



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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# Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 089**

Monday, December 11, 2023

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Chair: Mr. Heath MacDonald





## Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

Monday, December 11, 2023

• (1100)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Heath MacDonald (Malpeque, Lib.)):** I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 89 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application.

I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses and members.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. Feedback events can occur. These can be extremely harmful to interpreters and cause serious injuries. The most common cause of sound feedback is an earpiece that is too close to a microphone. We therefore ask all participants to exercise a high degree of caution when handling the earpieces, especially when your or your neighbour's microphone is turned on.

I remind everyone that all comments should be addressed through the chair.

Members, your subcommittee met on Wednesday, December 6, 2023, to consider the business of the committee and agreed on a number of items. You all received by email last Friday, a copy of the sixth report of the subcommittee on agenda and procedure.

Does the committee wish to adopt the report?

(Motion agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** Pursuant to the order of reference of Wednesday, October 18, 2023, the committee will commence consideration of Bill C-320, an act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act.

I would now like to welcome our witness today, the sponsor of the bill, Mr. Colin Carrie, member of Parliament for Oshawa.

Mr. Carrie, welcome. You have up to five minutes.

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC):** Thanks, Mr. Chair.

First, I would like to thank my colleagues of all parties for speaking in support of this bill at both first and second readings, as well as for voting unanimously in support of Bill C-320 at second reading.

I also want to thank Lisa Freeman, the person who inspired this bill.

As stated before, this bill is intended to help families who are plunged into unfathomable situations, demoralized and retraumatized by the actions of the Parole Board of Canada and Correctional Service Canada, institutions that say they are supportive of victims of crime. As an example of how victims are retraumatized due to a lack of information, allow me to tell you a little bit about Lisa's story.

Lisa's father was tragically bludgeoned to death by an axe murderer in 1991. It's also worth noting that this murderer was out on parole when this horrific crime took place. She was caught off guard when her father's killer was eligible for early parole only 20 years into his 25 years to life sentence. She believes, and I agree, that a lack of transparency regarding how parole dates and eligibility are determined causes the victims of crime to experience confusion, frustration, trauma and resentment towards our justice system.

It's the responsibility of the government to ensure that victims of crime are treated with the utmost respect and dignity. This legislation makes a simple amendment to the Corrections and Conditional Release Act regarding the disclosure of information to victims that would provide such respect and dignity. It would require that information regarding the review and eligibility for all forms of parole be communicated in writing to the offender's victims, including an explanation of how the dates were determined for parole and explaining this process in an effort to be as transparent as possible. We can't argue with the logic of the bill.

Sadly, victims don't have any support compared to the support our government gives to criminals. A murderer's rights should never trump a victim's rights, yet they seem to every single time.

A sentence like life in prison without the possibility of parole for 25 years is meant to imply severity and punishment. This is simply not true. It is misleading to families, and it's also misleading to the public. Offenders serving a life sentence without parole for 25 years can be released on other forms of parole well before for personal development or temporary absences and community service work. What we are trying to correct with this bill is simply victims' access to this information as well as an explanation.

A recent update from Lisa Freeman exemplifies this. She said, "I was notified in July that: My father's killer's day parole was extended for 6 months and when it goes up again for renewal in January of 2024 and even if he doesn't request full parole, he can be automatically granted it at the same time. No hearing I can attend, and no opportunity for me to object...just an in-office, paper decision. Also, at the same time I was notified that the 'conditions on parole' that I have in place—no transfers to the province of Ontario, and parts of BC—can be lifted at any time his Case Management Team feels that he 'would benefit from attending courses in these areas'. What an outrage that the only comfort for me and my family from this axe murderer can be lifted at whim of his team. The system needs to be recalibrated. The rights of victims should be made equal to, or better than, the rights of the offenders."

Here we have it colleagues. A killer can be released into a community where his victims live at the whim of his case management team. There is no need to explain to the victims how the decision was made and when the release will take place. I know you will agree that this is unconscionable.

Families that have suffered because of an offender's action don't deserve to be revictimized by the parole system. Victims of crime have enough to carry.

Under the guise of rehabilitation, victims of crime often have to stand back and watch while violent offenders exercise their rights, which, as most victims of crime find, are nothing more than a mockery of justice and basic common sense. Victims deserve better, colleagues. At the very least, they deserve accurate and timely explanations and information.

With that, I'm happy to answer your questions.

Thank you.

● (1105)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Carrie.

Mr. Motz, I believe you're up first.

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

Thank you, Mr. Carrie. I've never called you "Mr. Carrie" before, but I will in this setting.

Thank you for bringing this forward and for advocating on behalf of victims in our justice system.

I'll start my questions with you this morning.

Can you take a couple of minutes to give us a deeper dive into the inspiration behind this bill and provide some background? I

know you talked about Ms. Freeman. This has been in the works for some time.

Can you give us some background on how this came about?

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Motz.

It was a personal thing. My father knew Lisa's father. We attended the store he worked at. Lisa came to me and explained her trauma and re-traumatization.

This bill is a simple bill. It's for transparency. Really, it's about the mental health of victims. When something like this happens, it's a forever trauma. Every time there's a change in sentencing, parole or anything to do with the offender, it brings this up again. I'd like to ask you to imagine this for a moment: You think the killer of your loved one has a life sentence, with no eligibility for parole for 25 years. Then, you find out that, after 20 years, he's given day parole and certain abilities. He's going to be released within 10 kilometres of your sister. Imagine that you're in this community. What might the likelihood be that you're at a grocery store or out in the community, and you run into the person who killed your father? When she talked to me about the trauma, the re-traumatization and the lack of information and transparency, I felt we owed it to her and other victims to do better.

There are a lot of things I could talk about in terms of the parole system and how we could improve it. I think, if we went around the table, people would have suggestions. This bill is just a small change. It would allow victims of crime to be better prepared for changes occurring with regard to the perpetrators of these horrific crimes, so they can deal with them better.

**Mr. Glen Motz:** Thank you for that.

Obviously, that was the impetus behind doing this.

You consulted victim services groups, I understand.

Can you share with the committee the type of support this legislation received from the victim services organizations you may have been in contact with?

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** Yes, and I think committee members might have received a letter from Victims Services Durham Region. I've also heard from many families who have been victimized by some of the most horrific crimes out there. Maybe what I could do, Mr. Motz, is just read a little bit from that letter into the record. It says:

I'm writing on behalf of Victims Services of Durham Region to voice support for Bill C-320, an Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act...

