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—
Chair

The Honourable Shawn Murphy

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• (1530)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, CPC)): Order. Today we're looking at chapter 11, "Management of Forensic Laboratory Services".

We have Madam Fraser, with officials from her department, and Commissioner Busson, also with officials from her department.

A question from Ms. Sgro.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I don't know if you want to deal with this now or at the end of the meeting, but I have a question on whether we were able to confirm the witnesses for our June 6 meeting.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick): My understanding is that this will be dealt with tomorrow at the steering committee.

Hon. Judy Sgro: So we haven't confirmed those witnesses yet?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick): No.

Hon. Judy Sgro: I'm referring to the three individuals who were coming for our three-hour meeting on, I believe, June 6. Have we confirmed their appearance?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick): There's a steering committee tomorrow on that. I'm not sure we're positive on where we're at with that right now. We have no confirmation.

Hon. Judy Sgro: No confirmation from those three individuals?

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Georges Etoka): Mr. Chair, I've been in contact with two of the witnesses, although not the third; nobody knows where he is.

I received the first answer this morning. It was negative. I'm waiting for the second one.

Hon. Judy Sgro: These are the three individuals who are supposed to report here on June 6 at our three-hour meeting.

The Clerk: Correct.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Can you give a copy of that information to the committee?

The Clerk: Yes—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick): Well, it was my understanding that at the next steering committee, we were going to decide what we were doing on that June 6 date. So there hasn't been, I don't think, a definitive decision made on what exactly we're doing on that date. It's certainly going to get discussed tomorrow at the steering committee....

Sorry; I apologize on that matter.

Hon. Judy Sgro: If you've received a communication from any of those three witnesses, can you circulate it to the committee?

The Clerk: Yes, I can do that.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Can you do it today?

The Clerk: Yes.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick): With that, maybe we can get back to our chapter 11 study.

I'll start with the Auditor General for an opening statement.

Ms. Sheila Fraser (Auditor General of Canada, Office of the Auditor General of Canada): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We thank you for inviting us to discuss our audit of the RCMP Forensic Laboratory Services.

I'm accompanied today by Shelley Trevethan, director of the public safety team, who was responsible for this audit.

Our audit was in response to a request from the Standing Committee on Justice, Human Rights, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, who had heard conflicting testimony on the performance of the labs from former employees and current management.

The key issues were the backlog of DNA cases, turnaround times for DNA cases, and the comparison between FLS services and similar services around the world. During our audit, an additional issue arose on the adequacy of the quality management system of the FLS.

I would like to take this opportunity to provide members of the committee with an overview of our findings.

The acceptability of turnaround times depends on the ability to meet standards and on the needs and expectations of the clients of the labs. We found that the FLS almost always met its turnaround standard of 15 days for urgent cases, but that these cases composed only about 1% of its work. For the 99% of its work classified as routine, the FLS is unable for the most part to meet the 30-day target that it has set for itself. For DNA analysis requests, it takes 114 days on average, an increase from 91 days in 2003-04.

The backlog of DNA requests is a major contributor to the long turnaround times. For our audit, we defined "backlog" as "requests for service that had not been completed with 30 days", based upon the FLS target of 30 days for routine requests and the use of this target by other groups. As of March 2006, there was a backlog of 870 DNA service requests, an increase from 660 in April 2003.

Prior to the audit, the FLS stated that it effectively negotiated due dates for each case with police investigators. It relied on its quality of service questionnaire to provide it with feedback, and found that most clients were satisfied with the timeliness of service. However, clients told us that the RCMP rarely consults with them on their needs. Clients have little opportunity to negotiate turnaround times, and they have little say in the number of exhibits they are allowed to submit.

• (1535)

[Translation]

During our audit, the Forensic Laboratory Services were unable to provide us with much information on how they compare with others. After consulting with the RCMP on which labs to select, we gathered information on other labs. The results indicated that the FLS provide average performance in the turnaround of DNA samples and that the top-performing labs — the United Kingdom and Sweden — provide markedly better performance.

Our 2000 audit reported concerns about quality management at the labs. The RCMP responded by creating a national quality assurance program, completing lab accreditation, and implementing a proficiency testing program for staff. However, during the current audit we found that more needed to be done on the quality management system.

Although a national quality management system is in place, in practice there are significant weaknesses in how the FLS define, record, monitor and resolve quality issues. The quality management system was not functioning as designed and could not provide assurance of quality to senior management. The most significant example was the new automated process for DNA analysis. Although FLS scientists raised concerns that the automated process was not finding DNA that they believed was present, it took about a year for the FLS to identify a quality issue with the system.

Finally, in response to a recommendation by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, the RCMP agreed to begin reporting on the performance of the FLS in the departmental performance reports. The RCMP is not currently keeping its commitment to report to Parliament on performance, nor is it reporting to clients on FLS performance.

Mr. Chair, that concludes my opening statement. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this chapter. I will be happy to respond to the committee's questions.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick): Thank you, Ms. Fraser.

Commissioner, we usually try to keep our statements down to five minutes.

Commissioner Beverley A. Busson (Commissioner, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): I'll do my best, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the Auditor General's spring 2007 audit report, which makes recommendations specific to the RCMP forensic laboratory services. I'm joined today by Deputy Commissioner Peter Martin, who is responsible for

national police services; Mr. Joseph Buckle, the director general for forensic science and identification services, under which the forensic labs fall; and, Dr. John Bowen, director of biology services.

I would like to make a brief opening statement.

The RCMP worked with the Office of the Auditor General for over a year on the audit of the forensic laboratory, receiving its first draft in December of 2006. Between then and the tabling of the report in May of 2007, we accepted totally the recommendations and worked closely with the staff of the OAG to ensure that our action plan not only met the report's spirit and intent but that it will also address the recommendations in total.

We believe the activities detailed in our action plan will strengthen the forensic services and prepare the laboratory to meet future challenges. The Auditor General has accepted the action plan as our road map for the next two years. The RCMP has already started to work on various aspects of the action plan and anticipates that significant progress will be demonstrated in our first status report to the OAG in the fall of this year.

The RCMP accepts the Auditor General's definition of a backlog as any routine case not completed within the 30-day target. As this committee is aware, there has been considerable difference of opinion as to what constitutes a backlog, and this contributed to the impression that the RCMP officials may have misled the committee. Using the Auditor General's definition of a backlog, the RCMP agrees that it has a backlog of DNA cases and is taking steps to increase its capacity to provide for more timely results. The RCMP accepts that response times for DNA case work are too long and acknowledges the capacity gap between our resources and the demands for service.

Forensic laboratory services have improved significantly in many areas since the 2000 Auditor General's audit. There have also been considerable improvements to DNA services. However, the probative nature of science has led law enforcement to heavily rely on this value in criminal investigations. Despite the many efforts to improve DNA turnaround times, demands for DNA analysis have increased on average by 8% per year, which far exceeds our capacity to date. This situation is not unique to the RCMP. Most publicly funded forensic laboratories report the same kinds of challenges. We take no comfort, however, in being on par with other laboratories. We are proceeding aggressively to improve our turnaround times.

You have been provided with the action plan documents, which detail a response to each of the Auditor General's recommendations. The document titled "Meeting the Need" provides further detail on our plan to strengthen our DNA services.

I would like to briefly describe three specific projects. First, we recognize the need to address our capacity issue. We're engaged in two initiatives to enhance our DNA services and improve our ability to respond more quickly. During the 2007-08 fiscal year, the first initiative for the labs will be to hire approximately 70 new DNA scientists and create a new DNA analytical unit in our Edmonton laboratory. The RCMP has provided \$5 million in additional funding for these activities.

The forensic labs will also consider and implement other capacity enhancement activities, such as shift work, as required. It should be noted that there will be a significant time lag before the full benefits of this new investment will be realized. It will require up to 18 months in order to recruit and train new staff, and new equipment must be installed and validated prior to the use in actual cases. The time to conduct these activities is necessary to ensure that we maintain the rigorous scientific quality assurance process that we employ.

The laboratory's expertise is in scientific excellence, and the considerable increase in our DNA program provides, as our second initiative, the opportunity to engage outside expertise to review our DNA processes. The labs are seeking an engineering firm with process flow expertise to review processes in the current system and to then assist with the design of new processes to minimize bottlenecks and ensure optimal efficiency.

Improving capacity is not the only solution. We are also engaging the law enforcement community in the development of a new case priority system to better meet investigative and judicial needs. As I stated earlier, we know that our present response times are not satisfactory. Some cases are more serious than others and some require a more strategic response in order to meet investigative needs.

• (1540)

Since last November the forensic labs have been consulting with our police partners to develop a new prioritization system whereby the most serious cases would be identified and handled first. This may seem to be a simple approach. However, investigative priorities are different from region to region across Canada, and the labs are often faced with attributing competing needs between police forces. This is clearly not satisfactory. Senior management in the forensic laboratory has been working with the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, the national police services committee, and various other agencies to develop priority rating of operational files, or the PROOF system, to ensure balance and equity in our priority rating of casework, especially for DNA casework.

