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Chair: Mr. Vance Badawey



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• (1550)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.)): Good afternoon, everyone. It's a pleasure to welcome all of you here to meeting number 39 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of January 25, 2021. The proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website. The webcast will always show the person speaking rather than the entirety of the committee.

To ensure an orderly meeting, I would like to outline a few points to follow. First off, members and witnesses may speak in the official language of their choice. Interpretation services are available for this meeting. You have the choice, at the bottom of your screen, of either floor, English or French audio.

Members participating in person should proceed as they usually would when the whole committee is meeting in person in a committee room, and keep in mind the directives from the Board of Internal Economy regarding masking and health protocols.

Lastly, before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. If you are on the video conference, please click on the microphone icon to unmute yourself. For those in the room, your microphone will be controlled as usual by the proceedings and verification officer.

I will remind you that all comments by members and witnesses should be addressed through the chair. When you are not speaking, your mike should be on mute. With regard to a speaking list, the committee clerk and myself will do our very best to maintain the order of speaking for all members, whether they are participating virtually or in person.

Members, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on April 27, 2021, the committee will now continue its study of railway safety and the impacts of railway operations on neighbouring properties.

I would now like to introduce and welcome our witnesses. First off, we have, as an individual, Bruce Campbell, adjunct professor, faculty of environmental and urban change, York University. We have, from the city of Thorold, Mayor Terry Ugolini. We have, from the Coalition des citoyens et organismes engagés pour la sécurité ferroviaire de Lac-Mégantic, Robert Bellefleur, spokesperson. We have, joining us once again from the Comité ferroviaire de Boucherville, Isabelle Bleau, city councillor, city of Boucherville;

and François Beaulne, subcommittee chair. Finally, we have the following members from the Port Robinson Proud group: Jonathan LePera, Cliff Penn and June Wolfrath. I want to add that Mr. Penn will be joining us a little later on in the meeting. We have on our list Mr. George Marks, also a member, but George has fallen ill and will not be attending this evening.

We also have, from the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference, Mr. Chad McPherson. Chad is a locomotive engineer.

Welcome, all. We're going to start off with Mr. Bruce Campbell for five minutes.

Mr. Campbell, you have the floor.

Mr. Bruce Campbell (Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change, York University, As an Individual): Thank you, Chair, and thank you, honourable members, for inviting me to testify before this committee.

I want to make a few initial points at the outset about Lac-Mégantic. I presume that Mr. Bellefleur is going to focus his comments on that. I think it's important that we remember. It's easy to forget, with time, that the death and destruction that terrible night were without precedent on Canadian soil in over a century.

My second point is that I continue to be troubled that a commission of inquiry still has not been held.

Finally, CP Rail's continued denial of its role in the disaster is inexcusable, though not surprising.

My focus here is on the effectiveness of the safety oversight regime: safety management systems. SMS were a major shift from prescriptive regulation, leaving the railways much greater leeway to manage their operations. When they were introduced in 2002, officials insisted that they would constitute an additional safety layer. They still do.

However, no additional regulatory resources were provided. In fact, they continued to be squeezed. The number of unannounced on-site inspections dwindled. SMS has become a form of blame-shifting, providing cover for the government. After an accident, the language turns to blame: "We set the rules. They didn't follow the rules." We saw this in Lac-Mégantic for sure.

Safety management systems have been on the Transportation Safety Board's watch-list since the list was created in 2010 to highlight "issues posing the greatest threat to Canada's transportation system". They're still there.

I want to now address the status of a few SMS-related recommendations from your 2016 "Update on Rail Safety" report.

Recommendation 14 involved action to improve "fatigue management". Since 1994, the TSB has identified sleep-related fatigue as a contributing or risk factor in 31 rail occurrences. It first made it onto the TSB watch-list in 2016. It's still there. Science-based fatigue management practices continue to be thwarted by the companies. It's a major safety risk that's still not dealt with.

The second recommendation involved re-examining the rules on "maximum wear of rails". Since 2014, seven trains carrying crude oil have derailed and spilled their contents. Four resulted in fires, most recently in 2020. In each, a major cause was track infrastructure defects. A 2020 TSB advisory warned that the increased risks associated with the operation of key trains were still not being addressed by the current track safety rules. It also warned that compared to older models, the newest tank cars appear to be equally vulnerable to product releases when they derail at speeds of more than 55 kilometres per hour.

Finally, it was recommended that Transport Canada review whistle-blower protection provisions to determine if SMS is the appropriate framework. In 2021, two international bodies jointly ranked the effectiveness of whistle-blowing frameworks in 37 countries: Canada was tied for last place. It's clearly not an appropriate framework.

As you know, in 2019 there was a 25% jump from the previous 10-year average in accidents involving dangerous goods. The decline in 2020 correlates with a decrease in traffic volume. The 2021 AG report found that Transport Canada failed to assess the effectiveness of SMS. The AG called it "a big loophole", not dissimilar to its 2013 finding. The environmental commissioner in the AG's office, in its report, stated bluntly that "the window for a recurrence of a Lac-Mégantic-type disaster is still open".

The challenge, I believe, is to determine to what extent the current safety oversight regime is fulfilling its obligation to protect the public and what needs to be done to improve that.

I think I'm at my time limit. I make a number of recommendations. We could deal with them in the Q and A, or I could provide my list to the clerk for you.

Thank you very much.

• (1555)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Campbell. Well done.

We're now going to move to Mayor Terry Ugulini from the city of Thorold.

Mayor Ugulini, the floor is yours.

Mr. Terry Ugulini (Mayor, City of Thorold): Through you, Chair Badawey, good afternoon, everyone. It is truly an honour to have been asked to speak to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities this afternoon.

I must start my comments by stating that the city of Thorold is very fortunate to have excellent representation from MP Vance Badawey, a true champion of Niagara. I would also like to thank him as he continues to work for our city, the region and the private sector to create a new era in rail and marine transportation.

Thorold's new multimodal hub will help Niagara lead a sustainable industrial expansion in Ontario while promoting rail, road and marine transportation and creating a welcoming and sustainable environment for industry. The major regional facility will grow trade in a more sustainable way and contribute to Ontario's quality of life by reducing congestion while supporting key industries and creating new and innovative jobs.

Now more than ever, Canadians are realizing the importance of supply chains and transportation efficiency. These logistical assets within the city of Thorold and the Niagara region rely on access to efficient and safe rail systems. The implementation of new rail infrastructure and the refurbishment of aging rail lines will be a catalyst in supporting and expanding existing and future supply chain requirements while making safety paramount and bringing it to the forefront of every decision.

Transloading operations are becoming more commonplace along canal-fronting lands in our community, and they require attention to every conceivable detail through policy adaptation and development. These policies will ultimately protect those working on site as well as all citizens in the communities in which these rail assets and multimodal operations exist.

Successful communities are able to manage the impacts of growth, but I would like to take this opportunity to share some serious issues that have arisen because of increased railway activity in our community. These issues affect local residents on a daily basis and unnecessarily put our citizens at risk.

The community of Port Robinson East is situated between the Welland Canal and the CN rail line and has only two means of egress. When the rail crossings at Canby Street and Biggar Road are blocked due to slow-moving or stopped rail traffic, residents and businesses are blocked until the rail traffic has cleared. Recently, longer trains—those of more than 100 cars—have extended the response times for emergency services, disrupted delivery times for local businesses, and created a great deal of inconvenience for residents, tourists and cyclists wishing to access the Greater Niagara Circle Route. Our suggestion here as a solution is to restrict the total length of the cars travelling through this portion of the community to a maximum length of 945 metres. That will free up the distance between the two rail crossings so that they won't both be blocked at the same time.

Number two is shunting activities at the Port Robinson yard, which have increased measurably over the last five years. Blocked roadways, dust, noise and vibration from the coupling of railcars severely impact the quality of life and mobility of our residents in this community. Our solution is to move the shunting activity outside the residential area of this small village and/or to install noise barriers to reduce the impact of operating activities on the east side of the Port Robinson yard.

Number three is that empty tanker and railcar storage is occurring for extended periods of time on spur lines that criss-cross our city. In particular, the rail line currently leased by GIO Railway Incorporated from CN, just south of Lynden Street and close to our downtown business district, has created concerns for area residents by decreasing their enjoyment of their property and attracting undesirable activity. Our solution is to improve communication with the City of Thorold fire chief regarding the contents of the stored materials and to relocate long-term storage to outside of the city's urban area.

While we understand that the infrastructure that exists today was in many cases built years ago to support industry and goods movement of that time period, in many cases, that infrastructure no longer supports present and future safety needs. Citizens today and future generations expect more from us in that regard.

● (1600)

[*Technical difficulty—Editor*] rail systems will continue to connect us to the North American and ultimately global marketplace, and they will help fuel the economic recovery. However, [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] cannot come at the expense of families, friends and loved ones. We must remember that every decision we make affects the lives of those around us. We cannot be complacent in our efforts to ensure a safe and livable working environment.

Economies through time always bounce back. Those families who have suffered from disasters of the past now have only the memory. [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] makes safety paramount in that we do. There is a need to take every precaution, as this mindset ultimately contributes to a sustainable, resilient and safe way forward for all businesses and citizens.

