments of safety issues from external companies or experts in the field.

Mr. Patrick McDonell: No.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): I see.

Did you obtain legal advice as to what actions could or could not be taken in relation to the events?

Ms. Julie Lacroix: No.

[English]

Mr. Larry Brookson: No.

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): You didn't ask for them and you didn't get them.

From what I understand, the events were probably more important and cumbersome than you anticipated. Am I right in thinking that?

Ms. Julie Lacroix: Our role was to assess the threats and risks to parliamentary access and the security of parliamentarians and staff. In the Senate, we maintained access for parliamentarians and for staff. When necessary...

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Excuse me for interrupting you, Ms. Lacroix. Again, I may have asked the wrong question.

Were events more cumbersome, more difficult to manage, than you had anticipated?

[English]

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, originally, the information that was coming up was that this was going to be a three-day event, so that in itself was not necessarily a concern. Obviously what became a concern was when vehicles started to

present themselves on Wellington, which is right down the heart of both administrations. The reality for me is I didn't know what was in those vehicles, and I had no means to verify what was in those vehicles, so that was a constant security concern for me throughout the days of the occupation.

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): If I understood your answer correctly, the events were indeed more difficult to manage than originally expected. Rather than a three-day demonstration, the events were spread over a longer period. I understand that you had not planned for the closure of Wellington Street.

Am I correct in saying that?

[English]

Mr. Larry Brookson: I think it's important to be clear that none of the occupation touched the precinct directly. The precinct does not include Wellington Street.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Thank you. The time is up.

Monsieur Fortin, I will pass the floor to you and start my time. I'll make sure my time is at five minutes correctly. We'll go through the acting chair, Mr. Fortin.

I would like to continue on with that line of questioning. Would you be willing to share any written and ongoing threat assessments as they evolved with this committee for the purpose of giving us a better understanding of how it evolved from your perspective?

• (1900)

Mr. Larry Brookson: For that, Mr. Chair, I would defer to the law enforcement partners who would have had that information.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Through you, Mr. Chair, were there no internal communications as to the evolving nature of the threat? Would you not have reported to your superiors about how you viewed the threat assessment on the Hill as it evolved?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Those would have been through my own concerns and what I had seen.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Sure. Would you be willing to present those to this committee for our consideration?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Yes, I'm sure I can go back. I mean, there was nothing in formal writing that was presented here. A lot of this—

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): No, but there likely would have been emails and assessments, would there not? After it went beyond three days, for instance, I'm sure there would have been a concern when you saw Wellington Street, although adjacent to the precinct, having a direct impact on the work of the Hill.

Mr. Larry Brookson: Well, it's important to be clear on this one, Mr. Chair. It's that there was never anything that directly implicated the precinct, with the exception of what was happening on Wellington Street.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): That's a pretty large exception.

Would you have received any of the communications that were happening between the National Capital Commission, the City of Ottawa and the Ottawa police as it related to Wellington Street?

Mr. Larry Brookson: No.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): None at all.

Mr. Larry Brookson: No.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): There was no coordinated effort in the early stages or throughout this process that would have included your protective services working in coordination with law enforcement.

Mr. Larry Brookson: No, Mr. Chair, because we're not a law enforcement service. We're not peace officers, so no.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Perhaps, Mr. McDonell, would you have received, in your capacity as Sergeant-at-Arms, any information relating to the ongoing evolving threat that was presented outside the precinct?

Mr. Patrick McDonell: No.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): No. Is that a concern for you, in retrospect? Would it have been enabled your service to provide better security and intelligence within the precinct, given what was identified as an unknown threat in terms of cars parked, incendiary devices or canteens of gasoline walking to and fro?

In your opinion, would it be a recommendation that the precinct and the protective services be involved in these types of potential security threats?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Mr. Chair, only if there were a direct link to the precinct.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Would you agree that Wellington Street is a direct link to the precinct?

Mr. Larry Brookson: It's not a direct link.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): If MPs, as you have reported, were being harassed and their transportation to and from work.... I'll share with you myself that I stayed home. That is a prima facie breach of my parliamentary privilege to feel safe on the Hill.

I will put the question through you, Mr. Chair: Is it your responsibility to keep members of Parliament safe on the Hill?

Mr. Larry Brookson: On the Hill, yes.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): So if there are activities surrounding the Hill....

Let me put this question to you another way: Do you believe that we would have a greater opportunity to keep the parliamentary precinct safe if the precinct extended to Wellington Street?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Yes.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Would it be your recommendation, in the security recommendations back to Parliament, that the precinct be expanded to include the arteries that would perhaps obstruct the coming and going of parliamentarians to and from the Hill?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Yes.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Do you have any other recommendations that you would be willing to share with this committee on safety?

I will start with Mr. McDonell first, and then have Mr. Brookson and Ms. Lacroix if they would like to answer.

Do you have any other high-level recommendations that you would like to put forward to this committee at this moment?

Mr. Patrick McDonell: Other than Wellington Street, which is under study now.... I'm authorized by the Board of Internal Economy to be part of a working group. As I said, it's a study in progress, and our final report has yet to be tabled. There may be some other security recommendations within that report by the time we table it, but I'm not at liberty to speak to it at this time.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Okay.

Would you prefer to have a greater input—at least insight—as to the nature of the threats that surround the precinct, even if it doesn't include the precinct, given the nature of our work?

Mr. Patrick McDonell: Well, Mr. Chair, security, as I said in my opening remarks, is evolving, and we're always proactively addressing it, so yes, there are always improvements to be made, whether it's inside or outside the immediate—

• (1905)

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Did you find that not having the information available impacted your work?

Mr. Patrick McDonell: Well, at times I knew what was happening on Wellington Street if it was imminent, but it wasn't contained in a report per se. It would be like a phone call: You may want a heads-up; your employees are going to put barriers—

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Okay.

Unfortunately, I have to cut myself off.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): *Merci.*

We will now proceed with the Senate round, starting with Ms. Boniface for five minutes.

Senator Boniface, the floor is yours.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): Thank you very much.

Welcome to all three of you. I appreciate your being here.

I think the public and this committee need to understand how the workings on a day-to-day basis are with the local police service. You know my background.

Police agencies work very closely together, so I'm curious when we start kind of separating out: If we're standing on one side of the pavement, we're in one jurisdiction, and when we're on the other side of the pavement, it's somebody else's issue.

What would be the normal day-to-day—that would be my first question—in your work with the Ottawa Police Service, the municipal police service? Then, secondly, how did it work out through that process in terms of ongoing dialogue and conversation for the protection of everybody?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Today, there has been much advancement on the relationship between the service and the Ottawa Police Service, mainly due to the demobilization of the RCMP from Parliament Hill.

I stand here today with the utmost confidence in that relationship with the Ottawa Police Service. As an example, we have civil authority under the Criminal Code to make an arrest, which means we don't have the authority to release. The relationship we have today with the Ottawa Police Service is that they respond when the call is made, which is greatly appreciated.

We're in the works right now, trying to ensure that these relationships are removed from just the people who are currently in place. The MOUs have started. Right now the Ottawa police have the MOU with respect to critical incident command. Our service moved quickly in 2020 to establish our own critical incident command program, and nobody really knew about us because everybody just looked at us as the RCMP. It took some time and some effort to get everybody on board, and surprisingly enough it has been welcomed. Rest assured the service has been built to hold the first 90 minutes of any incident, and we'll continue to make the necessary changes moving forward.

Again, the service takes this protective mandate of Parliament, parliamentarians, staffers and others very seriously.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): I appreciate that and I respect that as well.

The important piece as well is to have reassurance that working together through an MOU.... You indicated that you've been working on an MOU. I think you've testified to that at a different committee. Where are we in terms of that discussion, and how close are you to the finish line?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, to Senator Boniface, the last update I had from the Ottawa Police Service is that it's coming in the next few weeks.

That said, there's another series of MOUs. The service does a great job at also setting in its tabletop exercise framework, and we're committed to continuing those tabletop exercises with the Ottawa Police Service and with the RCMP's PMPD, our friends at both security directorates. This is something that we'll continue to pursue to ensure that our operational readiness and response is where it needs to be.

I'm prepared to report back on the advancement of those MOUs, but I'm starting to become a pain in their rear end at the Ottawa Police Service, because we need to advance on these things.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): Your sense of it is that if the MOUs are in place it will help divide out this work in a meaningful way, so that in the day-to-day work and in a major incident like you experienced in January and February, it would help facilitate how the working relationships are.

