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Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

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● (1100)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): Good morning, everyone. We welcome you. This is meeting number four of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, on September 29, 2011.

Today we are commencing our study on drugs and alcohol in prisons. This is pursuant to our committee's adoption of the subcommittee report. Part of the motion was that we will study how drugs and alcohol enter the prisons and the impacts they have on the rehabilitation of offenders, the safety of correctional officials, and crime within institutions.

In our first hour we will hear from the Correctional Service of Canada. Returning again to provide testimony is Don Head, Commissioner of Correctional Service Canada.

First of all, on behalf of our committee members old and new, as chair I always thank you for being willing to appear before our committee and to sometimes appear with very little notice. That is indeed the case today, so we're very thankful for that.

Also, the commissioner is accompanied by Chris Price. He is the assistant commissioner of correctional operations and programs.

In our second hour we're going to hear from the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers on the same topic that we're looking at in the first hour.

I do welcome you here this morning. We look forward to your comments. We appreciate you being here.

Mr. Head.

Mr. Don Head (Commissioner, Correctional Service of Canada): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just for information, according to my atomic time-keeping watch, that clock is right.

Good morning, Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

I'm pleased to have the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss how the Correctional Service of Canada manages the issue of drugs and alcohol within our federal penitentiaries.

Let me start by saying that addiction is the most serious crime-related factor among the federal offender population. In the 2007 report *A Roadmap to Strengthening Public Safety*, it was noted that about 80% of offenders arrive with a serious substance abuse problem, with fully half indicating that drugs or alcohol were a factor in the commission of their offence. This statistic has remained constant for many years.

The use of drugs and alcohol presents a serious security risk to our staff and to offenders themselves. It is a well-known fact that in Canada, as well as in other jurisdictions, much of the violence that occurs within institutional walls is directly related to drugs. Instances of violence destabilize our institutions and put my great staff at risk. This instability also limits our ability to manage a complex and diverse offender population, which in turn limits our ability to effectively prepare offenders to be released into society as productive, law-abiding citizens.

There are also serious public health implications related to offenders' addiction to intravenous drugs. Our data shows that one in five male offenders has injected drugs in his lifetime. Of these, half report having injected in the year prior to incarceration. Intravenous drug users have a much higher incidence of blood-borne diseases, such as hepatitis C and HIV, than the general population. The reality is that we are dealing with one of the most seriously addicted segments of Canadian society, evidenced by the lengths they go to, and the crimes they commit, to obtain and use drugs.

This dependency does not magically disappear when they arrive at our gates. While inside, addicted offenders go to extremes to secure any illicit substance that will feed their addiction. These are the challenges that correctional staff face every day in institutions across the country, and indeed around the world, and these are the challenges I am concerned with, as the commissioner of our federal correctional agency.

In order to more effectively understand and develop strategies to address offender substance abuse, the Correctional Service of Canada has implemented a focused, evidence-based strategy around addictions. This includes engaging with other jurisdictions on this issue and sharing information and best practices on how countries around the world detect and deter drugs. Our staff are dedicated to helping CSC better understand the dynamics of offender substance abuse, which contributes to the development of effective programming and overall efforts to eliminate drugs from our federal penitentiaries.

Mr. Chair, I'm committed to continuous improvement and seeking the best public safety results for Canadians. This is why, starting back in 2007, the organization took the recommendations of the report I referenced earlier and set about to fundamentally transform our operations. This transformation agenda included a suite of initiatives designed to address the problem of drugs within our institutions. These efforts complemented and improved upon our existing drug strategy. This strategy focuses on detecting and deterring drugs from entering our institutions, as well as recognizing and treating substance abuse issues among federally sentenced offenders.

On August 29, 2008, the Minister of Public Safety announced that $122 million in funding would be provided over five years to help eliminate drugs in federal institutions. This funding supports a more rigorous approach to drug interdiction in order to create safe and secure environments where staff and offenders can focus on the business of rehabilitation.

The funding supports an increase in drug detector dog teams, and we will see over 100 teams across the country by the end of this fiscal year; an increase in the security intelligence capacity in both institutions and communities; enhanced perimeter security through better use of technology; and the reinforcement of search policies to better prevent drugs from entering our institutions.

● (1105)

Beyond these transformation measures, CSC has recently implemented a number of other initiatives in an effort to reduce both violence and illicit drugs in our institutions. These include more rigorous searches of cells, buildings, and grounds, and physical searches of offenders. We are also using innovative technologies such as thermal imaging and infrared equipment to detect intruders at our perimeter fences. We are also enhancing our dynamic security practices and our security intelligence capacity to better monitor and interpret offender activity.

Additionally, we have augmented the search of all visitors entering institutions, using technology such as metal detectors and ion scanners and, as I mentioned previously, with the increased use of drug detector dogs and teams.

I would also like to note that urinalysis testing of offenders is an important tool in detecting drug use and in deterring offenders from using illicit substances. Over the past decade, we have seen an encouraging decrease in the percentage of positive tests, and we've also seen a drop in the rate of refusals to provide a sample. The most dramatic decrease in positive testing and refusal rates has been observed in our maximum security institutions. Statistics also show a decrease in offender deaths by drug overdose and an increase in drug seizures.

Simply put, our results point to the effectiveness of our interdiction efforts and the tremendous work that my staff do every single day across this country. But again, I will always seek ways of improving our correctional results, to achieve safer communities for Canadians across the country.

Beyond addressing the supply of drugs, we must also address the demand for drugs. To this end, the Correctional Service of Canada provides a range of accredited substance abuse programs. The more significant the offender's problem, the higher the intensity of intervention provided. There are also substance abuse programs designed specifically for women and for aboriginal offenders.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that CSC is an international leader in the development and implementation of effective substance abuse programming. Indeed, numerous countries have added our programs to their efforts to help offenders get off drugs and stay off drugs. These include the United Kingdom, Norway, and Sweden, to name a few.

By participating in substance abuse programs and aftercare, offenders learn to manage their patterns of abusing drugs and alcohol. Our ultimate goal is to decrease recidivism and create safer communities for Canadians. We know that offenders who participate in substance abuse programs are 45% less likely to return with a new offence and 63% less likely to return with a new violent offence.

Mr. Chair, I know the committee is specifically interested in a number of related issues, which I'll briefly address here before welcoming any questions you may have.

I believe I've already indicated to you the link between substance abuse and institutional crime, as well as the impact on staff safety. Drugs and alcohol feed criminal behaviours that include muscling, threats, intimidation, and serious violence. Violence against staff and between offenders is not compatible with creating secure and safe environments, nor is it conducive to the safe reintegration of offenders into communities.

The continuation of these criminal behaviours inside our institutions is clearly counterproductive to offender rehabilitation. Institutional instability also affects our ability to consistently deliver programs. Furthermore, we will not see success in rehabilitative programming if we cannot keep drugs away from offenders whose substance abuse is key to their criminality.

Finally, with respect to how drugs get inside our institutions in the first place, we have uncovered a wide variety of methods over the years: everything from throwing drugs over the fence to hiding drugs in body cavities and even in babies' diapers. This is why it's so vitally important for the organization to maintain a robust security and intelligence capacity, coupled with rigorous search procedures and physical security.

CSC has also implemented a heightened public awareness campaign to communicate the hazards and repercussions of smuggling drugs into institutions. This includes a video entitled “Keeping Drugs Out” that clearly demonstrates the consequences of bringing drugs into our federal correctional facilities.

● (1110)

We've also established a toll-free national drug tip line to facilitate reporting of any suspected drug activity.

Safe, drug-free institutions are necessary to enhance public safety and help ensure the successful reintegration of inmates into the community. The presence of drugs creates violence within institutions and prevents offenders from coming out of their cells and participating in programming, as outlined in their correctional plans.

While we must all recognize that these efforts are a work in progress, I am proud of the measures that the Correctional Service of Canada and my staff have put in place to address these issues. It is our common goal to ensure safe communities for all Canadians, and this includes providing offenders with the skills necessary to live a life free of substance abuse, and to be productive and law-abiding citizens of society.

I welcome any questions you may have at this time. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Commissioner.

We will proceed to the first round of questioning.

Ms. Hoeppner, you have seven minutes.

Ms. Candice Hoeppner (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you so much, Mr. Head and Mr. Price, for being here with us today.

I wonder if you could begin by walking us through the process of what happens when a prisoner arrives at a facility. You would know their history, as far as whether drugs or alcohol were part of the crime they committed. Is there any kind of process to determine if they still have an addiction, or do you just put them in the general population and then, as their behaviour shows itself, that's how you know? Walk me through the process when a new prisoner arrives.

Mr. Don Head: Thanks for that question.

When a new inmate arrives at our federal penitentiaries they go through what we call an intake assessment process. During the first 90 days we subject an inmate to a variety of different assessments, including looking at the court documents that indicate the crime for which they've been sentenced. We look at the reasons the judge has sentenced the individual and the factors that were taken into consideration at the time of sentencing. Then we subject the inmate to a series of assessments that look at their social history and the various risk factors that contribute to criminality. That includes applying several tools to assess an individual's drug and alcohol substance dependency.

