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Chair

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC)): I'd like to call this meeting to order. This is the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. This is meeting number three.

We are welcoming today our minister, the Honourable Vic Toews. Thank you, sir, for coming before the committee today. We look forward to your testimony.

Along with Mr. Toews is Mr. Baker, the deputy minister, and Mr. Kirvan, the associate deputy minister.

From the RCMP, we have Senior Deputy Commissioner Sweeney. From the Canadian Border Services Agency, we have President Rigby. From Correctional Service Canada, we have Commissioner Head. And last, but not least, from the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, we have Mr. Fadden, the director.

Thank you all very much for coming to the committee at fairly short notice. We appreciate that very much.

The usual practice at this committee is to allow the minister an opening statement of approximately ten minutes, and we'll follow up with questions and comments.

Welcome, sir, to this committee. You may go ahead whenever you're ready.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before this committee for the first time as Minister of Public Safety to discuss the estimates.

As you've indicated and introduced, there are a number of my officials here today. As well, there are other officials in the audience, so if we don't have all of the information at our fingertips, hopefully one or another of them is able to provide that information.

Supplementary estimates (C) seek approval for funds of \$181 million for the current fiscal year. Subject to the approval of Parliament, this will fund security preparations for the upcoming G-8 and G-20 meetings and cover some of the costs incurred by the RCMP and CBSA associated with security at the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games. Additional funds are also being requested to help cover the costs to date of Canada's initial response to the earthquake in Haiti.

The main estimates for fiscal year 2010-2011 seek an increase in funds of \$589.2 million over fiscal year 2009-2010 for the portfolio. These increases represent prudent investments to protect the safety

and security of Canadians at a time of government restraint. The funding would continue to modernize the operations of the RCMP while enhancing its ability to fight capital market fraud, drugs, and border offences. It provides the Correctional Service of Canada with additional resources to implement the Truth in Sentencing Act and deliver additional accommodation for inmates. It would allow the Canada Border Service Agency, or CBSA, to modernize three ports of entry in British Columbia and one in Ontario as part of Canada's economic action plan and to protect front-line officers. It would also allow Public Safety Canada to renew the strategy to protect children from sexual exploitation on the Internet.

The supplementary and main estimates, which you have before you, reinforce our government's commitment to both fiscal responsibility and to building safer streets and communities for everyone. I look forward to working with this committee over the coming months on our legislative agenda as the government continues to deliver on its commitment to building safer communities.

It's been a busy week. On Monday I released the federal emergency response plan, a plan that helps ensure that the government's response to an emergency is seamless, timely, and that key decisions can be made quickly in emergencies. On Wednesday I introduced legislation to strengthen the Sex Offender Information Registration Act. Earlier this morning I introduced legislation to strengthen the International Transfer of Offenders Act by, among other things, recognizing that one of the key purposes of the act is to protect the safety and security of Canadians. While this is great progress, we know there is still more to be done, and I look forward to continuing to work on this front.

I'd like to close by mentioning that our government remains committed to ensuring that the RCMP is a strong and accountable organization. The RCMP has already taken significant steps to modernize its management and administration practices. We have committed to reforming the RCMP review and complaints system. Budget 2010 allocates \$8 million over two years to establish a new civilian independent review and complaints commission, and we hope to introduce legislation to implement it this spring.

I would like to say how privileged I feel to have been entrusted with the role of helping to ensure that this remains one of the most prosperous and safest countries in the world, and I am proud of the 64,000 public servants in my portfolio who work hard every day to keep Canadians safe.

Thank you, and I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Mr. Chair, as I understand it, my time here will be till approximately 4:30, approximately an hour from now.

• (1535)

The Chair: Yes, that's what's on our schedule.

Thank you very much for your opening comments.

As is the usual practice of our committee, we will go over to the official opposition, the Liberal Party, for seven minutes and then go around to the other political parties, all times being seven minutes on the first round.

Mr. Holland, go ahead, please.

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for appearing before our committee today.

Minister, I'm having a problem as we sit through committees and we hear witness after witness after witness, whether from policing or those who are involved in crime prevention, those who are on the front lines of making our community safer, telling us that this government's heading in the wrong direction. They say we're headed towards the American example of hugely over-bloated prisons that cost billions and billions of dollars more in money, and in every jurisdiction where it's tried it's been proven that not only does it cost a huge amount of money, but it actually makes communities less safe. In fact, it was just within the last couple of weeks that we heard from government-funded research that said the direction of this government was taking us to a place that would cost billions of dollars more and make us less safe.

So if all of the research that we are hearing says this government is taking us down an American example that has failed, and failed miserably, I would want to know what evidence, what specific fact-based information you're using to come to the conclusion that the approach you're taking in these issues is going to be anything but a disaster.

Hon. Vic Toews: Thank you for those welcoming remarks, Mr. Holland.

Let's start with statistics, because statistics are always brought up with respect to crime rates in this country dropping. In fact, we know that what is dropping is the rate of reported crime to police. If you look at Statistics Canada, we are now at about 34% of crimes actually being reported to police, and that is steadily dropping.

If one looks at the victimization study that Statistics Canada does every five years—there was one done in 1999 and one in 2004—what we see is a huge increase in crime in this country based on victimization reports. I believe it's somewhere between 15% and 19%.

Mr. Mark Holland: I think you misunderstood the question. My question was are there specific examples of other jurisdictions that have tried these policies, specific reports that say these policies work, specific evidence-based information that says this works—that's what I'm looking for.

Hon. Vic Toews: All right, and that's what I was getting to.

So you're in agreement with me that the crime rates continue to rise and they are unacceptably high—

Mr. Mark Holland: No. Can I pause and interject? I would disagree, but we're getting into a tangential debate.

The reality is, and this is my point, the Americans have a 700% higher rate of incarceration per capita—700%. It used to only be a difference of about 200%. In that same period of time the two crime rates in the two countries have declined by basically the same amount. So if we're going to follow your strategy here of much larger prison populations, let's just keep it really simple: name a jurisdiction that has tried this that hasn't ended in disaster—one jurisdiction.

Hon. Vic Toews: Let's take a look, then, at the study that was conducted.

You don't want to talk about victimization surveys, which essentially demonstrate that the crime rate is going up in Canada. And if you compare apples to apples, not apples to oranges—

Mr. Mark Holland: I'm not talking about the crime rate.

Hon. Vic Toews: Just let me finish.

Mr. Mark Holland: Minister, I'm just asking for a jurisdiction or a place that you could give me as an example. I'm not—

• (1540)

Hon. Vic Toews: That's what I'm getting to. May I, please?

If we look at the studies done, we see that the crime rate is going up in Canada if we compare victimization studies. There's a very interesting study that the Vancouver Board of Trade did in 2007-08. It looks at victimization surveys and indicates how American crime rates and violent crime rates have been falling, and that cities like Vancouver and Winnipeg have crime rates, especially in the areas of property and violent crimes, that exceed most American jurisdictions.

The distinction between the American statistics and the Canadian ones is the fact that many of the American crimes are committed with guns that are banned in Canada. I think all of us here can agree that we don't want to go down that road. But we have seen a dramatic drop in violent crime rates in the United States as a result of the policies they have implemented. You may indicate that they haven't worked, but there is clear evidence. Go to the Vancouver Board of Trade study, and go to some of the other studies I can send you.

The other thing is the suggestion that Canadians should be at risk when the crime rate from 1962 to today has in some respects tripled or more. Our government believes that we should put the safety of Canadians first and the interests of criminals second.

In 1971 Solicitor General Goyer said it was too expensive to keep prisoners in prison, and we had to let the prisoners out on the street. He said that from then on in Canada, we would emphasize the rehabilitation of prisoners rather than the safety of Canadians. That was his statement in the House of Commons in 1971, and that has been the direction of the Liberal Party of Canada for the last 40 years. It's the wrong direction, I submit, and not one that we're going to follow.

Mr. Mark Holland: Minister, I have a very brief amount of time left. Maybe I can suggest that you submit any evidence you have. I'm looking at Statistics Canada; you're looking at the Vancouver Board of Trade. If you have something concrete that shows that difference I'd welcome it. If you have any jurisdiction that has implemented these types of policies where they've been successful, I'd be interested.

If I could transition, in the capital budget this year there's a 43% increase in capital expenditure for Corrections Canada. The commissioner has said in an e-mail—despite the fact you said there won't be any new construction—that there will be “major construction initiatives that we will pursue in the coming years”.

Given that those aren't itemized, given that the commissioner has clearly stated that they're coming, given the fact that we have a 43% increase, and in the wake of the fact that the parliamentary budget officer is doing a report on how much all this is going to cost—

The Chair: Order, Mr. Holland. Your time is way up.

Mr. Mark Holland: Can I just ask the minister to respond?

The Chair: No, you can't. He'll have to take time later to answer. You're way over time.

Ms. Mourani, you have the floor now.

[*Translation*]

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

Welcome, Mr. Minister. I have a question for you about the firearms registry.

In the throne speech, it was clearly indicated that your government wanted to remove non-restricted firearms—in other words, long guns—from the firearms registry. I asked you two questions about that in the House of Commons. More or less, you said that it was expensive and pointless.

But I have received letters, accounts and calls from women's groups, victims of the École polytechnique in Montreal, Dawson College, public health officials in Quebec, police chiefs in Montreal and Toronto, the premier of Quebec and Quebec's public safety minister. They all say that the registry is important.

I want to mention something that was reported in the media. On March 15, it was reported that Mr. Blair, the Toronto police chief, was asking his fellow citizens to report anyone they knew who was in possession of unregistered firearms. He was willing to give them \$500. The way I see it, a good many people want to keep the registry.