The difficulty is that people vest it in people they know, but standing it in the long term is the hard part, agency to agency.

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, to Senator Boniface, my objective here is not just through the demobilization of the

RCMP. It was to ensure absolute sustainability of this service, and that's a priority that I'm not going to waver from.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): Can you tell me, again, through the chair, whether or not you conducted an internal review as a result of the incident overall, the role that PPS played and how they responded?

• (1910)

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, to Senator Boniface, yes, an after action review was conducted by the service. We're just finalizing the report on that, and we'll certainly be in a position to share those findings.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): I think that would be very helpful.

In terms of the attack on Parliament Hill and where you came from, those recommendations, to where we are today, could you elaborate on that as well? That, as you know, speaks to the preparedness for an incident like this.

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, thank you, Senator Boniface.

Yes, the recommendations from the OPP review have all been addressed, and I think we're at 90% or thereabouts with implementation. We're trying to decouple.... A lot of those recommendations were steered towards the RCMP, but from a service perspective our objective has been to transfer all of that from yellow to blue, which are the colours of the service, and that work continues as well.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): Thank you.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Thank you.

That concludes the five-minute round.

[Translation]

Mr. Carignan, you have the floor for five minutes.

Hon. Claude Carignan (Senator, Quebec (Mille Isles), C): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is for Mr. Brookson.

Did you have any discussions with the Ottawa Police Service and the RCMP before and after the convoy arrived?

[English]

Mr. Larry Brookson: Yes. I had several conversations with the RCMP and two or three with the Ottawa Police Service. Two were directly with Chief Sloly during the occupation.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan: What was the nature of these discussions before and after the convoy arrived?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Prior to the arrival of the convoy, it was just a matter of coordinating the security measures that we had in place to ensure the safe arrival of the parliamentarians on the first Monday after the arrival...

[English]

With Chief Sloly, they were conversations on where we might be with rectifying the issue that I witnessed every day on Wellington Street. Those were my conversations with him.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan: Were you part of the integrated command centre?

[English]

Mr. Larry Brookson: We had representation at the NCRCC. To be clear, the NCRCC was more for coordination and not the critical incident command. That was a piece that was created, I think, in the third week or two and a half weeks in, and that was with the OPP, the RCMP and the Ottawa Police Service.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan: All right.

On February 12, the Ottawa Police Service reported on its website that it had a plan to clear the streets of Ottawa. Were you aware of this plan?

[English]

Mr. Larry Brookson: No, I was not.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan: So you were not involved in developing any plan to move the trucks where it was more difficult?

Mr. Larry Brookson: No, I wasn't. That was part of the discussions between the police service partners. The PPS was not involved.

Hon. Claude Carignan: It's a bit odd that you weren't aware of this and didn't participate in these discussions. Did you ask for a greater presence in these discussions? After all, you had the mandate to protect parliamentarians. It is a bit peculiar that you were not part of these discussions.

[English]

Mr. Larry Brookson: Again, the policing operations were governed and driven out by the policing partners, not the service.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan: I understand that this was not your own department, but you were like the client in all this. You were like a victim, as you were not part of the discussion and you were not consulted on the methods or tools. Earlier, during Ms. Lacroix's testimony, she said that she had not been informed of the declaration of the state of emergency before it was made. So you were not consulted or notified beforehand either.

• (1915)

Mr. Larry Brookson: That's right.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Mr. Carignan, excuse me.

[English]

You froze. I don't know...

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan: All right.

[English]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): I've stopped your time. You can reclaim it, if you'd like to put the question again, sir.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan: That's nice, thank you.

Did you have any discussions with the two speakers about a possible declaration of emergency measures? Were there any pre-declaration exchanges with the two speakers, the Speaker of the House of Commons and the Speaker of the Senate?

Ms. Julie Lacroix: With respect to the Senate, Mr. Brookson and I briefed the Speaker, but only with regard to our ability to maintain access to Parliament for parliamentarians. We also provided advice when we sent the instruction not to report to the Senate during police operations.

Hon. Claude Carignan: How could you do that if you had no communication with the command centre? How did you do that coordination?

[English]

Mr. Larry Brookson: It's important that we decouple being involved with the definition of the operation and how the operation was going to roll out. Obviously, when the tactical plan was being put together by the policing partners, they kept us informed as to what those plans were going to be. It was of that information that we kept both administrations apprised.

Again, to Ms. Lacroix's point, ensuring the safe arrival and departure of our parliamentarians was always our collective objective throughout this period.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): That concludes the five minutes with the additional time, Monsieur Carignan.

We will now move on to Senator Harder.

Senator Harder, sir, you have five minutes for your intervention.

Hon. Peter Harder (Senator, Ontario, PSG): Thank you very much, Chair.

To our witnesses, thank you for presentations tonight, and through you, thank you to your respective staff, who have worked throughout this period to protect us and allow the Parliament of Canada to continue to function.

I'm struck by the testimony tonight, which was very consistent in viewing the occupation as a unique event—not a passive, nice gathering of protesters but rather more tumultuous than you've experienced in the past. Was there any time in the occupation when you feared a breach of the precinct?

Ms. Julie Lacroix: We actually did not have any breach of the precinct—

Hon. Peter Harder: No, I know that. Did you ever fear that there would be a breach of the precinct?

Mr. Larry Brookson: That came around February 17 and 18. My concern at that was understanding the route and how the policing operation was going to unfold. I was increasingly concerned about the next day, when Parliament was going to be sitting, the route of our parliamentarians' foot traffic into West Block, and understanding where the police operation could be at that time. That was the biggest concern I had.

Hon. Peter Harder: In that expression of concern, did the policing authorities take into account the advice you might have offered in assuring that parliamentarians, in the passage through...that their authorities would transpire in a coordinated and a proper fashion?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, it's important that when that level of a police operation gets put in place, it's really something that then gets governed on its own. What I appreciated the most from our policing partners was the information that they shared with us, which then brought me to the position of raising a concern about whether Parliament should take place on the Friday.

Hon. Peter Harder: I now want to go to the tail end of this period of emergency declaration. As I observed the coordinated police action, it was a classic case in how policing should take place in terms of confronting and disabling an occupation. What level of coordination was there with the precinct's responsibility to ensure that, as that operation proceeded, there wouldn't be an inadvertent breach of the precinct?

• (1920)

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, we took some increased measures by increasing the height of the fencing and what have you. That was something that I asked for specifically, just in alignment with the policing operation. My concern at the time was that as the police operation pushed westbound into West Block, it would collapse onto the precinct. That was something I wasn't prepared to permit.

The good news on how that rolled out, to your point, is that it was an operation that was done very well in comparison with maybe what it would have looked like 10 or 20 years ago, but there was nothing to the point...outside of, again, times when we were having roughly 150 to 160 parliamentarians and their staffers coming to work in this building every day.

Hon. Peter Harder: Right.

My final question or observation for your comment would be this. Lessons learned include what we discussed earlier about expanding the precinct to incorporate Wellington, and other aspects that are being looked at. Without specifics, and I understand that you can't talk about the specifics, would it be helpful in your mind if this committee were to recommend in its findings an endorsement of the work that is being done to expand the protective area for Parliament?

Ms. Julie Lacroix: Yes. I think my recommendation would be to ensure that we have the necessary technology and infrastructure to allow us to close and secure the precinct when necessary.

Hon. Peter Harder: Thank you.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Thank you very much, Senator Harder.

We now have Senator White for a five-minute round.

Sir, the floor is yours.

Hon. Vernon White (Senator, Ontario, CSG): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to all of you for being here. Thanks to PPS for your work. It's truly appreciated. I personally have seen a dramatic shift in your capabilities since the attack on Parliament Hill.

I have a couple of quick questions. One, were any of your offices receiving ongoing written reports from the Ottawa Police Service for that period of time when the convoy was in front of Wellington Street?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, our service was not.

Mr. Patrick McDonell: No.

Ms. Julie Lacroix: No.

Hon. Vernon White: You spoke about sending some information to staff and parliamentarians throughout, and I agree there was some information. I don't recall ever seeing anything come out that made me fearful of what was happening in front of Parliament. It's not that I didn't feel it, because I felt it walking the streets behind, but I don't remember seeing anything.

