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



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• (1835)

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ)): I call this meeting to order.

Good evening, everyone. Welcome to the 16th 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. Should any technical issues arise, please let me know so that we can suspend for a few minutes, if necessary, 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.

As I understand it, no witnesses are participating in the meeting virtually. Since everyone is present, what I just said was unnecessary. I also want to say that no preliminary sound check was done by the joint clerks as all the witnesses are in the room. So we won't have any sound issues.

Before I turn the floor over to the witnesses, I believe that Mr. Motz wants to introduce a motion that was submitted to us a few minutes before the meeting started.

Go ahead, Mr. Motz.

[*English*]

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

In response to information we got from the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel for the House of Commons and the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel for the Senate and the committees and legislative services directorate on the rights of committees to procure responses to oral questioning, I move the following motion:

That the Committee, having considered the October 24, 2022, briefing note prepared by appropriate experts of the Senate and House of Commons concerning the rights of committees to procure evidence from witnesses, directs the Joint Chairs to read the following statement to witnesses at the beginning of their appearances before this Committee:

The notice that we are proposing be read to all witnesses from here on forward is as follows:

Given their constitutional nature, a committee's powers supersede statutory law and other privileges, including Cabinet confidences and solicitor-client privilege. When questioning witnesses, beyond the general requirement of relevance to the subject being studied by a committee, there is no specific evidence rule limiting the nature of questions that may be asked to a witness during committee work.

Witnesses must answer the questions put to them truthfully. When a witness raises concerns about answering a question or refuses to answer, it is in that committee's sole discretion to determine whether any reasons for withholding information should be accepted".

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Does anyone wish to speak to Mr. Motz's motion?

The floor is yours, Ms. Bendayan.

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

First of all, I hear the bells ringing.

Second, it seems to me that, last week, everyone agreed on my proposal that we start getting down to work. Four witnesses are taking part in the committee's meeting today.

Consequently, I don't understand why we're still debating a motion that, I would point out, was put before us barely half an hour ago. So I move that debate on this motion be adjourned, which will let us get down to business.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Ms. Bendayan is introducing an adjournment motion.

We can discuss it.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: We can't debate an adjournment motion.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): In that case, we will vote on Ms. Bendayan's request that debate on Mr. Motz's motion be adjourned.

[*English*]

The Joint Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Miriam Burke): The vote is on the motion of Madame Bendayan.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

[*Translation*]

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

Debate on Mr. Motz's motion is therefore adjourned.

As you noticed, the bells have started ringing. We have 26 minutes before the vote. I therefore propose that we hear one or two witnesses, who will each have five minutes to read their opening statements. Then we could adjourn to go and vote.

Mr. Motz, I heard you say "yes". Do you agree with my proposal or would you suggest something else?

Mr. Brock, you had raised your hand. Did you want to speak to this?

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): No. Thank you, Chair. It's been clarified.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Chair, since the witnesses, as you just said, will each have five minutes for their presentations, and we have more than 20 minutes before the vote, couldn't we hear more—

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): That's what I was proposing, Ms. Bendayan. We will begin hearing the witnesses' remarks, and I will suspend the meeting 15 minutes before the vote starts.

• (1840)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: It doesn't take 15 minutes to vote electronically.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): No, but I believe some people want to vote in the House, as I was told earlier. Consequently, I'm going to allow them time to do so.

We have four witnesses. I don't know in what order they will be speaking.

Mr. Fleury, since you are at the top of my list, the floor is yours for the first five minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Mathieu Fleury (City Councillor, City of Ottawa): Good evening, Mr. Chair, and members. Thank you for inviting me to assist the committee's work in reviewing the declaration of the Emergencies Act.

I've been a city councillor for the Rideau-Vanier ward since 2010. The western boundary of my ward runs along the Rideau Canal to the Chateau Laurier. Parliament and many other federal institutions, which were the focus of the protest, border the neighbourhoods of Sandy Hill, Lowertown, and Vanier, which were the areas hardest hit by the occupation.

[*Translation*]

I have a few minutes for my remarks and would like to devote that time to informing the committee about the impact the protests had on the residents and businesses in downtown Ottawa.

[*English*]

During the occupation, the impact on residents in my community was unbearable. It severely impacted their well-being, the livability of the ward, and their safety and forced many businesses to close during the occupation.

Upon its arrival, the “freedom convoy” occupation had devastating impacts on our residents and businesses. This was initially felt from the unbearable noise. The protesters used truck horns and train horns almost constantly day and night. Fireworks further added to the constant barrage of noise. The impact of the horns was traumatizing for residents living in my area and those living in the neighbouring ward of Somerset.

At the Public Order Emergency Commission, residents testified as to how the noise had a detrimental impact on their mental and emotional health. Severe sleep deprivation was common. These conditions made the downtown unlivable.

[*Translation*]

Some people are still traumatized by the experience even now. These concerns were reported to me at the time via hundreds of emails and telephone calls that I received from the businesses and residents affected. The constant engine noise of the trucks parked on our streets and the gases they emitted had an impact on them, and the way the trucks were parked created a chaotic environment that resembled a kind of fortress. In the circumstances, the trucks were being used as a weapon.

[*English*]

I walked the streets of my ward during the protests. I can tell you that the streets of downtown Ottawa were in complete chaos. I witnessed open fires in the streets, the delivery of tanks of fuel to protesters in close proximity to residents and businesses. At the intersection of Rideau and Sussex, right beside the Senate building, protesters set up DJ booths and barbecues. I also saw large trucks driving on residential streets and, in some instances, driving in the wrong direction. In the ByWard Market, which is also in my area, many pickup trucks parked everywhere and anywhere, including on sidewalks, without any consequences: there were no tickets, and no towing. Aside from occupying space in our city and on our walkways, these trucks served another purpose: they represented an assault on our communities through aggressive and intimidating behaviour by people participating in the occupation, which created an environment of chaos and lawlessness.

The chaos forced numerous businesses and institutions in the area to close. This included the Rideau Centre, the Rideau library branch, the University of Ottawa, the Andrew Fleck Child Care Centre, and many others.

The Rideau Centre has historically never had to close more than a day a year. The centre was closed for 24 consecutive days due to this occupation. This meant that 300 stores and more than 1,500 part-time employees were unable to generate income.

For the Rideau Centre, each day represented a loss of revenue of \$2 million for the businesses. The closure of the Rideau Centre also compounded the effects on the surrounding Rideau Street and the ByWard Market. Small and independent businesses were severely impacted. Most businesses on Rideau Street and in the ByWard Market were forced to close. Although lockdown restrictions were no longer in effect, most of these businesses could not stay open. Groups of protesters were demanding to dine indoors at local restaurants in violation of public health measures and orders. The businesses faced stark choices: close entirely, confront protesters and ask them to leave, or serve them in violation of public health regulations. Many opted to close out of fear.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

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

I forgot to mention this at the start of the meeting, but I have a yellow card in my hand that I raise to signal one minute remaining.

I now give the floor to Steve Kanellakos.

● (1845)

[*English*]

Mr. Steve Kanellakos (City Manager, City of Ottawa): Good evening. I thank the committee and its members for inviting me to assist in this important review of the use of the Emergencies Act.

Tonight, I plan to cover a little bit about my background and a few areas that have been the subject of interest, certainly from the public inquiry that I testified at on Monday.

By way of background, I currently serve as the city manager of the City of Ottawa. I've held that position since May 2016. Prior to becoming city manager, I served as director general of the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Police Service, which was the predecessor to the Ottawa Police Service. I left policing and joined the City of Ottawa in 2000 as the general manager of emergency and protective services. I then had various roles within the city before becoming the city manager.

I want to begin by providing the committee with a brief sense of my role and responsibilities as city manager.

The City of Ottawa has 10 departments. Each of those departments has a general manager who reports directly to me. The city manager is directed by city council through the various bylaws and resolutions which delegate the city manager with various powers and responsibilities. In turn, I delegate council's requests to the 10 general managers that support me. In this role, I have oversight over Mr. Kim Ayotte, who is the general manager of emergency protective services.

I want the committee to understand that the Ottawa Police Service was the lead agency for the response to the "freedom convoy". It was in charge of making operational and tactical decisions in response to the convoy. Meanwhile, the city's role was to support the Ottawa Police Service as required and manage city services to minimize the impact of this protest on those services.

When the convoy arrived, the ticketing and towing of large trucks inside the control zone was not pursued by the city. The OPS, Ottawa police, was concerned that enforcing bylaws in the control zone could trigger violence. The city also could not independently decide to close some streets, because OPS was the lead agency and we were part of an integrated management system.

In addition to managing city operations during the protest, I also engaged in negotiations with the protesters at the request of Ottawa police.

On February 8, 2022, I received a call from Deputy Chief Bell of the Ottawa Police Service. He told me that members of the Ottawa Police Service police liaison team were coming to my office. He said that the PLT—the acronym for the police liaison team—wanted to discuss a potential meeting with some of the protesters. I at-

tended the meeting and was told that OPS negotiations with the protesters had broken down.

I was advised that the protesters wanted to meet with a senior city official and asked whether I would attend such a meeting. I agreed to meet with the protesters, on the advice of and with the support of OPS senior command. The PLT suggested that I ask the protesters to remove trucks from some neighbourhoods in return for a meeting with the mayor. Later that day, I met with some of the protest leaders. I advised them that the mayor might consider meeting with the protest leaders if the protesters moved trucks out of the residential areas. Members of the PLT were present for part of that meeting. After the meeting, I briefed the mayor and his chief of staff on the general principles that were discussed in that meeting.

I had subsequent calls with OPS senior command, on February 11 with Chief Sloly, and on the 13th with Chief Sloly, Acting Deputy Chief Ferguson and Deputy Chief Bell, to update them on the status of the city's discussions on the protesters. Everyone agreed that getting protesters out of residential areas would be positive for residents and reduce the footprint of the protesters.

I attended another meeting with protesters and Mr. Ayotte on February 13 to discuss the logistics of moving trucks out of the neighbourhoods. Acting Superintendent Rob Drummond accompanied us. OPS senior command had assigned him to negotiate the details and conditions of the move.

Throughout the ensuing days, the mayor, through his chief of staff, and a third party facilitator, Mr. Dean French, entered into discussions with protesters to remove some trucks from the downtown core. Our efforts resulted in approximately 40 heavy trucks and an unknown number of light trucks and vehicles moving out of the residential areas.

At around the same time that we were successfully moving these trucks, the federal government invoked the Emergencies Act. To my knowledge, the city never requested the invocation of the act.

That said, and in closing, the "freedom convoy" had a significant impact on our city's services and its residents. It was the first time that protesters used heavy trucks to paralyze a city that I'm aware of. While the city did not ask the federal government to invoke the act, we were grateful when it finally did.

Mr. Chair, I welcome questions from the committee, and I thank you for inviting me here today.

[*Translation*]

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

As we have 16 minutes left before the vote, I will now suspend the meeting.

[*English*]

Mr. Arif Virani (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a point of order.

We have a voting app exactly to facilitate voting. It takes 90 seconds. We can do that from this room.

Those people who want to vote in person can do so. We don't need them for quorum.

I propose that we continue this meeting.

• (1850)

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): I understand, Mr. Virani, but I've already ruled on that.

[English]

Mr. Arif Virani: It certainly doesn't take 15 minutes to walk upstairs, Monsieur Fortin.

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Mr. Virani, I've already ruled on the matter, which Ms. Bendayan also raised just before you spoke.

I understand your request, but some members want to vote in person.

[English]

Mr. Arif Virani: That's terrific. It takes about two minutes to go upstairs, Monsieur Fortin.

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): I understand, but I have to allow them the time to do so.

[English]

Mr. Arif Virani: I challenge your ruling. Let's vote on that ruling.

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): All right. Let's vote.

I move that we suspend the meeting now, 15 minutes before the vote.

[English]

Mr. Arif Virani: My counter-proposition is that we suspend for about 90 seconds so that we can vote online.

Considering, Monsieur Fortin, that seemingly everyone in this committee room, on different days, is emphasizing the need to get on with the work of this committee, let's get on with the work of the committee.

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): We all agree on the idea of getting on with our work, but I have to make sure the members can vote.

Since you are challenging my ruling, I will ask the joint clerk to conduct the vote.

[English]

The Joint Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Mark Palmer): Shall the ruling of the chair be sustained?

(Ruling of the chair sustained: yeas 5; nays 3)

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): We will now suspend until the end of the vote.

Then we will continue with the last two witnesses, who will give their opening statements.

• (1850)

(Pause)

• (1920)

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): We suspended at 6:52 p.m., and it is now 7:22. Unless the committee objects, the meeting, which was to end at 9:30, will end at 10 o'clock.

Barring any objections, that is what I consider is the committee's wish.

Kim Ayotte, you have the floor for five minutes.

[English]

Mr. Kim Ayotte (General Manager, Emergency and Protective Services, City of Ottawa): Good evening, Chair and committee.

Thank you for inviting me here today. I look forward to answering your questions and assisting the committee in whatever way I can.

I'm the general manager of emergency and protective services for the City of Ottawa. As such, I oversee approximately 2,500 staff. I'm supported by the city's director of public safety services, the director of by-law and regulatory services, the fire chief and the fire and the paramedic services, all of whom report directly to me. Previously, I was the chief of the Ottawa Fire Services before being promoted to my current position. As the general manager of emergency and protective services, I report to the city manager, Steve Kanellakos.

Before I answer your questions, I thought I could best assist the committee by providing it with an overview of the city's emergency operations centre, the EOC. The EOC was central to the city's efforts during the "freedom convoy". The EOC receives information from all city departments and convenes and monitors emergency situations once the situation is brought to our attention. During an emergency situation, the EOC status may escalate from "monitoring" to "enhanced", from "enhanced" to "activated", and then from "activated" to "a state of emergency". This exact progression took place during the "freedom convoy".

The EOC is staffed by duty officers from each of the city's departments. The EOC operates under the oversight of the emergency operations centre control group, which is chaired by the city manager, Mr. Kanellakos. The city is also a member of the national capital regional command centre, the NCRCC. The NCRCC includes representatives from the RCMP, OPP, Ottawa Police Service and Parliamentary Protective Service.

The NCRCC acts as an area command during an active multi-agency police operation in the region. The NCRCC was mobilized on January 28, 2022, to respond to the "freedom convoy". The Ottawa Police Service led the NCRCC incident command and was thus the lead agency during the protest in Ottawa.

With that structure in mind, I want to now turn to the city's role during the “freedom convoy”. The handling of the “freedom convoy” fell within the incident management of the Ottawa Police Service. The city's role—and mine—was to support the OPS to mitigate the impact of the protest on residents and businesses. The goal of the city was to get the convoy in and out of the city as soon as possible. To this end, we responded to the operational decisions made by the Ottawa police.

