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Thursday, November 29, 2012

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Chair

Mr. Dave MacKenzie

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC)): We will start the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, meeting number 54, pursuant to Standing Order 81(5). In accordance with the orders of the day, we are dealing with supplementary estimates (B), 2012-13, votes 1b, 5b, 30b, and 35b under Justice, referred to the committee on Thursday, November 8, 2012.

We have the Minister of Justice, the Hon. Rob Nicholson, appearing with two officials, Ms. Morency and Mr. Pentney.

Minister, I am sure you are more than familiar with this, so if you have an opening....

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm here before you today to answer any questions regarding the items in supplementary estimates (B).

Mr. Chairman, among my responsibilities is ensuring that our justice system operates in a transparent and efficient manner. In my dual role as Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, I'm responsible for a number of organizations under what is known as the justice portfolio, notably the Department of Justice itself, the Canadian Human Rights Commission, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, the Office of the Commissioner for Federal Judicial Affairs, the Office of the Information Commissioner of Canada, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner, the Supreme Court of Canada, the Courts Administration Service, and the Public Prosecution Service of Canada, or the PPSC.

Our government, as you know, has been working to ensure that our justice system continues to evolve as our society changes so that Canadians can continue to be proud of it. We work closely in law enforcement with our partners in the provinces and territories and other stakeholder groups to better align the justice system to meet the needs and expectations of Canadians and to ensure that victims have a greater voice within it.

Our government continues to pursue criminal law reforms to better protect public safety. Most recently, with the coming into force of all components of the Safe Streets and Communities Act, we are targeting sexual predators who exploit our children; ending the use of conditional or house arrest for serious, violent, and property crimes; creating tougher sentences for criminal activities that involve illicit drugs; and protecting society from violent and repeat young offenders.

We're also responding to the concerns of crime victims by proposing in Bill C-37 to increase offender accountability by doubling the victim surcharge and making it mandatory in all cases.

Our measures will continue to increase the confidence of Canadians in our criminal justice system. The items that the Department of Justice has submitted to be tabled under supplementary estimates (B) will further our work toward protecting Canadians and ensuring the safety of our streets and communities.

Mr. Chairman, you will note that the Department of Justice net increase is \$22.7 million, comprising \$1.1 million in vote 1 and \$21.6 million in vote 5.

One major expenditure is the renewal and the continuation of the funding for the aboriginal justice strategy. Over the past 20 years, the aboriginal justice strategy has been an effective and culturally relevant alternative to the main street justice system for aboriginal offenders, delivered in cooperation with police, judges, and counsel. This strategy assists in reducing crime and helps to provide alternatives to incarceration for less serious crimes in appropriate circumstances. We recognize that these programs do make a difference by helping to steer aboriginal people away from crime and helping put an end to a cycle of violence.

The strategy has operated on a cost-share basis with provinces and territories and has been renewed through Budget 2012. Renewing this strategy will assist in breaking the cycle of crime escalation on and off reserve in urban, rural, and northern aboriginal communities, as well as to support underserved communities by giving them the tools they need to fight crime and to help victims.

Mr. Chairman, part of our request for funding is for the delivery of immigration and refugee legal aid in the provinces and territories. While we recognize that the administration of justice, including legal aid, is a provincial responsibility, we believe that working in collaboration with our provincial and territorial partners is important to ensure a strong justice system. The funding we are requesting helps support Canada's refugee determination system to prevent delays in processes caused by adjournments and postponements. It also helps address the unique circumstances of refugee claimants, such as the need for interpreters.

In this same package of expenditure is funding for management of court ordered counsel in federal prosecutions in other jurisdictions. This arrangement helps contain costs by having the provinces and territories manage these court orders on behalf of the crown.

•(1535)

We are also requesting funding, Mr. Chair, to address challenges in security admissibility cases. This includes facilitating the use of information in immigration proceedings under Division 9 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, as well as maintaining a list of special advocates who are authorized to deal in classified information and to assist persons involved in security certificate cases. These funds will allow these immigration proceedings to operate in a manner that will ensure the rights and freedoms of those involved in such cases.

Mr. Chair, we are also asking for funding to enhance activities pursuant to the Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act related to the cessation and vacation of refugee status in order to deter abuse of Canada's refugee protection system. It will assist the Department of Justice to provide legal services, including advisory and litigation services, on a broad range of issues to the Canada Border Services Agency and Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

Mr. Chair, the supplementary estimates also indicate a net decrease of approximately \$700,000. This represents transfers of funds to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions to support the work of crown witness coordinators who work in the northern offices of the Public Prosecution Service of Canada under victims of crime initiatives in the territories. Funds are also being transferred to fulfill salary adjustments under the collective agreements for staff who provide internal services for the Public Prosecution Service.

I would like to thank you and your committee members for the important work you do and for giving me this opportunity to make some opening remarks.

The funding that the Justice portfolio has received brings results for Canadians, and I will do my utmost to ensure these funds will continue to be spent wisely.

Thank you. I am now prepared for questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

We will begin with Madame Boivin.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the witnesses for joining us. I also want to thank the minister for spending the first hour with us.

Last time you appeared, while we were discussing certain aspects of the budget, we realized that there were cuts to various services within your department.

Have those cuts been made? I would like some clarifications about that. If you cannot provide them to us today, you could perhaps promise to send them to us. Regarding staff, one of the things we need to know is where the Department of Justice stands. Some savings were supposed to have been made. You will see how this is related to this new budget request. We are talking about supplementary estimates here.

You and department representatives told us last time that cuts had been made, but that there should be no impacts. We would like to know whether that's actually the case. We would also like some details regarding this situation.

Why do you need all the other extra amounts requested besides additional funds? Has some sort of an error been made? I think you understand the gist of my question.

•(1540)

[*English*]

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Thank you very much, Madame Boivin.

The economic action plan of 2012 announced by the Department of Justice will, as we indicated, achieve savings of approximately \$67 million by the year 2014-15.

We are modernizing our operations to focus more on our core mandates in new ways of doing business while safeguarding Canada's justice system. At the same time, we will maintain standards of excellence.

