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Chair

The Honourable Paul DeVillers

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Tuesday, May 17, 2005

•(0900)

[Translation]

The Chair (Hon. Paul DeVillers (Simcoe North, Lib.)): The meeting of the Standing Committee on Justice, Human Rights, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness is now called to order.

Before we begin,

[English]

I just wanted to say that some of you may be aware that last Friday I was appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, so I will not be able to remain in this position as the chair of the committee. But I had discussions and I think it's agreeable that I chair this meeting. The first order of business of the next meeting of the committee will be the election of a new chair, so on that basis we'll continue.

I welcome the Honourable Anne McLellan, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, who is here with her officials to review the main estimates.

Madam Minister, I'll ask you to proceed. Maybe you can introduce your officials.

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): I will. I'd be happy to do that, Mr. Chair.

Congratulations on your appointment. I look forward to working with you in the days and weeks and months ahead.

It is a great pleasure to be here again before this committee. It gives us the opportunity to review my portfolio spending plans for 2005-06.

Before I go any further, however, Mr. Chair, let me introduce the people who are with me. We have Deputy Minister Margaret Bloodworth; Monsieur Alain Jolicœur, who is president of the Canada Border Services Agency; Jim Judd, who is the director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, better known as CSIS; Lucy McClung, who is the commissioner of the Correctional Service of Canada; Ian Glen, who is chair of the National Parole Board; Mr. Baker, who is head of the Canada Firearms Centre; and the commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Commissioner Zaccardelli.

[Translation]

Mr. Chair, members of the committee, since the events of September 11, the Government of Canada has invested over

\$9.5 billion in strengthening national security, improving our civil defence and our response to all emergency situations, and contributing to international security efforts. But the work must continue.

[English]

In budget 2005 the government reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring a safe and secure society and in meeting Canada's global responsibilities. For example, \$56 million over five years will go to the emergency management initiatives, \$34 million over five years will be invested in pandemic influenza preparedness, \$222 million is being allocated over five years to enhance the security of the country's marine transportation system, and \$88 million will support over five years Canada's work with the United States to increase targeting and sharing information on high-risk cargo. We are building a more secure border with additional funding of \$433 million to enhance the government's capacity to manage the flow of people and goods to and from Canada. The integrated proceeds of crime initiative will receive \$117 million over the next five years to continue the important work of seizing profits and assets from criminal organizations in an effort to combat organized crime.

Our focus today is on how these investments and my portfolio's main estimates will help to protect Canadians. I'd like to give you some examples of how our programs do that.

Let me first start with the National Crime Prevention Centre. The centre demonstrates how we work with key partners across Canada to create and sustain safer communities. Since it was established in 1998, the centre has supported more than 4,000 projects in over 800 communities. For an example, the San Romanoway revitalization project in the Jane-Finch area of Toronto is one of these efforts of the centre. Between 2002 and 2004 this collaborative effort involving the National Crime Prevention Centre, law enforcement, local businesses, and community groups helped to reduce violent crimes, property crimes, and break-ins—all by over 20%. Residents of the community also report significant reductions in vandalism, alcohol and drug abuse, youth gangs, and family violence.

We need more projects like San Romanoway and we need the committee's support for these estimates to make such projects happen.

The main estimates include funding of \$6.2 million for the RCMP's National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre, which links police agencies across Canada to aid investigations of child sexual exploitation using the Internet. In its first year of operation the centre has supported law enforcement to identify 55 Canadian victims through these integrated investigations.

Important progress is being made through the firearms programs to ensure that guns are kept out of the hands of those who should not have them. More than 13,500 licences have been revoked or refused. Police have direct access to the Canadian Firearms Registry database and are using its information to respond to calls, prevent crime, and investigate offences. In the past two years the centre has streamlined the administration of the program, reducing operating expenditures and improving service to Canadians. In these estimates, spending on the Canada Firearms Centre is reduced by 18% from last year, a 59% reduction from 2000-01.

Another priority for my portfolio is emergency management and preparedness. While the new Government Operations Centre is now ready to provide around-the-clock coordination and support in the event of a national emergency, additional funding is needed and provided for in these current estimates to increase staffing, strengthen the centre's capacity, and further modernize the Government of Canada's emergency operations systems.

Our spending plans for 2005-06 also include approximately \$5 million for the joint emergency preparedness program or JEPP, to improve emergency response and recovery capacity across the country through grants to governments, communities, and first responders.

Last year this program provided 413 grants, such as \$44,000 toward the cost of a new hazardous materials emergency vehicle and generator for the district of Campbell River in British Columbia and \$10,000 toward the purchase of a backup generator for the emergency response command centre in Channel-Port aux Basques, Newfoundland.

• (0905)

I am also pleased to report that we have made excellent progress in implementing the national security policy that I tabled in the House just over one year ago. Of particular note is the creation of the Cross-Cultural Roundtable on Security, which held its first meeting here in Ottawa in March and will meet again in Vancouver this month. This Cross-Cultural Roundtable is ensuring constructive dialogue with diverse Canadian communities on the national security agenda.

The Integrated Threat Assessment Centre began operations in October 2004 and has completed more than 50 comprehensive threat assessments to share with key partners in the intelligence and law enforcement communities. These estimates include allocations to build the capacity of the centre and to allow CSIS to increase its capacity in various key areas such as security screening.

The final priority I would like to mention this morning is our collaboration with the United States. We have made excellent progress over the past three years on the 32-point smart border action plan, an ambitious framework for Canada-U.S. cooperation on our shared border. The NEXUS highway initiative has attracted 75,000

participants in British Columbia and Ontario alone. As well, almost 450 carriers and more than 39,000 truck drivers are participating in the free and secure trade, or FAST, program. These estimates provide for more than \$70 million in technology investments to improve border management and to increase the efficiency of border operations through improved maintenance and information technology programs.

The estimates also continue funding for existing programs such as our integrated border enforcement teams, or IBETs. Binational, multi-agency law enforcement units that are targeting cross-border criminal and terrorist activity in 15 regions. We now have 23 teams in 15 regions covering the entire border across the country. The Central St. Lawrence Valley IBET, for example, seized hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of contraband recently, including cigarettes, weapons, marijuana, and ecstasy, and that operation was carried out over a six-month period between October 2004 and March 2005.

Former U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge recently, in a speech in Toronto, praised Canada as an able partner in guarding the world's longest border and as a defender against terrorism, and I quote from Mr. Ridge, my former colleague: "I don't accept the thesis that Canada is lenient or hasn't done what it needs to do to advance their interest and doing their share to combat terrorism. The law enforcement and intelligence community collaboration is excellent".

Mr. Chair, members of the committee, the estimates documents we are reviewing today will finalize a total appropriation of almost \$5.4 billion in funding for the departments and agencies for which I am responsible. They are investments that Canada needs, that Canadians want and expect, and that this government stands behind as necessary, reasonable, and deserving of this committee's support.

I would be pleased at this point, as would any of the people with me this morning from my department, to accept the committee's comments and questions.

Thank you. Merci beaucoup.

• (0910)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madam Minister.

We'll now go to questions of five-minute rounds, starting with Mr. Breitreuz.

Mr. Garry Breitreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Thank you very much.

And thank you to all the witnesses and the minister for appearing. I appreciate that very much.

We have just heard from the Auditor General that over \$5 million was spent in advertising contracts to Groupaction. Included in that was \$330,000 for the RCMP in what she termed an entirely bogus contract. Madam Minister, you were fully accountable and responsible for the gun registry when these contracts were awarded. My question to you is simply, what did you know about the awarding of this contract, and when did you know about it?

Hon. Anne McLellan: No, I knew nothing about the awarding of that contract. I believe the public accounts committee itself, chaired by a member of your party, indicated publicly recently—I think it was the Auditor General or someone who testified before the committee—that those contracts were let through Public Works and the Department of Justice was not involved.

I don't know whether Commissioner Zaccardelli knows anything about the particular contract involving the RCMP. I have no idea.

Do you want to say anything about that, Commissioner?

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli (Commissioner, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): I'm sorry, without further information, I have no knowledge of that contract, sir.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz: The Auditor General... It's public knowledge that it was done, and you have no knowledge of that—

Hon. Anne McLellan: No.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz: —despite what has been revealed?

Hon. Anne McLellan: I know what the Auditor General has said. But as I say, if you are referring to contracts let during some period of time when I was Minister of Justice, I do believe it was in testimony before the public accounts committee, but those contracts were let by Public Works. It's not my department.

• (0915)

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz: Isn't there some onus on you or the RCMP to investigate these things?

Hon. Anne McLellan: In fact, the RCMP is indeed investigating the entire sponsorship situation, and I'm sure Commissioner Zaccardelli could comment on that.

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli: If you're referring to the sponsorship issue, I have testified on all that before the Gomery inquiry, and we have explained exactly what's happened. The RCMP did receive moneys from the sponsorship program. We received approximately \$1.5 million, which we applied for. We put on over 700 events throughout the country. At a certain point, we became aware that there were certain irregularities in how those moneys were accounted for. We did our own internal audit and corrected the mistakes. The Auditor General actually complimented us for taking the initiative to correct those initial mistakes, and we've explained that. If you can be more specific, I'll try to give you more information.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz: Let's pursue that later. I want to bring up another issue as well, and I think this is quite serious.

Last week we received a document from the Canada Border Services Agency that stated, and I quote, "Funds received from the CFC are always less than our annual program delivery costs."

Madam Minister, why would you allow the Canada Firearms Centre—which really has been quite useless, I might add, in curtailing gun smuggling—to shortchange our customs officers?

