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Chair

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz

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•(1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC)): I'd like to bring this meeting to order.

This is the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, meeting number 44. We are examining the main estimates today.

We welcome the minister to the committee, but we'll ask the media to please leave the room.

Thank you very much.

As I just said, we welcome the Minister of Public Safety, the Hon. Stockwell Day, to our committee this morning. We look forward to some opening remarks from you, sir. You have beside you your officials as well, and you can take a minute, if you'd like, to introduce them, and then you can begin your remarks.

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety): Thank you, Chairman and members of the committee. I appreciate the time to be here to go over some of the key items related to this portfolio.

I look forward to what in the past has been good, incisive analysis and good recommendations from the committee, in an all-party way, and I look forward to that continuing.

With me today is Don Demers, our senior deputy commissioner for Correctional Service Canada; Jim Judd, as you know, heads up CSIS; my deputy, Suzanne Hurtubise; our Commissioner of the RCMP, Beverley Busson; Stephen Rigby, the executive vice-president for our Canada Border Services Agency; and Mario Dion is here representing the National Parole Board.

Let me just give you a big-picture breakdown of this portfolio, and then we'll get into some specifics. If you kind of have the large numbers in the back of your mind, they give you some sense of the order of magnitude here.

Last year the budget required to cover these portfolios was about \$6 billion. This year it's \$6.5 billion. That's an increase of 8%. It takes up 3.1% of the entire government spending, so it gives you some sense of the order of magnitude. There are about 55,000 employees throughout all the various agencies. This is a large portfolio.

When you're thinking of 55,000 employees, when you're thinking of \$6.5 billion, really, it's broken down into four main areas. Now there are others that are equally important, but the four main areas are, first, \$2.3 billion for the RCMP, and that's about 26,000 people

across the country. So that's really the biggest of the four of the big areas.

Then obviously, if they're doing their job, there will be an effect on our corrections system, and that's the next largest number of dollars that falls under this \$6.5 billion. There's \$1.8 billion there. That's about 15,400 people working not just in the prisons themselves but also in the various outreach and other follow-up facilities—parole officers, and so on.

•(1110)

Protecting our borders takes about \$1.4 billion out of this budget, and the number of people who are directly employed with CBSA is about 13,000, again across the country. That does not include, by the way—and it's important to say this because sometimes the lines are blurred—the individuals who check you at the airport as you're going through the scanners and all of that. Those are not CBSA people; that's CATSA, and those folks work under Transport Canada.

Completing the four pillars of protection is CSIS itself, with a budget of approximately \$346 million and about 2,500 employees. That budget is actually the fifth largest of the groupings, because slightly larger than that budget is in fact the budget of the department itself: about \$428 million, with 995 people there. That \$428 million and those 995 people include emergency planning as well as everything that's required to give the support in this large agency. So it covers a lot of ground and a lot of territory.

With that context, let me give you some specifics in this particular budget that show you what is additional to \$1.4 billion that was added on last year in the 2006 budget. Let me give you some specific items that are directly related to the 2007 budget: \$64 million for the crackdown on gangs, to combat illicit drug production, prevent illicit drug use, and treat illicit drug dependency; \$14 million over the next two years to improve front-end screening of first-time firearms licence applicants, and we'll get into that in a little bit more detail as we get to that part of the budget; \$6 million per year to the RCMP, and again this is added, this is extra, just to strengthen the current programs and activities protecting children from sexual exploitation and human trafficking; \$10 million over the next two years to expand the activities of the Canadian Police Research Centre and to establish its base in Regina; \$80 million over the next two years to allow CSIS to operate more effectively in investigating the threat of terrorism—we don't get into a lot of detail on where that's going to go, but that is largely to increase personnel; \$3.5 million to support the review of Canada's correctional system, and that's going on right now and they'll be delivering their report by October; \$102 million, which is new to this budget, for the Correctional Service of Canada to look at some of its key requirements, and I'll touch on those in just a minute; \$1 million over the next two years for the Canadian arm of the International Association of Firefighters, and that's to increase their training related to the handling of hazardous material.

That gives you some pinpoint, specific items in terms of some of the actual increases that are going to be on this particular budget.

[*Translation*]

That is why I am pleased to be here today to present the spending plan which will enable us to reach our objectives.

[*English*]

I'll break it down now in a little more detail and then turn it over to you folks. I'll just use my allotted time here of approximately 10 minutes, which is about half done, I can see.

This is National Police Week. I'm sure you're aware of that. It gives us an opportunity to highlight the incredible work that the various police agencies do across the country.

I just might say, on an editorial note, that obviously the RCMP has been the recipient of a lot of very incisive analysis over the last several months, if I can say it that way, as euphemistically as possible. I appreciated the comments of the complaints commissioner, the person who, in effect—I'm saying this in a positive sense—goes after the RCMP with complaints filed by people. With all of the focus on the RCMP lately, his comments reflect what I think most people feel, that this is an organization that continues to be recognized throughout the world for its integrity, for its professionalism, for the manner in which it goes about its activities of supplying the safety and security for our citizens. There has been a small number of cases and individuals who perhaps did not perform and did not respond the way they should have, and that's at the senior levels. I think it's important just to keep that in context as we look at the RCMP and the important tasks those men and women in uniform perform, day in and day out, protecting us and keeping our streets safe.

Do you remember last year, in Budget 2006, we put \$161 million for the next two years for our commitment of 1,000 officers? By the end of the fiscal year, 241 of those positions will be filled. The \$37 million that we committed to Depot is moving ahead in terms of added construction for facilities, for training facilities, for the physical infrastructure, and to enhance the field coaching. The program there is going to make sure that all Depot graduates are paired with senior officers when they graduate, so that a mentoring program will be fully engaged. And those will be veteran officers who've completed the RCMP field coaching course.

As I've already mentioned, there is an additional \$6 million for the RCMP in terms of the protection of children, and about a third of the \$64 million that we've allocated for the anti-drug strategy is going to be invested to support Canada's criminal justice system in combatting illicit drug production, grow-ops, methamphetamine labs, which we are going after in an increased way.

We talk about the long arm of the law, but there are the open arms of the communities, the balanced way in which we have to go after enforcement and make sure we're doing everything we can there, but also in prevention. That's why in January I announced \$16.1 million in funding for youth at risk, targeting the emerging problem of youth gangs and violence in many communities. The purpose of this funding is to make sure young people are reached out to, especially those at risk, that they understand there are other choices that can be made, hopefully, to protect them from getting into a life of crime. So we see a significant number of resources going into that particular area.

When we look at the area of firearms and tackling gun violence through effective gun control, that's another pillar of our public safety agenda, and \$14 million is being invested to enhance the front-end screening, interviews that will actually happen now, one on one, with individuals applying for a firearms licence. It will be 100% of individuals who are applying for restricted firearms—that's mainly handguns, for instance—who are going to have one-on-one interviews. We need to enhance the ability of screening out at the front end those people who possibly would be at risk in terms of having a firearms licence.

I just want to reiterate that I appreciate that there's a difference of opinion in terms of how we're doing the firearms analysis and firearms protection, but we need to be careful in the language. Often in the debate I hear, and it just gets repeated when people say it, that we're getting rid of the firearm registry, that we're getting rid of the gun registry. We are not getting rid of the gun registry. We are sticking with our commitment to get out of the money-losing and ineffective portion of the non-restricted long guns, but we are maintaining the handgun registry, the restricted firearm registry, the prohibited registry. So whatever side we are on in the debate, I would respectfully ask that we don't cast this net of fear out there by simply making a public statement that we're abandoning the firearm registry. We are not. We're maintaining it, other than the one particular portion of it, about which the Auditor General and others have mentioned that the data is not good and the money was not spent effectively. We want to make sure the money goes to going after people who are committing the crimes or at risk of committing the crimes.

On the border, we announced last year that we're moving ahead with the arming of the border officers and that we're adding 400 more border officers so that we don't have work-alone situations. That is moving ahead. By this summer, by August, you will see the first border officers, the CBSA officers, with sidearms. You will see a reduction in the number of remote or work-alone situations.

This year, for those two activities—training, arming, and also starting to fill in the 400 positions—\$60.5 million is in Budget 2007-08 to address that particular area. That's the security side of the border.

On the prosperity side, to make sure that traffic continues, that low-risk business continues, that low-risk travel continues, there's \$97 million for an electronic manifest system where truckers will forward all the information before they even get to the border. There is \$6.9 million for business resumption planning; if there's an incident at the border we have to make sure that traffic can continue to move across as quickly as possible. The NEXUS program and the partners in protection program all give businesses the ability to apply for security status and to be able to move across quite quickly.

I see the chairman is very excited about what I'm saying, and he's so excited he's giving me the signal to tell you even more.

As I said, there's \$80 million for CSIS to help there. On the domestic security side, we've listed two organizations, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin—two more terrorist groups that have been listed.

In Corrections, there's \$102 million more to address their infrastructure needs and also pressures of increased complexity with offenders, mental health needs, training and protective equipment for staff.

Mr. Chairman, I could go on and on, but you are, as I am, wanting to hear from others. That just gives you a broad brush, some of the larger things we're doing. I'm certainly looking forward to comments from members and added advice they can give me at this time.

•(1115)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Minister, for those opening remarks. You've given us quite an overview of the department.

As is our usual practice, we will begin the questioning, seven minutes, with the official opposition.

Mrs. Barnes, please.

Hon. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I thought last week the parliamentary secretary had assured me that our minister would be here for the full length of the meeting, and I understand now that you're leaving after an hour. That's unfortunate, because there are many areas in the many areas you are responsible for that we would like to have canvassed.

I'll start without a lot of preliminary. With respect to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act, does the minister anticipate any review or any corrections to this act in the near future? Specifically, I would ask him to consider the provision under formal disciplinary action of the limitation period of one year that currently exists within this act, which prevents further recourse. I'd like to hear from him on that point first.