To achieve the savings required, the Justice workforce will be reduced by 6.5% over three years. We're making use of attrition and volunteer layoffs to achieve our human resource objectives. To the extent possible, and to be as transparent as possible, the department has provided employees with timely information concerning the work for us at Justice, and you might be interested to know that the impact on human resources has been finalized for the most part. Again, this is part of what we indicated.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Is it possible to have more details of that in the second hour, or maybe even have some documents furnished to the committee?

Hon. Rob Nicholson: We will do anything we can to accommodate you.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: We would appreciate it because it's a big amount. You are talking about \$67 million in savings—

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Over the course of three years.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: I understand. If we could have the details, it would help the committee to see if the justice ministry is on the go, and which services are really

[*Translation*]

affected by those budget cuts.

My next question is more specifically about your estimates.

You and your provincial and territorial colleagues recently participated in the conference on justice. Provinces and territories made some requests in matters of legal aid. I see here that additional funding is set aside for that. Your provincial and territorial counterparts also talked about perhaps separating legal aid provided to first nations and more general legal aid. What do you think about that, Mr. Minister?

Also with regard to legal aid, last time, you talked about budget cuts similar to those today. Yet you have come back and are asking for additional funding. I'm having a some difficulty understanding your department's vision regarding that.

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Yes, as you pointed out, I have had discussions on this matter. In fact, I do this on a regular basis with my provincial and territorial counterparts. As I indicated in my opening remarks, legal aid is administered and funded for the most part by provincial governments. We do have a responsibility. We do transfer funds to them. In the supplementary estimates, as you will note in your examination of them, part of that is to continue funding in that area. This is consistent with funding we've had in previous years. This is not a new initiative by the Government of Canada. The budgetary process in this country sometimes works out that way—it's not all part of the first wave of expenditures and funding. This is why we have these supplementary budgetary exercises.

I didn't quite answer the second part of your first question. You asked about what we are looking for, whether what we did was valuable. Your examination of the supplementary estimates will confirm that this is money well spent. As members of this committee, it is your job and responsibility to examine this.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the minister and his staff for attending today.

Minister, last week you were in Montreal talking about the not criminally responsible direction or intent the government will consider in legislation next year. That, just to let you know, was highly spoken of in my province, particularly in my area of Merritt and the Nicola Valley. That has been an issue for a while. While you can only speak so much to those things, I just wanted to let you know that it was well received.

In regard to my questioning, the government introduced the Safe Streets and Communities Act on September 20, 2011, fulfilling its commitment to introduce several law and order bills aimed at combatting crime and terrorism. The Safe Streets and Communities Act received royal assent on March 13, 2012. Amendments that eliminated conditional sentences for serious and violent crimes—the final component of the Safe Streets and Communities Act—finally came into force on November 20, 2012.

Could you please explain how this comprehensive legislative reform will ensure that our streets and communities are kept safe, and that victims' rights are put ahead of criminals' rights?

• (1545)

Hon. Rob Nicholson: They're all part of a continuing process.

Thank you for your comments with respect to our press conference on the subject of not criminally responsible. I have heard quite a bit about this as I've gone across the country. I think the committee will be pleased with the legislation we will table in the new year.

That being said, the bill you were referring to was actually a compilation of a number of bills that died on the order paper. Some of them I personally introduced about four times—the bill specifically with respect to drug traffickers and drug dealers. I was quite pleased that this was put together, because it sends out an appropriate message.

In the area of drugs, we know it can be a very difficult problem. We know the problems when we see what has taken place in other countries. We want to make sure this does not happen to Canada. We are taking steps, because, from what I have been told, for instance, the people who bring drugs into this country are part of organized crime. These are mobsters who are sophisticated in their operations. Again, it's not the person who is just doing this as a one-off or somebody who has unfortunately become addicted and is just bringing in a few drugs. What they tell me is that this is organized crime. So we're sending out an appropriate message that if you get involved with this kind of activity, there are serious consequences in Canada, and that has come into effect.

We also send out a very clear message to those who would abuse children. I am particularly pleased with the two new sections introduced into the Criminal Code: one, where an individual who gives sexually explicit material to a young person for the reason of grooming that child—that has now become a crime in Canada; two, I am particularly pleased as well that we have plugged a gap, in my opinion, in the Criminal Code where two adults discuss with each other how to set up and how to exploit a child for sexual exploitation. That is now a crime in Canada. One of the things I particularly like about both of those is that we are intervening before all the abuse and the exploitation of that child takes place. We're trying to intervene to stop these individuals from going ahead with their plans. To the extent that we intervene to protect children, I think these are very important steps.

There are other components, as you know. Reducing the availability of house arrest is important. I've been told by people that if an individual is arrested or convicted and is immediately sent home, that can be challenging, in terms of people's confidence in the criminal justice system. It is a challenge to the individual, who we want to make sure gets help and understands the gravity of the crimes he has committed.

It's comprehensive, but as you know, it was part of a number of bills that we did not get passed in previous parliaments. We put them all together, and I'm very pleased and proud of the fact that now all have been implemented and are now part of the law of this country.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Cotler, go ahead

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Minister, for being with us today and for being comprehensive in your initial statement.

In the matter of aboriginal justice, the main estimates 2012–13 provided for a \$12.3 million reduction in funding for the aboriginal justice strategy. However, the supplementary estimates of 2012–13 include voted appropriations of nearly \$12 million. My first question is, has the aboriginal justice strategy therefore correspondingly been renewed, and if so, for how long and what might its annual funding be?

The second question is related. The department's website states that funding under the capacity building fund is only available for fiscal year 2012–13. Therefore, proposed projects must be completed by March 31, 2013. My question on this one is, does this mean that the capacity building fund will no longer be available after 2012–13?

• (1550)

Hon. Rob Nicholson: I wouldn't draw that conclusion, Mr. Cotler.

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Neither am I. I'm just asking a question.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: That's good. I say that I don't want you to draw that conclusion just in case you may have been going down that road.

With respect to the aboriginal justice strategy, it has been renewed on the same terms it was in the previous year. The funding will take us up to the end of this fiscal year. As I indicated in my opening remarks, I think it has many things to commend itself for. Certainly my analysis of it over the years is consistent with that. Again, the funding is up to and including the end of this fiscal year.