Hon. Anne McLellan: I think Mr. Baker is able to answer that question.

Mr. William Baker (Commissioner, Canada Firearms Centre): It's been a feature of our budget, year over year, that we provide some money to the Canada Border Services Agency in support of their responsibilities with respect to the administration of the Firearms Act. That relates to the processing of the non-resident

declarations and the collection of fees. The border agency also has ongoing responsibilities with respect to the control of firearms entering the country.

I've discussed this matter with the president, Mr. Jolicoeur, and we're comfortable that today the amount of money being received by the Canada Border Services Agency is sufficient to offset the costs directly attributable to the Firearms Act.

Hon. Anne McLellan: Mr. Jolicoeur, do you have anything to add?

Mr. Alain Jolicoeur (President, Canada Border Services Agency): No. I agree with Mr. Baker that we're very satisfied we're receiving the right amount of money for that part of the cost attributed to the work we're doing on behalf of CFC.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz: According to our figures, it was at least \$2 million short, and it's an amount that has never been attributed to the cost of the firearms registry.

But my time is short. I want to go to another matter as well.

The *National Post* reported that Detective Sergeant Gary Keys, head of the Toronto police gun and gang task force, provided them with the following facts, and I'm just going to quickly go through them: "Police have identified roughly 1,500 gang members in the GTA, belonging to 70 or 80 organizations...." The second one is: "Of the 65 murders that rocked Toronto in 2003, for example, roughly 31 involved guns; 27 of those were gang-related." Also, "Between 50% and 60% of the black-market firearms...are smuggled from the U.S."

More than 10 years ago—on February 16, 1995, Madam Minister—your predecessor, Mr. Rock, made this promise to Parliament: "Surely we must choke off the sources of supply for that underground market. Surely we must reduce the number of firearms smuggled into the country. Surely we must cut down on the number of firearms stolen and traded in the underground. How do we achieve that? Through registration."

Madam Minister, I think it's pretty obvious that's not happening. Why has the gun registry failed? Why has it failed to keep handguns out of the hands of criminals?

Hon. Anne McLellan: Of course, I reject the premise that it has failed in terms of dealing with gun smuggling. It is one of our tools to deal with the smuggling of guns, and we have reasserted our commitment, along with the United States. In fact, our IBET teams, for example, deal with smuggling of guns from the United States to Canada, and vice versa, although I think it's fair to say, Commissioner, much of the gun smuggling is from the U.S. to Canada.

In fact, our IBET teams are addressing the question of gun smuggling. I think both countries, through the Cross Border Crime Forum, have identified gun smuggling as an important shared issue. Of course, organized crime, and the commissioner can comment on this if he wishes, is a major challenge for all of us—for law enforcement agencies across the country and for us as a country, as it is in the United States, western Europe, Southeast Asia, and elsewhere. We work not only here at home but around the world, in partnership with key law enforcement agencies, including agencies like Interpol, to try to stop the flow of whatever illegal goods—the trafficking of guns, the trafficking of people, the trafficking of drugs, all of which are part, unfortunately, of the daily activities of organized crime.

• (0920)

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz: Madam Minister, wouldn't \$100 million go a long way towards combating some of these organized crime activities, rather than putting it into an paper-pushing exercise that does very little about anything?

Hon. Anne McLellan: You and I have had this discussion before, and you and I will disagree, and that's fine; we live in a democracy. In fact, I actually think the firearms program is an important part of an overall approach to safety and crime prevention. I think that has been proven over and over again, and while there are those who can choose to disagree—that's their right—I think it's fair to say that in our gun control program, part of that control is anti-smuggling initiatives.

The Chair: Your time is up.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ménard, you have five minutes.

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Madam Minister, I gave you notice that I wanted to ask you about the Blundell affair. I would like to repeat that I know you bear no blame; it happened a long time before you arrived, and before Mr. Zaccardelli became Commissioner of the RCMP.

You know that I have studied this issue in depth. Moreover, I believe I am a reasonable person. The conclusion off this affair is not at all reassuring about the way the RCMP protects female police officers against sexual harassment they may suffer, nor the way these women are treated when they make complaints.

I will remind you that Mr. Blundell, who was a star investigator doing undercover police work, was always accompanied by female officers who posed as his companions. In four cases there were complaints that he wanted to go farther. In one case, after alcohol had been consumed, he went so far as consummate sexual relations. The female officers claim that in some cases they also had been drinking, which led to the activity. The policeman and the policewoman playing the role of his girlfriend found themselves in a hotel where there was only one room available, with only one bed and no sofa, and both had to sleep in the same room and in the same bed. All the female officers made complaints about the way they were subsequently treated. They were interviewed several times, under circumstances they did not appreciate, such as in a hotel lobby near the elevators, for example, rather than in an office. They were refused copies of their transcripts and they did not meet the lawyer responsible for their cases, and so on.

Finally, the matter was settled. Sgt. Blundell admitted that in at least one case he had touched the private parts of a female officer without her consent, and according to what I have learned about criminal law, that constitutes sexual assault. But he got off with a one-day suspension and no criminal charges were laid against him. Moreover, the case could have gone to the crown prosecutors in the district where Sgt. Blundell worked.

I believe you are the first woman to be responsible for the RCMP. I am convinced that you should be particularly concerned about the protection that should be offered to complainants in the context of an investigation into such a situation where contact between police officers might well go too far.

Once again, I am not blaming you, but I know that the report in response to an RCMP request contained 11 recommendations. Are you currently implementing them? Which ones have you implemented? Have you taken any steps as a result of these recommendations? If so, what are they? What new progress has been made in this file?

Hon. Anne McLellan: Thank you very much, Mr. Ménard.

[*English*]

Indeed, you are quite right. I take very seriously the conduct of those who are in the force generally, but clearly in the kinds of circumstances that you have outlined, we—I know the commissioner is—are all concerned. We expect that members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police conduct themselves to the highest standards and that those with whom they work are treated with respect and dignity at all times.

In relation to the specific situation, I'll ask Commissioner Zaccardelli to answer specifically some of the issues around the recommendations.

• (0925)

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli: Thank you, Minister.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ménard, as you know, we have had discussions on this case. I cannot go into detail but, of course, there have been allegations, which we have investigated. As you mentioned, the file was turned over to the crown attorney, who made certain decisions.

Nevertheless, after I looked into this file, I demanded a thorough review of the RCMP's policy on this issue, and we have completely changed our policy. I believe the complainants in that case are satisfied with the action we have taken. We did an in-depth study.

I agree with you when you say that harassment has no place within our organization. In my opinion, we have taken all the measures necessary to ensure that the policies are very clear, at least. If there ever is a complaint, a thorough inquiry will be held and those responsible dealt with according to the RCMP Act or any other laws applying in our country.

Mr. Serge Ménard: I am convinced of your good intentions but we would like to know what actions you have taken.

For example, would it not be better to follow Quebec's example, and not pass on the results of an inquiry into criminal charges against a police officer to the crown attorney in the district where the officer worked?

Also, you said the complainants were satisfied. I understand, but the whole thing is secret. How can you expect me, as someone on the outside, to know if they were bought off, if the settlement is partly secret? How can I understand that in a case where apparently similar evidence was expected, this evidence was never introduced, and someone who committed criminal assault has no charges laid and that he got off with only one day of suspension?

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli: As I mentioned, Mr. Ménard, there was nothing secret about the fact we presented all the facts to the crown, who made a decision. The crown's decision was not to lay criminal charges. The person also appeared before an internal hearing within the RCMP, held in accordance with the RCMP code of ethics. This procedure was open; there was nothing secret about it. The procedure followed RCMP policy. The result of that procedure is therefore accessible.

Mr. Serge Ménard: Could you at least make the recommendations public, Mr. Zaccardelli, the recommendations that were submitted to you, and tell us which ones you implemented and when?

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli: Our policies are completely open, Mr. Ménard. They are accessible to everyone.

Mr. Serge Ménard: But the recommendations are kept secret, Mr. Zaccardelli.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ménard. Your time is up.

Mr. Comartin.

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli: The recommendations were released; they are in the file. I will consult the lawyers and if I can make them available to the public, I will do so.

The Chair: If that is possible, you could send them to the committee.

Mr. Comartin.

[English]

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you all for being here.

Mr. Baker, I'm going to go to you directly. When you were before us in late October and November of last year, there were projections as to what the Canada Firearms Centre was going to expend and also what revenue they were going to take in. Was that assessment accurate, and in fact has it been carried through, and are the projections for this coming year on line as well?

• (0930)

Mr. William Baker: Yes, they are. We had indicted in the briefings that were held that, as per the minister's announcement in May 2004, we would bring the global costs of the Canada Firearms Centre down to no more than \$85 million. The budget, as set out in

the report on plans and priorities for this year, is \$82.3 million, and I'm very confident that we will deliver the program within that.

A second part of the minister's announcement indicated that the costs of the registration of firearms component of the program would not exceed \$25 million per year. Bear in mind that while many people call it the registry, registration is only a small part of what we do. As for this year, the budget allows for \$15.7 million for registration, including employee benefits.

In terms of revenues, they offset our costs by roughly 20%. In any given year, they're \$15 million to \$20 million, depending on where we are in the cycle of renewals. For the coming year, it'll be offset. Now, of course, revenues are credited to the consolidated revenue fund and not to the program, so they're reported separately.

Mr. Joe Comartin: To follow that through, out of the \$82.3 million to be spent this year, you're expecting somewhere around \$15 million to \$20 million in revenues? So the net cost will be somewhere in the low sixties or high sixties?