That information gets rolled up over that period of time into what we call a correctional plan, which then becomes a road map for the inmate to follow during their period of incarceration. In a correctional plan, for example, if we've identified an individual as having a substance abuse problem or an alcohol problem, there would be an indication in the plan for them to be involved in one of our various substance abuse programs in the facility.

We offer a variety of intensities of substance abuse programs. We have a high-intensity substance abuse program and a moderate-intensity one. We have a program specifically tailored for women offenders. We have one tailored for aboriginal offenders. We have a substance abuse booster program before they transition out into the community under our supervision. We also have a community maintenance program while they're out in the community under our supervision.

We go through this intensive process of assessing them, developing the correctional plan, and setting out the expectations for them in terms of the kinds of programs or interventions they need to be involved in while they're under our care.

● (1115)

Ms. Candice Hoeppner: What about assessing the risk of them trafficking drugs or having drugs smuggled in, maybe because of their addiction, or maybe because it's going to be their business plan? Then how would you treat someone? Would you wait until they offended, or do something preventive before they actually smuggled drugs in or had drugs smuggled in?

Mr. Don Head: That's a good question.

As part of our assessment, if we've identified that they've had a substance abuse problem during their life, we'll identify that up front and they'll be put on a waiting list to participate in the programs.

We're in the process right now of changing how we deliver our programs across the country. We're doing a pilot project out in the Pacific region in British Columbia and one in the Atlantic region covering the Atlantic provinces where we're actually getting individuals, within the first 45 days they come through the gate, involved in program primers to start to get them engaged in programming. That will set the stage for the more intensive programs, such as the high-intensity substance abuse program.

If somebody has been identified as an individual who was involved, for example, in trafficking in the community or on the street, these individuals would be flagged through our security intelligence section and we would be watching their activities very closely. If there is indication that they might be trying to carry on that enterprise while they're under our care, we would be putting in place various methods for observing them, monitoring phone calls, additional approaches to dealing with searching, and those kinds of things.

So we'll take that into account. We'll know, for example, if somebody has come in after sentencing—and it doesn't matter what they've been sentenced for—and we'll have the history as to whether they might have been involved in trafficking out on the street, so we'll take that into account.

Ms. Candice Hoeppner: Do you think you have the necessary tools in terms of legislation in order to carry out those investigations and monitor effectively when inmates are in prison? Do you have any suggestions as to what we could provide to give you and your staff more freedom to be able to protect themselves, protect other inmates, and obviously protect the inmate in question?

Mr. Don Head: That's a very good question.

The approaches that are outlined right now under the current legislation, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, prescribe when and how, for example, we can use the monitoring equipment to intercept communications. For the most part, it serves our needs. There are times when it's a little more challenging. One could argue that if there were more flexibility we could do more, but at the same time I recognize why it's framed the way it is currently under the legislation.

I have to say that one of the elements in the current BillC-10 I'm glad to see there is a penalty under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, which will have a penalty for individuals who are trafficking in the prison. We believe that is something we've needed for quite a while.

One of the problems we've had under the current legislation is that quantities of drugs that come into the institutions are not the same as our cousins seize at the border, as you can imagine. Sometimes local police forces or prosecutors understand the seriousness of small quantities coming in, but they also realize the tremendous workload they have and are not necessarily as keen to pursue it. But having this kind of provision there heightens the focus on the serious problem of trafficking in prisons, not only federal penitentiaries but provincial and territorial prisons as well. So I'm glad to see that in Bill C-10.

● (1120)

Ms. Candice Hoeppner: Good.

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

We'll now move to the opposition, and to Mr. Sandhu.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Chair, thank you.

And I thank the commissioner and assistant commissioner for coming here today.

I think that any strategy to prevent drugs in our prison system needs to include both deterrence and also rehabilitation programs, so I'm glad we're taking a balanced approach.

I see we've allocated $122 million funding over five years. Is that $122 million dedicated solely to the detection and deterrence part of it?

Secondly, what results have we seen from 2008 until now? Did you have some stats before 2008, and what were the results after 2008?

Mr. Don Head: Yes, thank you. That's a very good question.

We have seen a couple of indicators that we consider to be positive.

As I mentioned early on in my speech, we have seen some decreases in the number of positive urinalysis tests. When we did the random testing of inmates in the penitentiaries, we saw a decrease in the percentage of individuals who were showing a positive urinalysis test. That indicates to us that there are still drugs getting into our institutions, which is a problem for us, but it indicates that, overall, the percentage is coming down.

We also have seen that the number of seizures of drugs at the front entrance and in the institutions has gone up. Now, you can argue that more seizures means one thing or more seizures means another. From my perspective, every seizure is a good seizure, because it means those drugs are not getting into the hands of inmates who can harm my staff, harm themselves, or, ultimately, harm another inmate. Last year we had just over 1,700 drug seizures in the institutions, and that's a significant find for us.

There is another indicator, though it's not necessarily as scientific as some of the other data. We do know that at times, when the supply of drugs coming into the institutions has been cut off, inmates will look to other means for some kind of intoxicant. Usually they'll start to try to make brews, homemade alcohol, in the institution. You can make homemade alcohol from a lot of different commonly available substances. Some of the worst ones I've seen were made out of those little ketchup things that you get from McDonald's. It's not very good tasting and it smells terrible, but you can get a brew out of that.

When we see the number of drug seizures going down and the number of brews that the staff are seizing going up, we see those as partial indicators that our efforts around seizing drugs are working and moving in the right direction. It's an indication that we're cutting off the drug supply coming in. But we still have a lot of challenges.

As we put our time and energy in to choke off the drug supply at one spot, people become quite innovative in looking at how to get drugs in. As I briefly mentioned in my comments, there have been people from the outside who have approached our perimeter and launched drugs over the fence using bows and arrows. They are 150 metres outside the perimeter, and they shoot arrows into the exercise yard, with the drugs either in the shaft of the arrow or taped around it. Then my staff have to go out and search the yard and they find those.

We've seen individuals become quite innovative at taking tennis balls, hollowing out the tennis balls, and filling them with drugs. If you get a good—and I'm dating myself—Bjorn Borg swing on the tennis ball with a racket, you can launch it quite a distance, and they sometimes make it inside the fence.

We've even seen cases where individuals have taken dead birds, removed the innards, stuffed the drugs inside, and then, we believe, launched them with some kind of slingshot device into the yard.

Again, my staff are very diligent. They do a great job in terms of searching and finding these things, but the odd time something gets in. We have cases of individuals being found using drugs, or my staff end up interrupting a drug overdose and saving the lives of an inmate who is stupid enough to use the drugs.

● (1125)

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: I totally agree with you that prisoners will find interesting ways to get the drugs into the prison system. What I'd like to know is do you have any facts or figures you can point us to here that would indicate that the amount of drugs available inside the prison systems is less now with these deterrent programs in place?

Mr. Don Head: It's a good question.

The indicators we have now are, as I mentioned, the decrease in the number of positive urinalysis tests, which we see as an indicator, and the increased number of seizures at the front entrance. Because we don't have a base or a norm to say this is how many drugs were inside, we can't say whether it's going down. What we can point to is the work the staff do in terms of the interception. But we do interpret the urinalysis findings as an indication that there are fewer drugs inside or making their way inside that inmates can access.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: You would agree that the prisoners are finding innovative ways to get their drugs in, even with all these deterrent programs in place?

Mr. Don Head: They find ways and we find new ways to combat those approaches and we'll continue to pursue that.

For example, where individuals are finding ways to sneak up on our perimeter, we've been experimenting at a couple of institutions with thermal imaging, infrared radar imaging technology, to detect them when they're on our perimeter. We're finding that it's a good tool, and it's working—it's allowing us to detect people before they get close enough to launch the drugs in.

We continue to work with our partners in other countries to find new approaches and new techniques.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Head.

Mr. Norlock.

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

My thanks to the witnesses for coming and being here once again. What would a session of Parliament in the public safety committee be without a visit from our friends at Corrections?

Mr. Head, you know where I come from. I live in the village of Warkworth, which is basically home to Canada's largest federal penitentiary. At least it's the largest currently. It's a medium-security prison, and the situation there has changed from what it was 15 or 20 years ago. It's a much more dangerous place in which to work for our men and women who are there to protect our society, our inmates, and themselves.

I appreciate that in your evidence you mentioned that we look to other countries, such as the United Kingdom, Norway, and Sweden. This committee not too long ago visited the United Kingdom, Norway, and many prisons across this country with a view to looking at mental illness and addiction in our prisons. We in this country think Norway is a very advanced society. Still, it's a different society. You can do some comparisons, but it is different. I was surprised and proud to learn that about 60% of their programs come from this country.

So while we always need to look for better ways, the rest of the world looks at our correctional system as one of the best on the planet. So I want to thank you and the men and women who work with you to make that happen.

One of the things we seem to leave out when we talk about addictions is the addiction to tobacco. Am I correct in the assumption that cigarettes are still the currency of choice within our correctional system?

● (1130)

Mr. Don Head: Yes, that's a good question. Thank you for the comments about the work that my great staff do. I'm truly proud of them.

Just a quick aside: we just finished meeting with a parliamentary committee from Norway the other day and they've come to us to learn about the work we're doing, so we feel good about that.