Please know that you have a willing partner and champion in me and the City of Thorold as we work in partnership to implement better planning and policy [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]. Thank you for your time and consideration of the above and this opportunity to speak to you today.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Well done.

We're now moving on to Mr. Bellefleur.

You have the floor for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Bellefleur (Spokesperson, Coalition des citoyens et organismes engagés pour la sécurité ferroviaire de Lac-Mégantic): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the committee members.

I want to acknowledge Luc Berthold, the member of Parliament for our constituency, Mégantic—L'Érable, in the House of Commons.

My name is Robert Bellefleur. I'm the spokesperson for the Coalition des citoyens et organismes engagés pour la sécurité ferroviaire de Lac-Mégantic.

My presentation will consist of two parts. The first part will focus on the specific situation in Lac-Mégantic, while the second part will focus on rail safety in Canada.

The small community of Lac-Mégantic experienced one of the worst rail disasters of the 21st century in Canada. We're still deeply affected by this tragedy. The town is barely 50% rebuilt now. Trains are running day and night through Lac-Mégantic. Trains were back on the tracks only three months after the tragedy. Six months after the Central Maine & Quebec Railway, or CMQR, purchased the track, the transportation of dangerous goods started again. Propane gas, sulphuric acid, sodium chlorate, automobile gasoline and various products were being transported on the same slope and curve through the downtown area. In addition, for years, trains continued to be parked in Nantes, right on the hill where the train was parked on the night of July 5, 2013. This practice continued until the recent purchase of the CMQR by Canadian Pacific, or CP.

I want to thank CP for stopping this dangerous practice. However, a great deal of work remains to be done. The track in Lac-Mégantic was outdated and falling apart. A 2019 report noted 53 faulty rails between Farnham and Lac-Mégantic. A great deal of work remains to be done to make this track safe.

The people in Lac-Mégantic are still living with the aftermath of this tragedy. In addition, an independent public inquiry has never been held, despite multiple requests to the government. No action has been taken regarding these requests. This has prevented people from coming to terms with the tragedy. They still don't know the real causes of the tragedy. The key players haven't been identified either. This is a big open wound. We hope that the government will reconsider its position.

We have two recommendations for the committee with respect to the Lac-Mégantic situation. First, we would like the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities to make recommendations to the government. Lac-Mégantic is a special case that requires specific action. We're asking for a permanent moratorium on the transportation of oil by rail through Lac-Mégantic. I'm not talking about oil that we use at a local or regional level, but about oil that leaves Alberta or Dakota and goes to other countries. This oil poses several risks to people, who don't benefit from it.

We want the committee to recommend to the government that a permanent moratorium be placed on the transportation of oil given the specific situation in Lac-Mégantic. Many dangerous goods already pass through our community. We need a bypass because trains must stop running on this slope and on curves. Lac-Mégantic needs a bypass. We don't want to see any more oil unit trains. The public unanimously agrees with this.

We want to see an independent public inquiry commission that will look at the Lac-Mégantic tragedy. In the case of Air India, it took over 10 years to set up a public inquiry. We've been waiting for eight years for an inquiry. Rest assured, we'll stay the course for a few more years.

This concludes the first part of my presentation, which focused on the Lac-Mégantic situation.

I'll now begin the second part of my presentation, which concerns rail safety in Canada. My brief includes a list of statistics published by the Transportation Safety Board, or TSB, on the Internet and in the media since 2016. The number of rail accidents in Canada has been steadily increasing since 2016, and even since the Lac-Mégantic tragedy, I believe. The issue is only getting worse. Hundreds of accidents involving the transportation of dangerous goods are occurring.

• (1605)

Fortunately, these accidents don't occur in urban areas. Fortunately, these disasters took place in areas where there's less of a direct impact on humans. However, the environment and nature suffer from the impact.

On July 10, 2020, Radio-Canada reported that the number of rail accidents had increased by 42% in the past 10 years. These statistics come from the TSB. This phenomenon shouldn't be taken lightly. It's a strong trend.

I said that these accidents didn't take place in urban areas. However, we should remember the accident on November 10, 1979, in Mississauga, where a train containing 90 tons of chlorine derailed. This resulted in a precautionary evacuation of 284,000 people and the creation of a toxic cloud. Trains of this nature are currently passing through Lac-Mégantic. Moreover, about ten derailments occurred between 2005 and 2015, which are included in the TSB statistics.

Oil transportation is a real issue because the rules have been changed.

I have here safety advisories issued by the TSB. For example, according to advisory 617-03/20, the TSB found that our rails—

• (1610)

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Bellefleur, could you wrap it up please?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Bellefleur: May I finish?

[*English*]

The Chair: If you could just wrap it up with your closing comments, that would be great.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Bellefleur: Okay.

In conclusion, our rails are maintained as they were 20 years ago, with a rail management system. Today, much longer, heavier and faster trains are running on the rails. This leads to the premature

wear of the rails, resulting in constant derailments. The seven derailments that occurred, according to the TSB reports, are related to the increased rate of rail wear. The system must be reviewed.

I had other recommendations for the committee. We want the government to completely review the legislation and the regulations, and to reinstate Transport Canada as the true guardian of transportation safety.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bellefleur.

If you could pass on those notes to the clerk, we'll make sure they get into the record for you. Anything else that you may want to add, you can add to some of the answers if members have questions for you. I want to thank you for your presentation; well done, great job.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Bellefleur: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Bleau and Mr. Beaulne, you already made your presentation. I'm told that you're just going to be here to answer questions. Is that correct?

Thank you. It's great to have you back.

We're now going to move on to representatives from Port Robinson Proud. We have Mr. Jonathan LePera and Ms. June Wolfrath.

June, are you going to go first, and then Mr. LePera is going to go second?

Ms. June Wolfrath (Member, Port Robinson Proud): Yes.

• (1615)

The Chair: You have the floor.

Ms. June Wolfrath: Hello. My name is June Wolfrath. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

After the Lac-Mégantic tragedy, in which 47 people died when a parked train that was insufficiently secured ran down a hill, derailed and exploded, there have been calls for increased scrutiny of rail safety, including in the Auditor General's report. The Transportation Safety Board made five recommendations after its probe of the Lac-Mégantic rail disaster.

I respectfully ask the CN representatives to address two recommendations in particular.

The first is that emergency response assistance plans must be created by Canadian railway companies when large volumes of liquid hydrocarbons or hazardous materials are shipped. Since the TSB made this recommendation in January 2014, what emergency response assistance plans, if any, have been developed for the Port Robinson community? What recent steps has CN taken to operationalize the plan with local first response agencies and other support organizations?

The second is that railway companies should conduct strategic route planning and enhanced train operations for all trains carrying dangerous goods. Since the TSB made this recommendation in June 2014, what measures, if any, has CN taken to choose its routes carefully when shipping dangerous goods, which could mean diverting some shipments around populated residential areas, namely Port Robinson?

Further, the argument that route planning is not a realistic solution and that moving such shipments around populated areas is logistically prohibitive and would be costly is no excuse. Shipping hazardous goods remains an unacceptable hazard to the community of Port Robinson.

Rail incidents will happen. The timing of such incidents and their impacts to the community are unknown. For example, the Transportation Safety Board incident occurrence database indicates a number of runaway train near-misses, such as when two CN cars full of corrosive anhydrous ammonia ran uncontrolled onto the main line from Port Robinson near Niagara Falls, Ontario until a citizen spotted the cars and reported them. That was August 19, 2001.

Personally, living in Port Robinson has destroyed my quality of life. It's a living nightmare. I have now bouts of depression and often am short-tempered. I was never like this. The first year here, I slept perhaps three hours a night for 99% of the time. I have pain and fullness in my ears from constant jet plane-like noise in my backyard from accelerating locomotives. Dynamite charge-like bangs go off day and night. CN trains block our main roads because of the small yard. I have seen an ambulance with flashing lights turn around because of this. Idling occurs for 12 hours and more. My 93-year-old mother and I experience constant anxiety waiting for the next train and the next full day of noise. During the CN strike, locomotives were parked directly behind our homes for at least five days, idling 24-7, non-stop.

Last year, I took part in mediation with the CTA and CN. My complaint was noise and vibration. I was obligated to sign an NDA. Therefore, unfortunately, I cannot discuss important facts and, to be honest, I am afraid I may suffer retribution from CN if I slip up by mentioning anything like that.

Thank you so much for listening.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Wolfrath. That was well done. You did a great job.

We're now going to move on to Mr. LePera.

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

Mr. Jonathan LePera (Member, Port Robinson Proud): Thank you, Chair Badawey.

Imagine being trapped beneath an insurmountable rock. That's what life is like when you're at the mercy of the CTA and the wrath of CN Rail.

Port Robinson was once a quiet rural community when I moved there to start my family 17 years ago. It all changed four months later. Where did all this train activity come from? Why did CN move a successful, functioning shunting yard to Port Robinson,

which is grossly undersized? How many complaints were documented at the previous location? What was the process?