Mr. William Baker: It would be in the \$60 million range, or somewhere in the sixties. It's difficult to project revenues from one year to the next, because they are somewhat activity driven.

Mr. Joe Comartin: For 2004-05, what would the net figure be?

Mr. William Baker: In 2004, the budget was \$100.3 million, and the revenues for that year were \$11.2 million, so we were looking at roughly a \$90-million net expenditure on the Firearms Centre. Of course, I'm talking about the direct costs of the centre; there are some costs incurred by other organizations that we report separately.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Right.

Madam Minister, the Federal Court of Appeal came down last week with a decision on arming Parks Canada wardens. I haven't had an opportunity to read the full decision, but it concerned me from the perspective of what it might mean for your department and, Mr. Jolicoeur, for the border agency if a similar rationale were applied to the ongoing dispute over whether our border agency personnel should be armed.

Has that decision been analyzed at all, in terms of what it could end up costing the department and agency?

Hon. Anne McLellan: I'll turn that question over to Mr. Jolicoeur, but you're quite right that there was a Federal Court of Appeal decision that overturned two previous rulings that had in fact upheld the position of the department. As I understand the decision, the court ordered federal health and safety officials to re-examine the issue, so at this point the effect of the decision is not necessarily to lead to the arming of the group of park wardens involved. Alain can correct me if I'm wrong, but I think the court, in essence, sent this back for the health and safety officials to re-examine the issue, because in this department and others where it's relevant, we do ongoing job safety and job hazard analyses and risk assessment in terms of the nature of the work undertaken by our employees. It is quite clear that the Federal Court has ordered those health and safety officials to re-examine this issue in light of the court ruling, and they themselves will be making some further recommendations. Whether or not the recommendations will be in keeping with what has been recommended previously, no one can say at this point.

But Alain, perhaps you can share with Mr. Comartin the review of the decision to date by CBSA.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Madam Minister, just before Mr. Jolicoeur starts, the quotes that I've seen from the Federal Court of Appeal decision were quite strong. They were very critical.

Hon. Anne McLellan: There's no question that there were concerns, I think, expressed about some of the situations in which some park wardens find themselves, which is why it was sent back for further examination.

You're also right that the whole question of park wardens as well as certain CBSA agents being armed continues to be an ongoing discussion. The policy of the government to date has been that these people not be armed. That has been based on job safety and job hazard assessments. But clearly these things can change, depending on the circumstances with which either park wardens or CBSA agents at borders are confronted. I think it is important to continue to reassess the situation in which our employees and officers find themselves, because we do not want to have a situation where people, in serving the public, are in unsafe or unhealthy situations.

Alain, you may want to say more.

● (0935)

Mr. Alain Jolicoeur: Yes, Minister.

You are absolutely correct about what the decision says. I read it quickly, and you're right, it is strongly worded. Basically it's saying that the earlier decision had not reasonably taken into account all of the factors before coming to a decision. But I can assure you that in the context of CBSA and the analysis that was done, we are comfortable that all of the factors were taken into consideration.

So we'll keep on reviewing, but I don't believe it will change our position on this issue in any way. We are confident about the analysis done by a third party, and the other analyses done internally, that basically point to the fact that the current situation is in a sense more safe than one we would create if we were to arm our officers.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Comartin.

Mr. Maloney.

Mr. John Maloney (Welland, Lib.): Minister, you made reference to the NEXUS program. As I understand it, the NEXUS cards used in the Niagara region to enter into western New York cannot be used at the Windsor border to enter into Michigan, and those cannot be used at, say, the Washington-B.C. border. That doesn't make a lot of sense to me, if you apply for it, and I'd like you to respond to that.

The U.S. has threatened a requirement for passports. There's a lot of push-back, even as far as the White House, on that issue, but it's not dead. Will you be making an intervention in the U.S. comment period? In the short term and in the long term, what efforts will be required should we find that the requirement for passports is put through? It would be devastating at our borders for many reasons.

Hon. Anne McLellan: I'll answer the last question, and then perhaps Alain can talk about the situation involving pre-clearance for NEXUS.

You're absolutely right, the western hemisphere initiative, which is a legislated requirement by the Congress of the United States, will require all Americans re-entering the United States of America to have secure identity documents. That was one of the recommendations coming out of the 9/11 commission.

There was deep concern expressed within the United States of America in relation to a situation regarding how licences in particular, but also birth certificates, are issued in the various states of the union. I gather it was felt that those were not secure documents, and that therefore one could re-enter the United States with one of those documents claiming to be an American citizen and misrepresent oneself.

Congress expressed the concern that their borders were not particularly secure as it related to identity documents of their own citizens—hence, in December of last year, what is now called the western hemisphere initiative, because it applies to a wide range of countries in the western hemisphere, including our own. Clearly, Canada and the United States have worked on the basis of reciprocity. Our people move back and forth across our two borders on the basis of reciprocal requirements to date. Therefore, one cannot expect that the United States of America will exempt Canadian citizens from the requirements they apply to their own citizens. We have always worked on the basis that we treat each other's citizens the same way, but one cannot reasonably expect that a requirement imposed on U.S. citizens would somehow not apply to Canadian citizens.

I have talked to my colleague Michael Chertoff, and we are both aware of the potential major problems the implementation of the western hemisphere initiative might mean for two countries like ours, where so many people—tens of millions of people—go back and forth on an annual basis. This is going to come down to how the United States decides to define secure identity documents and what will meet their standard if they continue to require the standard as set out presently.

We will argue strenuously that there are documents other than passports that can meet that requirement—for example, NEXUS and FAST itself. If you're pre-cleared and you've gone through the security checks, those should be, and we presume would be, accepted as secure identity documents. What about our new permanent resident card, for example, which people just applied for and received, say, less than two years ago? Could that be accepted as a secure identity document for permanent residents who go back and forth between the two countries? Then what other documents might be secure identity documents for the purposes of the western hemisphere initiative?

You're right, the President himself expressed surprise when it was brought to his attention that Americans and Canadians might require passports to go back and forth across each other's borders. Ironically, it will be harder and more disruptive for the United States and their own citizens for a number of reasons, including the fact that so few Americans actually have a passport. Canadians hold passports in much larger numbers than do citizens of the United States. Having said that, this could have major disruptive impacts on the free flow of people, and goods in some circumstances, across our borders. Neither Mr. Chertoff nor I want that situation. Clearly, the President and the Prime Minister don't want that situation.

Our officials are, and have been, in contact with Homeland Security officials. I have my colleague Michael Chertoff's reassurance that officials will work closely together to deal with this situation in a way that meets their concerns around secure identity documents, but at the same time, does not provide an unreasonable barrier to the free movement of people across the border. We are very much seized with this issue. Premiers McGuinty and Charest themselves were in Washington and met with Mr. Chertoff on this issue.

• (0940)

Our discussions are very preliminary. We are looking, for example, at whether we might at some point develop a binational standard for issuing drivers' licences in Canada and the United States; every province, territory, and state would require the same kind of background check before issuing a licence, and would have the same kinds of security features built into their licences to make it more difficult to forge or tamper with those documents. I'm not suggesting that will happen, but I think those are the kinds of things we need to look at together to make sure we're doing sensible things to keep people moving across the border.

Alain, do you want to answer the question around NEXUS cards and pre-clearance?

Mr. Alain Jolicoeur: Thank you, Minister.

Indeed, the registration systems for NEXUS are currently local and regional, so a card obtained in one location cannot be used in a different region. It has to do with the way the program was developed with the U.S.

I'm glad to say, though, that we raised that issue with them at the shared border agenda meetings a few months ago, and we've come to an agreement to develop a central registry for NEXUS drivers to make the cards available in all locations. We will also integrate other NEXUS programs into one program, so that one NEXUS card will be available in all circumstances and apply to NEXUS air, NEXUS marine, and to all ports of entry where NEXUS exists. So we are embarking upon that new program.

It's even better than that. We were faced with the challenge of truck drivers and the many kinds of requirements they have to deal with right now, including new U.S. transport requirements for drivers carrying dangerous goods, for example. However, we've been able to convince different U.S. administrations to use the current FAST card for all purposes, so there will be one card for all drivers and one central registry. That's a big plus for all of us.

• (0945)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Maloney.

That concludes the first round. I was generous with the times in the first round, so in the next round it will be no more Mr. Nice Guy; I'm going to have to get ugly.

We'll go now to Mr. Thompson for five minutes.

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, CPC): He does get ugly, so I hope everyone answers quickly. I'll try to ask quickly.

I have three questions for three different people. I'll ask the questions and then ask each person to answer.

To Commissioner McClung, since 1994 I've been visiting penitentiaries, doing critic work for the party I belong to. Drugs in prisons were bad when I started in 1994, and they're worse than ever today, regardless of the zero tolerance policy; I don't even know what that means. There are gang-builders in there, people who are training others to become members of gangs. They leave the penitentiaries to go straight to the gangs they've been trained for. It's a very effective way to build gangs.

I go around and hear comments from the corrections officers on the ground. When I ask how things are going, the one comment I hear more and more is, "Oh, just fine; we do exactly as the inmates allow us to do". That is a common comment.

I was at Bowden Penitentiary during mealtime, when 500 inmates were being fed, haphazardly, at the same time, and five guards were in control—five guards, unprotected, no stab-proof vests, no proper equipment. And I see that more and more.

I understand that the commissioner made unannounced visits to some penitentiaries in British Columbia recently. I commend her for doing that. There's nothing like an unannounced visit to really get to see what's happening. When you announce a visit, of course, it's like when mom and dad were going to be home at a certain time: clean up the house before they get home. So I commend you for doing that.