For example, on January 29, 2022, the Ottawa police instructed bylaw officers to not ticket or tow vehicles in the red zone without police approval. Later, bylaw officers and other city personnel and services were directed not to enter the hot zone—or the red zone—without police escort, due to safety concerns.

Despite our efforts and those of the Ottawa police, the protests had a grave impact on our city's communities and social services. Thus, routes had to be rerouted, and some individuals receiving care at home had to be relocated. The city also had to work with convoy organizers to maintain an emergency lane throughout the downtown for emergency service vehicles throughout the relevant period. The city experienced both setbacks and successes throughout this period.

From my perspective, the city learned some valuable lessons from the convoy demonstration. The city's response to “Rolling Thunder” is a prime example. Before the “freedom convoy” occurred, the city did not install traffic barriers after it was advised not to by Ottawa police. However, when we became aware of the “Rolling Thunder” protest, we worked with Ottawa police to block roads to the downtown core based on knowledge gained from the “freedom convoy”. I suspect that in the future these types of efforts will be invaluable in preventing an event like the “freedom convoy” from occurring again.

I am pleased to be here today to share lessons learned with you. I look forward to answering your questions.

Thank you very much.

• (1925)

[*Translation*]

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

I want to advise the committee that we have received a special request from Mr. Watson, who wishes to make a 10-minute presentation. Personally, I have no objection, and I believe everyone is in agreement.

Mr. Watson, you have the floor for 10 minutes.

Mr. Jim Watson (Mayor, City of Ottawa): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Members of the Senate and House of Commons, it is a pleasure for me to be here in my capacity as mayor of the City of Ottawa.

[*English*]

I'm mayor for the next 18 days and four hours and three minutes and two seconds.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you. I recently appeared before Justice Rouleau and the Public Order Emergency Commission on October 18, 2022.

I strongly believe and hope that the important work done by the commission and this joint committee will help prevent this city's residents and those of other Canadian cities from ever having to endure such a horrendous occupation.

[*Translation*]

In the past 25 years, I have had the privilege of representing the residents of Ottawa at Queen's Park and City Hall.

[*English*]

As mayor of the City of Ottawa, I've witnessed the city's residents triumph over a number of extraordinary challenges, particularly, as we all dealt with in our own communities, COVID-19.

In recent years in Ottawa this included events like the record flooding of the Ottawa River in 2017 and 2019, which forced many of our residents to evacuate their homes. In-between the two floods Ottawa and its surrounding areas were wracked by a tornado that toppled power lines and homes, and as you may recall, just this summer, residents endured a thunderstorm that destroyed tens of thousands of trees and property throughout the region, and left tens of thousands without power for days and in many instances, weeks.

The arrival of the truck convoy in January 2022 and the ensuing occupation of our city was another threat to the safety and security of our residents.

[*Translation*]

The Ottawa Police Service and the city have done a good job of working together on many occasions to protect the city in numerous crises over the years.

[*English*]

Trucks first started arriving in Ottawa, in front of the Parliament buildings, in fact, on January 27, 2022. I recall seeing a few trucks parked on city streets while additional trucks arrived the following day.

After the first weekend of protest, it became clear to me that Ottawa's police service had lost Wellington Street. A protest had ended and an occupation began.

Let me start by setting the table for MPs and senators and members of the public. Can you imagine a similar truck convoy demonstration taking over your downtown city or village? Can you imagine me showing up in your hometown with these demonstrators, rubbing shoulders with them, taking pictures of them, bringing them coffee and Timbits? Can you imagine how disgusting and disrespectful that would have been to your residents if their own community was under siege from the 24-7 noise and fumes over a three-week period?

As mayor I was in regular communication with the OPS as requested throughout the time frame of the convoy. I understood almost immediately that the OPS required additional resources.

On January 3 I received a call from the Prime Minister. I explained that additional officers from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police were necessary. From then onward I continued to push for assistance from our federal and provincial partners. On February 3, 2022, I spoke to Minister Mendicino and impressed upon him the need for additional resources. On February 7, at the request of the Ottawa Police Services Board, my office prepared and I co-signed a letter with the chair of the board seeking those additional resources. The letter was addressed to the Prime Minister, Minister Mendicino, Premier Ford and then Ontario Solicitor General Sylvia Jones. The purpose of the letter was very clear: Ottawa required more resources to bring an end to the protest.

● (1930)

[Translation]

That action was extraordinary because the chief of police normally makes this type of request to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and to the Ontario Provincial Police.

[English]

I agreed to sign these letters. I was told that the OPS was not successful in its request to obtain more police officers.

At around the same time I'd also declared a state of emergency in the City of Ottawa. While the declaration did not provide my office with any new substantial powers, I believe it was symbolically important. It relayed to our residents and to the country that the City of Ottawa was in fact under siege and could not end the occupation on its own.

I also participated in meetings with our federal partners. As I've mentioned previously, the Province of Ontario regrettably declined to take part in this dialogue of the tripartite committee. In these meetings, I echoed our request for more police resources to support the OPS in its efforts to reclaim our city.

As you know, on February 14, 2022, the Emergencies Act was invoked for the first time since its passing in 1988. Although the federal government did not consult me on its use, I fully supported and fully support the introduction of the Emergencies Act. Up until that point it was not clear to me that the earlier police efforts would be successful in bringing about a peaceful end to such a massive demonstration.

I take this opportunity to remind honourable members of the joint committee that the combined presence of these vehicles, these hundreds of 18-wheelers and smaller vehicles, felt like an overpowering and threatening armada to the residents of Ottawa.

I believe that the biggest challenge during the protest was the inability to move the trucks that embedded themselves on our streets. The Emergencies Act resolved this issue by forcing tow truck companies to provide towing vehicles.

In the end more than 1800 officers—which we asked for—came to Ottawa under OPS command, including officers from the OPP, RCMP and a number of municipal police forces from as far away

as Alberta. Ottawa residents will be forever grateful to those men and women in uniform who came to the aid of our city during the unlawful occupation.

The occupation of our city was a horrific experience for people who lived in the downtown core and was unlike anything our city has ever faced before. It affected those who work in the downtown core and call it home, our tourists who want to visit the Parliament Buildings, and the local businesses that depend on peace and stability for their livelihoods. It's had long-lasting impacts on some of our residents' mental and physical health, and has had a detrimental impact on our tourism industry.

I want to share a few examples, in conclusion.

● (1935)

[Translation]

The first example I want to cite is that of Montfort Hospital.

[English]

It is very important to our community and it had to put staff in hotel rooms nearby to avoid significant traffic delays, which ultimately affected their shifts over a two-week stretch. It led to a steep decline in activity in the emergency room, which impacted their patients negatively.

As well, 13 families who travel to the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario for cancer therapy were impacted by the convoy. They had to either delay or reschedule their treatment. A CHEO spokesperson described the occupation as “unnecessary stress on top of what is already...a stressful situation for kids and their families...whose treatments are critical for their best outcomes”.

A local media outlet reported on February 1 that an anonymous downtown resident had been “living a nightmare in her home just minutes away from Parliament Hill”, and that “Constant honking and noise outside her building, as well as the smell of diesel fuel, [had] left her sleepless.” The woman said, “It makes me so depressed and so sad that these people care so little about people like me, or people who are disabled...”.

The Public Order Emergency Commission heard the testimony of a legally blind resident in the downtown core who described the hardship she experienced during the occupation. This included difficulty getting around due the constant noise as well as hearing loss as a result of the extremely loud blaring of horns for days on end.

United Way East Ontario and 35 of its social service agencies studied the impacts of the occupation on the vulnerable and marginalized communities. Most notably, the Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region noted that more than half their calls during the 24-hour period were from residents in distress or in crisis. Additionally, and this is very, very sad, 12% of their clients had thoughts of suicide as a result of the events that unfolded.

And yet, Ottawa's residents were as resilient as they had been in the past and will be in the future.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chair, I'm now ready to answer the committee's questions.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear and to express the views of city council members and residents of the City of Ottawa.

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

We will now go to the first round of questions, during which each speaker will have the floor for five minutes.

Mr. Motz, the floor is yours.

[*English*]

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

Thank you to the witnesses for being here.

Deputy Chief Bell, when he was asked at the commission about the meeting with protesters, said, "I truly believed it took the temperature of the protest down and that was a good outcome".

Mr. Kanellakos, you were on the ground. You were a city official who actually met with the protesters. Do you think it would have had an additional cooling effect if someone—anyone—from the federal government had met with the main organizers and heard their grievances? After all, they were here to meet with the government, and the federal government would have heard their concerns with the federal mandates and restrictions and how those were impacting their livelihoods.

Do you think it would have had an impact on the protesters?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: Mr. Chair, it's hard to speculate on whether it would have or not. That certainly was their objective. I mean, the objective when they met with me, when Ottawa police brought them over, was—and they were quite clear about this—was that they felt that meeting with Mayor Watson ultimately, if they could fulfill their end of the bargain, would demonstrate and put pressure on other levels of government to be able to meet them.

That's what they were seeking. That was their ultimate goal.

Mr. Glen Motz: Fair enough. You're right. That was their ultimate goal, and unfortunately....

Mr. Mayor, I want to go to a statement that your chief of staff made. There was a text sent back and forth to the Minister of Public Safety. This is from your chief of staff, Mr. Arpin, to Minister Mendicino: "I assume that you must understand how spectacularly ridiculous the contention is that we could be meeting with them when your level of government trots out a number of ministers to denigrate the demonstrators and let them know that dialogue is impossible with the Government of Canada in the context of a demon-

stration targeting the government of Canada but somehow we should divine that we should be meeting with them to make them feel heard. That's nauseating to say the least. But thanks for sharing frankly."

Mr. Watson, I have a quick question for you. Those are his words. Would it be fair to say that they are reflective of how you felt at that time as well?

Mr. Jim Watson: Thank you, Mr. Motz, for the question.

The bottom line is that we were all frustrated because this thing had gone on for far too long. Temperatures were bubbling up at the surface, both with protesters and with government officials.

Mr. Glen Motz: The issue is about government not speaking with protesters.

Mr. Jim Watson: At the end of the day, I can't direct a federal minister to speak with anyone.

Mr. Glen Motz: But it added to your frustration.

Mr. Jim Watson: I'm not sure—

Mr. Glen Motz: The bottom line, Mr. Mayor, is that they put you and Mr. Kanellakos in a spot where they expected you folks to act and meet with protesters rather than them.

Mr. Jim Watson: No, because—

Mr. Glen Motz: But you did meet with them. Mr. Kanellakos met with them, but not the ministers—not anybody from the government.

Mr. Jim Watson: No, but we had worked on an agreement that if they moved trucks out of residential areas—which was my number one preoccupation because that was the annoyance, the frustration and the angst by the public with those trucks running 24 hours a day—and if they followed three different conditions that are in the letter that I tabled with the commission, then I would meet with organizers.

Mr. Glen Motz: I understand that before the police operation took place there was an agreement in principle.

Mr. Kanellakos, let me ask you this. As one of the only people willing to meet with them or able to meet with the protest organizers, did they seem agreeable, reasonable and respectful in their dialogues with you?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: The people I met with were reasonable and respectful towards us. We had a respectful conversation.

Mr. Glen Motz: Thank you. I would assume that was the expectation they had, if they had been given the courtesy and respect to be met by the government, which is why they came down here in the first place.

Did you meet with.... Let me ask you this way. Was this the only occasion that you were asked by someone from the federal government to meet with the protesters?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: No, I was asked by Ottawa police to meet with the protesters.

Mr. Glen Motz: Anyone from government?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: No.

• (1940)

Mr. Glen Motz: Okay.

As one of the only people to meet with them, you saw first-hand what they were like.

Mr. Mayor answered this the first time, but do you believe they would have been in a position to vacate, to leave, had they been heard by government?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: I'd say no because they didn't have control over the entire group of people who were here in Ottawa. That's why we ran into trouble, so we were trying to move out the vehicles. Not everybody was part of their group and listening to them.

[Translation]

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

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

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

[English]

Mr. Mayor, first of all, thank you very much for your public service. I think you are the longest-serving mayor of the City of Ottawa, and you'll be congratulated for that. In that period—I think you mentioned your having 25 years of public service at different levels of government—you must have seen many protests take place.

How did this particular protest that compare with what you have seen in your public life?

Mr. Jim Watson: Thank you, Mr. Naqvi.

Nothing compares with what we saw. This was extraordinary. We're very good at welcoming protesters to Ottawa, as you know—mostly to your riding because they're here for Parliament Hill, the Supreme Court and other important buildings along Wellington Street.

At the end of the day, at virtually all of the protests I've seen over the 25 years that I've been in public life in the City of Ottawa, people arrive; they protest; they give speeches, and then they move on.

This was entirely different in terms of volume, the level of anger that you could see from people, the complete lack of respect of many of the individuals who came here and were involved in activities that were just despicable, and the harm they did to people living in Centretown.

Centretown is a vibrant community, as is Lowertown, which is represented by my friend, Mathieu. The Byward Market and Overbrook—Forbes by the baseball stadium were also affected. There were many documented examples of this kind of boorish behaviour—urinating on the cenotaph, dancing on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, stealing food from the Shepherds of Good Hope, putting placards and the mandate on the Terry Fox statue.

I asked members of Parliament and senators, “If this were happening in your community, would you tolerate it under the guise of

free speech?” Absolutely not. You can have free speech, but you can't start to destroy a neighbourhood.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: So you've never seen anything like what you've just described.

How did you feel when you saw some members of Parliament, including the new leader of the opposition, going out there, buying coffee and taking photos with people who were disturbing the lives of the community and who shut down the city?

Mr. Jim Watson: Well, the best way to describe that behaviour is that it's disrespectful. It's disrespectful to the people of Ottawa, particularly since the now-leader of the opposition is an MP from Ottawa. Many of his constituents would have worked downtown, and much of downtown was shut down. We had just got out of the lockdown as a result of COVID-19 and the stores and restaurants were finally starting to open, and then there was another lockdown caused by the convoy.

It was not helpful at all to be mugging with selfie sticks and taking pictures with the convoy. Our city was hurting. We needed some empathy and sympathy, and not these kinds of tactics.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Mr. Fleury, I got hundreds of emails in my community office from residents and businesses who were hurting. What kinds of issues, specific cases, were there? Could you give some examples of what you were hearing through your ward office as the local councillor?

Mr. Mathieu Fleury: The range was very wide, so I'm only going to share a few examples. As you know, Rideau Street is an important transit hub. It connects both local transit routes from the western part of Centretown and the eastern part of the city, which connect at the Rideau Centre with our light rail. Having to close those local routes added a number of pressures for the folks trying to access, for example, hospitals and their workplaces. There were a number of situations where local businesses that wanted to open could not, because the deliveries couldn't make it to those businesses.