I can feel the trains idling in my bones, almost like tinnitus pulsing through your ears. With COVID, your home is your castle...unless you live in Port Robinson, where it's your prison. Our houses shake day and night. There's the pungent smell of diesel, the smell of rail ties, the constant vibration that rattles any two objects in your house that touch together. There's a film of diesel fuel on the windshields of our vehicles. Dust coats cars moments after they're washed. Perhaps CN should volunteer a shovelful of dirt from their rail yard near their lines for content and chemical analysis. That dust is breathed in by my kids every day they want to play outside. What if I told you 90% of the pot lights in my basement are dead? They're a year old. There are cracks in our foundations. Beautiful concrete around our pools has heaved and our driveways have sunk.

Most people know the holidays based on the calendar. We know them by the trainyard. At Christmas, Easter and Thanksgiving, our houses shake violently. We don't invite friends or family over. It's too embarrassing. Then there's the volatile cargo that could kill on contact or upon explosion.

My wife and I are teachers. We have no margin for error. Suicide, abuse, depression and anxiety—we're expected to psychoanalyze 20 to 30 kids with each interaction while delivering a curriculum. Now figure in minimal sleep due to trains shunting all night. We're not talking a two cups of coffee fix. Nurses, paramedics, firefighters, police officers and other frontline workers who live in our subdivision have suffered at work due to the implications of COVID and at home due to CN's operations.

I was invited to the mediation with the CTA and CN Rail in 2020. I refused to sign the NDA, which was a prerequisite for participation. In a democratic country under the guise of an arbitrary mediation, why hide the contents of the meetings? It's simple: Show us your info; we'll do nothing, and you will be muzzled. If you're looking for proof, we've had two meetings in mediation with not an ounce of resolve.

Why did CN idle its trains north, past the subdivision, last night? Is it a coincidence that we're testifying today? Wait a second; you can voluntarily move your operations north without complaints? Sadly, I still felt those trains in my bones as I sat in the chair in my basement.

On Tuesday evening, I learned that CN cannot block a crossing for more than five minutes while shunting. That's shocking. CN's safety record should have them on the CTA's speed dial, yet Tuesday night, the CTA admitted the best they can do is levy a fine to a company that earned record profits of \$3.2 billion in 2020. CN has repeatedly said it can't afford to move its shunting yard from our community.

I'm curious what a CTA fine might be. How about legislation that holds rail companies legally responsible and fines that reflect their earnings? Bill Gates, a significant investor in CN Rail and proponent of the environment, says on his website, "We need to reward people who have the courage to take difficult steps." That's why we are all here today.

The committee will be forced to investigate rail incidents on CN lines, CN's rail yard derailment reports and its cargo manifest. Is there federal compliance? Are there dangerous activities? For volatile chemicals, what do the warning labels say in the event of disaster? How long do they block rail crossings? What is their rate of compliance? How long does it take to separate a railcar in the event of an emergency? How often has that threshold been met?

The tail should not wag the dog. Legislation can be changed. Ethics are what allow you to sleep at night. This panel was elected to be leaders, not followers. It all starts with holding CN Rail and the CTA accountable right now.

My hope, once the final report is written and due diligence is served, is that their operations can no longer represent a function of neglect, complacency or entitlement. They have caused headaches probably for every elected official on this committee and their constituents. They will be shamed into changing their policies and procedures, which easily could have been made in good conscience and stewardship without this committee.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak.

• (1620)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. LePera. That was well done.

We're now going to move on to Mr. Chad McPherson. Chad is a locomotive engineer.

Chad, welcome. You have the floor for five minutes.

Mr. Chad McPherson (Locomotive Engineer, Teamsters Canada Rail Conference): Good afternoon. Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to appear before the committee today.

My name is Chad McPherson, and I represent the legislative position of the Teamsters Rail Conference Canada in our local division 510 of Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, which also encompasses Regina, Saskatchewan. I work as a locomotive engineer for CP Rail and have been employed with the company for nearly 27 years. Today I would like to discuss some important issues that are affecting rail safety in our area.

As mentioned previously, blocking public crossings at grade is a continual issue that requires a resolve. With today's rail carriers building trains well beyond 12,000 feet—I did some quick math, and that is approximately 3.6 kilometres—it is nearly impossible to stop a train without occupying a crossing at grade. A typical exam-

ple of multiple blocked crossings happens in Regina, Saskatchewan, where a train at approximately 9,600 feet, or 2.9 kilometres, is required to stop and line manual switches. While doing this, the train is occupying 11 crossings. This is from Winnipeg Street and Ring Road all the way down to downtown Regina. Many of these crossings are major roadways with high vehicular traffic volumes. There's also a school playground with a pedestrian crossing in the area that is blocked for a significant amount of time while this process happens. The current practice that I see here in Moose Jaw is having a 10,000-foot train—3.4 kilometres—reduce its traffic from the tail end of the train, which is a slow and arduous task and results in public crossings being blocked in excess of 60 minutes at any given time.

A vital component of rail safety is emergency response procedures. Greater attention and stricter regulatory procedures are needed for rail carrier compliance. As it now stands, an emergency response plan is in place for individual areas within the southern Saskatchewan area. These procedures are often simply re-signed from the previous year, with little attention given to mock drills or practices to prepare employees and the public for an emergent situation that may involve evacuation.

This lack of practice was evident in a recent side-swipe in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, in which dangerous commodities and special dangerous commodities were being carried on a train that was struck by another train's movement. No activation of an emergency tone was initiated, and several other inactions were observed as a result. The incident also included a personal injury that occurred because of ineffective communications.

Another issue that affects rail safety in the Regina/Moose Jaw area exists with the training of new conductors. In the past, it has been felt by the unionized employees that the rail carrier's priority was having additional manpower available rather than ensuring that these conductors were capable and qualified to perform the tasks required. In recent past, new hire employees were qualified simply through a phone call or through as little as applying a handbrake to a railcar and lining a hand-operated switch.

The duties of a conductor are vast, and I believe a more involved approach must be taken in the qualifying portion of conductor training. Advancing forward with this initiative would be a stricter regulation on minimum qualification standards. Currently, railway employee standard regulations require recertification at a minimum of every three years. I believe there is room for rail carriers to create, in conjunction with regulatory bodies and unionized representatives, practices that allow for better familiarization with rules and procedures.

Finally, I hope to find answers to some common questions regarding the duty and rest period rules for railway operating employees. There have been some significant changes in the existing work/rest rules, and some interpretation on how these changes will apply as the duty and rest period rules come in effect. Fatigue in the railway is an ongoing concern to railway employees. Although the TCRC has negotiated some great improvements to work/life conditions for employees, it is felt that greater improvements can be made through regulations. Today I hope to find some answers and to encourage some communication on the topic.

Thank you for your time.

• (1625)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McPherson. That was well done.

Members, there are a couple of things. First off, we started this meeting at 3:49, and we will be getting our full two hours in. I know Ms. Kusie was going to ask that question, so I'm going to answer it before she asks it. We will get the full two hours in, plus there was a request to extend the meeting 15 minutes past the two hours, and we're also going to be doing that as well. We're going to have 2 hours and 15 minutes, going to 5:49 plus the 15 minutes.

With that, we are going to start our first round of questions off with Mr. Luc Berthold from the Conservative Party. Before I go to Luc, I want to welcome him back. Luc was on our committee from 2015 to, I believe, 2019, and was a great member of the committee.

Luc, again, I want to welcome you back. I also want to welcome Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia. Francis is part of the Liberal Party and is subbing in for Mr. Rogers today.

Mr. Berthold, you have the floor for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to be back at the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. I enjoyed serving on this committee, where a great dynamic existed. I think that the dynamic is still there under your leadership, Mr. Badawey. By the way, I'm very happy to see you here.

I hesitate to call myself a witness or a member of Parliament today. However, given the situation and the importance of your study, I absolutely wanted to participate. I would like to thank my Conservative colleagues for making room for me today. I want to acknowledge the witnesses here today, especially Mr. Bellefleur, who is from Lac-Mégantic. He cares about the safety of the people living in Lac-Mégantic. He's always there to remind us of the impor-

tance of rail safety. Rail safety is the top priority in Lac-Mégantic. We can't afford to relive the tragedy that we experienced in 2013. Our other priority is the construction of the bypass.

On that note, I want to ask Mr. Bellefleur to tell us how much the people living in Lac-Mégantic want the promises made regarding the timeline for the construction and completion of the bypass to be kept.

Mr. Robert Bellefleur: Thank you, Mr. Berthold.

Indeed, the people living in Lac-Mégantic find it very difficult to have to wait until 2023. Imagine that: 10 years after the tragedy, they hear the trains passing day and night. Personally, this wakes me up often at night. A train passes at 2 a.m. and another at 4 a.m. The trains meet in our area to go through customs. The conductors change. We know that the trains carry chlorine and propane gas, among other things. They always go downhill. It's horrible to put people through this and to make them wait for over 10 years. We won't even have it in 2023, given the delays accumulated since the last year.

Mr. Berthold is right to push the issue. I encourage him to keep hammering away at our request. We really need a bypass in Lac-Mégantic because of the dangerous goods being transported there and the dangerous slopes and curves.