One inmate who severely beat a guard—I can supply the information if the commissioner doesn't know about it, but I'm sure she does—got a \$20 fine according to the in-prison method of handling that kind of attack, which is getting to be more frequent. I'd like an overall comment from the commissioner on that.

I'd also like a short comment, from whoever is in charge of this, on doing something about child pornography. I can't believe, since 1994, this no-brainer issue is still being talked about ten years later. The attorneys general across the land are certainly speaking out about the cream-puff sentencing. Holly Jones' mother was on TV recently, demanding on behalf of victims that there be minimum five-year sentencing for the possession of child pornography. We are not doing a very good job of fighting this thing, of causing deterrence, and I want to know when we can expect some legislation that will seriously address this.

To the RCMP, many of the officers on the ground in small detachments throughout the country are likewise getting complaints about child pornography. They are requesting that some training take place, because they don't know how to deal with it. It's a new thing that's happening more frequently in small areas. Is there any action being taken on the part of the RCMP to provide some training on how these people can effectively respond to these issues?

Thank you.

The Chair: Ms. McClung.

Ms. Lucie McClung (Commissioner, Correctional Service Canada): Thank you.

The problem of drugs in institutions is, and will continue to be, one of the major problems that we as well as other correctional jurisdictions face. That said, when we look at indicators in terms of violence against staff, violence between offenders, we see this year a marked decrease in major incidents as well as minor incidents.

That does not mean to say, Mr. Chair, that the issue of drugs does not continue to be a preoccupation. It is a preoccupation. Zero tolerance means that you must, on a daily basis, on every shift, use all of the equipment we have invested in. This is continuing to show some indication that rather than having drugs seized inside the institution, more drugs are being seized at the entrance of the institution. Just recently at Collins Bay Institution, a visitor was caught bringing in drugs, which led to police shutting down a marijuana grow-op.

Just as drugs are a very serious problem in the community, the links to the institution are very real. Mr. Thompson mentioned gangs. Gangs in our jails are creating havoc now more than ever. There is recruitment going on. We need to watch the links made in the incarcerated phase between the institution and the community, so much so that at the upcoming federal-provincial heads of corrections meeting, this will be brought to the table. In the provinces themselves, provincial officials, including ministers of justice and crown attorneys, are grappling with this very issue. There is no solution yet. We are actively working to define that solution.

• (0950)

The Chair: Thank you.

Is there a response from the RCMP on child pornography training?

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli: Thank you, sir.

Actually, the government has invested extensively in a national centre that is being run on behalf of all law enforcement agencies in this country, and we've partnered with private agencies to enhance our abilities here.

We are doing some wonderful things in terms of setting up integrated teams in strategic locations across the country. We recognize the global aspect of this issue. Specialized teams have been set up. A lot of this is being coordinated so we can ensure that every place in this country where there is a possibility or an allegation of child exploitation is brought back to this centre. So there's national coordination. Teams are being specifically assigned to do that.

There is also ongoing training to sensitize our members on the front lines to recognize it and to feed that information in. So a lot of money has been invested. We recognize the seriousness of this problem.

The Chair: Madam McLellan.

Hon. Anne McLellan: Mr. Chair, perhaps I could comment.

Mr. Thompson mentioned legislation. I think that before this committee you have Bill C-2, and I know the minister and the committee are working on amendments, as I understand it, that will—

The Chair: [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

Hon. Anne McLellan: Yes, but in fact I believe the minister has expressed his openness to amendments, and those discussions will take place here, around and including.... Pardon me?

Mr. Joe Comartin: [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

Hon. Anne McLellan: Mr. Comartin, you and I both know that is in the hands of others.

But there's a lot of important work to be done. Here's an area where Bill C-2 has been before the committee for a while. I know the minister has evinced a strong interest in working with the committee, especially on the question of sentencing, to see whether an agreement or a compromise can be reached so we can get the legislation out of committee and get it passed, so it will be there to help protect children.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Vincent, you have five minutes.

Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ): Thank you.

My question is for Ms. McClung, of Correctional Service Canada, or Mr. Glen.

When do you think there will be a settlement or serious bargaining with the Correctional Service officers? They have been in negotiations for three or four years now, and there is still no settlement. To what do you attribute this?

Ms. Lucie McClung: I can tell you that serious bargaining is continuing between the Treasury Board negotiator and the unions involved, the UCCO-SACC-CSN. Last week we identified the issues for which Correctional Service could be directly responsible, without any impact on the public service as a whole, and those for which the Treasury Board would be responsible. The national union leader and I believe that this is the best way to make progress.

• (0955)

Mr. Robert Vincent: But do you see an imminent settlement on the horizon or must we wait another few years?

Ms. Lucie McClung: It is really out of my hands, but I certainly want a settlement. You will understand that this is a factor influencing the working conditions. It is obviously a factor we have to consider, and the parties want to have a contract. That is always the best situation.

Mr. Robert Vincent: All right.

My second question is not for you. I could not let the presence of representatives of the RCMP go unremarked. My question is for the minister.

In your opinion, what role should Parliament, its members and its committees play in directing the national police force?

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan: They should have no role.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Vincent: They have no role.

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan: No. You do not want a state-run police force where in fact politics can enter into determining who is investigated, the nature of an investigation, and the resources put toward an investigation. I think we know of countries around the world where there are state-controlled police, and they are not countries we like to compare ourselves with.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Vincent: All right. I will try to be clearer.

What respect do you have for members of Parliament? Do you think they are irresponsible people with no judgment? The vote in favour of reopening the RCMP detachments that had been closed was 187 to 103. Do you think these people have no [Editor's Note: *inaudible*] —that their ideas are irresponsible?

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan: No, but I do not believe that either individual parliamentarians or ministers have the necessary expertise to determine ongoing operational matters, including where you deploy your officers to be most effective in the fight against crime. I do not believe that any one of us, including myself, has the skill and expertise necessary to make those decisions; those are operational decisions that are left under the RCMP Act to the commissioner and his assistant commissioners and others in the field.

Now, committee members can play a very important role in relation to the force, providing oversight and asking questions. You have every right to ask the commissioner or me why a particular redeployment took place, and the public has the right to have that answer, but in terms of determining where you deploy your officers and for what purposes, in my respectful opinion those must be left to the day-to-day operations of the force. They are not matters for members of Parliament or ministers of the Crown, but for the force itself. Ultimately, the commissioner is responsible for defending the decisions that he makes in the daily operations of the force.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Vincent: I might agree that is your point of view, but my own is quite different. You are telling me that the police force is above politics and that politics has nothing to do with police business. The police force manages everything, decides on everything, and has the final say.

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan: No, no, that's not what I'm saying.

• (1000)

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Vincent: My conclusion is based on your own words.

I shall continue in the same vein. History often repeats itself. We have seen what happened in Ontario. Closing the RCMP detach-

ments in Ontario did not have the desired effect. And so now they try the same thing in Quebec.

We understand that you are trying to save \$200 million somewhere; that is what I read in your submission. Why do you want to do that? That is what I do not understand.

I think MPs are able, looking at what has happened previously, to decide whether such a procedure would be good for Quebec. You tell me that Parliament is not able to make that decision; that only the RCMP can decide. You, as the minister, are certainly able to analyze any aspect of an issue. Why should we, as members of Parliament, not be able to do the same? Why is the RCMP the only body that can make a decision about policing?

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan: First of all, I'm going to let the commissioner respond on the redeployment in Ontario.

I want to respond to the comment on being penny-wise and pound foolish. In fact, the redeployment in the province of Quebec was not about reducing resources; as I understand it, we have exactly the same number of officers, and may have supplemented things like IBET teams and other things. It's not about saving money, but about deploying your forces in an operational way to meet the identified crime challenges of a national police force in the province of Quebec. As you well know, Monsieur, the RCMP only polices as a national police force, as it does in Ontario, and unlike other provinces.

I would like the commissioner to respond on the redeployment in Ontario and how that has worked out.

The Chair: Briefly.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Vincent: Before we continue, I would like to sum up. We have heard these words time and again from the RCMP. My question is this: do MPs carry any weight in the House of Commons? That is the question I wonder about. If there was a majority vote in Parliament, why does the minister not respect it?

I do not want to hear about redeployment; we held five committee meetings on this issue. I think we have been given all the information about it. This is what I want to know: what happens to a majority vote in the House of Commons on an issue? If, in your opinion, the members elected by the people do not have a deciding vote, is it the Commissioner who holds that power?

The Chair: Commissioner Zaccardelli, you may reply to the question on the closing of detachments in Ontario. Then we must move on.

[English]

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli: In terms of the redeployment that took place in Ontario, I was the commanding officer. We received the support of the senior executive of the RCMP, the minister of the day, and the members of Parliament who were affected in Ontario.

Again, the same principle applied. As the nature of crime and public safety changes on a daily basis, we as leaders of the agencies are obligated to respond to that crime trend or to those changes, and one of the tools we have is the redeployment of our resources. To stay static and not to change would heighten the security threats facing the citizens of this country.

This is simply what we're trying to do. It's an evolving issue, meaning that as the nature of crime changes, we must respond to those changes.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Mr. Vincent.

[*English*]

Ms. Neville, please, for five minutes.

Ms. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I have two lines of questioning, Madam Minister, and thank you for coming.

We've heard much this morning about the pluses of the gun registry. I wonder whether you could comment on the use of the gun registry and what its impact has been.

My second question relates to the national security policy. I know you've tabled a one-year review. I wonder if you would mind commenting on the one-year review. And I am interested in knowing how you envision the role of the advisory committee that you've established for national security.