Now with respect to the other issue, many of these things are... Sometimes there's funding for two years, sometimes there's permanent funding, sometimes there's year-to-year funding, and again, this is all part of the budgetary process. We all make inputs and suggestions on those. As I indicated to you about a year ago with respect to aboriginal justice, we wait for the budget to come out, but we all work towards the same goals.

Hon. Irwin Cotler: If I can, I'll turn to the question of security certificates, where the supplementary estimates propose \$6.7 million for the department—I think you know the particulars here—to address a series of challenges in the management of security inadmissibility cases, etc.

My question is really in the matter of protecting classified information and immigration proceedings and the like, and attaining assurances against torture and exceptional removal cases.

I have two questions. One, can classified information come from information that had been extracted under torture? And two, under what circumstances may an individual be removed from Canada even if there is a risk of torture?

Hon. Rob Nicholson: We are very careful, Mr. Cotler, as you know, with respect to the removal of anyone, and we do everything we can to make sure an individual is not subject to torture. It's not just with respect to special advocates, to individuals who are subject to extradition proceedings—anybody for whatever reason we remove out of the country. Pursuant to the laws of this country we are always concerned to make sure that that individual is not subject to torture.

Many times as Minister of Justice I have asked for assurances, for instance, from other countries that the death penalty will not be

applicable to individuals charged with serious crimes. This most often takes place when we get extradition requests from the United States. If the jurisdiction is one in which there is a death penalty, we always seek assurances that that will not take place.

In addition to the United States, where an individual may be subject to leaving this country, we always look...and many times we require assurances to make sure the individual is treated properly and fairly and is not subject to either torture or the death penalty, or to anything else. We do our part to do that.

Is there anything else you wanted to add, Deputy?

Mr. Bill Pentney (Deputy Minister of Justice and Deputy Attorney General of Canada, Department of Justice): No, Minister. I think the answer is comprehensive.

Obviously the procedures that have been put in place and the funding that's being sought in supplementary estimates to support the special advocates program are in recognition that the Supreme Court has decided that this kind of a process is appropriate for dealing with information that should be protected from public disclosure. So we're seeking to comply with that, and we're seeking funding to enable us to continue to comply with that.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Findlay.

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Delta—Richmond East, CPC): Thank you.

Thank you, Minister and officials, for being here today. We really appreciate it.

Minister, in 2007 the government announced the federal victims strategy and committed \$52 million over four years to respond to the needs of victims of crime. As part of the economic action plan, Budget 2011, that strategy was renewed at a funding level of \$13 million per year. Budget 2012 built on that funding by adding \$7 million over five years, \$5 million of which, as I understand it, will be directed to the creation and enhancement of child advocacy centres across Canada.

I went to the opening of one of those, actually, in Vancouver. It's very impressive what they're doing there to help children who are victims or witnesses of crime to not have to be overwhelmed by the system in which they find themselves.

With the new funding announced in Budget 2012, my understanding is the fund will have \$11.6 million each year available to fund provinces, territories, and non-governmental organizations whose projects, activities, and operations support the objective of the federal victims strategy.

We would appreciate you giving us an idea of what that federal victims strategy includes.

• (1555)

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Thank you very much for your comments.

As you know, since 2006 we've committed over \$90 million to victims services. In many cases they are enhancing programs in place—victims funds. We have made a number of extensions and a considerable financial commitment.

One of them that is brand new is with respect to child advocacy centres, as you indicated in your question to me. This is something I feel very strongly about. Those of us who practise law have all heard how traumatic the court process can be for a child who has already been victimized by somebody. The court process, the interrogation, the police stations, the medical examinations—all of these can add to the trauma of a child who has been victimized.

I can't tell you how impressed I was by this concept in some meetings I was having in Edmonton about four or five years ago. It turned out, by coincidence, they were opening up one in St. Catharines, which is very close to my constituency of Niagara Falls, and when I received an invitation to go have a look at it, I was only too pleased to do so.

Again, I think to have a child-friendly atmosphere, where all the services are brought to the children, is a huge step forward in the better treatment of children who unfortunately have had this kind of trauma inflicted upon them. When I asked, as appropriate, how these were being funded, it seemed to be very hit and miss. To the credit of law enforcement agencies, and certainly in my area, they helped contribute, and also some of the municipalities, so I was very pleased and very supportive several years ago when the budget of 2009, I believe, included \$5 million for child advocacy centres.

As you quite correctly pointed out, over and above that, and even in this time of restraint for all levels of government...I was pleased and appreciative that in the budget of 2011-12 there was an addition of a little over \$5 million for child advocacy centres. So I'm very pleased and proud of the fact that the Government of Canada is involved with this.

I'm going to predict that this is going to become the norm in Canada, as to how we treat children who have been sexually exploited or who have been traumatized by assaults, and I think this is something in which we can all take a great deal of pride.

Yes, there are many components of these budgets and, again, this is a time, of course, of restraint for all levels of government, all levels overall for departments, but I was very pleased to see that. It's consistent with what we have done and said with respect to victims.

I remember about six years ago now we initiated the federal ombudsman for victims of crime. I thought that was an important step forward as well, to have an office that was devoted exclusively to the issues that concern victims in this country. I think that, too, was an idea whose time had come.

Yes, we have been very consistent on that. Whenever we bring in legislation, we want to know how it affects victims. Does it help victims? Certainly, in conjunction with the legislation, the different victims programs, one of which I've discussed in some detail, are all very important, and I'm very pleased and proud that they're part of the budgetary process.

• (1600)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Scott.

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And thank you again, Minister, for joining us.

Particularly because your answers tend to be very fulsome, Minister, I thought I would ask a few questions, ask your officials, the deputy minister and Ms. Morency, to take notes, and then we might actually carry on the discussion afterwards.

I have a series of questions. They're all related to the issue of the item on funding to address challenges in the security admissibility cases protecting classified information, obtaining assurances against torture. There's a line item for \$3.4 million, of which \$3 million more is needed.

The premise of these questions, so you understand where I'm coming from, is that to understand the costs, and therefore the need for an increase, we need to understand the process, the criteria, and the frequency that assurances are being sought.

My questions very briefly are the following.

One, why are current funds inadequate?

