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Chair

Mr. David Christopherson

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP)): I call this 11th meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to order.

Colleagues, you'll note today that by decision of this committee we are holding a hearing on chapter 5, "Preventing Illegal Entry Into Canada", of the fall 2013 report of the Auditor General of Canada.

To start, let me first welcome Mr. Van Kesteren who is here replacing Mr. Shipley. Welcome, sir, I hope you enjoy your time here.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: We have opening statements from three entities today. Of course the Office of the Auditor General is present. So are the Canada Border Services Agency and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Before I introduce them and give them the floor, I will remind colleagues that the day after tomorrow, Wednesday, we will be having a hearing on chapter 2, "Access to Online Services", from the fall report of the Auditor General.

Unless there are interventions from any colleagues, and I am seeing none, I will turn the floor over to the assistant Auditor General, and then I will move to each of the representatives. I'll ask you to introduce your delegation. However, to begin we will have Ms. Wendy Loschiuk who is the assistant Auditor General of Canada.

Welcome, ma'am. You now have the floor.

Ms. Wendy Loschiuk (Assistant Auditor General, Office of the Auditor General of Canada): Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Mr. Chair, thank you for this opportunity today to appear before the committee to discuss our 2013 Fall Report, Chapter 5- Preventing Illegal Entry into Canada.

With me today is Nicholas Swales, Principal for this audit.

The Canada Border Services Agency and the RCMP share responsibility for preventing people from entering Canada illegally. The agency manages our ports of entry, where people are supposed to cross into Canada. But when they don't use those ports of entry, it is up to the RCMP to know about it and apprehend them.

Managing who crosses Canada's vast border is certainly a challenge. About 270,000 people cross into Canada every day. But it's an essential task that helps protect the safety and security of Canadians and the integrity of our immigration program. It is, therefore, very important that border controls work as they are supposed to. We raised concerns in our audit about how well these controls are working.

[English]

Mr. Chair, let me first talk about controls at the ports of entry and highlight three main challenges: getting information in advance in order to assess risks and identify high-risk travellers; taking appropriate action on lookouts and targets to identify high-risk individuals when they show up; having good performance measures to know how well efforts are working and where to focus attention.

We found that the Canada Border Services Agency often does not get all the advance information it needs to identify and target high-risk travellers en route to Canada by air. In our sample, we found that the agency was missing some data for about 95% of air passengers. This is concerning, because without good air passenger data, targeting controls cannot operate as effectively as intended.

Nevertheless, we found that the agency has made significant progress in some of its efforts to detect high-risk travellers. The new national targeting program has good practices, but some targets are still missed. Our review showed that 8% of targets were not examined as required. These are people whom the agency had identified as high risk from the advance information it did have. These findings are important because targets are intended to intercept individuals who may pose a threat to the security and safety of Canadians.

The agency has also made little progress since 2007 in monitoring the results of lookouts. Lookouts are notices designed to intercept known high-risk individuals connected to organized crime, terrorism, or regular migration who may attempt to enter Canada. We found that 15% of lookouts were missed, which means people who should have been further examined were not examined before they entered Canada. We found that the agency still does not monitor information about all missed lookouts, nor does it record information on examination results for all people who have been intercepted as a result of lookouts.

•(1535)

[Translation]

Border Services Officers rely on the agency's information systems to tell them which travellers must be sent to secondary inspection. However, these systems go down from time to time. Although the agency reviews the impact of system outages, it could not tell us what availability level it needs before operations are affected.

Between the ports of entry, we found that the RCMP does not have information on its success in intercepting people trying to enter the country illegally. This finding is important because without systematic performance information, the RCMP does not know whether resources are placed where they can be most effective.

We reviewed data in the information systems of both the RCMP and the agency and found that the RCMP's Integrated Border Enforcement Teams intercepted just over half of known illegal entries. The Marine Security Enforcement Teams intercepted known illegal entries more often. However, without consistent measurement, it is not possible to determine what rate of interception is acceptable, or whether the RCMP's ability to prevent illegal entry is improving or declining.

The RCMP needs a framework to measure and monitor how well its border enforcement activities are doing.

[English]

The Canada Border Services Agency and the RCMP have agreed with our recommendations and they have made several commitments in their responses. The agency was to have completed some of its commitments by the end of this past November 2013.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my opening remarks. We would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

The Chair: Very good. Thank you very much.