Regarding tobacco, as a result of our implementing a tobacco ban within our federal penitentiaries, tobacco has taken on a much higher value within our penitentiaries. Tobacco is a significant currency among the inmate population. We now have a few staff who are being enticed by offers of money to bring tobacco into our institutions. For us, this is a slippery slope to bringing other things in that we don't want them bringing in.

We're finding that individuals are being offered—not just staff, but family members, other people in the community—anywhere from $200 to $2,000 to bring in a pouch of tobacco. Tobacco is not an illegal substance—it's just unauthorized. So people are being enticed. They think the worst they're going to get is a slap on the hand. It's just a little bit of money. Who's going to know the difference?

Unfortunately, for us it's a slippery slope—people get hooked by bringing tobacco into the institutions. The next thing is that within the package there are a couple of pills, a few containers of hash oil. But don't worry: it's just one package of tobacco and one package of drugs. But the next thing you know, we have violent incidents.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Yes, and that would include, as you mentioned, staff, although I agree it's a minor issue. But from the standpoint of the average person in our society, we would expect—whether you be police, correctional officers, or border services officers—that criminal behaviour always seems to be heightened when that occurs.

One of the things that I was surprised to learn—and one would assume that if someone were coming back from being outside the prison, on leave from the prison and returning, because we know that's part of the integration into society.... It wouldn't surprise you to know that I know some correctional officers. I thought that if you suspected that an inmate was bringing drugs in.... And that would include, of course, the conjugal visits, because we know conjugal visits used to, and I believe still do—you could correct me if I'm wrong—form the largest avenue through which drugs as well as tobacco are imported into our prisons. I consider tobacco a drug, by the way, because it contains a substance called nicotine.

What I would like you to confirm, for the purposes of the folks at home—I always like to address that—is that you cannot simply do a body-cavity check, that you actually have to have an agreement from the inmate, and that a physician or a medical practitioner would do that. Is that correct?

● (1135)

Mr. Don Head: Yes. Anytime a body-cavity search is done it would be by a medical practitioner anyway, and the process by which we do that is very restrictive.

Mr. Rick Norlock: My point is that it's voluntary, even if you suspect it. The prisoner has to agree to it.

Mr. Don Head: Yes. It's obviously, as you can imagine, a very intrusive approach to searching.

Mr. Rick Norlock: My point is yes, it's very intrusive, but extrapolated it can cause the death of another inmate, because those drugs aren't just candy. Would you not agree that if you have reasonable and probable grounds, there should be an avenue by which we can make those determinations as to there being a need to do that by a nurse or someone?

The Chair: Very quickly, please.

Mr. Don Head: There are several things that we can do if they refuse, including putting them in what we call a "dry cell." That's where any of their bodily movements are captured and then we get to search it—not a very pleasant task for our staff to perform, but we can do that.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now move to Mr. Scarpaleggia.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

It's a fascinating discussion.

My question really almost gets to the purpose of the study we're doing, because it sounds like you have everything pretty much under control, Mr. Head. You're taking new approaches to the problem of drugs being jettisoned into the yards. You're able to conduct urine tests. You're pleased that Bill C-10 includes a provision for penalties for those trafficking within penitentiaries.

So my question is, what more are you looking for from this government to make these places more drug-free?

Mr. Don Head: I think a big part of it is linked to the issue of offender accountability, because as long as we still have individuals who test positive in urinalysis it means we haven't accomplished our task fully, and if we miss one pill that comes in through the front gate and it results in somebody dying, or somebody getting seriously hurt, then we still have a problem.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: What do you mean by "offender accountability?"

Mr. Don Head: Accountability for the fact that they may have tested positive for urinalysis. The sanctions that are available to us, for example, in the current Corrections and Conditional Release Act were formed in 1992, and some of the sanctions there are not necessarily significant enough for us to deal with some of those behaviours.

On the criminal piece, I think there's a very good piece in Bill C-10. I really look forward to that piece being passed. But in terms of some of the lesser types of offences that may not go the criminal route, that are dealt with within our own internal disciplinary processes—

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I thought you said at the beginning it was sufficient. Somebody asked if the act was sufficient for you, the correctional act, I forget the long name of it.

Mr. Don Head: I said for the most part. There are other errors. There are some.... For example, the one member who asked the question about the searching and the body cavity searching, I actually thought the question was going to go in a different path, because there is an area we've had some issues about, doing strip searches of offenders who move from one level of security into another. We need to make some regulatory changes to make it very clear so that it gives my staff....

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: But the problem is by the time the offender gets hold of the drug, the drug has already crossed some kind of threshold into the institution. We're talking about people being addicted, whether it be to tobacco and so on and so forth, and the solution we are looking at really is more addict accountability. We're not talking about how the drug gets in in the first place.

Do you have any stats, for example, about what percentage of inmates have access to drugs? I think stats have been issued in the past. I recall a 12% figure or an 11.5% figure. I forget exactly what those figures are referring to. Would you have any insight into those?

● (1140)

Mr. Don Head: I think the figures you are referring to are the urinalysis positive results.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: So we've gone from 12% positive results to 11.5%.

Mr. Don Head: No. We were around 11% to 12% positive tests. We're down to I think it's around 7.5% right now who test positive.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: So that means fewer drugs are coming into the institution.

Mr. Don Head: It's indicating to us now that fewer inmates are testing positive, but still roughly 7.5% of my population are showing up positive when we do the random sampling. For me, that's still a significant risk.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: So it's still 7%. It hasn't changed.

Mr. Don Head: It has gone down from 11% or 12% to 7.5%. So for me that's a move in the right direction. My goal is zero. People may say that's overly optimistic, but to be honest, in the kind of environment I operate in, I have to have a zero goal.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Do you know how the drugs are coming in, other than being thrown over the fence?

Mr. Don Head: They are being smuggled in by visitors, family members, contractors. As I say, we have very few staff. We've just finished dismissing 12 staff this year.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: What level were the staff? What kind of staff?

Mr. Don Head: It varied. We had food service officers, psychologists, correctional officers.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: One issue you brought up was correction plans, which are very important to any inmate who wants to apply for parole, for example. He or she has to have completed a corrections plan. Is that correct?

Mr. Don Head: Yes. A correctional plan is completed for every inmate.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I'm told there are waiting lists for the correctional plans; inmates who would like to get on a plan just can't because of the waiting lists. Maybe there aren't enough personnel to put plans together. Where's the bottleneck?

Mr. Don Head: A very good question.

We have encountered some lengthy wait lists to get into the programs. As I mentioned briefly, the new approach to offering programs—the integrated correctional program model that we're piloting in the Pacific region and in the Atlantic region—is a way to get offenders starting their programs within 45 days of starting their sentence, as opposed to the 150 to 250 days after they started their sentence. We know that's a problem.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: So there's no resource constraint there. It's just you're redesigning the program so they can get started earlier.

Mr. Don Head: Part of it is a redesign. Part of it was a resource issue. We have received some resources over the last few years to increase our program capacity, the number of program delivery officers I have. I can always use more at any given time to get more programs going, but we're moving in the right direction.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now move to the second round of questioning, a five-minute round, and we'll go to Mr. Garrison and Mr. Rathgeber.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

On this side, we welcome the opportunity to talk about drugs in prison. We do agree it is a public safety and a public security issue, as those whose addiction problems are not dealt with while they're in the institutions will of course return to the communities and bring those problems with them.

I'd like to thank the commissioner for his presentation and the emphasis on the two parts, their addiction and the demand for drugs in prison. I'd like to focus on that demand side.

In your presentation you talk about receiving an additional $122 million in 2008 to work on their addiction. Was there a similar increase in the budget for programming on the demand side within your operations?

Mr. Don Head: Yes. That's a very good question. Thanks.

Over the last couple of years our programming budget has continued to go up. We have, for example, as a result of strategic reinvestments a few years ago, received around $47 million to invest in more programs in the institutions, which include a community maintenance program, violence prevention programs, and programs specific for aboriginal offenders. As well, our normal growth number in terms of program funding has moved from $130 million two years ago for programs overall to currently, this fiscal year, $154 million. So that's a $24 million increase on the program side. This allows us to hire more program delivery staff to give those much-needed programs to inmates.

● (1145)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Would that increase then simply keep pace with the increase in the prison population, or is that an actual increase in real dollars per person in the institutions?

Mr. Don Head: Yes, it is a challenge. It's not necessarily keeping pace with the demand. We have to make some choices as to where we'll put our time and energy.

The fact that we've received those increases over the last few years has been very significant for us, because for many years we actually saw some declines in our program funding. So this has moved us to a point now where we have a level of stability, but we need to.... Part of the reason we're redesigning the programs now is to try to give us a little bit more of an edge to get as many offenders as possible in programs earlier.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I would say I'm disappointed to learn that the increase in the interdiction budget hasn't really been matched by an increase on the demand side. They're very good figures here. And I do want to acknowledge that our system is very good in terms of substance abuse programs. Those who complete them are 45% less likely to return with a new offence, and 65% less likely with a new violent offence.

You mentioned waiting lists for those programs in your presentation. Can you give me some kind of idea of what's happening now in terms of waiting lists for the addiction treatment programs?

Mr. Don Head: Yes. Again, it's a good question.