Our agency has worked extensively with survivors and witnesses of violent crime, and their families, including those impacted by homicide. We have seen firsthand the indescribable effects of trauma and the triggering and re-traumatization to those impacted as they navigate years of involvement with the criminal justice system. At every intersection with the system they are reminded of the violence experienced and the irreparable harm done, no matter how much time has passed.

I could read through the whole thing, but it's basically about when victims should know. It says:

All changes to a sentence related to a loved one's death or their own victimization can re-traumatize. Conditional releases, pardons and transfers that impact offenders, also impact their victims.

I could read from the stakeholders. There's a letter I have from Daniel Silcox. I don't know if you remember this case, Mr. Motz, but his father, James Silcox, was the first victim of killer nurse Elizabeth Wettlaufer. She injected him with a lethal dose of insulin on August 12, 2007.

The news of that murder sent his family into extreme trauma and a downward spiral, and the offender was sentenced to eight life sentences, four seven-year sentences and two four-year sentences and was eventually sent to Grand Valley Institution in Kitchener-Waterloo. He is a registered victim relative to the crime. In October 2018, it came to his attention that the offender had been moved, but his calls to Victim Services of Kingston were met with indifference, and he was informed that, due to confidentiality reasons, her new location couldn't be disclosed.

Again, I could read through the whole thing, but he basically said that he strongly believes they have the right to know exactly where their father's killer is located and her movements and that they certainly should not only have the knowledge but also input into the parole proceedings when they take place. He complained about an extreme offender bias, and that's what I heard over and over again from victims' families.

• (1110)

**Mr. Glen Motz:** Thank you very much.

My time is extremely limited. I just want to make a statement, and hopefully you can get that out in the response a little bit further on. I couldn't agree with you more that more information is always better when it comes to helping people through trauma, and that disclosure to registered victims is woefully insufficient. Hopefully you can weave some of that response into that through some of the other questions.

I think my time is up, Chair.

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

Mr. Bittle, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.):** Thank you so much.

Thank you, Mr. Carrie, for bringing forward this legislation. I think it coincidentally ties in well with what we've been discussing as a committee, given our previous study and hearing from victims and victims' friends of a notorious serial killer. It's good that someone has brought this forward and taken the initiative, so thank you so much. It's not often that we have unanimity on something, and it's good to see in the second reading that we have that here.

Just building on one of Mr. Motz's questions with respect to people consulted on this bill, you mentioned speaking with victims and victims' rights organizations.

Did you meet with anyone else beyond that, such as academics, parole board representatives, former employees or anyone like that? If so, could you let us know about those stakeholder meetings?

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** I did meet with mostly law enforcement and more or less victims' families.

Mr. Bittle, I want to thank you for your comments because very rarely do we get a bill in front of us that we do all agree to.

One of the things I considered when I was first researching the bill is what I could do, what I could put in, to make a difference in the system that would be significant for victims' families. One of the challenges we have, and I had this conversation earlier, is that when you want to make a change sometimes you want to make a big change. It could be arguable. When you talk to lawyers—I know you're a lawyer—but if you ask seven lawyers for opinions, you get 10 or 20 different opinions on it.

I really did try to narrowcast this bill, and through my discussions and conversations with people who were affected and also people in the field, the idea was to make a small change and hopefully, with a minority government, this is something that all of us can hang our hats on and say that we're making a very small change. I think it's 10 words that are added. It's not taking anything away, but it will make a huge difference in victims' lives in how they work with the system.

One of the things I'm hoping for as well with your questions today is perhaps that this bill will trigger more conversations, because if I go around the table there are probably some great ideas that we have right here on improvements we could make to the system. I think all of us have families, friends and loved ones who've found themselves in this situation. As Mr. Motz said, you'll never go wrong by being more transparent and giving more information to people.

• (1115)

**Mr. Chris Bittle:** I appreciate that, and it was one of the things we heard from the previous study, that the lack of information or information at the last minute was retraumatizing and particularly difficult. There's very little that I think we can do as a society for individuals who have suffered some of the most heinous crimes, or their family members who have been through the most heinous crimes, but we can take whatever steps that we can.

Information is something that should be easy to provide.

Did you have the opportunity to meet with or speak with the federal ombudsperson for victims of crime about your bill?

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** I did not.

**Mr. Chris Bittle:** Okay.

When appearing before our committee last month, the federal ombudsperson for victims of crime said victims need clear information that explains how they can register to be informed about an offender and their sentence and how to provide input for consideration before decisions are made.

I was wondering if you could speak to how Bill C-320 will provide greater clarity to victims about the crime and their role in the criminal justice system.

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** I'm actually quite happy to hear that the ombudsman said that, because I do believe from their standpoint there's a realization that more needs to be done.

This bill, and if I can take the opportunity to read from the start of it, will make a big difference but it's not a lot.

The summary states:

This enactment amends the Corrections and Conditional Release Act to provide that information that is disclosed to the victim of an offence regarding eligibility dates and review dates applicable to the offender in respect of temporary absences, releases or parole must include an explanation of how the dates were determined.

In my opening, I mentioned the experience of Lisa Freeman, my constituent. She basically said, "How in heaven's name did they decide to allow this person to be released, but even be released into a neighbourhood close to my sister?"

As things progress, like victim impact statements, things along these lines, if the victims have some of that information, it allows them to at least prepare mentally for the day when they may be confronted.

Also with this bill, what's really important is that it's about giving victims the choice, because some victims are different from other victims. Some victims want to know a lot of information. Others don't want it. They just want to put it past them.

This really carves out a very small change that's going to make a big difference. I'm happy to see mostly unanimous consent for it, and hopefully it moves forward. Like I said, if there's any other dialogue that can be stimulated by the bill, I'm really open to that as well.

Thank you for that, Mr. Bittle.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Carrie and Mr. Bittle.

We'll welcome Mr. Perron to the committee.

Mr. Perron, you're up for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you all for having me at committee.

Mr. Carrie, thank you for bringing this important bill forward.

I've been listening to you from the outset. Obviously, I'm not an expert on this issue; I'm filling in here. So you'll forgive me if I say things you've heard in other studies.

I'm very interested in the victims' trauma and the impact that can have. In your last answer, you mentioned giving victims a choice:

Do they want to be notified? Would they prefer not to be? If I understand correctly, you have already looked into this.