I also did some checking into the fact that, according to you, it is expensive. I looked at the numbers. On November 6, 2006, Peter Martin, Deputy Commissioner of National Police Services at the RCMP, basically said that the long gun component—which you want to get rid of—makes up approximately 20% of the total cost, which boils down to just over \$2 million. In some documents, I read that it was around \$3 million, according to the RCMP.

Quite frankly, I do not understand. How can you consider \$3 million expensive when it is a matter of public safety?

● (1545)

[*English*]

Hon. Vic Toews: Thank you very much.

I think it's no secret that our government's position on the long-gun registry is clear. We don't believe it's an effective use of taxpayers' money, and we are committed to seeing the abolition of the long-gun registry.

Having said that, we are very concerned about licensing provisions. We believe that each individual who actually owns a firearm should be properly licensed. There are always steps that can be taken to ensure that appropriate people are licensed, and those who are not competent to own firearms should not be licensed.

That's something I want to continue to emphasize. We strongly believe in the qualifications necessary to own firearms. We believe that the money that has been spent on the firearms could have been much better and more profitably spent on hiring more police officers and having those police officers on the street. That was our government's commitment—to see more RCMP positions. For example, one of our election promises was on the 1,500 positions. We believe that's a much more effective use of taxpayers' money.

As far as the police, I'll let you—

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: I do not have much time left, Mr. Minister. Is spending \$3 million on public safety too much? I am not talking about \$1 billion, but \$3 million.

Do you find that way too much money to ensure that 90.9% of firearms are always subject to the firearms registry?

[*English*]

Hon. Vic Toews: Let me put it this way. Every year from 2000 to 2006 I sat here in opposition listening to the government of the day tell me how the costs were spiralling out of control. Quite frankly, they were spiralling out of control. Estimates on what we've spent on the long-gun registry are anywhere from \$1 billion to \$2 billion.

Was that an effective use of money? No, it was not an effective use of money. I believe that anything that the long-gun registry could accomplish could be accomplished in a much more effective way through the appropriate licensing system, and that's what we're committed to doing.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Mr. Minister, you are talking about the money that was spent to set up the registry, but I am talking about the current budget. It is not \$1 billion, and you know it. Even if you were to get rid of the long gun registry, it would shave just \$3 million off a total budget of approximately \$66.5 million, known as the main estimates. It is not \$1 billion. You should put your earpiece in so you can hear better.

In closing, as I do not want to dwell on the topic since I know where you stand, I would like to know whether Mr. Sweeney supports the removal of long guns from the firearms registry. Since he estimated the amount to be \$3 million, I would like to know whether he agrees with that idea. I am very intrigued.

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews: Let me answer it this way. Our government is committed to seeing the removal of the long-gun registry. I believe that RCMP officers have much more important things to do than harass farmers and hunters in my constituency when they have .22 rifles and .303s and shotguns that they use almost as tools.

The issue is not one of registry. The issue is one of licensing.

• (1550)

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: I understand that it is an ideological view. I think they are two different ideologies.

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews: Just a minute. When I speak to police officers, I get various opinions. For example, I know the police association in Manitoba does not support the gun registry. Other police associations do support the registry.

Throughout western Canada, I speak to RCMP officers on the line regularly. There is a division of opinion on that. I believe—

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Mr. Minister, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police supports it. I would like to believe...

Regardless, I want to move on to something else, if I have time.

[English]

The Chair: Fifteen seconds.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Let's talk prevention budgets. When I look at Budget 2010, I see that it does not mention an increase in the budget for prevention anywhere.

The overall budget is really quite confusing; it is hard to see the actual numbers. We are talking \$40 million to \$60 million, and that has not changed since you have been in power.

A number of public safety ministers—and I am not referring to you—have made different announcements, \$30 million here and \$15 million there.

What I noticed in speaking with the people at the National Crime Prevention Centre, particularly...

[English]

The Chair: Your time is up, Ms. Mourani. I'm sorry.

Mr. Davies, please.

Hon. Vic Toews: Mr. Kirvan can answer that question.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman. My time has not started, I hope.

The Chair: I won't start your time yet.

Very briefly, very quickly.

Mr. Myles Kirvan (Associate Deputy Minister, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

For the main estimates for 2010-11, there's an amount of \$64.7 million. It is distributed among the three funds. One is the crime prevention action fund, which is \$37.4 million. I think this is the breakdown you were looking for. The other is the northern and aboriginal crime prevention fund, which is the amount of \$8 million. The third is the youth gang prevention fund in the amount of \$6.1 million. That's a \$30 million augmentation to the previous budget.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Davies, please.

Mr. Don Davies: Thank you.

Mr. Minister, the previous minister stated on behalf of your government on a number of occasions that people who have serious mental health problems should not be in the federal prison system. Do you agree with this view, and if so, what steps are you taking to make it a reality? If not, why not?

Hon. Vic Toews: I think that's a good question.

We have seen an increase of individuals who have mental health problems that need to be addressed. The question is where those problems should be addressed. Obviously if you simply have a mental health issue, it doesn't necessarily mean that you're not criminally responsible and therefore subject to the law.

Our government is concerned about the mental health needs of these offenders. We're working to address offenders' mental health needs through assessment and treatment. I'm proud of the work the Correctional Service of Canada is doing in that respect.

There are challenges, there's no question about that. I think Mr. Head can give you some more details about the programming.

Mr. Don Davies: Maybe I'll get that after.

Mr. Minister, as you know, this committee has been undertaking a study of mental health and substance abuse services across the country. We've toured prisons and we've heard from every prison we visited that Corrections Canada has recruitment and retention problems with respect to nurses, psychiatric nurses, occupational therapists, and substance abuse counsellors who work in our federal prisons. What's your plan to deal with that issue?

Hon. Vic Toews: The Government of Canada continues to implement key components of our mental health strategy to provide that continuum of mental health services that are necessary in a federal institution. I think Mr. Head can give us some of those details.

Mr. Don Davies: I'm interested in your views, Mr. Minister. I can talk to Mr. Head some other time. Your time is more valuable.

Hon. Vic Toews: I don't know, he's a pretty important guy, Mr. Head.

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Minister, on a different subject, there have been at least 26 deaths caused by the use of tasers in Canada over the last seven years. Will you be issuing restrictions on this weapon that have been called for by many experts, including Justice Thomas Braidwood, including using them only in cases of imminent harm to officers or the public, and restrictions on where they can be used on the body, how many times they're allowed to be discharged, and for how long?

Hon. Vic Toews: The issue of these conducted energy weapons is one that does need to be addressed by government and by police forces. I certainly remember my years in prosecuting before police had tasers, and the option when you were in a physical confrontation was essentially to use either your fists or a gun. I think that in terms of the continuum of force, the conducted energy weapon is a very important tool.

That said, it is important to have very clear guidelines in that respect. The RCMP has specifically amended its policy in respect of conducted energy weapons to restrict their use to circumstances where there are threats to public or officer safety. They have restricted it. I think the RCMP is working with other police forces across Canada to standardize those policies so that the policies are well known. For some of the details on that, perhaps the deputy commissioner can provide them to you.

• (1555)

Mr. Don Davies: Okay. Thanks.

You mentioned the issue of RCMP oversight, which has been a long-standing issue. In my province of British Columbia, there have been two high-profile deaths of people in the custody of the RCMP: Robert Dziekanski and Ian Bush. In your government's budget and throne speech, you promised the creation of a new oversight body.

I want to ask you if you'll confirm that this new body will be civilian led and civilian staffed, with the power to investigate and hear public complaints, subpoena witnesses, and compel the production of documents, and that it will be given sufficient money to carry out its mandate. Can you make that commitment to us here today, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Vic Toews: As I've indicated, we've committed \$8 million over two years on the complaints and review of officers' conduct. That doesn't necessarily relate to some of the more serious issues you've raised, to the deaths. We brought in a policy—and the RCMP just announced that policy—of bringing in other police forces to investigate serious allegations such as serious injuries or death.

In fact, in provinces where they have these stand-alone units.... For example, Ontario has one, Alberta has one, and Manitoba has just passed legislation to have one. That would be an excellent body that would conduct that kind of investigation, which is separate in review from the complaints commission that we're setting up.

Mr. Don Davies: Can I ask specifically, Minister, do you agree with the concept that police should not investigate police when it comes to allegations of police misconduct?

Hon. Vic Toews: No, I don't agree. Police should investigate police because sometimes they're the ones with the expertise to investigate. You don't want somebody who has no experience or no ability to investigate the police. You need someone.... That's why I support bodies like the Ontario stand-alone unit. It's the SIU, is it?

An hon. member: SIU.

Hon. Vic Toews: There's the Alberta one. I had a presentation for about an hour on the Alberta unit, on how it's set up and who heads it. It's actually headed by a former crown attorney or a crown attorney on leave. It's an excellent program. If you ever have the chance to go to Edmonton, hopefully the committee can bring in the individual who heads that up in Alberta. It's an excellent example of how police are investigating police, but at arm's length. They're independent.

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Minister, can you tell me of a single case of police being charged as a result of a complaint against the police officer from a death in custody in Canada in the last hundred years?

Hon. Vic Toews: Yes, I think I can.

Mr. Don Davies: I'd like that in writing from you.

Hon. Vic Toews: Well, there's the Alberta one where there was a manslaughter case. It went to trial three times, I believe. That's the most prominent one. Is that enough?

Mr. Don Davies: No, it's not enough. Could I ask your officials to give me a list, in your records, of every police officer who's been charged as a result of a death in custody?