•(1120)

Hon. Stockwell Day: Thanks. Good question.

My understanding...and I don't want this to take away from the member's time, Mr. Chairman. This is just to clarify something. I had indicated that my officials would be here for two hours, and that I would be able to stay for an hour, as I had a previous engagement.

I'm just wondering if you'd allow me to check something here for a second. Anyway, I thought that was the understanding. I did check with my predecessor. She appeared before this committee four times in her tenure. I've been here six times in 15 months, so I don't think I could be accused of not wanting to be with you.

Hon. Sue Barnes: I hope this isn't my time being used.

The Chair: I stopped the clock, Ms. Barnes. It's not going to cost you anything.

Hon. Sue Barnes: Thank you. I appreciate that, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I'm being very fair and honest.

Hon. Stockwell Day: Chairman, without breaking driving speed records, we can make an adjustment. I can stay an extra half an hour, so I can be here an hour and a half, if that's—

Hon. Sue Barnes: That's good. Thank you.

Hon. Stockwell Day: The question the member has raised, Chairman, has been one of concern to me. This period gives the appearance that if a time lag of more than a year takes place when an RCMP member is being investigated for something or there has been a complaint, then due process has not been seen to have been fairly applied, and it gives the appearance that a person then is not subject to certain types of actions after a year. This has concerned me. Also, I've raised this with the commissioner.

First, I make plain that the one year that is stipulated right now does not in any way protect or absolve anybody from any kind of criminal charge, so there's no statute of limitations there.

But I'm still somewhat concerned about this one-year provision. I've talked to the commissioner about that, and we are looking at ways to address that so that it doesn't apply the way it has been and so that proper discipline can be followed past that time.

There is the balance there between not wanting to leave something hanging over somebody's head, but—

Hon. Sue Barnes: I think, Minister, you would find support for that to happen. Thank you very much.

Hon. Stockwell Day: Yes, we're looking at that, so I thank you for raising it.

Hon. Sue Barnes: Also, I'm not going to recount all the things that are going on within the RCMP. I think the public is very much aware of that.

I would like to hear your thoughts, Minister, on some sort of oversight of the RCMP. It has been recommended in different forms, either from this committee or from reports that have been tabled with this government. I'd like to hear your thoughts on that.

Hon. Stockwell Day: I've been working on something, and it has been based on recommendations from the O'Connor report and also from other groups that have raised concerns about oversight. I'm just asking for a little more time, but I will be bringing something forward for your consideration, and it relates to RCMP oversight.

Hon. Sue Barnes: Thank you.

Hon. Stockwell Day: So stay tuned on that one, and hopefully it will be coming to a theatre near you soon.

Hon. Sue Barnes: I want to go now to Correctional Service Canada. On page 65 of the blue book, the government forecast planning spending on rehabilitation and case management will fall from \$20.5 million to \$17.7 million this year and to a very low—in our opinion—\$7.7 million next year.

What is the government taking out of Correctional Service Canada on rehabilitation and case management at the penitentiary level?

Hon. Stockwell Day: As you know, we have an increase overall in terms of the global...I'll ask Don to comment on that specifically. We are increasing the funding overall to Corrections, and not just on the infrastructure side. The \$102 million, which we were able to get in terms of an increase this year...some of that is going to be infrastructure, but a good portion of that is going to be towards individuals, towards work training programs, programs that would see them—

Hon. Sue Barnes: Minister, I can just correct you there, because your capital budget actually is decreasing. It's going from \$161.9 million last year to \$153.7 million this year, so your capital budget is going down at Correctional Service Canada.

Hon. Stockwell Day: I'm just going to speak to that. Overall, you're going to see an increase because we've had an increase of \$102 million.

On the first one, on the specifics, I'll ask Don to comment on the training portion there.

Have you got that page number? Could you give us the reference again?

Hon. Sue Barnes: It's pages 64 and 65 of the blue book. Rehabilitation and case management is on page 65 and capital expenditures is on page 64, both showing decreases. The most significant decrease is in rehabilitation. That's the Correctional Service Canada blue book. I can loan you my copy if you'd like.

Hon. Stockwell Day: Well, I have a copy here, Member. I have page 22.8, so I'm not sure when you're referencing page 65.

• (1125)

Hon. Sue Barnes: Pages 64 and 65 of the 2007-08 estimates, part III, report on plans and priorities.

Mr. Don Demers (Acting Commissioner, Correctional Service Canada): I'm a bit perplexed. It's under page 65. It's under the capital spending table, if I'm correct here, in terms of what it is that you are referring to. So they are basically referring to reductions in capital spending related to our major program activities in terms of care and custody and rehabilitation and case management.

I don't have offhand the specifics—

Hon. Sue Barnes: Perhaps, Mr. Chair, we could get that information in writing, as opposed to wasting the time here at committee.

Right now, I would like to have some other questions answered, specifically on harm reduction. I would like to know what the harm reduction strategy is of this government and if this new government is going to utilize within the Correctional Services a harm reduction strategy, if any.

The Chair: Mr. Day, I understand you wanted to respond to the earlier question.

Hon. Stockwell Day: I don't think Ms. Barnes' question was a waste of time. I just want to make sure we get the exact one. Was it on page 65?

Hon. Sue Barnes: Pages 64 and 65 on the RCMP, 2007-08...I got this out of the Correctional Services.

Hon. Stockwell Day: I have it here.

Hon. Sue Barnes: And the question was not a waste of time; it was a waste of time getting to the answer, so I'll take it in writing.

Hon. Stockwell Day: Okay. I'm trying to maintain a good spirit of collegiality here. We have a lot of documents and we're rushing to them as quickly as we can. We'll get that answer to you.

Harm reduction is something that is pursued in the corrections system. There's always the balance between wanting to make sure the laws are followed, wanting to make sure we discourage drug use in the facilities themselves.... Along with that, programs are shared with the prisoners related to cleaning of the type of paraphernalia that some might want to use; cleaning materials are prepared for.... Again, you're trying to maintain this balance. You don't want to have drug use happening. We do everything we can to keep it from happening, but we do provide programs that talk about how to maintain safe practices. We do provide extensive programming in terms of drug substitution. For instance, there's a very aggressive methadone program that is available, and with that there are counselling sessions that would be specifically tailored to an individual's particular needs, all geared towards harm reduction.

Those programs are fully engaged and in many cases fully applied. Now, offenders themselves cannot be forced to take them, but we find the uptake on them is fairly good. And there are a number of harm reduction programs in place.

The Chair: Ms. Barnes, you don't have any more time. You're a minute and a half over already.

Mr. Minister, if you would just wrap it up, then we'll move over to the Bloc.

Hon. Sue Barnes: I need a clarification, Mr. Chair.

My understanding in the budget is that your government was moving to a new harm reduction. Is that not true? Are you continuing with harm reduction in your policy?

Hon. Stockwell Day: Absolutely.

Hon. Sue Barnes: Thank you. That's all I needed to know.

Hon. Stockwell Day: We give very clear instruction on how to reduce risk.

The Chair: Mr. Ménard, go ahead.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Minister, I want to start with an important matter which does not involve a great deal of money. After the Dawson College tragedy, I have suggested that you create a reporting website for people who would happen upon sites of individuals like Kimveer Gill, the Dawson College killer.

Have you created one? Do you still think it is a good idea? If it has been created, does it work well?

Hon. Stockwell Day: It is a good idea. We encourage this type of thing, especially within organizations. Among professors or people working in the health care field, for instance, because it is important for options to be offered to people who have concerns about some individuals.

First of all, 911 may be used. Reporting may be a problem when there is an issue of trust and safety for individuals. The bill which has to do with a registry will give people more avenues to share that type of concern.

• (1130)

Mr. Serge Ménard: From your answer I understand the site has not been set up. I do not want to dwell on the subject, but I would like to remind you once again that the Sûreté du Québec has confirmed that the pedophilia site works well. One could assume that the type of reporting site I am suggesting to you would also work well. It would be good for you to look into it again.

On another note, I think you have offered a second amnesty to people having to register their long guns. I would like to know whether previously registered long guns will remain in the system.

Hon. Stockwell Day: The RCMP continues to update the files of people on the registry. It is important to note that the Auditor General stated that this information is not very reliable because for a number of years many mistakes and omissions had been made. It is up to the RCMP to decide whether it wants to use this information.

We will continue to maintain the registry for all men and women who own firearms, of all types. Even if it is a long gun which is not restricted, the fact that the person owns it is recorded in the system. Police officers approaching a house and wanting to know whether a resident has a firearm may obtain this information. With respect to specific information on long guns, it is up to the RCMP to take that decision.

Mr. Serge Ménard: From what I understand, Ms. Busson will remain after you've left. I will be able to ask her a few questions. In the meantime we could discuss other matters.

I know how disruptive a public inquiry or even a real royal commission of inquiry can be for an organization. However, it is not a way to charge certain people, but rather an opportunity to find solutions. Over the last few years, a number of things have gone wrong at the RCMP. Of course, I'm thinking of the Arar case, but I'm also thinking of the very troubling revelations that have come out regarding the relationship which existed between CSIS and the RCMP before the Air India flight bombing occurred. I'm also thinking of the pension fund issue, etc.

We've noticed that regarding some types of crimes, the RCMP clearly did not have the needed staff to ensure adequate screening. I think that in a general sense, the RCMP does excellent work. I would however get back to the idea of an external review, to look into possible new missions for the RCMP and to assess the way it does its work.

Do you not think the time has come to set up an actual royal commission of inquiry? I know the NDP made that suggestion yesterday. I can honestly say that were it not for the events which have affected us, we probably would have done the same.

I will however take advantage of this opportunity to ask you whether the time has come, in your opinion, to conduct a comprehensive review of the RCMP within the framework of an actual royal commission of inquiry.