We now go over to the Canada Border Services Agency, Mr. Martin Bolduc, vice-president of operations branch.

You have the floor, sir.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Bolduc (Vice-President, Operations Branch, Canada Border Services Agency): Good afternoon.

I would like to thank the chair and members of the committee for giving me the opportunity to appear today on behalf of the Canada Border Services Agency. I am pleased to be here with my colleague Maurice Chénier, Vice-President of the Information, Science, and Technology Branch, and Ms. Lesley Soper, Executive Director of the Enforcement and Intelligence Programs.

I would like to begin by saying that the CBSA agrees with the recommendations from the 2013 Fall Report of the Auditor General, which highlighted areas for improvement in preventing illegal entry into Canada. On behalf of the CBSA, we take the report seriously, and we are determined to move forward to address these issues. In fact, we are already taking action to tighten the procedures to keep foreign nationals who pose a risk to Canada from entering the country.

In 2007, the Report of the Auditor General, entitled Keeping the Border Open and Secure, identified vulnerabilities related to lookouts, risk management practices and targeting. Since that time, the CBSA has made considerable progress in addressing the issues raised by the 2007 audit. In addition, the agency has also strengthened its capacity for "pushing the border out", and is continuing to build on this capacity through Border Modernization and Beyond the Border initiatives such as Entry/Exit, the Integrated Advance Passenger Information Initiative, and our 100% data capture of travellers' information. I will be pleased to speak to you about what we're doing in this regard, but I would like to open by describing the role and mandate of the CBSA, and providing you with some context for the work we do to protect and serve Canadians.

The CBSA was created 10 years ago, almost to the day, on December 12, 2003, in the aftermath of 9-11. The protection of national security, therefore, was bred into the bones of our agency, and it is a responsibility we undertake with the utmost seriousness.

We were created to provide integrated border services across the functions of customs; immigration enforcement; and food, plant, and animal inspection at the border. In doing so, we administer and enforce over 90 federal statutes with a mandate that contains parallel obligations to Canadians: secure the border and facilitate the flow of legitimate travel and trade.

•(1540)

[English]

Let me share with you how the mandate translates into numbers. On the facilitation side, last year we processed approximately 100 million travellers to Canada. We also cleared 5.4 million trucks and 14 million commercial releases, virtually all of which constitute the very material for Canada's international trade. Those numbers have been growing steadily over the last several years, placing increasing demand on border services.

On the enforcement side, last year the CBSA seized almost 400 restricted and prohibited weapons and over 300 million dollars' worth of illegal drugs, made 93 seizures of child pornography, and removed 18,762 persons who were inadmissible to Canada. These figures, both for facilitation and enforcement, speak to how the mandate at CBSA supports the government's priorities regarding the safety and security of Canadians and our economic prosperity.

For 10 years, the CBSA has delivered on this responsibly, carrying out both sides of our mandate with equal results. We know how important it is to get our business right, and the report from the Auditor General helps us to do just that.

Let me turn to the report itself, and more specifically our enforcement role. The 2013 report examined particular elements of a multi-layered system that we use to protect the border. It found that some people who pose a risk had been able to slip through and evade detection. We recognize that however small the number, we need to ensure that the system designed to identify those individuals is functioning in an optimal way. I'd like to spend a moment on this.

Preventing illegal entry does not take place at a single point, nor is it dependent on a single process. In fact, it is carried out along a continuum that begins away from our shores and ends with the removal of an inadmissible person from Canada. Along this continuum, we work with trusted partners, both at home and abroad, to target and assess for risk well before arrival to Canada.

At the border, we have highly trained officers who provide front-line border services, such as inspection, database searches, and biometric screening, to identify persons of high or unknown risk. In addition, the CBSA has a very vigorous inland enforcement system, which, as I mentioned, removed well over 18,000 people last year, and over 115,000 since 2006. In fact, last year we were able to remove more persons who were inadmissible to Canada than ever before in our 10-year history.

Those are the various elements that work together to help protect the border.

[Translation]

That said, the report did underscore areas where we need to improve. One of these is the quality of Advance Passenger Information and Passenger Name Record data we receive at the front end of the process. In this respect, we know that we are not alone, and that border administrations in other countries have faced similar challenges. Even though this is a shared concern, we are currently implementing a comprehensive action plan to improve the quality of the API-PNR data provided by airlines that fly into Canada. The plan will be fully implemented by June 30, 2014.