Here's my last question. Your budget goes up by 43%, and capital construction has been pointed out. Prevention programming goes up by 0.5%. I heard some numbers from your official here, but I have right in front of me, on page 22-5, that it goes from \$64.435 million to \$64.77 million. That's 0.5%. I'm just wondering if you could let me know why the prevention allocation is only up 0.5% in a budget that's going up 8%.

Hon. Vic Toews: Well, in fact, you should have listened to the answer Mr. Kirvan gave. Your analysis is incorrect. You can either review the transcript or Mr. Kirvan can give you the facts again.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Glover, please.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC): First and foremost, I want to thank all the witnesses for appearing here today.

Minister, I want to thank you, because I, as you know, am a police officer on a leave of absence. Our party is the only one that has elected police officers in it. So I take exception to some of the things said by our Liberal opposition member about all police officers disagreeing with this tough-on-crime plan that we have. I can thank you a thousand times, because police officers contact my office—and I'm sure they contact your office daily to thank you for putting forward measures that will in fact help better protect victims and hold accused accountable. I want to take a moment just to dispute that perception left by the member, which was inaccurate, inappropriate, and frankly unsubstantiated.

I would like to know about the wonderful statement you made this morning. I know there was an announcement, and I'm sure Canadians want to know more about it. Minister, would you please inform us about the announcement made this morning with regard to the transfer of international offenders?

• (1600)

Hon. Vic Toews: Thank you very much. I want to thank you, Ms. Glover, for the work you're doing. I know you have spent much of your career as a public servant, as a police officer, and now you're serving the public in this fashion.

Before I get on to your specific question, I'll say there is overwhelming support of our legislation by police officers. I never have a shortage of police officers and organizations from the police who want to participate in our announcements. Just yesterday—I'm not talking about the announcement we made today—on the sex offender registry, we had the chief of the Ottawa police, Chief White, participate with us in that. I've been contacted by other police associations who continually ask if they can participate in these announcements, because they support them. So I thank you for clarifying the record and giving me the opportunity to do that.

In respect of the International Transfer of Offenders Act, I think this is a very important act. Our government takes the view that when we are repatriating Canadian citizens who have been convicted of crimes abroad, the primary concern needs to be public safety. The goal is not simply to bring back individuals because they're Canadians. We want to see that Canadians on the street are safe and not at risk because these people have been brought back. The crimes run the gamut of criminal actions to very serious crimes.

Under the previous government, before we took over, these transfers were done routinely. The statistics show that almost 100% of them were simply brought back to Canada. Our record has been somewhat different. I haven't had the opportunity to deal with those issues yet, but I know that under Minister Van Loan's tenure, the return rate was about 27%, from January 2009 to September of 2009. He took very seriously the responsibility of bringing back these criminals.

We now want to ensure that the legal criteria that are set out in the act are in fact very clear and broad enough to address issues of public safety, so our act will ensure that the protection of society is the paramount consideration when assessing requests for the transfer of these international offenders. So we will add various criteria to the act, and we have put those criteria into the act. We're very pleased with some of these criteria. They will ensure that the individual being brought back doesn't endanger public safety, that the

individual is not continuing to engage in criminal activities following their transfer, that this individual will not endanger the safety of any child—in the case of an offender who has been convicted of sexual offences against a child—and that the offender has been participating in rehabilitation and cooperating with law enforcement. We believe that's a very essential element. If an individual who has breached the laws of another country wants to come back to our country, then there has to be some indication that he or she is willing to work with law enforcement officials to repair the damage that he or she has done.

• (1605)

Mrs. Shelly Glover: That's fantastic news. Thank you, Minister.

Do you happen to have any indication as to how many people are seeking to leave Canada—to transfer out—and how many are looking to transfer in? Do you have any of those statistics available?

Hon. Vic Toews: Roughly speaking, I think two or three want to leave Canada and a few hundred want to come back. Wanting to leave a Canadian prison is not very popular, but wanting to leave other countries' prisons is certainly popular.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Why do you think that is?

Hon. Vic Toews: I have some ideas about why it is. Maybe it's because our correctional officials do such a great job in terms of working with these offenders. But there are some other suggestions about the availability of parole. Many of these individuals are eligible for parole at one-sixth of their time, whereas in some of these foreign jurisdictions, the same easy access to parole is simply not there.

I don't want to take anything away from the fine work that the people in the public service do in correctional facilities, but I think there are broader legal issues that generate that interest.

The Chair: There are thirty seconds left.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: I'd like to give you an opportunity to correct the record as well on the gun registry. There have been some misconceptions by the opposition. I personally know of chiefs who are standing alongside this private member's bill to abolish the long-gun registry, and SWAT team experts who are standing alongside us. Thousands of police officers are standing alongside that private member's bill. I want to give you an opportunity to correct that, if you'd like to.

Hon. Vic Toews: In fact, you're correct. I meet officers very regularly who express their disapproval of the long-gun registry and commend our government for putting resources into front-line policing or rehabilitation programs that work. Some of those were mentioned by Mr. Kirvan.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Wrzesnewskij, please.

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

We heard previously that there is a 43% increase in the capital expenditures in corrections. The commissioner has stated that there are major construction initiatives. Can you list what those initiatives are, Minister?

Hon. Vic Toews: Yes. The Correctional Service of Canada is facing serious challenges. There are aging facilities that need to be updated to meet health and safety standards. There is a more diverse, complex, and challenging offender population, specifically because of gang membership. There is a forecast increase in some of the offender population based on normal projections and the new legislation.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: So is this renovation, or will there be any new prisons built?

Hon. Vic Toews: There are no plans to build new prisons at this time.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Thank you.

I'd like to go to the president of the Canada Border Services Agency. In the last ten years, Mr. Rigby, have there been any incidents of Canada Border Services agents dying in the line of duty?

Mr. Stephen Rigby (President, Canada Border Services Agency): I am not aware that there have been, no.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: In the last ten years, how many incidents have there been in which Canada Border Services agents have faced real threats to their lives or serious physical threats?

Mr. Stephen Rigby: I would have to get back to you on that. I am not entirely sure that we capture those statistics accurately, but I'd be happy to look into it.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Minister, earlier you talked, when you referred to past years when you sat on committee, about the gun registry and how aghast you were about costs spiralling out of control.

Your predecessor prioritized the introduction of hand guns, of revolvers, for all Canada Border Services agents. I understand there are about 5,000 agents who will carry hand guns. Initially, we were told it was going to cost about \$180 million. Estimates now put it close to \$1 billion. That is \$200,000 per hand gun per Canada Border Services agent. Is that a good and effective—you said "effective"—use of money for Canada Border Services agents? That is \$200,000 per agent with a gun.

Hon. Vic Toews: I'm not sure where you got your statistics; I'm not familiar with those statistics. But I can tell you that a firearm in the hands of a peace officer or a Canada Border Services agent is a much more effective tool than the long-gun registry. I think it is very important that, in this day and age of concerns about border operations, our border services need to be trained and equipped like other border services agents.

One of the most embarrassing situations I ever heard about was when an individual was coming up to the British Columbia border. Essentially, because the individual was armed, our border officers had to retreat and let the RCMP take over. I have nothing against the RCMP involving themselves in that fashion, but I believe that our officers have a right to be armed and properly trained to ensure the safety and security of Canadians. That armed presence acts as a deterrent.

•(1610)

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: It was the previous president, Mr. Alain Jolicoeur, who in the public accounts committee talked about these costs spiralling out of control and said that it's now costing approximately \$200,000 to arm each agent with a handgun. So there's a billion-dollar boondoggle just on that one particular issue.

It then begs the question: at that same committee we heard that 21% of individuals—one of every five—coming into the country who were flagged for secondary inspection on immigration matters were getting through without secondary inspection because we don't have integrated information systems, because resources have not been put into integrated information systems. So on one hand, we're giving low-tech handguns at \$200,000 a pop to agents, yet at our airports one of every five flagged people is passing through Canada Border Services agents' posts because they don't have integrated systems.

Are our priorities in the right place, Minister?

The Chair: Mr. Toews.

Hon. Vic Toews: All right, I'll leave that to Mr. Rigby.

Mr. Stephen Rigby: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Let me address some of your facts and figures, sir.

The amount the government set aside and originally estimated for the arming customs officers and border officers was \$781 million, which was set in 2006. That number has not changed since 2006, and I can assure you that the project to arm my officers is proceeding on course, on budget. There has been no spiralling of costs; the costs have remained constant since the original estimates were made.

The Chair: Thank you. We can come back to this later.

Ms. Mourani, please.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Minister, I want to come back to...

[*English*]

The Chair: That's a mistake. Mr. Norlock is next. You're after Mr. Norlock.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Minister and department heads, thank you very much for coming today. You've been so far very informative, and I know there's more to come.

Minister, yesterday you made an important announcement about additional actions the government is going to take with regard to the sex offender registry and the DNA databank. Would you mind explaining how these proposed changes are helping better to protect Canadians and also are assisting law enforcement officers in investigating and preventing these offences?

Hon. Vic Toews: Thank you very much. Yesterday indeed I did make an announcement, and it was attended by Senator Boisvenu and also Chief White from the Ottawa city police and Ms. Illingworth from a victims group, who are all very excited about this particular initiative. This bill is being introduced into the Senate.

What it does is strengthen the sex offender registry and the databank base. When the legislation for the sex offender registry was first brought forward, there was a very convoluted procedural process put into place, and warnings were made at the time to the government of the day that it was going to fail because of unnecessarily putting all of these procedural hurdles in the way. That is essentially what happened.

After a sex offender was convicted of an offence, there was a gap while the courts then determined whether or not an individual should be put on the sex offender registry. The RCMP figures are that 42% of the sex offenders who should be on the registry are not on it, because the registration doesn't occur automatically upon conviction. This was the exact problem that the prior Liberal government was warned about, and they proceeded on this basis anyway. The implications of that are very significant.