Have any evaluations been done? Is it good for victims or not? Do they really base notification on the preference of the victim's family or the victim themselves?

• (1120)

[*English*]

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** That's an excellent question.

I'm not aware that this has been studied in any detail. What I know, by talking to numerous victims and their families, is that it's unique to every individual. When I said earlier on that it seems the perpetrator's rights are put ahead of the victims' and the victims' families' rights, what I've heard from families is that with this unbelievable trauma, they see the perpetrator getting assistance through the correctional system, but they don't get it. It's not necessarily something that they have access to as well.

I can't even imagine what these families go through—and not just individually. When one person dies in such a horrific way, it definitely affects the central family. We've seen it with the whole neighbourhood. We've seen the interviews where people said, "I knew this guy and was really surprised by whatever is going on." It's a psychological hit to the entire community and, sometimes with some of these more horrific ones, the entire country.

Everyone deals with these traumas in their own unique way. By allowing them to have a choice of when they're ready, whether it's a year from now or 15 or 20 years from now... Lisa got more involved, even though it was 20 years later. In her mind, it was supposed to be a life sentence with no eligibility for parole for 25 years. The fact that it happened earlier...she was taken by surprise by the trauma and the uncertainty of the system.

To Mr. Bittle's comment about the ombudsman coming before you and realizing there are things that we are aware of that we need to do, we're learning more and more. These things don't go away. These are life-changing events, and how each and every victim and their family adapts to them is something we have to be very cognizant of and respect. We have to allow them as much transparency as possible and as much transparency as they're able to digest at that time.

Mr. Perron, you've brought up an extremely important issue. As I said, with this bill, I think we have good support around the table for it, but maybe it's going to bring up some other questions on how we can make improvements.

I thank you for your question.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Perron:** Thank you very much, Mr. Carrie.

I have another question for you. Your bill requires that the authorities notify the victims. Obviously, we agree on that.

Have you considered adding a minimum time frame so that victims don't find out at the last minute or after it's already been done? The way it's written is not entirely clear.

Can you tell me more about this? Does the legislation provide for a period during which the authorities must notify the victims before notifying the criminal in question? As you say, it's about reversing the priority in terms of law and privilege.

Between the two, who is better taken care of? Obviously, we all agree that more needs to be done for victims.

[English]

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** I agree with you 100%. We need to take care of the victims first.

The challenge with this bill.... Actually, when it started, it was a lot more encompassing, but then the decision had to be made: What was it that I thought we could all agree on? In a perfect world, in my view, we should give these victims the information ahead of time. My assumption, as well, is that, when you're dealing with a government service, it's going to be reasonable and timely in its disclosures and things like that.

However, even looking at a word like "advance" or "timely", if you're a lawyer, what does that mean? Do you know what I mean? I could ask a lawyer what "timely" means. He might say, "within a day or two". When I do talk to lawyers, they definitely say things like, "Well, it depends". That argument really is beyond my scope. I'm a chiropractor by trade. I'm not a lawyer. I could play one on TV, I suppose, with my new goatee.

However, the reality is that these are the larger conversations. I know that Lisa, who inspired me on this bill, is hopeful that, if we can pass these small changes, it will make a big difference. It will also inspire us to maybe ask some more questions, simply, like you said, because I think Canadians would see it as reasonable that there's advance notice or a certain amount of time for people to be prepared in advance for some of this, especially if it's going to be so retraumatizing.

• (1125)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Perron.

Welcome, Mr. Garrison. You're up for six minutes, please.

**Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to be back at the public safety committee. Some of you may know that I served here for, I think, seven years. I haven't been back for quite a while.

I want to thank Mr. Carrie for bringing forward this bill. I do want to point out that he's been working on this bill for quite a long time, and there are a few things that have happened in between.

In particular, the justice committee, where I now sit, conducted a very large study on the government's obligation to victims of crime, which was tabled in the House in December 2022, and it was concurred in by the House in June this year. That report has 13 recom-

mendations on how to better serve victims, which were unanimously endorsed in committee and in the House of Commons. I think some of those larger questions you're talking about are addressed in that report.

I'm sure you've seen the report. As usual, our challenge is in getting action on those recommendations. I wonder if you have any comments on the issues that were addressed in that report regarding improving support to victims of crime.

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** First of all, I'll correct you. I hadn't seen that report, but I should have seen it. It would be nice to see it. Maybe I'll talk to you about it afterwards.

You mentioned "getting action". One of the things about this bill, Mr. Garrison, is that I think it's something we can get action on. I think it's something we can all agree on.

As I said, I'm not a lawyer, but I do know that words have particular meanings, and the words we have in this bill will give victims a little solace in ensuring they do get information so that they can actually prepare themselves, because it isn't something that's a stop-go thing. It continues for the victims and the victims' families. If we can make this one small change, it would be greatly appreciated by the victims' communities.

**Mr. Randall Garrison:** I think you're quite right in identifying that, while we may have differences on some larger issues, we do largely agree on what you're proposing in this bill. It's a good idea.

Recommendation four of the "Improving Support for Victims of Crime" report points out, though, that the way we operate with information to victims is still on request. Recommendation four in the report says that the key sections of the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights should be amended so that information is automatically provided to victims and so that they can opt out if they don't wish to receive information.

What we heard then from victims was that quite often people don't have a good idea of when to make requests or what requests they can make. Therefore, the report recommends reversing that onus so that the system must notify victims, and if victims don't want to have that information, they can opt out. I wonder whether you took that into consideration when you were preparing this bill.

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** No.

As you rightly pointed out, I've been working on this for quite some time. It would have been before that report. If you give me the opportunity to comment on that recommendation, I think that's an excellent recommendation. The work that you did in that committee to do a reverse onus would be extremely well received in the victims and victims' rights community.

I'll go back to when I first met Lisa. Victims don't know and families don't know what's available out there. They don't know what to do. They don't know how to stickhandle their way through the system. It's panic, when they hear of these changes.

Anything that would make it easier for information to be channelled towards victims and their families, I think, is an excellent recommendation, so you have my full support for that recommendation, Mr. Garrison.

• (1130)

**Mr. Randall Garrison:** Thank you, Mr. Carrie.

There are two related issues that came up in that study. One was the lack of resources for victim support organizations, and the fact that, quite often in fact, we depend on volunteers to provide support to victims. The second issue was the lack of training for people in the justice system on victims' rights. Those are two things that I think I have your agreement on. We need to spend some more time making sure that victim aid organizations are properly resourced, and that the justice system has proper training in terms of victims' rights.