Did any of you ever send anything out advising parliamentarians that they may wish not to attend work, or directing them to specific locations that they should follow to work?

Ms. Julie Lacroix: I did. I directed senators and staff to stay home on two occasions.

Hon. Vernon White: Was that near the end of occupation?

Ms. Julie Lacroix: It was near the end. That's correct.

Hon. Vernon White: It wasn't at the beginning.

Ms. Julie Lacroix: No. However, in all of my communications, I recommended to senators and staff to work remotely if they could do so.

Hon. Vernon White: Go ahead, please, Patrick.

Mr. Patrick McDonell: In the first few days, Senator White, we recommended certain routes onto the precinct.

Hon. Vernon White: Was that from a driving perspective?

Mr. Patrick McDonell: No. It was walking.

Hon. Vernon White: Superintendent, did you at any time request that the Ottawa Police Service freeze the space in front of Parliament, on Wellington Street?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, yes, Senator.

Hon. Vernon White: At what point was that?

Mr. Larry Brookson: It was about a week before the arrival. My concern from the onset was filling up Wellington Street.

Hon. Vernon White: What were you told?

Mr. Larry Brookson: I was told that the plan was in place and they would leave one lane open.

Hon. Vernon White: The police service stated they would leave one lane open for a protest.

Mr. Larry Brookson: That's correct. It was for emergency transport.

Hon. Vernon White: We freeze that area every year for Canada Day and special occasions, so it's not that it's not something that's done.

Does the Ottawa police do that every time it's requested?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, to be clear, for Canada Day, it's not for vehicles to be parked on Wellington. Wellington is closed down for foot traffic for people who are visiting.

Hon. Vernon White: I understand. That's what I'm saying. It's not something we've never done before. We have done this before. For the Queen's visit previously, we froze certain areas, particularly in front of Wellington Street.

Mr. Larry Brookson: That's correct.

Hon. Vernon White: Were any of you involved in any discussions with the office of the mayor while that office was negotiating with the convoy protesters?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, yes. I attempted a call with the mayor. At first, he accepted my invitation. It was the same day I had a follow-up discussion with Chief Soly, but then my team received notification back that the mayor was not available.

I tried to make notification with the city manager, Steve Kanelakos, and the same response came back.

Hon. Vernon White: We know the outcome of those negotiations. I think most of us have seen the letter that came from the mayor's office, which was later rescinded as a result of the convoy's refusal to follow it.

Do you know if the police service or the RCMP was involved in that negotiation?

• (1925)

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, I'm not aware of any involvement by either policing—

Hon. Vernon White: Go ahead, Mr. McDonell.

Mr. Patrick McDonell: I'm not aware.

Hon. Vernon White: In hindsight, do you feel that information was shared sufficiently between the law enforcement agencies and parliamentary precinct security?

Go ahead, Larry.

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, I do, Senator.

Hon. Vernon White: You felt that sufficient information was shared.

Mr. Larry Brookson: As it was being provided to me, keeping me abreast as to what the.... It was not the service, to be clear. It was not the service being part of the creation of the tactical response, but when that was put in place, it was giving us an FYI.

A case in point is keeping us abreast when the operation was under way. We were well informed to ensure that we needed to take the necessary measures.

Hon. Vernon White: Thank you.

At any point in time did you see...? Our understanding is there was a removal plan that was to be followed prior to the invocation. We've heard the RCMP speak to that.

Were you able to see that plan that was going to take place the weekend prior to the invocation of the Emergencies Act?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, no, Senator.

Hon. Vernon White: It wasn't shared with you.

Mr. Larry Brookson: No.

Hon. Vernon White: Do you think it should have been?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, again, Senator White, I rely heavily on those policing partners to do what they're mandated to do and then on what they choose to share with me.

Hon. Vernon White: I'm good, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): That concludes the opening round.

We'll now go into the second four-minute round, beginning with Mr. Brock.

Mr. Brock, you have four minutes. The floor is yours.

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses for your attendance today and your participation in this extremely important study. I want to thank you for your service.

I want to do some housekeeping before I get into some more substantive issues. I want to clarify with Mr. Brookson and Mr. McDonell that neither of you personally, nor any member of your staff, requested the invocation of the act by the government.

Is that correct?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, that is correct.

Mr. Larry Brock: I understand, Mr. Brookson, that you testified at a previous committee, I believe in June 2022, and you're quoted as saying there was "no benefit whatsoever in the invocation of the Emergencies Act for the service". That's a statement that you stand by today. Is that correct?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Mr. Chair, that's correct.

Mr. Larry Brock: Thank you.

To Mr. Brookson, in that same previous testimony, you stated that you were “flabbergasted” that activities that could constitute criminal activity were happening right in front of law enforcement. The former chief of the Ottawa Police Service, Mr. Peter Sloy, issued a warning through the press, hours before the truckers arrived on January 28, that any protesters who broke the law would be prosecuted. He stated, “Let me be very clear. We are prepared to investigate, arrest if necessary, charge and prosecute anyone who acts violently or breaks the law in the demonstrations or in association with the demonstrations.”

Notwithstanding those strong words, you and your staff witnessed the complete opposite, while law enforcement stood by and allowed those activities to occur. Is that correct?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, there's one point of clarification. I would never use the term “flabbergasted”. That would fall to my colleague, Mr. McDonell.

Mr. Larry Brock: I apologize.

Mr. Larry Brookson: You notice how he's quiet now. He's not opening his mike.

Through you, Mr. Chair, again, the decisions of the Ottawa Police Service during that time belong to the Ottawa Police Service and the police board that was in charge of that service at the time.

Mr. Larry Brock: To Mr. McDonell, did you use the word “flabbergasted”?

Mr. Patrick McDonell: Yes.

Mr. Larry Brock: This was in the presence of cruisers, and this was in the presence of both uniformed and non-uniformed officers. Is that correct?

Mr. Patrick McDonell: I didn't witness any police in civilian attire. What was happening every day was that our employees were being harassed. I think the “flabbergasted” comment was relative to the entrance that we made into our parking lots in front of the Supreme Court. We had employees pulling in and out of there every day. There was banging on the cars and there was a police cruiser within sight, a police cruiser witnessing it, and nobody exiting the police cruiser.

• (1930)

Mr. Larry Brock: This was reported to the Ottawa Police Service almost on a daily basis. Is that correct?

Mr. Patrick McDonell: I don't know if it was on a daily basis. I think we gave up at a certain point, and Larry put a car down there.

Mr. Larry Brock: Did you speak directly with former chief Sloy about this issue?

Mr. Patrick McDonell: No, I did not.

Mr. Larry Brock: All right.

You'll agree with me that there was a suggestion by the government in relation to the silly words used by some of the protesters, that they were trying to overthrow the government and speak with the Governor General and have a new form of government to take over this country. I put that to Justice Lametti when he testified earlier at this committee. He thought that was a silly statement. Did either of you take that as a serious threat to national security?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, no, I did not.

Mr. Larry Brock: Mr. McDonell.

Mr. Patrick McDonell: That started in January 2019. It was James Bauder, with his convoy. He didn't gain much traction, and no, I didn't take that comment seriously.

Mr. Larry Brock: Thank you.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): That concludes the four minutes.

We will now pass the floor to Ms. Bendayan.

Ms. Bendayan, you have four minutes. The floor is yours.

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

Thank you for appearing before us today.

I'll go quite quickly, given that time is limited.

Mr. Brookson, you indicated that at no time was the precinct breached, but isn't it true that you were blocking access to Parliament Hill? I came to the chamber every single day during the convoy, and I was instructed to go through a very specific entry point, at which point I had to present an ID. So isn't it true that you actually blocked access to the precinct?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair.

During times of heightened security measures there are going to be some heightened restrictions. My apologies if there was any sort of element of you feeling that you were blocked from coming to work. The service does what it can in doing what it needs to do. We continue to work, and I know we had to augment and shift the points of entry that we felt were the safest for our parliamentarians.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: I understand, but that's in part why there was no breach of the precinct. You in fact blocked access to the precinct.

You mentioned earlier that you didn't know what was in the vehicles that were on Wellington Street. You actually testified before the PROC committee that there was a technology gap, and I'm quoting here. You stated, “It was considered to be unsafe for some of those members to walk through that street and sense vehicles.”