• (1135)

[English]

The Chair: It would be good to leave a little time for the response.

Go ahead, Mr. Minister.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Stockwell Day: I do indeed know that investigations have shown that there were problems within this organization. All organizations of this size experience this kind of problems. You mentioned the relationship between CSIS and the RCMP. As you know, they signed an agreement last fall which would, pursuant to legislation, ensure information is accessible without impediments. We've noticed a clear improvement in that relationship, especially following the Arar case. It served to somewhat raise the alarm as to the existence of problems.

I have more confidence now when I speak to the commissioner or to Mr. Judd. Since Canada's new government took office, following the January 2006 elections, there has been a noted improvement in the relationship between CSIS and the RCMP. Of course, there are problems, but we are currently investigating. I hope to receive a report by June. We will then be able to say whether the issues are significant enough to justify a complete investigation. I hope that by June, there will be a new commissioner. I believe that the report, the ongoing investigations and the specific investigation I called for will give us an opportunity to make some changes. It would be an ideal time for the new commissioner.

Give us an opportunity to see whether it is possible to immediately make major changes. We can then look into whether more substantial changes are needed.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

I would ask questioners to allow some time for the answers, because we're going over time here.

Mr. Comartin, please.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): We just much prefer to hear ourselves talk, Mr. Chair, as obviously does the minister as well.

Mr. Minister, thank you for being here.

Let me cover off a couple of points.

I don't know how many times I've asked you and your predecessors from the prior government about the oversight committee. Let me just make a statement. It's just not acceptable that it's taken this long. When we see what came out of both Justice O'Connor's and previous looks at the Air India situation, the crying need for a parliamentary oversight committee is so apparent, and further delay is really unconscionable.

I don't want a comment back; that was just a statement.

With regard to the gun registry and the money being spent, the Auditor General made it very clear that it wasn't just the long-gun registry that had real problems with its data because of data entry problems, and more extensively because of the attempt to merge two systems together. Those two systems were the long-gun registry and the hand gun and illegal gun registry; the systemic problems with accuracy of data apply to both.

The Auditor General came out with that report well over a year ago, close to a year and a half ago now. Has anything been done to improve the quality of the data—I know your party's position with regard to the long-gun registry—at least with regard to the hand guns and the illegal guns?

Hon. Stockwell Day: First, Chairman, in fairness, I realize you didn't want a comment back, but you can't just toss a grenade at me and ask me to hold on to it.

Mr. Joe Comartin: But I've asked so many other times, Mr. Minister, and we haven't had any progress, so I thought that was fair.

● (1140)

Hon. Stockwell Day: I can tell you there's progress.

I was joining you and others before we were in government—our group, not yours yet—in asking for this oversight. For years we asked for that and we didn't get it. In fairness, on the second Arar report, it's just been a matter of months. As I'm finding, the amount of consultation that has to happen just between departments alone in terms of establishing the reporting mechanisms that are going to be involved in oversight, consulting with other countries who have oversight committees, and I've been doing that extensively.... I'm telling you, as I said to our previous Liberal colleague, it's coming soon. You know we're not in the habit of making announcements before we can make announcements, but I'm going to have something for this committee to look at very soon. I don't want to prejudge how you will see it, but some of your input I think you'll recognize there. You and others have had good input there. So it's coming soon, but I don't want to pre-date here.

Once we were able to transfer the firearms registry to the RCMP, they've been able to apply some of their own methods of accuracy and data collection. As you know, the RCMP were the collectors of this data before, and you will see—and the commissioner may want to comment further, but I appreciate as long as I'm here that you want to have me comment on this—there have been improvements, I believe, related to the restricted registry. I think in fairness, though, that although the Auditor General did comment that accuracy in data is a problem across the board, the vast majority of that was with the long-gun registry. Having said that, the commissioner can comment further on improvements on the technical capability of assuring data on the other parts of the registry.

Mr. Joe Comartin: I'm assuming no work is being done at all, given the two amnesties, of trying to clean up the long-gun registry data.

Hon. Stockwell Day: I'll have to let the RCMP commissioner comment if there's any there. I would think, in fairness, they wouldn't be spending a lot of time on that, but they do have all the data that has been sent in. As to what they're doing with it, the commissioner can comment on that further.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Do you have any plans on bringing Bill C-21 forward so that we can have a vote in the House to deal with this issue, as opposed to unilaterally making these decisions?

Hon. Stockwell Day: Do you have any plans to support us on that?

Mr. Joe Comartin: Absolutely not. You know what our position is. Actually, our position is divided in our party. We would very much like to have a free vote in the House, which your party has also pushed for on a number of bills, historically.

Hon. Stockwell Day: That's true. I agree, you have some clear thinkers in your party, and we're looking forward to their—

Mr. Joe Comartin: It's slowly changing, Mr. Minister.

You didn't answer the question, though. Do you have any plans on bringing it forward?

Hon. Stockwell Day: I'm working with the House leader on a number of pieces of legislation, and the House leader controls the agenda there, but there are some items that, given the spring agenda, I would like to bring forward for your consideration related to the gun registry.

Mr. Joe Comartin: With regard to legislation, the amendments that are going to be—I'm not sure what your government is proposing. Are you proposing to bring forward amendments to deal with the Supreme Court of Canada decision on the security certificates?

Hon. Stockwell Day: Yes, we are.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Is there any timeframe for it, other than the year that they've imposed on it?

Hon. Stockwell Day: Definitely within that timeline, but my wish is for even sooner. Both the Minister of Justice and I have put together what we think are some good draft approaches to that, and again, not wanting to overly excite you with an imminent date, I can tell you that we want to get that done soon. It's subject to the House leader's agenda, but things are pretty close to being ready to present, and I'd like to get that to you as soon as possible. I'd like to get that to all members as soon as possible.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Does that mean before the spring session is over?

Hon. Stockwell Day: If I say "I hope so", that could be putting undue pressure on the House leader. I guess I'd say we'd like to get our whole agenda done before we break. I'm being sincere with you on this. Both the Minister of Justice and I want these addressed. The Supreme Court said a year, but the longer we wait, the more risk we have that something might not move forward within that time. There are some cases that are pending out there, so we're moving as aggressively as we can, giving due consideration to what the Supreme Court has said, on the security certificates and on the ATA provisions.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Mr. Minister, with regard to—I don't know what to call it—the institution that's at Kingston to hold people who are subject to security certificates, can you tell us how much it cost to build that and how much so far we've spent on operational expenses? And let me finish with this. You only have one individual left. I assume at some point the courts will finally get enough gumption to release him as well. What do we do with the institution once it's vacant?

• (1145)

The Chair: That will be your final question.

Hon. Stockwell Day: Subject to correction—and I'll get back to you if this figure is wrong—\$2.3 million, I believe, was the

construction cost. The ongoing administration costs vary according to how many people occupy the facility. We'll get those to you on a graded basis—up to four people, or up to six people, or whatever it may be. If there is nobody occupying the facility, then you won't need the staff complement we have there now, so costs will drop precipitously.

On your comment about the gumption of the Supreme Court, I think the Federal Court and the Supreme Court have both recognized and have gone into some detail, and it's now a matter of public record, though I'm not going to speak to specific cases, saying that individuals—let's just say a number of individuals whom we've identified as security risks because of their terrorist involvement, which has been very clearly documented to date.... In most of the cases, the courts have wholeheartedly agreed with us about the extreme risk the people I'm talking about present generally to Canadians.

You see this in the very strict provisions the court has imposed on those who move out of the facility into house detention, including their phone lines being open and monitored, people wearing monitoring devices, and other very strict means. The courts have recognized largely that with security certificates we are talking about people who present a clear risk to Canadians.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Minister.

We will now move over to the government side for seven minutes.

Mr. Brown, please.

Mr. Gord Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Minister Day, for coming. It's great to have all of your representatives of the various public agencies that help secure our country here in front of us today.

I have three areas. In fact, Mr. Martin asked the question on the security certificates. I represent a riding that has two border crossings, so I have a great deal of interest in how secure our border is, and in the Canada Border Services Agency and of course in the arming of our border guards.

Recently when the president, Alain Jolicoeur, was before the committee, I was quite aggressive in trying to get out of him why it was taking as long as it was to get our border service agents armed. I was quite concerned that in fact the agency wasn't carrying out the wishes of the government to see our border guards armed.

Minister, could you give us an update on how that's going, and the costing, and tell us whether you're happy with the speed at which it's happening?

Hon. Stockwell Day: Well, sometimes we cynically refer to the glacier-like speed of government. In this case, although at times I've had some frustration, it's evident there's a lot more to seeing officers armed than simply getting them sidearms. For instance, to keep costs down, we have embarked on and we're now fully engaged in a process of training trainers.

Along with the ability to have a firearm, a person also needs to be trained in a multitude of other tasks related to borders and transport of goods and apprehension of same, so the training has to be consistent with the broader training package. On the training of the trainers, just on that process alone—and it was very good uptake in terms of people who wanted to be raised to that level—the amount of time they have to go through for training and certification, psychological testing, and the emergency health training they have to take...that alone is a very extensive process.

Then there's the identification of facilities that can handle the increased amount of people who are being trained. There was a process that we've been involved in, in terms of getting the training package done. I wanted it done in such a way that once it's in place and once we have people being trained, and we have the trainers now, what you are going to see are that expressions of interest will be asked for from other agencies, other groups, who would like to provide the same training program, possibly in a more efficient way or alongside what CBSA is doing.

With respect to the identification and the construction of storage facilities for firearms—the officers will not be taking firearms to their homes, their residences, as they have to be stored properly—you can imagine the amount of regulation that goes on there. It had to be an open competitive bid process to secure not only the firearms themselves but also the holsters and the ammunition that goes with them. I can tell you that a firearm, a sidearm, has been identified and the procurement through an open process is happening.