I spoke in my earlier statement about the issues of livability. You live beside the parliamentary precinct, but that's your home. That's your city. You usually walk to your coffee shop, and you couldn't do that, because there was noise and intimidation and aggression. When you were in your own unit, it was not quiet. There were constant horns and smells.

On your ability to travel, on your ability to do business, and on your ability to live safely, as a city, we weren't able to uphold our responsibility for the well-being and safety of residents.

• (1945)

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Mr. Kanellakos, I've got a few seconds left.

Did the 311 call volume go up during that period? Was there a marked difference in the calls?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: Yes, we had over 18,000 calls. At one point, I thought it was double our normal volume. I don't think it was quite double, but it was significantly higher.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Was there any sense of what kinds of complaints you were receiving through those 311 calls?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: They were mostly the bylaw types of calls regarding nuisances: fires, fireworks, noise, parking issues, and people urinating and using outdoor premises to go to the wash-room. We were receiving all kinds of nuisance bylaw types of complaints.

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Thank you, Mr. Naqvi. You are over time.

Since I am the next speaker, would Mr. Green or Senator Boniface like to take the chair?

[English]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP)): The floor is yours.

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Thank you for being with us this evening, gentlemen.

Mr. Watson, I listened to your presentation. I'd like you to tell me a little more about how you view the role you had to play during the events.

I understand a lot of stakeholders were involved. There was the chief of the Ottawa Police Service, Mr. Ayotte in Emergency and Protective Services, the Parliamentary Protective Service, the Ontario Provincial Police and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

As mayor of Ottawa, how would you define the role you had to play during the events?

Mr. Jim Watson: Thank you for your question.

Since the mayor is definitely responsible for working with the provincial and federal governments, I spoke with Mr. Trudeau, Mr. Ford and various ministers, and there definitely was a lot of co-operation with local MPs, such as Mr. Navqi and Minister Fortier, since their ridings were affected by the protests.

I was also responsible for providing support to the police service, but, as you know, politicians can't direct police operations because that's against the laws of Canada and the Province of Ontario.

So I spoke with the ministers and the mayors of other cities to solicit their help when we needed tow trucks and police officers. I want to take this opportunity to publicly thank Mr. Tory, who offered a lot of resources to assist us in responding to the crisis in our city.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): You say you spoke to those people partly so you could bring in some tow trucks. What exactly did you do about the tow trucks? You helped, but, as I understand it, no tow trucks were available, or no one wanted to intervene.

Mr. Jim Watson: I'll give you a specific example. I spoke with Mr. Tory, who gave me the telephone numbers of three or four towing companies.

However, my priority in my discussions with the other levels of government was to request additional police officers. We needed 1,800 officers to assist our police service because it couldn't control the situation alone.

First, we had talks and lobbied for more human resources. Second, I had to speak with other mayors to see if I could get information in order to call in more tow trucks.

• (1950)

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): You say you had a few telephone numbers. Could you tell us how many you had and for what businesses? What towing companies did you call?

Mr. Jim Watson: I didn't make any calls personally. Members of my staff, such as Mr. Kanellakos, handled that. The problem was that local towing companies refused to work during the protest because they feared for their safety and that of their trucks.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): How many companies did you call, Mr. Watson? You told me you had some telephone numbers. How many did you have?

Mr. Jim Watson: I got three or four from Mr. Tory.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): You gave those numbers to a member of your staff so he could make the calls. Who exactly was that?

Mr. Jim Watson: I think I gave them to Mr. Kanellakos. As you know, it's not a mayor's responsibility to make calls of that kind.

It was definitely a very serious situation: we had to find a way to remove the trucks from Wellington Street.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): You gave those telephone numbers to Mr. Kanellakos. What happened after that? Did he come back with answers? Did he confirm his results with you?

Mr. Jim Watson: We managed to find tow trucks after the Emergencies Act was invoked.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): On what date did you give the three or four telephone numbers to Mr. Kanellakos?

Mr. Jim Watson: It was one or two days before the act was invoked.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): So I understand you didn't get any results before the act was invoked.

Mr. Jim Watson: No. We definitely had no success finding local companies that could supply tow trucks. That's one of the reasons why I supported the act being invoked.

[English]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): That concludes the round. I do apologize. I'll note that when we intervene, it's to take our time back because we are limited. It's not a personal affront to anything that you're saying in your testimony.

Mr. Chair, the chair is now yours.

[Translation]

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

Thank you, Mr. Watson.

Go ahead, Mr. Green.

[English]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): To carry on with that comment, I'm going to put some questions in a rather rapid-fire way. I'm going to ask, through you, Mr. Chair, that the witnesses try to answer the questions in a like manner so that we can get through the list of questions that I have.

Through you, Mr. Chair, to Mayor Watson, how often did you communicate with other levels of government in relation to the protest in downtown Ottawa?

Mr. Jim Watson: Well, it was on an almost daily basis with someone from one of the orders of government. It wasn't always necessary—

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): You mentioned, for instance, that Mr. Naqvi is the MP representing your riding. Did you have a chance to speak with Mr. Naqvi or other political representatives?

Mr. Jim Watson: Yes, and he was also the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Emergency Preparedness, so it was helpful to have that liaison as well.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): When was the first time you had those conversations?

Mr. Jim Watson: It would have been the first weekend, probably the Friday when the trucks really started to arrive.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Were any briefings presented prior to their arrival of certain security threats that might have been presented?

Mr. Jim Watson: I had a briefing by Chief Sloy and our other emergency operations people earlier in the week.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Did you share that information with some of your political counterparts?

Mr. Jim Watson: The information I got from the chief wasn't political. It was—

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): No, I'm sorry. Did you share the nature of the threat? For instance, if you as mayor were briefed that correspondence received from the hotel association said that 11,000 people were coming for 30 days, would you have shared that with any other levels of government?

Mr. Jim Watson: With that particular case, we shared it with the chief of police. We got the information from Mr. Steve Ball, who's the president of the hotel association. He emailed the city and—

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): With regard to other information like that, were you able to provide briefings...? The question I'm asking is this: Were you able to provide briefings to your political colleagues in upper levels of government?

Mr. Jim Watson: Well, again, in that particular case, because it was an operational matter, it would not be appropriate to have a political discussion. This was intelligence that came through the hotel association, and it was forwarded to the appropriate authorities

within the police. The police at that time were under the impression that they would come and that they might stay a day or two and then move on. Obviously—

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): But the hotel association suggested, sir, in an email to you, 11,000 rooms for 30-plus days, and you stated in your testimony before the Public Order Emergency Commission that you didn't take it seriously.

Mr. Jim Watson: Well, we didn't take it seriously because there was no follow-up on the part.... It's fine for someone to go in and call to say that they'd like to order 11,000 rooms when, in fact, we don't have 11,000 rooms in the downtown—

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Right, but when they arrived en volume—

Mr. Jim Watson: Well, that's why I referred it to the police, number one.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): At that point, when they arrived en volume and the hotel association suggested that they'd be booking for 30 days, did you believe that they were here to stay?

Mr. Jim Watson: Well, again, the hotel association did not take it seriously. They didn't have the rooms available, number one. Second, no down payment or any kind of opportunity was given to collect a down payment and—

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Sure, in advance, but once they showed up.... You would agree that when thousands of people showed up in the city, at that point, perhaps you could have given some veracity to the claim that they had intended from the outset to stay for 30 days, would you not?

• (1955)

Mr. Jim Watson: Well, again, I was on the ground. There was no evidence that they were going to stay that long from my perspective—

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): But the hotel association told you they were going to stay.

Mr. Jim Watson: No, the hotel association received an inquiry. It didn't say they were booked. There were no rooms booked.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Okay, so on that nature, when you mentioned in your testimony, sir, that you worked on an agreement, who did you work on that agreement with?

Mr. Jim Watson: Well, it wasn't me. It was my chief of staff, and it was city staff. I received a call from Dean French, who was Premier Ford's former chief of staff, and he offered to act as some kind of a mediator because he had contacts with the trucking—

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Had you ever done that before as a mayor? Have you ever intervened—

Mr. Jim Watson: Would you like me to answer? I'm going to answer, but you keep interrupting me.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): I mentioned to you, sir, through the chair, that I would reclaim my time when appropriate. That's how this committee works; that's how we'll proceed.

Mr. Jim Watson: Yes, but if you're going to ask me a question, I want to reply to it.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): I'm asking you a question.

Mr. Jim Watson: Well, let me answer it.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Did you, in that process when you were working through the negotiations with Dean French...? Had you ever, in any other situations as a mayor, intervened in frontline negotiations with protests, or was this your first time?

Mr. Jim Watson: Well, we'd never had a protest of this nature, so of course—

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): So, it was your first time.

Mr. Jim Watson: —I never would have involved myself in something because this was—

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Part of the agreement—

Mr. Jim Watson: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): I established your answer.

Part of the agreement...did it include staging at Coventry? Were you part of the negotiations that would have had the logistics supply chain set up at a city-owned baseball facility?

Mr. Jim Watson: No, that was a decision by the police and city staff. It wouldn't have been made at the political level. As you know—I hope you know—we're not allowed, as politicians, to direct police operations, so for me to start directing the police to go and clean up the Coventry site would have been completely inappropriate—

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): But you're acting as a third party negotiator with people who came with hostile interests.

Mr. Jim Watson: Well, as I tried to explain—and you cut me off, sir—the bottom line is that I did not negotiate. I had a call from Mr. French, who had contacts within the trucking industry. He got in touch with my chief of staff. They worked out an agreement that was signed by one of the protesters that they would do certain things and that we would then meet with them. They, obviously, did not live up to the agreement. The Emergencies Act was imposed, which I support, and that brought resolution relatively quickly. I commend the police for the work they did to clear our streets.

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): I'm sorry, Mr. Watson, but your time was up 30 seconds ago. I let you complete your answer, but I can't let you continue speaking.

Senator Boniface has the floor for five minutes.

[*English*]

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface (Senator, Ontario, ISG)): : Thank you very much.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here. I have a short time and a lot of questions.

Mayor Watson, I'm curious about the provincial role because you've been very specific in your comments, and you had meetings with the federal government—not with the provincial government. The last I looked, the provincial government is responsible for policing in the province and as an oversight for municipalities, so can you tell me what conversations you had with the provincial government on this and if you could tell us about the tripartite discussions that took place?

Mr. Jim Watson: Thank you, Senator.

I believe it was Minister Blair who suggested that we have, in essence, a tripartite political table with the City of Ottawa, the federal government and the provincial government. The federal government, of course, supported that—it was their idea. I supported it, but we could not get agreement from the province. I raised the issue myself with Premier Ford, and he did not want to be involved in the tripartite committee.

I can say that once we sent our letter asking for 1,800 resources from the province, the federal government and municipal police services, there was great co-operation in getting Wellington Street cleaned up after three weeks. However, I was disappointed that we did not have the province at that table because we thought that was a good way to share information and better coordinate our efforts to help take back our street.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): Can you help me understand Mr. French's role? Why would he have reached out to you, what expertise does he have, or what did he think he had to offer?

Mr. Jim Watson: I met him on a few occasions when he was the premier's chief of staff. He called out of the blue. I had not had any contact with him since he left Queen's Park. He said he had contacts in the trucking industry. He did not want to get paid. He was not here to make money off this. He saw what was happening—as Canadians coast to coast saw what was happening—and offered to act as a go-between. I said, “Great, I will get my chief of staff to call you.” They had a number of calls. The police were informed that this approach had been made to my office.

At the end of the day, to his credit, Mr. French was able to reach an agreement that we felt was reasonable, one that would require the removal of all trucks from residential districts and that agreed not to backfill the residential areas or displace the truck convoy with other vehicles. At the end of that process, just prior to the Emergencies Act on February 14, we counted approximately 102 vehicles moved away from the residential area, which was my number one preoccupation—trying to give some peace of mind to those residents. About a third or half of those were big rigs, and the others were pickup trucks, other campers and so on.

● (2000)

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

Mr. Kanellakos, if I could get clarity, I'm trying to understand the provincial role, as you would expect.

From your emergency management responsibility—yours and Mr. Ayotte's overall responsibility—what's your link to the province? Did you ask for any resources in that regard to fulfill your obligations from an emergency management perspective?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

No. Unlike other emergencies, as the senator well knows, we didn't link into the emergency operations centre of the province. It was very much between the police chief and Police Commissioner Carrique, who were doing the discussions, until the request was made by the police services board to ask the mayor to write the joint letter.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): With respect to your own order, could you tell me what the purpose was of your own declaration of emergency?

Mr. Kim Ayotte: I don't mind taking that question. Generally, the declaration of emergency will provide us with additional powers, purchasing powers, etc.

In Ottawa, we've been through many emergencies in the past few years. As a result, we've changed our bylaws to allow us to have those powers even without declaring a state of emergency.

Primarily we would use the state of emergency to motion to the public that this is a very, very serious matter and that we're engaging other levels of government as well. It's a symbolic gesture, and we would make that recommendation to the mayor. The mayor is the person who has the authority to declare that.

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

With respect to the provincial emergency order, what benefit did it give to you as the City of Ottawa?

Mr. Kim Ayotte: Once again, from a symbolic gesture, it provided us with little benefit, except for that ideology that this is a serious event and that the province is taking it as seriously as we are with regard to the declaration. It also may have provided some additional abilities for the police, but I don't have that specific information before me.

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Thank you, senator. Your time is up.

Senator Carignan, it's your turn for five minutes.

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

Mr. Watson, I want to continue on the matter of the mediator, Mr. French, who was asked to do something. According to the media, you told the Rouleau commission that certain municipal councillors had wanted to bring in a mediator and that they had even prepared a draft resolution to submit to city council. However, Mr. Blair and Mr. Mendicino apparently dismissed the idea.

Could you clarify your thinking on the subject?

Mr. Jim Watson: Thank you, senator.

That was a suggestion made by two members of our city council, Mr. Cloutier and Mr. Egli, who drafted a resolution requesting that the federal government provide the services of a mediator. Unfortunately, they didn't submit that resolution, which was a draft, to city council. I don't know why.

I had probably mentioned the idea in the first week of the protest. I suggested it to Mr. Blair and other federal government representatives, who told me, however, that it wasn't a priority and that there would be no mediation with the persons responsible for the protest.

However, I think it was a good idea, but the federal government ultimately had the authority to say yes or no, and it said no.

● (2005)

Hon. Claude Carignan: Why didn't you challenge that decision by asking why it couldn't be attempted? It's somewhat strange for the federal government to say no like that.

Mr. Jim Watson: We had 20 or 25 items on the agenda during the meetings. We didn't have a lot of time for debate. The federal government said it wasn't a good idea, and we accepted that.

Hon. Claude Carignan: So the government felt it wasn't a good idea and told you that it was dismissing the idea, that there was no need for a mediator.