At the May 16, 2007, federal-provincial-territorial heads of prosecution meeting in Moncton, New Brunswick, Deputy Martin gained agreement from the representatives to participate in validating proof as well. The first significant result of this new priority will be the development of realistic and reasonable targets for the case response times. Law enforcement works around the clock, and the forensic laboratory will respond by enhancing access by police officers to forensic support services.

Currently, police can only access laboratory personnel from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. five days a week. By the fall of 2007, this will be expanded to 24-7 service, and we'll see a closer integration of forensic science

services with field forensic identification services. In other words, those services that have traditionally been somewhat removed from the crime scene will be brought closer to the crime scene and the investigator's tool box. The intent is to provide a more streamlined service, as identified during our client consultation activities.

Finally, I would like to emphasize again that the RCMP has strengthened and will continue to strengthen its forensic laboratory services. We view the OAG report and recommendations as significant advice, and it is our intent to follow through with our action plan commitments in a timely way.

To this end, the forensic labs have dedicated a senior manager to coordinate the action plan activities and reporting and will install a monitoring function specifically to ensure follow-up in the short and longer term. With the exception of Ontario and Quebec, RCMP forensic laboratories provide forensic analysis to law enforcement across Canada. Clearly, the results they provide to the investigators are significant in helping solve crime and support the criminal justice system.

We understand the need to provide timely, reliable service to support safe homes and safe communities for Canadians. That is why we developed a comprehensive action plan to address the recommendations of the Auditor General's report.

Thank you for your opportunity to provide an opening statement. We're available to answer any questions you and the committee may have. Thank you.

• (1545)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick): Thank you very much, Commissioner.

The first round is eight minutes, and we're starting with Ms. Sgro.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Thank you very much.

I guess I have to say it's nice to see you back again, but it seems as if we see you every week here, so—

Mr. John Williams (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Be happy about that.

Hon. Judy Sgro: —we should be very happy about that, according to Mr. Williams.

We're again dealing with some challenging issues. The whole issue of the forensic labs and the work you're doing is extremely important to Canadians.

That issue of the definition of backlogs or whatever seems to be quite different between what the RCMP's definition of a backlog is versus the Auditor General's. That seemed to be a key part of the differences in how you were looking at things.

Commr Beverley A. Busson: That had been a contention in the past, but in reviewing the recommendations of the Auditor General, we fully agree that her definition of backlog is a viable and workable definition. Under the frame of reference she was dealing with, we accept that definition and agree there is a backlog.

Hon. Judy Sgro: So if you're going to function with the definition by Ms. Fraser, how is that going to change anything within the department?

Commr Beverley A. Busson: We have redesigned how we will deal with those kinds of cases and have put together a new matrix of what we consider A, B, and C cases. The first set of cases will be addressed, the most serious cases, in a response time of between 45 and 60 days. The cases that fall outside that would be addressed within 90 days, and then the routine cases will be beyond the 90 days. And that does not exclude the opportunity to deal with extremely urgent cases in situations where there may be an offender yet at large in a serious or life-threatening situation. To have yet better turnaround times, these would be queued to the front of the queue on a case-by-case basis.

Hon. Judy Sgro: On your resources versus services, do you have the resources required? There have been some increases in the delays, even in the biology areas as well. Do you have the money you need to run your operation efficiently, especially when it comes to something as important as the forensics area?

Commr Beverley A. Busson: I'll let Deputy Martin, if he will, address that issue.

Deputy Commissioner Peter Martin (Deputy Commissioner, National Police Services, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): Thank you, Commissioner.

We do have the financial resources. We have just reprofiled \$5 million into the FLS budget, and those funds are going to be used to bring the Edmonton facility up to a standard where it can take on DNA analysis and hire the additional 70 people.

Regarding the turnaround time and the backlog, I think what the Auditor General is telling us is that we're too slow; we need to be quicker. It's more about getting the cases delivered to the police officers in the field when and as they're required. While the commissioner mentioned the 45- and the 60- and the 90-day scenarios, that's the model we have put together, which has yet to be validated.

As she said in her opening statements, we have met with the heads of prosecutions from across the country. We are now dealing with the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, and we will be meeting with a committee of that association at their annual convention in August. We are going to welcome any input they have, and they may want us to adjust those dates. So while they're presented here today, they're not yet cast in stone and won't be until they are endorsed by the client community.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Regarding the 45-day turnaround time, is there any other alternative for various police forces, from a forensic perspective? Do they have to go to the RCMP, or do they have alternatives to go to private labs?

D/Commr Peter Martin: The other point regarding the timing is that we are still maintaining the 15-day urgent-case grouping, so we will have that. We also accept urgent, unusual requests. So if an agency has something that they would like us to process faster, we will do that. However, when you're talking about the DNA science—and I've got to be careful here—it does take time to run that. I'm sure Mr. Buckle or Mr. Bowen could present an explanation on that. We do not do every type of forensic that's possible in the world today. We do contract some work out when necessary, and we will find the appropriate place for any law enforcement agency if they request that assistance. We also have to recognize that there are provincial

forensic operations in Ontario and in Quebec, and both of those facilities, while they are provincial, do serve the police communities in those provinces.

• (1550)

Hon. Judy Sgro: So they do have the alternative of going to the provincial body?

D/Commr Peter Martin: The Centre of Forensic Sciences in Ontario is set up to look after the Ontario police forces, and there is a similar set-up in Quebec. I'm not aware of their accepting case work from outside.

Joe, do you have anything?

Assistant Commissioner Joe Buckle (Director General, Forensic Science and Identification Services, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): The only time they would accept case work from outside is if in partnership we asked them to give us assistance, and we do that collaboratively as a need arises. But generally speaking, the centre in Toronto and the *laboratoire* in Montreal do case work for their provincial police agencies.

Hon. Judy Sgro: I would think that there would be a fairly extensive amount of demand on your time, as life gets more and more complicated, for more thorough analyses. You've increased the complement of individuals who will be working in the unit by 70?

D/Commr Peter Martin: We are in the process of doing so. We have not hired them yet. We are in a recruiting phase. They'll be made up of some support staff, but mainly biologists. While we can go to a university and hire some very bright minds in the scientific field, the educational facilities do not teach DNA forensic science. We have to teach that ourselves. If it were available, we would definitely not be doing that kind of activity. But that's one of the reasons it takes time for us to ramp up.

Hon. Judy Sgro: The audit also noted that the backlog in biology service requests increased from 663 to almost 200 more than that. The expenditures increased by 30%, and the service requests increased by only 5%. Why did the backlog in biology increase after the injection of the additional resources?

D/Commr Peter Martin: I'll let Mr. Buckle take that question.

A/Commr Joe Buckle: Thank you for that question.

That's obviously information I've been asked to respond to several times in the last few months, and the response is that we injected about \$2 million into all of the forensic laboratory services around the 2003-2004 fiscal year. Some of that money went to firearms, some went to toxicology, and some went to our DNA area. We have seen some improvements in our toxicology and firearm turnaround times, but in the DNA area we didn't, and that has certainly been a challenge for us.

Intuitively, when we work inside the system, we look at it and say, all right, we've seen an increase in demand for DNA cases and we've actually put out more DNA cases in 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006—so we were focused on getting cases out the door, but our turnaround times didn't improve.

During that period of time, as well, we changed our technology and methodology, investing quite heavily in new technology or instrumentation. And we were also charged with a couple of very large investigations, the Project Evenhanded investigation in British Columbia being one of them. Although that investigation was funded by the provincial government, the resources from British Columbia were used for overtime and the equipment and supplies we used to run our tests. It was only in the last year that we actually used some of the resources to hire temporary civilian employees. So there was a drag on our system.

I think the more fundamental issue here is our inability to provide the audit team with data that could demonstrate our ability to respond. As I mentioned, intuitively, we understood that we were seeing improvements and that we were facing some challenges, but we didn't have the ability to provide that data to the audit team.

• (1555)

Hon. Judy Sgro: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick): Thank you very much.

Now it will be Mr. Laforest.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome to all of you.

According to your statement, Mrs. Fraser, the Forensic Laboratory Services told you before the audit that the diary dates for each request are negotiated with the police investigators. A bit further down in the same paragraph, you state that some clients told you that there was no negotiation. There is a contradiction there.

Does that ring a bell for you? It seems to me that this is not the only area where there are contradictions relating to the RCMP. Even though this may not be major, it is still important. It seems to be part of their culture.

Ms. Sheila Fraser: In fact, the audit was carried out in a response to a request from the Justice Committee which had received contradictory testimony from managers and previous employees of the Forensic Laboratory Services. This is what I was referring to. Why were those statements made? This is partly due to the confusion that exists with the definition of certain words. Of course, I cannot explain why some statements were made.

What is important to us is that the RCMP has accepted our recommendations and put in place a plan of action to correct any failings or concerns that appeared during our audit. Now, as we do for all our updates, we will wait to see the results and may carry out another audit to see if the plan of action has been effective.

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest: Still, there have been many audits of those services in the past years. There was one in 1990, one in 2000...

Ms. Sheila Fraser: Audits were carried out in 2000 and 2006.

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest: And, in 2006, there was the testimony before the other committee.

The issues raised in the past have not necessarily been corrected yet. During your audits, you frequently find problems in some

departments and none in others. Do you believe that the backlog is a source of concern? Is it an administrative issue or a technical issue? Is it because the objectives are too high?