We've reduced the time for the waiting list by about 50% over the last two to three years, and that's primarily because of the investments. I should clarify that the $122 million investment on the interdiction side was over five years, not $122 million each year. The other moneys that I talked about, like the $24 million increase in the program, is a yearly increase. So there probably is a much closer parity between the interdiction side and the program side.

We have reduced our program waiting list times by 50%. We know we still have some work to do. We also know that for certain individuals we can deliver the program a little later in their sentence, because the level of intensity of need as it relates to their substance abuse program is less than that of some other offenders. Those who have a high-intensity need should be involved in the programs as quickly as possible; otherwise, their behaviours are going to carry on during their sentence and get them into more trouble. In terms of those with moderate or low-intensity needs, we can get by with a little more time before we get them enrolled. So we do make some very calculated choices in terms of prioritizing who goes into the programs.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now move to Mr. Rathgeber, very quickly, please.

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

Thank you to the witnesses. It's good to see you, Mr. Head.

I want to talk specifically about staff. Do you have any estimations, anecdotal or otherwise, as to what proportion of contraband is being smuggled into your prisons where the conduit is actually members of the service?

Mr. Don Head: As I mentioned, this year we dismissed 12 staff members. That's 12 on a base of about 18,000 staff. It's a very small percentage. But even one staff member bringing it in jeopardizes the safety of my institutions.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: How were you able to determine that those staff members were involved?

Mr. Don Head: It usually comes about through various means. Sometimes we get the information from other staff who are indicating that there's something strange about the behaviour of another staff member. Sometimes it's information that comes from inmates. Sometimes it's information that we get from police sources because of something they're observing out in the community that was unrelated to our business, and then they find a connection with a staff member who works for us.

● (1150)

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Those individuals, the 12 who had been dismissed from the service, do you know if any of them have been charged? Or is it simply a matter of their being dismissed from their employment?

Mr. Don Head: We dismissed them because that's as much as we can do. They then are still subject to criminal charges outside.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: But do you know if any of them have in fact been charged?

Mr. Don Head: Yes, they have.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: As you know, I've visited many prisons from coast to coast to coast, and always as a visitor. Normally I'm subject to very thorough security, always a metal detector, and whatever briefcase I might be carrying is always subject to an X-ray, but sometimes I've been subject to a sniffer dog and sometimes I haven't been. Is that only because I had some sort of status as a member of Parliament that they might have not subjected me to the sniffer dog?

I guess my question is whether, with respect to visitors, the security regimen is standard from institution to institution, or is there some variance?

Mr. Don Head: There's a level of sporadic-ness that's built into that so that people don't see a constant routine with some of our approaches all the time. We want people to believe that they're going to be subject to that dog every time.

Mr. Chair, I think your member has been very fortunate, because every time I go to a visit, the dog is always there to greet me and he always seems to be sitting, which is not a good sign.

Yes, there is a level of unpredictability so that people are not always seeing the routine. And at times, for example, the drug detector dog team may be already deployed down inside, so it may not be there at that time. There are some processes that are standard, others that are sporadic. Our hope and belief is that people know that any time they come in there, they're potentially going to be subject to something that's going to detect it, and if they get caught, there are serious consequences.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: What about staff? What is their security regimen when they enter the institution at the beginning of their shift? I know they have to check their personal belongings into a locker, but what about the sniffer dog, what about the X-ray machine?

Mr. Don Head: This is something we're looking at enhancing more than what it is now because of these very, very few cases, but we know we have to put in place some more stringent processes to deal with staff.

Over the years the approach with staff has not necessarily been as rigid as it has been with visitors or contractors, MPs, or the commissioner. This is something we're working on right now, and there will be some changes in the very, very near future.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Thank you, Mr. Head.

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chicoine, you have five minutes.

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank all the witnesses for being here.

As you mentioned in your presentation, almost half of the inmates are less likely to be put in prison again after they participate in substance abuse programs. What is the percentage? Do you have the percentage of offenders who have access to and participate in substance abuse programs?

[*English*]

Mr. Don Head: As I said, about 80% of the offenders who come into the system have had some form of substance abuse problem in their lives. About 50% of the offenders who come in to us have had a substance abuse problem that was directly linked to their criminal activity or their criminal behaviour. Those are the ones we target first, because there is a direct link between their substance abuse addiction problem and getting involved in criminal activity.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine: Do all those who want to participate in substance abuse programs have access to them?

[*English*]

Mr. Don Head: Yes. As was discussed earlier, we have some wait lists for people to get into those programs. We'll identify through the assessment that they have a problem; we'll identify in their correctional plan that they need to be involved in the program; we'll give them the opportunity to participate in the program. We'll put them on a wait list depending on their level of intensity and need and potential earliest release date. We'll use those as factors to determine who will go in front of somebody else on the wait list, and then they'll go through the program.

Our substance abuse programs have relatively high completion rates. On average, most of our programs have around a 70% or 71% completion rate, but the completion rate for our substance abuse programs is between 83% and 85%.

We'll have people drop out for various reasons and not complete the program, and we'll look to offer the program again later; or they may be transferred because they've gotten into trouble—those kinds of things. But we know that if we get them to complete the program, get the booster program lined up before they go out into the community, get them linked to the community maintenance program, if that's appropriate, and keep all those pieces strung together and keep them focused on the program, the stats show that they're about 45% less likely to commit an offence. That's what leads to good success rates

● (1155)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine: Okay.

Do you think that increasing funding for those programs would help you get more people to participate? We see that there is a direct link. When those people attend the programs, they are almost twice less likely to reoffend. Would an increase in funding improve the percentage?

[*English*]

Mr. Don Head: Most definitely. My belief is that the more programs I can offer to all those inmates who have the need, the more likely I am to produce even better public safety results than those we have. The more opportunities I have to provide those programs and make them readily available sooner, the more I can have the inmates motivated to be part of them.

On any given day, maybe 20% of the offender population will refuse to participate in programs. They're very entrenched in criminal behaviour and don't want to be part of anything we offer. But if I can get at them and get them involved in the programs very early on in their sentences, I'm going to address that problem as well. We know if we get them involved early on, put the support around them, and work with them through their sentences, we're going to produce good public safety results both inside the institutions and out in the community.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I want to thank the committee. Those were all very good questions and good answers.

I don't want to mess up by asking a bad question, but I'm wondering. My constituency includes Drumheller and the Drumheller institution. There are some very good things happening in that institution as far as information-sharing is concerned, and being able to coordinate and recognize.... I've been on a number of tours over the years. You walk into a room, and they have a board, and they have pictures, and they're sorting out the gang affiliations. They do a lot of information-sharing with the RCMP and correctional workers.

I know that in Alberta this is viewed as a very good program. The last three wardens—Tim Fullerton, Floyd Wilson, Mike Hanley—have all bought into this a bit. I wonder whether that type of sharing of information is going on in other institutions. If it is, great; if not, why is it not?

The other thing is what Mr. Chicoine brought up in his question. Are there incentives for taking some of these programs? Can you explain to us, if someone comes in who is an offender who refuses to take part, and your tests show, perhaps, that he has a drug problem, what the incentives are for his moving into a place where he's willing to take part in rehabilitative programs?

● (1200)

Mr. Don Head: Mr. Chair, I have to say that those are two exceptionally good questions.

In terms of the first question, what you saw at Drumheller is our expectation across the country. Through our security intelligence staff, through working with all the other groups of staff in the institution, the gathering of that information, the analysis of that information, and the dissemination of it back out is key to having a safe environment. As well, working with our other criminal justice partners, such as local police and even in some cases CSIS and Canada Border Services Agency, is key to having an environment that's going to be safe.

As part of the investments we've received over the last few years, we received investment to increase our security intelligence capacity, to allow us to do that very thing you've talked about. And I can attest, Mr. Chair, that your picture and name don't show up on any of our i2 charts at all, just to alleviate any concerns of any of the other members.

In terms of the issue of incentives, again, one of the things I'll refer to is Bill C-10. One of the things that I'm glad to see in there is the item that will give me the opportunity to address the very issue of incentives.

I have a very quick story, Mr. Chair. Right now, if Mr. Price and I were two inmates with relatively the same length of sentence, the same kind of offence, and Mr. Price, being a much better inmate than I, decides he's going to follow his correctional plan, he's going to participate in programs, his behaviour is going to be good, and he'll ultimately apply for whatever discretionary release he may be entitled to, he's entitled a series of privileges in the institution. If I choose not to follow my correctional plan and my behaviour is not serious enough to move me to maximum security or put me into segregation, the only difference between Mr. Price and me is that I probably won't get a discretionary release, a day parole, or full parole, but I'm entitled to the same privileges as Mr. Price, as it stands right now under the Corrections and Conditional Release Act.

We don't believe that's the kind of incentive regime that's going to work in terms of moulding people to be accountable for their actions. This goes back, Mr. Chair, to one of the questions around inmate accountability.

There is a provision now in Bill C-10 that would give me the authority to establish the appropriate scheme for incentives for individuals who are engaged in their correctional plan versus those who are not engaged, and we look forward to that piece being passed as well.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I want to thank all members for their questions today.

Thank you both for appearing.

We are going to suspend momentarily.