Mr. Jim Watson: I've forgotten all the details of that discussion with the federal government.

My priority was to convince the other two levels of government that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Ontario Provincial Police should provide more officers because that was the only solution.

Hon. Claude Carignan: I understood that. However, it seems that the intervention of a mediator, Mr. Dean French, as it happens, worked, at least for part of the city.

Mr. Jim Watson: Yes, I know Mr. French's intervention made it possible to make some progress because nearly 102 cars and trucks left that part of the city.

Hon. Claude Carignan: That was a real success; you were glad.

Mr. Jim Watson: I was glad because it was the first time we had seen any movement among the truckers.

Hon. Claude Carignan: That was done with the help of a mediator.

Mr. Jim Watson: Yes, that's correct.

Hon. Claude Carignan: You said that your declaration of a state of emergency in Ottawa was only symbolic. Did you do it for strictly symbolic reasons?

Mr. Jim Watson: I believe Mr. Ayotte has more information on that subject, but that kind of declaration coming from a mayor doesn't really confer the same powers as those conferred by a declaration made by the province or the federal government. Many people think that Canadian mayors have the same authority as their counterparts in the United States. However the mayors of American cities have a lot of powers.

Here's an example. I'm going to say this in English because it's a bit easier for me and the subject is more complicated.

[English]

It allows us to override the procurement process, for instance. When we had COVID-19, at the start, at the recommendation of city manager Kanellakos, I signed an emergency declaration because we needed personal protective equipment: masks and needles. We had to shift people from one—

Hon. Claude Carignan: You needed tow trucks now.

[Translation]

Mr. Jim Watson: Pardon me?

Hon. Claude Carignan: You also needed tow trucks later on.

Mr. Jim Watson: Yes, definitely.

Hon. Claude Carignan: Don't you think your declaration of a state of emergency helped you?

Mr. Jim Watson: It didn't give the City of Ottawa the authority to compel a company to provide that service.

[English]

You don't have to go through three tenders to get smocks, masks and so on. There were no recreation programs during COVID, so we could take people from one collective unit and put them in the test centres for COVID-19, working with Ottawa Public Health, *par exemple*.

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Thank you, Senator Carignan. Your time is up.

Senator Harder, you have the floor for five minutes.

[English]

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

Thank you for being here, all of you.

My questions will be for the mayor, at least at the start. He may want to direct in the answers.

Mayor, your earlier description of how the residents of Ottawa felt at that time resonated with me as a resident of Ottawa. I want to talk a little bit about what the perspective was, being here.

You said that the OPS lost Wellington Street. I think that for a lot of residents in Ottawa they felt that the police action was, in fact, a complete breakdown of policing in the municipality. I wonder if you would share that view that we had a breakdown of policing?

Mr. Jim Watson: Thank you, Senator.

I think we're seeing that each and every day during the public inquiry. Clearly, we were overwhelmed at the local level, and the Ottawa Police. There appeared to be a great deal of argument back and forth among the three orders of policing. There was a lack of a clear direction and communication as to where we were going to get out of this mess that we found ourselves in.

Hon. Peter Harder: Yes, from my perspective, it was not only that there were silos at the jurisdictional level, but also that there

was at least a lack of alignment at the municipal level between the political and administrative arm of the city and the police force itself, and the lack of confidence in the policing leadership. Is that true?

Mr. Jim Watson: I think at the start you couldn't say that because you have to assume it's going to take some time to put together a plan of this nature; it's going to require some logistical challenges to bring people from coast to coast—municipal police forces and so on—and put them up. There was no question that by the beginning of the second weekend, a lot of us—me included—were wondering, why is this taking so long? This should have been done when the numbers dropped in the middle of the week, but which then came back up on weekends. That happened, obviously, three weekends in a row.

I think there was a general lack of communication and frustration. In fairness, I'm not prepared to paint every police officer with the same brush. The women and men who were on the front lines in miserable conditions, being spat upon, yelled at and so on, were doing the best they could and I'm proud of their efforts. Clearly, there were arguments at the higher level of policing, where there were allegations of lack of confidence, planning and so on.

● (2010)

Hon. Peter Harder: How soon did you lose confidence in the leadership of the OPS?

Mr. Jim Watson: Well, I think it probably started to erode by the second weekend. When they arrived here.... I know that I've heard from lots of Monday morning quarterbacks, as constituents; but at the end of the day, nothing like this had happened in Ottawa before. For people to say, "Well, you should have known this; they've booked hotel rooms and so on", it's easy to criticize.

The fact is we did not have the resources to go and clean it up. To the credit of Chief Sloly—and I know he has taken a lot of criticism—he did lay out in a letter to me, which I co-signed with the chair of the police board to the two orders of government.... We needed 1,800 officers. We could not move in sooner.

We couldn't, for instance, enforce an injunction, the police told me, because we just didn't have the resources to do it.

Hon. Peter Harder: But the police board itself was going through a crisis of confidence.

Mr. Jim Watson: Yes.

Hon. Peter Harder: It just seemed, as a resident of Ottawa, that it was a police failure, a governance failure and a coordination failure all in one.

Mr. Jim Watson: It was a perfect storm; that's true. At the end of the day, our council, through a two-thirds vote, decided to remove the chair of the police services board, because of a lack of confidence. The province then moved to remove their three appointees. Then we had a whole new police board. One of the reasons there was this level of frustration on the part of council members was that the chair was going to hire a new chief, so we would have had three chiefs in three days.

Hon. Peter Harder: It sounds like the U.K. government.

Mr. Jim Watson: Yes, it was just about like that.

We had Chief Sloly, interim Chief Bell, and this individual from Waterloo.

Hon. Peter Harder: On that point, did you at any point in that period seek an Emergencies Act declaration at the provincial level or at the federal level?

Mr. Jim Watson: No, because, again, I had two major preoccupations: the first was to get the officers; and the second was to get as many vehicles out of the residential community as possible, because these people were suffering.

I went down there on two occasions, escorted by the police, to see what was going on. There was a pig roast on a spit, there were fires in pits, and there was yelling and screaming. They had these loud train horns that they kept honking—

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Thank you, Senator Harder. Your time is up.

Thank you, Mr. Watson.

Senator Patterson, you have the floor for five minutes.

[*English*]

Hon. Dennis Glen Patterson (Senator, Nunavut, CSG): : Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just have one question I would like to ask Your Worship.

Mr. Ayotte has told us that the city did not install barricades on the advice of the Ottawa city police. I would have thought that knowing that the convoy was rolling across the country, the barricades might have been a preventive measure to at least protect the parliamentary precinct.

I'm wondering—and maybe it's Mr. Ayotte I should be asking—if the city asked the police. What was the interface between the city and the police that led Mr. Ayotte to say that the city had advice not to install barricades? Could you elaborate?

Mr. Jim Watson: I think, if you'd allow, Mr. Ayotte would have more detailed information than I would.

Mr. Kim Ayotte: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Very early on when we established the emergency operations centre we also established a group, which is well known in the city, called the traffic incident management group. It has representatives from our traffic and public works...and from the police and our emergency operations centre. That group works together to come up with a traffic plan depending on the jurisdiction of the event.

If it's a police-led jurisdiction such as this was, then the police take the lead on whether or not they approve the closure of roads through the discussions with the TIMG, the traffic incident management group.

In this particular case, they did get together. They established the group. They had those discussions, and the police did not want to close the roads, because they wanted the flow of traffic to be allowed throughout the city.

● (2015)

Hon. Dennis Glen Patterson: In hindsight, do you think that the city police gave you the right advice? It's always easier to be wise in hindsight. Could you have prevented a lot of congestion, especially in the parliamentary precinct, if barricades had been employed?

Mr. Kim Ayotte: Well, we certainly learned from following demonstrations such as “Rolling Thunder”, and on Canada Day, that once we closed the roads we had more control. In hindsight, yes, that was a mistake, or that was a decision that should have been made at the time, as we've shown through follow-up demonstrations.

Hon. Dennis Glen Patterson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Have you finished asking your questions, Senator Patterson? You still have two and a half minutes left.

[*English*]

Hon. Dennis Glen Patterson: Yes.

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): All right.

We will now begin the second round of questions. Every speaker will have four minutes.

Mr. Brock, the floor is yours.

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Brock: Thank you, Chair, and good evening, gentlemen. Thank you for your attendance today.

I mean no disrespect to three of you, but I will be focusing exclusively on Lord Mayor Watson.

An hon. member: It's not “Lord Mayor”. That's only in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Larry Brock: Whatever.

In any event, Mayor Watson, in preparation for your testimony today, I reviewed hundreds of pages of transcripts of your recent appearance at the commission. Some of the takeaways were that a number of counsel referenced documents to you, whether these be emails, letters or notes.

I got the impression, in reading your responses, that not every meeting you had with government officials resulted in a note. Would that be fair to say?

Mr. Jim Watson: That's true, yes.

Mr. Larry Brock: Where do you place the priority as to when you feel it necessary to record conversations?

For instance, with the Prime Minister, with Minister Mendicino or with Minister Blair, under what circumstances is it appropriate for you to have an accurate recollection by reviewing a note as to what was said and discussed during a meeting, or at other times you simply would not prepare a note?

Mr. Jim Watson: As you know, the apparatus within the Prime Minister's Office is quite extensive for providing—I don't know what the proper term is—a general summary of activities and phone calls and so on. We don't have that practice and we don't have that ability at the City of Ottawa.

In many instances, the calls are coming fast and furious on cell phones. For instance, when the premier first reached me, he called my cell phone from his cell phone. On another occasion I think I called his cell phone to ask for support. It was not a common practice to have that kind of note-taking at the municipal level.

Mr. Larry Brock: Okay, that's fair enough.

Were any of the conversations recorded?

Mr. Jim Watson: They were not by us, no.

Mr. Larry Brock: You made reference to many occasions where you'd have to take a look at your records to see whether or not a response was made, perhaps to a letter to the Prime Minister or a letter to a minister.

If I asked you this question, would you comply and provide details of any and all notes, correspondence and briefing materials that you have not already supplied to the commission counsel?

Mr. Jim Watson: According to our lawyers, everything that was asked for has been delivered to the public inquiry.

Mr. Larry Brock: I'm not asking what was asked for.

If there is any other material relating to your involvement with the Prime Minister and any minister at a federal level, and if there is anything outstanding that was not requested by commission counsel, will you provide that to this committee?

Mr. Jim Watson: To the best of my knowledge, Mr. Brock, there is no other information. We scoured emails and correspondence, written and electronic. It was all provided to the inquiry.

I'm not aware of anything that was held back. We'd have no reason to hold back any information.

Mr. Larry Brock: I want to circle back to Senator Carignan's questions to you about the utility of having the federal government engaged in mediation. I have a very limited amount of time.

Would you agree with me that a precedent has been set by the federal government—by numerous previous prime ministers, including our current Prime Minister—that from time to time, with protests on and off the Hill, the prime minister or members of his cabinet have spoken to those protesters?

Would you agree with that?

• (2020)

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): A quick answer, please, Mr. Watson. Mr. Brock's time is up.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Watson: I'm not well versed on prime ministers going to speak to protesters, so I wouldn't have any historical information to offer an informed opinion.

[*Translation*]

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Bendayan for four minutes.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you.

I'll follow up on Mr. Brock's question regarding mediation.

I, myself, am an accredited mediator. I certainly believe in the power of mediation, but mediation requires the right parties around the table. I understand from your earlier testimony that there was no representative or even representatives who were in control of the blockaders within Ottawa. I believe it was Mr. Kanellakos who stated that earlier.

Is that correct?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: That's correct.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Is that your understanding, Mayor?

Mr. Jim Watson: Yes, there's no question there were many leaders, and they didn't all sing from the same hymn book, if you will. As a result, we were approached by Ottawa Police Service to see if we could get involved, first through Mr. Kanellakos, then—

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: But there was no single person—or persons—with whom to negotiate?

Mr. Jim Watson: No, there was no one leader. It was very disjointed.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you.

You also testified earlier that Minister Blair attempted to set up a tripartite working group or meeting—federal, provincial and municipal governments all together—to communicate, exchange information and find solutions.

At the commission, you testified about your disappointment that "the Province rejected that." You went on to say "They didn't feel it was necessary to have three Orders of Government at that political level to have this table."

I can only imagine your surprise and disappointment, as mayor of the second-largest city in Ontario, over your province not being interested.

Mr. Jim Watson: I think that's a fair assessment. The premier did not come to Ottawa during the entire occupation, which was unfortunate. He called the tripartite proposal by the federal government a waste of time. I felt it was a lost opportunity. He thought it was going to be a bit of a gabfest: "Why would you have all these people sitting around a table?" I said, "Because we need to get on the same page to get this thing—"

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Particularly, I understand you had a conversation with the solicitor general of Ontario. She was under the impression that there were 1,500 OPP officers on the ground. You indicated that was not true, at all. In fact, you had to explain to the provincial government that there were more like 50. That's quite different from 1,500.

How is it possible there was such a lack of understanding and communication between municipal and provincial governments, in this case?

Mr. Jim Watson: My understanding is that, within the last week or so at the inquiry, there was a clarification that the information the minister was getting was incorrect. I think they were doing an accumulation of days, so, if 50 came one day, then 40 left...another 50...they'd keep adding it up. I don't know how they got to 1,500, because we would know if there were 1,500 OPP officers downtown. You would see them in their distinctive uniforms.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Of course.

Mr. Jim Watson: As a final point, I think the other challenges.... I went back to the police after I heard that from the minister, and they said it was 50 to 55 OPP on any given day.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: I have one final question in the time that remains.

You testified, in response to earlier questioning, that your confidence eroded by the second weekend. As we know, this blockade lasted far longer than that. How did you foresee this ending? What needed to happen? Did you believe an intervention was necessary for this to end in your city?

Mr. Jim Watson: Absolutely. What was happening was that the protesters—the occupiers—were emboldened. They had a national and international stage: the Parliament Buildings as the backdrop, with music blaring out and speeches by everyone—

• (2025)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: How would this have ended, in your mind?

Mr. Jim Watson: It was going to end with police intervening and cleaning up the site. We needed the officers and we needed the tow trucks. When those both became available, we saw action taken.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: How did those become available?

Mr. Jim Watson: As a result of the Emergencies Act.... That allowed us to get tow trucks. We ended up having to put Ottawa Police Service decals on the trucks, because the tow trucks were still fearful of retaliation by—

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Your time is up, Ms. Bendayan.

Thank you, Mr. Watson.

Since it's my turn to speak, Mr. Green, would you please take the chair?

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Were it not for the Emergencies—

[*Translation*]

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

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

I am addressing you again, Mr. Watson, because you're the mayor of Ottawa. I heard your testimony. If the situation were to recur, would there be a way of preventing people from occupying downtown Ottawa?