Ms. Sheila Fraser: One of our major difficulties, which Mr. Buckle referred to, came from the fact that the labs did not have all the management information that we thought they would have. It is important to understand what created such important backlogs and why injecting more money did not resolve various problems.

The RCMP took some steps and did some restructuring to resolve the problems but we found that this did not produce the expected results. The RCMP agrees with the need to establish some mechanisms aimed at obtaining good management information, at respecting the measures taken and at understanding better the system and the process, in order to find the root causes of their problems.

I am not willing to say that it is only a capacity issue. This may be partly the case but there are also other reasons. The plan of action will at least allow the RCMP to take steps to identify the problems but, of course, there will have to be a follow-up to make sure that they have been resolved.

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest: Thank you.

I have a question for Commissioner Busson. There have been three audits of the RCMP Forensic Laboratories and, each time, there were some recommendations. Each time, the RCMP accepted the recommendations and said that a plan would be developed to implement them. However, once again, the expected results are not here.

This leads me to believe that it is easy for them to say that they accept the recommendations of the Auditor General but that, as a matter of fact, the plans of action are not implemented. As the saying goes, they don't walk the talk.

Do you believe that this time there is a real determination at the RCMP to implement the recommendations of the Auditor General?

• (1600)

[English]

Commr Beverley A. Busson: I'll begin to answer that question, and then I'll pass it to the deputy here for the details, if you don't mind.

First of all, with regard to the audit in 2000, I agree with you that some of the responses missed the target with regard to commitments that were made at the time. We have been dealing with a moving set of goal posts with regard to DNA. We have done a lot of research into why we don't seem to be making a lot of progress with the backlog issue and the turnaround times issue.

One of the things that was stated with regard to Project Evenhanded—which is the Pickton case—was the effect of the new robotics on our turnaround times. Unfortunately, as Madam Fraser has stated, we don't have the managerial data to be able to connect the dots between those two events. I can assure you that it hasn't been for lack of trying. We have taken her recommendations and the action plan that we worked on with that group, and have made an investment of real dollars and real effort, to bring this organization, I believe, to a place where we have realistic commitments and realistic expectations that will be delivered to Canadians.

We have a biannual reporting system set up and an annual report now to Parliament, which I believe will satisfy folks that we intend to walk the talk.

D/Commr Peter Martin: Mr. Laforest, the answer is yes. I think that we've already demonstrated.... I was going to go back and talk about some of the other audits. I think we have missed the boat on some of this. But when you start talking about it, it sounds very "excusey". I think the real answer is yes, we are serious about this.

The fact that we have taken \$5 million and already begun the hiring and recruiting process to get the new facility in Edmonton up and running is an example. And the fact is that each of the audit recommendations is being dealt with—and not dealt with off the corner of somebody's desk. We have hired a senior manager to oversee this on a full-time basis. We are absolutely dead serious about making sure that we employ and report regularly on all of the audit recommendations.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick): Thank you very much.

We'll turn over our time now to Mr. Williams.

Mr. John Williams: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Good afternoon, everybody.

First, I'd like to compliment the commissioner. I think this is the first time that I can recall when before we even have the examination we have two documents from the commissioner of the department under investigation. One is the letter to Mr. Murphy, our chairman, giving a proactive response saying they accepted all the recommendations of the Auditor General, and also the response regarding testimony before the Standing Committee on Justice, Human Rights, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

I appreciate the proactive response, Commissioner. For Canadians, of course, this is a vital part of the crime-solving tool box, and we need to know that it does work well.

The thing that concerned me most of all was the report about the conflicting testimony given to the public accounts committee. Madam Fraser, you mentioned in your report, in section 7.15, and I quote:

...the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness heard testimony from two former RCMP staff members, casting doubt on statements made earlier by RCMP officials before the Committee.

The two former members particularly disputed a number of things. Who were these two particular members, Madam Fraser?

•(1605)

Ms. Sheila Fraser: They were Mr. McLeod and Mr. Hepworth.

Mr. John Williams: They disputed testimony from whom?

Ms. Sheila Fraser: From the commissioner at the time, Mr. Zaccardelli, and Mr. Martin.

Mr. John Williams: If I read what's given to me today, it would appear to be an honest mistake of misinterpretation being proposed by the RCMP as to why the discrepancy occurred. In fact, in the letter to the chair, the commissioner had said: "Let me state emphatically that at no time was there an intent to mislead the Committee."

By the way, Mr. Chairman, has this been entered into the record of the committee, the fact that the chair received a letter from the commissioner? If not, it will be part of the record.

Madam Fraser, do you feel it was, in essence, an oversight for lack of clear and specific guidelines, or do you feel it's more serious than that?

Ms. Sheila Fraser: Mr. Chair, we don't get into trying to understand why certain things were said or not said, but we do believe there was a potential that the committee may have, at best, been confused by the testimony that was given. There's a table, an exhibit, in the report at the very end, on page 31, that sets out some of the statements that were made and what our audit found. I think there was the potential, at least, that the members of the committee may not have appreciated some of the nuances in definition and may have used a more usual form of defining backlog, for example. So that was our concern and I think that was the concern of the committee when they asked us to follow up on these conflicting testimonies.

Mr. John Williams: I noticed at one point in time—I don't have it here—where apparently for the emergency cases being referred and dealt with as emergency cases, the response was that these murder cases would have presumably been designated as an emergency, but that turned out not to be the case. I was wondering with the way the words were used whether or not it was a lack of knowledge by the people who gave it and just throwing out an answer rather than knowing the facts.

Ms. Sheila Fraser: I can't respond to that.

Mr. John Williams: I think we'll leave it up to that committee if they ever want to follow through on the issues of misleading, Mr. Chairman, so I'm not going to go into that any more. What I do want to get into is something I think Ms. Sgro mentioned.

Commissioner and Mr. Martin, does the RCMP have sufficient resources to do the job that Canadians want regarding this particular vital service in fighting crime?

Commr Beverley A. Busson: I've been asked to address those kinds of issues in other forums. Of course that's an answer that's a work in progress as we move forward, but I believe at this point in time, with the processes we have in place, we have the proper resources to fund our action plan and to work forward. There are processes in place to ensure that the continuing funding will be supported in business case submissions, etc., but this is not, in my estimation, a function of a lack of support or lack of budget resources.

Mr. John Williams: You've mentioned the Pickton case already. I know it was a huge demand on the forensic services of the RCMP. While that was ongoing, was there any threat to providing adequate and prompt services on other crimes?

Mr. Buckle.

A/Commr Joe Buckle: During the Pickton investigation we reorganized the forensic services so we could harness all of our resources across the country. As we ramped up the Vancouver lab to handle the demand for the Pickton investigation, we utilized resources and other facilities across the country to do work that would normally have been done there.

So in answer to your question, during that period of time the number of samples we actually processed remained about the same, with the exception of the Pickton case, of course, which was a separate issue.

• (1610)

Mr. John Williams: Okay. So there was no threat to being able to adequately respond to other cases across the country.

A/Commr Joe Buckle: The Pickton case certainly challenged us, but we were able to respond to the other investigations across the country.

Mr. John Williams: Thank you.

By and large, I would hope—given the commitment by the commissioner that this will be a good-news story—this is all going to be resolved. The Auditor General has pointed out that the FLS is not prioritizing cases as described to the parliamentary committee. They were told one thing, and things were actually a little different.

Backlog is a major cause of longer turnaround times in biology, and the Auditor General noted that there had been no improvement on the biology issue. I hope the commissioner, Mr. Martin, and others will recognize that biology has to be kept up to speed as well.

When I read through this, additional resources have not made service more timely in biology. I came from the private sector, ran my own business, and helped others run theirs, and when there is no competition we sometimes find that things like quality assurance fall by the wayside.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick): With that comment, Mr. Williams, you're out of time.

Mr. John Williams: Okay. I thought I could play on this for quite some time.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick): I've been waiting for that.

Next on the list is Mr. Christopherson.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Thank you very much, Chair.

Auditor General, Commissioner, and others, thank you all very much for your attendance today.

Commissioner, let me start out on a positive note. I appreciate the fact that every time you've been here and we're dealing with an issue, I really get a sense that you're doing everything you can to get ahead

of the curve, as opposed to spending time on devising ways to avoid addressing the curve. It's much appreciated.

I made comments about you earlier, and I'll say them while you're sitting here. I've been very impressed with your forthrightness. I believe you are honestly trying to do the best you can to help this committee do its work. It's appreciated and respected. I would hope that whoever succeeds you on a permanent basis takes into account at least how well this particular member has appreciated that approach. Thank you for that.

Having said that, we still have problems. I know for my own part, and I think for some other members of the committee, nothing upsets us more than two main things. One is when we are given assurances that are over the top. Where "it's sufficient and things are okay" would be very reflective of the reality, we get "we're the best in the world, it's not a problem, and everything is excellent". When it's the RCMP, we believe that. We expect it, and the RCMP expects it.

The second problematic area is when we have previous audits. It's one thing for something to go wrong, things to screw up, and people to screw up. Our job is to get on top of it and fix it; the Auditor General does her job, and the whole thing comes together. But when we get audit after audit where issues that have been raised are not addressed, then we get very upset, and we start climbing up towards the top of the house to find out why.