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** Absolutely.

Victims have to be comfortable when talking to different individuals. You mentioned volunteers. One of the things we do see is... Sometimes for families and family members who have faced these horrible situations and who have been in extremely dark places, one of the ways for them to heal is to get involved and help others with whom they can relate: "Oh my God, this is exactly what happened to me."

Mr. Garrison, what you mentioned is so important—that we resource this not only with professional training but with the knowledge that victims and victims' families know that these services and these individuals are available. It doesn't always have to be a trained professional. It can be somebody who can relate or who has gone through it. That's sometimes the best person to talk to.

Thank you for that.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We're now moving to the second round.

We're starting off with Mr. Melillo.

**Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Carrie, for being here, for moving forward on this important bill and this important initiative, and for your comments so far here today. It's much appreciated.

I'll try my best not to be too repetitive. I think that when we all find agreement that sometimes is the case, but I appreciate your comments on the motivation you had to bring this forward, specifically around the horrific crime you spoke of.

With the process as it is now, in your view, Mr. Carrie, what would be the ongoing interaction between victims, their families and the Parole Board?

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** Thank you, Mr. Melillo.

My answer is going to be an opinion answer. My opinion has been shaped by listening to victims and their families. Unfortunately, I'm going to say it's contempt. If you were listening to one of the letters that I read into the record.... Imagine that your father is in a senior's residence, a place where you think he is going to be safe

and have proper care for the rest of his life, and he is murdered. Having a 95-year-old mum in a senior's residence right now—God bless her—she's 95 years old and as sharp as a whip, a lot sharper than I am. However, when he tried to get information, he was stonewalled. In other words, the perpetrator's rights trumped his right to know.

I don't think it can be overstated that when somebody goes through this type of trauma.... Maybe our bureaucracy sees it as a small thing, saying, "Why would you need to know? They're still behind bars," and that type of thing, but in Lisa's case, if somebody is on day parole in an area where a family member is....

I can't even imagine coming face to face with somebody out walking who you know murdered your father. My perception is that we need to do much better and what's really right. That's the work of this committee, and Mr. Garrison mentioned that we're actually taking a look at this and seeing what changes we could make. What I'd like to see and what victims would like to start seeing is a step-by-step recognition of what they are going through and what mental health challenges they are having.

When you are looking at a victim and a perpetrator with regard to that sharing of information, you can't have one without the other. In order for that person to heal, the least we can do is give them the information they need to be prepared for the things they are going to go through.

• (1135)

**Mr. Eric Melillo:** Thank you very much.

You just mentioned it again, but as I understand it, registered victims under the Corrections and Conditional Release Act do have access to some information. You just touched on it, but I wonder if you can go into more detail about why that information that they have access to currently isn't sufficient and if you could highlight how your bill will address that.

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** If you read it, you will see that it says that they have a right to certain information, and it's arguable. That's one of the reasons we didn't get into a lot of details in this bill, because we can argue back and forth about what is reasonable information. However, from a victim's standpoint, certain information that we, as the government, decide is important for them to have may not be all-inclusive of what they need to know.

The idea with this bill is to give them a little bit more of that information, to be as transparent as we possibly can, to allow that transfer between victim and perpetrator so that they can learn from it and can understand it. As was brought up earlier, victims didn't choose this. They were thrust into it. They don't know what the system is all about. If they need certain information in order to heal, to function, to remain employed, to remain in a family situation, in a community situation as a reasonable participant in society, it's the least we can do.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll move on to Ms. O'Connell, please, for five minutes.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Carrie, for being here, as one of my colleagues in Durham region.

I wanted to continue on the questioning that Mr. Garrison brought up in terms of the idea behind automatic reporting. You said you fully support that. I do too. The lack of resources and ensuring that there's proper training, these are things that we heard in our previous study as well in terms of making sure that there are trauma-informed individuals to walk victims and their families through this process.

There are even suggestions through the process of Bill S-211—and I had a constituent who was really involved in that process—for publication bans and victims of sexual violence and the need for or even the suggestion of maybe even having legal representation for victims.

Mr. Bittle spoke about the ombudsperson for victims of crime. One of the big things that were brought up was that all of these things require funding and to be adequately funded. Do you support implementing these measures and making sure that they can actually be implemented through funding?

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** As far as the funding question is concerned, right now we need to study that a little bit more. I know I have spoken to municipal officials and police officers on the ground. Depending on who you talk to you, sometimes there's a feeling that if you reallocate, if you put money here versus here, you actually will get different savings. If you get proactive, you can do that.

Any time that you get into an expansion of services, of course, there are going to be some resources that need to be put out. That goes beyond the scope of this bill.

I'm happy to sit down, Jennifer, with you any time if you want to actually discuss some of it overall and how we would improve it. It is a difficult one to come up with—

• (1140)

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Thanks.

I'm sorry. I'm limited on time, but if you have ideas—you mentioned reallocating—I would love to hear them.

Commissioner Kelly spoke at this committee about the notification to victims. I don't have the numbers in front of me. She quoted the numbers. If we go to automatic reporting, which again, I actually agree with, it's just going to require resources. Just last week,

you and all of your Conservative colleagues voted against \$43.5 million to the justice department, which would actually include funding for the ombudsperson for victims of crime and victim supports. You also voted against \$290 million to Correctional Service Canada.

We all support doing more. I fully support your bill. I think it's honourable how you represented your constituent in telling her story here, but I think what also matters is that, if we're going to advocate for these changes, we also support the actual implementation of them. That requires resources, whether it's reallocation or not. However, in cutting funding from a resource that the ombudsman for victims of crime has already said is underfunded, I wonder how we can sit here today and say we support victims of crime, we want to expand their services, we want to expand trauma-informed training and we want to provide resources to help them navigate the legal system, but then vote against the resources to actually implement that.

I'm just curious if perhaps maybe next time there's an opportunity to support funding the services that we want to expand, you can do so as honourably as you have in representing your constituent here today.

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** Thank you for your comment, Ms. O'Connell.

Like I said, when you're looking at the entire justice system—I don't want to get too partisan about what we're talking about here today—there are different approaches. When you're funding the justice system, sometimes making decision A can affect decision B as far as criteria for parole go and things along those lines, or release into the community. Perhaps some of it wouldn't really cost a lot of money at all.