Even as we work to strengthen Advance Passenger Information, the system itself is being revised and improved under the Beyond the Border Action Plan. Currently, airlines provide passenger information after the plane has taken flight. Under the Beyond the Border Action Plan, an Interactive Advance Passenger Information system will provide that data before the wheels are up, allowing for board or no-board decisions to be made prior to arriving in Canada.

In addition, also as part of Beyond the Border, we have implemented, together with our partners in the United States, the first two phases of an Entry/Exit system at the land border, so that the record of entry into one country can be considered as a record of exit from the other. As an example, Entry-Exit information will help us determine whether a person who is the subject of an investigation has left the country.

It is a key component of modern border management and strengthens our ability to keep us all safe from threats. To support that initiative, the CBSA now scans and records travellers' identity information, including that of commercial operators, at all entry points into Canada. Moreover, all officers working in secondary inspection at automated ports of entry have access to the Canadian Police Information Centre database. This enhances our enforcement capacity and further strengthens our ability to prevent illegal entry.

With respect to the Lookouts Program, we had already put into action an internal follow-up audit on our lookouts program when the OAG returned to undertake this audit. We have nearly completed implementation of a comprehensive action plan which puts in place stronger controls, and provides for greater oversight by senior management.

● (1545)

[English]

In conclusion, even with its challenges the lookouts program has helped us identify and deny entry to over 51,000 people who are inadmissible to Canada. It's not perfect, but it remains an important tool in helping to protect our security.

I would also like to note the report's acknowledgement of the progress we have made in collecting, monitoring, and assessing information through the development of our national targeting program as well as the improvement we've made in resource management.

In these few minutes I've tried to provide some insight into the work of the CBSA and what we do, both on the front line and abroad, to help protect the border while making sure that we also serve as an efficient and welcoming gateway for returning Canadians, permanent residents, and legitimate visitors to our country. While our process has evolved, our commitment to protect Canadians has not.

I am pleased to take your questions.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation.

I have to say I've noted that an important document that should be here is not, and that is the action plan that is to accompany your visit here.

The rules are very clear. We send them out. You are to have an action plan here when you are called for a hearing, or within six months if you're not called for a hearing. There may be extenuating circumstances, but I'm not aware that anybody contacted the clerk's office to advise of that and ask if there could be an extension, or to at least provide some reason.

The same applies to the RCMP. There is nothing here.

Unless you have a very good explanation for why there isn't one, the next thing I'd like to hear is when we're going to get it.

Mr. Martin Bolduc: I'll make sure, sir, that you get a copy of the action plan as soon as we can.

The Chair: Not good enough: the date, please.

Mr. Martin Bolduc: By tomorrow.

The Chair: Thank you.

For the RCMP, I'd like you to comment on it, too, when I give you the floor, which I am just about to do.

Chief Superintendent Eric Slinn, who is the director general for support services for federal policing, welcome, sir. You now have the floor.

C/Supt Eric Slinn (Director General, Support Services for Federal Policing, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You will have the RCMP action plan tomorrow as well.

The Chair: Could I, through you, send a message that these action plans are important. If it can be here tomorrow, it could have been here today.

Please continue.

C/Supt Eric Slinn: Okay, thank you.

Joining me today is my colleague Staff Sergeant Jamie Solesme. She is in our border integrity program and a subject matter expert in that regard.

Good afternoon. Thank you for inviting me here today to speak on the RCMP's action plan in response to the "Preventing Illegal Entry into Canada" chapter of the Auditor General's report.

I am the director general of federal and international special services within the RCMP's federal policing program, which includes responsibility for overseeing the RCMP's border law enforcement activities, including the integrated border enforcement teams and marine security enforcement teams.

[Translation]

The RCMP is committed to safe communities and that includes preventing and investigating criminal activity along our borders. We work closely with our partners, including the CBSA, to help ensure that criminals do not enter Canada illegally.

[English]

In his report, the Auditor General recommended that the RCMP develop and fully implement a framework to measure and monitor the performance of its border law enforcement activities. The RCMP's management response agreed with this recommendation and committed to implement it.

[Translation]

The RCMP's Management Action Plan will include: A new Program Alignment Architecture (PAA) and Performance Measurement Framework (PMF); a new approach to managing operational information; and a new Service Delivery Model and dictionary.