Hon. Anne McLellan: Thank you. I'll answer the last question first. Then I'll turn it over to Mr. Baker for numbers use—whether it's the police who access the system or whether it's the number of people who are licensed, or registered, and so on.

In respect of the national security policy, you are absolutely right that we issued the policy in April of last year. I tabled in the House, a week or two ago, an update on our implementation, because we think it's important that we are as transparent and as accountable to Canadians as possible with respect to what is happening with the national security policy. It was a first-ever integrated policy. So Canadians have an enhanced interest, not only because of what happened on September 11, but also because they need to know what their government is doing, how we're working with other levels of government and other countries to ensure their collective security.

The document I tabled last week speaks to a very significant amount of forward progress in the implementation of the key aspects of the policy. But it is an ongoing challenge. National security, like regular law enforcement, is never static, and you're always identifying new challenges. As Mr. Judd will tell you, you're always doing new risk assessments, determining what the risks are, where they are, what you need to do to prevent those who would do harm from being allowed to do so, identifying at an early stage those who would do harm, breaking up their networks both here and around the world.

We have come a long way, whether it's the Integrated Threat Assessment Centre.... We were severely criticized by the Auditor

General a year ago for having what seemed to be a voluntary system, in which agencies that gathered intelligence shared it if they thought it was a good thing to do, or if they could afford to do it. Clearly, that's not good enough, and that's why we now have a system with an Integrated Threat Assessment Centre, where everybody who gathers intelligence must bring the intelligence together in one place. It is analyzed and then sent out to the front lines, wherever that may be. It might be sent to a CBSA agent or, where appropriate, shared with other countries. This way we are able to deal with any threat and deal with it in real time.

That's just one example of what we've accomplished over this past year. But it isn't static. We're always identifying what the threats may be and what we need to meet them. Technology is very important in this area, as are well-trained human resources. You need human resources, whether it's in CSIS or the RCMP, as it relates to their work in national security, who are representative of the many communities with whom we work and with whom the communities feel a sense of comfort. That's an ongoing challenge.

I had the opportunity just last Thursday afternoon, along with my parliamentary secretary, Roy Cullen, to visit a mosque in the city of Toronto. Gathered there were a large number of representatives from various Muslim organizations, and CSIS was well represented, as was the RCMP and the CBSA. We want to work with the Muslim community so they do not see these agencies and our national security policy as something to be feared, or something that excludes, marginalizes, or victimizes them. We want to demonstrate to them that if we all work together we will ensure a higher level of collective security for all Canadians.

Those are just some of things we're doing.

You mentioned the advisory council. We actually have two. We have the Cross-Cultural Roundtable on Security. It deals with the relationship of our government—my department, Minister Cotler's department—with ethnic communities as they interface with our national security policy. As I mentioned, it has had one meeting. This month it will meet again in Vancouver, where they're going to be spending some time with the CBSA, going to the border and talking to people on the front lines. They are interested in the things they should be interested in, among other things. If you are a Sikh or an Arab, do you see yourself reflected in these organizations on the front lines? And if not, why not?

•(1005)

These are all important questions, but only some of them the Cross-Cultural Roundtable will be taking up. We also have an expert panel, the advisory committee, which serves a different purpose. Its membership will be announced very shortly.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Neville.

Mr. Comartin, go ahead, please.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Just following that up, where is the legislation on the parliamentary oversight committee?

Hon. Anne McLellan: It's being drafted. In fact, you know that I tabled your report and our response to that, in terms of the general framework that we would be pursuing. I have asked that the legislation be fast-tracked and be brought into the House as soon as possible. I must say, this very morning, Mr. Comartin, I'm not sure what stage the drafting is at.

Do you know, Margaret?

Ms. Margaret Bloodworth (Deputy Minister, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): It's still being worked on, primarily with the Privy Council Office, but it is under way, and as I understand it, the goal was this spring, probably June.

Hon. Anne McLellan: So it's close.

Mr. Joe Comartin: I'm not sure, Madam Minister, but perhaps Mr. Zaccardelli could respond to this. We've had, in our end of the country, some significant concerns in the last month or so on the establishment of what you could only call vigilante patrols on the U.S. side, as they've done on the Mexican border. There has been a proposal to do the same on the Canadian border. Obviously we found that extremely offensive, given the number of guns that do come across the border and the security problems we have, not flowing from Canada to the U.S. but from the U.S. to Canada. I'm just wondering if this government has taken any position formally—I haven't seen any—and expressed any direct objection to that to the U.S. government.

•(1010)

Hon. Anne McLellan: We are very concerned. The President of the United States himself referred to these people on the southern border as vigilantes; it was his language that was used to describe them. We are very concerned.

First, we see no need for such extra-legal activity outside that which would be provided by normal border patrols and law enforcement agencies and the CBSA. I think it should be of concern to everyone, as it is to the President, that these groups can potentially.... While I don't doubt their motivation is to help protect, in some way, the integrity of the United States, I think the risk of innocent people, either the members of the patrols themselves or those who they might be pursuing in whatever form, being harmed is enormous, and I would think both the President and the Prime Minister would say there is no need for these kinds of organizations.

We don't have them on our side of the border. These are American groups who have taken this onto themselves. But I think it's quite clear we are concerned about how these people, if they appear on the northern border, will interact with the CBSA and the Homeland Security border patrols. I would say there is deep concern on the part of the U.S. administration. We are concerned as well.

I don't know, Commissioner or Alain, whether you want to add to that.

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli: Certainly, we are very concerned. We simply do not support that in any way, and of course our gun laws are much stricter, as you know, which would prohibit anybody from carrying weapons, even if they were out on such patrols. The

provinces that are generally responsible for the administration of justice are on side on this, but we haven't seen any evidence. I know there's been some talk, but there's been no actual evidence. We're monitoring that, and certainly it would be the wrong way to go.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Madam Minister, we had a meeting with the border caucus on the U.S. side and some of the reps from the House of Representatives on the U.S. side in Windsor a week and a half ago, I think it was.

I'll just make a quick point to you, because I don't know if this information has made it back to you. It appeared to us that one of the more likely cards to upgrade and standardize between the two countries was their social security card and our social insurance card. The problem with the driver's licence is that you're only going to catch much less than 50% of the populace, with children particularly being left out.

One of the points that came out from one of the House of Representative members was that on the U.S. side the social security card is actually issued when the child is born, as opposed to in Canada, where most of the time it's when the youth begins to be employed. That card may be the more productive way to go. It's one they already have, so they don't have to create another step in the process.

I want to go back quickly to the issue of arming at the border. Has there been an analysis done on what the alternative is going to be if at some point—from a health and safety standpoint—you're required to allow them to be armed? How would that be done? Would it be done by the existing staff with upgrading and training? Is it the RCMP or some other force that would be introduced? Has there been any analysis of the costs that may result?

Hon. Anne McLellan: I think Mr. Jolicoeur can answer at least some of that.

Mr. Alain Jolicoeur: We don't have detailed analysis, but first of all, this would not happen all of a sudden. If there was a decision, there would no doubt be a reasonable time to put it in place. The scenario that is being looked at would be to use officers who are already trained to ensure that there'd be police presence wherever judgment directs us to have it, as opposed to necessarily arming the present employees of CBSA. This would have to be discussed in detail with the RCMP.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Warawa, for five minutes.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

For Corrections Canada, the corrections officers should have received the puncture-resistant protection vests. They've been asking for this for years. The government has delayed this for years, leaving these officers at risk. This has been discussed, particularly for the maximum- and medium-security institutions, which are very dangerous institutions where our officers are put at risk.

My question, first of all, for the minister—and I'd appreciate a short answer—is it in this year's fiscal budget that we will have funding for these vests?

•(1015)

Hon. Anne McLellan: The vests have been purchased. They are not worn on a daily basis by every guard. I gather—but Madam McClung can talk more fully to this—that assessments are done on a daily basis as to the state of security in the prison and whether or not vests are required.

Personally—and I have expressed my views on this before—I think the whole question of vests, among other protective devices, is one that we need to revisit. I think—

Mr. Mark Warawa: Minister, I wanted a short answer.

Hon. Anne McLellan: Well, that's the answer.

Mr. Mark Warawa: The answer is that there is limited funding for this year. There's not funding for everybody to have a vest.

Hon. Anne McLellan: I think Lucie has the answer, if you'd like to ask Madam McClung.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Please.

Ms. Lucie McClung: There are vests available right now, as we speak, in every institution across this country. Secondly, the union and CSC have agreed with the specifications, which are going out to contract. Once we receive the vests, there will be funding.

Mr. Mark Warawa: I thank you for that answer. It's a different answer to what I'm getting from staff. We'll have to talk more.

The next question will be on our border and security. I'm not sure who will want to answer this, perhaps a representative from CBSA and Commissioner Zaccardelli.

CBSA is responsible for the crossings. The RCMP is responsible for between the crossings. We've heard very disturbing reports that thousands of people have been blowing through the border at crossings. These aren't people who are crossing with jugs of milk. There is very likely a serious reason for why they're blowing through the border.

We've also had statistics from the border patrol in the United States that there are thousands of people crossing the borders between the crossings, which is an offence. These people are also not crossing because they've gone to pick some raspberries, or whatever, across the border. They are very likely dangerous people.

We have a drug problem. We have illegal weapons. We have smuggling of people back and forth across the border. So I'm very concerned that we've closed the nine RCMP detachments. The philosophy is that it's safer to remove members from those areas and that it's now making the areas safer, where people are crossing illegally.