The amount of ancillary instruction and support that goes with simply arming border officers is very significant. When you think about it, it has been a little over a year now, and this summer you're going to see those first officers across the country who are armed. Then you will see the pickup accelerate, because all of this preliminary stuff that takes so long and has to be painstakingly done will be cleared.

I'm pleased with how it's moving now, but I was having some frustration at the start of the process. There's no question in my mind that CBSA is moving along with this. They're moving along in an expeditious way, but it has to be done with all the appropriate care and regulatory processes that have to be involved in this.

It's actually consistent too with what we've seen when the U.S. did its arming. It's fairly consistent on the timelines, the things that have to be built into this process.

• (1150)

Mr. Gord Brown: Thank you, Minister. I'm glad to see that you're pushing that along. I know that the border service agents who live in my area and are at the border are very happy that the government is proceeding on that.

The other area in which I have a great deal of interest, of course, and you've mentioned it briefly, concerns the national security oversight committee. As we know, in the last Parliament, the former government brought forward legislation for that, and the subcommittee of this committee that reviewed the Anti-Terrorism Act, which I chaired, unanimously recommended that the government bring forward legislation to create such a committee.

I know you didn't say a lot about it. Is there anything else that you might be able to share with us at this point about when you might expect that legislation to come forward and any ideas that you have on how that might work?

Hon. Stockwell Day: As I indicated to our NDP colleague, there will be something for you to see soon, if I can keep things moving along on the broader agenda of the government. I don't think I'm being unnecessarily optimistic when I say that members will recognize some of their input on this. We also have had to tie that in with part two of Justice O'Connor's report. He gave some suggestions there. He, himself, admitted that he may not be the expert on this, but he gave some suggestions. We are tying that in with an analysis of what works in other countries, and this committee did a lot of that analysis also.

This is a monumental change—one that's necessary, one that we want to see, but I'd like to have it as close to operable as possible, and, frankly, it is there in the drafting stage right now. The finishing touches are being put on it, but I'd rather have it as amenable to you as possible. Clearly, there may be some changes that this committee is going to suggest.

I'm somewhat constrained in terms of what I can say on a date, but I am concerned about this. It is a priority. We've made it our priority in the past. Our party has. Others have made it that.

One of the benefits of this type of legislation is that although there's always partisanship that goes on in a democracy, because of the nature of this type of legislation, as we've seen even around the discussion table here, partisanship becomes limited as people realize safety and security are what we're talking about here. I think that will help to expedite it, once you see it.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll have to bring round one to an end. We now will begin round two, which is five minutes.

Mr. Cullen, please.

Hon. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Minister Day and all the officials.

Minister Day, when I look at your overall budgetary allocation for all the responsibilities—the department, the RCMP, CSIS, the Canada Border Services Agency—the budget is actually down in 2008-09 by about 3%. I know it's a large number. It's \$6.5 billion. You referenced Budget 2006 in which you had some new allocations, but the last time I checked, organized criminals and terrorists hadn't checked in all their weaponry following the 2006 budget, so I have a couple of areas where I think your budget is missing something.

Before I do that, I'd just like to comment on some of the areas. Particularly with a government that prides itself, at least in the public's eyes, from the way they message it, as being a law-and-order government.... CSIS, for example, is flat-lined essentially at \$6 million. The RCMP is down. Canada Border Services Agency is essentially flat-lined from 2007-08 to 2008-09. Emergency management and security is totally gutted. At a time of climate change, we should be doing a lot more in terms of loss mitigation, loss control, and I'm very sad to see that. Looking at the departmental budget, which is cut significantly, community safety is way down. I presume that means these crime prevention programs are being gutted—something that in my riding has worked extremely well to try to deal with drugs, gangs, and young criminals. Policy and law enforcement within the department is down from \$36 million to \$23 million. The Canada Border Services Agency, the security aspect, is down by about \$40 million. In my judgment, this just doesn't stack up to a government that presents itself as law and order.

I'd like to address two things in particular. One of the things that I couldn't find in there, Minister, was the re-opening of the RCMP detachments in Quebec. The minister was on the record in 2005, twice in the House of Commons, to say first that we should stop the closures and then another time that we should reopen the detachments in Quebec. I know that he has an ally in that with Mr. Toews, the President of the Treasury Board, because he was also concerned about some closures in Manitoba. The President of the Treasury Board is a big law-and-order guy, the last time I checked.

Why is it, Minister, you can't get your budget through? There is no money in there to reopen the detachments, as far as I can see.

Secondly, on the Canada Border Services Agency and arming of the border guards, which I think is totally wrong-footed myself, we were told at this committee that it will be \$1 billion over 10 years. I know that CBSA is a very efficient organization. But are you going to tell me that they're going to swallow \$1 billion over 10 years? Maybe there's a line item in here, Minister, that I just didn't locate.

I wonder if you could comment.

• (1155)

The Chair: We'll need to allow a little time for the answers. You touched on a lot of issues.

Go ahead, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Stockwell Day: I'll touch on as many as I can, and any that I don't get to, you have my commitment that I'll get back to you on the specifics.

In fact, overall in terms of public safety, there's been an 8% increase in the budget, from just over \$6 billion to \$6.5 billion. I can show you how various capital allotments happened, and, when we secure two-year funding, how a preponderance of that may come out in the second year and some of that in the first year, and that's done through the supplementary requisitioning process. But I'll get back to you on specifics that you've mentioned, if I don't get to all of them within the time allotted.

People should, and I've been asking that people would, simply abandon previous speculation in terms of the overall cost of arming the border officers. That's simply not an accurate figure. As a matter

of fact, we have calculated it, and I'm just going to give you an idea of the types of things that are involved in this whole process.

Training and development, in terms of the program itself, is about a \$3-million figure. You have to look at training existing officers, and then there's refresher training, which is once a year, and the recertification that goes into that. With respect to the equipment itself, including the firearms, the holsters, the belts, and the armoury services, it's \$43 million to cover everything to do with the actual equipment itself. The infrastructure in terms of storage, but also increased training, certification, location facilities, and expanded facilities, is over \$90 million. All added up, that comes to just over \$770 million.

That is before proposals are put out. We want to have our certified program in place to show what's necessary to deliver this. After that, starting in the next budget year, we put out requests for proposals. We've had some very interesting offers in terms of supplementary facilities, facilities that can be used in parallel, that will bring costs down. That also includes hiring 400 more people. If you're looking at a specific figure, if you want to talk about firearms, the actual equipment itself is \$43 million.

I realize it's a little difficult to maintain all in one package, but it's nowhere near the figure you mentioned. In fact, we believe once the proposals go out, you're going to see it lowered.

Hon. Roy Cullen: What about reclassifying all the people to public safety officers? You'll have to pay them more. Where's that money?

Hon. Stockwell Day: I can't speak to labour-management issues, Chairman. Certainly when people are more qualified to do more things, we can surmise that this may enter into discussions, but it's not our position to get involved. That's a labour-management issue. That could well be, but there are the offsetting costs.

When you look at the economic analysis of what happens, for instance, at White Rock when the border shuts down, when they receive notice that there's someone armed and dangerous approaching and they can't properly protect the public because they're not armed, you know what happens. If that happens at a major port of entry, like Detroit-Windsor, for instance, within four hours factories start closing down their production lines because of just-in-time delivery. So when you look at the offset to those types of incidents not happening, you can make a case quite quickly that this is revenue-positive. But those begin to be a little speculative.

These are costs, and as you break them down, you get to see that a lot more is being purchased than simply an actual firearm.

• (1200)

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Ms. Mourani.

Hon. Stockwell Day: If I could just say, Chairman, the member raised a number of areas in which in fact there have not been decreases. Through Department of Finance requirements in terms of reporting, it may show a negative in a line here, but it shows up as a positive elsewhere. On each one he raised, I will get that information to the committee and show there have been increases.

The Chair: Sure. Maybe some officials can discuss this after you leave, Mr. Minister. We're pressed for time here, I'm sorry.

Hon. Stockwell Day: I understand.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Mourani.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to thank you for appearing before the committee today to answer our questions. I would like to discuss the NCP. You said that prevention is an important factor in the fight against crime. In fact, you came to my riding to announce that Quebec would be receiving millions of dollars for crime prevention, for youth at risk and more specifically for street gangs, which I find quite interesting. However, we don't really see these millions of dollars being put to use, on the ground. I could give you many examples, but because we are short of time, I will mention only two.

First, an application for a project called AIDE was submitted to the NCP. It is sponsored by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences from the Université de Montréal as well as by the CSSS in my riding; the application was submitted in June 2006. They came to see me in February or March 2007, because they had not yet received a response. On April 2, 2007, we got in touch with your office, and we were told, around 11:48 a.m., that the project had not been accepted. At 3:56 p.m., we were told that a decision was not quite firm. The next day, we were told that the application had not been turned down, but that it was being studied and that no other information was available. A number of days later, on April 25, we contacted your office, but our call was never returned. Seven days later, someone from your office called to say that the project was still being reviewed, and that there was no indication of what was to come. That is no way to run a program. We really don't know what is happening with this application.

There is also a project, *Médiation sociale et communautaire Sainte-Marie*, sponsored by the Université de Montréal. The aim is to set up a mediation committee in a specific area where there is low cost housing. This is a high risk neighbourhood where a number of children are practically living in the street. The committee would allow parents and people from the community to find a peaceful solution to their conflicts. It seeks to prevent the creation of street gangs, that, I can assure you, just as project AIDE targets the development and safety of children. So both projects are intended to combat street gangs. That group received its response on March 30, 2007. There was an apology for the delay because the response had been almost one year in coming, since the department had been reviewing subsidy programs, including the MCPC. Then, they were told that their application had been denied because the priority was to reduce the number of high risk neighbourhood, etc. But the project met those requirements. People no longer understand what criteria they are supposed to meet.