So we're working hard not to fix a gap in the law but basically a gaping hole in the law. We want to make sure that police officers have the appropriate tools, not only through the sex offender registry but through the automatic provision of DNA samples.

The other matter we brought in, which is in this bill, is the ability of police officers to use the registry in a proactive manner. Prior to this time, when police officers were confronted with a complaint about an individual being parked in front of a schoolyard or a playground, which Chief White says is the most common complaint, about a stranger being there—and you being a former police chief yourself, I think—

•(1615)

Mr. Rick Norlock: Police officer.

Hon. Vic Toews: Police officer. It's Mr. MacKenzie who was the police chief. In fact, there are three of you there.

In any event, you know the common complaint that is brought forward. Are you a police officer, too, Mr....?

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: No.

A voice: He just wants to be.

Hon. Vic Toews: Anyway, I'm glad that we have all of you here. I just noticed the police officers.

The police could not access the sex offender registry before a crime was committed. So a crime would have to be committed, and then they could use the sex offender registry. What this in fact does is allow the police, they get a complaint and they can check the vehicle—the licence number, the make—and then determine if it is something they should be putting their resources into. So it's a tremendous advantage for the police in terms of being able to identify possible criminal activity before it happens.

There are a number of other initiatives, but what is very important is that we receive the cooperation of the Liberal senators and the

independent senators in order to pass that bill through the Senate. And I hope we get the cooperation from the opposition parties.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Yesterday, of course, you made the announcement—

The Chair: Briefly.

Mr. Rick Norlock: There was a story that Chief White told you about a person who had been 15 years in jail in the U.S, who came across. Of course, rumours get around. I wonder if you could straighten out the rumour and what the story really is.

Hon. Vic Toews: Well, the problem was that when you brought back some of these international offenders, they basically.... The story related to me by the chief was essentially that an offender came to the border in shackles, in handcuffs, and the only question CBSA was allowed to ask him was, "Do you have any liquor you're bringing back?"

Mr. Rick Norlock: That's changed, I hope.

Hon. Vic Toews: And now, with the international transfer of offenders and sex offender registers, we can determine exactly who that individual is.

The Chair: Ms. Mourani, please.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Thank you. Mr. Minister, I want to come back to the issue of prevention. Mr. Kirvan mentioned \$64.7 million. When I talk with the people at the National Crime Prevention Centre, they say that right now, no organization in Quebec can apply for new funding in the area of prevention under the NCPC's programs, because there is no money. Despite the new budget that you have just come out with, there is no money, and we are told that it will stay that way until further notice.

I see that there is no budget increase and no money for prevention in Quebec right now. I want to clarify that is in Quebec. As we speak, no organization can apply for funding, even though the NCPC's Web site may say that applications can be made to such and such a program. That is misrepresentation, because there is no money. They are told not to apply for any more funding, that there is no money left. I want to know what the facts are, really.

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews: Why don't you take it?

Mr. Myles Kirvan: Merci.

In the program this year, we will probably be spending in the order of approximately \$30 million. There will still be some money left at that point in time, so I'd be pleased to look into an individual case for you, if there are cases there. I don't know—

•(1620)

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: I am not interested in an individual case. I was told that there was no money for any new funding request anywhere in Quebec. I am not talking about an individual case. I want to know whether there is money or not. You say there is still a small budget, but I was told there was no money.

[English]

Mr. Myles Kirvan: Yes, there is money that is available there. I would be pleased to look into it to find out what the—

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Very well, you need to tell people that.

Mr. Myles Kirvan: What they said and why is it like that? There is funding available.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Very well, thank you. It is important to clarify that.

I have another point, Mr. Minister. The issue of DNA is very important, as you mentioned. In April 2009, the committee met with two directors of large laboratories. As you know, there are three labs, the third being the RCMP's. We heard from Mr. Prime, from the Centre of Forensic Sciences, and Mr. Dufour, from the Laboratoire de sciences judiciaires et de médecine légale. These two labs do approximately 70% of the testing. Both directors told us, in April 2009, that not only was there no agreement with the government, but that they also had to do a huge amount of testing with very little money. Turnaround times could be as long as a year. Emergencies made up around 1% of their work.

I saw that the new budget includes \$7 million. I want to know how much goes to Quebec, Ontario and the RCMP, and whether they are additional budgets or the regular budgets.

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews: What I can tell you—and thank you for the question—is that the government, as I say, recognizes the importance of DNA analysis. In fact, strengthening the sex offender registry and the DNA data bank legislation is a recognition of the importance of this analysis. So we're continuing to examine ways to strengthen the DNA analysis system in Canada. Budget 2010 has allocated \$14 million over two years to increase the ability to process DNA samples so that the results can be added to the DNA data bank.

To support this DNA casework analysis, the federal government continues its cost-share agreements with provinces, with territories. That began in 1999 to 2000—

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Do they have an agreement, Mr. Minister?

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews: And we are—

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Is there a new agreement? When I spoke to them, there was no agreement with the government. I just want to know whether there is an agreement, yes or no, and what Quebec's and Ontario's shares are. I know that you are very dedicated, but I want to know.

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews: Yes, Mr. Kirvan can give you those details.

[Translation]

Mr. Myles Kirvan: There are agreements in place until the end of this fiscal year.

[English]

Each year we have discussions among deputy ministers.

[Translation]

I co-chair a group of deputy ministers who are studying this issue. The group includes the Deputy Minister of Justice and a deputy minister from Alberta.

We are currently working on these agreements. Right now, our group is studying the specific issue of having in the budget...

Mrs. Maria Mourani: You mentioned \$14 million. How much is it for...

[English]

The Chair: We'll have to finish this later. You're over your time.

Mr. McColeman.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Minister, for coming today and taking your time here with us.

Just to clarify, I'm not a police officer. I was a contractor, but I did serve on my local police services board for a period of time and I want to comment on one thing you've said here today. Thank you actually for your views that there is a spot for police investigating police. It has been my experience that they have the expertise. As a person, a civilian, serving on a police services board and in certain situations, I don't know what we would have done without them and their expertise. So thank you for that.

My question relates to the recent announcement on the federal emergency response plan and the \$100 million that's in the main estimates for the disaster financial assistance arrangements. While I'm sure Canadians are pleased with the initiative, I think some Canadians may have been surprised that something like this wasn't already in place. Is that the case? That's my first question.

The second question is what improvements were made?

• (1625)

Hon. Vic Toews: All right, that is a good question, because it was the same question that the media asked after the announcement. What is the news here today?

Well, the announcement that we made was in response to the Auditor General's concern last November, when she indicated that in fact there was no clear document that brought together all of the federal agencies and departments to work in a coordinated fashion when we are confronted with an emergency. They not only have to coordinate with each other, but of course in many cases—for example, flooding along the Red River in Manitoba or the ice storm here in Ontario and Quebec, or forest fires in British Columbia and Alberta—the provinces are the key and primary jurisdiction. So not only do you have to coordinate the federal agencies with each other, but also you have to interface, then, with the provincial authorities.

So we thought the criticism or the concern of the Auditor General was well placed and we moved very quickly to put that plan together. In fact, we adopted this as a government, the federal emergency response plan, in December 2009, and that was announced yesterday.

I had the privilege to speak to a number of instructors at the emergency college who told me about how they coordinated activities. For example, if there was a hazardous waste spill in one part of Canada, you could essentially bring together responders from Montreal, Ottawa, Regina, Calgary, all working together not just as a team but indeed on the same body, in terms of cleaning up individuals who have been contaminated with hazardous waste and then bringing them right to hospital to make sure those individuals are properly cared for.

So the coordination and the work that has been done is an excellent example of the type of work that public servants are doing in the federal government by working together with provincial and municipal officials.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Just to expand on that, you have had complete cooperation from your provincial and territorial counterparts on putting this together. How much of a coordinated effort was that? Perhaps some of the individuals who are involved here, who are part of the team who did that.... How did that come about to be coordinated in such an efficient fashion?

Hon. Vic Toews: If I can just mention, the plan itself was in existence prior to November 2009. It simply wasn't packaged and it wasn't clear in terms of one document.

I noted last year, for example, working together with the provincial government on the flooding in Manitoba along the Red River Valley, the work the provincial government did there was simply excellent. We then coordinated our resources with the provincial government. So the actual coordination and the plans were already taking place. But the Auditor General properly noted that more attention should have been paid to the details.

I am just wondering if someone else can continue.

The Chair: We maybe will have to finish that a little later. We are out of time.

I would like to thank you, Mr. Minister, for appearing before the committee. We don't have another five-minute round left. So thank you very much.

We will now move over to the Liberal Party. Who's going to go next? Mr. Oliphant.

• (1630)

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I won't start your time until everybody's ready.

Okay, go ahead, sir.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: This will probably be addressed to the deputy minister.

Thank you all for being here.

The government is obviously very impressed with Mr. Justice Iacobucci, having appointed him to another role. Yet Mr. Justice Iacobucci had a report following up on Mr. Justice O'Connor's report that had a number of concerns and considerations around oversight.

I am wondering if, in this year's budget, your department is budgeting for improved oversight or even some existence of oversight, particularly of CBSA. I notice that there is some reference to other oversight areas, but there are over 20 recommendations looking at the over 20 agencies involved in the horrible circumstances that Mr. Almalki, Mr. El Maati, and Mr. Nureddin faced, and the lack of oversight. I am wondering whether you are now planning to pay the price of an oversight set of bodies or an integrated body.

Mr. William Baker (Deputy Minister, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): Thank you.