Last week, in downtown Lac-Mégantic, a switch was discovered with a lower grade of iron than the main line. One rail was completely cracked where the train derailed on July 6, 2013. We aren't wondering whether we need a bypass in Lac-Mégantic.

• (1630)

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you, Mr. Bellefleur.

That's exactly the message that I want to send today. Since the start, we've been working with as many people as possible on this issue and with the political parties to make the bypass a reality.

As Mr. Bellefleur said, the timeline is very tight. There's some skepticism about whether the bypass can be built by 2023. However, the government has reiterated its commitment on several occasions. We expect the government to fulfill its commitment.

I also want to inform the committee members that another report on rail safety was released today in the House. This report is quite tough on Transport Canada. The report is from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, which had meetings on this topic. Let me read an excerpt:

The department made important improvements to both its safety oversight planning and inspection follow-up [we acknowledge this], but it did not assess whether its oversight activities improved rail safety. Also, the department did not measure the effectiveness of the railway companies' safety management systems or integrate the results of those audits into its rail safety oversight planning.

The report was tabled today in the House of Commons.

Mr. Campbell, you spoke a great deal about railway management systems. What do you think about the fact that the government still doesn't measure the effectiveness of these systems today, after all these years?

[English]

Mr. Bruce Campbell: Yes. I couldn't have said it better than the Auditor General herself, who said that it was "a big loophole". It was pretty much the same kind of critique that the AG's 2013 report made. It remains a risk, and what else can I say? It's pretty dismaying.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: The Auditor General said that she found it discouraging that, after so many years, the results weren't being checked. I think that this is telling.

I want to give the committee members another document presented to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. This document follows up on all the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. I'll send it to the clerk so that he can look at it. The document follows up on all the recommendations made when we were sitting together in 2016. In particular, I want to talk to you about two recommendations today.

The first recommendation said as follows:

That Transport Canada accelerate the current study examining the feasibility of establishing a rail bypass ... and partner with the municipality to facilitate the request ...

According to the status report submitted by Transport Canada, the file has been completed. However, we don't have a bypass yet. The committee should be aware of this situation.

In response to Mr. McPherson's testimony—

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Berthold.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you.

[English]

I will table the report for you.

The Chair: Thank you.

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

Mr. Iacono, you have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank all the witnesses who are present today, as their testimony is essential for this study.

I will address my questions to the Port Robinson Proud residents.

We all expect to enjoy a good quality of life in our homes; however, I understand that many families are greatly affected daily by the CN operations.

My first two questions are, what kind of attempts have you made to resolve the shunting issue with CN, and how have they responded?

• (1635)

The Chair: Ms. Wolfrath or Mr. LePera, who wants to jump in?

Ms. Wolfrath, go ahead.

Ms. June Wolfrath: On the first one, we are advised by our municipality to contact CN via email directly. When I first started to complain via email, they would answer. I have to tell you that in the last few months, they do not even let me know that they have received the complaint, and I never hear back from them. I would say that in the last two months, I have heard nothing.

I am very respectful when I send my email in, and I ask them why the locomotive is shunting when it's 20°C or 30°C, because I know that on their website they explain that at 5°C and below, it must—

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you. I'd like to also give an opportunity to have other responses.

Go ahead, Mr. LePera.

Mr. Jonathan LePera: Thank you, and I thank you for inviting us today.

It's a great question.

If I came across as terse or serious in my speech, I wanted to meet the time limit, not to disrespect the committee.

We've tried everything. I used to be a city councillor in my municipality, actually, for 10 years. When I was on council we met with members of Parliament and we met with CN; we tried every means possible via that route. I have been off council for probably about 10 years now.

We have tried two mediation attempts. We've tried the CTA. You call the CN police and they're very respectful. I've never met a rude police officer yet, and basically you understand they have very little control over the operations in the yard. Sometimes a phone call can fix it.

Thus far, the most productive means of resolution has been Chair Badawey. Chair Badawey has shown leadership I've never seen before. No disrespect to any of you, but one phone call from him has meant that shunting stopped within 10 minutes. That meant that the idling stopped within 10 minutes, but this wasn't consistent.

What's happened is that sometimes it works, but sometimes it doesn't. You have to understand, I am also texting at one o'clock in the morning, or at three o'clock in the morning, whenever, and he gets it. The proof is that Chair Badawey gets it, but those calls go unanswered now. When the complaints go in, it seems to have fallen on deaf ears.

I want to point to last night, in particular. The argument has always been, in Thorold, move the shunting north. There is so much barren wasteland. It's unuseable land that will not impact anybody. I want to point out that this yard was expanded after the city requested that it be relocated, so it's not like an after the fact. We requested that they relocate it, and then I think they went and dumped \$100,000—Mayor Ugolini will have to look it up—and they now say, we can't afford to move it.

I'm sorry, but with \$3.2 billion in profits, this is like us buying a Kitkat at the Avondale. This is about being a good corporate citizen.

Our soldiers did not die at Vimy Ridge for this conversation to have to happen today. It's embarrassing.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Mr. Penn, do you want to add to that?

The Chair: Mr. Penn hasn't joined us yet.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: My next question is again for both of you. Do you have any idea what the cost might be to relocate the yard?

Mr. Jonathan LePera: I would have no idea. We've never gotten that far into the conversation, nor have I been privy. Perhaps Mayor Ugolini might be able to shed some light on that.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you.

Ms. Wolfrath, do you have any comments on that?

Ms. June Wolfrath: I honestly don't know, but I was once told—I can't remember by whom—that it would take about \$1 million. Personally I think \$1 million to CN is peanuts. That's all I have to say.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Again, please do not judge the question I'm asking. It's just to get it on record. This is for both of you, once again. Who do you think should bear the cost of relocating the yard?

• (1640)

Ms. June Wolfrath: I think CN should bear the majority of the cost, but the City of Thorold may have some responsibility.

The Chair: Mayor Ugolini, do you have a comment?

Mr. Terry Ugolini: The city has met with CN multiple times. We've had those discussions. We've talked about moving the yard north, because we think that's a feasible solution and it's probably the cheapest solution. The problem is—and the Port Robinson group knows this very well—the length of trains has increased, and because of the closing of one or two other yards, the amount of shunting done at that location has increased the need in that yard. You have to understand that there's a history here. That yard wasn't as busy as it is now. I think increasing activity in that yard, in a residential area, should never have happened.

Who should bear the cost? CN should bear the cost because they've increased activity and increased the length of the trains. Moving that yard because it doesn't fit in a residential area should be at the cost of CN. I know the city would work with CN, because we have some rights of way and own some property just north. We could work with them and come up with a feasible solution.

However, they have to be willing to make that move, and I'm going to tell you, a big argument they always bring up is that moving

the yard north will affect their shunting operations on the length of trains they can put together. Do you know what, though? Putting together longer trains and totally disrespecting a neighbourhood is not a feasible answer.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mayor; thank you, Ms. Wolfrath and Mr. LePera, and thank you, Mr. Iacono.

We're now going to move on to the Bloc Québécois. Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you have the floor for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We heard strong and very moving testimony today. I want to thank the witnesses and tell them that I, for one, heard them. I hope that we'll have the opportunity to prepare a report on their testimony from today.

My first question is for Mr. Bellefleur. You said earlier that you saw defects on CN's rails again recently and that oil or dangerous goods cars are still passing through Lac-Mégantic.

Do you think that it's appropriate for these types of goods to pass through a downtown or urban area and, above all, that information about what's running on the tracks isn't available?

Mr. Robert Bellefleur: Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

First, these are CP trains, not CN trains. I'll forgive you, since both of these major Canadian companies are involved in this issue.

No, in our opinion, it isn't normal to see a series of 30 tanks of propane gas, sulfuric acid, sodium chlorate and automobile gasoline coming down the Nantes hill, the second-longest hill in Canada, and arriving downtown on a more pronounced curve. The original curve, where the tragedy occurred on July 6, 2013, had an angle of 4.25 degrees. The contaminated area had to be bypassed when the track was quickly rebuilt. We now have an eight-degree curve, and virtually no superelevation. If the conductor doesn't slow down enough on the slope, there will be another disaster in Lac-Mégantic. Once a 100-car train speeds up, you don't try to stop it. It will just accelerate.

It isn't normal to see these products passing through downtown Lac-Mégantic or any other downtown. The products transported are no longer products that people need. These products are necessary for businesses and industries. Normally, they should be diverted to industrial parks.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you, Mr. Bellefleur.

I also want to give you the chance to answer the second part of my question, which concerned information about what's running on the tracks.

• (1645)

Mr. Robert Bellefleur: In summer 2019, we attended a hearing of the Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement, BAPE. We requested access to content information from Central Maine & Quebec Railway, but unfortunately it was confidential.

However, thanks to the placards, you can easily see the numbers and get a good idea of what's going through. I installed a surveillance camera in the trees and I film every train that goes by. That way, I can find out what products are being transported. Anyone with a cellphone or any public authority can easily know what is currently passing by despite the industry's well-kept secrecy.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: I'd like to ask you another question.