Second, what kind of activity increase is being envisaged, if such activity increase is being envisaged, and in particular to any particular countries where diplomatic assurances are viewed as likely to be necessary more and more?

Third, it's listed under Courts Administration Service, and I'm having a little bit of a hard time understanding what exactly the use of the funds will be in the diplomatic assurances context. What government actors are involved?

Fourth, is there a written policy or are there guidelines with criteria for determining whether assurances are to be sought, and when they're sought, whether they're adequate?

Fifth, are these assurances in our practice now legally binding? All of these have cost implications.

Sixth, the Supreme Court, in Suresh, places a lot of emphasis on monitoring as one component of reliability of assurances. Is monitoring built into our assurance system, and does that have any cost element for this number?

Last, can I be clear that we never use diplomatic assurances in advance of having already assessed whether there's a substantial risk of torture? That is, you can never just use diplomatic assurances; you have to know what the risk is.

Once I know the answers to these questions, I'll understand why we're looking for \$3 million, and I understand we might have to get this information later.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: You've asked quite a few questions there, and we'll attempt to get to them.

In terms of why more money is needed, we assess these on a regular, ongoing basis. You might say, well, why don't you just do it once a year and you should be able to figure this out? When we have a look at the ongoing processes and we get feedback from those who are either employed by the Department of Justice or are associated with it, in terms of these various costs...this is the whole supplemental estimates program, to try to make sure it squares with what actually is happening.

A number of issues that you raise, quite frankly, are with Public Safety. Nonetheless, if you're asking about the whole question of assurances, as I indicated in my answer to Mr. Cotler, these are investigated very carefully. We make an assessment of these. For instance, I'm directly involved with extradition in this country. We have people, who I believe have considerable expertise in this area, to look at this very, very carefully, and this is something that we look for. Unless we get those assurances on a number of the issues, as I indicated to Mr. Cotler, that will hold up or stop something.

Sometimes there can be challenges in this when you're dealing with different legal systems around the world, but we're very careful. We're not sending somebody outside of this country unless everything is in place and everything is as it should be in terms of what we are required to do. If you think about it, this is a huge change in status for an individual to be actually removed from a country and moved to another country. I, for one, am very careful with that, as I'm sure all previous justice ministers have been. When we get these requests, it's to make sure that what we're talking about are serious matters that can and will be determined and that there are proper assurances in place.

You ask, how do you determine that? This is the expertise I have with the people around me, and then, ultimately, we have to make those decisions. But I'm confident in the cases that I have been involved with over the last six years that we have fulfilled our responsibilities on that.

Deputy, did you have anything additional on these questions?

• (1605)

Mr. Bill Pentney: Mr. Chairman, I could just make two quick points, and then I've no doubt we'll come back in a subsequent round.

Very quickly, the premise of the question was that this is entirely new money. This is a renewal of a program that has been in existence since 2008, first, and, second, the money for the Courts Administration Service relates to the cost associated with providing secure facilities, providing administrative support, providing appropriate support to the judges who are dealing with these matters, which is different and unusual compared to the normal work of the court, and for which the Courts Administration Service has not had funding. This is a renewal, through the supplementary estimates, of a program that has been in existence for some time.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Jean.

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair,

I was going to make that point as well. It appears that it's been in place since about 2006-07, at least. Is that fair to say?

Mr. Bill Pentney: My information is 2008, following a Supreme Court decision.

Mr. Brian Jean: It seems to me that the funding components have remained fairly consistent since that time, except for somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$6 million, so that would be in that funding envelope.

I noticed there has been some change and reclassification regarding legal aid funding going into the base funding component as well, which may throw some figures off at first glance. Is that fair to say?

Mr. Bill Pentney: Yes.

Mr. Brian Jean: Minister, thank you so much for coming today. I want to say that I applaud the position of the ministry, and of course yourself, in relation to your concentration on demolishing organized crime in this country. I want to compliment you on that, sir, because most of the legislation—some 20 bills that have been in place since you've been minister—have in some way or other taken a chunk out of organized crime and its ability to operate in this country.

Also, as a member of the Canadian Bar Association for some period of time, I know that as an association they are not always in lockstep with our government. They, of course, are very independent in their opinions from time to time. I think that is fair to say.

But in relation to the quadrennial commission's key salary recommendations, I noticed that the Canadian Bar Association, the Canadian Superior Courts Judges Association, and others, including the president of the Canadian Bar Association, Robert Brun, have suggested that we have done an exemplary job, not only in the independence from the judiciary of our findings, but also in getting it on track much more quickly so that they have a response.

I quote from Pierre Bienvenu, who represents judges:

The judiciary has been concerned about delayed government responses to past commission reports. I am pleased that the government provided its response to the present commission's report well within the timeline set by the Judges Act and has quickly introduced legislation to make the necessary amendments to the Judges Act.

Can you comment on that?

Hon. Rob Nicholson: I was very pleased to hear that. It shows that there has been considerable analysis of what we are doing. As you know, we included in the budget implementation bill that's presently before Parliament our response to the quadrennial commission because, among other things, I wanted to move quickly on that.

We accepted the main recommendation that there be no general salary increase for Canada's Superior Court judges beyond the indexation that is mandated, as you may know, by the Judges Act. We understand that judges have to be compensated in a manner that will attract outstanding individuals who are prepared to serve on the Superior Court benches in this country, and while all governments are under pressure for financial restraint, we have to strike that appropriate balance. I believe we've done that with the response to this.

I agree that we should move as quickly as possible to respond to these commissions. That is only fair, and that is consistent with the role the judiciary plays and the role Parliament plays. So as you can see in our response to the quadrennial commission, the timelines have been moved up. This has been well received, and quite frankly, I was very pleased at the comments, as you pointed out, by the president of the Canadian Bar Association and others who have had the opportunity to have a look at that. I think it strikes the right balance, and we can all be very proud of the independent judiciary of this country. We all have a role to play in being supportive of that, while at the same time ensuring that the judiciary maintains its independence, and that balance is the one that we attempt to strike. I believe we have done that. Again, the quadrennial commission is something that we have responded to in a timely manner, and I think that was appropriate under the circumstances.

Thank you.