I have only given you two examples, but there are a number of other projects waiting your signature before they can go ahead, and before the sponsors can begin working with youth. Meanwhile, teenagers and children are hanging around on the street and are ripe for gang recruiters. Is there an administrative problem or is it that you simply don't believe in prevention?

•(1205)

[English]

The Chair: I presume you want an answer. You have used up most of the time, so we'll give a little chance for a response.

[Translation]

Hon. Stockwell Day: Mr. Chairman, it is difficult to give an answer based on a particular case. If you send me the specific information, I will try to provide an answer for you. When you say that you heard from my office, are you referring to the minister's office, or the department? It is a little confusing.

I said that a lot of money would be provided, including for Quebec. For example, last November, I was in Quebec and I announced the injection of \$10 million for prevention programs that would target youth in particular. In January, I also made an announcement of \$356,550 to help aboriginal parents steer their children away from a life of crime. In January, once again, I provided a large sum of money to support the National Crime Prevention Centre.

With all due respect, for every unhappy group that you have mentioned, I can tell you about one that is extremely satisfied.

We don't have enough money to cover all of the requests. However, we do have criteria. The project must be local, because we don't know, here in Ottawa, what all of the requirements might be. It is not up to us to tailor a program to a specific region. Moreover, the program must work. That is why I have one question that I ask about each program: Does it work? What works?

Then we will determine whether or not there is enough money for research.... But I want programs that will work on the ground. I can assure you that there are no programs waiting my signature in my office at this time. However, there are still programs in the departments, and they are awaiting the final review.

Last week I asked the department for a progress report on the Quebec programs. I was told that at least ten are now ready, but they have not yet made their way to my office. I think you will have word on them soon.

[English]

The Chair: We'll have to pursue that later.

Mr. Hawn, please.

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Minister and officials, for being here.

I'd like to cover two or three areas. The first one is that some concerns have been expressed about the use of Canadian seaports by organized crime for exporting stolen vehicles, or to raise funds for terrorist groups such as Hezbollah.

I was wondering—it has come up fairly recently—whether you have a comment on that, or any CBSA reaction to it.

Hon. Stockwell Day: We've been in discussions with CBSA, and we've also have been putting them together with the major.... We're getting most or a lot of our information now from the major insurance corporations, which have done a lot of the tracking. It's been positive. These are things that are watched for. There's no question that it happens. Stolen vehicles are a problem. There's been some great progress in technology to limit it.

We've seen a number of programs that don't just involve CBSA—you have to move it right back to the streets—that have proved very effective in reducing auto theft, notably a program in Surrey and a program in Richmond. The one program has seen a 31% reduction in one year in auto theft. We want to make it a fully integrated approach, right from the street on down, through to the borders.

You'll see that we've received now some acknowledgment for increase in funds for the RCMP to have a greater presence at the ports. As you know, there was a problem with the former ports police. The ability to track, the ability to survey containers is all on the increase.

Because of concerns raised here at this committee, but also by consumers and the insurance associations, you're going to see those numbers continue to drop. It still happens. The day we totally eliminate all crime will be a wonderful day. I don't know whether you or I will be here to see it.

So there has been some good progress there, and some of it has been due to positive pressure by this committee and others.

• (1210)

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Thank you.

I'd like to switch to the area of intelligence. In my view, one of the limitations we have in Canada in terms of national security is the lack of foreign intelligence-gathering capability that we used to have and don't have anymore. I know the government has talked about establishing a Canadian foreign intelligence agency of some sort. I'm wondering whether that's still on the books.

In hopes that the answer is yes, will it be part of a CSIS mandate, or are we looking at a separate organization?

Hon. Stockwell Day: We looked at it, and we were public about the fact, even in the last federal campaign, that there needed to be increased capacity for Canada to be protected by acquiring foreign intelligence. The two approaches to that were, one, to set up a separate agency, and two, to make some changes in the CSIS Act, to enhance their ability to collect information in certain situations, all according to the law, of course, in foreign fields.

The research we've done, the discussions we've had with a variety of groups, lead us to think that starting a separate agency would not be in our best interests. The cost of that, of course, would be huge. It would be a number of years in process just to get it set up, and it creates the possibility of yet another silo of information storage, which could be difficult, as organizations, just by their nature, are sometimes difficult, as we've seen in the past, with the RCMP and CSIS. I don't think they have that problem now, but in the past they did.

What you're going to see, in our discussions with CSIS and with our other partners on foreign fields, is that we will have the ability to change legislation, subject to obviously what this committee and Parliament says, that will enhance the ability for CSIS to gather information without having to create a separate silo and a separate agency. After some months of looking at it, this is the direction that we believe is the best way to go, and having determined that, we'll be presenting for consideration at some point, whether it's spring or fall, our approach to that, and hopefully get some good advice from this committee on what they think of it.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Okay, thank you. I agree with that approach, personally.

I have another one on the RCMP area, in terms of the \$161 million we're spending to get 1,000 more members out there. We're at 241 right now, and it's a good start—

Hon. Stockwell Day: And the \$161 million is just for the first two years.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Correct. There has been concern expressed about lack of experience or a decreased experience level in the RCMP, and of course part of it is just undermanning and so on and part of it is early retirements or recruiting not keeping up. This isn't a hard date sort of thing, but what's our feeling in terms of when the experience levels will be back up to something that the RCMP, the commissioner, would be—

Hon. Garth Turner (Halton, Ind.): I have a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Mr. Turner.

Hon. Garth Turner: This line of questioning has now gone six minutes on a five-minute round. We're now going to go into an answer from the minister that is going to take us at least another three minutes. Do we have five-minute time? I'm new to this committee, so excuse my interruption. Is five minutes not five minutes, or is it 10 minutes?

The Chair: You may be new to this committee, but your time piece is also way out of whack, and so is your intervention. I'm sorry.

Hon. Garth Turner: Why is that, sir?

The Chair: It's not six minutes.

Hon. Garth Turner: It actually has been so far with Mr. Hawn.

The Chair: It has not. I have an assistant here.

Hon. Garth Turner: The clock on the wall is obviously broken then. How long has it been, sir?

The Chair: It was four minutes and 45 seconds when you opened your mouth.

Hon. Garth Turner: Four minutes 45 seconds, not five. Okay.

The Chair: So you've been totally wrong.

Hon. Garth Turner: I gather the minister has 15 seconds to respond now.

The Chair: I have given you plenty of time on your side for your questions. Now you're using up government time. I don't think that's fair, sir.

Anyway, go ahead, Mr. Hawn.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Just to wrap up a quick question, is there a feeling for when the commissioner would be comfortable with the experience level being back up to what would make detachments comfortable out in Rubber Boot, Saskatchewan, or wherever?

Hon. Stockwell Day: All police forces, including the RCMP, are experiencing the loss of seniority, but the RCMP has plans to address that, and after I've gone, the RCMP commissioner can address that.

That was 13 seconds, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

You can have a short.... They took over a minute from your time.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Does the commissioner have a quick response to that?

Commissioner Beverley A. Busson (Royal Canadian Mounted Police): In addition to what the minister said, over the next three years we will be addressing the vacancy pattern, and during that time, of course, seniority increases. We have a very good level of comfort that in the next few years the vacancy pattern will be at zero and the plan to continue with the federal group of experienced police officers will fall into place.

• (1215)

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Thank you.

The Chair: That ends the second round. We'll now move to the third round.

Ms. Barnes.

Hon. Sue Barnes: Thank you very much.

I'll just ask if you could send on to us from the public safety blue book, page 41, policing and law enforcement.... It falls to \$32 million from \$38 million, a \$6 million cut. I would like to have in writing what was cut out of that budget.

Also, from the border guards, under page 41, we've had an explosion of costs, from \$94 million under science and technology-based innovation to \$378 million. I would like you to outline that in writing so all of the members can get it.

I'll just pass my questioning time to Mr. Turner, who has a very important question.

Hon. Garth Turner: Thank you.

Minister, yes or no, do we have correctional officials in Afghanistan now?

Hon. Stockwell Day: Yes, we do. We have two. Given the fact that the facilities are open to us and open to those officers, we are sending two more. We had a considerable number of people—I think it was a credit to our corrections officers—who volunteered to go.

Hon. Garth Turner: Have they been visiting Afghan detention facilities?

Hon. Stockwell Day: They have visited three facilities, a total of 19 visits, and they have assurance that it's an open door policy. They've been experiencing that personally, from my discussion with one of those officers. They're also allowed to see the registry and also the suspected terrorists who are there.

Hon. Garth Turner: Have you been there, or are you going there, or will you be visiting these facilities?

Hon. Stockwell Day: I have been to Afghanistan. I was there a little over a month ago. I met with one of our officers there. The particular day I was due to go to the facility it had been targeted by some of these terrorists, and I wasn't going to put at risk our soldiers so I could have the visit there. So I haven't been there yet. I'd like to get there, but our officers do have access to those facilities.

Hon. Garth Turner: Have you received reports on conditions there that satisfy you?

Hon. Stockwell Day: The reports I've received indicate that these are third world-type prisons. That would reflect what we've seen in media reports. These are not facilities that would meet Canadian standards. The facilities, however, are meeting basic needs. Although none of us would want to be in those facilities, we see improvements, and our officers there prepare reports that they give to the administration. Specifically mentioned to me were the acquisition of blankets, for instance; to make sure that the meals are regularized—

Hon. Garth Turner: Right. Can I just skip through for a moment, because my time's limited?

In terms of all of these allegations that we've heard on the mistreatment of detainees, based on the information that you have, do you think it's exaggerated? Do you think there's anything there? Is there any reason that we should be concerned about this as parliamentarians?

Hon. Stockwell Day: Well, there are two things. First, I think it's important to step back and realize that in Afghanistan we're talking about a feudal society that has existed for centuries, with successive regimes having little or no respect for human rights, and within the period of about two to three years, there's now an Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. They have independent inspection of their facilities. The change has been remarkable.