Some of you may want to grab a lunch prior to our welcoming our next guests. We will fairly promptly ask them to take their seats, and we look forward to their testimony as well.

Thank you.

We suspend.

●

(Pause)

●

● (1205)

The Chair: We're going to call this meeting to order once again.

We're pleased that in our second hour we're continuing with our study on drugs and alcohol in prisons.

We have testifying before us today the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers. We have their national president here today, so we welcome Pierre Mallette. Again, we thank him for coming on such short notice. We appreciate that. Appearing with him today is an advisor of his, Michel Bouchard.

To both of you, we welcome you and thank you.

We'll proceed. I noted that you were here for the previous presentation, and this will be much the same. You may give an opening statement, and then we'll go into a number of rounds of questions and answers.

Monsieur Mallette, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Mallette (National President, Union of Canadian Correctional Officers, Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN)): I would like to thank everyone who invited us to give a presentation.

First, I would like to point out that I am wearing my uniform this morning because I have been a correctional officer for 25 years. I am proud to be one and to represent the union members as their national president.

Our presentation deals with a major topic of great importance to us: drugs and alcohol in penitentiaries.

In order to talk about this problem, the issue has to be divided into four separate topics: the tools we need, visitor screening, population management and, finally, programs.

In terms of tools, over the past few years, we have actually received new resources in the form of dog handlers and security equipment. But I would point out that medium and maximum security penitentiaries are often surrounded by woods and they are easily accessible through the trees. In those prisons, we often see what we call the throw over. Flying packages are thrown over the fences. People might think that all the towers around our penitentiaries have guards at night and that there are several patrols, but that’s not true. A patrol sometimes covers a perimeter of two kilometres. In some cases, if there is no perimeter, only one tower has guards. But the fact remains that, in most institutions, none of the towers have guards at night. So this means that it is now easier for offenders to get drugs in at night if they want to.

I would also like to point out that prisons are not closed environments. We often talk about the number of visitors who come to see the inmates every year, for various reasons. They could be family, friends, community groups, inmates’ rights groups, entrepreneurs and contractors. There are also social events. There could be up to 5,000 visitors every six months. That is a lot of people. And the more visitors, the higher the chances for increased criminal activities, unfortunately.

As union members and as correctional officers, we feel that the third topic is the most important. I would really like the committee to take the time to study it. I am talking about population management. Just now, I heard Mr. Head talk about inmates who commit to their correctional plan and those who do not. We have always felt that we should do everything in our power to help inmates who make a commitment and focus on rehabilitation, by providing them with programs and the necessary tools. However, we are dealing with a group of individuals who are not necessarily interested in committing to their correctional plan. Unfortunately, these people sometimes create problems within the institutions. They can ruin the program for other inmates. There should be a separate program for them. But we need tools for that.

I would also like the committee to look into what gangs do and what power they have in prisons. Some of the commissioner's directives pertain to criminal groups. There are positions of trust in prisons, such as canteen staff, the chair of the inmate committee or the chair for inmates’ complaints. I suggest that the committee members take the time to look into that. They will see how often those positions are filled by people from biker gangs or the mafia. Those groups control all the underground economy in the place. And what is the underground economy? It is the money used for or made from illegal sales.

● (1210)

We have two types of problems. On the one hand, we have people who use drugs. The numbers get up to a staggering 80% or so. On the other hand, we have people who want to make money from selling drugs. They are the ones who control the underground economy and get inmates to do drugs and become addicts.

As a result, those inmates get hopelessly trapped. They are screwed, as they say. The amounts of money they owe are so large that they have to ask for protection. Getting protection means that another population has to be created; they leave the population where they owe the money and so another population has to be created. That is what I call population management. We need one type of program for the inmates committed to their correctional plans and another type for those who are not committed.

The last topic is also important to me. It includes substance abuse programs, the possibility for inmates to follow those programs, insufficient employment opportunities in the institutions, meaning positions that are not open to the general population. In the 1990s, we were told that the symptoms of having no programs were connected to the revolving door syndrome, which means that people go to prison, serve their time without attending any programs, and are released without necessarily succeeding in rehabilitating themselves.

I feel that your committee is faced with a major challenge. If we had had more time, we would have prepared a brief. I am not sure whether it's too late, but if we can give you more information, we will be more than happy to help you with that. I have to say that we got the invitation yesterday afternoon. But we still managed to outline the issues at hand.

We are now ready to take your questions. It is our pleasure to do so.

[*English*]

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mallette.

[*English*]

One of the things I would like to thank you for is for bringing up all the different parts of it. Also, although you've appeared on short notice, and we appreciate that, I would encourage you to please feel free to forward us a brief, if you have one, regarding drugs in prison, to rehabilitation, and the issue of danger to correctional officers because of it. We can get you a copy of our motion and the study we're doing, and as long as you keep your briefing to that study, it would be very much appreciated.

We'll move to the first round of questioning. We'll go to Mr. Leef, please, for seven minutes.

● (1215)

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Mallette, for appearing and for your comments today.

I want to go into the topic of visitors, from your experience. You talked about that. I'll speak slowly because I know they're going to translate it for you, unless you're fluent in English. Okay, that's great.

We heard the commissioner talk a bit about the consequences—and they're outlined in the video—and for visitors. Can you maybe give us some of your perspective and background on what exactly those consequences are? I don't necessarily mean directly from the video, and not the warned consequences, but from your perspective as a frontline officer, which consequences are actually realized? Are they serious? Are they the kinds of things that are deterring drugs from entering a facility? Are they sufficient, from your perspective?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Mallette: I am going to answer from my perspective as president of the union. We often get calls from members saying that they don't always trust the system. Visitors go through the IONSCAN that can detect drugs, but sometimes the consequences are not always clear to us. We assume that, if a visitor comes to the institution and the machine goes off, the visitation rights will be suspended. But the big question about visitation rights is whether they are a right or a privilege. What does visitation mean? Should there be contact allowed during visits or should they take place through a window?

I would like to draw your attention to one more thing. In my career, I have witnessed very sad situations. I have seen mothers come to visit their children—sometimes children are criminals—and they were forced to try and smuggle drugs in to help their sons. In one instance, a lady called the institution completely devastated. We tried to make her understand that we had to protect her son too. We warned her that she might well come and try to bring drugs in, but that it wouldn't work and she would be arrested. There are consequences for everything.

Sometimes people wonder what the consequences are for visitors, but we also have to determine what the consequences are for inmates who put pressure on their families and friends to bring them drugs. Those consequences are not always clear to people.

Are visits a right or a privilege? If we are dealing with a right, do we allow contact or do we require visits with indirect contact if the person has already tried three times to bring drugs in?

That's what this is all about. We have the people who want drugs and the people who want to make money from drugs. The consequences must be clear, but that is not always the case. I know that CSC has policies, but unfortunately they don't always seem to be the right way of doing things.

[*English*]

Mr. Ryan Leef: Thank you for that.

Would you at times then see the visitors who have been caught with drugs or any other form of contraband having these consequences levied against them, such as going from an open visit to a closed visit? Or sometimes do you observe them not subject to any consequences at all, so they are caught one week and then are there again with free and clear access to the inmate population?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Mallette: Let me make a distinction. The IONSCAN does not necessarily go off because the person has drugs on them. It can go off because they were in contact with drugs or they were around drugs. It doesn't mean that you have to have drugs on you. We must be careful.

So if a visitor is stopped for being in possession of drugs, they can be charged with a criminal offence. It is the responsibility of the police to come and arrest them.

In order to deal with offenders who get drugs in, are in custody and have pushed hard to get the drugs, we need the help of the public, judges and crown prosecutors, who must take those offences very seriously. But if the offenders are already in prison, there is no point in bringing them before the court again; they are already in prison. What else could happen?

All those things have to be factored in. There have to be consequences for both parties, meaning the people who try to get the drugs in and those who bring them in.

● (1220)

[*English*]

Mr. Ryan Leef: Great. Thank you.

Going to your topic of managing prison populations, can you give us some background on what the inmate cash limit is? They have bank accounts they can access. Where are we with that and their ability to hold funds that can be transferred in and out of the institution? What's the limit—and in your opinion, is that a reasonable limit?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Mallette: There are usually two accounts—unless things have changed. I will tell you what I think the situation is. I am actually almost certain. There is what we call a current account and a savings account. If I am not mistaken, once or twice a year, inmates have a right to transfer money from their savings account to their current account in order to buy Christmas gifts or a specific piece of equipment.

Let's talk about the underground economy. It is important to check those types of money transfers with the help of a good intelligence service. So we must make sure that those inmates, who have a right to transfer the funds, buy only what they really need.

I told you earlier about positions of trust in the institutions. Who is on the canteen staff? Inmates are going to buy things at the canteen. Some of the canteen staff are not civilian personnel. They are inmates. When inmates want to buy pop or chips, they don't get them from a staff member, but from another inmate. So an exchange takes place, but not a money exchange because there is no money. It is done through the hands of someone and it is all electronic. The fact remains that someone gives the inmates what they want and they have to pay for it.