• (1610)

Mr. Brian Jean: Congratulations for that, Minister.

I only have a minute left, but I notice that among the three largest components of the total net increase for the 2012-13 supplementary estimates (B), the first is, as Mr. Cotler pointed out, “the delivery of immigration and refugee legal aid in provinces”, and as well, “court-ordered counsel in federal prosecutions”, which is about \$14.3 million.

The “Funding for the Aboriginal Justice Strategy” is the second largest component, and the third is, as Mr. Cotler noted, “Funding to address challenges in the management of security inadmissibility” and safety generally for inadmissible individuals facing the risk of torture.

All of those components are, of course, the largest.

Do you see the aboriginal justice strategy as something that seems to get significant results for aboriginal Canadians?

Hon. Rob Nicholson: This is something we analyze on a continuous basis, as is appropriate with all government programs. My analysis of it on a year-to-year basis is that it's effective in providing culturally sensitive assistance to aboriginal Canadians who have become involved with the criminal justice system.

Important as well is the reduction in recidivism rates. We all have an interest, whether aboriginal or not, in helping people who have become involved with the criminal justice system to do what is possible to ensure that they're not back in. It is on that basis that we renewed the funding for this fiscal year, and as you see, it is part of what we have here as supplementary estimates.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Scott.

Mr. Craig Scott: Thank you.

I want to clarify, Mr. Pentney, that I'm well aware it's not a new program. What I'm talking about is new money in the supplementary estimates. My question, to which I'd like an answer a little more precisely, is why we need an extra \$3 million under this head.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: I'm sorry, Mr. Scott, which area did you mention?

Mr. Craig Scott: We're looking again at “Funding to address challenges in the management of security inadmissibility, protect classified information...and obtain assurances against torture”.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Well, these are the estimates that have been given to me by the department for their ongoing responsibilities in this area. It's a very sensitive area, an important area, so they have been tasked, as you will hear in the second hour of this, in answer to....

I appreciate that you had quite a few questions. I was satisfied that their estimates as to what they will need and what to continue on were reasonable under the circumstances, so I had no hesitation in including that—

Mr. Craig Scott: Is it your understanding, Mr. Minister, that there is not any particular new need for, say, assurances in cases involving potential torture, that there is not an upsurge in the likelihood of its being needed? That's really where my question is going.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: We always hope that these things aren't needed, in the sense that we'd like to see a reduction in the kinds of issues that require this. But that being said, this is an ongoing matter, and I indicated, I think in some detail, how careful we are when we seek assurances when we do this.

Mr. Craig Scott: Thank you.

Did I understand you correctly, when you gave the example of extradition, that Mr. Kenney's ministry would be involved in seeking diplomatic assurances as well, but that it is in your ministry that the actual process of seeking assurances goes on in extradition cases? Or is it done elsewhere?

• (1615)

Hon. Rob Nicholson: It's within my department. When we receive a request, for instance, from a foreign country to extradite somebody from Canada, this is part of the discussions that go on between the two countries. The country will, among other things, obviously, set out what the charges are, what the circumstances are surrounding the issues, and why it is that they want an individual.

On the other hand, it's up to us to consent to that, and one of the things we look at, among other things, is the seriousness of the crime. We're not going to extradite somebody for a very minor incident—or for something that is not a crime in Canada; that's another level of it. But the assurances have to be a part of it.

The best example, of course, is that if it's a jurisdiction—for instance, if it's one of the American states—that has a death penalty, we seek those assurances. We have to be satisfied that that individual is not going to face the possibility of a death penalty if convicted. That's part of the process, and we have to have those assurances or we will not send somebody out of this country. As I indicated to you, being removed from a country is a very important thing in the life of somebody.

Mr. Craig Scott: I appreciate that. Thank you.

The clarification I need is whether, on the assurances or the agreement between the two countries, you as minister sign off or whether that is done somewhere else.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: I do. I actually sign the document of extradition. Generally it's accompanied, if there's a solicitor involved...or a letter to the individual explaining what my decision is. But the actual document is signed by me on behalf of...

Mr. Craig Scott: That helps a lot.

The Courts Administration Service bundle with respect to that process—not to get too far into the officials side of our time.... If we take an example of, say, somebody who has been sought for extradition to Sri Lanka—we know there is a history of torture there, and Minister Baird has made it very clear he is very concerned with the human rights situation there—it would come to you on an assurances issue.

Where would the cost be incurred in the system as it exists and with respect to the extra money you are looking for?

Hon. Rob Nicholson: It's not really the Courts Administration Service. When there is a request for extradition, that is something different from deportation or some of the other incidences related to dealing with individuals who are charged. Extradition is contained within the department, and the budgetary provisions are already part of that.

The Courts Administration Service deals with coordination among a number of the superior courts—the Tax Court, the Supreme Court, the Federal Court. There is a service that assists judges of the courts.

That is a separate ask, and it's not attached to or part of what we incur as a department by way of the expenses related to extradition.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Goguen.

Mr. Robert Goguen (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, CPC): Thank you, Minister, for appearing, and thanks to the able witnesses who accompany you.

You spoke earlier about the fight on organized crime. This committee recently tabled a report on the state of organized crime. As minister, you've passed probably more than 20 bills, the majority of which deal with organized crime in one fashion or another, and of course there is a cost attached to them.

Could you tell the committee about your successes, your achievements, in regard to the fight against organized crime, Minister?

Hon. Rob Nicholson: This is part of what it is we're doing. As I indicated in my opening remarks, or perhaps it was in response to the question of Madam Findlay, organized crime is involved with a lot of the illegal activity in this country. I gave the example of drugs, and very early in my term as justice minister, it was brought to my attention that that's who was doing it. One of the major components of Bill C-10 is dealing with those individuals who are in the business of trafficking, but it's not confined to that.

It was brought to my attention that there are sophisticated illegal operations involved with auto theft, shipping cars in and out of this country. I was told, and I believe, that the laws as they existed at that

time did not cover that, just dealing with theft over or under \$5,000, or if you break up a chop shop, the main offence may be possession of stolen property. Needless to say, if you break into a chop shop, you're going to have people say they don't actually possess these; they just do the public relations for the chop shop, so they don't possess.