When you talk about Commissioner Kelly talking about the notification of victims, as we know, victims do get notified of different things. It's called an envelope and a stamp. How much information we put in that is one of things that I'm trying to address here with this bill. By just—

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Thank you, sir. I'm limited for time.

How much would it cost—

**Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC):** On a point of order, just a couple of weeks ago, Ms. O'Connell pointed out that the witness has as much time as the questioner. I don't think he's had as much time as she has had in asking the questions.

Can I get that clarified, please? She pointed out just a couple of weeks go that he should have equal time.

**The Chair:** Let's continue.

**An hon. member:** Continue with who, the witness or the questioner?

**The Chair:** We're actually over time by about 25 seconds, Ms. O'Connell.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** I just wanted to know what he thought it would cost.

**The Chair:** Mr. Perron is next for two and a half minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Perron:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

We're going to get back to the substance of the bill, because that's the work we need to do here.

Mr. Carrie, your bill asks that information be given to the family, but it doesn't specify what information. From the beginning, you've explained that it had to be simple so that we could reach a consensus. I understand that, but what information, what justification do you think should be sent to the family?

[*English*]

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** What I'll do is—

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Perron:** What would be needed?

I'm going to ask you a more complete question, because I don't have much time.

The bill states that some information might not be provided for public safety reasons.

Even in cases like that, does the legislation require that basic information be shared with the victim? Could they at least be informed of some travel, or something like that?

Could you comment on that?

[*English*]

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** Yes. When the information is released, it is at the request of the victim. The victim has a choice.

To be 100% clear, I'm going to read what line I'm adding. Basically, it is this:

and an explanation of how those dates have been determined;

This goes to Ms. O'Connell's question. They are already going to be given information. We're already sending them a letter. We're putting a stamp on it. We're giving it to them. If we're sending out this chunk of information, we're just adding a little more to it.

What would be determined in future committees is maybe how we would give more information.

• (1145)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Perron:** I apologize. I don't mean to cut you off, but I only have 30 seconds left.

I hope that my fear is unfounded, but when I see that, I fear that bureaucratic explanations will be given, like “those were the only dates employees were available to do the transfer”. Explanations like that won't do much to reassure victims.

Aren't you afraid that will happen too?

[*English*]

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** No, I don't. I'm actually quite certain that by making these small changes, by giving more information and more transparency, it will give more solace to the families. This bill was not designed to address all of the problems with the parole system or the corrections system. It was one little step in the right direction.

To be clear, I have not had anyone say that they're against this bill. We could do more and maybe that's a conversation we can have. I cast this bill in a kind of narrow way because I felt we could all get behind it.

**The Chair:** Mr. Garrison is next for two and a half minutes, please.

**Mr. Randall Garrison:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

As everyone is aware, I'm substituting for Peter Julian today. He has a notice of motion that he wanted me to place before the committee, which I will do right now, given the vagaries of time in committee.

Mr. Julian would like to give notice that he plans to move the following motion:

That the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security hold a 2-hour meeting, immediately after the winter break, to study the possible impact of the Conservative Party of Canada's proposed motions and votes, on December 7, 2023, to cut each of the following Supplementary Estimate (B) items of a total of \$659,805,933 related to public safety:

Canada Border Services Agency - cuts proposed of \$23,051,792

Canadian Security Intelligence Service - cuts proposed of \$32,964,572

Correctional Service [of Canada]- cuts proposed of \$290,588,112

Courts Administration Service - cuts proposed of \$22,743,433

Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness - cuts proposed of \$176,059,072

Royal Canadian Mounted Police - cuts proposed of \$114,398,952

I'll send that off and people will be receiving that through the normal committee channels.

I felt that this was a good time to do that, because Ms. O'Connell has raised an important question. No matter what changes we might make in favour of providing victims with more support and more information in law, we have to carry that through with the resources needed to follow up on that.

I don't have a question at this point for Mr. Carrie. I thank him for the work he's done on this bill.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Garrison.

Just to inform the committee, we're getting down in time. I'm going to move to four minutes each for the last two in the second round.

Mr. Shipley, you're up.

**Mr. Doug Shipley:** Thank you, Chair.

I also will be planning to give a notice of motion. Before I do that, I'd like to just do a little preamble to it.

We know that the carbon tax is driving up the cost of everything, but something that is overlooked is how this tax impacts the budgets of policing services across this country—and I think that's important to discuss here at the public safety committee—particularly in rural and remote areas, where regularly driving long distances is required.

For example, for a large provincial police service, every one-cent increase costs that police service an extra \$250,000 annually on their police budget. The City of Peterborough recently had to increase their budget 11% due to many things, including the rising cost of fuel. Last year in Brandon, Manitoba, the Brandon Police Service had a deficit of \$174,000. The biggest contributor was the increased cost of fuel.

Therefore, we must support our hard-working law enforcement officers across the country and call on the Liberal government to cancel the carbon tax.

My notice of motion will be:

Given that the Liberal government's costly carbon taxes are driving up the cost of everything, including the cost of fuel, which negatively impacts the budgets of policing services across Canada, that the chair report to the House that the committee call on the government to immediately cancel the carbon tax.

Chair, that's our notice of motion.

• (1150)

**The Chair:** You have two and a half minutes.

**Mr. Doug Shipley:** Mr. Lloyd has it.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Lloyd.

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

Thank you, Mr. Carrie, for being here today.

It's important for me to be part of this bill because I had a tragic case happen in my area back in 2010 with the McCann family, when an elderly couple was murdered on a road trip. Their bodies have never been found, but their killer is currently in prison and will be eligible for parole very soon—if not already.

It's critically important that we have legislation to ensure that, at the very least, victims and the victims' families get the transparency they deserve so that we can avoid any additional emotional trauma. In our previous study on security reclassifications, which we're in the process of completing, that's been so clear when we have friends of the victims and lawyers who represent the families of the victims come forward to committee and tell us about the severe impact.

As well, based on Mr. Garrison's testimony, it seems that the Victims Bill of Rights has this language in there and it's clear that it's on the “request” of the victim. I note that your amendment doesn't really deal with that—it deals with amending part of it—and that the information must be provided.

What would be your thoughts about perhaps amending subsection 26(1) to make it so that, unless otherwise requested by registered victims, there is proactive disclosure from the Parole Board and Correctional Service Canada to provide this information?