Can you be a little more precise as to what your concern was? What could have been in those vehicles?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, for me, it's just not knowing what's in those vehicles that concerns me, without needing to have a sense of the specificity. My request in previous testimony was that it's not a specialty of the service itself to do the checking of what vehicles are. That was a request that I made to one of the partners.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. McDonell, you stated, in connection to the vehicles on Wellington Street, that, “We voiced our frustration with what was happening. It was almost a daily occurrence.”

You voiced your frustration to the police of jurisdiction. Is that right?

Mr. Patrick McDonnell: We went back through Larry. Our employees were calling in. They weren't getting any sort of response, so they would take their complaints to their managers.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Nothing happened, though.

Mr. Patrick McDonnell: Nothing ever happened. The police posture was on the outside of the demonstration. They were never on the inside of the demonstration, so there was no police officer to be seen at—

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you.

On Friday, February 18, I came to the Hill. I wanted to be in the House of Commons. I was actually stopped by your staff and escorted home. I was not allowed to attend the House of Commons on Friday, February 18.

Can you explain why? Again, in specific terms, what was the security threat on February 18?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, the security threat of that day was the commencement of the police operation that was going to walk right down Wellington Street. I had hoped that it would have been cleared prior to February 18, on the evening of February 17, but for reasons unknown to me, the policing operation was halted.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: And so, in effect, did the convoy stop the functioning of democracy temporarily in this country, in your opinion?

• (1935)

Mr. Larry Brookson: What I do know is that the recommendation from me to the administration was to suspend Parliament for February 18.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: That was because it was unsafe?

Mr. Larry Brookson: I felt it was unsafe. Yes.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Thank you.

We will now go to the three-minute rounds.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fortin, you have three minutes.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

If I may, Mr. Brookson, I'd like to pick up on the last part of the testimony, where you told us that you felt that the security of parliamentary operations could be compromised.

At what point did you feel that there was some danger to the safety of actors on Parliament Hill?

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, it would have been around February 18. February 18 was the Friday, I believe. February 17, or the evening thereof, was the commencement of the police operation. The operation commenced outside the perimeter of the downtown core, and it was suspended that evening. It was

February 18, during the day, that it was going to be coming through Wellington and clearing out.

Understanding what I wasn't alive to, understanding what a police operation of that magnitude could trigger off with those who were involved and remaining—

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): I apologize for interrupting. I know it's from February 18, but at no time before that date did you feel that the safety of the actors on Parliament Hill was in danger.

[*English*]

Never? No?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Larry Brookson: No.

[*English*]

My sense was that.... Just to be clear to the committee, and I've expressed this to the policing partners, the threshold for me is much lower at maintaining security within the precinct. What I was seeing happening on Wellington Street and the massive police operation to clear Wellington Street, understanding the level of foot traffic of our parliamentarian staffers who come to work—that was the consideration I took in making the recommendation.

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): The occupation began around January 28, as I recall. I'm not questioning the value of your judgment, but I just want to make sure I understand. In your opinion, at no time between January 28 and February 18 was the safety of actors on Parliament Hill compromised.

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Brookson: Outside of February 17, 18 and 19, I didn't have the same level of concern about shutting it down and blocking it.

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): You know as well as I do that parliamentarians work all over Parliament Hill. We go to the Wellington Building, the West Block, the Confederation Building across Bank Street. There's also the Prime Minister's Office, at the Langevin Building. There are a number of buildings around Parliament where parliamentarians go to work, including for committees, at their offices, and so on.

Are you responsible for the security of all these parliamentarians at all times, even in these buildings, or only when they are in the West Block?

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, to be clear, the precinct is inside buildings—Parliament Hill—and that's it, so sidewalks, Wellington Street, any of the side streets...are not part of the precinct.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): That is it, unfortunately, Mr. Fortin.

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Thank you.

[English]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): I will pass the chair now to Mr. Fortin, and I will commence with my three-minute round.

Without getting into specifics, in the lead-up to the occupation, did you take steps to increase the personnel within the precinct?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, yes.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): In what range, just percentage-wise, how many more officers were required?

Mr. Larry Brookson: It was an increase of roughly 30%.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Was that at its peak or was that at the beginning?

Mr. Larry Brookson: That would have been throughout.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Okay.

You referenced that perhaps the threat of it being breached or there being some kind of overthrow wasn't present. After January 6, did your organization take any steps to begin preparedness for a like scenario that might occur here in Canada, Mr. McDonell?

Mr. Patrick McDonell: After January 6.... Are you referring to the United States?

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): That's correct.

Mr. Patrick McDonell: That would be Larry's area.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Mr. Brookson?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Yes, we took steps. Again, I think I mentioned earlier the importance of the tabletop—the TT exercise and framework—that the services put in place. That same January, we commenced tabletop exercises with our partners, which was inclusive of the Ottawa Police Service.

• (1940)

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Okay.

When the weapons were found in Coutts, you have referenced not knowing what was in the trucks. What precautions did you take to improve the safety and security of the precinct at that time? Did you elevate the threat when you heard that there was a connection with weapons in Coutts, or did you do nothing?

Mr. Larry Brookson: The elevation was already there.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): It was already.

If you were to range the different levels of elevation—I don't know if you use colours or codes or whatever—at what level...?

Mr. Larry Brookson: It takes me back to my ERT training, Mr. Chair: We say “always add one to it”. The establishment of what happened at Coutts was exactly what my thoughts were right on Wellington Street.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): You thought there could have been a potential for weapons there.

Mr. Larry Brookson: Yes.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Did you receive any reports related to ideologically motivated violent extremists and the potential for lone wolf actors?

Mr. Larry Brookson: The open-source intelligence at the service does that. There's always a review of the actors that are involved and what their backgrounds and potential ideas are.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): How would you rate that threat, given the information you had?

Mr. Larry Brookson: It would have been up there for me.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): “Up there”? Please be more specific, sir.

Mr. Larry Brookson: It would have been a heightened security concern. If those types of individuals are walking down Wellington Street on a regular basis throughout that period and I have parliamentarians who are coming to work with their staff, it's a huge concern for me.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Would you have reason to believe that there was that element within the crowd—not to say the entire crowd, but within that crowd—and that there could have been that element?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Absolutely.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Given that and hearing the testimony, is it possible that, during the police movements to disperse, there could have been a scenario where the precinct was breached? Or, in your opinion, do you feel that your service was adequately prepared to withstand the thousands of people that were out in front of Parliament?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, the increased fencing that was put down, the Wellington fence, was in preparation and readiness for the police, the tactical operation.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): I am out of time, unfortunately. We will continue through.

Thank you for that, Mr. Brookson.

We will now go on to Monsieur Carignan for three minutes, sir.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Brookson, earlier you mentioned that you had tried to reach the Mayor of Ottawa, Mr. Watson.

Can you tell us when you did that and why?

[English]

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, I don't recall the specific date, but the call I requested to have with him was in response to the opening back up of Wellington Street and escorting the trucks back up onto Wellington.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan: I see.

Am I to understand that you were dissatisfied with the services provided by the Ottawa police and wanted to increase the level of pressure? I used to be a mayor, in another life; usually when people came to me it was because they were not satisfied with the services.

Was it because you were dissatisfied with police services, in particular, that you contacted Mayor Watson?

[English]

Mr. Larry Brookson: My concern when it started was the number of vehicles already established on Wellington Street, and that was the first weekend. During the first weekend, there started to be some removal of vehicles that were leaving overnight. My discussions with PSPC led them and the security partners to start establishing Jersey barriers, because what I didn't want to see happen was a backfill of those vehicles that, on their own initiative, decided to leave.

The decision by the city to, I guess, alleviate an issue in the suburbs or wherever, to let the vehicles come and just completely jam up Wellington Street, was a big concern for me, and that was the reason I tried to reach out to the mayor.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan: My understanding is that you did not agree at that time with the response strategy of the City of Ottawa security services or the Ottawa police.

[English]

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, my responsibility is just to secure the precinct. My responsibility is also to take into consideration all factors, and this was one key factor that was a heightened concern for me. We had to respond accordingly.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan: So you were not on the same wavelength. You disagreed with them.

You can say it.

[English]

Mr. Larry Brookson: That's correct.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan: Thank you.

• (1945)

[English]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): You have 30 seconds left, Monsieur Carignan. I don't want to shorten your time.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan: That's fine.