[English]

The RCMP will establish a working group with a mandate to review and propose changes to the existing PAA and PMF, with a full implementation deadline of the 2015-16 fiscal year. The revised PAA and PMF will reflect the federal policing senior management team's resource allocation decisions, which are to be based on program requirements, resource availability, financial constraints, performance metrics, threat assessments, operational priorities, and risks.

The RCMP's federal policing program has re-engineered the way it does business in order to streamline how we set operational priorities. This should improve how we manage our border enforcement activities. The changes will allow federal policing to better account for its enforcement activities.

• (1550)

[Translation]

Federal Policing's new approach to operational information management will allow us to better capture the border enforcement

activities we are engaged in and will result in more accurate reporting.

[English]

Our new service delivery model will better capture the activities federal policing is engaged in, and coupled with a dictionary that defines these activities, inform our performance reporting.

The RCMP is committed to implementing the Auditor General's recommendation and to providing better reporting of our activities related to border enforcement

I thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I'd be more than happy to answer your questions.

The Chair: Very good. Thank you.

We'll now begin our questions and comments in the usual rotation. We will begin with Mr. Albas.

You have the floor, sir.

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

I want to thank the Office of the Auditor General for being here today. Certainly, we do appreciate your diligence in working with both the RCMP and CBSA, because we always know that improvements can be made.

I'd like to take a moment, Mr. Chair, and thank both the RCMP and CBSA for their work in trying to keep our country as safe as possible. Every day 90,000 people come across our borders and it's a tremendous undertaking to keep Canadians safe. I sincerely want to say I appreciate what your organizations do to keep us safe.

Moving into the actual guts of the report, Mr. Chair, I'd like to start with the comments on page 7 of the brief, which Mr. Bolduc mentioned:

I would also like to note the Report's acknowledgement of the progress we have made in collecting, monitoring and assessing information through the development of our National Targeting Program, as well as the improvements we've made in Resource Management.

Mr. Bolduc, it's my understanding that many of the changes were reflected after the Auditor General's office did its 2007 report, with a series of recommendations from "Keeping the Border Open and Secure". Specifically, could you please highlight some of the areas we've seen that have increased? For example, they said:

We found significant improvements in the program, including the development of formal standard operating procedures and training, and a framework to systematically measure and monitor program performance.

Could you walk us through what the 2007 report did and what the reaction of CBSA was, and what Canadians know we have working to protect us today?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: Before 2012, targeting was being conducted in every region in the country. We have seven regions and we also had a small team that was located in Ottawa that was mainly doing targeting for national security reasons.

The 2007 report of the Auditor General highlighted the fact that the program needed to be more robust and needed to take into account an evolving environment around the world. We took advantage of the strategic review exercise that was launched to essentially move away from targeting that was done in all regions and centralize it in Ottawa, building a robust IT system that enables us to automatically risk assess every passenger on board aircraft and at the same time risk assess goods that are en route to Canada via the marine mode.

That brought rigour to our process and it brought uniformity into how we risk assess. We were pleased that the 2013 report of the Auditor General reflected there was a lot of improvement on that front.

• (1555)

Mr. Dan Albas: Through your work on that, you would say that today the system is greatly improved from the—

Mr. Martin Bolduc: Yes, that's right.

Mr. Dan Albas: Also, in your opening statement, and I'll go to page 2, you say, "the Agency has also strengthened its capacity for 'pushing the border out'". Could you please explain that?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: Pushing the border out is essentially trying to address threats before they show up along our borders. We've got a fairly significant liaison officer network abroad, over 60 officers in 40 countries, who are assisting airlines in providing training and also being available as a reference. It is the responsibility of airlines to determine if people who are getting on board aircraft bound for Canada have the proper documentation.

We are also, as I said, risk assessing goods and people before they show up at the border. That helps guide our officers to focus on what we feel are high or unknown risks and facilitate the movement of legitimate goods and people.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Albas. Time has expired.

Now over to Mr. Allen. You have the floor, sir.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to our guests.

Mr. Bolduc, I will start with you. I am looking at your opening comments, at Ms. Loschiuk's opening comments, and at some of the questions that my colleague Mr. Albas has asked you about this 2007 audit.

Let me just read your statement. "Since that time, the CBSA has made considerable"—the emphasis is mine—"progress in addressing the issues raised by the 2007 audit."

Let me go to Ms. Loschiuk's comments at point seven in her opening remarks. "The Agency has also made little"—my emphasis—"progress since 2007..."