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** Thank you, Mr. Lloyd.

I would be in favour of that. I think that any time we can give more information, more transparency, it's a good thing. Until you're a victim of something like this, you don't even understand. You can't even relate to what you need to go through and the hoops you need to jump through.

Anything we can do, first of all, to listen to victims.... As you said, they've come before you. As Mr. Garrison did say, it's about action. We have a great report coming out of the committee but has the government done anything about it yet? I guess not, but I'm hopeful today. This is just one little step so that all of us can move forward and make a difference in the lives of victims and victims' families. Anything in that regard, I would be supportive of.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Carrie.

We have a final question from Mr. McKinnon.

Welcome back. It's great to see you here. Go ahead for four minutes.

**Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's good to be back.

I don't have a notice of motion, and I feel bad about that.

I will remark on the climate change aspect.

The whole point of the carbon tax is to not pay it. Therefore, over time, we change our behaviour, burn less and less carbon dioxide, and so forth. I should point out that we are, at this point, on track to meet or exceed our 2030 projections, in large measure because of programs such as the carbon tax.

I'll go back to Dr. Carrie, though.

Firstly, I agree with your concern about trying to take too big a bite out of things. I find that, with private member's bills, if you keep it short and sweet and to the point, you're more likely to succeed, whereas if you try to solve the whole world, too many things can go wrong and things fall apart pretty quickly. I respect that you made this very short and sweet.

Once this is said and done, and we've accomplished what we set out to do, what do you see as the next steps? What is the next low-hanging fruit we should take on in regard to victims' rights? This is giving deference to Mr. Garrison's comments about the report from the justice committee.

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** Thank you very much, Mr. McKinnon. It's good to sit around the table with you again. I always appreciate your input.

As you said, work has been done. I think what's key is that we don't reinvent the wheel. We take a look at what's been done and set timelines. Whatever we do, we do it with the thought of victims at the back of our minds. What I've learned through this process is that an unimaginable amount of trauma and permanent life change occurs when somebody is presented with this and deals with it in their life.

I don't know the background of everybody around the table, but I know enough victims and their families to know they're hurting. They also have an amazing ability to reach out to others who are suffering in the same way. Allow them a voice at committees like this to discuss what the legislation we're dealing with means to them. It's everything from stickhandling the bureaucracy to dealing with the mental health issues they have, as well as their children, families and extended communities.

Whatever we do, moving forward, keep the victim at the back of our minds. That is the person we're responsible for, more than anybody else. If we do that, I think we'll do good work.

• (1155)

**Mr. Ron McKinnon:** With 33 seconds left, we'll leave it there. Hopefully, we can move on to clause-by-clause.

**The Chair:** Mr. Carrie, thank you for being here today.

Committee, we're going to take a five-minute pause while we get set up for clause-by-clause.

• (1155)

(Pause)

• (1205)

**The Chair:** We're back at it, members. We will start our clause-by-clause consideration.

I'd like to welcome the officials who are with us. They are available for questions regarding the bill, but they will not deliver an opening statement.

From Correctional Service of Canada, we have Kirstan Gagnon, assistant commissioner, communications and engagement sector; Katherine Belhumeur, director general, offender programs and reintegration branch; and Katherine Cole, director, citizen engagement. From the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, we have Chad Westmacott, director general, community safety, corrections and criminal justice. From the Parole Board of Canada, we have Lawrence Chow, director general, policy, planning and operations.

Welcome. Thank you for joining us today.

We'll move now to clause-by-clause consideration.

(On clause 1)

**The Chair:** Shall clause 1—

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** Mr. Chair, can I move an amendment?

**The Chair:** Certainly.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Is it on clause 1?

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** It's a new line. I don't know when the appropriate time to move it is.

**The Chair:** It's now.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** Thank you.

I do want to ask the officials something. Basically, I'm just waiting for a quick translation to be done.

Subsection 26(1), which is the initial paragraph that this entire amendment deals with, uses this terminology: "At the request of a victim of an offence committed by an offender, the Commissioner". Then it goes on to list the things the commissioner "shall" do, which is what we're dealing with here today.

Based on the testimony we've heard today and from the previous study on security reclassifications, it's become clear that a lot of victims aren't even aware that they have a right to request this information. They're not aware that these things are even happening. Based on a review of the Victims Bill of Rights, it was recommended that we set up some sort of proactive disclosure. I thought this bill could be a great opportunity. We asked Mr. Carrie, who was moving the bill, if he would be supportive of this. He indicated that he would be supportive of this.

I'm looking for some feedback from the analysts on my amendment, which I am still just getting translation for. It's very minor.

We propose saying, "Proactively, to a victim of an offence committed by an offender, unless otherwise requested, the Commissioner". That changes subsection 26(1) by removing "At the request of a victim" and changing it to "Proactively, to a victim". This is "unless otherwise requested", because it has been noted that there might be victims out there who don't want to receive this information. That's completely within their rights. If the commissioner gets a request from a victim that they do not want to receive this information, then it should not be released to them.

This would ensure that all victims, as best as CSC could contact them, would have an opportunity to get this information ahead of time without having to know that they have to make a request.

I'm wondering what the thoughts are of the panel here about that amendment.

• (1210)

**Ms. Kirstan Gagnon (Assistant Commissioner, Communications and Engagement Sector, Correctional Service of Canada):** Thanks for that. I agree with you. Education is key. I'll just provide a bit of context on what we currently do, because we do proactively reach out to the victims before they're registered.

We send a first contact letter. I'm okay sharing these with the committee as well, if you're interested. We provide convicted offences, court of conviction, date of conviction, sentence length, start dates, eligibility dates for escorted temporary absences and unescorted temporary absences, and the dates that they can apply for parole and full parole. We then provide a second letter, once they're registered, with the same information. Then there's a third letter if, for example, the offender occurs new offences or there are any additional changes to that.

We also do a correctional plan progress report that's provided yearly or every two years, depending on the length of the sentence of the offender, that provides all of the eligibility dates. On top of that, we do proactive victim notification for these things in addition to offender transfers.

I'll just say that in terms of adding "proactive", as you mentioned, some victims just do not want to receive the information. We have a bit of a plug-and-play approach, if you will, where they can choose what they want to get, how they want to get it and when they want to get it. If that changes over the course of an offender's sentence—sometimes over 30 years that situation can change for the victim—they can come forward and change their victim statement or provide additional information and we will change that. We have a 1-800 number. We proactively call them. We do letters.