[English]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): We will allow Senator Boniface to take the floor now.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): Thank you very much.

One of the perils of policing is that you use acronyms. Mr. Brookson, you referred to your time in the ERT. Can you just give a very brief description of that?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, I apologize for the acronym. It's the emergency response team. I had the team up in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, and I was also part of the A-division team responsible for the national capital region.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): You had some experience, then, in terms of managing these things before you came into this role.

Mr. Larry Brookson: That experience of ERT is a heightened tactical capability and the armaments that come with that tactical capability.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): Training and such went with that. Am I correct?

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): I'm trying to think of recommendations going forward. When you look at protecting the precinct, when you're dealing with the number of partners that you do—as we saw, a number of partners came on the scene near the end of it—do you have any recommendations?

When I hear you say a coordination centre versus a critical incident operation, do you have any sense, given your experience, of whether or not there was opportunity for that critical incident to be much earlier?

Mr. Larry Brookson: That's correct.

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, Senator Boniface, I think Madame Lacroix mentioned this, too, looking forward.

Any time both institutions are sitting, we have approximately 135 to 140 guns on the precinct. What I don't need is more. What I do need more of are effective barriers and, more importantly to Ms. Lacroix's point, technology. What I lacked the most during this period was adequate situational awareness, and I can't rely simply on the human eye or the human asset to get me that.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): Thank you very much. I think that's a very good point for this committee, and I appreciate it.

Quickly, while I have a few minutes left, Mr. McDonell, I was taken by your comments around the complaints. You said that eventually there were so many that you quit taking them. What was the nature of the complaints generally, and how do you evaluate them as you do an internal report to think about how this should be done in the future?

Mr. Patrick McDonell: It's not that we quit taking them. The complaints were relative to what happened outside the parliamentary precinct and, more specifically, in and around Wellington Street. The staff would bring it to the attention of and call the Ottawa police, and there was little or no action taken, so they just put up with the harassment and went back to their office managers.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): Just to be clear, though, you're referring to harassment of your staff—

Mr. Patrick McDonell: Yes, harassment to the staff....

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): —by those who would have been—

Mr. Patrick McDonell: On the street....

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): —protesting.

In terms of long-term effect on your staff, is it a prolonged event? Do we know if there is impact?

Mr. Patrick McDonell: Yes, there are some who are still affected by it, and if you go around and speak with shopkeepers and people working in the restaurants, they're still affected by it also.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): Okay.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): At this time, given the ongoing rounds, we're going to take a five-minute recess for refreshment. When we come back, just to let folks know, we're going to reset, so there will be a five-minute round followed by a four-minute/three-minute split like we have just done.

We'll be back in five minutes.

• (1945) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1945)

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): I'll call this meeting back to order.

We will get into our five-minute rounds. We will begin the five-minute round with Mr. Motz.

Mr. Motz, you have five minutes, and the floor is yours.

• (1955)

Mr. Glen Motz: Thank you very much, Chair.

Mr. McDonell and Mr. Brookson, I'd like to get each of your perspectives.

With your background and policing experience, and the co-operation required to deal with the incident that occurred in January and February, what lessons are to be learned from the policing response during this convoy, from your perspective, because it impacts us here? From your perspective, what lessons should we be looking at?

Mr. Patrick McDonell: As a former police officer now in charge of protective operations, and as an assistant commissioner at one point, I would say listen to your intelligence and listen to your experts. For your posture, set it up days out and set it up right.

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, I echo the comments of Mr. McDonell.

With respect to the Ottawa Police Service, we can sense the change in terms of how the Panda Game, for instance, is going to be addressed. You go back one year to what the choice was back then, and it wasn't good.

I'm very pleased and happy with the changes that seem to be occurring at the Ottawa Police Service. I'm looking at that as extremely positive moving forward.

Mr. Glen Motz: Thank you for that.

Chair, I want to try to share some time with Mr. Brock, because I know we probably won't get to the second round of this.

Mr. Brookson, you provided testimony here that in the weeks before the convoy arrived, the PPS asked for Wellington Street to be frozen and to not have vehicle access. This tells me that there had to be contact between the convoy organizers and the City of Ottawa and/or the Ottawa Police Service.

Would that be your assessment as well? Did the convoy end up on Wellington because of the permissions given by the city and by the Ottawa Police Service? Would that be a fair assessment?

Mr. Larry Brookson: That would be a fair assessment, I'm sure.

Mr. Glen Motz: Okay.

With your experience, both of you know that in many of the protests that occur, whether here on Parliament Hill, in other parts of the country or even around the globe, there will be those who have extremist views and have nothing to do with the protest, but attach themselves to it and try to either fly under the radar of that protest protection or propagate their own agendas, separate from that of the protest. We saw that at Coutts. The people involved with the firearms at Coutts had nothing to do with the protest.

Would that be a fair assessment, from both of your experiences with this particular situation, as well as in other circumstances?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, that would be correct.

Mr. Glen Motz: Go ahead, Mr. McDonell.

Mr. Patrick McDonell: I don't have first-hand information on who was in the crowd, although I will agree it's common that radical groups will attach themselves to lawful protests. In this particular instance, I have no first-hand knowledge.

Mr. Glen Motz: Okay. Thank you.

I'll turn it over to Mr. Brock.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): You have a minute and 30 seconds.

Mr. Larry Brock: Thank you.

Gentlemen, you previously responded to a few of my colleagues—particularly you, Mr. Brookson—about your heightened concerns regarding the unknown in the vehicles and in the trucks. You indicated that this heightened concern was rather high, without putting an actual number on it. That continued largely throughout the entire protest, until it was disbanded.

Can you share with me whether or not you received any intelligence reports from any police service or CSIS that either confirmed your suspicions or simply dispelled them?

• (2000)

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, no.

Mr. Larry Brock: No?

Mr. Larry Brookson: I did not receive any direct information to suggest otherwise.

Mr. Larry Brock: Okay.

I know that you specifically testified—because you testified about this in June—that you wrote or spoke to the RCMP and requested that CBRNE sensing be conducted within days of the arrival of these truckers, and the RCMP did not comply with that request. What was the reason for that?

Mr. Larry Brookson: It was security concerns for the individuals. We're not talking about police officers who would conduct that assessment; we're talking about civilians, and it was deemed to be unsafe.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): That concludes the five minutes.

We will now move on to Mr. Virani.

Mr. Virani, you have five minutes, and the floor is yours, sir.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Thank you very much. Again, thank you to all three of our presenters. Thank you for your service in keeping the parliamentary precinct safe. It's very important.

We've taking you back to a lot of testimony.

Mr. McDonell, I want to take you back to some testimony that you provided at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs on June 21. It dovetails with some of what you've been asked presently, where you're talking about instances of cars being banged on. I'm going to read back what you said at that time. You said:

One individual would block certain employees' cars every day. If it was a female employee, he would bang on their car before moving aside. We had one instance when, just before coming up the steps off Wellington, a female employee was accosted by a gentleman who tried to throw a bag of what appeared to be human feces on her. A male employee came to her rescue and pushed the assailant to the ground, and they left.

Do you recollect giving that testimony, Mr. McDonell.

Mr. Patrick McDonell: Yes.

Mr. Arif Virani: Mr. McDonell, I want to ask you something that's directed at a question that I think was put directly to Mr. Brookson, and I think Ms. Lacroix answered it a bit later. It was this idea about policing, and we understand your jurisdiction ends at Wellington—at least for PPSA it ends at Wellington. It was put to your two colleagues on the panel that expanding the precinct beyond Wellington would assist in terms of keeping parliamentarians safe.

Do you agree with that type of recommendation?

Mr. Patrick McDonell: Yes.

Mr. Arif Virani: Okay.

Then I want to put to you, Mr. Brookson, something that Mr. Brock was just touching on. Perhaps we'll take it from the first instance. When we're outside right now and we're trying to get onto the parliamentary precinct, there are those things that I think are called bollards. They come up out of the earth. It's pretty cool for a guy who isn't familiar with bollards. Those are there to prevent vehicles from accessing the precinct. Again, that's because they can be dangerous because they are vehicles—and you're nodding in assent. They can also be dangerous because of what's inside the vehicles, potentially. Is that fair?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, that's correct. Vehicles can be weaponized.

Mr. Arif Virani: Okay. We know that they've been weaponized in terrorist incidents around the planet.

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, you are correct.