Mr. Jim Watson: Thank you for your question. It gives me an opportunity to speak a little in the language of Molière.

[*English*]

In hindsight, we should have shut down Wellington Street much sooner. Everyone could figure that out when the trucks were coming. They shouldn't be that close to the parliamentary precinct.

As I said, I think the prize for the protesters was having the back-drop of Parliament Hill. If we shut Wellington and they go down to Slater or Albert.... There's nothing spectacular about the scenery on Slater and Albert, and they probably wouldn't stay that long.

[*Translation*]

I feel that we made a mistake by not shutting down Wellington Street ahead of time. We've learned our lesson.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): I understand that Wellington Street was occupied, but let's go back to the first day of the occupation.

It took a few days, but once people had arrived, they were increasingly settling in. Earlier on, there was a discussion about hot tubs and barbecues. If it happened again, then one or two days after seeing that trucks were moving onto Wellington Street, what would you do to clear downtown Ottawa more quickly?

Mr. Jim Watson: Firstly, we would definitely close down Wellington Street ahead of time.

Second, if trucks were illegally parked, we would have them towed away, because there's no parking on that street. It's dangerous leaving a vehicle parked near the Parliament Buildings.

I think it would require being more proactive about closing off that street, because it's definitely the most important street in Canada.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Why didn't you, Mr. Watson? Why didn't you order the trucks towed on the first or second day?

Mr. Jim Watson: That's probably the most important question for our country, and certainly for our city. That's why I said that the police and the city had made a mistake by not closing the street ahead of time. However, when 20 or 50 trucks arrive in the space of an hour, it's hard for the police to respond.

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

[English]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): : Mr. Chair, I would like the record to note that I allowed the witness to finish his answer.

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): I understand that I've run out of speaking time.

[English]

Thank you so much, Mr. Green.

[Translation]

I'll give you the floor for three minutes.

[English]

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

It's my position that over the course of the commission, there's been quite a bit of historical revisionism in some of the testimony that's been provided. There has been some contradictory testimony provided at certain committee meetings here by our law enforcement agencies that have been involved, and the changing nature of the threat. This committee's mandate is to determine whether or not the threshold of a national security was in order, and at this point, I'm still unclear about that.

However, what I am clear about, regardless of the legal nature of the invocation of the act, is that there was a practical collapse of policing within the city of Ottawa. The Ottawa Police Service was wholly incapable and inadequate to meet the size and scale of the operation that was presented here.

Councillor Fleury, given that you have had primary contact with your residents about the impact and the nature.... Being a representative of the ward most impacted by it, I want to give you the opportunity to explain if your experience of the protest, and the information that you received from residents, was consistent with the OPS's communications about the convoy and, in particular, with reference to some of these reports that were perhaps framed by Rex Murphy, and some other ludicrous things.

Could you comment about whether, in your experience, it was just some girls and boys rolling into town to have a talk with the Prime Minister.

● (2030)

Mr. Mathieu Fleury: I hear a number of questions in what you're bringing up, and police jurisdiction is certainly an issue of discussion for us locally. The local taxpayers, who pay for the local policing of their city, were extremely preoccupied by what we locally call the "red zone".

Ottawa police were extremely focused on this red zone, and on the periphery of the red zone there were us locals trying to—

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): : Specifically, and appreciating the political nature of the question, is it your opinion that your characterization, your experience of the occupation, is consistent with the recent testimony of the OPS, given the nature of the threat?

Mr. Mathieu Fleury: I have not listened to every member. I continue my role as a councillor, and these meetings that you have here include hours and hours-long testimony, so I wouldn't be in a position to comment.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): : Is it your opinion that, given what you experienced, there was a legitimate threat, and even if certain legal aspects were available, the practical collapsing of functional police services under the occupation made it impossible for them to do their job?

Mr. Mathieu Fleury: I think there were certainly obvious errors that happened at the leadership level of the OPS, including allowing trucks to use non-truck routes and not explaining to the public and businesses in the area what the plan was.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): : Do you think there was a plan?

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Your speaking time is over, Mr. Green. Thank you.

It's over to Senator Carignan now, for three minutes.

Hon. Claude Carignan: Mr. Mayor, I've been a mayor myself and was elected chair of the Union des municipalités du Québec's Commission de la sécurité publique. I'm therefore staggered to hear you say that invoking a state of emergency is symbolic.

I consulted the Ontario Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, which says in subsection 5.1 (2) that the board:

... shall identify and assess the various hazards and risks to public safety that could give rise to emergencies and identify the facilities and other elements of the infrastructure for which the minister or agency, board, commission or branch is responsible that are at risk of being affected by emergencies.

You are the mayor of the City of Ottawa, where there are public buildings, including the Parliament Buildings. There are demonstrations there on a regular basis. Do you have an emergency measures plan to respond in the event that things get out of hand during these demonstrations?

Mr. Jim Watson: Yes, Senator. We had a plan, the details of which were described by Mr. Ayotte, along with all the phases for the city's Office of Emergency Management.

The act is very clear on what constitutes a declaration of an emergency in a municipality and does not give the municipalities many powers.

Hon. Claude Carignan: Did your plan cover incidents that might occur during demonstrations in front of Ottawa's Parliament? Did your plan specify what these risks might be, and what were the measures you intended to take?

Mr. Jim Watson: It would probably be better for Mr. Ayotte to answer that, because he is responsible for...

Hon. Claude Carignan: The fact remains that you adopted that plan. When I was mayor, I adopted plans. You know whether or not you had a plan...

Mr. Jim Watson: Yes, absolutely, we had a plan. As you know, there are lots of demonstrations in Ottawa. There are also environmental events like tornadoes and flooding.

Hon. Claude Carignan: Can you provide us with a copy of the City of Ottawa's emergency management plan, which covers demonstrations and measures to be taken when they occur?

Mr. Jim Watson: Of course.

Would you like to add something, Mr. Ayotte?

[*English*]

Mr. Kim Ayotte: Yes, Chair, we can certainly provide our plan. However, the plan for demonstrations falls completely under police jurisdiction, and they're responsible for the response. It will be a combination.

Our emergency response plan is an all-hazards plan, which means that it includes demonstrations, and the police have the responsibility of developing the plans for responding to demonstrations. We don't necessarily have access to that, because it's an operational plan, and it might include public order and other types of measures. Obviously the public is not privy to that, in that there could be counter-plans to our plan. We have an emergency plan. There's a demonstration component to the emergency plan that falls under the jurisdiction of the police, and the police are responsible for that.

• (2035)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Claude Carignan: Okay, but it's not just a police responsibility. There are the employees at public works and at the roads department. You have to specify the role of each in the plan.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Answer briefly, Mr. Ayotte.

[*English*]

Mr. Kim Ayotte: Yes, with our emergency plan, all departments within the city would respond to support the police. It's just like a fire. If we had a major fire, the police wouldn't be telling the fire chief how to put that fire out. The people with the subject matter expertise and the responsibilities are those who are responsible for developing those specific operational plans.

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Thank you, Mr. Ayotte. Excuse me for interrupting you, but I have to give the floor to Senator Harder for three minutes.

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Harder: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will go back to the mayor.

Mayor, we talked earlier about the collapse of the police's capacity to respond to the occupation, the lack of coordination amongst the various police forces involved and, in a sense, the lack of political coherence across the levels of government.

You welcomed the imposition of the declaration of emergency by the Government of Canada, and it was shortly after that emergency declaration that, in fact, you saw in Ottawa the model of policing for dealing with and dismantling the occupation. Was that just a coincidence?

Mr. Jim Watson: No, I think the Emergencies Act acted as a catalyst for us to have the ability to move in. On the first day of the counter-activity to clean up Wellington Street, I saw outside City Hall 14 or 15 tow trucks all lined up on Laurier Avenue ready to go.

I thought, when the plan was implemented, that the police did an excellent job. People were literally glued to their television as they saw the police moving and dismantling Coventry, Wellington, Rideau, Sussex and Byward Market....

I commend all of the officers for the work they did, but they could not have done that...because, if we got the people out, we'd still have the trucks there. We had to get rid of the trucks because they were acting almost as a shield or a weapon to those people who wanted to peacefully walk in front of the Parliament Building.

Hon. Peter Harder: Thanks very much.

Finally, Mayor, you commented earlier on the disappointment you felt as a resident of Ottawa—and certainly many of my fellow residents felt as well—about the absence of the premier's involvement personally here.

Can you confirm with us that he did visit Ottawa during the floods and the hurricanes you referenced in your early remarks?

Mr. Jim Watson: He was here after the tornado that affected Dunrobin, primarily in the west end of the city, but he was not here during the occupation.

He was here for a brief moment at the end of the big storm, which was in the middle of an election. He stopped at a fire station, but I don't think he saw any of the damage.

Hon. Peter Harder: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

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

The first two rounds of questions are now over. We are now entering the third round of questions with speaking time of five minutes each, as was the case for the first round.

Go ahead, Mr. Motz.

[*English*]

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

I want to go back to you, Mr. Watson.

You left the impression here today that it wasn't until the Emergencies Act was invoked that you were able to clear out the protest, which we all know isn't true. You had tow trucks.

Superintendent Bernier testified at the commission two days ago that there were 34 tow trucks lined up long before the Emergencies Act was invoked.

Would it then be reasonable to suggest that had actual enforcement action taken place, dealing with the existing laws that we have—municipal bylaws, provincial statutes, federal laws—and negotiations—humble, respectful negotiations—that it was possible, with the police operational plans that were in place, it could have worked and that the Emergencies Act would never have, and may never have, been necessary.

Mr. Jim Watson: As you know, Mr. Motz, later in the day, it was confirmed that those 35 tow trucks never made it to Ottawa. The deal fell apart. The OPP, I believe, confirmed that yesterday—later in the day. That was the big news that I read about today.

In fact, we didn't have tow trucks prior to the Emergencies Act. There was a—

Mr. Glen Motz: Let's go back for a minute.

Whether we had tow trucks or didn't have tow trucks, there was a lot of talk about whether or not enforcement action took place, didn't take place, could have taken place. Enforcement negotiations and police plans that were in place before the Emergencies Act came into being could have resolved this.

I go back to a statement you made earlier that a mediator was offered—the suggestion was made. I'm shocked that a federal minister of the crown didn't think it was a good idea, didn't want them to get involved. I am shocked that was the position of this government.

To me, they completely disregarded the concerns of Canadians with that particular attitude. We wonder why there's division in this country. It appears to me that the federal government was more interested in optics, looking tough, than actually resolving the situation. That concerns me. It concerns all Canadians.

Like all members of the House, we walked around downtown. We know what happened here. I am asked all the time in my constituency whether or not it actually happened. I say, not the way it was reported. Did it impact people? Absolutely, it did. The issue is that people wanted to be heard.

● (2040)

Mr. Larry Brock: I have a point of order, Chair.

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): You have the floor, Mr. Brock.

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Brock: Could we suspend his time?

I'm asking for the chair to point out to members of the Liberal team that it's wholly inappropriate to be talking above a member who is asking questions of a particular witness.

I'm asking for respect. We provide respect when they ask questions. This isn't question period; this isn't an opportunity to heckle. I'm asking for a bit of decorum.

[*Translation*]

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

Would anyone like to add anything?

As no one responded, I'll go back to Mr. Motz.

[*English*]

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

There are numerous sides to this situation. It was something that could have been resolved a lot sooner, had the appropriate action been taken. We all know that and we all believe that. Many people around this table believe law enforcement could have done something different earlier on. The government certainly could have been respectful to the Canadians who came here to be heard, and it wasn't.

As an elected member of the government who represents a part of this country that believes in democracy, it's actually quite shameful. The smear that's gone on to characterize individuals, as our government and our Prime Minister did, I think is inappropriate and created the hassle that happened here. It put the City of Ottawa in a very difficult situation, and, basically, you guys were left hung out to dry, to some degree, in trying to resolve this without proper negotiations.

If you actually had a tripartite meetings, why were negotiators not involved? Why weren't efforts made to listen to protesters? They had legitimate concerns.

Mr. Jim Watson: Do I have time to answer?

You raised a dozen different issues there—

Mr. Glen Motz: Yes, I did.

Mr. Jim Watson: —so I'm not going to be able to answer.

I lived through the protest, the vulgarity of it. I gave examples of boorish behaviour. After things had gotten cleaned up, I was walking around the area and was called an “effing fag” because I'm gay by some of these people who came in to disrupt our community. This was not some simple protest. This was a serious takeover of our downtown and—

Mr. Glen Motz: I want to stop you right there. You know, Mr. Mayor—

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Your speaking time is over, Mr. Motz.

[*English*]

Mr. Glen Motz: —not everybody arrived here as part of the protest.

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Mr. Motz, your time is up.

[*English*]

Mr. Glen Motz: You know many other people came here because they wanted to attach themselves.

Thank you.

[Translation]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): I think Mr. Motz has got the message, Ms. Bendayan.

Mr. Virani has the floor for five minutes.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

Mr. Fleury, you commented in your opening that just at the Rideau Centre some 300 businesses and 1,500 employees were affected. Is that correct?

But you also represent the ByWard Market. I presume the number of businesses, the number of employers, was actually greater than that if you include businesses that were shut down during this so-called “freedom convoy” for the three weeks-plus that it endured. Is that correct?

• (2045)

Mr. Mathieu Fleury: Correct. Including Rideau Street and the ByWard Market, there are around 1,000 local businesses.

Mr. Arif Virani: Did you find it at all ironic that people who were here ostensibly on the basis of freedom because of their objections to lockdowns effectively locked down the part of the city that you represent?

Mr. Mathieu Fleury: Yes.

Mr. Arif Virani: When the people came and blockaded or “occupied”, as people have called it, the city, some of the evidence that came out at the commission that Justice Rouleau is running has been that, in fact, that this was a boon to business because there were so many people here. They were actually buying a lot, and shopping a lot and eating a lot. How would you respond to that kind of perspective?

Mr. Mathieu Fleury: Certainly not. The Rideau Centre is an economic driver. Having the Rideau Centre closed closes a number of things in the area that rely on that business going to the Rideau Centre. The businesses at that point in time, and where we were with the restrictions, were able to open. But there were restrictions. Many had to close because of the impacts of those who came to our city and didn't allow us, as locals, to live normally.

Mr. Arif Virani: Thank you.

Mayor Watson, I want to direct something to you.

I'm reading from an Ontario Provincial Police situation report, dated February 6.

On page 5 of that report—I'm just going to read it to you and ask you to comment—it says: “The apparent support from Canadian political figures is certain to further embolden those organizing and participating in the blockade, lending them credibility and validating their tactics. Any such validation may also motivate further blockades elsewhere in the country, such as those in Alberta. Support for the blockade from public officials or other influential figures is likely to nurture and embolden ideologically motivated extremists in Canada. As long as the blockade remains in place, it will continue to attract individuals and groups with a range of different

ideologies, agendas, and intentions hoping to capitalize on the protests for their own ends.”