As you observed, there are a number of oversight bodies already in place in the public safety portfolio, particularly those with respect to the activities of CSIS and the RCMP. There is money in the budget, of course, to put in place an expanded review and complaints function for the RCMP. The broader issue of an inter-agency review is still under active consideration.

I think one thing we have to take into consideration is the ultimate recommendation coming out of the Air India inquiry, which of course we haven't received yet but are expecting in the not too distant future, and that will inform us moving forward in that regard.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I have a question with respect to prisons. Maybe Mr. Head may be able to respond to this.

The previous minister indicated that one of the reasons they needed to shut down prison farms was to use the land for larger prisons. Yet the new minister said today there's no plan on capital expansion in prisons. Does that then mean the prison farms will be maintained and will be a valuable part? We were able to visit New Brunswick this year, and talked to many people around Westmorland, who said it was a very valuable function.

So if the land is not needed for capital expansion, will we have prison farms?

Mr. Don Head (Commissioner, Correctional Service Canada): The plans for closing the farms at minimum security institutions will continue. They will be closed by March 31, 2011, so there is no change in plans as they relate to the farms.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Unless there's an election.

A new government might have a different idea on the importance of connecting the land and prisoners, as many of your wardens indicated that they felt the rhythms of discipline and tying offenders to the land are actually part of the rehabilitative process. We can look forward to that day.

I have a question regarding crime prevention, following up on Ms. Mourani. There has been a history of underspending in crime prevention, which is fairly massive. As much as 20%, 30% or 40% of the annual budgets for crime prevention have not been spent in the past.

Is there a departmental plan to ensure that we actually do continue to try to prevent crime, as opposed to just wiping up after crime, which this government seems to want to do?

Mr. William Baker: I'll answer briefly, and then I'll ask Mr. Kirvan to respond.

Crime prevention continues to be an important part of the programming coming from the public safety portfolio. We are seized with the fact of the time it has taken to process requests for crime prevention projects. We've made some good progress on that recently, and we'll continue to look at ways we can streamline that.

Perhaps I'll ask Mr. Kirvan if he has anything to add.

Mr. Myles Kirvan: We've done much better in this current fiscal year over last year; we've spent about 50% more. We have not spent all the moneys available this year either.

We went through the repositioning and the three separate funds. That has taken its time in terms of our own officials adjusting to it, the review times and so on.

It's interesting. Honourable member Mourani raised a question about money, and this year there will be some money left. We have spent another \$10 million over where we were last year.

Obviously I'll look into it, as I mentioned I would. But in talking about the next fiscal year, in terms of ongoing programming—these are multi-year agreements, and some of them are several years out, which was also one of the changes made—it may be that is accounting for more of the funds being taken, because we're trying to maximize our opportunities within the funds available in the next fiscal year.

• (1635)

Mr. Robert Oliphant: One last question. It's a yes or no answer.

The Chair: Very quickly.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Is there money in this budget for compensation for Mr. Almalki, Mr. Elmaati, and Mr. Nureddin?

Mr. William Baker: Of course those are still active cases before the court. It would be improper for us to comment on that.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: So there's no money in the budget for that?

The Chair: We're going to go to Mr. Rathgeber, please, for five minutes.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you to the witnesses for your time today and for your service to Canadians in helping to keep us all safe.

I want to pick up on a theme of questions commenced by my colleague Mr. McColeman regarding disaster response. I was certainly happy to hear the government's announcement this week concerning coordinating the efforts for disaster response.

I'm specifically going to ask a question about the estimates because I understand that's why we're here. Gentlemen, Haiti is no longer on the front pages of our newspapers, but Canada's commitment to rebuilding Haiti is long-term. Two figures caught my attention in the supplementary estimates, on pages 165 and 167 respectively. One is \$1.118 million for the Canada Border Services

Agency for rebuilding Haiti, and the other is \$3.932 million for Haiti RCMP. My questions are to President Rigby and Assistant Commissioner Sweeney respectively. Could you enlighten me as to how those moneys are to be employed?

Mr. Stephen Rigby: Certainly, Mr. Chair.

In the normal course of events the border agency maintains a migration integrity officer in Haiti, whose job it is to work in the airport in Port-au-Prince checking documents, making sure the people getting on the plane are appropriately coming to Canada.

When the relief effort commenced, one of the things we did was to supplement that officer with two others in Haiti and another one in the Dominican Republic. The funds we saw through the supplementary estimates were substantially for the maintenance of those officers during the relief effort—the travel and support costs for them. There were also a few dollars for some of the coordination costs in Ottawa.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Thank you.

Deputy Commissioner William Sweeney (Senior Deputy Commissioner, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): The money that is reflected in the supplementary estimates is associated with our immediate response to the disaster in Haiti, not our long-term commitment to restoring the police service to a level of competency and professionalism that can make Haitians proud.

The \$3.9 million we spent was for the repatriation of the remains of our two members who were killed in the disaster; it was in relation to disaster victim identification and other immediate pressures that were facing our contingent in theatre. We had to bring people out—people who were traumatized as a result of the earthquake itself—and put people in.

More importantly, what is not reflected within the supplementary estimates is an increase in total of the Canadian police arrangement in providing services to Haiti. We've increased our establishment there to approximately 150 Canadian police officers, including providing a senior RCMP officer to be the deputy commissioner of operations in Haiti. It's a significant commitment.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Thank you. Both of your agencies are to be commended for your rapid response in helping that country redevelop from the disaster relief.

Commissioner Head, I want you to further elaborate on a question from Mr. Oliphant regarding construction of prisons. If I heard you correctly, I don't think you said there wasn't going to be a capital plan for prisons, and I'm not sure I understand the correlation between the closure of prison farms and expansion of prisons.

Was it not your response or perhaps the minister's response that there was going to be capital spent on prisons in terms of renovation and retrofitting and bringing existing facilities up to health and safety standards?

Mr. Don Head: Yes, we do have some money available for us to address some of the health and safety standard issues, some of the maintenance issues. The answer is yes.

• (1640)

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Thank you.

Those are my questions, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you. You had one minute left, but we'll move over to the Liberal Party now.

Mr. Holland.

Mr. Mark Holland: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much to the department officials for staying in the second hour to answer our questions.

Maybe I could start with Mr. Head.

In the e-mail that you had sent that I referenced earlier, when you referenced major new construction initiatives that you're going to be pursuing in the coming years, would it be correct to say that you weren't referencing new-build prisons over the next five years? Is that correct?

Mr. Don Head: Yes. The general communication that went out to staff was to talk about the efforts that we're going to have to put in place to address some of the refurbishing, renovation issues that are going on in the institutions, some of the temporary accommodation pieces. So there's nothing to imply that any new prisons have been approved.

Mr. Mark Holland: Approved or planned? Is there any planning for new-build prisons that you've been involved in at all?

Mr. Don Head: There's nothing approved or planned at this point, no.

Mr. Mark Holland: Perhaps I could ask you the question, then. Already the prison system is near bursting at the seams in many of the places I visited. There's going to be a massive influx. Even by your own e-mail, there's going to be a massive influx of new inmates.

Do you have an estimate of how many inmates there are going to be? Do you have a plan of where you're going to put them, and can you share both that plan and those estimates?

Mr. Don Head: We're still trying to assess what the actual numbers will be. There are several components that we're sifting through right now. We're waiting for the fiscal year to end to look at our population growth, because what we do is go back and look at our normal forecasts as they relate to just normal growth as a result of the flow that we've experienced over the years. We're assessing the impact of the bill tackling violent crime, and the Truth and Sentencing Act as well.

So we're not quite at the point where our numbers are finalized. Part of the job of the team that we're putting together is to help us to finalize those numbers and then the plans we're going with. So at this point we're in the early stages of bringing together our plans.

Mr. Mark Holland: There are many, many more pieces of legislation, so these numbers are only going to grow and grow. Already we're near a point of capacity.

Maybe you could do this. Do you have a deadline of when you're going to be able to provide those estimates and that plan, and do you see any possible way you can deal with that influx without building new prisons? Is that even conceivable?

Mr. Don Head: That's what we're assessing. There are several measures we're looking at right now, including temporary double bunking, the use of temporary accommodations, and the use of new living units within existing institutions. Once we've at least completed that short-term assessment, we'll then have a determination as to whether there is anything more needed.

Mr. Mark Holland: So in terms of a deadline, with all of these bills that are coming out and all of its implications for corrections, what is your deadline to have a plan and estimates?

Mr. Don Head: We're working through this year to have our long-term accommodation plan complete, because we're looking out to the year 2018. So over the course of this fiscal year we hope to complete our long-term accommodation.

Mr. Mark Holland: Before the end of this fiscal year?

Mr. Don Head: 2010-11.

Mr. Mark Holland: Mr. Rigby, would you concur with both Justices O'Connor and Iacobucci and with various House committees and Senate committees that have stated the imperative importance of having independent oversight of the Canada Border Services Agency? Would you agree with that?

Mr. Stephen Rigby: You stray into an area that basically represents advice that I give my minister, so I'll have to decline to answer directly.

But if I may perhaps in part respond to your question, the vast majority of the complaints that are brought against the Canada Border Services Agency go to issues of service and whether or not people received, in their view, appropriate service. We are doing everything we can to ensure that there's an independent or separate examination of those complaints within the agency.

Mr. Mark Holland: On the issue of the border closing and ongoing border issues in Cornwall and problems with Akwesasne, I know the minister—and I didn't have a chance to bring this up with him—has refused to meet with the mayor. He hasn't gone to visit the location. Most in Cornwall are obviously pretty upset about this. Can you itemize for me what specific actions the department is taking, what concrete measures are being taken to try to resolve this issue and bring the parties to a conclusion?