As was raised earlier, not long ago CP was saying that it was impossible to meet the deadline announced by the government, which was to complete the rail bypass by 2023.

Recently they've turned things around, and it looks like it would be possible in the end. Do you believe it's possible? If so, how would they manage?

I am told that the engineering plans are not done, Canadian Transportation Agency approvals have not been obtained, and the work has not yet begun. The rest is not done either.

From your perspective, is the deadline realistic? Do you believe it's possible?

Mr. Robert Bellefleur: The coalition consulted with a longtime engineer, and from what he confirmed, at this time, there's no way that the bypass will be built and operational by 2023.

The land has not even been acquired; the whole Canadian Transportation Agency evaluation process is not even done, the plans and specifications are not even drawn yet and people believe that this bypass will be built in two years. So we're very skeptical about that, but the sooner the better.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: I'd like to ask Ms. Bleau a question.

We had you in this week, but we didn't have a chance to talk much. You also lamented the lack of access to information about what is moving on the railways, particularly with respect to hazardous materials.

Can you tell me who has access to information, and when do they have access to it? What information do they have access to?

There is something mysterious about how information is passed on. I understand that some people have access, but apparently not everyone does.

Ms. Isabelle Bleau (City Councillor, City of Boucherville, Comité ferroviaire de Boucherville): Thank you for your question.

As far as the City of Boucherville is concerned, only the clerk is made aware of the products moving on the railroad tracks, which run through a very highly populated urban environment. She receives this information on a quarterly basis, three months after the materials have passed by on our tracks. It makes no sense.

We may have first responder systems, but we can't plan our first response when we learn three months later what has just gone by on our tracks.

The clerk has signed a confidentiality agreement. However, once a year CN sends us a report that can be disclosed to several people about what happened in the previous year. This morning, she sent me what she received in March about what passed by on the Boucherville tracks in 2020, and 89% of the cars contained hazardous materials. That's pretty disturbing.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Bleau, Mr. Bellefleur and Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

We're now going to move on to the NDP.

Mr. Bachrach, you have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I too would like to thank all of the witnesses who are appearing today for their excellent testimony so far. It's evident to me that over the course of these past two meetings we're only just scratching the surface of what is a very important issue for so many people across the country. I hope we get to extend this work and learn even more about what needs to be done.

I'd like to begin with Mr. Campbell.

Mr. Campbell, you're familiar with the reports from the Auditor General and the office of the environment commissioner. When you read these reports, do they give you an impression that rail safety has adequately improved since the Lac-Mégantic disaster?

• (1650)

Mr. Bruce Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Bachrach.

No, and the fact is that these concerns have been articulated going back to just after safety management systems came into force in 2002. There was the 2007 Railway Safety Act Review, and the 2013.... You know, there's been a whole series of reports and reviews by the Auditor General and by other bodies, and the incrementality of improvement is incredibly disturbing.

As I said, what your committee can do in the report is to examine and report on the extent to which this regime, the rail safety regime, is fulfilling its obligation to protect the public. If it's not, I think it should be suspended, and I think conventional prescriptive regulations should be in place until the resources are there and everything is in place to ensure that safety management systems are truly minimizing the risks to rail safety.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thanks, Mr. Campbell.

We've talked a fair bit about safety management systems, but I want to ensure that in this study we're getting right to the nub of the issue. Could you tell us why the way in which the government and the rail companies utilize safety management systems poses a problem when it comes to rail safety?

Mr. Bruce Campbell: In my opening I highlighted a few safety risks that are outstanding and that have been outstanding for a long time. I've characterized the relationship between the industry and Transport Canada as one of capture and complicity, and that's the power relationship between the two. I could go on and talk to you about what capture means, but I probably don't have time in this six-minute session to do that. It is a very serious issue that needs to be rebalanced. The relationship needs to be rebalanced, and I have a lot of recommendations for doing that.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: In your opinion is Transport Canada adequately resourced to carry out its role as the regulator of Canada's railroads and to protect communities and citizens when it comes to the operation of rail transport?

Mr. Bruce Campbell: I heard the ministry in the last session say that it was adequately resourced, but I'm skeptical when I look at what's happened over the last four decades. In the infamous Paul Martin budget, Transport Canada resources were cut by over 50%, especially with respect to regulatory aspects. I tend to be reminded of what Justice Moshansky said when he appeared before the committee in 2017. He was the justice who headed the commission for the Dryden air crash inquiry and he basically said the root cause of the Dryden crash was the lack of resources. He said it remains today as a sword of Damocles, hanging over the Canadian air-traveling public. I believe it applies equally to the rail sector.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: We've heard a bit about fatigue management. This is an issue that is relevant not only for rail communities and communities along the rail corridors, but most specifically for rail workers, the people who work on the trains. It's been identified by the Transportation Safety Board as a concern since 1994. Why hasn't this been dealt with, and what needs to happen to adequately deal with fatigue management today?

• (1655)

Mr. Bruce Campbell: That's the question. As a locomotive engineer, maybe Mr. McPherson is better placed to answer that question.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Chair, could we flip it over to Mr. McPherson?

The Chair: Mr. McPherson, answer quickly, please.

Mr. Chad McPherson: I apologize. I had some issues with the microphone.

I heard "fatigue management plan" and a question about what has been done.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Well, the question is what needs to be done. What isn't being done that should be?

Mr. Chad McPherson: It's about addressing fatigue in the workplace.

As a locomotive engineer, I am constantly fatigued. I tell people that my life consists of a series of naps. The unscheduled lifestyle that we live and the regular train lineups that are erratic and make it hard to decipher when I should be rested are the main problem.

We have train lineups, and then there is fear of reprisal. If I make myself unavailable, which is the right, healthy choice to make, there is a fear of some sort of reprisal or reprimand from the company. In my opinion, a lot of people are going to work tired because they're afraid to be disciplined.

On the other hand, there is some greed involved on a personal level. There are some people who will go to work tired just to make more money because maybe they missed a trip or something. That is part of the equation, too.

However, the major part that I see is train lineup inaccuracy. I'll give you a quick example if I have 10 seconds.

A train was on the schedule for 17 o'clock, which is 5 p.m. It was on the lineup from eight in the morning until about 14 o'clock, 2 p.m. of that afternoon, and then right before its closing, it went back 24 hours. This employee is trying to be rested to go to work at 5 p.m., and now they're not going to work for another six hours. They're rested and ready to go to work, and now they're staying awake for another six hours or longer before the next train comes. That is a continual issue, one that we see daily.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McPherson, Mr. Campbell, and Mr. Bachrach. I appreciate it.

We're now going to move on to the second round, where we have Mr. Soroka starting us off, from the Conservative Party.

The floor is yours for five minutes.

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My first question will be for Mr. McPherson.

We've heard a lot about the difficulties with trains carrying oil and various other flammable products. My question to you, though, is this. In order to prevent these disastrous oil spills, when it comes to transporting oil, could you touch on the safety of transporting oil through rail versus a pipeline?

Mr. Chad McPherson: From my own experience, what we've seen in regulatory practice recently as a result of Lac-Mégantic is a reduction in speeds in CMA limits, in highly populated areas. That alone will not fix the problem. If we're going to continue to transport oil by rail, which I think can be safe, we're going to have to have stricter regulations on maintenance. I see that in what we call "dark territory" where there are not bonded rails, so the engineering services go out to patrol the track.

With the pipelines, I'm not familiar with the process and I couldn't comment effectively on that.

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Mr. Campbell, you mentioned many of the rail derailments and oil spills that have happened. Do you think there would be a better way if we could actually get more pipelines built, to get oil off the tracks and thus have a safer route for our oil products?

Mr. Bruce Campbell: Well, just to remind you, there have been some major oil and gas pipeline accidents. Recently, in Belgium, 24 people were killed.

The Quebec participants will recall that in LaSalle, Quebec, the gas line was destroyed and 28 people were killed.

In Mexico, recently, in 2012, at the Kinder Morgan pipeline, 22 workers died.

Let's not pretend that pipelines are safe and the danger is with oil by rail.

I think there is much that can be done to lower the risks and avoid another Lac-Mégantic, but remember what the environmental commissioner of the AG's office said: that the window is still open for another occurrence.

• (1700)

Mr. Gerald Soroka: My next question will be for Mr. Bellefleur.

Lac-Mégantic was a horrible situation, and we definitely do not want to see that ever again in Canada. You said there's a moratorium now, and that the residents would like to see a stop to oil products being put through the community. Would they be more inclined to have a pipeline now, or are they just opposed to oil completely? The product still has to go through, so which would they prefer, a pipeline or rail?

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Bellefleur: As Mr. Campbell kind of demonstrated, neither method is safe. It's 2021 and we still have single-walled pipelines. When there's a crack, we get a spill into a natural environment. Sometimes it explodes, while other times it burns.

Both methods are not safe. Safety measures need to be reinforced and maintenance staff hired. Maintenance is sometimes overlooked. They don't do many inspections of oil pipelines, or of railways. The problem is there, no need to look any further.