Could you comment on that in light of your opening statement about people who were providing coffee and Timbits to those who were involved in the blockade?

Mr. Jim Watson: I think it was absolutely reprehensible that members of Parliament, who should be held in high esteem, were out there kibitzing and mugging for photos with 18-wheelers and individuals who were honking their horns, keeping people awake at night and causing such stress in the neighbourhood. To have leading members of one political party, namely the Conservatives, going out there and posting pictures on Twitter, that's just salt to the wound to those people in our community who were putting up with so much nonsense.

As I said earlier in my comments, what happens if I went into your riding, brought a bunch of 18-wheelers, and blocked your main street in your Toronto riding and honked horns for three weeks in a row? They were just acting in such an outrageous fashion.

Any good they wanted to come out of this was lost by their boorish behaviour. They lost in the court of public opinion. People were saying, “You know what, this is not acceptable in a civil society to have this kind of behaviour.” We then had members of Parliament, who would give it some credibility by showing up, hugging and mugging with the truckers who were doing such damage to our nation's capital.

We should have great pride in our nation's capital. The way it went on, I was just disgusted by that outrageous behaviour. No one should be subjected to that kind of nonsense.

Mr. Arif Virani: Can I just take you back to the tow truck example, and I'll use the English, not the *remorquer*. Specifically, you said that you needed tow trucks to remove the vehicles, and you weren't able to access them. Is that a fair characterization?

Mr. Jim Watson: That's right. Just to clarify for Mr. Motz, the 34 magical tow trucks never appeared, so they were not there. If he goes to the transcript of the hearings, he will see that the OPP confirmed that it wasn't able to deliver on those 34 trucks.

Mr. Arif Virani: I have a few more seconds left.

You indicated that reprisals and threats were so strong that even once the Emergencies Act was invoked, once the tow trucks were procured, you had to cover the company's names to prevent further reprisals, so you used OPS decals over the tops of the trucks.

Mr. Jim Watson: That's right. When you saw all the trucks lined up, all of their markings, all of their addresses and their phone numbers, were covered with Ottawa Police Service stickers, because these individuals were fearful of retribution.

We had one example, when the protesters put together the wooden shack down by Confederation Park. The tow truck driver who came to help move some of that away was harassed, and people were taking down the phone number even though that truck driver later said he was there in support of the convoy. That was an area where our first nations representatives were outraged by the behaviour.

• (2050)

[Translation]

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

Mr. Virani, your time is up.

As it's my turn to speak, Mr. Green, I'll turn the chair over to you.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Mr. Fortin, you have the floor for five minutes.

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

Mr. Watson, you won't be too surprised by what I'm about to say, because I'm going to pick up where I left off. I'm keen to sort out the matter of the tow trucks with you.

You said earlier that if you had to do it over again, you would have had the trucks towed away on the first or second day of the demonstration. I must admit that your answer makes sense and that doing that would have been desirable. But why wasn't it done right at the start?

[English]

Mr. Jim Watson: I think all of us, the police, city officials, and government officials, were caught off guard. The only indication we had was that there were trucks coming. We've had large truck vehicles, mostly farm equipment vehicles, come to Parliament Hill in the past. They protested, they had their say, and then they moved back home to their communities.

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): I understand what you're saying. I remember, because I was there. The farmers went by on their tractors, and it lasted for just a day. They went up and down Wellington Street and left. But I'm sure we would agree that it wasn't the same thing and that the two events can't really be compared.

For the demonstration, it had been announced that big tractor-trailers were coming to Ottawa. The whole country already knew about it. Some claimed that it would be for the weekend, while others said it would be for a few weeks.

Call me naive, but it seems to me that the situation was unacceptable in both cases. I may be wrong, but I have the impression that everyone agreed that it made no sense to lock down Ottawa's downtown with big trucks, even for a weekend.

The citizens of Ottawa were disrupted; parliamentary security, Parliament Hill employees, and residents were endangered. It made no sense. We're not going to argue about that for three days.

Since the beginning of our hearings, there's a question to which I've been unable to find an answer, and the question I'm asking is

this: As soon as it was known that the trucks were coming, why did no one do anything to stop them? It would have been possible at the very least, at the end of the first day or the start of the second, to say that they were going to be towed. Why was that not done?

[English]

Mr. Jim Watson: Well, Mr. Chair, I share the same concerns.

As mayor, I'm obviously not able to direct police on operational matters, by law.

I think what happened in our situation was that we ended being the guinea pig for the rest of the country. That's why Quebec City as well as Toronto were able to deal with the situation much more efficiently than we were. They saw what happened. They took preventative steps in Quebec City during the carnival and resolved the problem relatively quickly.

The same happened in Toronto where they had the ability to protect Queen's Park and make sure that it didn't turn into a second Ottawa.

We were the first ones, really, that were tested. As a result—but unfortunately for us—it helped other jurisdictions ensure that they were better prepared than we were.

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): I understand your testimony and would tend to agree, but it always takes me back to the same question.

On the first day, they moved in. If I am remembering correctly, the vehicles arrived on a Friday evening or a Saturday morning. By the time it was Sunday, it was clear that they were there to stay. Why did no one request that the trucks be towed? They could have been given a warning an hour or two beforehand, but why weren't they cleared right away?

[English]

Mr. Jim Watson: The first trucks I saw on Wellington Street were some pickup trucks on Thursday. More came on Friday and then it culminated, obviously, in the large number on Saturday.

You'll have to ask the Ottawa Police Service's chief and acting chief why the system failed us, because, clearly, we knew they were coming—

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): I'm sorry for interrupting you, Mr. Watson, but as the mayor of Ottawa, why didn't you tell the police chief, the head of security or the director general to wake up, that the trucks had been there for two or three days already and that they had to be evacuated? Didn't anyone think to sound the alarm?

[English]

Mr. Jim Watson: Can Mr. Kanellakos, who is the liaison with us and the police...?

• (2055)

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): I didn't understand the answer.

Mr. Jim Watson: Mr. Kanellakos will answer your question.

[English]

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. I only have 15 seconds. I can't answer the question in 15 seconds, but I would like to answer the question.

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): I would have liked you to answer it as well.

Thank you.

[English]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Do we have agreement around the table that we can allow him to answer the question?

Okay. Please continue.

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: Mr. Chair, the answer is that the decision was made, based on the information Ottawa police had, to allow the trucks into downtown as a strategy. It was to basically allow them in for the weekend with the belief that they would leave after the weekend. That was the information we had going into the weekend. Once that happened, the trucks got entrenched downtown.

With the number of people we had, it was impossible to put tow trucks in that crowd and safely remove a tow truck without securing the area, as we did on the final weekend. Police, if you noticed, pushed them back and tow trucks came in behind police and took out the trucks.

There is no way you can safely—and there are a number of police officers on this committee—bring a tow truck into a crowd of tens of thousands of people and move those heavy trucks without police being able to secure those trucks and get them out.

Once we lost downtown and those were parked, it was impossible for us to get them out without having an incredible police operational plan with public order units to secure that area. They were backed up, front to back, very tightly. They had to pull them out. There was no way they were going to come out.

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

[Translation]

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

Mr. Green, I'll take back the chair and give you five minutes of speaking time.

[English]

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

Mr. Ayotte, I understand that before your newest role, you were the fire chief. Is that correct?

Mr. Kim Ayotte: That's correct.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): In the conversations within the integrated task force you had—the emergency coordinating body—were there any conversations about the jerry cans of diesel that were being brought in? Was that a concern for you?

Mr. Kim Ayotte: It was a concern for several people, primarily because they were bringing in lots of gasoline or diesel to a certain area. You want to make sure that it's being used for the purpose that it's supposed to be used for.

When you're thinking of a demonstration, there's always a possibility that those volatile liquids could be used for other things, like Molotov cocktails, or other types of weapons. You're never guaranteed that it's just going to be used to refill the....

That was the primary concern with the gas cans.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Just for the record, can you please refresh me on the name of the coordinating group that you put together after the emergency order was called?

Mr. Kim Ayotte: Within the city we had the EOC, the emergency operations centre.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): That's the one. In that, when you were getting updates, I'm sure you would have received some information from police services as well...?

Mr. Kim Ayotte: Yes. They were on our [Inaudible—Editor].

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Were there any conversations about ideologically motivated violent extremists and the potential for infrastructure within the city of Ottawa to potentially be a target?

Mr. Kim Ayotte: Yes, but no information came forward with regard to that. If the police had that intelligence, we weren't privy to that intelligence.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): I think it's clear through testimony at the commission that they weren't even sharing it with each other.

From that perspective, when the incident happened in Coutts, when you talked about the progression of the emergency, as the perceived threat elevated, what was your response? For instance, we've identified that there were now jerry cans going into what was essentially a corridor and alleyway of the Prime Minister's Office, complete with a crane and a wrecking ball, and the House of Commons.

In your opinion, particularly as it relates to incendiary devices and this threat, when you found out about the threat for ideologically motivated violent extremists in Coutts—i.e., the weapons that were found embedded within the protests—did that change the tenor of your organizing and planning efforts?

Mr. Kim Ayotte: We tend to look at it from a risk perspective versus a threat perspective. The police will consider a threat perspective and we will look at it from a risk perspective.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): How would you describe the risk?

Mr. Kim Aytte: First of all, we need to have the information to make a decision on risk. Unless we get specific information with regard to specific threats, then we can't identify what the risk is. We could only surmise and then look at potential risks. That's where you're looking at potential risks for gasoline or for diesel or—

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): In your opinion, were there potential risks present once the incendiary devices started to be transported into the area?

Mr. Kim Aytte: Yes. Well, they weren't incendiary devices unless they became incendiary devices.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Sure—but they were flammable.

Mr. Kim Aytte: They were materials that could be used in incendiary devices.

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

Mr. Kim Aytte: The storage of large propane containers in a consolidated area was also a risk in a different way, in that they weren't going to be used as incendiary devices, but they could—

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): At what point did your emergency operations committee consider Coventry Road? Was that something that was brought to you as city-owned property? Was that something you okayed to say, yes, we're going to allow a logistics supply chain to be set up off-site?

• (2100)

Mr. Kim Aytte: Coventry was supposed to be for overflow parking only, originally. Police came to us and said they didn't have space for all of these vehicles coming into downtown Ottawa—

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): So let's accommodate them.

Mr. Kim Aytte: —and they were looking for overflow parking, so we approved it for that. It morphed into something else as time went on.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Correct. At that time, when it morphed, what was your response back to the police in terms of what was one of the most sophisticated logistics supply chains I've ever seen on a direct action when it relates to a protest? What was your response to the OPS?

Mr. Kim Aytte: Well, we certainly weren't happy with the use of city property for that purpose.

But we were also reminded throughout this incident that any single point of contact could cause riots. Without having the experience in Canada that we see in the United States.... Our exposure is to what happens in the States. Do we want people killed? Do we want—

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Was January 6 a reference for you when you were doing your planning on the emergency operations?

Mr. Kim Aytte: It wasn't just January 6. When you look at all the racial incidents that are happening in the States, and the far right versus far left incidents, those are all concerns that we didn't want to happen in Ottawa. From an objective of keeping citizens safe—

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): But to be clear, there were no incidents of far left present on this particular action. That's just for the record.

As it relates to aid to civil power, is that something you contemplated?

Mr. Kim Aytte: No.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): In your past, for other things that have happened, have you ever—

Mr. Kim Aytte: I'm not quite sure what you mean by that.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): It's when the Attorney General of the Province of Ontario requests that the military come in to provide backup support.

I see you nodding your head, Steve. Is that something you're familiar with?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: Yes. There was a discussion. There was actually a motion crafted at council, but it never proceeded.

I did raise the issue with the deputy minister of public safety to say that there were inquiries about using civil aid, and he said it was a non-starter for the federal government.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): For the provincial....

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): You're speaking time is up, Mr. Green.

[English]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): It's just for a point of clarity. I want to make sure that we're clear.

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: You're right, sir, it is through the provincial, but the question was posed: Would the federal government support it if the request came through?

[Translation]

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

[English]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Just for the record, as a point of clarity—it's a very important distinction—you're saying that it was the federal government that said it wasn't.

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: I was advised that it was a non-starter.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): From the federal government—

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): I'm sorry, Mr. Green, but you've gone well beyond your speaking time.

Senator Boniface, you have the floor for five minutes.

[English]

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

I want to go back to the day the protest was brought to an end.

Mr. Kanellakos, you've been around the environment for some time in terms of both policing and as a city manager. Have you ever seen anywhere in the country where that type of enforcement has been required?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: Mr. Chair, never.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): Would it be fair to say that in the negotiations, discussions and the information you were able to glean from the three weeks...?

Let me give you the forefront to this and say that I am sympathetic to Mr. Motz' point that there were many people there with a variety of views. What started out, perhaps, as a single grievance morphed into many grievances. As you know, you start negotiating with someone, and then you find out they can't lead, and they switch. There's a different group in charge and such. I think we all understand that's a convoluted situation to try to figure out.

When I look at the police operation that took place that day.... The mayor mentioned it was exceptional. I would say that it's beyond exceptional; it's unprecedented. I look at G20 and G8 summits, where we would have had.... This would have been in your city at some point earlier.

I look at the operation, and I think of the skill, but I also think about the risk to the police officers. We were fortunate that day that they were able to complete that operation in such a professional way.

Would you agree with me that part of the success they had on that particular day was because some people chose to leave when they were given notice?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: Mr. Chair, I would agree with that, yes.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): Some people chose to leave; some people chose to stay, and some people decided to face down the enforcement after three weeks of what had essentially become.... I think it gives you the range of people who were there. Would you agree with me?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: Yes, I would agree with that.

• (2105)

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): When you look at it in terms of lessons learned, which I think both you and Mr. Ayotte spoke about, what's the number one lesson you learned from the incident?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: I think that the assumptions that were made leading into the first weekend were that it was within the usual paradigm of the hundreds of protests we have every year in the city of Ottawa and that the advanced planning that would have been required—to some of the other questions we've been asked—to effectively deal with that weekend were not in place, so we got behind as a city and as a police service. We got behind the event and could not get ahead of it then because the resources were not adequate to meet it.

The biggest lesson, in my mind—and there's been a lot of discussion at the public inquiry—is that the intelligence translating into strategy was a big gap.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): Intelligence to action....?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: To action....

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

In that vein, have you...? I look and I think as a Canadian.... I can tell you that a friend of mine from New Zealand sent me an email and asked me what we were exporting from Canada to New Zealand, because they ended up being faced with it.