Not to parse words, sir, but "considerable" and "little" aren't quite the same. Can you help me understand why it is you believe you have made considerable progress and the Auditor General's report says you've made little?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: We feel that we've made considerable progress because we've put in place solid procedures, a solid system. I think what the Auditor General's report highlighted is that we were

lacking management oversight in assessing those tools and those systems.

From an operational front, it is our assessment that those improvements were significant, but we do recognize that management oversight is an important piece of that. I think the report highlights that there were deficiencies there.

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Ms. Loschiuk, I would ask you to comment on the real disparity between the two opening comments.

Ms. Wendy Loschiuk: Mr. Chair, I would like to point out that we do recognize with the new national targeting program that they have in place, which was what we were commenting on a lot in 2007, that they have focused and done some good work in there. That's where we saw that they were putting in place a lot of the things we had asked them to do back then.

Nevertheless, there were targets missed. I think our concern was a little bit more on the lack of progress on the side of lookouts. We found there hadn't been the kind of progress in keeping an eye out for people who we knew about. Lookouts and targets are a little bit different, and it's the lookout area, I think, that needs some focus where we were concerned.

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Would you agree with that assessment, Mr. Bolduc, in the sense that maybe overall you might be able to suggest to me you've become much better? In specific reference to the lookouts situation—and I know what the lookouts are since I live in Niagara and had two daughters who worked for your agency for four summers—would you say that is perhaps the weakness so far of what you've done to date?

• (1600)

Mr. Martin Bolduc: I think that's the area we needed to improve a lot.

What we were pleased with is that in 2012 we did our own internal review of the lookouts. We had an internal audit. In fact, we put together a working group, which I personally led, and when the Auditor General showed up to do the lookouts review, essentially we had identified internally all the areas that needed improvement. I think it is recognized by the Auditor General in the report that we already had put an action plan in place, which was essentially what the Auditor General's recommendation was to implement our action plan.

Mr. Malcolm Allen: I think, sir, as the chair indicated at the beginning, this is a case in point where your action plan may have helped you today. I can't work off an action plan that's not in front of me. As much as I take you at your word, Mr. Bolduc, I really do have to have the document in front of me. You may have been able to walk me through that today, sir, and explain all of your accomplishments that I'm now asking you to try and convince me you have accomplished based on an Auditor General's report. That's the importance of those action plans for us at this table. We need to get those.

I know sometimes departments feel they might be hurtful because they haven't quite got there, but in your case, sir, I think, the action plan would probably have reinforced for us that perhaps you've done more than what the report is indicating to us at this point. We look forward to getting those tomorrow.

One of the other pieces that's on page three of the Auditor General's report—

The Chair: Mr. Allen, I'm sorry. You're already right now at five. You would have taken me well over.

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Thanks very much.

The Chair: We'll get you on the next round. Thank you.

Now it's over to Vice-Chair John Carmichael. You have the floor, sir.

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses today.

Ms. Loschiuk, I'm going to direct my questions to you, and then if you wish to push them out to your colleagues, that would be fine.

In your report on page 5, paragraph 5.2, you say that preventing illegal entry has been a policy priority for the Government of Canada, especially since 9/11, which is an understatement. We all agree on that. Keeping terrorists out is a good thing.

In your comments today, you talk about managing who crosses Canada's vast border. You referred to some 270,000 people a day. Obviously, it's a massive job.

I wonder in your audit if you could tell us what you found as far as border security goes in terms of numbers. Did you find a strengthening or a weakening in our front-line security? Has the government increased front-line border guards?

Ms. Wendy Loschiuk: Mr. Chair, I will ask Nick to add on anything.

What we were looking for was actually a direct answer to your question. Are we getting better? How are we doing overall against the five controls for CBSA we looked at, and for the control mechanisms the RCMP have?

Unfortunately, there wasn't a lot of performance measurement information. That's one of the recommendations, the areas we're focusing on in our report. It's saying there needs to be better use of the information they do have, and we were able to use some of it to do sampling, in order to get a sense of how well we're doing overall.

Nick, did you want to add anything to that?

Mr. Nicholas Swales (Principal, Office of the Auditor General of Canada): Only to say I think that is the essence of it. In almost all the areas we looked at, with the exception, I think, of the targeting program, one of the key challenges is whether the information is there to allow you to know whether you're getting better or worse.

With reference to your question about numbers of border guards, we didn't specifically look at that question in this report.