I would disagree with that. I would like an explanation of how this makes it safer. What's being planned to bolster the borders?

We have some border crossings where we have single officers. We had one in British Columbia where the person died. They were by themselves and not able to get care. We had a female member who was not able to be notified that a potentially dangerous person was coming to her crossing. We have single-member problems.

Our borders are not secure. We've heard from the minister that some have praised the relationship with the U.S., but I've also heard

many people say that our borders are not secure. We have limited funding for this. In post-9/11, it's a big concern to Canadians that our borders aren't secure.

Who wants to answer those questions?

Commissioner Zaccardelli.

Hon. Anne McLellan: I think the commissioner can answer the first question on the redeployment along the border and the policing between border points.

Alain, you can address the whole question on the job, the safety analysis that's done, the single-person border crossings, and so on.

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli: Thank you, Minister.

With respect to the detachments, it's important to understand that most of those detachments were not border detachments. They're quite a distance from the border. The people who were working in those detachments were not there to look after policing the border. They were there to carry out criminal investigations, which are federal responsibilities.

We've taken these people and we've regrouped them in a strategic way. We call them the integrated border enforcement teams, or IBETs. We've strategically located them throughout the country, thanks to the substantial resources we were given after 9/11. Those resources are working in a seamless way with our American counterparts, who have created the same philosophy and the same team.

On both sides of the border, we recognize that we have to do risk assessment based on intelligence. We can't guarantee that every person and every car will be stopped. That's not what we're trying to do. We're trying to identify that by being intelligence-led and having people who are flexible, responsive, and strategically located along 8,000 kilometres to deal with it. That's what we've done.

•(1020)

Mr. Mark Warawa: Commissioner, your responsibility is to secure the borders between the crossings. That's not happening. We have guns, drugs, and people being smuggled across them, and you're removing your presence from the border.

Hon. Anne McLellan: No, we're increasing the presence on the borders.

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli: We have actually increased the presence.

My mandate is to investigate what happens between the border crossings. I do not have the resources to simply hold hands with a number of officers to stop every vehicle that's crossing. I investigate criminality that's related to the border. We do that in an intelligence-led way, where we identify the groups that are using the border or that might potentially use the border.

That's what we're doing. We're locating our people in strategic locations. We took people who actually weren't working on the border, and we've now enhanced our presence, along with CBSA. We actually have a number of other colleagues in local municipal police forces working on these teams, who weren't there before. We're actually working with our American counterparts in doing the same thing on both sides of the border.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will hear from Mr. Jolicoeur, and then we have to move on.

Mr. Jolicoeur.

Mr. Alain Jolicoeur: First, on the second incident that was reported in the paper about a female employee who would have been left in a difficult, dangerous situation, that was not factual. There was no break in communication, and we were not looking after anybody who was a specific concern at the moment. So that report was not factual.

With regard to border crossing and security in general, safety of our employees, we are regularly analyzing that situation and are implementing a very significant program for safety of our employees at the rate of \$139 million over five years. So it's a significant program.

With regard to border crossings, or running the port, more specifically, it is a concern. We've looked at the numbers for last year. Half of those events occurred in two locations, and in these situations we have been in a position to speak to the individual who did it almost every time in those two locations. It's more a matter of confusion than anything else, and we're working on the arrangements. There are two specific sites.

There are occurrences of port running in other locations. We have a procedure in place with police to try to catch these individuals, and they're brought back to the border crossing port. We do have a system of penalties in place that we are reviewing, and we are reviewing the situation. This year we've been able to correct the local arrangement in some areas that made it easier than necessary for people to do that. But I think we are on top of the situation, if we consider that at the land border we have more than 70 million crossings every year, and we have a few incidents like that, where we need the police to catch those individuals. I think we have reduced it significantly and are on track to reducing it even more to numbers that are very small.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Cullen.

Hon. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Minister and the officials who are here today.

This budget requests an additional \$1 billion to deal with national security priorities, public safety priorities of your portfolio, Minister, and that builds on the \$9.5 billion that has been put into national security priorities since 9/11. I know it is the duty of the members opposite to be critical of the government, and they've been critical in the past about the resources that have been available to deal with national security and public safety issues. Now, on Thursday they will have a chance to stand up in their places and support this budget, which will put a further \$1 billion into the fight against crime and the national security priorities of this government.

If I read the papers correctly, Mr. Comartin will probably support this budget, but I know this is a great chance for the members

opposite, the Conservative Party and the members of the Bloc, to put another \$1 billion into the national security budget of this nation.

I'd like to come back to a part of that, which is the \$433 million that will be available to the Canada Border Services Agency and how those funds will be deployed. But before doing that, I just wanted to touch briefly on crime in cities like Toronto, big-city crime. I represent a riding in Toronto, and I know Mr. Breitzkreuz talked briefly on that.

It's interesting, while people tend to think about the anti-gang legislation our government brought in some years ago as being used for Hell's Angels and that, it's actually being used quite effectively in cities like Toronto to break up gangs. In fact, I was very happy to see the funding for the national crime prevention program extended, because it's working very effectively in my riding of Etobicoke North, where we've had some incidents of drug-related gang violence. In fact, in 2004 the violent crime in my riding decreased by some 30%. Now, I wouldn't attribute that all to the national crime prevention initiatives we have going in Etobicoke North, but we do have a number. And it's the old adage, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure", and it is working. I'm glad to see that program is continuing.

Let me come to my question now, Minister. With respect to the Canada Border Services Agency, the \$433 million that has been proposed in this budget, how would that money be deployed to make our borders safer and more efficient?

● (1025)

Hon. Anne McLellan: I think Monsieur Jolicoeur is in the best position to answer that question. But that \$433 million is absolutely key to the Canada Border Services Agency to be able to deliver its core functions and ensure that we have the people we need, trained the way we need them, in the places we need them. And the demands are always growing on the CBSA.

There are always new demands to provide border services of one kind or another—maybe a new tourism venture in a part of Newfoundland, where they're flying in American tourists. Well, CBSA has to have a presence. They've got to somehow be there, and you've got to make sure that the CBSA and our requirements around people coming and going from this country don't impede the private sector, for example, in developing new business opportunities.

Some of these are in remote parts of the country. It puts pressures on the CBSA, but this is the expectation on the Border Services Agency. Therefore, Monsieur Jolicoeur was able to convince the Minister of Finance that he needed substantial new resources over the next five years to be able to meet those core needs of the Border Services Agency.

Over to you, Alain.

Mr. Alain Jolicoeur: Thank you.

There were many elements in the budget for the CBSA. The total actually was around \$600 million. The main one is for \$433 million. That basically comprises three areas. As the minister says, we need additional employees at the land border, and a good chunk, \$175 million, is dedicated to that. There is the job hazard we discussed earlier, which is \$139 million. That is basically to improve the health and safety of our workplace. Then there's a big part for infrastructure integrity—\$119 million. That's basically for the systems behind the operation of the border agency.

We have other areas in the budget. One of them is marine security, where we will be deploying equipment in ports where we face significant challenges in the area of criminality. We also have a very important program, the CSI, or container security initiative, with the U.S. DHS, where we will be posting employees in seven ports overseas to ensure that containers coming to Canada do not present a risk to North America. So we'll be deploying these people. We also have \$36 million for war crimes, basically to ensure that war criminals do not come to this country. Overall it's more than \$600 million.

•(1030)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Comartin.

Monsieur Ménard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Ménard: Madam Minister, yesterday the newspaper, *Le Soleil*, had a story on the misadventures of Pierre-Antoine Thériault, an agricultural science student who was selected on March 31 for a job as an assistant in the Ste-Foy soil and field crop research centre.

Before obtaining this position, he had to agree to interviews about his past, as is now the case for all federal employees, it appears. On May 5, he received a call saying they needed his fingerprints, but that it would cost him his job, since they could not take them until yesterday, the day on which he was supposed to start work. I should also mention that Mr. Thériault had an RCMP certificate confirming that he had no criminal record.

In my riding, Ms. Hélène Renaud had already had several contracts with the Department of Canadian Heritage, who were expecting to have her services again this summer. She also had an RCMP certificate confirming that she had no criminal record. She also applied in March. Unfortunately for Ms. Renaud, she is not the only Hélène Renaud: another person with the same name did have a criminal record.

I have checked and found that other MPs have also had similar cases in their ridings, where people had to wait several months before receiving what they asked for.

You began your speech this morning by speaking about the measures that have been taken and money invested so that, despite enhanced border security, the transfer of goods can be expedited. I am certain that nearly all Canadians accept certain inconveniences related to these security checks.

In that context, I hope you will permit me to ask the following questions. What are your priorities? Can we expect to put enough care and funding into this so that people in Canada are treated as well as trucks?

[*English*]

Hon. Anne McLellan: I think you raise a very important and legitimate point. Depending on the kind of clearance required, CSIS is involved, CBSA may be involved, and the RCMP may be involved.

Jim, correct me if I'm wrong, but it is CSIS that does over 400,000 security clearances a year?

Mr. Jim Judd (Director, Canadian Security Intelligence Service): Yes.

Hon. Anne McLellan: So as you can see, they do an enormous amount of security clearing.

Now, in terms of fingerprints as they relate to employment, I think the commissioner has talked about this before, but he might like to say something about that.

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli: Thank you, Minister.

We do hundreds of thousands of checks. Since 9/11, the request for checks has increased tremendously. The government has given us just over \$100 million to completely automate the checking system. Mr. Ménard is correct that right now in certain cases it does take weeks, and in some cases months. We have a prioritization system to make sure the ones that are most urgent go to the head of the checking list.