Hon. Garth Turner: With respect, Mr. Minister, in—

The Chair: You have asked a question. With all due respect, do you not want an answer?

Hon. Garth Turner: Yes, but I don't want a history lesson. I want an answer to the question.

The Chair: I think this is a very good answer, and I think if you were to listen—

Hon. Garth Turner: Mr. Chairman, with respect, you have nothing to say about it, okay? I asked a question and I'd like an answer to that question.

Do you think we, as parliamentarians, have any reason to be concerned with the treatment of these detainees? And do you feel the allegations that have been brought up in the House have any substance at all, yes or no?

Hon. Stockwell Day: The history is very important, and yes, we have reason to be concerned, just as we have reason to be concerned about any jurisdiction in which we have involvement related to prisons, our own or another country's. The history is important because it is rarely noted that improvements have been made—significant improvements—in two to three years. That's rarely noted.

Secondly, the information I have, in talking with our officers, is that they have not seen visible evidence of any of that, neither on the physical being of the suspected terrorists who are there, nor of any kinds of equipment or things that would lead to that. All they're saying is they have not seen the evidence of that. They have seen—

Hon. Garth Turner: Are you satisfied with that, Minister?

Hon. Stockwell Day: I'm satisfied that we have ongoing access. I'm satisfied that they can report back. It's an open door policy now. I'm pleased with the progress, but always looking for—

•(1220)

Hon. Garth Turner: Are you satisfied based on the reports you've gotten that there's no reason for us to have the concerns that have been expressed in the House, just as the minister responsible for this file? It's important for us to understand whether you are satisfied, completely satisfied, with the level of information we've gotten or not.

Hon. Stockwell Day: I'm satisfied that our officers have open access now, that they can see and talk to prisoners, that they can look at the registry to see who's there and all of a sudden to see if somebody's missing. They can verify that.

I'm very pleased to see the progress. I wish it would be reported more, but there's a lot still to do, a lot to learn, and more progress to be made.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

We'll now move over to Mr. Carrie, please.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the minister for being here today. I represent Oshawa, and one of the amazing things about Oshawa right now is it's growing like crazy. On the ground, I'm getting very enthusiastic support for the direction the government is taking with our youth. It was brought up by my colleague from the Bloc.

Could you expand a little on these youth at risk programs, this initiative you've taken?

Hon. Stockwell Day: I'm very encouraged when I see the level of quality of the programs that are being approved. I have to say that in the past—and this is not meant to be pejorative in any sense about people running other types of programs—there hasn't always been the same level of focus and intensity of focus that I would like to see

on practical programs that work. There is a preponderance of requests for research, and I think there are other avenues of research that can be pursued; research is always important.

Largely, I think when it comes to criminology, if you have a particular philosophy about rehabilitation or prevention, whatever it might be—as you know, there are different philosophical approaches—there will be a substantial body of research to support that. That's why the criteria have to be local programs, developed by people on the ground locally and not imposed from Ottawa, but they've got to show that they integrate a number of things. They've got to show the prevention aspect of it. They have to show results. Some people say you can't measure results of a social services type of programming, but I believe you can—there are audit programs out there that help you to do that. They have to be effective. Those types of programs will get funding, and they have been getting funding.

When I see the level of ingenuity involved in intercepting young people, the continuum of service that is brought into play for a young person at risk, I believe it should always include the family of that person. Whether there are two parents or one doesn't matter, but they have to be pulled into the system and the support groups. Along those lines, we're seeing some excellent programs at work. They are showing positive results, and that would include your area also.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Thank you very much.

I have a second question.

Coming from Oshawa, we build cars, and we've been hearing about the importance of the border and of manufacturing. You mentioned just-in-time delivery earlier and the concern manufacturers have if anything goes wrong at the border. How will the government policies improve safe border crossings but also ensure that the border crossings occur in a timely manner?

Hon. Stockwell Day: One of the references raised by the member for London West was in terms of the increase in technology and in spending on technology at the border. Technology can be of great assistance. I announced a few months ago at one of our borders some \$431 million for a cross-country increase in technology, and approximately \$396 million of that is going just into the increase in the eManifest program. This is a huge leap forward, in the sense that trucks approaching the border have already eManifested who the driver is, who the brokers are, who the people are who load the trucks, who they deal with, and what the product is. That is so time-consuming. When that truck hits the border, the officer there already has that on the screen.

Technology is always important, but human intelligence and human sensitivity have to play a part. At that point it's up to the border officer to decide if that truck is going to go to a secondary for further risk assessment. At some point in time, 100% of trucks may be subject to the VACIS machine. That's the gamma ray that can spot something as small as a pen inside a tractor-trailer truck.

That's the technology side, and that's where you're seeing the increase. It's those types of things that help just-in-time delivery, for instance. Along with that, if you do have an incident and a border closes down for reasons related to crime or terrorism or some natural disaster, we've committed over \$9 million just this year for business resumption plans. In other words, each border point has to come up with their emergency plan. Yes, you've had an incident, and yes, you have a problem, but what are you immediately putting in place, not just to cordon off an area and not just to shut things down, but to begin the rerouting of traffic, with a focus on the commercial traffic? It's a combination of technology, planning ahead for the incident if it happens, and being able to continue to move quickly with low-risk travel.

• (1225)

The Chair: This will be your final question.

Mr. Colin Carrie: We were really excited with the government's announcement of \$400 million for a new crossing at Windsor-Detroit. I was wondering if you could let us know what the role of your department is with this new crossing so we can get this up and going and have the most efficient border crossing in the world.

Hon. Stockwell Day: I think eventually it will be that. You may be aware that at that particular border crossing, that one bridge, more trade crosses than the entire amount of trade the United States has with Japan. It's huge, and we can't afford problems there.

As you know, and as members from that area know better than I, there's been a lot of discussion at the local level on what the best approach is going to be: tunnels, bridges, or pre-clearance areas. We have to let that process finalize. We'll have input there in terms of the expertise; we have that input in terms of our assessment on what would be most effective, but we have to respect what's happening at the municipal and provincial levels and let that decision-making process go forward. We're there to provide our assessment from our point of view on expertise. We'll be there in terms of funding and infrastructure, but there are local issues that have to be decided. Frankly, I'm glad it's other people right now who are involved in that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Minister. We'll now go to the fourth and final round.

Mr. Cullen.

Hon. Roy Cullen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Minister, it's reassuring to know that a lot of these programs that seem to be cut.... Page 8 of your estimates shows the overall portfolio spending going from \$6.7 billion to \$6.583 billion. But perhaps with some creative accounting and off balance sheet or off income statement presentation, you will reassure us when you write back that in fact emergency management and policing have not been cut back, that CSIS has received a larger increase than is evident here, that the department's community crime prevention programs have been augmented, and that the RCMP detachments in Quebec.... The money had been put into the budget for those, but this is not apparent from this sheet.

Minister, I'm absolutely amazed that my colleagues from the Bloc have not asked you about the reopening of RCMP detachments in Quebec, because I know they were really hot about this in the last Parliament.

Regarding the land border pre-clearance, I'd like to ask two questions. I think there were some pilots going on in Fort Erie and Buffalo. Under our government, there was a tacit understanding that we were to proceed. I'm told now that this has fallen apart. Maybe you could either confirm or deny that, and explain why.

Also under our government, we launched a very worthwhile initiative, called the fairness initiative, to bring the same transparency to the Canada Border Services Agency, particularly as it relates to Customs, as when Customs was part of the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, where taxpayers had rights and responsibilities. People coming through our borders should have rights and responsibilities.

I know you've told me, Minister, that if anyone has a problem at the border, they should call you. I'm sure you're more fully briefed now, and I'd like to know, are you supporting that fairness initiative to give transparency and recourse at our border?

Hon. Stockwell Day: Quickly, on the fairness and calling me, when I get incidents that come right to my desk—and people do call me to say they ran into a problem at the border and they don't feel they were treated correctly—every single one of those is looked into with a full, detailed report that comes to me and goes back to the individual. If required, corrective action is taken.

I could show you significant correspondence where corrective action needed to be taken. Maybe a border officer was not sensitive to a particular issue or what a person was carrying—whatever it might be. In other cases, maybe the situation was an agreement to disagree. But every case that is reported gets a very significant review.

Given our time, first, you will get the explanation where there appear to be decreases. For instance, on one of the pages you referenced there was a decrease, but because money had been asked for the year before, in terms of some new health information management modules, all the technology was purchased and everything put in place, so that amount wasn't required and it appears as a decrease. But I'll show you the subsequent increases in the other areas you mentioned.

On the last one—this is very important, and it's interesting that the member has raised it. I'm somewhat sad to report that the pre-clearance discussions have come to an end. In my view, pre-clearance offered some great opportunities. If members are not familiar with this, pre-clearance would give the ability for traffic moving from one country to the other to be cleared before it actually gets to the other border. Each country would purchase an area of land on the other side of the border where you can clear a lot of that traffic, and then it sails on through the border.

A lot of issues had to be worked out, because you're talking about our officers working on what is really U.S. soil and American officers working on our soil. Of course, we maintain that Canadian sovereignty has to be paramount. Then keeping that in place, we worked out virtually every problem that arose except for one. The U.S. was requiring that if a person came to the border point—on Canadian soil, but it's their border point in a pre-clearance area—and there was some suspicion, the person would be required to go to secondary and be fingerprinted. Our law states that Canadians can only be fingerprinted voluntarily or if they're being charged with a crime. Not being charged with a crime, you cannot be required to be fingerprinted. The U.S. side sees it a little different. They say that on their soil, once you show up at a border point and you're under some suspicion, you can be taken to secondary and fingerprinted. They wanted to maintain that same capability on Canadian soil.