The Chair: Can you do that in one or two sentences?

Mr. Stephen Rigby: We have been pursuing discussions basically on three tracks.

We're in constant communication with the City of Cornwall, obviously, and I am well aware of the concerns that the mayor has there and I'm doing my best to respond to them. We are in ongoing dialogue with the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne in an attempt to resolve the issues they had that originally prompted us to leave the island, and we have had continuing discussions with our counterparts in the United States to see whether or not there might be opportunities to seek a resolution in cooperation with them.

•(1645)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Mourani.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I wanted to ask Mr. Sweeney whether the RCMP agrees with the minister and what he told us earlier about the removal of long guns from the firearms registry.

[*English*]

D/Commr William Sweeney: The RCMP performs three functions as it relates to firearms legislation. One, we're entrusted to administer the registry, and we do that as effectively as we possibly can. We enforce the law as it is defined by Parliament. The third of course is we provide advice to the government with respect to issues of law that are under consideration.

I think the minister was absolutely right that there is a wide divergence of opinion with respect to the efficacy of the firearms registry. That divergence of opinion, as has been stated by other members of this committee, includes members of the police community. We are currently working with the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police to present to our cabinet committee a position paper with respect to whether or not parliamentarians should consider information that is compelling that the registry promotes officer and public safety. I personally believe it does, and we're hoping that parliamentarians will take that into account when they debate this very important topic.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: I want to understand what you are saying. I do not understand. Are you for or against? My question is very simple. Is the RCMP, like the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, in favour of keeping the registry? Or is it that you have not made a decision and that you are going to send a report?

[*English*]

D/Commr William Sweeney: No. I believe that there is compelling evidence that the registry promotes officer and public safety. That's a personal opinion. I believe that there will be an opportunity for the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police to present to a cabinet committee that evidence.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Thank you. I apologize, but I did not understand, perhaps because of the translation.

I am going to address my next question to everyone because I do not know who to address it to specifically. I have already asked Mr. Rigby.

Who is in charge of the no-fly list?

[*English*]

Mr. Stephen Rigby: I believe I recall our conversation, and it would be the Department of Transport.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: The Department of Transport is responsible for preparing a list of the people who are not to get on a plane, even though it is a security matter. Is that right? I do not suppose any of you know whether there are minors on that list.

Mr. William Baker: Mr. Chair, I have no information about the list itself. Actually, I do not think that the public has access to that information.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: So it is very likely that minors are on that list and we will never know. Is that right? Yet, when this no-fly list came into effect, we were to be reported to each year. The goal was not to find out the names of the people on the list, but whether there were minors on it. What really interests me is finding out whether 12-year-old children cannot get on a plane with their parents because their names or their faces are a bit different.

Mr. William Baker: Mr. Chair, I suggest that the question be addressed directly to the Department of Transport.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Very well. I will ask it again.

Do I still have time, Mr. Chair?

[*English*]

The Chair: One minute.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Could Mr. Myles Kirvan provide us with the details of the budget for prevention and of the DNA in writing? As to the \$14 million, I would like to know what goes to Quebec, Ontario, the RCMP, whether it is an additional budget and whether it will fill the current gaps. It is all fine and dandy to have a law demanding DNA samples, but then we must be able to pay the labs so that they provide the samples in a timely manner. I do not want you to answer right now; I simply want you to send me the information in writing.

•(1650)

Mr. Myles Kirvan: I would like to clarify something. Previously, I said there were agreements between the federal government and the provinces and territories.

[*English*]

Just to be more precise, the agreement with the Province of Quebec is the same as the agreement with the Province of Ontario, whereby the federal government pays \$2.3 million per year to assist the Government of Quebec or the Government of Ontario with their own labs. The agreement for the Province of Quebec has not yet been signed by Quebec for this fiscal year. It's there. We've discussed it with them. The federal government commitment is there.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Davies, please.

Mr. Don Davies: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Head, it's a pleasure to see you here again. Our committee heard repeatedly from your ministry and experts that up to 80% of inmates in the federal system suffer from substance abuse issues or addictions. We have seen millions of dollars allocated by the government over the last few years targeted at interdiction policies, but we don't seem to see that much treatment.

I can tell you that, touring the prisons as we did, the anecdotal evidence we get is that there are insufficient treatment resources. I'm just wondering if you would concur with that and if you see any plans in the upcoming year to add treatment.

Mr. Don Head: Thank you for that question. An infusion of money is coming our way to help us provide more programs to offenders. As a result of the strategic review process that our department went through a couple of years ago, we are receiving reinvestment money that will peak at \$48 million within the next two years.

The vast majority of that money is targeted toward programs for offenders. This includes violence prevention programming. It includes the community maintenance program, which has a very significant substance abuse addictions component to it, programs specifically for aboriginal offenders, and the aboriginal pathways units we're opening up. So we—

Mr. Don Davies: Is that new money, Mr. Head?

Mr. Don Head: That's new money, yes.

Mr. Don Davies: Okay. Second, our tour has revealed that there is at present no single, stand-alone psychiatric facility for women inmates in the federal corrections system. I've heard your comments about there being no prison construction. Is there any talk within the ministry of establishing a stand-alone, separate women's psychiatric facility?

Mr. Don Head: This is one of the issues we're looking at in terms of a long-term accommodation plan: how to best address the issues, particularly for women with mental health problems.

Mr. Don Davies: Okay. Mr. Sweeney, I think I have this right. The government announced in the last session that it would be closing single-member detachments in a number of rural communities. I know it has in British Columbia. I know that mayors from certain small towns have publicly criticized this and said they felt this would make their communities less safe because in some cases the RCMP officers would be up to an hour away.

I'm just wondering if you have any comment on that and whether you think there's any possibility of adding two officers to a single-member detachment, because I think we all agree that, for officer safety, we need to have multiple officers at a detachment. I'm just wondering if you doubt there would be a better way to approach the issue of rural policing.

D/Commr William Sweeney: The discussions with respect to the minimum standard of resources within detachments is occurring at the provincial and territorial levels, not at the federal level, where we are providing services under contract to various jurisdictions. There are a number of discussions ongoing right across the country.

Recent events and recent tragedies, when members of the RCMP have been working alone, have caused us to reconsider our operational readiness policies and the whole notion of backup. I

have spent 11 of my years working in isolated and remote communities and can attest to the fact that the unfettered time off for RCMP members in these remote communities is obviously another concern that has to be taken into account.

In a modern policing system, I don't think one-person, two-person, or even three-person detachments are sustainable if we're serious about the health and well-being of our members and their safety.

• (1655)

Mr. Don Davies: I see.

I will turn to another matter. RCMP officers have been calling for the right to collectively bargain within an essential services restriction, like most police forces in the country. Can you comment on what the state of that movement is within the department? I think the government has indicated that it's resistant to this. Do you think the majority of your members would like to bargain their terms and conditions collectively, and if so, would that be a good thing?

D/Commr William Sweeney: It wouldn't be for me to pronounce an opinion with respect to the choices that members legitimately ought to make for themselves. I think one of the principles that the court in the MacDonnell decision recently articulated quite clearly is that members ought to be able to exercise free will with respect to their form of association and the form of bargaining, so it's not for a manager to offer an opinion.

The Chair: Time's up, Mr. Davies.

Mr. MacKenzie.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Head, I appreciate what your people do. It's interesting to note what different people see when they go through the prison system. I was also on that tour of Canadian prisons, and although I think there are opportunities for us to improve in most areas of everything we see in life, I saw a lot of good things being done in the Canadian prison system. I think my colleague said we're not doing enough, but I'm not sure we could ever do enough for everyone, where there are problems.

One of the areas that we all genuinely share is the issue about mental health in the prison systems and addiction. We recognize that likely 99% of the people who come into the prison system have the drug problem; they don't get it in the prison system.

I know that you're doing good things. We need to see more people there. But are there in fact all that many people out there whom you can recruit into the prison system, given that the prisons are frequently located geographically in areas that would be under-served in many respects? Is that one of the major problems you face?

Mr. Don Head: Thank you for that question. That is one of the challenges we have, particularly in relation to the issue of mental health.

I am extremely proud of my staff. They do a tremendous job every single day in every institution in the communities across the country. But as you have pointed out and as this committee has seen in their travels, there are challenges, and one of them very clearly is locating and being able to recruit the types of professionals we need.

As some members in this committee who have institutions in their ridings know, in the more remote areas it is difficult to find psychologists, to find psychiatric nurses to come and to work in those communities and stay there, partly because there are greater opportunities and better-paying opportunities closer to larger cities. This is a challenge. It's one we're trying to tackle every single day, trying to come up with new strategies, new approaches, but as I've pointed out to this committee and a Senate committee, this is one of my largest challenges in terms of the mental health portfolio.

As I have pointed out before too, one of the things I really do not want to do in running a federal penitentiary service is become the default mental health system for this country. Although I have some legal obligations to meet in terms of the legislation, I don't want to become resourced to the point that I become the default system for all mental health issues.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: That's fair enough.

Mr. Rigby, I think some issues were brought up earlier, and maybe some misinformation, with respect to the cost of arming the border people. I'm not sure you got the opportunity to completely answer the question. Having been on the committee when this was addressed a long time ago, I'm aware that there was much more involved in the costs associated with the arming. I have to say that as a member of this side, I'm very pleased by what I see with the Canadian Border Services, their interdiction of firearms and so on at the border. There has to be a sense by the people there that they feel far more secure approaching vehicles knowing that they are armed. They don't know what's in the vehicles. We're starting to see larger numbers, I believe, of interdiction of firearms coming into the country.

Would you expand a little on what that money really purchased? It purchased a whole lot more than the arming of the officers, and I'm aware of that.