[English]

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Mr. McPherson, you said that rail cars are getting quite a bit longer, and one of the big issues, I know—I hear it from my residents—is trains blocking railway crossings, mostly for emergency vehicles, ambulances and fire engines, trying to get through as a safety issue, but even just school buses trying to get to

work or other people getting to work. Is there something more that can be done? I know they talk about how the rails can't be blocked for more than five minutes, yet that doesn't seem to occur all the time.

Mr. Chad McPherson: I think it's nearly impossible to comply with the five-minute rule. For the switching operations, there is room for improvement on that. Train design can be looked at with respect to where the traffic that needs to be switched is in regard to the location on the train. If it's on the back end of the train, you're going to be on crossings. If it's at the head end of the train you won't be following crossings. For the situation in Regina I proposed a fix to blocking the Ring Road and those 11 crossings by making sure the rail was lined up for that movement to continue moving until it had cleared, without having to be stopped and go at low speeds and block those crossings for extended periods of time.

Shorter trains, realistically, are just not going to be an option for the carriers. That's just where we are today, but as for preventing them from stopping in key locations like highly populated or at-risk areas, I think there's definitely room for improvement on that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McPherson; thank you, Mr. Soroka.

Before I go to Ms. Jaczek from the Liberal Party, I see that Mr. Penn has joined us. I understand that Mr. Penn is just getting off work and has joined us on screen.

Mr. Penn, I'm going to give you an opportunity to make some opening comments if you wish, or do you just want to answer some questions?

Mr. Cliff Penn (Member, Port Robinson Proud): I can do both, Vance.

I'd like to address Mr. McPherson about the rail crossings blocking traffic.

In Port Robinson we're a small community isolated by two roads. There are two points of access here, and your trains cut off both points of access. I had a heart attack in February. With a five-minute rule alone, that's enough to have people pass before the first responders can attend. Beyond that, when we're waiting 15 to 20 minutes at a time we're showing up late for work and then the answer has always been, if you contact CN they'll break the train apart. How do they break the train apart when the trains are that long? I've sat there for 20 minutes. Mr. Badawey can tell you I've sent him messages regarding it, and this is a daily or weekly occurrence. How can we correct that?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Penn.

Are there any further comments, Mr. Penn, you want to make?

Mr. Cliff Penn: I would like to thank the committee for asking me to join. I sent in a statement. I'm assuming that everybody has had an opportunity to read that.

• (1705)

The Chair: Okay. We're just into questions right now, and the next set of questions is going to be coming from Ms. Jaczek from the Liberal Party.

Ms. Jaczek, you have the floor for five minutes.

Ms. Helena Jaczek (Markham—Stouffville, Lib.): Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses.

Certainly, the testimony today and on Tuesday has been extremely interesting. Of course, the possibility of tremendous tragedy, such as we saw in Lac-Mégantic, is there, as well as what we heard with regard to noise, vibration, the quality of life and the blocking of traffic, as Mr. Penn has just alluded to, and possibly emergency vehicles. Of course, at the back of people's minds is the potential that there could be a derailment in their community. We know this is happening across the country.

My questions are for Port Robinson Proud. In particular, we heard on Tuesday some testimony from a representative of the Canadian Transportation Authority. They detailed to us that the CTA would respond to complaints within some 20 days, that they were able to order all sorts of mitigation related to noise and vibration, and that there would be orders served in regard to those.

Mr. LePera, perhaps starting with you, could you please describe your experience in terms of approaching the CTA and the length of time you experienced in getting a response? I know you're not supposed to discuss the mediation itself, but could you just lead us through the process and how it's worked for you?

Mr. Jonathan LePera: I'll tell you how it worked. I blocked myself out of it both times to make sure I could talk here today. I had a hope and a dream that you would some day have a standing committee, that democracy would prevail—not to use that as a cliché—and that somebody would get it here.

It was the worst feeling as a city councillor, because you're in a conflict of interest. You can't sign the NDA, to be in mediation, in case it ever needs to go public. Again, recently, there was another NDA.

I can tell you, based on my conversations with Mr. Bettencourt, the liaison who offered me the opportunity to participate with the CTA, that he had a lot of.... It was a very roses and sunshine kind of conversation—you know, we can pretty much move mountains—but I just didn't believe it. I wasn't willing to sacrifice my voice to be able to do that.

I found it really troubling, Tuesday evening, to hear that the CTA has this much power to act upon complaints, yet we've had two mediation sessions. They shunt through the night like it's a regular business day, which is not allowed. The length of cars is not allowed. There are constant infractions.

I sat for 32 minutes at a rail crossing. I called CN police, who respectfully said they were sorry, and it shouldn't be happening, but

they had no jurisdiction and couldn't do anything. That was 32 minutes.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you.

Maybe I could turn to Ms. Wolfrath as well for her experience in terms of timelines and the responsiveness.

The Chair: If I may, folks, I'm sure you know this but I'll just clarify that an NDA is a non-disclosure agreement.

June, go ahead.

Ms. June Wolfrath: That's right. I can't discuss too much, but I can say that I originally started with an application to CTA about noise and vibration. It took about six months, so it really was a short time. CN and I and CTA came together. We had two sessions. We came to no resolutions. It was essentially listening and saying, yes, that happens, and it has to happen. It was left at that. That's where it's been left.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: In essence, the end result should be public knowledge, surely. There has been no resolution.

Ms. June Wolfrath: There has been no resolution.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Okay. Thank you very much.

How do you feel that the CTA's dispute resolution process should be changed?

Ms. June Wolfrath: I just don't know how to speak, because I am always afraid that I may infringe on the NDA I signed.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Well, if you feel uncomfortable, please don't proceed.

Ms. June Wolfrath: I do feel uncomfortable. I honestly don't know how to interpret what I can say, so I'd rather just not say anything.

• (1710)

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Okay.

The Chair: Mr. LePera.

Mr. Jonathan LePera: Plain and simple, I think you need to give the power back to the government. I think you need to revise the legislation. Just because it's legislation.... Yes, it's grandfathered, but it's archaic, and it makes no sense to me that we have the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to protect our rights on every level, to make sure everybody is equally protected, yet a rail agreement cannot be changed to reflect a changing society.

I would say that this is why we elect leaders. You're all leaders; your people all trusted you, not the other person; they trusted you, and this is your chance to really be a good exercise in democracy.

I want to point something out, though, about this yard that's very interesting. When I moved here 17 years ago—I hope you'll give me some lateral movement on this—I called the city planner and I did my homework. A lot of people were like, “Well, you were dumb enough to move by a rail yard.” No. When the vendor sold, he said that no trains went by. I saw the fence in Mr. Penn's backyard, which is six feet tall, and I called the planner at the time, and I asked if that was going to work. She said, “Based on our sound studies....”

I'm going to paint you a picture here. From my doorstep to the rail line is about 510 feet. Separating us is a rail line that is above grade, that's above the fence. Not only that, in the forest that separates us—and there's not much of it with 500 feet and another row of houses—all the trees shed their leaves in the winter, so there is no noise barrier. It leads me to believe.... CN was consulted in this process before the subdivision went in, as was the city and MOE. CN promised that if their traffic went up 4%, they would introduce more or improve noise mitigating measures.

That tells me one thing. When you look at the layout here, that's conservation land beside the track. Where were they going to put the noise attenuation measures? They never expected to increase 4%. I just connected the dots sitting here. I'm like, why would they have allowed it? They were either going to go by the legislation, or the function of the yard has changed, and they pretty much put a circle into a square hole, and that's how we've ended up at this meeting today having this uncomfortable discussion with you guys and hoping that we can effect change. I hope I shed some light.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. LePera.

Thank you, Ms. Jaczek.

We're now going to move on to the Bloc Québécois for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you have the floor.

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Witnesses have raised the issue of Lac-Mégantic bypass before the committee. They also said that they would like to see the railway rerouted in Boucherville.

My question is for Mr. Beaulne.

I understand that you have worked on track rerouting projects. How did it go working with Transport Canada? Do you believe any improvements should be made?

Mr. François Beaulne (Chair, Subcommittee, Comité ferroviaire de Boucherville): Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

Actually, yes, in the early 1990s, in anticipation of the Soligaz project in our area, which was to bury natural gas tanks in the City of Varennes, the rail cars that were to supply that project were going through the populated areas of our city, Varennes, with highly flammable materials.

At that time, I was the member of the National Assembly for that riding, and with the Quebec government, we'd considered making a bypass route to prevent highly explosive materials from passing

through our populated areas. The federal government said no. This was at a time when CN, which controls the line, had not yet been privatized. You can imagine how much more difficult it is today to get a private company to design and study a rail bypass project.

What I would say to the committee somewhat reflects Mr. LePera's comments that industrial operation conditions have changed. This is not the late 1800s, when a lot of these railways were built and running through towns and villages to supply these communities with essential goods.

Today, quite to the contrary, the Government of Canada, the Government of Quebec and other provinces are working to maximize the use of rail transportation for very commendable reasons, which are reducing greenhouse gases and other environmental considerations.

I feel it's now time for the federal government and the Department of Transportation to change their perception of rail relocation projects to a preventative perspective rather than *ex post facto*, as was the case in Lac-Mégantic.