We looked at alternatives. They pushed hard for that. I said I'm sorry, that's a basic Canadian right. It is charter supported, and as much as I would want to see pre-clearance go ahead, we are not going to diminish the right of any Canadian on Canadian territory.

I'm sorry, but it ground to a halt on that point. I regret that. I've asked them to reconsider their position, but they seem to be sticking with it.

● (1230)

Hon. Roy Cullen: Minister, we're running out of time, so I have a very quick point. Here's a chance to give your position on the RCMP detachment closures in the province of Quebec.

Hon. Stockwell Day: You mentioned the Bloc. The Bloc MPs have been quite aggressive on this particular point, so much so that last year I met with the mayors involved on more than one occasion. Politicians don't give—I'm being careful because the commissioner is listening very carefully—direct operational instruction to the RCMP. As you know, that's not the way a democracy should work.

I assured the mayors that with the increased amount of officers—which you're going to see in the field, and we've already talked about those numbers—the concerns they have about what's happening at some of the borders, concerning drug trafficking, are going to be as tightly watched and managed as they have been. I gave them the assurance that this will happen. The RCMP is now in the process, with extra funding and extra officers available at the federal level, of making decisions regarding those detachments. I can't speak for them specifically, as to what they will ultimately decide, but I have the assurance from the commissioner that she and others are looking at that situation. That's respecting the limitations we have.

The Chair: Do you have time to take one more question from the government side?

Hon. Stockwell Day: Just to let people know, there's a news conference involving a very significant high school project, and I don't want to disappoint those students. They've done some great work in terms of crime prevention.

The Chair: Mr. Minister, I will be in big trouble with the government side. To cut them off, you're really putting me on the spot.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Stockwell Day: Direct their ire towards me. I thank the government members for being willing to give up part of their turn.

Thank you, members. We'll get back to you with the questions you asked for.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

We'll go to the government side, and we'll have to direct the questions to the officials.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): That's fine, Mr. Chair.

Minister, thank you for being here. I think it's over the hour and a half that you had indicated you could allocate.

My questions were going to be directed to the members of the panel sitting here, aside from the minister. Basically this came from Mr. Cullen's comment about cuts to the budget. It's a simple question. Would the members from their departments tell us if they have sufficient funds in these estimates to perform the job that they need to do in an efficient manner? Not that it's all the money that you would always want, but are the funds sufficient to do an efficient job with the department you have?

Perhaps we'll ask Mr. Dion.

● (1235)

Hon. Roy Cullen: I find this troublesome, and I'm wondering if it's an unfair question to put to senior officials by the government side—by any side, frankly.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: That's fair; they can say that.

Hon. Roy Cullen: If you're a senior official in a department, the question of whether you have enough money to do everything you need to is very difficult, I can tell you that. It may be slightly unfair, so I put that question out.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Then I would certainly add the proviso that if you don't feel comfortable answering it, don't answer it.

But I know that I was asked that question in another life, and I was always prepared to answer it. If you didn't have enough money, you would say so.

The Chair: I'll let the officials who feel comfortable answering that go ahead.

Mr. Mario Dion (Chairperson, National Parole Board): My task is easier in the sense that the National Parole Board had a business plan prepared a year and a half ago, before I was appointed chairperson. The Treasury Board approved additions to the budget to the tune of \$10 million in 2005-06. Therefore, the National Parole Board does have what it needs to function properly at this point in time, because there was action taken by my predecessor.

The Chair: Mr. Rigby.

Mr. Stephen Rigby (Executive Vice-President, Canada Border Services Agency): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In our estimates, in fact we're showing an increase of about \$140 million over last year. That relates to firearms and to funds that the government allocated for the security and prosperity initiative. Certainly in terms of the undertakings that are laid out in this estimates document, yes, we believe we have adequate funding.

Commr Beverley A. Busson: Thank you.

I'll be the one to say that there's never enough money to do everything you want to do in policing, and unfortunately it continues to be a growth industry in this country. But for this period of time, we feel that we have the support and funding to address the priorities and the business cases that we put forward. We are busy building new ones for future endeavours and priorities, but for now we feel supported and have the funds to do what we need to do.

Mrs. Suzanne Hurtubise (Deputy Minister, Department of Public Safety): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Yes, the department also feels it has the funds necessary. We are still a relatively young department. We are still building business plans on a variety of issues.

I would like to flag for the committee, though, that some of the funding we received in past budgets on emergency management are still not reflected in main estimates because of timing, but will be reflected in supplementary estimates. I think that will go a long way to addressing some of the work we've been doing on emergency management.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Judd.

Mr. Jim Judd (Director, Canadian Security Intelligence Service): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We, like our colleagues at the department, are expecting some supplementary estimates funding. Of course, the budget this year provided for additional funding for CSIS, so we think we're comfortable.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Demers.

Mr. Don Demers: Again, we are one of those organizations that has had an increase in our budget in the main estimates in the short term that allows us to keep our head above water, but I think it's no secret that our financial situation is dire in the longer term. We are hopeful, and we are looking forward to the recommendations that the corrections review panel, for example, may bring forth.

The Chair: Thank you.

Hon. Roy Cullen: Mr. Chairman, I have a point of order, please.

The parliamentary system is really to blame here. I'm sitting here with a book that says, for example, CSIS is basically getting no increase and Canada Border Services Agency is getting no increase, which is totally inconsistent.

The Chair: I don't think that's a point of order, sir.

Hon. Roy Cullen: I know there are supplementary estimates, but why can we not be properly prepared to deal with...?

First of all, how we can plan for supplementary estimates in this sort of order of magnitude is beyond me. To prepare, based on this book, and to come here and be told these numbers are all wrong is a travesty—not necessarily of the minister or the department, but of the parliamentary process, in my judgment.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. MacKenzie, do you have any further questions?

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: I will just say that I don't think the process has changed significantly over the years. Perhaps, although Mr. Cullen has an issue, it's something that has been a long time in the making. We're still here and we're still dealing with it in the same manner.

From that perspective, I would just like to say from this side that we are confident that the people who are here and the organizations they represent do a tremendous job for Canada and Canadians. This is an important exercise for people to understand. These people are here, justifying budgets, and at the same time they can know and take some comfort in the fact that they do have the financial resources to do their job.

Mr. Chair, I'd just like to thank them for their time here.

●(1240)

The Chair: Thank you.

We now have completed the first four rounds. We'll begin from the beginning again.

Mr. Chan will begin.

Hon. Raymond Chan (Richmond, Lib.): How much time do I have?

The Chair: You have five minutes.

Hon. Raymond Chan: My question, Mr. Chair, is to the Commissioner of the RCMP. I have a lot of trouble with the government extending the amnesty for the long-gun registry. I also read in the newspaper that both the police association and the police chiefs association are against scrapping the long-gun registry.

With the report from the Auditor General complaining about the integrity of the gun registries, does the department voice a strong opposition to the political decision of extending the amnesty? Obviously, it's going to hurt the integrity of the database.

Commr Beverley A. Busson: That's a difficult question to answer, generally. [English]

We too are concerned about the integrity of the database and the responsibility to make sure that both Canadians and our own police officers are safe as they go about their business in dealing with those kinds of issues. The integrity of the firearms database is a very important issue for us and one that we want to be able to rely on. We're investing internally to make sure the database is reliable and is one that can serve Canadians.

Hon. Raymond Chan: When the amnesty for registering has been extended for two years, doesn't it mean that you wouldn't have accurate information on those gun owners for two years? How badly will that impact the integrity of the database?

Commr Beverley A. Busson: The decision around the amnesty issue was certainly not our issue. Our issue, and our continued issue, is to make sure that the laws in place are enforced and moved forward. What I feel about the amnesty is secondary to the fact that at the end of the day, the amnesty was designed so that we would have some take-up time to put the firearms registry in proper order and move forward with the decision of Parliament.

Hon. Raymond Chan: On the cost of eliminating the long-gun registry, I understand that the long-gun registry and the handgun registry have one system, infrastructure-wise, computer system-wise, and so on. Is that correct?

Commr Beverley A. Busson: I understand that as well, but I will get back to you if I am wrong.

Hon. Raymond Chan: It's so important for us when we enter into debate on the cost and so on. We need the facts before we can have a good debate on this issue.

Over the last few meetings when we had a discussion on the savings by scrapping the long-gun registry, it appeared that it would only save about \$2 million or \$3 million. Is that correct?

Commr Beverley A. Busson: I'm afraid I don't have that information at my fingertips, but I will supply it to the committee.

Hon. Raymond Chan: Okay, thank you. That's all.

The Chair: Monsieur Ménard, do you have another question?

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Ménard: Well, I am also concerned about the reliability about the fire arms registry. I know that some people have registered their long guns and others have not yet done so because of the amnesty.

Will the names of those who have registered their long guns remain in the electronic file? Do you keep the registrations?

•(1245)

[English]

Commr Beverley A. Busson: Yes, we do.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Ménard: We thought that you had received enough funding to reopen the border units that you had closed in Quebec. Do you intend to reopen them with the money that was provided?

Commr Beverley A. Busson: To answer your question, the closing of the units in Quebec were not purely a funding issue. They were an issue around how to get a critical mass of investigators together to do the type of priority work that is done between issues around border integrity and drug enforcement in the province of Quebec and elsewhere. This issue is always around the efficiency and effectiveness of the units.

Those decisions were made in a different time and place. With the new funding we are revisiting the placement and reallocation of all of our federal positions, not only in Quebec but certainly across the country. To say that we will be reopening those detachments I think is something that would lead you in a different direction. We are looking at redeploying and placing units and re-establishing units that address issues that weren't present four years ago. But to say that we would go back and reopen those same detachments, I can't promise you that is what's going to happen.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Ménard: I imagine that you agree with what Mr. Zaccardelli told us at the time, when he said that, because investigations were so difficult, he preferred to concentrate on investigating organized groups rather than have police officers walking the beat, more or less, along the borders.