Have you had inquiries or such from other cities outside of Canada trying to seek information?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: I have not.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): Have you had them from other cities across the country?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: We had words of encouragement, but nothing beyond that.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): Is there a debriefing taking place within the city that would allow other cities to learn from this incident, including the actions of the police?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: Yes, we do, as part of our emergency management bylaw, have after action reports, but they've been put on pause because of the public inquiry and because of the work of this committee. Our auditor general, who has also been seized with an independent officer of council, is also conducting a parallel audit of the entire process. We've put it on hold until we receive all that, and then we'll do our after action report.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): Am I okay?

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): You have 10 seconds.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): I'll just make a quick suggestion: Be careful waiting too long, because the lessons you learn you may need at another time.

[Translation]

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

Senator Carignan, it's now over to you for five minutes.

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

Mayor Watson, if I have understood your comments properly, you had a great deal of confidence in Police Chief Sloly. Am I wrong?

[English]

Mr. Jim Watson: Yes, I backed Chief Sloly. I think it is the role of a mayor, in the midst of a crisis, to support their chief of police, and I did. I saw no reason for him to switch out. Obviously, we're receiving more information as to what happened behind the scenes. Based on my observations, I had confidence in him and his deputies.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan: On February 12, on its website, the Ottawa Police Service published a news release stating the following: "All available officers were deployed last night. We have a plan to end this unlawful occupation and await the necessary reinforcements to do so."

Did you discuss this plan with Mr. Sloly?

[English]

Mr. Jim Watson: Senator, I had almost daily—if not every couple of hours—discussions with either the chief or deputy chief, in my office, through Zoom calls or on conference calls. Again, the theme of almost every call was, “We can’t move until we have more officers, because our police force still has to police the rest of the city. We can’t put all of our resources downtown. We also have suburban and rural communities.”

Most of my time, during that lead-up to getting the okay for the 1,800 officers, was spent lobbying the provincial and federal governments. Ultimately, we were successful, and they moved in. As Senator Boniface mentioned, we often forget there were no deaths during this protest or occupation, and no serious injuries.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan: What was the plan?

[English]

Mr. Jim Watson: That’s to the credit of police officers, who did remarkable work in—

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan: Could you answer my question? What was the plan?

• (2110)

Mr. Jim Watson: Excuse me?

Hon. Claude Carignan: What was the plan?

[English]

Mr. Jim Watson: The plan, as we saw unfold, was that we got tow trucks. We had the officers move in strategically—

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan: So it was the same plan. Police Chief Sloly’s plan is the one that was acted upon.

[English]

Mr. Jim Watson: Basically, there was only a three- or four-day difference between the time Chief Sloly resigned and the police action began. I wasn’t involved in the details of the plan, but I have to assume that a good portion of the plan had already been assembled by Chief Sloly, under his command. When he resigned, Chief Bell took over. My understanding was that there was greater co-operation at the provincial and RCMP level, at that time.

The plan was to move and systematically clear out Wellington Street, Lowertown, Rideau and Sussex—

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan: You said that your job was to ask for help from other cities. You said that you called other mayors to get help from their police services. Did that work? Did some of your counterparts refuse to send reinforcements?

[English]

Mr. Jim Watson: No one said no. We didn’t get as many, from certain forces, as we wanted to. When you went downtown, during that lead-up to the clean-out of the street, you saw police cars from

York Region and Belleville. The mounted unit came up from Toronto.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan: When you were making these requests, the Emergencies Act had not yet been invoked. Were you told about any jurisdictional problems owing to the fact that police officers were leaving from places like Windsor and York to go to Ottawa?

[English]

Mr. Jim Watson: There were no jurisdictional issues.

In fairness, though, it was the chief and his deputy who made the bulk of the calls to their counterparts. I spoke to a number of mayors, in most instances to thank them, because they had already pre-committed to the chief. From that perspective, we were grateful those municipal police forces came about.

There was no need for any swearing-in of Ontario municipal police services, but there was a requirement for us to swear in RCMP officers, because they did not have the jurisdiction on municipal matters in Ottawa. Of course, the OPP did not have to swear in, as they are the provincial service.

[Translation]

Hon. Claude Carignan: All right.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): You have 10 seconds left, Senator.

Hon. Claude Carignan: I’m finished.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Okay.

Senator Harder, you have the floor for five minutes.

[English]

Hon. Peter Harder: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In the post-event period.... Can you tell us a bit about the condition of your staff, in terms of post-traumatic events? We talked earlier with former Chief Sloly, who spoke of the concern he had for frontline police and some of the health issues they experienced as a result of the trauma.

Mr. Kanellakos, was there an issue with city personnel who had been on the front lines—with exhaustion or other health issues they might have felt afterwards?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: Mr. Chair, we had all of our emergency personnel, obviously, working. We had firefighters, paramedics and our bylaw officers who still had to get in there. We had our traffic people, public works people.... We still had snowplow operators.... All of our services were still trying to function in and around that area.

I can tell you that even back into our emergency operations centre, the people that were embedded with the National Capital region command centre, everybody felt exhausted after that event was over. I don’t know if it’s PTSD or what’s happened to them psychologically, but there was a collective exhaustion. We really felt—and people have used this expression—that we were “on our knees” after that. The emotional trauma from that event was significant for everybody.

Hon. Peter Harder: I think that's an important observation, in that it corroborates the exceptional nature of this event. This just wasn't a visit to Ottawa of a few people who wanted the opportunity to see the Prime Minister or, as they had in their manifesto, to meet with the Senate and then instruct us to go to the Governor General to overthrow the government. This is a serious and unprecedented occupation of Ottawa itself with lasting results.

• (2115)

Mr. Jim Watson: Certainly, from our perspective, our staff were exhausted. This was three weeks in cold weather, whether it was the police, bylaw or snowplow operators. They were exhausted.

It crippled our tourism industry, which is our third-largest industry in Ottawa after government and high-tech. They've been rebuilding because of people's fear of coming to Ottawa. We've started to see an uptick, obviously, in that. That's helped our local economy.

You have to remember that this is also under the guise of COVID-19, which we were still dealing with. We were just getting out of a lockdown. I think as Mr. Naqvi mentioned, another lockdown began, which was imposed as a result of these people claiming they wanted freedom. They weren't offering any degree of freedom to the 18,000 people who live in Centretown and the thousands who live in the ByWard Market. We have story after story of individuals who have said that they hear a horn honk, and they get uptight about that because it was a traumatic experience.

I know some people scoff at that, but can you imagine sleeping in downtown Ottawa with these horns honking literally 24 hours a day? It was unbearable, and it had to stop.

Hon. Peter Harder: I know people who have moved out as a result of this.

Perhaps I'll give the last word to Councillor Fleury.

Could you tell us a little bit of the post-trauma felt in your ward?

Mr. Mathieu Fleury: There are a number of areas I could obviously go towards. I think there are a number of elements, including every element that the mayor described in terms of noise, fumes and the risk. Residents were really asking us, "How do we prevent this risk, as a city, in the future? How can we live downtown?"

As you know, in Ottawa, we're having an issue with our downtown. The federal workforce has not come back to the downtown. There's a confidence issue with Ottawa's downtown. There's a business.... As the mayor was highlighting, our tourism partners are saying, "We see the reviews. People are asking questions: 'Is Ottawa safe? Do I book? Is this risk going to continue?'" There are areas where our business operators are saying, "We're getting these bizarre questions that we never thought...." Usually, Ottawa's a safe city. Usually, we welcome protests. Protests are part of the local economy, but they're not impacting the livability for locals.

Hon. Peter Harder: Thank you.

[Translation]

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

We'll now go to Senator Patterson for five minutes.

[English]

Hon. Dennis Glen Patterson: Mr. Chair, I wonder if you would allow me to cede my time to Senator Boniface.

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): As no one has objected, Senator Boniface, you have the floor for five minutes.

[English]

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

Thank you, Senator Patterson. We welcome you to the committee.

I want to come back to the question of jurisdiction.

Mayor, you can talk about this.

The Police Services Act—to my knowledge, since it's been a while since I opened it up and looked at it—would normally say that the police service of jurisdiction would be Ottawa. If there's a requirement in an important investigation—normally it wouldn't be a city the size of Ottawa, but if a smaller department had a major case—then the Crown could step in and ask that the OPP take over the investigation, as an example. That's within the act, as far as I'm familiar with it.

When you look at it now, in reflection, do you see that there should be a provision or some agreement between the three levels of government that would look at how you do an integrated command at the front end of an incident like this, that it would be mandatory versus left to the police agencies to decide?

Mr. Jim Watson: I think that's a very good point. I think it would be covered under what Mr. Kanellakos indicated would be the post-mortem that we're going to do. I agree with you; we have to do it sooner than later because we might see one of these incidents happen sooner than later. It's also about people's memories. The longer you wait, the more difficult it is to remember what happened on that specific day or that specific hour, who called who and so on.

Certainly, our obligation, particularly for Mathieu and me, who are both leaving politics, is to make sure that our successors are never put in a position where we have this kind of horrific experience, whether it's a lack of coordination by all three police forces....

We all share the blame. The buck stops with me as mayor. I take responsibility that we let down the people of Ottawa. We have to do better.

• (2120)

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): Maybe to Mr. Kanellakos, at the government level—I'm thinking of your counterparts in the provincial government and at the federal level—again is there something that should be...?

People, the public, would think that these people would naturally work together in this case, but it wasn't necessarily the case. Should that be something that is either covered by agreement or legislatively?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: What was evident and something that we haven't had to deal with necessarily in the past.... The only other time I can remember is after the shooting of Corporal Cirillo.

There is no memorandum of understanding between the federal government and the City of Ottawa in the federal precinct for how to deal with an emergency of this kind of scale. Even at the provincial level, there are mechanisms with their emergency operations and ours, back and forth, but there isn't a memorandum of understanding, any kind of documentation or pre-work that has been done to understand how we will come together to lead an incident that escalates and scales up so that we can quickly mobilize.

To his credit, Deputy Minister Rob Stewart called me after the first weekend and said that we should talk. I didn't know who Rob Stewart was. He became a key link for me into the federal government and brought the deputy minister of community together with us and the police chief, etc. Eventually it expanded to the RCMP commissioner, OPP commissioner, etc.

That became an ad hoc thing where we came together to discuss situational awareness and what other steps we could take to try to mitigate what was happening. To me, from a lessons learned viewpoint, I've been thinking a lot about these things as they happened. I think it's a pretty fundamental course of action that we need to have for the nation's capital.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): On that, then, I suspect that it would be helpful to all of you to understand the role of each of the governments and document what that means in advance in a situation like this. There were multiple incidents that were taking place when the events in Ottawa were going on. I think the commissioner of the OPP testified to this today, that he had the whole province, and there were a number of different.... We had all kinds of things going. You could only stretch a provincial police service so far. Like the Ottawa Police Service, they were on their knees when they finished. We need to recognize that.

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): We have completed the third round of questions and are now beginning the fourth and final round.

Mr. Brock, you have the floor for four minutes.

[English]

Mr. Larry Brock: Thank you, Chair.

We talk about takeaways or lessons learned. One thing I've reflected upon about this particular incident is the extreme naïveté demonstrated by so many organizations, from police organizations to government officials to you four gentlemen—specifically Mayor Watson. You all felt that this was going to go away within 48 hours.

This was organized for weeks prior to these truckers and their supporters arriving in the city of Ottawa. They were coming from the west coast, from the east coast and from everywhere in between. Given that their mandate, which was widely shared across

all kinds of social media platforms, that they weren't leaving until all federal mandates were removed, how could anyone be so naive to think that in 48 hours, someone who's travelled from Vancouver, British Columbia would just say, "Okay, my point's been made" and then return?

They were there to speak to a government official. That didn't happen. I wanted to throw that out for consideration.

We've heard on a couple of occasions from my colleague Mr. Virani, who took two opportunities to describe the actions of a certain member of Parliament.

I listened very carefully to your responses, Mayor Watson. Clearly, your indignation with respect to that member of Parliament was very evident. You commented that the particular member was giving it "credibility" and that it was "salt to the wound".

I didn't hear that same indignation when the Prime Minister of this country was the origin of, the genesis for, the anger that many people had about mandates. That's the same Prime Minister who called these people "extremists", "racist, misogynistic", those with "unacceptable views", those who "don't believe in science" and those who take up space.

Were you concerned about the Prime Minister using that language, Mayor Watson?

• (2125)

Mr. Jim Watson: No. What I was concerned about was seeing swastika flags and Confederate flags—

Mr. Larry Brock: That's not the question. Were you concerned about the Prime Minister's language?

Mr. Jim Watson: No, I wasn't.

Mr. Larry Brock: Obviously not, because you used that same language yourself. You called those protesters "yahoos".

Mr. Jim Watson: Yes.

Mr. Larry Brock: They were "disgraceful" and "despicable", engaging in "unacceptable behaviour". The vast majority of these people were not being respectful.

They weren't just outsiders, Mayor Watson. These were people who live in your city—

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair. The member asked a question and did not allow the witness to answer.

Mr. Larry Brock: He did answer.

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): The five minutes are for a member of the committee who has the floor.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Witnesses deserve a modicum of respect.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): I agree with you. If there is a lack of respect, I will intervene. I think each of you should use the time remaining to you as you see fit. If one of you wants to speak for five minutes, I can't interrupt, unless there's a lack of respect.

I have thus far found the tone a little harsh, but haven't felt that there is really a lack of respect.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: He asked a question and didn't allow the witness to answer.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): I'm going to allow Mr. Brock to resume.

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Brock: May I proceed? Thank you.

People who were there to support those truckers also included residents of your city. Were they yahoos as well? Were they those who were holding unacceptable views? Were they engaging in unacceptable behaviour?

I think the answer is obvious. No, they were not.

But you had no problem answering the question because it was important for you to set the agenda. It was important for you to maintain your liberal ideology. We all know about your background, Mayor Watson. We know you're a former federal staffer to a Liberal member. We know about your member of Parliament status in the province—that you were a minister. We know all about that.

I'll bet you didn't critique the Prime Minister when he took a knee when protesters were on the Hill during COVID. You probably said nothing about that. Of course not.

You were also criticized—

Mr. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I don't understand the relevance of this questioning. I don't appreciate the tone of the member.

He asked for a respectful tone by members of the committee. I think the witnesses also deserve respect for their testimony. He doesn't need to agree with it, but he doesn't need to be disagreeable in the way he's phrasing his questions.

Mr. Jim Watson: Let me just clarify one thing, Mr. Brock—

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Please wait a moment, Mr. Watson, a point of order has been raised and I'd like to deal with it.

I understood your intervention, Mr. Virani. As I told Ms. Bendayan earlier, I think that the tone may be harsh, but that there have not been any disrespectful comments thus far. I am therefore going to allow Mr. Brock to finish what he has to say.

Over to you, Mr. Brock, you have one minute left.