For much of the concern here, at least from me, Commissioner, I know you can't address it, but you have to speak on behalf of the organization. Why the hell has it taken us three audits to get to the point where we're now hopefully getting commitments? We've had commitments before, when things were found out, but they didn't happen. It's totally unacceptable.

As an example of the first one, I want to go to page 31 of the AG's report, which shows a comparison on what has been said in the past. I'm not going to parse words, as we've had to do in other cases, for different reasons. But these things are nonetheless pretty dramatic, and they need to be fleshed out.

I'm not sure who it was, because it's hard to read here, but the committee was told this by either the Solicitor General or the RCMP themselves. Certainly somebody in authority gave these kinds of commitments.

The first one I want to raise is the one in 2004, where it says:

There is no backlog in the system. What we have is cases in process. There isn't one major case that is not done within 15 days. There is no country in the world that meets that standard.

It's not true. We're told in this report by the Auditor General that the United Kingdom Forensic Science Service met a target of seven days to complete DNA analysis of crime scene stains. Not only is it over the top, but it's wrong. I'm not saying it's deliberately misleading, but at the end of the day, it certainly leaves the wrong impression.

On further evidence, a year later, in March 2005, a quote was reported to the committee:

We today on major crimes guarantee and have produced a 15-day turnaround, which is as good as if not better than anywhere else in the world.

Well, again, no, it's not true. Secondly, there was a redefinition so that only 1% of the cases received qualified for the 15 days.

It then says that 99% are routine, including murder and other violent offences, which again takes me to March 2005 and a quote to the committee:

But clearly, murder cases, cases with violence, violent assault cases, those kinds of things would definitely go right into the priority queue and be handled right away.

38 percent of service requests relate to violent offences. The FLS categorizes most of these as routine and does not give them any special priority.

Again, on the same date, this is a commitment from the government and the RCMP:

by 2005 we will have substantially improved our ability to provide world-class service.

What did the Auditor General find? In the 2005-06 fiscal year, the turnaround times for biology requests were longer than in earlier years and backlogs had increased.

I want to hear from you, Commissioner. First of all, do you have any explanation as to why these kinds of commitments were being made to Parliament and were then not honoured? Secondly, why should we believe the commitments you're making today are going to show any better results in two or three years than we've had so far, Commissioner?

• (1615)

Commr Beverley A. Busson: Thank you very much, Mr. Christopherson.

The issues around the statements about our backlog and the statements around the 15 days have been a source of great concern to me and the other people at this table, because certainly in reading the report and in having a look at the review of how those statements came about and where we find ourselves today, it is not a good place to be. We've struggled with the issue around backlog and the definition of backlog, and unfortunately the person who made those statements is not here today to explain what they meant under those circumstances. But I can assure you that we are not arguing with the fact that the Auditor General has found a backlog, and we are building an action plan to improve it.

One of the things that we experienced, as I said, over the period between 2000 and now was a vast increase in the number of intake and uptake cases, which again has affected our results. As was stated by the Auditor, we did not have the defined and refined data to be able to directly reflect the connection between the issues of the effect of things like the Pickton case and the other increase in DNA intake and our backlog and turnaround result issues. So I have a very difficult time answering that part of your question with any kind of certainty.

With regard to the comment that Deputy Martin made, I'll pass the mike to Deputy Martin for him to offer you an explanation with regard to that, please.

D/Commr Peter Martin: Mr. Christopherson, one of these comments was or is attributed to me. Clearly, murder cases, cases with violence, violent assaults, those kinds of things would definitely go right into the priority queue and be handled right away. That is my statement.

When I appeared before this committee—I appeared once before on the FLS issue—there was a request about the explanation for the negotiation process. When cases come into the lab, they either go into the urgent queue or they go into what we call the routine queue. We have murder and violent-type cases in both of those areas.

The question put to me was who decides on that negotiation process, who makes the decision? My response was that it's the case manager at our case receipt unit and the investigating agency. Together, they agree on what the response time is.

An example of that is that there may be a case coming up in court, and 100 days might be too long but it may be required in 60 days, so we program it accordingly. In those particular instances, that case will go to the front of the queue in the routine category. So that's the way that happens.

Now, the Auditor General has pointed out that a small number of cases are handled in this fashion. We were surprised by that. The whole process under discussion for turnaround time has to be initiated by the investigator, but we found out that not a lot of investigators were aware of that. We're fixing that right now. In the year 2005-06, there were over 350 cases submitted in the routine category that were given additional priority within that area.

The other comments...I did not make them, but if you would like me to comment on any one of them I'd be more than happy to.

• (1620)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick): Thank you very much.

It's Mr. Wrzesnewskyj's eight minutes, and we all want to hear from Mr. Wrzesnewskyj.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

There are two items of critical importance when the forensic DNA testing is being done; one is timeliness, and the other one is accuracy.

Madam Fraser, in exhibits 7.6 and 7.9 you deal with both of those. Exhibit 7.9 is particularly disturbing. It deals with a piece of evidence that had 100 spots of blood, but when the laboratory's automated processes were used, no DNA was found.

Then when I take a look at the timelines on the chart you provided in exhibit 7.6, what we see is that in fact with the forensic labs and their processes, we have no assurances that violent criminals are not walking the streets.

Obviously blood was involved in the crime from table 7.9, and when we take a look at table 7.6, it's incredibly disturbing. When we look at the turnaround times, in fact we're endangering the public. When we compare to countries like Sweden, they spend half as much in terms of financial resources, have half the number of people doing this sort of testing, and turn around in 28 days. We turn around in 114 days, so in each one of these cases we are potentially putting the Canadian public unnecessarily at risk for an additional 90 days—three months. As well, with the processes in place, we have no guarantees that violent criminals are not walking the streets because the RCMP isn't doing their job.

Is that a fair assessment?

Ms. Sheila Fraser: We did raise concerns on the two issues you mentioned. One is the timeliness. I think DNA is becoming used more and more, and I'm sure the other witnesses here would be more eloquent on this. Obviously, as it takes longer to get test results, investigations and eventual court proceedings will slow down, so the timeliness is important.

The question we were concerned with in relation to the automated process was that the RCMP labs put in a quality management system, and with a quality management system you would expect that any concerns about any aspect of the systems or the procedures within the labs would be reported. If there were any potential problem with quality, it would be identified. It would be ascertained if there really was a problem, and there would be a rigorous review to see what was going wrong and how to fix it.

The problems with the automated system were being raised by the scientists, and it took a year before they started to be addressed. That's why we were raising the issue that the quality management system was not operating in the way one would expect it to be operating.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: But, Madam Fraser, to the whole question, when I take a look at the comparatives with other jurisdictions—28 days in Sweden's case, 7 days in case of the U. K.—I can't help but arrive at a conclusion that with the processes that have been in place over the last number of years here in Canada in the RCMP system, we've in fact unnecessarily endangered the Canadian public. Would you agree with that statement?

•(1625)

Ms. Sheila Fraser: I could not draw that conclusion from what we have done in this audit.

We have certainly encouraged the RCMP to consult and to benchmark against other organizations, and I believe they have begun to take measures to do so, and they might want to address that.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Perhaps I could skip over, then, to Mr. Martin.

You said there has been an infusion of \$5 million to start addressing some of these issues. Compared to jurisdictions that have an equal number of cases, you do have one of the biggest budgets, so it doesn't appear to be a budgetary issue.

You're reviewing this. Has anyone taken a close look? Has anyone travelled to Sweden, for instance, to take a look at their systems to try to figure out what we're doing wrong?

D/Commr Peter Martin: I have not looked at those, but I would pass that on to Mr. Buckle to respond.

A/Commr Joe Buckle: Thank you.

That particular area of benchmarking has been somewhat troublesome.

In 2005 we attempted a benchmarking exercise with seven laboratories. The problem we found was that no lab was collecting a set of data to which we could compare our data.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: The question was, has the RCMP sent someone? You've just put \$5 million into the budget to fix things.

Have you taken a step? You have the Auditor General's report. Has anyone gone to see what the Swedes are doing? Yes or no.

A/Commr Joe Buckle: Nobody has specifically gone to the Swedish lab.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Has anyone gone to the U.K. to take a look at the private lab there that handles forensics?

A/Commr Joe Buckle: Yes. We collaborate with all of the labs mentioned in this report, with the exception of the Swedish lab, which I believe is the only one we haven't paid a visit to.

If I may follow up on the benchmarking issue—

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Perhaps someone else will touch on that, because we do have limited time here.

Coming back to exhibit 7.9 and the automated processes, I understand that all of the lab results that use the automated process are being reviewed. Is that correct?

A/Commr Joe Buckle: Yes. I may point out that that was a controlled situation. Following the installation of our automated process, we did determine very early on—you're looking at exhibit 7.8—that there were problems. We started to look at each of the issues raised by our people. We eventually narrowed it down to a single issue, which was HEMASTICK. We know when it started; we know when it ended.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: How many cases are problematic?

A/Commr Joe Buckle: There were 216 cases about which we sent out letters to clients, advising them that there was a concern with the results. However, 87% of those cases did yield other probative evidence.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: So there are potentially 30 cases in which the conclusions were wrong?