Mr. Stephen Rigby: The total amount that was budgeted for ten years basically represents the investment to convert an unarmed force to an armed force at the border. A lot of the costs that we have to incur, and we have incurred, go to building capacity to build clear policies and directions so that our officers can safely use the firearms appropriately. It's gone to the creation of a training capacity to make sure that we have good, qualified trainers, and we've worked with qualified forces around the country, including the RCMP.

It goes to making sure that we have range time for proper practice for our officers and it goes also to the modifications we make to our training or we are in the course of making to our training centre in Rigaud to make sure that we have a permanent capacity to run this program effectively so our officers are safe and the travelling public can be assured that they are qualified to use the firearms.

I think when you look at the cost of the program, a good barometer of what it costs to actually run it will be the permanent ongoing costs, which will be a little over \$100 million a year. I appreciate it's not a small amount, but that will represent the true cost of having an armed force at the Canadian border.

• (1700)

The Chair: We'll have to come back. You're out of time.

Mr. Wrzesnewskij, please.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll just continue on with that particular question.

Thank you for the correction. It's not \$1 billion, it's \$780 million, and I've noted here that it's for 4,800 of your officers to have revolvers. So the correct numbers would be \$165,000 per revolver in the hand of every Canada Border Service agent. Is that an effective use of taxpayer dollars, \$165,000 per revolver per officer?

Mr. Stephen Rigby: Well, I....

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij: In the context, of course that you said that in the past ten years there has not been a single death. In fact, it appears that there weren't even any serious life-threatening situations that your officers have faced.

Mr. Stephen Rigby: What I said, Mr. Chair, was that there had not been a single death. I deferred on the question of whether or not there had been assaults on my officers, and I will be happy to get back on that.

In terms of the policy of the government to move forward on arming border officers, I would not in any circumstance want to see a situation where we actually had to wait for a death in order to react to it. I'm not sure if that is a valid barometer of whether this policy is effective or not.

I would also make a little question about whether the math that you're using of simply dividing the total cost by the number of officers is valid. I think over time the cost of the weapon, the cost of the training, the cost of the support that goes into maintaining an armed force will be quite comparable to any armed force in Canada, police forces and others.

I think at the end of the day this will be an effectively implemented program. And given the circumstances that my officers have faced where there have been 63 cases of weapons having been drawn since the deployment of the program, 63 cases have been checked and validated as having been appropriate action on the part of the officers. This demonstrates to me that there have been circumstances where border officers have been placed in situations where their health and safety was compromised and was at risk.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij: What I'm questioning is the actual cost of the program and the spiralling cost, because you had said \$780 million but now you've added that there's an additional ongoing cost of \$100 million per year, which we'll see going forward, and that is \$20,000 per officer.

I'd like to turn to another subject, and my question is for Deputy Commissioner Sweeney. A number of years ago, but not that long ago, in June of 2007, during the public accounts committee investigation into the RCMP pension and insurance scandal, we had officers before the committee who talked about the access-to-information department within the RCMP. Some incredibly serious allegations emerged during that testimony. The committee was not seized with that particular issue. We were looking strictly at the pension insurance fund and not the ATIP—access to information—section, but there appeared to have been tremendous abuse taking place and continuing to go on in the ATIP section.

To refresh people's memories on some of the allegations, one allegation that was documented—and documents were provided to substantiate it—was that former Deputy Commissioner Gauvin, who resigned several days after these allegations emerged, had in fact called the ATIP officer into the former commissioner's boardroom and tried to do a switch of documents that were to be released. Allegations emerged that the ATIP computer system documents were not being entered onto the ATIP section, contrary to the rules and regulations, documents that perhaps might prove to be problematic or embarrassing. There were allegations that individuals out of deputy commissioners' offices talked to the officers in the ATIP section, telling them that they wanted a good—

• (1705)

The Chair: What's your question?

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: —ATIP shop like the one that existed in National Defence or DFAIT, which worked hand in hand but not for the same purposes as the ATIP sections work.

Has the RCMP investigated those very serious allegations, and if so, what has been done to fix the ATIP within the RCMP?

The Chair: You're out of time, but we could have a brief response.

D/Commr William Sweeney: I believe all of those allegations were reviewed in the context of Mr. David Brown's review of the whole issue of pension administration and all of the improprieties that occurred and allegations that arose from that, but that's an assumption. I would have to confirm that.

And in terms of the ATIP branch, the commissioner of the RCMP appointed Sheila Bird, somebody who is not a member of the RCMP, into a very senior executive position. The ATIP branch falls under her jurisdiction, and she has made a number of reforms and changes, so it is my understanding that the ATIP branch has made significant improvements in how it administers the law.

The Chair: Mr. Norlock, please.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I have some questions for Mr. Head. I'll start off by asking you to comment on the statistics I'm going to give you. With regard to the prison farms, I'm told that about 19 out of 15,000 inmates have actually obtained employment in agriculture. Could you comment on the veracity of that statistic?

I also came across something today that I think better explains how we could best utilize the time people spend in our prisons to prepare them for when they get released. It is a CBC story that came out very recently about prison inmates in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, at the Riverbend Institution, who contributed five hours to the construction of a 2,000-square-foot house owned by Mr. Matthew Charles and his wife and four children. The story goes on to say that some of the inmates who were constructing that house, because of the experience in carpentry, etc., actually were employed immediately upon being released.

I also observed some of the good work performed by individuals training people at the Warkworth Institution. You can actually get your sandblasting papers. I was told by the trainer that some of the inmates actually received employment offers before they even left

the prison, and it's very rare that when they get their sandblasting ticket they ever come back.

I also saw people making furniture using modern machinery, computer-operated machinery, and when inmates were released they would be able to find employment in that area.

Could you comment on some of the other things going on with CORCAN in our institutions, where people are actually receiving training for jobs that are actually out there and that exist?

Mr. Don Head: Thank you for the question.

In terms of the numbers you presented, it's actually 99 out of 25,000 who went on to find jobs in the agriculture sector, so it's a relatively low number.

In terms of the CBC report you talked about, they actually put 5,000 hours of work into that 2,000-square-foot house. There were 19 offenders from the minimum security institution, Riverbend, which is adjacent to the Saskatchewan Penitentiary. It was a tremendous project all the way around in terms of providing offenders with the current-day skills they'll need to find jobs in the labour market. Several of those inmates have finished their sentences and actually have taken up jobs in the construction field as a result of the training they received.

We had a similar project out in Mountain Institution in British Columbia, where we were doing house framing. Again, it's another project that is giving inmates the kinds of skills that are going to allow them to find long-lasting jobs when they go out into the community.

Part of our focus right now as it relates to CORCAN is on making sure that our training and skills development reflect the need in the labour market so that offenders can find those kinds of jobs that pay a decent wage, allow them to support their families, and move on with their lives. We've had some very good projects in the last little while.

For example, in Saskatchewan as well, at the Saskatchewan Penitentiary, inmates have been involved in the welding program to fix those blades that do the plowing of the highways in Saskatchewan. One never thinks about those things running over the roads during all those winter months and getting worn down or about who fixes them. Well, there is a significant need in that province for that kind of skill, and we've started to do some work in Prince Albert.

The kinds of activities you talked about at Warkworth Institution are, again, relevant trades and skills that offenders need. We've also been involved in a project that has seen inmates refurbishing military vehicles, not the fighting vehicles or the combat vehicles, but the maintenance types of vehicles like the big cranes. DND has been very pleased with the work the offenders have done around those projects.

Again, these are the kinds of initiatives that we're looking for and that give offenders the skills they need to find the jobs that will help them stay out and not come back into conflict with the law.

• (1710)

Mr. Rick Norlock: Is there any time left?

The Chair: No. Sorry, but your time is up.

We'll go to the Bloc Québécois and Monsieur Desnoyers.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desnoyers (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is for Mr. Head. I am sharing my time with my colleague.

My question is simple. In the main estimates, we are looking at a \$255 million increase. Does that include building new correctional facilities or are you planning on adding as many units to the existing sites as those already on the sites?

[English]

Mr. Don Head: The \$255 million, which represents about an 11% increase in our main estimates, reflects \$157 million in operating costs and \$98 million in capital.

In terms of the operating costs, there are several initiatives. One is what we call the national—

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: Mr. Head, my question is simple. Are you planning on building new institutions or additional units on the existing sites?

[English]

Mr. Don Head: As I mentioned in my answer previously, at this time we are not planning to build new institutions. We're going through the planning process to determine what the needs are going to be based on—

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: Are you planning on building new units on the existing sites?

[English]

Mr. Don Head: That would be the first wave of what we're looking at. Yes.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: So that is going to happen?

[English]

Mr. Don Head: That's what we're looking at. Yes.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Thank you.

Where are you going to start? In Quebec? Ontario?

[English]

Mr. Don Head: As I mentioned earlier, this is the planning we're going through right now. We're trying to ascertain the exact numbers and then to determine where the best locations are for those temporary accommodations, the double-bunking, and any new units that we might build in existing institutions.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Thank you, Mr. Head.

My question is for Mr. Fadden, who is new to the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, I believe.

I noticed—and correct me if I am wrong—that the 2007-2008 budget was \$389 million. The 2008-2009 report is not on your site. I want to believe that you are an intelligence agency, but we would still like to have access to the figures. I guess it is always the same. We are talking about an additional \$28 million over two years. And that is almost half a billion dollars.

Could you tell me what you are doing with all that money? You are not the police, you have no weapons. Actually, you do not have anything: you are analysts. How many analysts are there? Is it the trips to Afghanistan that are expensive? I am quite intrigued. We are talking about almost half a billion dollars, after all.