I think the change may be inconsistent with the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights. Sections 6, 7 and 8 specify that it should be "on request". I'll just flag that, because we want to be consistent with that piece, which is quasi-constitutional as well.

I don't know if you have anything to add.

**Mr. Chad Westmacott (Director General, Community Safety, Corrections and Criminal Justice, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness):** Thanks very much.

The only thing I would add is that Public Safety Canada regularly holds round tables with victims and victims groups. We do hear repeatedly about the need for information, as you pointed out.

However, as my colleague has pointed out, there is the need to respect individuals who do not want that information. The idea of moving to proactively providing that information raises some concerns in terms of the revictimization and retraumatization of those individuals who do not want to receive that information.

I will point out that the recent passing of Bill S-12 sets up a much better approach to ensuring that victims knowingly have the opportunity to register for additional information. I think that goes a long way toward what you're suggesting, while respecting the rights of some victims to decide not to have that information proactively put toward them.

**The Chair:** Mr. Motz, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Glen Motz:** Thank you.

This is just about two of those points.

Ms. Gagnon, you indicated that a letter goes out. Based on the concern with moving to "proactively", how do you send out your letters? You're doing it proactively. You said you send them to everybody, unless a victim has already informed you that they don't want to be notified. How do you know they don't want to be notified until you send out a letter?

I don't understand then, how "proactively" can interfere with the process you have if you already sent out a letter unless you've been notified. It just codifies it, if you will. It ensures that it occurs because currently it doesn't say.

I understand that you want to be consistent with Canadian Victims Bill of Rights. I'm not sure that having this in the act would prevent or cause any conflict or incongruency with the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights.

**Ms. Kirstan Gagnon:** The way I read the proposed bill, what it would do is provide additional explanation to victims who wish to receive it.

I know that sentence calculation can be incredibly technical, so the important thing is to make sure our people are trained to provide a trauma-informed approach and also to explain it in plain language.

How we come to those dates is a bit of a mathematical calculation. Right now, we do give the dates, but I understand this as providing a more thorough explanation of how we arrived at those dates as a more systematic practice, for those who wish to receive it.

● (1215)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Garrison, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Randall Garrison:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Having been the one who raised this question as a result of the justice committee report, I'm just going to say that I'm a little bit concerned about making an amendment to this bill on the fly. In the justice committee's report, we go back to the Victims Bill of Rights and sort of start at the crowning piece of legislation over victims rights and try to make consistent changes through it.

I do worry that if we simply change it in this bill, we will have contradictions written into the legislation, which could cause problems for victims. It will certainly cause problems for the public servants who have to interpret the legislation when it says one thing in one place and another thing in another place.

I am concerned that we probably need a bit more of a systematic look at how to do this, rather than just trying to amend this private member's bill today.

**The Chair:** Ms. O'Connell, go ahead, please.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Thank you.

My concern is about making amendments on the fly without having the benefit of hearing testimony or studying it. Mr. Garrison rightly pointed out that it would then be inconsistent with an act that has had all of that work done, such as listening to victims services and the ombudsperson specifically to talk about this.

It's not that I'm opposed to proactive notification, but it's not for me to decide what's right for victims in terms of the way they receive information, what the most appropriate forum for them is or how we make the process better. I think that kind of top-down approach of telling people what is best for them is what has gotten us a little bit into this situation of forgetting the trauma-informed process that is needed.

That being said, Ms. Gagnon, I'm just curious. At the top, you were mentioning the information that is already sent out in the letter. You were speaking quickly because of the nature of this committee. I just want to make sure I heard you correctly. Your interpretation of this bill is to just provide more details, as Mr. Carrie spoke about, of that calculation with a better plain language explanation.

Correct me if I'm wrong, but sometimes these decisions come as a result of, let's say, an offender's lawyer filing something in the courts to have a different calculation or to have a different ruling, and it's not just X, Y and Z and nothing ever changes within that formula.

Would there be that opportunity? How do you see the implementation of this act, notwithstanding this amendment, for that clarity around how these decisions are made? Even if at the time of sentencing it might be one thing, sometimes changes can happen over time.

**Ms. Kirstan Gagnon:** Currently, we would provide the information to the victims. In terms of sentence calculation, I don't know if my colleague wants to add anything on how that occurs, but right now, our victim services officers would go speak to sentence calculation and ask for more details for the victims, because some of them do want to further understand.

Sometimes the information doesn't come across the first time. It requires additional contact with the victim, or it requires a different mechanism to be able to make sure they have the information. Because of the trauma they experienced, sometimes it requires two or three contacts to be able to get into the details. We're happy to do that. It's more of a resourcing question, as you raised earlier, of additional contact time with victims, explaining and making sure our people continue to be trained and retrained for that trauma-informed approach and take the time they need to convey the information.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Thank you.

That initial contact is done through a letter, but what we certainly heard at our last study—the classification study—is that a trauma-informed approach, frankly, can't be done through a letter.

In each case, where the victim or their family is at the time of the trial and sentencing versus years later into the sentence where changes might start to happen, that approach can't just... In my opinion, and based on what we've heard, victims really want that contact with a human who can explain it to them in a way so they understand the system. Frankly, it is a case-by-case basis.

That's why, at its core, I do support this legislation, because any improvement to share that information...but it can't just be to send an additional letter. I would think it needs to have those additional resources.

In my last round of questioning, I brought up the numbers that Commissioner Kelly...and thank you to my team who scoured the blues. I think there are 40,000 contacts and 8,000 registered victims. Would this bill change anything? The big question we have is who those registered victims are and how they know to register. Even with this amendment, if it's a proactive reach-out, you would still have to know to register as a victim. Is that correct?

• (1220)

**Ms. Kirstan Gagnon:** Yes, and just to clarify, the first contact letter is for those who wish to come forward and register with us but haven't done so yet, or maybe we haven't processed the registration. It starts, "Further to our recent telephone conversation, here's all of the information that you're entitled to receive. This is how you can receive it. This is how you can sign up for our portal." It explains everything from location to confidentiality to preferences, etc.

In what you're speaking to, I think Bill S-12 will help with that, because with the courts now being able to convey the victim information to us directly, that will help us ask them if they wish to receive our services. Part of the difficulty is often knowing where the victims are. Sometimes they go to court, and then we don't know how to find them. I think that will help in terms of conveying that information. Then if they don't wish to receive further contact up front, we'll be able to know that.