A/Commr Joe Buckle: No, I would not say that.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: You said 87%?

A/Commr Joe Buckle: Yes, 87% of the cases about which we sent out letters had other probative evidence included in them. Six percent were cases in which we did not find DNA. We don't know if it was because of the HEMASTICK or not. It would not be unusual for us to not find DNA in a case. The other 6% were cases in which DNA was found but at a level lower than what we would have expected.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick): Now we'll have Mr. Sweet.

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I guess I have some of the same concerns that all of my colleagues have with the fact that we would desire to believe that your conviction today is one that will change it.

I wanted to ask you about the special projects team that was established in 2000. Mr. Martin mentioned having a manager specifically for this action right now. But there was a whole team in 2003, I believe, set up to review the Auditor General's recommendations. Whatever happened to that team that was supposed to follow through on those issues?

D/Commr Peter Martin: That predates me. I'd have to ask Mr. Buckle to speak to that.

• (1630)

A/Commr Joe Buckle: Thank you.

The team that was set up in 2000 to address that audit functioned until about 2002, and was at that point disbanded. That team put in place some of the action items that we followed up on in 2003, such as the restructuring of the labs, the lab information management system, the accreditation activities, and the installation of an advisory committee.

They had recommended that in fact we close two labs in our system. However, the events of September 11 prompted the government to change that decision. It was felt at that time, as I understand it—it predates my tenure as manager—that the activities were then handed off to the onboard management team for completion of their activities.

Mr. David Sweet: You're saying to me that the committee was actually successful but then was disbanded for some reason?

A/Commr Joe Buckle: My understanding was that the special projects group was put together to get the project started, with a hand-off to the management team. Again, I wasn't privy to the decision-making process, but that is in fact what occurred.

Mr. David Sweet: Okay. Time is one thing, but I think quality is also a big issue. The most direct question I could ask you that Canadians would be concerned about is whether there is any chance that innocent people have been convicted due to the quality issues we've been dealing with here in this present audit as well as previous ones.

Commr Beverley A. Busson: Can I pass that on to our scientist to answer that question, please?

Dr. John Bowen (Director, Biology Services, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): I would say no. The major issue we had was the isolation of DNA from some samples in cases. As Mr. Buckle has indicated, in the 216 cases where there was some concern, 87% had other probative results. We do not always obtain DNA from every case; routinely, within 4% to 6% of our cases we do not isolate DNA. So whether we missed information that might have been there is very difficult to assess with the technologies we have in place.

Mr. David Sweet: So if you think that would not be the case—and it didn't sound extraordinarily conclusive to me—what would the quality issues affect, then?

Dr. John Bowen: The quality issues affected, in the first case, the ability of the quality management system to isolate and identify quality problems within the system. Obviously, within the biology program we also have our quality assurance program, which is headed up by the national technical leader. All issues were eventually identified, but they were not working together as one group to resolve the issues between the quality assurance program as well as the quality management system.

The issue with respect to the results was that we were not able to isolate DNA in some cases where we felt we should have, and that is something we resolved. There were two instances, one in which a manufacturer's kit caused some problems, and the second was a test that was used for the presence of blood, which had additional

consequences we had not noted before. It caused a problem with the isolation of DNA from some of those samples.

Mr. David Sweet: I'm hoping to get back to that issue, but I also had another question regarding the communication with stakeholders. It's obvious the RCMP had one line of thinking that everybody was happy, they were filling out surveys saying good show and everything, and then the Auditor General went directly to the clients and found out that was not the case.

Is this new regional client consultation group going to impact that aspect? What are you doing right now to make sure you're hearing real quality feedback from clients so you can build your services to help them in law enforcement?

D/Commr Peter Martin: We're taking a very different approach. Just to add to what the commissioner said earlier on about if we have enough resources, the answer may be no, if we have extra service demands during that consultation process. But this program is the number one priority in national police services, and the resources will be made available if that happens.

The difference today is that the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police has a new committee called the national police services committee, and it's chaired by Chief Constable Derek Egan from the Saanich Police Department. It is not an RCMP member who is chairing that. It's somebody who is extremely outspoken. He will not be shy about taking us on and challenging us. So I think part of the answer is putting the right person in the right job and making sure we really do have a consultative process going on.

I think if I or Mr. Buckle were to go to some of the other areas, because we work in a paramilitary environment, there's sometimes a tendency for people not to want to come forward and speak up. I don't know if that was part of the problem or what, but some of the things took me by surprise. I was quite surprised to find that the Auditor General was getting a different reception from what we were getting. That's something we have to be concerned about, because it tells me that our communication is not effective.

• (1635)

Mr. David Sweet: Yes, that's just it. And these are outside clients, so I don't know how they would be impacted by the internal paramilitary culture. You're probably going to need a third party in between.

I need to ask you point-blank: how does a problem go on? Have you isolated the management issue? You have experts, you have professional people who are saying there's a problem for one year, and it's not dealt with until a full year transpires, particularly in something as critical as DNA extraction and identification. Have you isolated what the problem was to make sure you're not going to have another issue that carries on to that degree?

D/Commr Peter Martin: Are you talking about the quality control issue now?

Mr. David Sweet: Yes, I'm talking about the mechanized process you brought in, and then nothing was really completed for a year.

D/Commr Peter Martin: We'll let the scientists speak to that one.

A/Commr Joe Buckle: Thank you.

Again, that particular question has been of concern. We addressed it with the heads of prosecution a couple of weeks ago at their annual meeting and again last week with the FPT ADMs in Calgary.

The response is that quality assurance at the scientific level was in place from the very beginning. The issue was that the quality issue our scientists were challenged with and were resolving was not recorded as a quality issue and reported to management so we could resolve it on a system-wide basis, or in fact learn from it on a system-wide basis. That, I believe, was a result of our accreditation activities.

Mr. David Sweet: Well, I thought people were raising this all along. Was that not what I heard today and what I've seen in the reports?

A/Commr Joe Buckle: That's correct, and that's part of our quality assurance process: everybody has the ability to raise an issue on our quality level. It was raised with the technical leaders—the subject matter experts in our DNA area—and actions were taken to resolve it.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick): Thank you very much, Mr. Sweet.

I have maybe a few points of clarification here. Maybe this would be for Mr. Buckle. Am I correct in understanding that there isn't a university or academic institution in Canada that actually has a program that leads to some sort of designation to be a DNA forensic scientist person?

A/Commr Joe Buckle: There are programs within Canada. I don't know the exact universities or colleges, but you can come out with a master's degree in forensic science or a diploma in forensic science.

The issue is that the vast majority of our applicants come from other academic institutions with an honours B.Sc. or a master's degree in science. Once we get these folks, we then have to undertake a very specific training process in order for these people to understand the application of forensic science and the use of our particular methodologies and technologies.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick): Another thing that crossed my mind is that if you have gaps or problems in your quality management systems that you haven't ironed out, and you aren't really managing quality management the way it should be, when you get into court with some of the defence lawyers out there, that may lead to some very technical issues about the reliability of your evidence, and so on. Is this a concern?

A/Commr Joe Buckle: Absolutely, sir, and we've been very proactive with this issue. We've tried to get out ahead of the curve. We've met with the heads of prosecution and explained it in detail to those folks so they can prepare their prosecutors.

We've spoken to our client groups—the law enforcement community—and also, last week, to the FPT ADMs.

• (1640)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick): Thank you.

I have one short question, maybe for the Auditor General. Did you find any commonalities or similarities between the audit we're

talking about today and the audit you conducted on the pension and insurance issues?

Ms. Sheila Fraser: Not really, Mr. Chair. They were really quite separate audits.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick): Okay. Thank you very much.

We'll turn the next round over to Mr. Bagnell.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Thank you.

And thank you all for coming. It's great to see you again.

Peter or Beverley, roughly how many employees are involved in the lab and in the offices related to this whole process?

Dr. John Bowen: Right now there are 129 individuals within the program.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: When Ms. Sgro and Mr. Williams were asking about resources, I think, Mr. Martin, you said you have the resources necessary. And Ms. Busson said that it's not a function of lack of budget resources.

I'm just wondering, Commissioner, what exactly the line in the sixth paragraph of your speech means, where you say that the RCMP "acknowledges a capacity gap between our resources and demands for service".

Commr Beverley A. Busson: What I was referring to when I said there are no resource issues at this moment is that we are in the process of bringing on the other 70 people who we believe will fill those gaps and will move those things forward.

The business plan was brought to us this spring. And the decision was made very recently to invest in the other 70 resources and to go to, perhaps, if we have to, a shifted program, a scheduling that will bring that together.

I don't want to lead this committee to think that we always have enough money to do everything we want to do, but certainly at this period of time I also don't want to mislead the committee into thinking that with more money we can fix this problem tomorrow. It is definitely a process issue as much as a capacity issue.

D/Commr Peter Martin: We have to be careful here. The Auditor General also pointed out that you can't solve all of this with money. There is a process issue involved here, and whether or not we have an efficient work flow. We're not just throwing money at a problem. We are going to be hiring people; we have a capacity gap. But on the recommendation of the Auditor General we are bringing in a process engineering firm to look at our operation and provide us with any design changes we may need. So we are looking at these two activities together to make us successful, not one.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Thank you.