• (1715)

Mr. Richard Fadden (Director, Canadian Security Intelligence Service): Yes, that seems like a lot of money. We have about 3,000 employees. We have some at our head office in Ottawa and others all across Canada. We have four regional offices and a number of district offices. We do actually have officers in Afghanistan and more than 30 people abroad. That is just the cost of the staff.

Making a security system work, collecting and coordinating information, requires a lot of technology. Coordinating our activities with those of security services around the world requires a lot of energy and effort. If we add the benefits provided to our employees and the capital costs, all that put together amounts to approximately half a billion dollars.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Is it your practice to hire retired people from the services or from the RCMP, as is done in the army, where two salaries are paid?

Mr. Richard Fadden: Honestly, I think it is being done, but it is relatively rare. We used that method in security screening, for example, when we have to determine whether people are entitled to security clearance. We do not have enough employees in that area, but the number of requests keeps increasing. If that interests you, I would be pleased to provide you with that information.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Yes, I would really like to have that information. Thank you. I think we will be seeing each other again.

[English]

The Chair: You have 30 seconds after you're done.

Okay, thank you very much.

We will now go on to Mr. Rathgeber, please.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I will be sharing my time with Mr. McColeman.

I only have one supplemental question for Assistant Commissioner Sweeney, and it was in response to a question Ms Mourani asked you about the long-gun registry.

I appreciate a couple of things. I appreciate that you were providing a personal opinion and not necessarily the opinion of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

I look at the estimates for 2010-2011 and a couple of line items here: \$56 million for firearms licensing and supporting infrastructure, and a further \$22 million for firearms registration. Again, I appreciate that there is no suggestion that hand-guns are not going to be registered, and there's certainly no suggestion that the licensing issue is going to be dismantled.

My question nonetheless is, in an era of finite and sometimes scarce resources, could whatever portion of that \$78 million that is going to be saved should the long-gun registry be dismantled...in your view, could those scarce resources not be better deployed to promote what you said in your own words, officer safety and public safety?

D/Commr William Sweeney: There are always opportunities to reinvest money in other ventures, but I believe that money is well invested, and I maintain that it does promote officer and public safety.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Thank you.

Mr. Phil McColeman: My supplemental question would be to Mr. Rigby and it would pick up on Mr. Wrzesnewskyj's comments on arming our border guards.

Somewhere in the comments today it's been mentioned that there have been several incidents—I forget the number, but maybe you can clarify it for me—where people are coming to the border as armed individuals and our border guards have to stand back and retreat, and then a supplemental police service would have to arrive to deal with the situation.

I would like your views on the cost of an incident like that—the cost of whatever police service is called. Let's say it was in Fort Erie, so the Fort Erie Municipal Police Service or the OPP would be called in. I'd like your views on the types of things and safety issues that are faced in those situations.

• (1720)

Mr. Stephen Rigby: Thank you.

I think a lot of the thought that went into the original policy decision to arm border guards went to the issue of the evolving environment in which they work, speaking from a law enforcement point of view or from a national security point of view. I think that increasingly the officers who work at the border see the evolution of their role from a tax collector twenty years ago to more of a law enforcement officer today—not a policeman, I recognize, but a law enforcement officer.

I think the prevalence of criminality that has grown in border locations does go to the issue of why a decision was taken to arm the guards. And there have indeed been instances—I think the minister referred to one—where because there were armed and dangerous lookouts that were known to officers, they decided under Labour Canada rules to withdraw their services because they felt their health and safety was in danger, and that was completely within their rights.

Yes, obviously there are ancillary costs that would go to calling in other police forces. There are questions of response time that it would take for those other police forces to get to the border. Those I think all have to go into the reckoning as to whether or not this is an effective policy decision. I believe generally speaking that the

evolving environment in which my officers work quite often supports that.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Do I have more time, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Three seconds.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Okay, just a quick question of Mr. Baker. Noticing on page 21 of the estimates that there is money allocated for short-term sustainability of policing agreements and program review with first nations policing programs, I'm just wondering what the objectives are of those review programs with first nations policing, and is there any intent to review the cooperation between the police services and the enforcement of tobacco smuggling laws?

Mr. Myles Kirvan: If I could just answer it, this is a fundamental look, a comprehensive look at the first nations policing program in terms of funding, delivery mechanisms, adequacy, the kinds of services being delivered, and so on, and it's really about effectiveness and responsiveness—is it fulfilling the objectives that were set out for it in terms of augmenting in the provincial jurisdiction police services for first nations that are culturally appropriate, and so on.

An issue like that could come up through the consultations. Of course we're talking to all the provinces, to the first nations, and so on. There could be other policing issues, cooperation issues, and so on, that could come up as well. It's not the main focus of it, but those issues could arise.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Wrzesnewskyj, please.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Deputy Commissioner Sweeney, I'd like to continue with the investigation the public accounts committee did into the RCMP. Superintendent Christian Picard in that testimony said something that was quite poignant, and I'd like to read it:

When I joined the RCMP, as with any member of the RCMP, I swore to uphold the law and to respect it. I ask myself this question every day: if the RCMP does not respect the Access to Information Act, who will? For five years I made sure I respected the spirit of the act. Of course, this meant that I fought epic battles with senior managers. That was not always easy within a paramilitary organization like the RCMP. You try to protect the organization against itself, but that is often perceived as being disloyal to the organization.

In later testimony it came out that when Superintendent Picard had tried to do what was right, soon afterward he was seconded to Africa to the Ivory Coast, and when I asked him what happened when he came back, he said they didn't have a job for him. He stayed home.

I understand that four out of the five key whistle-blowers during the RCMP investigation are no longer with the force. They did a tremendous service. We're all proud of those officers. They did what was right and they tried to uphold the rules and the law. They knew they were going to pay a personal cost and they all felt that it was worth the personal cost for the greater public service that they had made by coming forward.

As a result, there were a number of reports. You had the parliamentary committee reviewing this for about a year and a half; 31 recommendations were unanimously passed by the committee. The government finally did the Brown report. Two former commissioners took part in the panel that wrote the Brown report. It was called “Rebuilding the Trust—Report of the Task Force on Governance and Cultural Change in the RCMP”, 49 recommendations. The deadline for all of them to be acted upon was this past December.

Of the 49 Brown report recommendations and the 31 recommendations unanimously passed by the parliamentary committee, how many have been acted upon?

• (1725)

D/Commr William Sweeney: I could probably talk about transformation in a much more fulsome fashion as it relates to the 49 recommendations of the task force. I know that we responded to the parliamentary committee with respect to the 31 recommendations, but I don't have that information right in front of me.

There are some complications with respect to how I can respond to how the RCMP dealt with the 49 recommendations, because some of those recommendations were not to the RCMP; they were to government. We had control over some elements of those recommendations but not complete control. Certainly we did not have control over some of the more governance related issues, such as a renewed public complaints entity, governance, and the board of management. But the RCMP has been very active in moving forward on the recommendations from the task force. In fact, the government appointed a reform implementation council that has regularly reported. Actually, they are about to table the fourth report on progress since the reform implementation council was initiated.

Generally speaking, if I may take some liberties, my read of the reform implementation council's assessment of our progress has been that they are favourably impressed with what we have done. Having said that, we are probably harder markers on ourselves. We can do much better than we have and will continue to do so.

As an explanation, and not as an excuse, we have been enormously busy with things like the G-8, the G-20, the Olympics, and our day-to-day operational requirements. It is like redesigning an airplane in flight. Having said that, we have been very successful in dealing with the Treasury Board. We have new authorities delegated to us, which was an issue Mr. Brown raised with us. We have announced a new external review policy and are actively engaged.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: If I may, because there is so little time, could you provide the committee with a checklist of recommendations and how they've been acted upon? Unfortunately, the minister is not here, so I can't ask the minister—he left after an hour—whether he could provide the same for those that were relevant for the government to act upon.

D/Commr William Sweeney: I'd be very pleased to do that, and I will also supply the reform implementation council's reports.

The Chair: Thank you.

We have one and a half minutes left. We'll go to Mr. MacKenzie.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Commissioner, I find it quite interesting that my colleague goes back to the years 2000 to 2003 to dig up the issues that were under a previous government. We are trying to fix them. This government is trying to fix those issues.

I think the Brown report has been discussed. Certainly parts of it have. I believe that we got reports indicating that the vast majority of the recommendations that could be covered have been covered. I think most things are up to date.

I am more interested, as we go forward—we are fixing some of those past things—in the training at the depot, in the money that has gone in there, and in the additional police officers. Those all have to be things that are good for the force.

I am just wondering if you could elaborate a little bit on those issues.

D/Commr William Sweeney: Thank you.

I agree that since four years ago, three years ago, we have come a long way. We have filled our vacancies in contract policing. As you may recall, Mr. Brown reflected that there were significant challenges in resource levels across the country. Last year we trained over 1,700 cadets, which is absolutely an incredible number.

We have increased our investment in training a full continuum of leadership, leadership being an issue Mr. Brown also identified with respect to things that needed reform within the RCMP. He talked about bureaucratic systems. There has been an enormous amount of work on all of those things, which I will be pleased to table.

I am confident that the RCMP has moved light years. I was mentioning to the deputy minister a few minutes ago that it is like your children. Day to day you don't necessarily see a change, but all of a sudden they're in elementary school. All of a sudden they're in high school, and suddenly they're out the door. Then they come back and ask for \$30,000 or thereabouts.

Nevertheless, I believe that we are making that type of change.

• (1730)

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Thank you. I really appreciate that. I think it is like General Hillier said: it was a decade of darkness.

The Chair: I would like to thank all our witnesses very much for coming. I think it's been a very useful session.

This meeting stands adjourned.

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