I don't mean to be funny about it, but the laws weren't covering what actually takes place. If you had the public safety minister here, he would tell you that there were gaps in what Canada Border Service Agencies could do about intercepting containers with cars and car parts; they didn't have the authority to start opening these up to try to break up these chop shops. That was one bill that I think was particularly important in updating the Criminal Code to reflect what's going on. If you have these sophisticated operations, the laws should respond to them.

We made changes with respect to ID theft, as you know, and again, in my opinion, it's updating the Criminal Code to reflect what's actually happening out there.

We made changes, for instance, with respect to bail proceedings, individuals who have been charged and/or convicted of serious crimes involving guns, for instance, putting an onus on that individual to say why they should be back out on the street after they have been charged with another criminal offence. I had law enforcement agencies tell me that if you had somebody who has a record of a violent offence involving firearms, for example, and they're charged with another crime involving firearms, and if that individual is back in the neighbourhood in the next couple of hours, it sends out the wrong message to the neighbourhood; it sends the wrong message out to the victims and witnesses. They say, "What's going on here?" Again, it's for the protection of the individual. If the individual has a proclivity for firearms offences, that individual may be a danger to himself as well as to the public. We have been very focused on that, as you know.

Things such as drive-by shootings have all been connected to gang activity in our country. As you would know, and the members of the committee are aware, we've had many pieces of legislation—I think we've had over 20 pieces of legislation—and all of them are moving towards better protecting victims, cracking down on violent crime, going after organized crime, and, in some cases, updating the Criminal Code to reflect what's actually happening out there. It hasn't been easy, but I'm very pleased with the progress we're making these days.

• (1620)

Mr. Robert Goguen: I notice that you're also attacking white collar crime, trying to prevent investment fraud, to protect seniors from being defrauded of their hard-earned investments.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: This is a continuous thing, Mr. Chair. Yes, we did tighten up and increase the penalties with respect to white collar crime, but these scam artists are around all the time. They're continuously calling my and your constituents, or calling our houses, all with an idea to try to scam people out of their hard-earned money. Again, we all have a responsibility to help them.

You had a bill that dealt with elder abuse. This is a recognition of what sometimes takes place—people targeting individuals who they think might be vulnerable to their attacks. We've gotten after this on a number of different levels, and I'm very pleased with the legislation that we've been able to put before Parliament.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madame Boivin.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, I often say that justice is a poor relation when it comes to budgets—be it in the case of the federal government, of provincial or other governments. At the beginning of your presentation, you talked about law-and-order bills. I know about that. We have studied several such bills in this committee. Those kinds of issues require money.

The Police Officers Recruitment Fund was discussed. Earlier, I talked to you about the federal-provincial-territorial meeting. The provinces and territories said they think this program is important. Yet the federal government will cut it. Justice is not limited only to ongoing legal proceedings. Its goal is also to prevent the commission of crimes. I would like you to explain to me why this program is being cut. I think it's fairly important to have more police officers on the streets.

Do you think justice is something of a poor relation? Requests have been made regarding legal aid and first nations police services. Requests are being made at all levels, but you are being asked to make cuts. We see that small amounts are earmarked for some areas and slightly larger amounts for others. We may wonder how the department made its projections at the beginning of the year.

What does the Minister of Justice of Canada think about these budgets?

• (1625)

[*English*]

Hon. Rob Nicholson: We have a very important role to play in justice issues in this country. The RCMP and policing matters are within the purview, of course, of my colleague, the Minister of Public Safety, but one of the issues that I look at very carefully is the fact that for the most part the administration of justice is within provincial jurisdiction. I guess I'm one of those who, when the budget is presented, always takes note of the transfers to the provinces. Quite frankly, I'm pleased that there has been a 43% increase in transfers to the provinces.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Over the past few weeks, we have heard a great deal about the insufficient number of crown attorneys and judges. I do realize that the administration of justice comes under provincial jurisdiction. However, a number of federal laws increase the burden, thus impacting the day-to-day administration of justice. The budget requests come from your colleagues. They want to make sure some money is set aside. If that is not done, the system will eventually implode.

We are told that people living below the poverty line have absolutely no access to legal aid. That means they have no access to justice. There are desperate needs.

Are you speaking to the appropriate people to ensure that justice stops being the poor relation in your colleague Flaherty's budgets?

[*English*]

Hon. Rob Nicholson: How the provinces spend the money is within their purview. You mentioned crown attorneys; they're appointed by the provinces.

One of the things I guess we can all agree on is that the provinces have certainly had considerably more money transferred to them since this government was formed.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: So it's your statement that they have enough money to deal with all the new legislation that's been brought in by the government?

Hon. Rob Nicholson: We work with our provincial counterparts. Some of the legislation, quite frankly, is to help them and assist them. If you remember getting rid of the “two for one” credit, you will remember that every single provincial attorney general was in support of that. They told me that individuals who could benefit from not having their matter heard before the court, or who would delay putting a guilty plea or who wanted their matters extended, were costing, particularly the provinces, a great deal of money.

I remember the attorney general in British Columbia telling me that he heard of a case of an individual who didn't want to have a bail hearing because he was racking up “two for one” credits in there. I told him I had every sympathy for him; I understood what he was saying. There were places in Toronto where they were getting “three for one” credits.

So we came forward with that bill to help expedite.... But for the most part it was to assist our provincial counterparts who had the expense of dealing with and housing people in provincial detention centres. I was very pleased to bring that forward. It was lucky for me that I had so many provincial attorneys general who were supportive, and this would help them in the administration of justice.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: I have 30 seconds.

The Chair: We're out of time.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: We're not watching the same clock.

The Chair: I'm watching this clock and you're way past.

Thank you, Minister. I think we've used the allotted time, and Madame Boivin got a bonus.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Officials from the Department of Justice will continue to answer questions, and I thank them for that in advance.

• (1630)

The Chair: We'll just take a short break as we change panels

• (1630)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (1635)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

Mr. Cotler had to leave; he has another task to do. He may be back before we finish.

I want to thank the new panel, which includes two of the original people. Ms. Merriam and Mr. Schnob, thank you for being here. I'm sure all four of you know that some questions were left unanswered; Mr. Scott is probably going to look for an answer today.