Since we are talking about positions of trust and we are looking at all that... I would ask your committee to take the time and look into that, to ask questions in order to find out who is in those positions of trust, and who the canteen workers in an institution are. Let's say the canteen person is Joe X. Is he a member of an organized crime group, or a street gang? Is he with the Hells Angels? I encourage you to check that, to check that information. You will see the extent to which the underground economy is managed by people with bad intentions, unfortunately. They belong to organized crime groups outside prison. Can we really believe that, once in prison, they are not going to try and organize themselves in the same way? Of course they are going to try.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mallette and Mr. Leef.

We'll now move to the opposition side and Mr. Sandhu.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I want to thank Pierre for being here this morning and I want to thank the men and women who serve in our correctional system, especially the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers. They have been doing a wonderful job and I'm very thankful for their service to Canada.

This may be for another day, but I also want to acknowledge that you work under extreme and very difficult circumstances, and a lot of times your safety is a concern to your members. I want to assure you that we on this side of the House are also concerned about the safety of men and women who are providing an essential service to Canada.

Pierre, if you had to say one thing, just very briefly.... We've seen, over the years, a number of preventative programs being put in place where we have sniffer dogs, metal detectors, and such. Have these reduced drug usage or the number of drugs available to the inmates? You've had 25 years' of experience. Are they still able to access drugs, even with all of this detection and dogs and all of that?

Mr. Pierre Mallette: One thing I would like to say is that the new equipment we have received, dogs and detectors, are good tools. We need those tools. We're not going to say that is not good equipment.

Are we better with this equipment? Yes. At the same time, you can have all the equipment you want; you can have everything you want, but at the end of the day there are people in there who want to make money. They want to take drugs. There's a problem with that too. They're always going to try to find something else, and they will be better.

I was talking about the fence. To give you an example, I saw some place where they were using a tennis ball and a racquet. They threw the ball inside. There's always something.

People tell me, “But don't forget, Mr. Mallette, in the morning somebody is supposed to search the yard”. Of course somebody is supposed to search the yard, but you're asking one person to search the yard. Do you believe the yard is the size of this? No, it's huge. Of course they know that somebody is going to search the yard, and they try to make that thing more difficult to find. In French we say it's

[*Translation*]

It is the old cat and mouse game.

[*English*]

In English maybe it's a cat and mouse play. It's huge.

But I cannot say that these tools are not good to help with the drugs. They are good.

● (1225)

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: If I wanted to summarize, would this be fair: that those tools help, but the amount of drugs accessible to inmates is still huge?

Mr. Pierre Mallette: Those tools have to apply with the management of population. That's what I was saying: the management of the population is so important.

There are so many problems there. In some institutions you've got nine kinds of population. There's the population where this inmate cannot talk with this inmate.

We don't make a separation between somebody who is engaged and somebody who is not engaged. I'm going to use the same example as Mr. Head. I'm inside with Michel. Michel is following his plan. I wonder why I would do that when I have the same privileges as him. I've got the same tools. I have everything.

That's the problem we have tried to fix for a long time, since 2001. UCCO were involved in the regime. We sent Mr. Grabowsky to Ottawa for four months to sit on committees. We never succeeded. We never got anywhere with that. The reply we got on the law at that time was what is a right and what is a privilege?

That's still going on. The new law is maybe going to succeed in trying to make a difference, but it's huge.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: You talk about segregation, somebody who is engaged, somebody who is not engaged. Can you elaborate on what that means?

Mr. Pierre Mallette: “Engaged” means it's my first sentence inside. One of the program we always talk about on first sentences is whether there is a place in the country, in each region, where you can send a first offender.

So say it's my first time. I stole a car. I have a file. I'm coming in. I don't want to go back to the criminal stuff. I want to change. I want to get out of that. But for now I'm going to an institution with people who come from gangs.

Do you seriously believe a guy who is so proud to be a Hells Angels, is so proud about what he's doing outside...?

[*Translation*]

They call us “*les citoyens*”.

[*English*]

We are paying taxes for them. We are paying money to government for them. They have a beautiful life. They are not engaged, to us. They are complicated. And they're going to put pressure on the guy coming in.

When you're searching a range and they want to hide some brews, some drugs, they are going to go to a new guy on the range and tell him he's going to put this, this, and this in his cell.

Don't forget this guy is facing a Hells Angel. He's facing a tough guy. He's going to be a little bit scared about that, so he's going to do it.

And guess what—when we search, we're going to find the drug in his cell. Is he going to tell us it's not his, it's the drugs of the bad guy? He will be scared. He will have to go to segregation because he's going to ask for protection.

It's complicated.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: With those who want to be engaged, want to get involved in the programs, do you find that programs are readily available to them and in a timely fashion?

The Chair: Very quickly, Mr. Mallette.

Mr. Pierre Mallette: The answer is yes and no.

[*Translation*]

The problem with the substance abuse programs is that if the inmate transfers to a different institution, the program does not follow him.

Not every location has vocational training for inmates. We also have the situation of double-bunking in cells. Jobs are fewer and fewer and increasingly being reduced. Inmates are spending a lot of time in their cells. It's the revolving door syndrome There are programs, but they aren't always adapted in the same way from one place to another. It's a problem for the inmate who wants to get out.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Monsieur Mallette.

Madam Hoeppner.

Ms. Candice Hoeppner: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Mallette, for being here.

I also want to express gratitude for the work that you and your colleagues do and the risk that this work involves. I'm sure you're under immense pressure and stress every day. Thank you for what you do.

You painted a pretty vivid picture for us of an inmate who comes in wanting to do well and then is pressured into helping in the trafficking of drugs. Really, it's the same outside, in many ways. People who are trafficking drugs sometimes are motivated by addiction, but a lot of times it's about the money. They want to make money. So whether it's on the outside, and they're trying to traffic drugs to our kids, or inside the prisons, where they're trafficking drugs to inmates who are trying to get over their addiction, it's often motivated by money.

We're debating right now Bill C-10, which talks about greater accountability and greater consequences for those kinds of activities. In your estimation—and we talked about this in regard to people smuggling in drugs—do you think that having greater consequences and greater accountability will be a part of the tools that will help deter this?

● (1230)

Mr. Pierre Mallette: Maybe you're going to give me a chance to talk about a slogan I hear a lot, “tough on crime”. I hear that from the field. People are saying the new government wants to be tough on crime, right?

We accept the challenge to be tough on crime. I'm a correctional officer. Justice, it's in my mind. But tough on crime means being tough on criminals, too. Changing the law to bring us wider margins of manoeuvre to manage the population is going to be good. At the same time, we're going to have to give what goes with that. Managing the population, managing new rules, means we're going to have to review the number of correctional officers we have at the site. You're going to build more units. That's good news. Now we're facing a lot of double-bunking, and double-bunking is no good for anybody. It's not good for correctional officers, but it's not good for inmates, either. Two in a cell means a lot of stress for them and a lot of stress for us.

This is the first chance I've had to talk to the MPs in the committee about those things. You're going to see the media saying different things. People are going to say, “Ah, you're never satisfied. You're receiving more units, more jobs.” Let's talk about the stuff. We're passing the law, and now we're going to have to deal with new stuff, new laws. How are we going to apply that? Engage? Not engage? Maybe we're going to arrive at something. In any case, we want to be there.

I want to tell you something. We were in Ottawa this week, all week, for the Blood Samples Act. We want the Blood Samples Act. If an inmate is trying to throw feces at me, and he's using his blood as a weapon, please, can we know if he's sick or he's got something? Can we just know? We know that in your bill it's going to be criminal to do stuff like this. Please, we want that. We need it.

The Chair: Mr. Mallette, you're asking the government to do some good things, and we may have to have you back for another piece of legislation. But we want to try to limit this discussion to the drugs and prisons.

We look forward to your coming back again. Mark my words.

Continue, Ms. Hoeppner.

Ms. Candice Hoeppner: Thank you.

You also referred to inmates putting pressure on you. You used the example of a mother bringing drugs in. As a mother, I can see you might feel sorrow or guilt, or whatever the pressure might be. But what about actual gang activity? Can you explain to us the relationship? Somebody who is in prison, you would think he would not be able to have influence outside of prison, but obviously he sometimes can. Can you explain how gang members, Hells Angels, are able to exert pressure outside of prison to tell people to bring drugs in?

Mr. Pierre Mallette: It's going back to one thing. It's going back to the fact that a penitentiary is not closed to the public. They have the right to call. They have the right to call people outside.

Ms. Candice Hoeppner: Can they call anybody?

Mr. Pierre Mallette: They have a list. Do you know what tool they have? Okay, I have the name of Michelle on my list. Boom, I'm calling Michelle. Michelle is transferring my call to somebody else. With the technology we have now with the cellphone.... We're talking about contraband. They like to have a cellphone. We know that some people are still doing their business. They are inside and they're still doing their business outside. Is there pressure on family? Of course. When we decided to take tobacco out of jail, it was about the money inside. Give me three packs of smokes; that represents two pieces of drugs. Good. Now we take out the money like tobacco there. What they're trying to do is put pressure outside: ask your wife to go and make a term deposit of $400 into that bank account.