Mr. Arif Virani: In terrorist incidents, in fact, in Canada, vehicles have been used to strike people down.

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, you are correct.

Mr. Arif Virani: Going back to Mr. Brock's question, you actually put a specific request in to the RCMP to do this chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive detection test, and they did not do that. Is that correct?

Mr. Larry Brookson: That's correct.

Mr. Arif Virani: The reason they gave to you was that the people who did this specific test didn't feel safe accessing the vehicles.

Mr. Larry Brookson: That's correct.

Mr. Arif Virani: That goes back to what Mr. McDonell said, because a lot of the policing was taking place outside of the actual blockade, as opposed to within the blockade, because law enforcement agents didn't feel safe inside the blockade itself.

Is that correct?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, I can't speak to how they felt, on whether the Ottawa Police Service or any other serving agency that was there felt safe or not.

Mr. Arif Virani: Okay.

You guys are the law enforcement experts, not me. I guess if you're faced with that sort of situation, if you can't figure out what's in the vehicles, one of the other options is to just move the vehicles.

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, the option is not letting them on in the first place.

Mr. Arif Virani: Fair enough, but they were there, and we can explore that.

I just want to make sure we're crystal clear on your testimony. You had actually suggested to Senator White a freeze of Wellington one week prior to the blockaders arriving in Ottawa, and that request that you put to the Ottawa Police Service was effectively rebuffed.

Mr. Larry Brookson: You are correct—through you, Mr. Chair, sorry.

Mr. Arif Virani: That's right.

Now that we have a situation where the vehicles are on the territory and you can't find out what's in the vehicles, then I guess your only option is to try to have the vehicles removed from the territory as a means of keeping the area safe.

• (2005)

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, the biggest challenge I had was that I didn't have authority on Wellington Street.

Mr. Arif Virani: When the Emergencies Act declaration comes into force, things such as towing provisions are empowered. Those vehicles were eventually removed after the EA declaration was put in place. Is that correct?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, that's how it was conducted within the policing partners, but the service had no role in that.

Mr. Arif Virani: Just in these last 30 seconds, you talked a bit in response to questions put by Mr. Green about your concerns about potential ideologically motivated extremism.

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, that's correct.

Mr. Arif Virani: That was informed a bit by what you had observed at Coutts, but also by what you were observing here in Ottawa, so you had a level of heightened concern about potential IMVE here in Ottawa.

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, that's correct.

Mr. Arif Virani: Was that threat assessment heightened by virtue of what you witnessed in terms of certain flags or types of things being displayed such as swastika flags?

Mr. Larry Brookson: The protective intelligence unit of the service does a great job, working with our partners, on doing that open-source capture of the messaging, what's going back and forth. That's the information that I'm talking about that elevates my concern as to what's happening within the precinct.

Mr. Arif Virani: Thank you.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Thank you very much.

We will now move on to Mr. Fortin.

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Brookson, let me continue with you. I have nothing against you, but I want to try to get through the questions.

You said earlier that you did not agree with the actions of the Ottawa police or municipal authorities with respect to Wellington Street. You attempted to contact Mayor Watson on this matter.

When did this happen? Was it before February 15 or after that?

The occupation began around January 28. The proclamation of the Emergencies Act was on February 15. I believe it was between those two dates that you contacted Mr. Watson. Is that correct?

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, my recollection—I can confirm this for the committee—is that it was prior to the police operation of February 17 and 18. It was the same as the period when the access roads were opened up by the city and additional vehicles were brought up right in front of the triad.

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): You told us earlier that you are responsible for security at all the parliamentary buildings, which includes the West Block where we are now and where Parliament sits, the Senate Building, the Justice Building, the Confederation Building, the Wellington Building, the Victoria Building and others that I forget.

Am I correct in saying that you are responsible for security at all of these buildings?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Yes.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Wellington Street and others separate these different buildings. You said that a couple of times, but I want to make sure. That was one of the priorities for you in terms of security and the work that you had to do. Is that correct?

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, yes, that's correct, and it's always important, but another concern is the SCB building. Again, the precinct is within the building itself. I know there were measures taken with the City of Ottawa to make it part of the sidewalk as well, but from a security measure standpoint, for me, the sidewalk is just not good enough.

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Mr. Brookson, if you had been in charge of security on Wellington Street and the perimeter of Parliament Hill had been entirely under your control, what would you have done differently than what was done starting on January 28?

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, the streets would have been blocked. There would have been no vehicles permitted to come up onto Wellington Street.

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Would it have been possible for the police authorities to block Wellington Street? I know this is not a matter of fact, but of opinion. You've spoken to us at length about your experience of security. In your opinion, would this have been possible?

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, again, it's not for me to speak on behalf of the Ottawa Police Service. I'll leave that to the Ottawa Police Service to answer those—

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): As a security expert, you would have done it. You told us you would have blocked off Wellington Street.

My time must be almost up. I've been given the one-minute signal.

Mr. Brookson, would you agree to provide us with a copy of the emails you exchanged and your daily notes during the period of events, that is, between January 28 and February 20, when the operation was completed?

• (2010)

[English]

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, most, if not all, of my conversations were verbal and in person as to the concerns I had in recommending the suspension of Parliament. I can certainly look back and see what emails may or may not be in place and provide that to the committee.

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): You say that the communications were oral most of the time. I imagine you probably put some notes aside. That's why I'm asking you to send us not only the emails, but also any notes you might have on the event. Obviously, I'm not talking about your personal events, which are none of our business. Rather, I am talking about notes that relate to your responsibility to provide security on Parliament Hill.

[English]

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, I think it's important to provide the context as to how fast and quickly this was moving throughout the entire period. For me to have taken time to take the necessary notes was just not something that was within my timetable.

Again, I'm committed to looking back through, and I'm more than willing to provide anything that I can find.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Thank you.

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Thank you, Mr. Brookson.

I thank all three of you for the work you do.

[English]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Monsieur Fortin, I will pass the floor to you and claim my five minutes.

Mr. Brookson, are you aware of the attacks on the Prime Minister's residence in July 2020 by an active member of the military?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, yes, I am.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): When such attacks and threats are posed to the Prime Minister of this country and to federal ministers, are you briefed on them?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, the notification of that incident was made almost immediately to the service. The service responded accordingly to increase its posture until that incident at the Prime Minister's residence was dealt with.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Was it something to be taken very seriously?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Absolutely.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Are you aware that, over the course of the fall, an internal counterterrorism report revealed that at least four federal cabinet ministers were subject to specific violent, extremist threats in the lead-up to the Ottawa convoy occupation in January? Were you aware of that?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, I'm not alive to any of the specifics of those incidents, no.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): If there is a specific threat to the Prime Minister and four cabinet ministers, Mr. McDonell, are you apprised of these threats?

Mr. Patrick McDonell: Yes.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Were you aware at that time that the internal reports of counterterrorism had identified the Prime Minister and four cabinet ministers as being subject to ideologically motivated violent extremist threats?

Mr. Patrick McDonell: I don't recall specifically, but it's likely that I had conversations with contacts in the security community about the security of certain ministers prior to, during and post convoy.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Help me to clarify that. Were you made aware or weren't you made aware that the Prime Minister and four cabinet ministers received specific threats related to the anti-government sentiment within this crowd through open-source observation as well as the calls for political violence against the government? Are you aware of those threats? Yes or no, sir.

Mr. Patrick McDonell: I would say yes. I can't definitely say which four ministers. If I said yes, and you asked me which four ministers—

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): No, I won't be asking that.

Mr. Patrick McDonell: I would say yes, because I have those conversations on a regular basis.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Given this increased, direct threat, anti-government sentiment, calls for political violence as being justified, and knowing what happened on January 6, what steps would you have taken in addition to anything that you had already been proceeding on related to the occupation and specific to ideologically motivated violent extremists? What additional steps and measures would you have taken to ensure the safety and security of the Prime Minister and those members of cabinet?

Mr. Patrick McDonell: That falls under the responsibility of the RCMP protective operations.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Is there any coordinated effort between the RCMP on those efforts and your...?

• (2015)

Mr. Patrick McDonell: It would be discussed. Maybe the movements of the ministers on and off the precinct would be discussed at a certain time.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Would there have been any direction from you to the Speaker or from the Speaker to you regarding this?