I'd like to turn to item 10 of the Auditor General's statement. It says that the RCMP is not currently keeping its commitment to report to Parliament on performance, nor is it reporting to clients on the FLS performance.

Commissioner, I wonder if you could comment on that—and then Ms. Fraser.

Commr Beverley A. Busson: That is a correct statement. It was from looking at our commitments from 2001 on. We have since resolved to commit to report to Parliament at least annually and on a six-month basis on recommendations through to the Auditor General, and as required.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: And to clients...?

Commr Beverley A. Busson: We are working with clients now to build a robust system that will work for them and us, through the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police and with the prosecutors who ultimately take these cases to court, so we will have what we feel is a full feedback loop around our ability to meet their needs on a timely basis.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: When these tests are finished after an average of 114 days—as I think Mr. Wrzesnewskij said—in some cases do they result in criminals being taken off the streets?

Commr Beverley A. Busson: I stand to be defined as not having all of the information around this, but when a case becomes routine—it may shock people to hear that a murder case can become routine—we will have preliminary results, someone in custody, and a court date perhaps 200 days down the road, much like the Pickton case. Once you have someone in custody there is a lot of analysis of a very serious case, and it that might take a year. People might be shocked to hear that this is a very important case and it could take a year.

We re-prioritize these cases so we can keep the ones up front that need immediate assistance because there are people still on the streets. It's a very complicated priority system. Some of the cases that may not seem as urgent become urgent because, despite their categorization by crime, the real differentiation may be whether the person is at large or not. That is a huge part of our prioritization process.

• (1645)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick): Mr. Sweet.

Mr. David Sweet: What is the difference between the expected diary dates and the target dates?

A/Commr Joe Buckle: There are two diary dates that get quoted. One is the corporate target of 30 days for completion of a routine case. Aside from the 15-day urgent cases, it is 30 days for routine cases. That came about from two sources. Chief Justice Archie Campbell stated that in an ideal world DNA cases should be returned in 30 days. We went to our police clients as a result of our reorganization in 2000-01. They told us they would like to see results returned in 30 days as well, so we accepted that as a target.

Mr. David Sweet: Is the EDD simply a target date—that is a linguistic form at the RCMP?

A/Commr Joe Buckle: We realized very soon that we couldn't meet the 30 days. It was an unrealistic expectation. So we decided we would give the investigator somewhat of a realistic expectation on when they could get results back. That was generally based upon how fast the system could respond.

Mr. David Sweet: Okay, but are you using two terms or just one? Are you using expected diary date and turnaround time, or is your linguistic phrase solely EDD?

A/Commr Joe Buckle: I'm sorry I didn't quite understand your question the first time.

The expected diary date is the diary date in which the system can normally respond to a case. The turnaround time is in fact when we do respond.

Mr. David Sweet: So the expected diary date is the acceptance of the inbound request, and the turnaround time is the actual completion of the examination.

A/Commr Joe Buckle: That's correct.

Mr. David Sweet: Do you have a peer-review process with other labs where annually or once every two years they can take a target of your samples and cross-reference with their intelligence, and of course vice versa? Do you have that kind of collaboration going on?

A/Commr Joe Buckle: With casework samples, do you mean?

Mr. David Sweet: Yes.

A/Commr Joe Buckle: No. We work closely with scientific working groups in all of our scientific areas, and in fact I meet with the directors of the Montreal and Toronto labs on a very regular basis to talk about methodology and what we're doing. But to share case work back and forth is really out of our scope.

Mr. David Sweet: It's not really sharing. I'm talking about a peer-review process that happens in many other professions, where you have professionals who are very good at their trade and excellent, world-renowned people who can come in. That's great quality assurance, to know that other people get the same findings that you do.

A/Commr Joe Buckle: Yes. We in fact do a peer review on every single case internally, and we participate with other labs on some external testing just to validate results, particularly in our DNA area.

John, please respond.

Dr. John Bowen: The other aspect, of course, is the accreditation process that we undergo. Since we're accredited to ISO 17025, we have to be audited on an almost annual basis with respect to the service that we provide. So the technology, the qualifications of the individuals involved in delivering the technology, as well as some of the files, are reviewed by technical experts who are part of the auditing team.

Mr. David Sweet: So the audit is processed, as well as actually findings, then, actually digging into the samples that you've tested yourself.

Dr. John Bowen: They do look at operational files. They review them in order to determine whether the results were appropriate.

Mr. David Sweet: Okay, but they would actually retest a sample.

• (1650)

Dr. John Bowen: No, they would not.

Mr. David Sweet: So that's not a practice at all in the domain of forensic labs, that there's ever a time that this occasion would happen, just to continually validate the quality?

Dr. John Bowen: Not that we're aware of. There are jurisdictional issues, of course, because the samples belong to the investigator, not to the lab.

Mr. David Sweet: You were talking about—what was the phrase you used?—reprofiling \$5 million. I take it that “reprofiling” is removing it from one budget to another. Does that mean that your full budget now would be about \$14 million, compared to what we see in the audit here?

If that's the case, I just want to go back to what some of my other colleagues mentioned, the issue that we have here of value for dollar. We see some of these labs that apparently.... And I understand that sometimes black and white figures may not give a real-world view, but does that mean that we're up to \$14-million-plus in the lab, and will you take measures to maybe check out this Swedish lab just to see exactly the kinds of performance results we're getting?

D/Commr Peter Martin: We will look at the Swedish lab.

When we talk about the \$5 million, it's in addition to the money that's already there. Within national police services, it incorporates a lot of services within the RCMP. My budget is around \$400 million, so within the various programs I'm responsible for, we are taking funds from lower-priority items and also putting them into the lab.

The other thing we've done is generate some savings internally by taking the forensic laboratory services and the identification program and integrating them. Both of those areas had administrative support groups, a financial group, HR, and planning and that kind of thing, and we have achieved some significant savings.

Mr. David Sweet: But specifically, I was just looking at exhibit 7.6—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick): Mr. Sweet, you're 30 seconds over. I can't give you any more time. We have to get to Mr. Laforest.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mrs. Busson or Mr. Buckle, when were the specialized Forensic Science and Identification Services created at the RCMP? Was there a previous incarnation?

[English]

Commr Beverley A. Busson: I just had some support from other people on my team, who tell me that it's been since the 1930s that the forensic laboratory system has been in place serving Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest: The older it is, the worse it is.

One of the recommendations of the Auditor General reads as follows:

7.43 The RCMP should develop mechanisms for identifying bottlenecks in the process...

You said that the Services were created in the 30s. How come that today, in 2007, you have not yet been able to do some planning and to develop mechanisms to avoid such problems? The explanation may be in part linked to the evolution of the methodology but, still, any good management system in the public sector should be able to forecast its needs. I am particularly concerned that the Auditor General would have felt the need to make such a recommendation.

Let me read to you recommendation 7.73:

7.73 The RCMP should develop standard procedures for project planning and implementation, including documentation of decisions and sign-off by senior management.

My question is for Mr. Buckle or Mrs. Busson. How do you explain that this was not done before the Auditor General raised the issue after a third audit? I am really concerned by your lack of effectiveness. I asked a while ago to Mrs. Fraser if it was more an administrative issue than a technical issue and if the objectives were realistic. Those two recommendations seem to be linked to a lack of forecasting, management and planning capacity.

[English]

Commr Beverley A. Busson: I'll start by replying, if I might, Mr. Laforest, and then I'll pass the mike, if I could, to my colleague.

Certainly, without putting words in the Auditor General's mouth, I don't think we're where we were at in the 1930s with regard to the labs or lab science; we have made some incredible progress over the last number of years.

Having said that, as I said, we have accepted the Auditor General's recommendations and are prepared and anxious to move forward. One of the issues about the process and management systems is that, in conjunction with her recommendations, we have hired process engineers to help us get through to the next level of competency when it comes to dealing with these incredibly complex issues arising specifically around DNA and the complex processes in which we are engaged there.

All of that is to say that we are not in denial about the fact that over the last five to six years it has been a moving goal post and that we have certainly missed the mark in a number of cases, in a number of instances, and in a number of areas. But we are most anxious and have worked very hard since these things were brought to our attention. And as we work with the Auditor General's reports and recommendations, we will make sure that the next report to be tabled in the fall will give this body, and other bodies, confidence that we are paying attention to our responsibilities.

I will pass this on now to Joe, if he has anything more to say.

● (1655)

A/Commr Joe Buckle: Thank you very much for that.

I think the two issues you are concerned about are forecasting and our ability to predict where we're going in the future. The DNA area has been particularly troublesome for us, simply because of the demand. It's a very powerful forensic technique for law enforcement; hence, the demand for it is increasing all the time. We recognize that we do not have expertise in that area, and we are taking the Auditor General's recommendation to bring in outside experts to assist us with that activity.

But we have done fairly reasonably in our other areas—toxicology and firearms—where we have placed people and reduced the turnaround times. This is because we understand those areas and the demand for them far better than DNA; each day, it seems, we get more demands for the use of DNA that we haven't even thought of.