We'll begin with Madame Boivin.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin: I will yield the floor to my colleague Mr. Jacob, but I will ask a quick question first.

Department representatives promised to send us information about cuts to services within the Department of Justice. I wanted to make sure that you will send us that information. I am not asking you to give me all the answers this afternoon, as we would then not come out of this room for quite some time. However, I do want to make sure that we will be able to obtain on paper the information the minister mentioned—the 6.5% to

[*English*]

reduce most of it by attrition, but it's just to have an idea over a certain number of years. If we get that, I'm quite satisfied.

Now to Mr. Jacob.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank my dear colleague. I also want to thank our witnesses for joining us.

I will discuss Supplementary Estimates (B) 2012-2013. In the estimates, it is proposed that \$1.8 million be added to the department as part of the funding to enhance activities related to the cessation and vacation of refugee status pursuant to the Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act. This is in vote 1.

Here is my first question. Can you tell us about the activities related to the cessation and vacation of refugee status and those related to removal? Second, what is the Department of Justice's role in terms of that? Will the department work with the Canada Border Services Agency and, if so, in what way? Finally, what will be the real impact of the Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act on the role of the Department of Justice?

• (1640)

Mr. Bill Pentney: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the member for his questions.

The Department of Justice provides legal services to almost all federal departments and agencies. The Department of Justice's funds are used to support departments in their proceedings. So we anticipate needs related to legal advice in proceedings and, occasionally, support in potential litigations.

I will now answer the question about the fight against human smuggling. I'm sorry, but I don't know the French term. Part of this proposal concerns the broadening of the process. It provides for

cancelling the refugee claim of a person convicted for taking part in human smuggling activities.

This is only a recognition of the broadening of a process and its application. We need more lawyers to support departments. That is all there is to it.

Mr. Pierre Jacob: Okay. Thank you.

I believe you have not answered three questions?

The question is for all four of you—Ms. Morency, Ms. Merriam, Mr. Schnob, or Mr. Pentney, you may answer if you like as well.

Mr. William F. Pentney: Frankly, I don't think we have anything to add.

Mr. Pierre Jacob: You have nothing to add regarding these questions? Okay.

My next question is about Shiprider.

A \$230,000 amount is available in the current budget of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. That money is set aside for the funding for the implementation of integrated cross-border law enforcement commitments, under the Beyond the Border Action Plan. This is in vote 35.

First, I would like to know where those savings stem from?

Mr. Bill Pentney: Mr. Chair, as the committee member mentioned, that has to do with the budget of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. I cannot talk about that office's budget or its administration.

[*English*]

I'm sure he would be happy to attend if the committee were to invite him. He'll thank me later for saying that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Jacob: So, you cannot answer my question.

I will ask my second question. Are those one-time or permanent savings. What is the role of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions under the Shiprider program?

Mr. Bill Pentney: I'm sorry, but I cannot answer on behalf of the Director of Public Prosecutions. He has to answer for his administration. That's why the government decided to create an independent director of public prosecutions.

Mr. Pierre Jacob: I will share my time.

How much time do I have left, Mr. Chair?

[*English*]

The Chair: You've used five minutes.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: You're done.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: It's back to you, Mr. Scott.

Mr. Craig Scott: I'm getting the strong sense that my colleagues are looking forward to some other activities. I'll try not to delay this too long.

Mr. Pentney, I was just wondering if you could help clarify what no doubt might have been confusion on my part with respect to this vote 30b for the Courts Administration Service. We were briefly talking about this at the break. Could you explain how the system works so that this is before us as a supplementary estimate?

• (1645)

Mr. Bill Pentney: In terms of the budget process—and I know there's another committee of the House that has examined the operation of the budget process—the main estimates are voted on, and historically over time the main estimates have generally not reflected items that are reflected in that year's budget. So the 2012 main estimates that were tabled reflected the continuing operations of the department, but there are a number of sunset programs, many of which are now before this committee in the context of supplementary estimates (B).

The main estimates reflect a tragic loss of money, and the supplementary estimates represent a miraculous return of money, and at the end of the day it kind of balances out. Officials from the Treasury Board could explain historically why this is so and why this is the way the Parliament of Canada has appropriated money. But essentially, when the mains were voted on, a certain appropriation was approved for the department. Through the budgetary process and subsequent approvals, the government decided to come forward to Parliament and seek supplementary estimates in respect of the renewal of a number of time limited programs.

You asked earlier about the special advocates program. The Courts Administration funding is related only to Division 9 proceedings under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. It's simply a reflection of the fact that when the program was established, the decision was made not to give it permanent and ongoing funding as a new program, but to renew it from time to time. As I understand it, the money has gone up and down in adjustment to what's been needed, but the Courts Administration Service simply does not have an ongoing kind of aid base or core funding for it.

The way the system works is the mains are voted on, the government brings forward its budget, and other approvals are done. The government tables supplementary estimates, generally to reflect adjustments associated with the budget. In the department's case, that's an adjustment up for some new resources for aboriginal justice, for court-ordered counsel, for court administration. It also reflects the savings associated with DRAP, so it's kind of a netting out to the supplementary estimates.

That's how the appropriations process currently works under the system for the whole of government, and that's why we're here before you seeking approval for supplementary estimates.

Mr. Craig Scott: Just as a follow-on, to show how confused I may or may not have been, the \$3 million-ish here, a part of which deals with obtaining assurances against torture and exceptional removal cases in the context of the immigration proceedings—is that the entirety of the annual budget for that item, or is there something in the main estimates that really is a foundation and this is added on top?

Mr. Bill Pentney: That question I'm going to have to take under advisement, just to make sure I give you entirely the right answer.

This would represent the bulk of the funding, but it's possible that part of the ongoing departmental resources, what we would call the A base, is being allocated towards this. If it's acceptable to the committee, I'll take it under advisement and we'll simply confirm.

This would certainly represent the bulk of the resources dedicated to the Division 9 proceedings for the courts, for the department, and for the special advocates.

Mr. Craig Scott: I don't have any other questions. I think the fact of this being in the estimates sparked a number of questions that I think are relevant to how costs are generated, but not as relevant as they might be in other areas of the government system.