Mr. Patrick McDonell: No. I would apprise the Speaker, if necessary, if we were doing anything differently on the precinct as a result of the RCMP's providing them protection.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Brookson, given your past experience and assessment, would your assessment of the security of parliamentarians, staff and your members include having a knowledge of the staffing levels of police? You mentioned 135 guns at any given time and 30% additional capacity. We can do the math on that; it's 150 folks or so. Would you also have knowledge of how many police officers were present in Ottawa, on Wellington Street, directly in front of the precinct?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, no.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): You had no idea how many officers were there.

Mr. Larry Brookson: Not the exact numbers, no.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Given your own internal threat assessments on the security of the precinct, would it not make sense that you would have at least some kind of insight and understanding about the capacity of the Ottawa police in front of Parliament on Wellington Street?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, I was alive to the increased numbers that were being brought in to a certain degree, but their daily posture was not something I was informed of.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Would that information have helped you at all in making assessments on whether or not you had the appropriate staffing on the precinct to protect against the possibility of a surge and a breaching of Parliament?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, my responsibility is to ensure that the service can act on its own, although I rely heavily on, and I appreciate, the support that I get—

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): For 90 minutes.

Mr. Larry Brookson: For 90 minutes, from my partners.

What I have full control over are the 421 protection officers I'm responsible for.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Thank you. That concludes my round.

We will now go on to.... I thought it was safe, by the way, Mr. Fortin, when you gave me the....

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): That is the case. You were safe as long as you stopped.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): I was safe to stop talking. Okay, I appreciate that.

We'll now go to Senator Boniface. Senator Boniface, you have five minutes. The floor is yours.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): It will be Senator White.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Okay. Senator White, the floor is yours.

Hon. Vernon White: Thank you very much. I'll try to ask some rapid questions here.

Just so we're clear, Superintendent Brookson, the Emergencies Act provided the PPS with no new powers.

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, that is correct.

Hon. Vernon White: At any time, are PPS members provided special constable powers under section 7 of the RCMP Act?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, no.

Hon. Vernon White: Was it considered in this case that possibly, because of the incident and the invocation, the RCMP should provide section 7 powers to PPS officers?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, no.

Hon. Vernon White: Would it assist PPS if it had more powers to perform some of its duties, such as arrest, beyond the powers it has now? If so, what would that look like?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, for the current operational requirement for the service, we're well suited within our civil authority under the Criminal Code.

Hon. Vernon White: Thank you very much, Superintendent.

Would it change if you were to take over Wellington Street and you had an expanded precinct? Do you believe it would be necessary to gain a different level of powers or more powers to maintain peace in that area?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, no, Senator White.

Hon. Vernon White: As a last question, my understanding is that there are reports that had been prepared in relation to closing Wellington Street well before the convoy at certain entry points onto the Hill, and even reports on a response to post-blast impact. Are those reports in the possession of PPS and/or Madam Lacroix?

Ms. Julie Lacroix: Any of the threat risk assessments and reports we work on are a coordinated effort among the three security partners.

Hon. Vernon White: Would it be possible that we could have those shared with the committee, please?

Ms. Julie Lacroix: Yes.

Hon. Vernon White: Thank you very much.

I think I have a couple of minutes left. I'll share them with my friend.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Senator Harder, the floor is yours.

Hon. Peter Harder: Thanks very much, Senator White. On behalf of the committee, I think we'll miss your questioning.

Hon. Vernon White: Some will.

Hon. Peter Harder: I'm not sure the witnesses will.

I'd like to follow up on Mr. Brookson's description of his enhanced staffing on the Hill. You said 30%. Was that deploying your full capacity of 421 officers?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, no.

Hon. Peter Harder: What was the cost of the additional 30%, roughly?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, the cost incurred by the service during this period is something I can get and provide to the committee. I just don't have the number.

• (2020)

Hon. Peter Harder: Okay, fine.

We talked a little bit about the harassment of staff of senators and members of Parliament and indeed of senators and parliamentarians during the period of the occupation. What about your staff? Were they harassed and assaulted in any fashion that you could share with us?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, there were no direct invocations, but it was a period of time that was extremely difficult. We're talking about PPS employees who were working 10, 11 or 12 days in a row to ensure.... Yes, we have 421 protection officers, but when you take into consideration the importance of spending time with family and having adequate time for rest, it was a difficult to ensure that the numbers were there.

Hon. Peter Harder: Were there any actions that you undertook post-occupation to deal with the special emotional or other circumstances your staff felt?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, yes, Senator. That's an incredibly important question to ask.

The health, safety and well-being of our employees is something that the service takes as a priority. The engagement of adequate counselling and what have you went on for an extended period of time.

Hon. Peter Harder: I congratulate you for that. I think that's a very important role for you to play. I'm grateful for your confirming that it took place.

My final question is to all three of you. Did you ever feel that you didn't have appropriate situational awareness for you to be able to perform your mandated tasks?

Ms. Julie Lacroix: I think that throughout we had enough coordination and enough of a coordinated effort that I felt that I had the information I needed to make decisions and to "brief up" to make those decisions.

Hon. Peter Harder: Mr. Brookson, would you comment?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Again I'll reiterate that my lack of situational awareness as to what was sitting on Wellington Street was my biggest concern, and it remains my concern to today.

Hon. Peter Harder: Mr. McDonell, would you comment?

Mr. Patrick McDonell: I would say I lacked the situational awareness with respect to the anticipated actions of the Ottawa police moving forward. That would have been good to know.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): That concludes the five-minute round.

I am unclear about the timing for the three in-person senators, but I do know that Mr. Carignan has a five-minute round.

Ms. Boniface, were you changing the order or would you prefer to have your round? You are on the list.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): Do I still have time?

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Yes.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): Oh, I'm sorry. When you indicated, I thought you meant only one of us, under the old rules.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): No, my apologies. We are back to the original five-minutes rounds.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): Would you like to let Mr. Carignan go first?

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): If you wouldn't mind—

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): No, I'd be delighted. It's no problem.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): —I would like to do that.

Mr. Carignan, the floor is yours for five minutes.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan: I can give two minutes of my time to the Senator, if she wants to ask questions. I will take the rest.

[English]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): She has five minutes, but I do appreciate that. Thank you.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan: All right. That's fine.

I get the impression that the three of you take daily notes on activities and problems that have occurred during the day, evening and night. You also receive status reports.

You had meetings with each other and with police officers, whether from the RCMP, OPP or the City of Ottawa. Minutes of those meetings were surely taken. There were email exchanges between you as well as with the Senate Corporate Security Directorate offices, government departments and the City of Ottawa.

Is it possible to obtain a copy of these exchanges, minutes and daily progress notes from the three witnesses?

[English]

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, what I can speak to is that at the NCRCC, as well as at our crisis management centre that was stood up throughout the entire period here, all the discussions and decisions were scribed, which means that notes were taken throughout those two. That's something we can look for to provide to the committee.

• (2025)

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan: Perfect.

Could you provide the emails exchanged between these departments and you, and between the City of Ottawa or the mayor's office and you?

[English]

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, again the only thing I'd be in a position to provide to the committee would be the dates and times for verbal telephone conversations I had.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan: Fine.

Are the other two speakers able to do so?

[English]

Mr. Patrick McDonnell: I'm not sure how many notes and emails I generated during that event. I will verify exactly how many there were, and before saying yes to your question, I will consult with the office of the Law Clerk and Legal Counsel of the House of Commons.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan: Perfect.

Ms. Lacroix, will you consult the one from the Senate?

Ms. Julie Lacroix: Yes, exactly.

Hon. Claude Carignan: All right. That's fine.

My question is for Mr. Brookson.

I've looked at your expertise. Don't be surprised; I have looked at your LinkedIn page. I'm impressed with your expertise in operations, in particular.

You had good ideas for interventions. You could block certain streets. From an operational point of view, you had your opinion on what could have been done or what should have been done. What do you think the Emergencies Act added?

From an operational point of view, the act didn't add anything to prevent or help clear the street, did it?

[English]

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, I can speak only to what my responsibility is for the Parliamentary Protective Service. We're not a policing entity, and therefore the invocation of the Emergencies Act provided no additional authority for me.

With respect to what it may have provided to either the Ottawa police force or the RCMP, it would be best for them to respond to that question.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan: Fine. I have no further questions.

[English]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Thank you very much, Senator Carignan. We will finish with a five-minute round for Senator Boniface, and then I will need about five minutes or so after that just to do a little bit of housekeeping.