If rail is to play an increasingly important role in the transportation of hazardous materials, the federal government needs to be more receptive to plans to relocate railway lines in populated areas.

• (1715)

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Beaulne, and thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

We're now going to move on to the NDP.

Mr. Bachrach, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I have a question for Mr. Bellefleur.

You cited in your opening remarks the increased number of rail accidents. Industry representatives at our committee have said that the number of accidents per kilometre travelled by train has actually gone down.

From the perspective of a community that has been profoundly affected by a rail disaster, does this claim give you any comfort?

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Bellefleur: The industry may well have its version of the facts and its arguments, but I'm talking about the report by the Transportation Safety Board of Canada, TSB, which confirms that there has been a 42% increase in the number of accidents in the past 10 years. It's not me saying it, it's an independent agency that's quite serious and well informed.

Certainly, a change in volume can also lead to more or fewer accidents, depending on the year, but the fact remains that before 2012, we didn't transport oil and gas on the railways. There were no block trains. They were hauling freight and they only had a few tank cars with gasoline, oil and sulfuric acid. So when they had a derailment, it was much less harmful. Today, it's the advent of these infamous block trains that is a big problem.

[English]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you.

Mr. Bellefleur, I would like to read a sentence from the Auditor General's report on her recent follow-up audit on rail safety. Rather, it's from her presentation on April 13 at the transport committee. The Auditor General said:

Overall, we found that eight years later, the department had yet to fully address our recommendations and that, in fact, there was still much to do to improve the oversight of rail safety in Canada.

How does hearing that make you feel?

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Bellefleur: For the people of Lac-Mégantic, it really feels like a slap in the face. They experienced one of the worst tragedies and nothing has really changed. What the Auditor General is telling us, and she confirms it in her latest report, is that the incident in Lac-Mégantic could happen again somewhere else. The conditions that led to it are still in place.

That's why, on July 6, 2021, we're holding a demonstration in Lac-Mégantic on the railroad tracks to show that we are against oil being transported through our town again.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bellefleur. Thank you, Mr. Bachrach.

We're now going to move on to the Conservative Party.

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

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

My questions are for Mr. McPherson of the Teamsters union.

Earlier, Mr. McPherson, you mentioned that you had some plans about alleviating the problem of blocked crossings at the Ring Road in Regina. I was wondering if you would be willing to elaborate on these plans, because I'm sure that's one problem people in Regina would love to have addressed.

• (1720)

Mr. Chad McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Kram, for the opportunity to speak to it.

It is so simple it's almost laughable. What happens when that train stops and is occupying the Ring Road and all of those other crossings that we're talking about is that a series of about four manual hand-operated switches need to be aligned. Depending on where they rode that train through, if they're aligned in advance, that train can keep rolling through. Now the speed through that territory is about 10 miles an hour. When you have a train two miles long, it is going to occupy that, but at least it's moving. When it stops, that's when the dangers occur, because we have people crawling through with the pedestrian crossings there.

The fix to that problem in itself is simple and I've proposed this. I'm a health and safety representative and a co-chair for the Sask south health and safety committee; I've proposed this on numerous occasions and have yet to see it implemented.

Mr. Michael Kram: Mr. McPherson, you presented these plans to whom: the city of Regina, the railway companies, or who was it?

Mr. Chad McPherson: I presented the solution to our local management and the superintendent, the general manager of the division, and it was agreed upon. We operate on a bulletin. An information bulletin would be released saying how we're going to operate through that territory. That has yet to happen.

The Chair: Just for clarification, Mr. McPherson, do you mean the superintendent of CN Rail?

Mr. Chad McPherson: For CP Rail.

The Chair: CP Rail. Okay, thank you.

Mr. Kram.

Mr. Michael Kram: Thank you.

Mr. McPherson, you identified four broad areas of concern that the Teamsters have: blocked crossings, emergency response procedures, new hires and rest periods. I was wondering if you could tell the committee which one of these issues is your greatest concern and why.

Mr. Chad McPherson: The Teamsters' biggest concern has always been fatigue. As I mentioned earlier, the inaccuracies of train lineups are one of the greatest causes of rail fatigue. As I alluded to earlier, many are faced with a decision to go to work tired, which is heavily influenced by fear of reprisal from the employer. Mandatory eight-hour broadcast of crew starts is going to help. We need more information so that we can be better prepared to go to work. The employer needs to cease disciplinary action. We are governed by.... We have to be fit and rested prior to.... We work in a safety critical position. When we make mistakes, they're not paper cuts. We don't hit the backspace. We see major tragedies and major incidents happen. These often result in fatalities, and fatigue is a major component in that.

Going back to Lac-Mégantic, that happened at approximately two in the morning. If you ask me, I would question fatigue.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Berthold, go ahead.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, the interpreter is saying that he's having a lot of trouble interpreting Mr. McPherson because of interference in French.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Berthold.

Mr. McPherson, if you could get that mike a bit closer to your mouth, we'll see if that helps.

Mr. Chad McPherson: Okay. I received a phone call from tech support about the boom. Maybe it's not working if it's picking up the hardware microphone on the laptop. I'll just try to slow down.

Fatigue in the railway is a major component of train incidents and personal injuries. The new proposed duty-to-rest periods are a major improvement on that fatigue, but the railway carriers need to address the train lineups. When I'm going to go to work, I need to know well in advance how much time I have to prepare for it. Right now, as it stands, if I work at midnight, I'll be phoned at 22:00 hours, or 10 p.m., to report to work, so I have two hours' notice before I need to report to work.

Prior to that, there's a train lineup I can follow that's very inconsistent and often inaccurate. As I alluded to previously, there's a train that's ready to go at 5 p.m. and I'm waiting and primed to be rested for that, because when I report to work I could be working for a maximum of 12 hours. If that suddenly disappears and I'm going to work at midnight for the next train, now I've been awake and rested to go since 5 p.m. and I could be awake for an additional 12 hours.

Fatigue science has proven that 17 hours of wakefulness is equivalent to a .02 blood alcohol content and it increases exponentially after that.

• (1725)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McPherson and Mr. Kram.

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

Ms. Martinez Ferrada, you have the floor for five minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Hochelaga, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is for Mr. Campbell.

Recently, in the newspaper *The Interior News*, you said the following:

[English]

The safety of your communities is of grave concern to me, as it took eight years for Transport Canada to act on any of the recommendations that came out of a review of the Lac-Mégantic disaster, and dangerous conditions and rail cars still operate.

[Translation]

Do you wish to correct that statement, in which you claim that Transport Canada took no action in eight years?

[English]

Mr. Bruce Campbell: I don't know what the publication is that quoted me, but what I've said already is that there is a discrepancy between the needs to improve safety, which have been outlined and identified by multiple reports, and the marginal progress that Transport Canada has made.

Just look at work-rest as an example. That has been a recommendation by your committee reports previously and it's still a huge problem. I remember interviewing Steve Callahan, who was an expert witness at the Lac-Mégantic trial, about fatigue management provisions in the SMS. He said they were kind of a joke, because it's a question of the bottom line. Companies can get away with it and they're not taking measures. It's the same thing with whistleblower protection. It should be taken out.

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Thank you, Mr. Campbell.

I understand that perhaps your quote was misinterpreted.

You claim that DOT-111 tank cars carry propane. As I understand it, that is not entirely true. I have had several discussions with officials.

In 2015, Transport Canada implemented an aggressive risk-based phasing out of DOT-111 tank cars. The phase-out schedule has been accelerated twice. As of November 2016, they cannot be used to transport crude oil, but they can continue to transport other flammable liquids until April 2023. Transportation of ethanol and all other liquids continues until April 2025.

However, I am told that the rest of the liquids transported in much smaller volumes are rarely, if ever, transported by block train, that is, in long freight trains.

Do you believe that information you have provided is outdated? What are your comments on that?

• (1730)

[English]

Mr. Bruce Campbell: I would agree with your articulation of the phase-out schedule. It's 2025. They should be completely phased out.

I would note that the—

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: We're talking about ethanol transportation until 2025. As for crude oil, transportation stopped in November 2016.

[English]

Mr. Bruce Campbell: Exactly. As I said, I agree with you, but I just want to make one point, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: I'd like to ask you another question, Mr. Campbell.

According to you, DOT-111 tank cars are still transporting crude oil. Do you have any suggestions for how hazardous materials should be transported in this country?

What other means of transportation do we have?

[*English*]

Mr. Bruce Campbell: I think that's true. That's one way of transporting dangerous goods, and if it's done properly and the risk is minimized, then I'm supportive.

What I'm trying to convey to you is that the actions have not been taken to minimize safety risks. The TSB chair has noted that it wanted the phase-out of these old cars to be accelerated, and she hasn't had a good answer to that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Campbell.

Thank you, Ms. Martinez Ferrada.

We're now going to move on to the third round, starting off with the Conservative Party and Mrs. Kusie.

Mr. Bellefleur, I see your hand up. I will ask that the next speaker recognize you. I can't. I have to allow the floor to go to the next speaker, and then hopefully that speaker will then recognize you.