If I have ongoing interest, I'll just formulate order paper questions.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin: I will be brief, Mr. Chair.

I asked the minister a number of questions about legal aid because I think this is a Canada-wide issue. It's prevalent across the country—in all jurisdictions. Some federal money is transferred to the provinces. I don't want to get a simple answer that the provinces are responsible for that.

That was one of the major issues discussed at the federal-provincial-territorial meeting. At the very end, I think the provincial and territorial ministers repeated their requests for the federal government to examine its funding in terms of civil legal aid. We know that those who need legal aid make up a large segment of the population. They are women and, very often, they are first nations members.

Has your department been assessing this situation? Are you currently conducting any studies on the legal aid issue, or is it simply a matter of business as usual where you say that this issue will be considered at the next federal-provincial-territorial meeting?

• (1650)

Mr. Bill Pentney: I will answer your question, and then Ms. Merriam can correct me or add something.

First, it should be pointed out that the government has spent a lot of money on legal aid. Part of that permanent funding is transferred to provinces and territories. We are talking about \$112,000. That amount is not mentioned here, as it is....

[*English*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Ongoing.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bill Pentney: Yes, it's ongoing.

Second, this process seeks to set aside about \$14 million for immigration refugees and other types of refugees.

Third, the Canada Social Transfer is partially transferred to the provinces. Provinces can use it for legal aid or other social needs, which have been growing steadily over the years.

In the context of considerable financial strain, the government has maintained transfers to provinces in the three categories. In the third one, the Canada Social Transfer has continued to grow.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: I was more interested in knowing whether studies have been conducted on legal aid needs.

Mr. Bill Pentney: Studies and discussions are ongoing with the provinces regarding legal aid and access to justice.

Ms. Merriam could perhaps add something to this discussion?

Ms. Barbara Merriam: No.

Mr. Bill Pentney: Okay.

There are ongoing discussions between the federal government and provincial governments.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Unless I'm mistaken, you're telling me that there is a budgetary limit, but that legal aid is nevertheless a concern for justice departments at different levels—be they provincial, territorial or federal.

My colleagues will surely agree with what I am about to say. I want to bring up the issue of existing penalties for impaired driving cases under the Criminal Code. The Department of Justice's provincial and territorial counterparts also want to toughen the law with regard to this. They apparently asked senior officials to study this issue as a priority and to provide them with some recommendations.

Do you think that examining this issue as a priority and providing various ministers with recommendations could result in new budget expenditures? Are projections being made based on that aspect, or is it a matter of looking into amending laws or the Criminal Code?

Ms. Carole Morency (Acting Director General and Senior General Counsel, Criminal Law Policy Section, Department of Justice): The ongoing study is focusing on the current legislation. Its goal is to determine whether we need other reforms to amend the legislation.

You are right—the press release published at the end of October talked about the ongoing study. It is actually just a review of the legislation and not a review of costs. The cost review could come later, but that will depend on the changes recommended to the minister.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Since we have the opportunity to hear from you, I will ask you my last question. I have been wondering about this for a long time, but I don't have the answer.

When legal proceedings involve the government, does the Department of Justice—even if it is not directly involved—have to cover the costs associated with all those cases? In other words, in a hypothetical conflict between an individual or a corporation and Transport Canada, are the costs stemming from that case covered by Transport Canada or the Department of Justice?

Mr. Bill Pentney: Welcome to budget mysteries. That has to do with both departments' budgets. We are responsible for defending the

government—either regarding laws or any actions taken by the Government of Canada. A portion of our budget is part of our ongoing A base, and another portion is made up of revenue stemming from client cost recovery—so costs recovered from departments. The monetary burden is shared. We have an operational budget of about \$368 million and, we can recover \$290 million in costs from clients from other departments.

• (1655)

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Okay. Excellent.

Sometimes, I am shocked when I see how much money is spent on legal proceedings, when an out-of-court settlement would have probably cost much less. Does the Department of Justice encourage other departments and crown corporations that depend on the federal government to not get involved in trials that last 5, 10 or 15 years? That would benefit Canadian taxpayers. This is 2012.

Mr. Bill Pentney: We are currently involved in about 50,000 prosecutions or trials. Most proceedings are brought by Canadians against the government. We have to defend the government.

We worked closely with the Canada Revenue Agency to establish a complaint management system. I can establish connections with some savings made as part of the previous budget. We have worked with a few departments on establishing a more effective and less expensive process, but most of the spending has nothing to do with proceedings. It has to do with defending the government when Canadians initiate legal recourses against departments and laws.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: I am sure that my colleagues, like myself, have been approached by certain taxpayers who told us about their case. Without getting involved in their case, the lawyer in me says that this cannot be happening. We see harassment cases—which could have been resolved through a mediation—go to court and last 5, 6 or 7 years. That costs Canadian taxpayers millions of dollars. I don't think this is a very intelligent way to do things.

Mr. Bill Pentney: That is true.

Several years ago, the Department of Justice created a centre of expertise in mediation and complaints. We have provided a lot of training, and we are trying to establish mechanisms for resolving most complaints, especially in the area of employment within the federal government.

[English]

The Chair: Is that the last question?

Ms. Françoise Boivin: That was my last last question.

The Chair: I want to thank the panel for being here. I think we all learned a great deal, and that's the important part of these meetings. Thank you very much.

I do need the committee to vote on the items we have before us.

Shall vote 1b carry?

JUSTICE

Department

Vote 1b—Operating expenditures.....\$1,757,990

(Vote 1b agreed to)

The Chair: Shall vote 5b carry?

Vote 5b—The grants listed in the Estimates and contributions.....\$21,630,000

(Vote 5b agreed to)

The Chair: Shall vote 30b carry?

Courts Administration Service

Vote 30b—Program expenditures.....\$3,028,012

(Vote 30b agreed to)

The Chair: Shall vote 35b carry?

Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions

Vote 35b—Program expenditures.....\$1

(Vote 35b agreed to)

The Chair: Shall I report the votes on the supplementary estimates to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: I will do that on Monday.

Now we have committee business.

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay: Mr. Chair, I'd like to move that all committee business move in camera.

The Chair: We just need to take a minute.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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