With regard to project management, in 2003 we recognized that the organization was growing so quickly that we had to put in a project management office, and we installed one at that time. I believe the issue the Auditor General was concerned about was that the senior manager—that is me—would sign off on a project at the beginning, assuring that the funding was available and that resources could be put to it and that there was a project plan in place, but that I wouldn't subsequently sign off on the project when it was finished. That was a weakness on our part in the project management area. We had made the assumption that a sign-off at the scientific level was sufficient. We accept that recommendation and will improve in that particular area.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick): Thank you, Commissioner Buckle.

We'll turn the time over to Mr. Christopherson once again.

Mr. David Christopherson: Thank you, Chair. I appreciate that.

Commissioner, in your opening comments, just to read it back into the record, you said:

Despite the many efforts to improve DNA turnaround times, demands for DNA analysis have increased, on average, by eight percent per year, which far exceeds our capacity. The situation is not unique to the RCMP; most publicly funded forensic laboratories report the same challenge. We take no comfort, however, in being on par with other laboratories, and we are proceeding aggressively to improve our turnaround times.

Then later on in your comments, Commissioner, you say, "The most significant result of this new priority work"—referencing work you mentioned in your earlier comments—"will be the development of realistic and reasonable targets for case response times", again recognizing that as far as we're concerned in Canada, the RCMP is the gold standard of policing around the world. If not meeting that in every category humanly possible, we certainly strive to.

I'm just curious as to why you weren't stronger on saying that we've now identified that there are at least two jurisdictions that do far better than we do, and our goal is to match or exceed that. Instead, I got sort of—I'm going to say it—wishy-washy kind of language.

I'd like to know why this kind of wishy-washy language and why not an absolute commitment on quality and turnaround time, that we are going to be the best in the world. Why aren't you saying that, or will you say that now?

Commr Beverley A. Busson: Mr. Christopherson, what we want to say is that we will build a regime that is robust and reliable and the best system that Canadians have every right to expect. What we need to do is to be realistic and at the same time to promise expectations, promise goals and objectives that we know we can deliver in the short term and the long term. In my opening statements I talked about short-term goals and longer-term goals. We are most interested to be the best in the world. That will be our long-term objective.

One of the things we got ourselves in the soup for the last time was talking about 30 days, because we wanted to get to 30 days. We never got to 30 days.

So we are learning from experience to make the commitment to do the best we can and to perform in such a way that the committee and the Canadian public have confidence in our ability, and our ultimate

goal is to get to be the best, but we have learned not to promise that as a short-term goal.

● (1700)

Mr. David Christopherson: Okay. That's reasonable. I can understand that you could find yourself in an impossible situation. Nonetheless, I would hope that at some point, some future committee does get an opportunity to hear that we're much closer to being the best in the world, rather than quite a bit far down, in the middle of the pack.

I'm sorry, Commissioner, I'm going to be a little abrupt and push along, because I've only got a couple of moments.

Commissioner, there were commitments made previously by the RCMP to report performance to Parliament. It didn't happen. Why didn't it happen? And once again, what is the commitment, and why should we believe it's going to happen now when it didn't happen before?

Commr Beverley A. Busson: Can I pass that on? I wasn't around when that commitment was made, and I understand there's someone here who has a better explanation than I can offer.

Mr. David Christopherson: Certainly.

D/Commr Peter Martin: Initially I believe the force did start reporting but abandoned that process over time. That is not going to be the case. One of the reasons—

Mr. David Christopherson: How could that happen, Deputy? I'm sorry to interrupt, but in an outfit like the RCMP, how could a parliamentary requirement just sort of stop happening?

D/Commr Peter Martin: A lot of it starts to sound like excuses again. We went to the new DPR reporting. As I understand it, the templates didn't lend themselves to it, but we could have added information as an attachment to the templates. Those are the reasons I've been given. They do sound like excuses.

I'm going to be monitoring this myself. We will make sure, and I know darn well that I'm probably going to be the person here answering if it doesn't happen.

Mr. David Christopherson: Excellent. Thank you. I like to hear that.

Auditor General, in the remaining time left, you went out of your way to mention quality quite a few times in here. You also went right out of your way to make sure that it was clearly understood that you're not standing by any kind of analysis, or no one should think that you've done an analysis. Just in knowing you and your shop, I looked at that and I went, hmm, putting a lot of distance there.

There's been a lot of detailed discussion, Auditor General. Overall, what is your impression around the quality issue? We've talked a lot around timing—and not just the automated process but the other issues too; that's had a fair bit of airing. Do you have any recommendations to us in terms of things that you think we ought to recommend, measures that we should take to deal with the quality issue? Probably more than anything, at the end of the day, quality is one of the biggest concerns running through here.

Thanks, Chair.

Ms. Sheila Fraser: This is a recommendation that goes back, I believe, to our 2000 audit. We had initially recommended that there be a quality management process put in place. That was done. We had a couple of comments on the process now. First—and I'll go back to one of the comments by one of the members—it was not peer-reviewed. I think it would have given it more robustness if that quality management process had been peer-reviewed at the time it was put in. When the problems of the automated system were not identified in that quality management system, it made us question how effective it really is. A peer review of the system might be something the RCMP would want to consider going forward. Again, I think comparisons and benchmarks with others is always a good practice.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick): Deputy Commissioner Martin, did you want to comment on that?

D/Commr Peter Martin: Yes. Thank you, Chair.

We are in the process of negotiating with a technology firm to do a peer review. We're in a contract negotiation situation right now. We have asked to see the names of the people they suggest do the review. This is a very small community. We want to make sure they have no association with the RCMP and that it's a complete arm's-length review of the science and the technology.

•(1705)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick): As an observation, if you're talking about process, the private sector, as Mr. Williams mentioned, relies heavily on ISO certification and standards and so on. It occurs to me that this would lend itself quite well to that kind of a process.

A/Commr Joe Buckle: Sir, if I may respond, we do have an ISO accreditation now. It's under 17025. We are in fact approaching the Standards Council of Canada, based upon the recommendation from the Auditor General that we put a little more robustness around the management part of it. They're going to be coming in very soon to look at a corporate accreditation, as opposed to a laboratory accreditation.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick): Right. If I understand this continuous improvement that comes out of quality management, there never is an end to the pipe; you can constantly improve the process. It's a never-ending exercise, so there's no finish line here.

I'll turn it over to Mr. Rota.

Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is for Commissioner Busson or Deputy Commissioner Martin.

I have a report in front of me that forensic science and identification services put out. It's called "Meeting the Need". I was going through it and I noticed that one of the areas covered is a biology service directorate that was established on April 1, 2007. It committed up to \$5 million to enhance equipment and human resources. There's a progression chart in place. I was wondering if you can update us on the phase one staffing and how that's coming along—the number that should be hired and the actual number that has been hired.

D/Commr Peter Martin: I'm going to pass that question on, but I'd like to make a comment first. I neglected to mention that DNA was an activity within the biology science of the forensic laboratory services within the RCMP. We have broken that out now. DNA biology is a self-standing activity inside the FLS of the RCMP. It will have its own accountability framework. It's not part of all the other biology activities, so it gives it much more visibility within the management side.

With respect to the details around hiring, I'm not current on that. I will ask either John or Joe to respond.

Dr. John Bowen: In mid-April of this year we hired nine new employees. Since then we've added two more employees, so we've actually hit eleven now.

Mr. Anthony Rota: What was the total that you wanted to hire?

Dr. John Bowen: We wanted to hire ten in phase one.

Mr. Anthony Rota: I guess the training should be taking place right now. How is that coming along?

Dr. John Bowen: It's coming along very well. The trainees are for the search component as well as the analyst group. They should be completing their training on schedule.

Mr. Anthony Rota: Okay. Are renovations on schedule as well?

Dr. John Bowen: We're working on the renovations. The necessary renovations for the first phase have been completed and things are in place.

Mr. Anthony Rota: Now I'd go to phase two, on the same page. Staffing should have begun as well. How's that coming along?

Dr. John Bowen: We are on target for hiring additional staff. We haven't staffed them yet. We hope to have people on board in August of 2007 in order to prepare them for the second phase.

Mr. Anthony Rota: And what is the exact number there?

Dr. John Bowen: Right now, we're looking at 28 new staff. We've modified the phases slightly in order to accommodate the needs for instructors and operations support.

Mr. Anthony Rota: The number 70 came up. Where would I have seen that? Is there an explanation on that?

Dr. John Bowen: If you add the numbers up, there are the 10 for phase one, 34 for phase two, and 25 in phase three, plus 14 new support staff.

Mr. Anthony Rota: Okay, very good. So everything is on line and the capacity is expanding as expected, or is about to expand as expected.

Dr. John Bowen: It should expand as expected. Obviously, these people are still in training and they won't complete their training until the end of September or early October. Then we should expect to see an increase in our capability.

Mr. Anthony Rota: Very good.

I'm going to move a bit to something that's happened in the past with the Auditor General's report, paragraph 7.4. The audit states that new staff members were assigned to the evidence recovery unit. I find it interesting that the bottleneck was actually at the analysis unit. Why were additional staff assigned to the evidence recovery unit and not the analysis unit where the bottleneck was?

I'm just wondering if I could get some clarification on that.