The next speaker will be, on behalf of the Conservative Party, Mrs. Kusie.

Mrs. Kusie, you have the floor for five minutes.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

I'll be passing my time back to MP Berthold.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Kusie.

Monsieur Berthold, you have the floor for five minutes. Could you keep in mind, with all due respect to Mr. Bellefleur, that he has his hand up?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you.

Mr. Bellefleur, I would ask that you present your comments in 30 seconds. I have a lot of respect for you, but I have a lot of questions too.

Mr. Robert Bellefleur: I wanted to come back to the issue of the DOT-111 tank cars, which I studied a little bit. It's true that they haven't been carrying oil for a few years, but they still carry sulfuric acid, which is much more dangerous than oil and can create a toxic cloud like the one in Bhopal. It did happen in Mississauga, where 234,000 people had to be evacuated.

The DOT-111 tank cars had to be replaced with cars that went through many variations and had a new look. So...

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you, Mr. Bellefleur.

I really wanted to allow you to respond, and I apologize for interrupting. However, I do have two things that are still quite important that I would like to discuss.

Mr. McPherson, I am surprised when you talk about fatigue. Transport Canada has submitted a report to us on fatigue, and according to the department, the fatigue issue is resolved.

Are you aware of the opening and operation of a fatigue centre of expertise?

It appears that the situation has been resolved. However, you're telling me that it is not.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. McPherson.

Mr. Chad McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

No, I do not believe that is the case as it stands now. I know amendments have been made. Currently there are work/rest rules in place that have been amended, but they will not totally come into force for another two years, I believe. As it stands now, train lineup inaccuracy and fatigue are still major issues in the railways. I'm a legislative representative on the Saskatchewan provincial board, and those affect both CP and CN.

The Chair: Mr. Berthold.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you very much.

Mr. Badawey, you were there in 2016 when we produced the fatigue report. It was a priority issue at the time. Changes have been made since then, and Transport Canada tells us that the rules have been changed to help reduce fatigue. That includes reducing duty periods and increasing rest time between shifts, but I think there is still work to be done.

Mr. McPherson, the committee will take your suggestion, because it is indeed extremely concerning, especially when you think of all the damage and tragedies that could occur if conductors and train engineers are not at the top of their game when operating large locomotives, which are getting bigger and bigger.

Mr. Chair, as you know, I have a motion to put forward. I would like to do that now:

That, as part of its study on rail safety, the Transport Committee ask the Minister of Transport to submit to it by June 23 all documents relating to, and including, the agreement reached with the Canadian Pacific concerning the construction of the track bypassing the Lac-Mégantic railway line, in order to reassure the members of the committee on the construction delays of this project aimed at ensuring the safety of the citizens of Lac Mégantic, following the rail tragedy of July 6, 2013, which claimed the lives of 47 people.

The motion had already been sent out to committee members. I only added "and including" after "all documents relating to". That was the only change I made.

• (1735)

[English]

In English it is “by June 23 all documents relating to, and including, the agreement”.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Berthold. The motion is in order due to the fact that we are discussing this. With that, I will ask members if they have any questions. I see two hands up.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, I would like to speak very briefly about the motion to explain why we need to introduce this motion, and to give committee members some context.

[English]

The Chair: Absolutely, Mr. Berthold. You can have all the time you need.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I had the opportunity this week to speak with the mayor of Lac-Mégantic. She would have liked to be here, but unfortunately she was already busy. A public information meeting is being held tonight for the people of Lac-Mégantic, about the acquisition process and the bypass. On her behalf, I'm therefore giving you that information.

I have also had the opportunity to speak with officials from Canadian Pacific who made this deal. We asked them for a copy of the agreement, and while they had no objection to giving it to committee members, they told us that it was the government's decision.

We have been working with the Parliamentary Secretary and the newly appointed Minister of Transportation, who are handling the bypass and working to secure the commitments needed to get the project done on time. I applaud their work in that regard. However, the timelines are extremely tight and we want to see this commitment to complete the bypass by 2023. We believe that making this agreement between Canadian Pacific and Transport Canada public on the completion of this project would be as transparent as possible for the people of Lac-Mégantic who suffered this tragedy.

I urge committee members to adopt this motion in support of transparency and to support the timely completion of the bypass as promised.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Berthold.

I'm now going to move to Ms. Martinez Ferrada.

Ms. Martinez Ferrada, the floor is yours.

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am very surprised. As I have said on a number of occasions, both publicly and to several individuals, there will be a public information session for landowners today. It is specifically to start the land acquisition process, which is an important phase in the plan-

ning for the bypass and in the construction of the bypass itself. I specifically told the mayors of Lac-Mégantic, Nantes and Frontenac about it. We have met with them on a number of occasions and I met with them myself as recently as last week.

I am a little surprised by my colleague's action at the committee today, right in front of the witnesses with whom we must still have discussions and to whom we still want to put questions. We were not even given the chance to finish the third round of questions. These witnesses certainly still have a lot to tell us. As I have repeated on a number of occasions, the accelerated timeframe we have provided has steps that have been made public.

I feel that my colleague will understand that, in any agreement—and this is one of the difficulties—there is often commercial information that may be sensitive and that a company, in this case Canadian Pacific, CP, would prefer to keep confidential. I am really very surprised to hear my colleague speaking in CP's name. I might perhaps have asked CP itself to tell us that it has no problem with this agreement being made public. I'm not sure whether its shareholders, its employees or its suppliers would even agree with CP.

In negotiations that a government as responsible as ours is conducting with those involved, a rigorous process of confidentiality must be maintained with some aspects of the negotiations. The proposal that has been put to us makes me very uncomfortable. Instead, I would like to propose that he meet with Transport Canada, so that he can be reassured as to the plan, he can be shown exactly what the mayors and all the landowners have been shown, and that he can be given the public timeframe. I would also invite him to visit the Transport Canada website to see all the information and all the steps that have been made public, so that we can talk about the timeframe in more detail. Releasing an agreement like this to the public, without Transport Canada, for one, having vetted what can be made public, would be irresponsible on our part.

I see that other members want to speak, so I can come back to this issue if need be.

I propose that we first finish the evening with the guests we have with us. They surely have more to tell us. Let's all finish our questions. Afterwards, we can discuss the significance of my colleague's motion with him. I feel that we both can agree on the timeline that must be followed.

Let's see the results of the public information sessions that are being held. Mr. Chair, at 7:00 p.m. this evening, there is a meeting that I will be attending. I feel that my colleague would be much more inclined to work with us rather than to try a purely political move today, at this committee and in front of our witnesses. It is a move that really has nothing to do with the issue and the study we are conducting today.

I'll let my colleagues comment.

• (1740)

Mr. Luc Berthold: A point of order, Mr. Chair.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Martinez Ferrada.

Go ahead, Mr. Berthold.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Since I am joining you from outside, you did not see my hand up. I put it up right after I spoke. Could you just add me to the list of those who want to speak?

[English]

The Chair: I didn't see you. I'm sorry.

Thank you, Mr. Berthold.

Ms. Martinez Ferrada, was that an amendment you were putting forward, or just a suggestion?

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Mr. Chair, I think that some members want to comment. I will let them express their opinions on my colleague's motion and I will put my name on the list again.

[English]

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Ms. Martinez Ferrada.

Ms. Jaczek, you have the floor.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Chair.

Obviously we understand that Monsieur Berthold is interested in transparency. I would hope, from what parliamentary secretary Martinez Ferrada has said about the type of consultation that is going on with the public about Lac-Mégantic, that there is going to be a lot of information available to the community going forward, and the timeline referenced in this motion.... I've been on many committees now—

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: A point of order, Mr. Chair.

At the moment, an alarm is going off where the interpreters are located. Everyone is wondering what to do. Perhaps we should suspend for a few minutes.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Berthold.

Mr. Clerk, can you give us an update on what's happening in the House right now?

• (1745)

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Michael MacPherson): I'm waiting, as you are, to see what the alarm is for. I would suggest—

The Chair: You're not in the House.

The Clerk: No. We normally all receive a message on our emergency messaging system, so it should pop up on all of our devices, although normally, if there is an alarm, we would expect everyone to vacate the building.

The Chair: Thank you, Mike.

Mr. Berthold, is the alarm still going off?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Yes, it still is. Can you hear it?

[English]

The Chair: I will suspend the meeting until further notice.

Members, keep in mind we have a time of 6:04 to adjourn the meeting. I will let you know that in advance. It's because of the resources available to us, or the lack thereof.

I will suspend for a few moments to see what the outcome is in the House.

• (1745)

(Pause)

• (1805)

The Chair: All right, folks, I will reconvene this meeting.

I'll start off with three comments. The first one is to say this: Mr. Bachrach, thank you for bringing this study forward. Obviously, this study is going to have to continue with the next two meetings in the fall months. Of course, for that, the clerk will prep us to make sure we're ready for the first of the two meetings in the fall.

Second, I want to say, members, as this is our last meeting of the session before rising for the summer, have a wonderful, wonderful summer. Take some time with your families. Get some rest. Please, please enjoy it.

Finally, have a great evening.

I will adjourn this meeting. Thank you.

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