When this new automated system comes in, we will be able to have criminal record checks done within 24 hours. We will be able to do all other checks of a lower priority—for example, when a team wants to hire a coach to deal with children—within 72 hours.

We are in the process of it, we have the money, we're making the investment, and we are bringing in the technology that will deal with this backlog. We recognize this is a serious problem and we are dealing with it.

•(1035)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Ménard: Madam Minister, Mr. Commissioner, I practised criminal law for over 27 years before being elected here for the first time in 1993.

I have seen thousands of accused persons appear before the courts; some of them arrested during the night. I practised in an era when computers were very expensive and very rarely used tools. How can you explain that within 24 hours we had received the records for each accused and that in our day we cannot get these checks done as quickly?

You did not really answer my question. Good heavens, are trucks more important than students who need a summer job or people looking for government work?

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli: Mr. Ménard, I will try again to explain the situation.

You are right. In important cases, an answer can be given in 24 hours or less. Still, the current system is manual. People have to look at the fingerprints. That is why we have acquired the technology we are now installing. We want to be able to do that for every request. We are working on it. There is a list of priorities, and criminal cases are the most important. I agree with you. When a police officer or a judge needs an answer, we are able to provide it, but we cannot do that for every request. That is our challenge. As I said, the government has given us \$104 million. We are buying the necessary technology and will be able to give responses in 24 hours, or 72 hours at the most, as I have explained.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Moore.

Mr. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Thank you.

My question is for the minister. I know in the past, when debate about the gun registry was first starting, there seemed to be the perception out there among Canadians that there's almost a culture at the department, whether it was with the Department of Justice or your department now, against law-abiding gun owners and the legal use of firearms. That would include, I would suggest, the Canadian Border Service Agency and park wardens. The department seems averse to allowing law-abiding Canadians to legally use firearms.

My question is on something specific, and I brought this to your attention on April 22 when I sent you a letter. A number of my constituents have concerns that in recent weeks individuals who own a certain classification of firearm that they legally acquired and are legally licensed to own—we know there are non-restricted, restricted, and prohibited firearms—have been told by the New Brunswick CFO, in my case, since I'm from New Brunswick, that they can no longer transport those firearms. Many of them over the course of the summer are planning to go to gun ranges or different competitions to use them.

I know that two of the individuals who brought this to my attention are upstanding citizens, community volunteers, and law-abiding people in every sense. They've taken the steps to comply with the law, but they're being told by the chief firearms officer for

New Brunswick that they can no longer transport their legally owned, legally licensed, and legally acquired firearms.

I know this committee was assured, when we were discussing Bill C-10 and amendments to the Firearms Act, that there would be no real, substantive impact on the rights of firearms owners. Is this a misinterpretation by the CFO for New Brunswick? What's going on at the bureaucratic level that is preventing these people from transporting their firearms?

Hon. Anne McLellan: Thank you.

I was recently in New Brunswick and this issue was brought to my attention by a gun owner, and someone who has worked very closely with us over the years in terms of participating in our user groups and other things. I promised him that I would take this issue up with Mr. Baker.

Mr. Baker, perhaps you could respond to Mr. Moore this morning.

•(1040)

Mr. William Baker: Thank you.

What we're referring to here are prohibited long guns—rifles. Under the amendment bill to the Firearms Act, Bill C-10A, which received royal assent in May 2003, there was a provision that came into effect only in April of this year that removed from the owners—and there are some 6,000 owners of these prohibited rifles and long guns—the ability to fire them at a range. This was part of the design of the act.

I can tell you that notwithstanding that there are, to be exact, 6,400 of these firearms in the country, last year just over 300 requests were received by the Canada Firearms Centre and the CFOs across the country to actually transport these or use them at ranges. Indeed, the opportunity to fire these prohibited long guns is no longer there.

Mr. Rob Moore: I guess, Mr. Baker, and Madam Minister, I was afraid that's what your response would be. You have to understand that you have been assuring Canadians and legal gun owners over the past 10 years that you're respecting their rights. To me, this is akin to someone being allowed a licence to drive an automobile, being allowed to purchase and legally own that automobile, but being told one day that they cannot leave their driveway with it.

My question to you is about a slippery slope. We know that when this came in, Allan Rock said that only the police and the military should own firearms. There are legitimate concerns out there; these are law-abiding citizens, and I don't understand why they can't take these firearms.... Where else are they supposed to use them if they can't go to a legally licensed range?

This is going to beg the question, and I know it has, but I'm bringing to your attention the fact that amongst Canadians and citizens in my riding the question is, who is next? If it's this small group, as you said so at first, is it going to be some other group next who will be told they can no longer use their own legally acquired property? This is a grave concern of mine.

I also want to ask whether it was ever raised in committee that the change through Bill C-10A would have an impact on individuals' rights to use their own property. This is a major concern.

An hon. member: Good question.

The Chair: A brief response.

Mr. William Baker: Certainly.

First of all, I agree with you this is not a question about individuals who are not otherwise law-abiding; this is not the issue here. It was altered in committee well before 2003, when the bill was originally going through the House. This is simply a function of the design of the act.

As the commissioner of the Firearms Centre, I am obliged to apply the act as it's designed. This is not a discretionary decision that was reached recently, but was simply acknowledging the change in the act and the implications of that, removing the ability.... Owners of these prohibited firearms can still use them in limited ways, but you're right, they can no longer fire them on a range.

Mr. Rob Moore: I would suggest that they were not given a heads-up on this. From my take on what the experts are telling me in my own riding, this is an interpretation of the act that bureaucrats are making within your department. Owners were in no way given a heads-up; there was no lead-up to this, or concern among any of them. It was just a case that one day the CFO told them, our interpretation of the act is you can no longer use.... If you live in a suburban neighbourhood and you can't transport your firearm to a range, you're being told you cannot use it. I can't contemplate how else they could use it legally.

So this is a problem.

The Chair: Did you have a brief response?

Mr. William Baker: Just very quickly.

People were alerted to this change earlier this spring, when the minister announced the regulations for Bill C-10A. I acknowledge, though, that owners would have been given just several weeks and that some gun owners would not normally be following ministerial announcements of regulations.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Moore.

Mr. Macklin.

Hon. Paul Harold Macklin (Northumberland—Quinte West, Lib.): Thank you, chair.

Thank you, Minister and witnesses, for being here with us today.

I'm a supporter of the Correctional Service and clearly believe in the rehabilitative goals we have within the Correctional Service. But I am going to come back to one of the old saws I've trotted out before on these occasions, which is that I'd like to know what progress we're really making in terms of literacy, or what progress we're making in terms of meeting the goals we've set in trying to have our inmates leave the institution with at least a grade 12 level of literacy.

I am concerned about the number of teachers who don't seem to be in the system, and I'm also concerned about the methodology of internally funding the educational portion of our rehabilitative process. I know that at one point in one of these sessions, we

discussed the concerns about putting envelopes designated for educational purposes within our institutions. I believe there was an indication that was going to be followed. But I'd like your response to my concern that it appears we aren't necessarily meeting the goals we've set. I'm wondering whether we should even be looking at some form of dedicated budget for the educational rehabilitative portion within our institutions.

• (1045)

Ms. Lucie McClung: Thank you.

I don't have with me the specific situation as it relates to grade 12. Certainly what I do know, however, in taking a look at year over year, is that there has been a decrease of offenders participating in enrolments, and therefore fewer in education. I've asked for a complete review of all programs, clinical programs as well as education programs, so we can assure ourselves that we have a schedule so that transfers or movements of offenders do not interfere with at least a grade 12 education and their clinical work.

There is also the second issue. This is based on the unions' wanting to take a look at whether CSC should contract with provincial authorities for the provision of education or do it in-house, so we can assure ourselves there is a better link between educational services and offenders on the floor. But I will have to get back to the committee as to how to specifically answer your question.

Hon. Paul Harold Macklin: Do you have any indication as to the level of success you're having, or is that what you're going to get back to us on? Although our goals are laudable, I'm concerned that we may be coming up short—that the budget we allocate on the higher-level scale doesn't necessarily translate into a dedicated budget at the local level, and can be used for other purposes. I'm very concerned because I don't see, from my own observations, that the teacher complement is rising to meet the needs of the inmates.

To me, rehabilitation is part of the public safety process and I believe we need to put more emphasis on it. I would hope it could be done within the scope of the budget you're bringing before us. I am very concerned.

Can you give me any assurances that my concerns will be addressed, that in fact we will be able to meet these goals?

Ms. Lucie McClung: What I can assure you is that, based upon the assessment done upon reception, the needs of the offenders are prioritized, so in some instances it would be better for an offender to go through sex offender programming or cognitive skills programming, starting the education process in the institution and pursuing it outside the institution. I will be able to tell you, for instance, that the education is being dealt with not only during the incarceration phase but also during the community integration phase, because we must ensure a continuity for the needs of the offenders. Basing our decisions on that assessment of which should come first, we then prioritize and move the money accordingly.

Hon. Paul Harold Macklin: Is there any way we can do this concurrently, though? It sounds as if you're doing it consecutively.

Ms. Lucie McClung: No, we are increasing our structured use of time within institutions so that the needs are dealt with concurrently. However, in some instances I know for sure that the education will be sidetracked to some extent and then reinforced upon release, because what the offender must deal with on a priority basis is more clinical or psychological needs.

Hon. Paul Harold Macklin: In terms of the percentage of inmates who need this type of support, my understanding is that roughly 50% or more of the inmates, when they come in, don't have much more in the way of education than possibly around grade 6. Is that an accurate reflection of where we're at?