Senator Boniface, the floor is yours.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): Thank you very much.

Again, thank you to the witnesses.

Mr. Brookson, I feel as though we've been targeting a lot of questions your way, but I really thank you for the candour with which you've tried to answer them.

I'd like you to look at it from a perspective of hindsight. Given what you may have learned, if you were to start this exercise on day one, what would you hope for? What do you think the benefits of that would be, in terms of working with your partners?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, to the senator, I appreciate the question.

I think part of my objective in working with the policing partners is to increase awareness as to what this territory is actually about, how sensitive it is and how important the people who work here are.

I think we made quite a bit of advancement on that. Again, looking back, just to have the authority to do what I'm responsible for doing is something I wish I would have had prior to this event starting.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): Do you mean authority in the context of Wellington Street itself, or perhaps, given what you had to work with at the time, enough influence to have that decision go a different way?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, I think part of my disappointment is that I thought I had more influence with the policing partners than I actually did. I'll have to go back and talk with them on that.

It saddened me throughout. I was before the Liberal caucus, and I have to tell you that my heart sank when I was looking at their eyes. At the end of the day, parliamentarians are just human beings, and to suggest that people have to come to work and be under that sort of level of torment—where it's coming from is irrelevant—is something that just doesn't sit well with me. I try to do the best I can in leading the service to make sure that parliamentarians can come to work without feeling a sense of concern for their safety and well-being.

• (2030)

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): In terms of what the committee can do and when we think of recommendations, it would seem to me that what is needed is something like an MOU that would clearly lay it out with commanders at a high enough level in the policing partners that you would be able to pick up the phone and call and the message you were trying to give was heard, and they would have a good understanding of what you do. That would be far down the road from what you were faced with when this process started. Am I correct on that?

Mr. Larry Brookson: Through you, Mr. Chair, that's absolutely correct, Senator Boniface. There were a couple of moments when I had two public order teams under the authority of the service, and that happened for the first time ever. There was a public order team from the OPP as well as one from the RCMP.

I think it was a bit of a shift, too, for those partners, as to who would have control; but I've said from the outset in working out this critical incident program for the service that I will never relinquish the authority for protecting this ground to another, even if it's a law enforcement agency. We've made leaps and bounds with respect to how serious we are and where we're at in our readiness, and that competence is starting to come into the fold. You would know better than most what it takes in that policing world and mindset to relinquish that authority over your own assets.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): They have to have confidence in you and in the resources that are leading them.

Mr. Larry Brookson: That's correct.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): If I may, Mr. Chair, I think the committee members would be interested in any recommendations you leave for us at this table or that you think would be helpful, because when this committee finishes, you will have made some steps, and it would be very helpful for us to know whether there are other gaps as you make those steps. That would be of help.

Thank you again for your service.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Thank you. That concludes the round of questioning.

I want to take this moment, on behalf of the committee, to thank you for your incredible public service. I know that you were put into a tumultuous time, and we certainly look forward to providing whatever supports we can from this committee on recommendations moving forward.

At this time, you are now free of your obligations here before committee. I do need about five minutes of committee time just on some housekeeping items. I want to thank you again for your attendance here.

I want to make a quick reference to members of this committee. I want to flag—not for discussion or debate—a serious concern I have as chair on scheduling regarding communications that we received both from the OPS and from the OPP about their unwillingness to appear before this committee until they are appearing in front of the judicial review.

I'm of the opinion—and I'll just state it—that I don't think it's within their purview to pick and choose the priorities. I find it to be very problematic particularly to deprioritize this committee in this way.

I'm going to leave that with the committee, and we can revisit it at a future date to get a sense for the timing. As it stands now, we're working through the scheduling. We want to make sure that we have a full work plan and witnesses lined up for future sessions in a way that will be to the benefit of this committee.

Go ahead, Ms. Bendayan.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: I believe there was a suggestion that we attempt to get Mayor Watson here as quickly as possible. I was just wondering if there was any update.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): We're looking now towards the end of October.

We're in a situation in which, given the seriousness of this committee, witnesses are making a commitment and then not availing themselves. I do reference the power of this committee and our Parliament to send for people, documents and evidence, and I take that seriously. We don't have to delve into that now, but I think there's going to have to be some process for this committee if we want to get this work done in any kind of way, but waiting until after the judicial inquiry is not sufficient.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Perhaps, Mr. Chair, we don't need to park this for a future debate. I think there may be agreement in the room that the clerk will simply go back and say that this is not an acceptable justification and that the committee is insisting on their appearance.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): I'm in full support of that, actually.

Do we have that as a...?

An hon. member: I might go with that.

An hon. member: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. With that being done, and before you leave, Mr. Virani, it's a good opportunity in this moment right now, if I could. If there's ever an argument to maintain the Senate, it's the calibre of senators like Mr. Vern White. I want to take this moment on behalf of the committee to thank you for your service.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Chair: That is on the record and not in camera.

Mr. Virani wanted to give you the opportunity. For anybody who has had the opportunity to get to know Vern, it has been an absolute pleasure.

The richness and fullness that you brought in your questioning was to the benefit of all Canadians across the country. I thank you for your service. I know it's a thankless job and I wish you all the best in your next endeavours.

There is no meeting Monday. We're going to celebrate Vern on Monday—just kidding.

● (2035)

Mr. Larry Brock: Just to clarify before we go, do we have witnesses lined up for Thursday, or are you working on that?

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): We're working on it.

Mr. Larry Brock: You're working on it slowly. Okay.

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Before we go, I want to mention something.

Today, I made a request to the clerks, Mr. Palmer and Ms. Burke. I think the documents in the digital binder should be identified more clearly. Obviously, it's not the clerks' fault, but I would love it if there was a better way to identify documents. I'm referring to things like indicating the date of submission, document type, the name of the person who submitted it and the time it was submitted. That would make it easier for us to work with the lists. Otherwise, it's really tough to establish the connection to a document when it is labelled simply as "Document," even though it's a letter, an email or a report.

I'm curious as to whether the members of the committee are finding it as hard as I am to work with the documents. Am I the only one? Do the committee members think the documents should be identified more clearly so that we can make the necessary connections?

We can ask the people producing the documents to do it. Right now, we've received more documents. We already had some thousand pages, and we are receiving more documentation from the same organizations, like the Canada Border Services Agency. It's important to tie them together. Do the newly received documents represent changes to the previous ones, or are they altogether new documents?

I think the people producing the documents should be responsible for reconciling them and sending only one version. That would make everybody's job easier.

The last thing I wanted to talk about was redacted documents, which we talked about last week. I think redactions should be accompanied by explanations. I'm not sure where the committee stands, but I think the people producing the documents should have to provide them unredacted, and when that's not possible, they should have to explain each redaction. That way, we could determine whether the redaction was appropriate or not. Otherwise, it's a free-for-all.

[*English*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): We have Senator Carignan, recognizing that the time is beyond our allotted time.

Senator Carignan, we do have.... We will open it up for you.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Claude Carignan: I agree with Mr. Fortin.

Were the thousand or so pages that were supposed to appear on the committee's website posted? If not, when will that be done?

Even if they're not up on the site yet, are the documents in the public domain?

[*English*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): I just want to reference for members the volume of information that our clerks are having to deal with. They are working through it and they're hoping to have it in due course, but this is a pretty serious undertaking. I don't know that we have the administrative resources to keep up with just the volume of things that we're requesting.

Go ahead, Mr. Motz.

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Chair, this is just to go along with Mr. Fortin's comments about redactions and the reasons behind redactions.

Mr. Brock, Senator White and I know from court experience that when you do redactions, especially in the drug world, you have to give explanations for every redaction you have on every document you submit. Usually a template goes with it explaining that, for example, redaction A was for these reasons, and A is standard—

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Mr. Motz, I want to reference that I think that's something that you or somebody had sought to remedy via a motion. I think at the appropriate time we can deal with that motion and have that debate. I just don't think it's the time right now.

● (2040)

Mr. Glen Motz: Yes. I know that you want to get going, but I'd just like to sit and chat. My flight has been delayed, so it's all good.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): We're trying to get Senator White off the hook here. He's been on the clock and he's 15 minutes over time.

Thank you to the interpreters and the staff who worked through technical difficulties. Thank you very much.

The meeting is adjourned.

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