• (1710)

Dr. John Bowen: The strategy was to increase our capability at the front end because we were working on the automated process for the analysis, thereby expecting to see a two to threefold increase in capacity with the staff that we had in place. Therefore, in order to feed the analysis, we needed to have upfront capacity to search the exhibits and process them so that they could provide samples for analysis. As well, when you're in transition from one process to another, it's not a good time to be bringing people in. You want to train them in the new technology, as opposed to the previous technology. So it made more sense to us to do it that way.

Mr. Anthony Rota: But the capacity didn't increase, or did it?

Dr. John Bowen: The capacity and the analysis has increased, yes. In fact, the bottleneck is pretty much defeated.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick): Thank you, Mr. Rota.

We have some time left here. I have Mr. Wrzesnewskij, who would like another go at things. I'll give you five minutes, Mr. Wrzesnewskij.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij: Thank you, Chair. It's very generous of you.

Madam Busson, you were quite forthcoming in your opening statement, and in it you said that the results—and I wrote down the quote—“are clearly not satisfactory”.

Deputy Commissioner Martin, do you agree with that assessment, yes or no?

D/Commr Peter Martin: Yes.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij: Thank you.

I'm looking at the transcripts from November 24, 2004, when Mr. Zaccardelli was testifying before a parliamentary committee. In it he stated, “The Canadian DNA data bank is a world-class operation that's being modeled and examined by many countries around the world.”

Madam Busson, are you familiar with any countries that have used the Canadian DNA bank as a model?

Commr Beverley A. Busson: I'm getting an answer from someone. I'd suggest that maybe they might want to answer the question.

Thank you.

A/Commr Joe Buckle: Yes, other countries have come and had a look at it. In particular, Singapore has modeled their data bank...and other jurisdictions within North America have used the technology, our STaCS—a way of processing samples.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij: This is just a suggestion, but if other jurisdictions have used ours as a model, perhaps we should send copies of the Auditor General's report to them. If you in fact have modeled something based on what appears not to be an adequate system that we have here—

Commr Beverley A. Busson: The data bank is different from the DNA analysis capacity. They are two different programs, and it causes a lot of confusion for people. The DNA data bank refers to a

whole different process and program from the DNA processing issue.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij: Okay, thank you for that clarification.

I'll go back to other testimony before parliamentary committees in that timeframe. It was stated—and once again it's a quote—that the forensic services are as good as if not better than those anywhere else in the world.

Deputy Commissioner Martin, do you agree with that particular statement—once again, a yes or no.

D/Commr Peter Martin: We compare favourably with some and not favourably with others. That's a yes or no answer.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij: So as good as if not better than anywhere else in the world.

D/Commr Peter Martin: I would not use the word “anywhere”.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij: So you do not agree with this particular statement.

D/Commr Peter Martin: I would not use the word “anywhere”.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij: Okay, but in other words, you do not agree with this statement.

D/Commr Peter Martin: I... No.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij: Thank you.

So you're telling me now that you do not agree with a statement that was made before a parliamentary committee, that you would have used different wording. Why would you not have stepped forward at that time if you had reservations about unequivocal statements of this sort, especially dealing with a matter of this seriousness?

D/Commr Peter Martin: Okay, what committee meeting was that made at? Was that the November meeting?

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij: It's noted in paragraph 7.31.

Auditor, you pulled that quote out of which committee meeting?

Ms. Sheila Fraser: It would have been the Standing Committee on Justice, but it would have been...

D/Commr Peter Martin: Was that the November committee meeting? I wasn't at the November meeting. I wasn't in this program in November.

• (1715)

Ms. Sheila Fraser: It was in March 2005.

D/Commr Peter Martin: In March? I was there. I didn't pick up on it.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij: Okay.

Auditor, the benchmark that the RCMP established was 30 days. They're averaging 114. In certain jurisdictions, such as Ottawa, I understand it's significantly worse.

On average, do you agree that there's about an 84-day delay?

Ms. Sheila Fraser: With the target date that they had established, yes.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij: Okay.

I'd like to come back to an observation you made in your paragraph 7.20, under observations and recommendations: "More important, delays endanger public safety by giving criminals more time on the street to re-offend."

I had previously asked whether or not these delays were in fact endangering public safety. It appears that in 7.2, that's exactly what you're stating. Is that correct?

Ms. Sheila Fraser: The possibility is there. I believe when you had asked earlier, you were making a statement that the delays had created that, and we were saying that we cannot conclude that from this audit. But the potential is there, of course, that investigations will take longer and be delayed because of that.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: So the potential is there and you've noted it in your observations.

Ms. Sheila Fraser: Yes.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Thank you.

When I take a look at the processes being used—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick): This is your last question.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Thank you, Chair.

In exhibit 7.4, it shows that we have four compartments, four separate steps, four different groups of people who do our analysis. In places like the U.K. or Sweden, do they use this methodology, or do they use one team that follows a particular piece of evidence through the whole process?

Well, I suggest, in that case, that's something worth looking into.

Thank you.

Commr Beverley A. Busson: Sorry, there is an answer to that question. I was looking to Joe to answer it and he thought I was going to answer.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick): Sure, go ahead. We want to hear the answer.

Dr. John Bowen: There are various similarities in the way in which we process samples. They do have the same functionalities. Generally they have a reporting officer who deals with the case from start to finish as a supervisor, but there's not an individual who does each step within a case. It's a group of individuals. So it is very similar.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: In the U.K., Sweden, or both?

Dr. John Bowen: I can't speak to Sweden, only the U.K.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick): Now we'll hear from Mr. Sweet.

Mr. David Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I think it's right, at the close of the meeting here, or getting close to it, that we say congratulations to you, Madam Fraser, on your fifth honorary degree.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Sheila Fraser: Thank you.

Mr. David Sweet: I was allowing the rest of my colleagues to take that, but they didn't, so congratulations.

Congratulations too to Commissioner Busson. I was just asking my colleague about it—he's been here much longer than I have, although he says he's not Methuselah—and I don't recall ever having a response this sophisticated from a report. With the action plan and the dedication, I feel very positive and hopeful. Thank you for that.

I want to ask some questions around the diary dates and the targets. Obviously that's where there has been some real concern. Those expected diary dates are discretionary by you, is that correct?

A/Commr Joe Buckle: That's correct. Those expected diary dates are based upon the system response. We've started to change that process. In November 2006 we rolled out a new pilot project to look at priorities and response times to each of the various priorities. It's on a grid, based upon the Criminal Code and the seriousness of the case.

The actual intake process works very well. Our clients are telling us in Alberta, where we did the pilot project, that it works very well. Now the next step is to look at what those actual response times will be for the various grids, A1, A2, A3.

It should be noted that 60% of our cases are in the serious category, in the A category, and this week we actually reduced the turnaround time for those to 102 days. So we're already seeing an improvement.

Mr. David Sweet: But I'm just saying—*à la* Deputy Commissioner Martin's phrase—that if you have a turnaround date of 100 days but you have the full discretion to say when you diarize that, then that turnaround date could really be 300 days, depending on when you decide you've received it.

A/Commr Joe Buckle: Absolutely, and that's what we want to get away from.

Our new system is actually based upon what the police will tell us. We no longer will have intervention on those diary dates. What they tell us will actually be used in there.

What we will be getting away from is trying to be all things to all folks. We will take resources away from the lesser-priority areas and move them into the higher-priority areas to ensure that we hit the diary dates.

● (1720)

Mr. David Sweet: Okay. Am I hearing that in the very—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick): Can I just interrupt for a minute here? It's a point.

There's a reception being held to my left on this side, so if anybody is leaving the meeting, go through the back entrance. We've been instructed by the officials here to go through that back entrance, if you could.

I'll just turn your time back here, Mr. Sweet.

Mr. David Sweet: Thank you very much. I'm glad you mentioned that.

The expected diary date, then, is it on a death watch? Are we going to see an elimination of that term, and then it will just be "Received", and a target date?

D/Commr Peter Martin: I want all these terms cleaned up, because they're confusing to me, and I'm responsible for this area. We have too many of them.

Being the best is not being the fastest. Being the best is listening to what the client's need is, and then meeting that client need. Because if a client needs the turnaround time in 30 days, doing it in 15 is a waste of money. We have lots of activities in the forensic lab and lots of priorities, so we need to invest to meet the client needs, and that's what we're going to do, but not necessarily be the best in terms of how quickly we get it out.

Mr. David Sweet: Good. No, I concur. Obviously that's good management.

Page 13 is what I was trying to ask you about last time, Deputy Commissioner.

In this model here, in exhibit 7.6, basically your expenditures for your department, for the forensic labs, are \$9.4 million, and you have

said that you reprofiled \$5 million. Does that mean that we're now at a total there of \$14.4 million?

D/Commr Peter Martin: Yes.

Mr. David Sweet: Okay. So now, then, it is really critical to make sure we take a look at value for dollar, because we're way above what the other labs' cost of business is at present.

D/Commr Peter Martin: Yes.

Mr. David Sweet: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick): I want to thank the witnesses today. That was a very good session, very informative. Top-notch day, so I thank all the witnesses who are here today.

I will declare this meeting adjourned.

Thank you very much.

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