• (1050)

Ms. Lucie McClung: That's right. Functional illiteracy is quite high. Although they may come in sometimes with even a high school education, when you test the individuals, they don't meet the basic functional literacy test. At the same time, 50% show literacy or educational problems, another 80% or so will show substance abuse, and close to 70% will show cognitive deficiency.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Macklin.

Next is Mr. Thompson.

Mr. Myron Thompson: I want to share my time with Mr. Breitkreuz. I don't think it will take us long.

I'll come back to the commissioner of corrections. I know she said that the gangs were a problem in the penitentiaries. She didn't get into the topic very well.

Why would the department of corrections take...? For example, the Indian Posse is being scattered through the federal penitentiaries across the country. Why aren't they collectively kept in one spot? Do they not realize that the more they scatter them throughout the institutions, the more training and the more messaging gets out, and the better they seem to grow? Why are we doing this in a way that makes it easier for them to grow, rather than stamping them out? It makes absolutely no sense to me. Could the commissioner explain to me what's behind that kind of philosophy?

Ms. Lucie McClung: We have close to 50 gangs represented in our institutions. We have 50 gangs and about the same number of institutions. When it comes to the placement of the individual, it's not our preferred strategy to scatter. Indeed, it's the opposite. We will scatter only if it absolutely becomes necessary to protect either staff members or the individual offender for which we are responsible. So scattering, as the provincial heads of corrections will say, is not a good idea. It enhances recruitment, the subculture, and the extension of gangs. We are trying to manage incompatible populations. These 50 gangs are for the most part at war with each other, and therefore cannot be contained within a single unit. We're segmenting the population so that the transfer of knowledge and criminality does not occur. Sometimes it does happen because of individual decisions that one needs to make for security reasons. It was our policy in the beginning of the eighties; it's not our policy today.

Mr. Myron Thompson: I would suggest to the commissioner that immediately, if not sooner, she get some protective gear into these penitentiaries. These people are at high risk with this gang involvement, extremely high, and I wish they would take that into

account and do something for these people who are putting their necks on the line day after day. The stress they are under is tremendous. I'm sure the commissioner recognizes this when she visits these penitentiaries.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz: I want to note, Madam Minister, that you were before this committee when Bill C-10A amendments were being debated. You assured us that these would not materially change anything. You didn't answer my colleague's question about what changed. We were told these were intended to save money, etc., and now we find out that they do change things for firearms a great deal. I'm disappointed you didn't answer that question.

I want to raise the issue of the ports police, which was cancelled some time ago. I don't have time to read some of the quotations from the newspapers, but they make it clear that organized criminal activity—smuggling, drugs, counterfeiting products—are all coming in through our marine ports. I realize you said we're pouring more money into this. You have known about this problem for years and years, and nothing was done. Now you hold over our head that if this budget isn't passed the money won't be there for these kinds of things. You've had plenty of time to address this.

The RCMP do not have adequate resources to fill the gaps at the ports. I read one report that only 3% of the containers entering Canada are checked. We allow \$100 million to be spent on CFC, and yet we let real police and public safety priorities like port security go underfunded. I do not understand this. We've known about this problem for years. Why?

• (1055)

Hon. Anne McLellan: In respect of port security, the commissioner can provide you with substantial detail. But let me say that we have presently in Halifax, Montreal, and Vancouver special teams working in the ports. We will expand that program to...how many new ports?

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli: Well, we're going to increase the complement.

Hon. Anne McLellan: Okay, I'll let the commissioner explain the new resources that are available.

The general point you raise is valid. We always assess the resources we need to protect Canadians and legal business. It isn't static. Can we use more resources? Yes, we can. Can we do more? Will expensive technology make us more efficient? Yes, absolutely. All of that is true. We use the resources in the most effective way possible. We have a wide array of measures and programs, including our gun control program, that help assure the security of Canadians. For me, it's not one or the other. It is working on all key fronts in the most sensible way possible at any given time.

Commissioner, maybe you would like to speak to the issues around the port security. Then Alain might like to add something about the screening and the percentage we screen.

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli: Thank you, Minister.

For the first time in the history of investigating ports, it is really only recently that we have become very proactive in dealing with organized crime at the ports. Historically, with all due respect to the ports police, they were not mainly focused on organized crime, but they were doing other things. Today what we have is a specific team that is at the major ports dealing with it in an integrated way. We don't have just the RCMP. We have the local police, the provincial police, and we have CBSA and other partners concentrating specifically on organized crime. It is a top priority for law enforcement.

We are getting more resources, but I have to admit we don't have enough resources to do all the work that's there. For the first time, we are specifically targeting the ports as a key entry point or a key location of major organized crime activity.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz: Thank you. I know where you can get more resources because of ineffective things.

Can I just challenge the minister on one point?

The Chair: Well, the time is up.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz: She said that she was using resources in the most cost-effective way possible. There is a low-risk activity occurring right now at our border crossings. You have customs officers spending a huge amount of time checking legally owned firearms coming across the border with hunters—450,000, I think, in the last three years. These are low-risk activities.

How can you tell us that you're spending the money in a most effective way? That is not true.

We don't even check to see if those firearms ever leave the country. They come in, and if it's so important that we track them, we never even determine whether they leave or not. We're spending millions of dollars doing that. That to me is a low-risk activity, when in fact we should be tightening up our ports.

I would really challenge you on that.

Hon. Anne McLellan: Mr. Breitkreuz, I would presume, I hope, that you are not suggesting that our border agents would not ask whether someone is bringing a firearm into this country and about the basis on which they're bringing it into the country. I would think most Canadians would be shocked and dismayed if they thought we

were not asking those questions and we were not asking where people were going with those firearms and what their purpose was. That is, I think, a key component of what Canadians expect around a culture of safety and responsibility.

Alain, I don't know whether you want to add anything in that regard.

Mr. Alain Jolicoeur: First of all, we don't know ahead of time what we're talking about so we have to look at it and ask those questions.

In terms of deploying resources from what you call low-risk areas to high-risk areas, specifically the ports, we are receiving four million containers every year in our main marine ports. We have instigated a system called ACI, where 24 hours before a container is even loaded to a ship that comes in our direction, we are informed about it. We are regularly issuing no-load orders because we have concerns with some of those containers. So we have a program in place, and we are doing those analyses using a risk algorithm that is now the best in the world.

If you look at it from the perspective of the number of computations made on each one of those four million containers, we're making close to a billion computations in order to identify containers that would be high risk so that we don't have to open them all. On top of it, we've developed gamma-ray technology in our ports so that we can basically scan them and identify those that we would want to look at more closely.

So our resources are really deployed in a manner that is in line with our risk analysis.

• (1100)

The Chair: Thank you.

I know the minister has to leave at 11 a.m., but I think Mr. Maloney had one brief question that he wanted to ask.

Mr. John Maloney: Madam Minister, this is perhaps a question to you and to Mr. Jolicoeur. Marine transportation security has been expanded into the St. Lawrence Seaway and Great Lakes area. It's a vast area. Part of that will be for the control vessels for boats. How will they be manned? With there be a mix between the RCMP, the Border Services Agency, and the Canadian Coast Guard? Will they be armed? When will they be deployed, and is there an interim initiative to cover that until these new boats are in place?

Hon. Anne McLellan: That's a very good question, and I think probably Commissioner Zaccardelli could answer that.

The Great Lakes have been identified, as you know, by both the United States and Canada as an area of concern, as it relates to our ability to provide the degree of security that we would like. This is why Canada and the U.S. are working together in relation to how we patrol the Great Lakes in a way that delivers that level of security.

You may have heard of the ship rider program, which is a U.S. initiative. We have had discussions with our U.S. colleagues around how the ship rider program might be implemented in the Great Lakes.

Commissioner, you may be able to bring Mr. Maloney up to date on where those discussions are at and on the deployment of your new resources.

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli: Thank you, Minister.

The way it will work is that the coast guard will provide the platforms. They are getting the ships. The RCMP members, the emergency response team, and other members will use those platforms to go out on patrols and do the interventions as required from an enforcement perspective.

Last week we launched a new boat that was built in Nova Scotia. It's an almost \$4-million RCMP boat which we will be using in the Great Lakes, and then it will be going back to the Maritimes next year.

We also have an arrangement with the military. The military are part of this strategic deployment. We have the members of the U.S. Coast Guard who will be patrolling with us on our patrol boats. Also, we will have people on their boats, so there will be a seamless interaction to deal with whatever security risk there is on the Great Lakes. We are doing it now and once these resources are spent we will have a greater presence on the Great Lakes.

We are also engaging the Ontario Provincial Police and other police forces in Ontario who will be partnering with us again in an integrated way so that we maximize our resources at the federal, provincial, and municipal level.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Commissioner and Mr. Maloney.

Madam Minister and officials, thank you very much for being here.

Hon. Anne McLellan: Mr. Chair, I know I speak on behalf of everyone here and for everyone from my department when I say we certainly appreciated your time as chair of this committee. I think it's fair to say that you run a good meeting, a fair meeting, and you've always been very kind to me and to the members of my department, and I thank you for that.

Good luck in your new endeavours.

I thank all the members of the committee for your attention, your good questions, and civility. I've always enjoyed coming before this committee, and I hope to continue to do so.

Thank you all. Merci.

The Chair: Thank you very much. I appreciate your comments.

I'd like to take the opportunity also to thank members for their cooperation during the time that I was chair—I've indicated that I won't be anymore. I thank staff—our researchers; Madame Diotte, our clerk; and the personnel. Merci beaucoup.

Thank you, everyone, and I'll see you later.

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