I think that will be helpful, because for us...and we've increased our outreach over the years, especially to marginalized groups and populations, to be able to make them aware of our services. However, if they don't come to us, we often can't find them.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Thank you.

Thank you for... It is Bill S-12. I think I referred to Bill S-211 before, but that's what I was referring to.

In terms of the amendment then, again, notwithstanding the fact that it's inconsistent with another piece of legislation and some other work that the justice committee is doing... In terms of resourcing, I would hate to see a reallocation of resources taken away from this trauma-informed approach to simply send more letters. Are we in a position yet to be able to provide that without taking away from that one-on-one, case-by-case contact?

**Ms. Kirstan Gagnon:** We would have more contact with victims, if this were to come into force the way it's worded.

If there's an amendment, I believe it would affect all of section 26, which I don't have in front of me. There could be other impacts to consider. It'll have training impacts, etc., for trauma-informed approaches. We do that regularly as we get new staff or with existing staff for any changes.

Sure, it will have some impacts, but we're currently doing it today. We're not turning victims away if they want the information.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Okay. Thank you.

Those are all of my questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Lloyd.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** Thank you.

I feel as if there has been somewhat of an explanation for my questions about this.

From the testimony we heard and the justice committee's review, I have a greater fear that victims would not be disclosed enough information and be very upset, than I have that they would get too much information. Although it is a possibility that they'll get information they don't want to receive, I think it's far more traumatizing when people feel they're forgotten and not even included in the process.

You spoke about Bill S-12 and how, very early on in the process, you wanted to make it so that people could tell you what information they want to receive.

Is that correct? Would you say there isn't a major threat that people will be disclosed information they don't want to receive, if such an amendment requires proactive disclosure?

• (1225)

**Ms. Katherine Cole (Director, Citizen Engagement, Correctional Service of Canada):** We have, in the past, sent victims information proactively that they did not ask for. This has raised issues in the past with victims—where they've asked us not to send this information.

As Ms. Gagnon said, we try to tailor the service to what the victims want. We have proactive discussions and share with the victims all of the information available to them in paragraphs (a), (b) and (c) under subsection 26(1). Then, we identify what information they want, how they want it and when they want it. It's all tailored specifically to meet their needs.

A change to the legislation to proactively share that information would perhaps impact all those different paragraphs, which, presently, give the victim the choice of receiving it. If they don't want to receive it.... Some of it is quite detailed, like the correctional plan progress report, which provides a lot more information than some victims want to receive, including the sentence calculations.

Some of it is more information than they want and, perhaps, need to understand. Unpacking and understanding that information is a step beyond just receiving it.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** Once a victim has requested they not receive the information.... Has there ever been a problem with sending people information they previously told you they did not want to request?

**Ms. Katherine Cole:** I'm not aware that we've ever done that. Usually, if a victim calls with questions, we can identify a means to provide that information. We will ask them if they want to receive it.

For example, if they have lots of questions about the offender's rehabilitation and participation in programs, we'll suggest they might want to proactively receive the correctional plan progress report, but we don't automatically send it based on previous feedback to the program.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** My next line of questioning may be my last.

It has been said that this is in contradiction to what's written in the Victims Bill of Rights, which says victims have a right that, "on request", they can receive this information.

Does it contradict somebody's right to request something, if they have that thing proactively disclosed to them? Is that a contradiction of their right? Does it cancel out their right?

To me, it seems like a common-sense enhancement of their right. Even if they don't know they have that right, they're going to be provided that information. Then they'll have the right to opt out if they choose not to receive that information.

What are the potential pitfalls of adding an amendment like this, which isn't exactly in congruence with the Victims Bill of Rights? Is there really any risk? If there isn't a risk, I don't see a problem moving forward with this, but I want to get....

**Ms. Kirstan Gagnon:** Currently, out of respect for victims, when we make contact with them initially, we ask about this and respect their not wanting to receive the information. That's what we currently do. If they change their mind down the road, they can come back any time and ask us to provide information. Sometimes they're more ready at that point in time, or their situation has changed.

That's currently what we do.

**The Chair:** Ms. O'Connell.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Thank you.

I'm sorry, but I have one more question. To clarify, you proactively reach out immediately, not with all the information, but as soon as someone is deemed a registered victim, you reach out to them to make them aware of their rights. Is that correct?

• (1230)

**Ms. Kirstan Gagnon:** That's correct.

There's an initial letter that goes out, and it's quite lengthy. It provides all of the things we do provide. In addition to that, the public safety department has a number of guides available for victims and resources, as does the Parole Board. We try to work all together so it's more streamlined for victims.

I'll add that in the new committee we struck in November to look at issues related to victims, we're looking at a whole range of topics. Any feedback we get from that will be used to make further enhancements as well to the program.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Thank you for that clarification.

I think it's important to know there is a proactive outreach. If you're a victim, you're not sitting there wondering what your rights are or what information might exist. You have the choice of what you're ready to hear and what you want to receive, and you can at any time change that based on your needs.

I wanted to know that a pre-emptive outreach happened initially.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** We have Mr. Lloyd, please.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** One quick aside is that one of the reasons I put forward this amendment is the study we just came out with on security reclassification. I do know there's a distinction between parole and security reclassifications. However, we do know, from ATIP materials, that the families of the victims were not informed until the day the transfer took place. I think it was roundly agreed in this committee that this wasn't up to the level that Parliament expects in terms of disclosure to victims.

I do know this is somewhat of a distinct issue, but my amendment wants to ensure that victims are always disclosed the information that they have a right to receive in advance of any decisions or meetings taking place.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Ms. Gagnon, go ahead.

**Ms. Kirstan Gagnon:** Yes, I was going to note that in the law, currently, for transfers to a minimum-security institution, we notify the victim in advance. For a transfer to a medium-security institution, we notify them after the transfer has occurred. In that case, we did give a heads-up to the victims in advance, and then again on the day of.

**The Chair:** Thank you, committee.

We're dealing with Mr. Lloyd's amendment. We'll call a recorded vote.

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

(Clause 1 agreed to )

(Clauses 2 and 3 agreed to)

**The Chair:** Shall the title carry?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Shall the bill carry?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Shall the chair report the bill to the House?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** That's it. We're good. Thank you.

Go ahead, Ms. O'Connell.

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** I move a motion to adjourn.

**The Chair:** It's so moved.

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