Mr. John Carmichael: When you talk about the metrics now, you're talking about tools that will help you to measure the success

of those who are on the front lines, which I guess is something we'll look at next year.

Will that be in the action plan, just out of interest's sake? It's one of the recommendations. Should that be in the action plan that we'll get tomorrow?

Ms. Wendy Loschiuk: I will hand that to Martin Bolduc.

Mr. Martin Bolduc: Yes, it's part of the action plan that we are able to assess our performance.

Mr. John Carmichael: Good. Thank you.

On illegal entries, again on page 5, you say, "Failure to prevent illegal entry compromises Canada's border, the immigration program, and the safety and security of Canadians." Clearly, that's what this is all about. Illegal entries are also a significant burden on taxpayers.

I wonder if you could comment. I understand from the report there are a number of rejected refugee claimants who entered Canada illegally. What is the estimated cost to taxpayers for each rejected refugee claimant? How are they determined?

• (1605)

Ms. Wendy Loschiuk: I believe we have in the report the cost that was given to us by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. It was \$26,000 per claimant. That was the figure we used as an example. While we don't have good, robust data on the costs for a lot of these activities, we were able to say that at least if it gets to the point where an individual has entered and is now making a refugee claim, we know what that cost is.

Mr. John Carmichael: When you're putting a value or a cost to taxpayers on failed refugee claimants, those who come in by legal means and those who come by illegal means, a combination, and that's the cost per...

Ms. Wendy Loschiuk: That's right, yes.

Mr. John Carmichael: Okay.

Our government strongly supports an immigration system that honours people who play by the rules, as we would all agree, and respect Canadian law; however, many people try to enter Canada through fraudulent and criminal means.

What did your review conclude about the illegal entries into Canada? Were illegal entries a burden on taxpayers and a risk to Canadians?

Ms. Wendy Loschiuk: Mr. Chair, our audit concluded the controls that are put in place by the two agencies responsible for preventing illegal entry were not preventing illegal entry all of the time. More concerning was the question about who was getting through.

While we were able to do a survey and look at some of the data and say that about 8% were not targeted or identified, or another 15% should have been further examined, more concerning was that some of those people were individuals with serious criminality.

It's very hard to make an overall statement about the level of how many people are getting through. What is concerning is who's getting through and what mechanisms we have in place to try to stop that.

The Chair: Your time has expired, Mr. Carmichael. Thank you.

Mr. Harris, you now have the floor, sir.

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): It's not Mr. Simms?

The Chair: I'm going by my list, so you have the floor.

Mr. Dan Harris: I'm up sooner than I thought.

Going back to some of the questions that were just asked about performance measurements and an ability to assess performance, Mr. Bolduc, you said it's contained in the action plan. When do you expect to have these measurements in place so that we can actually start measuring the success rates?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: Depending on the area of concern, I think I would turn to my colleagues.

Would you go over that, Lesley?

Ms. Lesley Soper (Executive Director, Enforcement and Intelligence Programs, Canada Border Services Agency): Sure.

For lookouts, we're currently putting in place the reporting regime in order to collect performance measures around lookouts. That's being deployed right now, supported by training to our staff to ensure that reporting is complete and thorough in 100% of cases.

On the targeting side, we have the measures in place. I think they need to be adapted to reflect some of the comments made by the Office of the Auditor General. Specifically, we use a generic performance measurement in targeting, which speaks to the completeness of advance passenger information that we're receiving from airlines. It's not sufficient to really get at the issue, which is the quality of advance passenger information, so an action plan is in place with the air industry in order to deliver a more robust reporting framework for that piece.

Mr. Dan Harris: Do you have a timeframe for when that will be in place?

Ms. Lesley Soper: It's under way now.

Mr. Dan Harris: It's under way. It's happening. Okay.

Is there a reason there was little progress on lookouts between 2007 and now? That would be between the last time the Auditor General's office looked at it and the current time.

Mr. Martin Bolduc: We did focus on the recommendations that came out of the 2007 report from the Auditor General. In fact, as I mentioned earlier, our national targeting centre is a result of that report.

There was a lot of work being done, but we did realize we needed to be more rigorous about our approach on lookouts. That's how we came up with an action plan that essentially was recognized by the Office of the Auditor General.

•(1610)

Mr. Dan Harris: Ms. Loschiuk, the office has raised many concerns about border security. Of course, some problems still

persist, and I'm glad to see there should be some progress on those soon.