I understand his arguments, but in that case, would you be open to once again having a border police operation, which would be less costly than the RCMP but which could patrol the border, something that, it will now appear, you have abandoned?

[English]

Commr Beverley A. Busson: We certainly haven't abandoned any measure of the issue around border security. My suggestion is that over the years, with the new focus on integrations, new partnerships, and new ways of doing business with our provincial and municipal partners, we have opportunities to do things in a new way, to achieve the same kinds of efficiencies, if not better than we have in the past, and to give people a level of confidence that we are doing business as far as both organized crime and border integrity is concerned.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Ménard: I will move to another topic. My question is for Mr. Judd as well as for you, Ms. Busson.

Are you now clear on what is the responsibility of the CISC and the role of the RCMP, particularly with respect to terrorist activity, because that is what is most important, and what is of greatest concern?

[English]

Mr. Jim Judd: In my mind, I think there are. The RCMP's role clearly falls in the domain of criminal investigation leading to prosecution. Ours tends to be much more further behind that, if you will, in terms of an intelligence or security intelligence investigation.

In the case of the conspiracy in Toronto in which a number of people were arrested last year, we had been looking at that for over a year before it was turned over to the RCMP and other police forces as a criminal investigation, which took, I think, the last six months of the process prior to the arrests. So I think in terms of what we've done over the last several years—joint collaboration, the changed memorandum of understanding, and so on—there are a number of improvements that have been made to ensure greater clarity.

I would say, though, that there is still an issue that we are looking at with the RCMP and the Department of Justice that relates principally to the question as to how intelligence information can be used in the criminal prosecution, because the standards by which we collect intelligence information sometimes differ from those used by police forces. In order for our information to be used, we may have to look at changing some of our practices to facilitate that.

• (1250)

The Chair: Did somebody else have a comment?

Ms. Busson.

Commr Beverley A. Busson: I can confirm what Mr. Judd is saying with regard to our intention being turned into the reality of working very closely together, and the issue of whether something is a national security issue for an intelligence purpose or when it becomes criminal is something that we work very closely together on to make sure that gap does not exist. I also agree with him from a legislative perspective. We are still struggling with the issue of intelligence versus evidence and the admissibility of that in a court of prosecution.

The Chair: Mr. Comartin, did you have a question as well?

Mr. Joe Comartin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Commissioner Busson, going back to the gun registry, you're officially designated as the commissioner for the gun registry. When it was transferred over, was it the commissioner who was named as the head?

Commr Beverley A. Busson: Yes.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Do you actually carry that role out, or do you delegate it to someone else?

Commr Beverley A. Busson: It is generally delegated to the head of our National Police Services, NPS, to deal with on a day-to-day basis.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Are you able to answer as to what you've done specifically to try to clean up the database?

Commr Beverley A. Busson: I don't know how specific you would like it to be. We have been dealing with a company to bring a new product on-line.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Not another computer system.

Commr Beverley A. Busson: Well, yes.

What has happened is that has fallen through. Their ability to bring us what we needed was not satisfactory, so we have decided to support the database that is presently in place with internal technical support. We believe we have a fix for that database that will not only bring efficiencies but also save us from going to a scary place with regard to software engineering.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Is there an internal report as to what you're doing to clean up the database?

Commr Beverley A. Busson: Yes, there is.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Can you make that public?

Commr Beverley A. Busson: I believe I can. I'd be happy to, if I can.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Would you provide it to this committee, if you can?

Commr Beverley A. Busson: If I can, I will.

Mr. Joe Comartin: I want to switch to the DNA database.

Again, the Auditor General was less than complimentary. Are you maintaining the same position as your predecessor, that in spite of a 114-day average processing time, we don't have a backlog?

Commr Beverley A. Busson: No.

Mr. Joe Comartin: So we do have a backlog.

Commr Beverley A. Busson: I use a different interpretation of that word, and we do have a backlog.

Mr. Joe Comartin: And what are we doing to...? We have a backlog.

Commr Beverley A. Busson: We have made an internal investment and redeployed a number of resources to enable us to begin to hire more scientists, so that we can go on shift work to increase our ability to deal with the increased demand for data analysis. We are also building a new matrix, so that we can be satisfied to a larger degree that the issues around which analysis gets done first has a more scientific application.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Is there money in this budget to deal with those new hires?

Commr Beverley A. Busson: There isn't. We are building that business case as we speak.

Mr. Joe Comartin: With regard to quality, your predecessor again was great at extolling this as the best DNA database in the world. He had convinced me of that, but the Auditor General found that in fact there were issues around quality. What are you doing with regard to those concerns?

Commr Beverley A. Busson: We were actually in the midst of the Auditor General's report when those observations were made known. We have engaged a number of other labs to come and do peer research of our lab, and there are some other things taking place as well.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Is there a report coming on that?

Commr Beverley A. Busson: We will be addressing that in further replies to the Auditor General's report.

Mr. Joe Comartin: When that is available, will it be made public?

Commr Beverley A. Busson: Yes.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Will you make sure that it comes to this committee?

Commr Beverley A. Busson: I will do that, yes.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Hawn is next.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My quick question is possibly for Mr. Demers. It relates to the announcement about the panel to review the Correctional Services' business and operational plans, and so on. Can you describe, first of all, the mandate of that panel and the areas they'll be looking at specifically? Are there any areas they're specifically not allowed to address?

• (1255)

Mr. Don Demers: In response to your question on the terms of reference, the area they're explicitly not mandated to review is the issue of privatization of institutions. That's explicitly removed from the terms of reference. If I can do it very generally, they're really looking at the soundness of CSC's business plans and its priorities, as well as its resource capability to carry out those priorities to achieve its objectives.

We have a major infrastructure problem. We have 58 institutions. Some were built in the 1800s. Most of them are over 40 years of age, and they need some fairly significant maintenance. The question the review will look at is whether we are looking at the issue of patching, or whether we are looking at a new approach, for example, to infrastructure. They've also been asked to look at some of the effectiveness of our programs in the community and in the institutions—the effectiveness of aboriginal programs, as an example.

The Chair: We have a couple of minutes left. Go ahead, Ms. Barnes.

Hon. Sue Barnes: Mr. Demers, a couple of minutes ago you talked about the situation at Correctional Service Canada as dire. Was that because of infrastructure, or what else were you referring to?

Mr. Don Demers: Infrastructure is certainly a major issue, but it's broader than that, simply in terms of being faced, for example, with a very significant change in our offender profile and population.

We're looking at inmates who have more extensive histories of violence and who are more problematic in terms of substance abuse. There are all kinds of problems in terms of mental health problems: 12% of our male offenders and 26% of our female offenders are assessed with a mental disorder upon admission, so we have to respond to that. We're working within a context in which we're now developing almost a bimodal offender population; almost a quarter of our population are lifers who are going to be with us for a long time, but at the same time the trend is to shorter sentences, so we're getting a tremendous increase in the number of offenders with two- and three-year sentences.

We traditionally have been geared to the normal distribution in terms of our program planning and delivery, and we have to find a way now to give effect to the correctional plans, particularly for those offenders with short terms, to try to get the maximum effectiveness of intervention within the time we have available.

Within that, over the years, of course, our resource situation has become more difficult. We have internally reallocated—which has been our past characteristic—as much as we can. We have held back on maintenance, for example, in order to use those resources to fund

other sorts of priorities. This has exacerbated in some respects our infrastructure problem, so what was needed is now an emergency.

Our message to people clearly has been that if you're looking at us in the short term, we're broke. We're really struggling to maintain the results that we have been able to achieve within that. While we are awaiting the results of, let's say, the deliberations of the corrections review and whatever that may bring, the government has given us some two-year bridge funding that we need to at least sustain ourselves and carry out the very basic kinds of things. We are now developing an implementation plan that we will take to Treasury Board.

Hon. Sue Barnes: It sounds like you have a lot to tell us. Perhaps I'll canvass my fellow colleagues and maybe we'll be able to get you back before the committee to elaborate even further.

I think the committee could have a role in this study. I put it out there. I think the minister could have asked this committee to do the study, as opposed to the outside panel. I think we had something to contribute there. I think we should be doing some follow-up on this.

I did talk about studies from this committee. We're doing a counterfeit study, and one of the things that surprised me when we looked over the estimates here is the national counterfeit enforcement strategy from the government, and this is in the public safety blue book, page 41. We're hearing testimony saying this is a big issue, and yet when you look at 2007-08, it goes from \$0.2 million to next year down to \$0.1 million. We've just heard how everybody thinks they have enough money. Yet we're hearing the problems here at the committee. We're doing a report on counterfeiting, and you've cut the enforcement budget. I just will note that right now. I'd like to know what's being cut on that. You can send it to the committee.

My final question is to Mr. Judd. I know Transport Canada and you are involved in the passenger protect program, which is the no-fly list in Canada that's being developed. The last time we heard about this in this committee we were told that there was no in-person appeal if your name gets onto this no-fly list and you don't really know why you're on the list. We've had some Supreme Court of Canada terrorism cases since that time. I think it was pointed out by one of my colleagues in his questioning in the last meeting we had on this passenger protect list that we might want to do a rethink on what we do on a technical appeal situation. Could you give me an update, Mr. Judd, on where you are with this? I understand it's coming up soon.

• (1300)

The Chair: Please give a brief response.

Mr. Jim Judd: I can't give you an adequate response because I'm simply not familiar enough with Transport Canada's deliberations on this. I do know that the issue you refer to is part and parcel of what's being looked at now to ensure that there is some form of recourse mechanism. I can ask my colleagues at Transport Canada.

Hon. Sue Barnes: This is hugely important to Canadians.

Mr. Jim Judd: I understand that.

Hon. Sue Barnes: I hope somebody will get back to us on that.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'd like to thank all of the witnesses for coming before the committee and supplying us with the information. This meeting stands adjourned.

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