You were talking about Drumheller. I visited that place two years ago, and it's true. I was proud to finally see a place where staff can have that information. Two years ago I visited Drumheller, the big board in the staff room. Well, it's not like this everywhere. In some places you don't have all the information like this. It's like secret intelligence. They like to keep that information for them. That's another problem. It's our problem because it's all related to everything. If somebody was telling me more information about the gang inside, if I'm a correctional officer, it would be better for me to have better ears.

And the pressure on the family.... I was talking about a mother, a grandmother. I saw a grandmother who was crying when she called the institution—the pressure on her. They have access by cellphone. They have their list of numbers they can call. And, like I told you, I'm calling Michelle: do you want to transfer me to another place?

● (1235)

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

I'm very proud of Drumheller and proud of my constituency. Maybe we're going to have to figure out a way to get our committee to come to the beautiful Canadian badlands at Drumheller and see the penitentiary, the institution, there as well.

Mr. Scarpaleggia, please, you have seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Mallette. Your testimony is fascinating. Honestly, you have opened our eyes to a lot of things, I speak for myself at least.

Do you think the percentage of inmates who use drugs is between 80 and 90%?

Mr. Pierre Mallette: No. Mr. Head just said that 80% of inmates have a drug problem.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Do you think more than 50% of inmates are using drugs inside the institutions?

Mr. Pierre Mallette: To be honest, in my experience, we talk a lot about drugs, but let's talk instead about drugs and alcohol. Let's not forget about alcohol. I think the percentage is much higher than 50%.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: But Mr. Head said that when urinalyses are done, it turns out that about 7% of inmates are using drugs and alcohol. That's quite a gap.

Mr. Pierre Mallette: It's interesting. The data is interesting. Did the inmates manage in some way to falsify the urine tests? I don't know. It's true that there's a problem between the statistical data and what we see as correctional officers. I think it's true.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Do you think the rate of intoxicant use hasn't really dropped significantly?

Mr. Pierre Mallette: I think that the new tools have made it more difficult for people who want to bring drugs into the institutions. I sincerely believe that the drug-detecting dogs, the Ionscan detection devices and the urine tests are tools that make it more difficult to bring drugs in.

But, by doing that, are we going to resolve the problem completely? No. Even in our own society on the outside, we are spending billions of dollars on the war against drugs. Have we managed to eliminate it completely? No.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: You said that the towers aren't guarded at night.

Mr. Pierre Mallette: No.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Is it because of a lack of resources?

Mr. Pierre Mallette: There are two reasons. First, it's a lack of resources. Second, there is sometimes a logic at play from the employer. At any given moment, I have to take on my role as president. When I receive calls and people tell me…

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: You're talking about the president…

Mr. Pierre Mallette: The president of the union. I'm the president of the national union.

For example, if resources are given to a place to deal with the problem of drugs being thrown over the fences, someone may interpret that as requiring a minimum operational position and the position may be cut. But that's the interpretation of one person.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I don't understand. If there's a problem, positions can be cut?

Mr. Pierre Mallette: No. Let's say that we assign one more person to monitor the perimeter. Great; the money has been allocated. But at some point, someone interprets it and says that it's possible to use the person in that position for other things. That's what needs to be checked.

But I'm not going to tell you that when we talk to management in Ottawa about this, they say to me that these people have the right to act this way. Actually, they tell me I'm right. There are 54 institutions…

● (1240)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: But you can see Mr. Head.

Mr. Pierre Mallette: Yes, we attend eight meetings a year, and some discussions are very heated. Still, there are 54 institutions, and 54 wardens who can interpret things incorrectly.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: You were speaking earlier about certain populations, particularly individuals who want to be engaged and others who don't. There are also individuals who accumulate debts and who must then be protected. Do they become a third population?

Mr. Pierre Mallette: As terrible as this seems, some institutions have nine populations. There are inmates who are under protection because they have not paid their debt; those who are under protection because they committed sexual offences; and biker gangs who can't stand each other.

I had a terrible time at Donnacona Institution in 1995. Members of the Rock Machine and the Hells Angels were in the same penitentiary at the same time. One night, a war broke out outside, then inside. They had to be separated. We were lucky. A correctional officer saved a lot of lives that night. He closed the door. One inmate was getting stabbed. A lot of things happened.

In an institution, just sending an inmate to the hospital means that all sectors are frozen. For example, if an inmate from block E is going, nobody moves because he cannot come in contact with the others.

There are nine different populations, for all sorts of reasons.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: You've worked in this environment for long enough to be able to pass judgment on this question. I would like to know if you have had an individual arrive at a penitentiary and you say to yourself that he shouldn't be there. I'm thinking of someone who isn't a tough person and who you wouldn't give a week before he's attacked by a gang. I'm not talking about a situation that happens every day; I'm thinking more of a person who would not be able to bear the conditions and who shouldn't be there.

I know you see some tough cases who need to be where they are, but I would like to know if, in your career, you have seen that certain people—it could be people with minimum sentences—shouldn't be there.

Mr. Pierre Mallette: Are you talking about inmates or correctional officers?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Inmates.

Mr. Pierre Mallette: Oh, inmates who shouldn't be in the prison system?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Inmates who, when you see them, you think that they won't last long.

Mr. Pierre Mallette: Yes, this has happened often to me. Honestly, even though we're correctional officers, sometimes we say to ourselves, when we see certain inmates: "Oh, poor guy, it makes no sense!" How can it be that there is no program for managing first sentences? It's something I've always asked myself. Nothing like this is offered to inmates who are serving their first sentence.

When we look at the background of some individuals who've committed an offence—I'm not talking about 25 murders, but a succession of offences—we say that they're going to get beaten down. They are going to be abused, picked up and asked for things, but they are going to have to keep it for themselves. At some point, they will have drugs or alcohol in their cell and will be ratted out. They are going to revolt against us and receive a disciplinary report. Then they'll be cornered. In those cases, an inmate doesn't tell us that, really, it's another inmate in the range who is responsible, otherwise it's him and not the other one who is going to get out. Population management revolves around this type of problem.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Thank you, Mr. Mallette.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Monsieur Scarpaleggia.

We'll move back to the official opposition.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Morin, you have five minutes.

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Right now, we're talking a lot about Bill C-10. If it's passed, the prison population would increase considerably, but the funding might not necessarily be in place. We could talk about inadequate staff to implement and adopt the assistance programs. I'm talking about correctional officers, but also services for the inmates, including psychological, medical and detox services. Could you please talk about the possible consequences of that, for the inmates first of all, then for the employees, and lastly for the public?

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Morin.

Again, we will have legislation coming before committee. Bill C-10 will go before the justice committee, where some of those issues will be discussed. My job is to keep us focused on the parameters of the motion.

Thank you, Madame Morin. You're always very good at accommodating.

● (1245)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin: I'll rephrase my question.

Should the prison population increase, what would the consequences be for the inmates, the employees and the public?

Mr. Pierre Mallette: Let's start with the population.

[*English*]

An hon. member: A point of order.

The Chair: Keep the answer focused on drugs, and perhaps some of—

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin: It's not a problem.

The Chair: That's good. As long as we're on the issue of drugs and not on whether building more prisons is good or bad, that's fine. We want to stay focused on the study that we're doing.

Mr. Pierre Mallette: Mr. Sorenson, should I be answering the question or not? I'm not sure what I'm doing now.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: You're going to answer. You are to answer a question in regard to drugs in prison.

Mr. Pierre Mallette: Drugs in prison, okay.

The Chair: If we're going to try to wordsmith Madame Morin's question, what will be the effect of drugs in prison if we see an increased prison population? Working within the parameters of this question, how can we better serve those people coming in?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Mallette: Ms. Morin, if there's an increase in the prison population, we would have to have the resources necessary to handle that new situation. The correctional officers or the institutional staff would need to be given the resources required. If there are 80 inmates in a range made to hold 40, that means that there would be two inmates to a cell. There would be twice as much work and twice as many responsibilities. It would lead to significant difficulties and would affect the morale of the inmates.

All these things, as Michel is telling me here, will have an impact on the identification of people involved in drugs. The entire information system will become 10 times more complicated. Of course, we'll need the corresponding resources.

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin: We also heard earlier about programs specifically for women and aboriginals. If possible, could you tell me more about the unique features of those programs? It would be of interest to our committee.

Mr. Pierre Mallette: Are you talking about drug programs?

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin: Yes, that's right.

Mr. Pierre Mallette: One thing that's certain is that drugs aren't linked to one group of people. The penitentiaries for women have drug programs, but it's handled a little differently. If you visit a penitentiary for women and a penitentiary for men, you'll see that it's not at all the same thing.

But there are women in the prisons for women who are dealing with criminal gangs. These behaviours are difficult to manage. We've been taught to deal with male and female inmates differently. In the union, we often say that we should be careful not to treat them too differently because when the problem involves drugs or gangs, it's the same basic problem whether it's a man or a woman involved. It's the same problem with intimidation of other inmates.

We need to take the time to think, to not make too big a distinction between them. At the same time, we shouldn't think that there's nothing for women. Nor can we say that this doesn't exist in prisons for women, that there are no problems. Hold on! We need to look at this together.

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin: So there are programs for women who are facing substance abuse problems in prison. And the programs are offered and adapted.

Mr. Pierre Mallette: Yes.

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin: I imagine it's the same thing for aboriginals.