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Brock: You were criticized after your testimony at the commission by a member of the press. The headline read “Watson wanted to protect Trudeau, embarrass Ford during convoy”. We have testimony from your city manager, Mr. Kanellakos, who basically put on record that you were quite hesitant about even engaging in the whole thought about having a mediator, because what would that do to Mr. Trudeau's reputation? What would that do to the reputation of the federal government? His exact words were:

He was very reluctant. His initial reaction was we shouldn't and thought that doing that was going to put pressure on the federal government in terms of, you know, if we meet with them, someone else would have to meet with them, 'Kanellakos said'.

The article also quoted Justin Trudeau as saying: “Doug Ford has been hiding from his responsibility on it for political reasons,” Trudeau said”.

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Excuse me, Mr. Brock, your speaking time is over.

Mr. Naqvi you have the floor for five minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Arif Virani: I think the witness is asking for an opportunity to respond to the speech that was just made impugning his credibility.

[*Translation*]

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

Mr. Watson, I'll give you just a few seconds to answer briefly.

● (2130)

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Watson: Very briefly, Mr. Chair, thank you.

Mr. Brock indicated I'm a former staffer for a Liberal member of Parliament. I was a former staffer for a Conservative member of Parliament. Secondly, we were concerned that Mr. Ford had time to go snowmobiling, but no time to come to visit the second-largest city in Ontario, the fourth-largest in Canada, when we were at the mercy of this mob that had taken over our city. So, yes—

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Watson: —I'm not happy with the premier for not showing up.

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Mr. Watson, you'll be able to finish answering in the next round of questions.

I said that Mr. Naqvi had five minutes, but it's rather four minutes. He has the floor now.

[*English*]

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Actually, looking at a news story from April 25, 2020—

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Excuse me, Mr. Naqvi. I've noticed that I made a mistake. I gave Mr. Brock the floor for five minutes, so you are entitled to five minutes as well. However, in the next round of questions, everyone will have just three minutes.

Please go ahead for five minutes.

[English]

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'm actually looking at an article from April 25, 2020, where it says "Ontario Premier Doug Ford called anti-lockdown protesters at Queen's Park on Saturday 'a bunch of yahoos' and said they were being 'selfish' and 'irresponsible' for demonstrating against provincial emergency orders in place to slow the spread of COVID-19." So I'm sure Mr. Brock will direct his comments to the Premier of Ontario as well.

Mr. Mayor, you testified at the public inquiry that "A number of children had to miss chemo and radiation appointments at CHEO," which is our children's hospital. I was taken aback by that testimony, because as a resident of the city, I was not aware of that, and as a father of two young kids who use CHEO often, my heart sank. Can you elaborate on that part of your testimony as to how that happened?

Mr. Jim Watson: Yes, and also for the hospitals we have a lot of our health care workers, particularly nurses, who come from the province of Quebec and have to travel over our bridge system to get to the Montfort Hospital in the east end or CHEO in the south end, and as you know, most of the bridges were shut down as a result of the challenges. There was one bridge designated for health care workers where they would have to go through a checkpoint, which slowed everything down. The Montfort had to rent hotel rooms close to the hospital so that their staff could actually go sleep over to meet their shift the next morning or the next evening.

Alex Munter, the president of CHEO—the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario—stated very recently that 13 families—I believe it was—had to have their chemotherapy appointments for their children cancelled because during that period of time the traffic flow was not going where it should have. These were people who were from outside of Ottawa, because CHEO serves all of eastern Ontario, and there was a fear of bringing children into the downtown core. These are not made-up stories—the president of CHEO is not spinning a tale—these are facts that put these children at risk as a result of this behaviour of these people who came to protest.

We have nothing against protesters, as Steve Kanellakos says, we're very good at welcoming protesters, but this was an occupation of our downtown.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Councillor Fleury, perhaps I may ask a personal question. I know you have spoken about the personal impact of this occupation on you and your family's life. If you're comfortable, would you share a little bit as to what you went through as a stellar representative of your community and trying to help them during the crisis.

Mr. Mathieu Fleury: After that first weekend I was one of the first elected members locally to say that we have to go after the funds, to get the demonstrators to go back home, so that we could get our life back locally. I was pretty clear that we had to go to the source of what was keeping folks in Ottawa.

A number of individuals showed up at my house with pickup trucks and flags, and threatened.... I have a young family at home. Finally, we had to move out. I had to focus, obviously. I had to move my family out of the area so that I could focus on the crisis.

As you're well aware, I was hosting daily meetings with all elected members in both my community and in yours. You were part of many of those. We brought all the stakeholders, including General Manager Ayotte. We had police representation. We had the hotel...tourism, local BIAs, local community associations. I had to focus on the crisis and what I could do as an elected member. I was certainly not naive about the situation; I was quite active on the situation.

It's an uncomfortable position, because I want people to run for office, but when people show up at your house, and you have a young family, you do have a responsibility as a father.

• (2135)

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you.

It's getting me emotional thinking about what people went through. You're one example of so many stories. I have emails upon emails here that I had from constituents. Some are for you guys, and you are copied too, and I'm sure you received them. There are some horrific personal examples of what people went through, because it was not a peaceful protest. It was not a lawful protest. It was an occupation of our city.

Thank you both for your public service. We sincerely appreciate it.

[Translation]

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

Mr. Green, I have the floor for five minutes and you are now back in the chair.

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

[English]

It's three for you, four for me. Okay, here we go.

[Translation]

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

Mr. Watson, on a few occasions, you answered that you were fairly close to Chief Sloly. You were in touch with him on a regular basis, sometimes several times a day. You mentioned earlier that it could be every couple of hours. I'm not surprised.

How did you react when you learned that Chief Sloly wanted to resign?

[English]

Mr. Jim Watson: I was concerned, because at the same time the chair of the police board had decided to sign a contract with another chief. As I mentioned earlier this was a situation where we had three chiefs in three days, so I did not support that move. As a result, the individual who was approached by the police board declined the opportunity. I think he saw what an environment he was getting into, and then—

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): I just want to talk about Chief Sloy. With respect, I don't want us to move away from the subject, because three minutes goes by quickly.

Do you know why Chief Sloy resigned?

[English]

Mr. Jim Watson: It's my understanding that the police services board did not have confidence in the chief, and that was the reason why he was offered a severance package of some sort, and he stepped down. Chief Bell was—

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): His team of officers lacked confidence in him. Did you ever witness this yourself, or is it something that was reported to you?

[English]

Mr. Jim Watson: No, I didn't, because I was not a member of the police services board. Any of the activity that was taking place in—

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Who told you that Chief Sloy was resigning because his team of officers had lost confidence in him?

[English]

Mr. Jim Watson: I'm sorry. Can you repeat that?

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Who told you that?

[English]

Mr. Jim Watson: I'm sorry. Who told me...?

A voice: [Inaudible—Editor].

Mr. Jim Watson: It was the police board.

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): You're saying that you never saw signs of this lack of confidence.

My question is straightforward. Who told you that the officers no longer had confidence in him?

[English]

Mr. Jim Watson: It was the chair of the board when she came to see me to indicate that the chief was stepping down.

[Translation]

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

Mr. Jim Watson: You're welcome.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Mr. Green, I'll retake the chair and give you the floor for three minutes.

[English]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): It's somewhat of a revelation for me, Mr. Chair, in the scope of our work, to find out that the federal government said it was a non-starter to use aid to civil power. Part of our job is to find out whether or not they had exist-

ing legislation in place, powers in place, at the different levels of government in order to resolve this without invoking the act.

Mr. Kanellakos, can you just explain or give me a timeline, of roughly, in your recollection, when that was raised and what their rationale on the response was?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: I don't recall when it was, because I don't have it in front of me. It would have been around the second weekend, I would imagine, of the protests. It was in that area.

There were some councillors who were interested in pursuing that. They were frustrated. I raised the issue to see if it was even going to be a possibility. It wasn't a long discussion. It was exactly as I said it.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): Would that have been a written request? Is that something that you sent in writing?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: No. It was a conversation.

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

I will note that in the affidavit you submitted to the commission, you stated on page 17, chapter 4, second paragraph, the following:

The City requested Police resources and inquired what the various levels of government could do in light of existing legislation to put pressure on the protesters. The City asked the province, in particular the Deputy Minister of Transportation, whether there was anything that could be done in regard to the truckers' insurance or Commercial Vehicle Operator's Registration (CVOR) certificates, but the province was not prepared to do anything in this respect.

These were your words in the affidavit. Did the province provide any explanation of why they weren't prepared to act under that existing legislation?

• (2140)

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: No.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): This is again, I think, another significant point for our committee.

Were there other areas at either the provincial level or the federal level that you pursued, sir, verbally or in writing, that would have used existing legislation to bring this to a resolution?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: We weren't specific about the things they could pursue. We were asking what tools they would have available in existing legislation or regulations that could help us.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): But in your opinion... I mean, you've listed in your affidavit those two things, the insurance and the commercial vehicle operator's registration. Those to me seem very obvious. Is it your opinion, or would you agree with me, that if the provincial authorities had put pressure under that ministry, under the threat of losing their licence, this thing could have been wrapped up within the first week?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: I can't speculate that it would be, but it would have helped.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): It definitely would have helped.

Are those the only two things that you put requests in...as well as the aid to civil power?

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: We also asked them for anything else they could do—

The Joint Chair (Mr. Matthew Green): And they came back with nothing.

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: The province came back with nothing. The federal government didn't have jurisdiction over local trucking, so they couldn't do anything.

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

[*Translation*]

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

Senator Carignan, you have the floor for three minutes.

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

Does anyone here know Larry Brookson?

A voice: Yes.

Hon. Claude Carignan: Mr. Mayor, do you know him?

Mr. Jim Watson: I know that he is the Director of the Parliamentary Protective Service, but I don't know him personally.

Hon. Claude Carignan: After he called your office, why didn't you call back?

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Watson: It was because the appropriate protocol would involve politician to politician, not police to politician. We referred his call to Mr. Kanellakos's office, who I believe—if I'm not mistaken, Mr. Kanellakos—referred it to Chief Sloly.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Claude Carignan: In my view, the City of Ottawa has demonstrated a great deal of incompetence in this entire matter.

You have admitted that it was a mistake not to have closed Wellington Street and not blocked it off.

You must also have had an emergency plan identifying the infrastructures. I understand that was the first time you heard anything about Mr. Brookson and that you had no contacts with the Parliamentary Precinct. Moreover, your emergency plan didn't provide for any discussion or joint committees to ensure security or implement emergency plans.

It was entirely improvised. What's that all about?

[*English*]

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair, but everything that has just been said is completely incorrect. I don't agree with any of it.

Mr. Brookson is director of PPS. His people were sitting in the national capital regional command centre. His people are on Intersect, which is an Ottawa police-led intelligence group. He spoke to Chief Sloly the day that he called Mayor Watson.

I had arranged for a call with him on the next morning, but I spoke to Chief Sloly right after he spoke to Mr. Brookson, and Chief Sloly filled me in on all the details. He advised Mr. Brookson about what was happening with the operation.

Our emergency plan is there to support. Sometimes we lead it, but, in this case, police led it. Our emergency plan is designed to support police. It was a police-led operation, so this isn't a failure of the city enacting its emergency plan.

As for Mr. Brookson, I didn't hear all of this testimony about putting a statement out there that he never got a call from the mayor or from the city manager and that he wasn't aware of the situation or where it was on the ground. I have a hard time believing that given that he spoke to Chief Sloly half an hour before Chief Sloly spoke to me, and Chief Sloly told me that he had briefed him completely on what the situation was on the ground.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Claude Carignan: When you send us your emergency plan, what are we going to see about relations with Parliament and the plans in place to protect Parliament from things like crowds getting out of control?

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): A brief answer please, Mr. Kanellakos.

[*English*]

Mr. Steve Kanellakos: Yes, it was exactly as I answered earlier. There aren't clear protocols between the city and federal institutions for the national capital, but there are protocols between police, the parliamentary precinct, RCMP and OPP. That's where the protocols are, and they're strong, but the city doesn't have institution-to-institution protocols with the federal government.

• (2145)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Claude Carignan: I was talking about a plan, not a meeting.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Thank you, Senator Carignan. Unfortunately, your time is up.

The final speaker this evening is Senator Harder, for three minutes.

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Harder: I'm going to share my time with Senator Boniface.

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Rhéal Fortin): Do you really want to share three minutes, with one and a half minutes each?

Hon. Peter Harder: Definitely. I'll begin right away.

[*English*]

Very briefly, Mr. Watson, it seems, in the discussion, that it was almost like the Province of Ontario wasn't willing to co-operate as long as Chief Sloly was in office and that the co-operation seemed miraculously available once he was out.

Am I oversubscribing to the notion of something going on?

Mr. Jim Watson: I can't answer that because I don't have an answer on that. I think there was concern raised, I know, at the provincial level and the federal level about our ability to do this on our own and where the plan was going to eventually end.

At the end of the whole process, it worked out. No one was killed. No one was seriously injured. The area was cleaned out. A number of people were arrested, and hundreds of charges were laid, but I don't have the information that would back you up.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): I just want to close off the last minute and a half on the risk of counterprotest.

Mr. Fleury, from your riding and others.... I know people who lived in the area. They were getting very impatient. Was there a plan in place for any risk of counterprotest? For instance, if the police didn't do something, the community members were going to.

Mr. Jim Watson: Maybe Kim can speak to it.

I know there were a number of counterprotests, particularly at Riverside Drive in the south end. The police discouraged them because these took resources away from the main problem, but, at the end of the day, I admire the individuals who stood up to a lot of pickup trucks, and they got them out of the area. There were other walks done through the community in Centretown. Again, we don't want to see anyone in a situation like that put themselves at risk.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): It puts the officers at risk as well.

Mr. Jim Watson: Absolutely, yes, and it spreads the resources that were already thin even thinner.

The Joint Chair (Hon. Gwen Boniface): Mr. Ayotte, do you want to just close out with your comments?

Mr. Kim Ayotte: Sure, thank you.

I think the mayor covered it quite well. We did have communication plans to try to communicate to the public not to have counterprotests because these do take police resources away from where they need to be, and it is dangerous. It's dangerous for them. We did see a few. However, they were managed by the police.

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

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

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

Mr. Fleury, Mr. Kanellakos, Mr. Ayotte and Mr. Watson, thank you for coming this evening.

That ends our evening of questions.

I would remind the committee members that next week, our meeting will be on Thursday, November 3, from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. The witnesses we will be welcoming include Commissioner Carrique, of the Ontario Provincial Police, as well as two representatives from the Ottawa Police Service, interim chief, Mr. Steve Bell, and his acting deputy chief, Ms. Patricia Ferguson.

As that seems to work for everyone and no one has any comments, I'd like to thank you and wish you a good evening.

The meeting is adjourned.

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