Mr. Pierre Mallette: It's the same thing for aboriginals. We call these healing lodges for aboriginal inmates. They are in western Canada, including in Kwikwèxwelhp and Willow Cree. There are also substance abuse programs.

Alcohol is also a big problem.

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin: So is it the same thing for the specific programs? Are they handled the same way? We know a little about the situations on the reservations. I simply wanted to check.

Mr. Pierre Mallette: There are specific programs…

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Morin.

We'll now move to Ms. Young.

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): I'd like to join my colleagues in thanking you and your 18,000 workers across Canada for the work you do every day.

I want to note that you came here wearing your flak vest or whatever it's called. Obviously you have to go to work with these tools and measures that we've been talking about the whole time.

I want to ask you three brief questions to get a sense of what you and your workers truly think about what we are working on here, in terms of what has happened now, where we are now, and moving forward, and what we can do as a committee to assist you in your work to keep our communities safe.

I note some of the astounding numbers that Mr. Head gave us in the previous presentation. He mentioned that something like 80% of inmates arrive with serious substance abuse problems, with 50% of them indicating that this was a factor in the commission of their crime. Obviously, if they go into these programs, they are 45% less likely to return and 63% less likely to return with a new violent offence.

Would you agree with that? Has that been your experience?

● (1250)

Mr. Pierre Mallette: I heard some numbers this morning. I'm not saying they're good, and I'm not saying they're not good. It's possible; can I say it like that?

Ms. Wai Young: I'd like to be very clear. Do your workers experience that with these programs it does help the inmates get better?

Mr. Pierre Mallette: You know, you have to consider the level of the institution: maximum, medium, minimum. As I said at the beginning, yes, those tools are helping. Are we going to succeed to eliminate all of the drugs? Are we going to succeed so that nobody will ever have a problem with drugs? Are we—

Ms. Wai Young: Yes, but that wasn't my question. I'm just asking, is it better? Do you think these programs are good steps?

Mr. Pierre Mallette: I think those tools help us to find more drugs, yes.

Ms. Wai Young: And they are better.

Mr. Pierre Mallette: But it's not perfect.

Ms. Wai Young: Of course not.

I note that a couple of years ago, we increased funding to these programs, at $122 million, and Mr. Head was saying another $47 million as well.

Have you noticed that the incidence of drugs, as he said, has gone down from 11% or 12% to now 7.5%? Is it better? Do we have measures now in place to make it better?

Mr. Pierre Mallette: The measures we have in place now are tools, measures that will help us to be better. But I want to give you an example. We found $47,000 in drugs at Stony Mountain two weeks ago.

Ms. Wai Young: Yes, I read that in the briefing notes.

Mr. Pierre Mallette: We try, but we need to be sure that those....

First of all, yes; to answer your question, yes. But I'm going to say something here. It's all really related to one thing. You give us resources. You give us money to do stuff. Well, let's do it. Don't not give us the opportunity to use those resources. I gave the example of the throw-over. In Dorchester, a place in the Atlantic, they decided to use that tool to do something else.

That's the job of UCCO-SACC-CSN, the union, to be sure that if they receive resources.... I want those resources to be applied to that.

Ms. Wai Young: Exactly. So I'm hearing you, Mr. Mallette, say that it is better. Of course it's not at 0% yet, not 100% better, but it is better.

Mr. Pierre Mallette: Those tools will help us.

Ms. Wai Young: So the funding and the programs are making it better. Yes or no?

Mr. Pierre Mallette: Oh, yes. I'm not saying no.

Ms. Wai Young: I also want to talk about the safety of the workers, because also embedded in his report was the notion that having drugs in the institutions compromises the safety of your workers.

Would you say that with the reduction of the drugs in the institutions, the safety of the workers has gone up? How does that play out for you?

Mr. Pierre Mallette: No, you have to be careful with that. You ask if we relate the using of drugs with staff assault....

I'm going to speak in French, if that's okay.

[*Translation*]

I want to make sure I say it right.

We are saying that drugs are linked to assaults on staff. But we are thinking that if the quantity of drugs decreases, the assaults will decrease. I would say to be careful. When we seize drugs, some inmates aren't happy about it. It isn't simply a matter of addiction; there's also the matter of trafficking. When they aren't happy, how do they react? They react by taking revenge on the staff.

The connection isn't as automatic as that. It isn't because there are fewer drugs that there will be fewer incidents. The stricter we are and the more we fight this problem, the more unhappy they'll be, the less they will like it and the more they will try to resort to intimidation. These are criminal organizations.

I can't make a correlation between seizing drugs with various tools and the decrease in violence. People aren't happy when there aren't any more drugs. They'll try something else and they'll put pressure on the staff. I'm not making that kind of link.

[*English*]

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

I will now go back to Mr. Chicoine for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for coming, despite the short notice. Thank you as well for telling us about the staff security problems. I hope that we will be able to look at that in the near future.

You touched on some problems with different penitentiaries, such as the fact that inmates who are transferred can no longer continue with their programs. Do you think that a standard program would make things easier, given the reality of your institutions?

● (1255)

Mr. Pierre Mallette: I think that it is an idea that must be looked at. For example, if you are in La Macaza Institution in Quebec, and you are transferred to another institution, the programs offered there may not necessarily be the same. There are a number of reason why people may be transferred at times. Maybe they are going to get out soon, or maybe they are allowed to move closer to their families and acquaintances. Programs are not necessarily the same everywhere.

I think the programs should be much the same everywhere. At least, the substance abuse program should be set up everywhere. A basic minimum number of programs needs to be in place in every institution so that people can take them. My answer is yes.

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine: What stops them from being the same?

Mr. Pierre Mallette: We are handling so many different populations. Sometimes, institutions change their approach because of the type of population.

In Quebec in the 1990s, we had a major danger to face. Institutions were becoming compartmentalized. There was a Rock Machine prison and a Hells Angels prison. Rock Machine members were transferred to Cowansville and Hells Angels members went to Leclerc. In Donnacona, sector 119 was Rock Machine and sector 240 was Hells Angels.

An inmate who belonged to neither group did not know where to go when he arrived. He was said to be part of whichever group he was put in. We went through that, and it is still going on.

Crime is not easy to manage. When police arrest people on the outside, the people do not disappear. For us, that's not when the movie ends; it's when it starts.

If drugs are decreasing, does it mean violence is decreasing? Everyone is put in the same place. Some criminals make their living from organized crime and they do so in prison too.

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine: So, from the standpoint of staff safety, eliminating drugs completely could become dangerous. As you said, people who miss them…

Mr. Pierre Mallette: Right; that is where our job is not easy.

● (1300)

[*English*]

Take all those names, go and fight those privileged positions. Ask the real questions. Give me the name of the president of the inmate committee—let's say at Leclerc, let's say at Cowansville, let's say another place—and ask if he's related to a gang. Maybe you will be surprised. Maybe you are going to say “Oh, my God.”

Merci.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mallette.

I have a couple of quick questions. I know Mr. Norlock is in a hurry, probably to get to another committee, knowing how hard a worker and member of Parliament he is.

By way of your experience, I have seen some of these brews, or hooch, that they make in prison. I'm telling you, it is bizarre. I've seen them made in big pieces of poly-plastic up above the rafters, and literally the ketchup, as Mr. Head said, and it was bad. There's always a way to make this stuff. They're always looking for hunks of fruit to throw into this and let it ferment. I wonder about the size. I can understand how you can smuggle in a little pill, a joint, coke, or something that might be in a body cavity. Is there much alcohol coming in? I've never walked down the halls of any prison and seen a guy drinking a beer. The bottle would be recognized right away. Is there alcohol coming into prisons, or is it mainly the hooch they make?

You also talked about smuggling in tobacco, where mom, the wife, the kid, or the grandma is involved. It may not just be smuggling in drugs; it might be smuggling in tobacco. So here she is smuggling in tobacco because she's being pressed on it. You aren't the lawyer, so you may not know, but is there a charge for smuggling in some legal substance? It has to be confiscated. So there is no charge against her for anything down the road, is there? You can't charge them for handing someone tobacco.

Mr. Pierre Mallette: Mr. Sorenson, that's a very good question.

First, maybe real alcohol coming inside will be found more in minimum security. For medium and maximum security, normally they're going to create their own alcohol. I was on a committee in 1999 regarding alcohol—how they do it and why they do it. Research was done in Donnacona, and I'm from there. We were asking in that report why on the outside drinking alcohol at home is not a criminal charge but on the inside it's a discipline report. At that time, a warden in Donnacona would say, “Mallette, Jesus Christ, stop.” I'd say we should try something else. We went to the RCMP in Quebec, and we asked them the question. My warden was a good warden and he said to me, “Do you want to try it? We're going to.” But guess what? We win. We win in court. The guy received eight more months to serve. For us, alcohol on the inside is creating a lot of problems. Four or five guys are drunk in the common room together. Normally, they're going to fight. That's the thing. Yes, we would have to do the same thing if we were outside. There would be criminal charges. For the visitors carrying drugs it would be a criminal charge as well. We have to do it.

The Chair: Thank you. Our time is up.

We appreciate hearing from the union side. You're a good communicator. Thank you for being here.

Thank you to our committee.

We are adjourned.

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