Did the office identify any issues or concerns with the cuts that have happened at CBSA, which will be totalling \$143 million by 2015? Was anything looked at to see what kind of impact that will have on our border services?

Ms. Wendy Loschiuk: No, Mr. Chair, we didn't look at the cuts. We looked at what was happening currently at the border and the information that was available to us for the past couple of years.

Mr. Dan Harris: Okay. Thank you very much.

I blew through my questions too fast. That very, very rarely happens.

Moving on to air passengers, it's actually shocking that for 95% of air passengers arriving there's some missing data. Why does that problem happen?

Ms. Wendy Loschiuk: Well, that's probably a very good question to ask Canada Border Services Agency, which is dealing with the airlines. I don't know that we have a lot of information on why it's happening.

I will ask my colleague, Nick, if he has anything to add on that.

Mr. Nicholas Swales: Not really, in terms of the details of why; part of what we were seeing was that as a result of the problems with the performance measure the agency was using, they weren't understanding some of the issues with the granularity of the information that would be necessary for a dialogue with the airlines on that question.

A voice: Monsieur Bolduc.

Mr. Dan Harris: Since you suggest it, I'll pass that to Mr. Bolduc.

Mr. Martin Bolduc: The 95% that was raised has to do with the risk assessment that is done on PNR. When we do targeting on an air passenger, we use two types of information: API, advanced passenger information, and PNR. API is legislated. Airlines have to provide the CBSA with API information. PNR is not. PNR information is provided by airlines when they collect it and when they get it.

Mr. Dan Harris: Is that done on a voluntary basis?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: It's on a voluntary basis, but we have engaged the airlines in a solid way to improve the quality of information as well as the delivery of information from airlines moving forward. I have to say we've seen progress since the set-up of that working group.

Mr. Dan Harris: Thank you.

The Chair: Very good. Thank you.

That takes us over to Mr. Hayes, who now has the floor.

Mr. Bryan Hayes (Sault Ste. Marie, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

For the assistant Auditor General, what were your findings regarding identifying appropriate risks and threats, consultation with partners on shared risks, and the progress of the agency to date specific to those? Could you speak specifically to Canada Border Services Agency, please?

Ms. Wendy Loschiuk: Mr. Chair, we found on the CBSA side that they did have a risk assessment integrated plan in place, and they were working with other agencies. We have it in our report, I believe, in paragraphs 5.62, 5.63, and 5.64. We found that they've been doing a pretty good job in that area.

Mr. Bryan Hayes: Did you find that the risks identified by the agency were definitely aligned with the threats and priorities identified by the Government of Canada?

Ms. Wendy Loschiuk: We did.

Mr. Bryan Hayes: Regarding the consultation process, the agency consulted with federal partners to consider the shared risks. Are you satisfied with the consultation process?

Ms. Wendy Loschiuk: We looked to see if they had done it, and we saw that they had done it.

Mr. Bryan Hayes: Very good.

Within your report, paragraph 5.14 mentions that there's a suite of enforcement systems. I would suggest that's absolutely the case. I'm wondering if since 2007 there has been a new system added to the suite of enforcement systems.

•(1615)

Ms. Wendy Loschiuk: Mr. Chair, in this case, we looked only at the controls that are in place at the border, so really, I can only speak to those five that we list in paragraph 5.17 for CBSA and then the ones that we looked at for the RCMP.

Mr. Bryan Hayes: I noticed within your report there was mention made of how in 2010 the government developed Canada's strategy to combat human smuggling and illegal migration. In 2011, you made mention of the beyond the border action plan. In 2012, there was the counterterrorism strategy, so it appears that certainly a number of good things have happened.

I'm going to put this question to Mr. Bolduc. You mentioned the beyond the border action plan and specifically this new in-out. I want to get a sense of the beyond the border action plan. I believe this was a three-year plan, and I believe we're at the end of two years. Could you touch on the beyond the border action plan and what good things are coming out of that in terms of illegal entry into Canada, and what is still to come out of that action plan that will be beneficial in this area?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: You're right in that right now we are in phase two of entry-exit. Essentially entry-exit enables us to share with our colleagues in the U.S. Their entry becomes our exit and vice versa. We are able to exchange information and assess those people who have left the country who might be of interest and pose a risk when they come back, but it will also enable us to confirm if people have left the country and if they were overstays.

Maybe another element I can highlight is IAPI which is interactive advance passenger information. Right now, we get information from airlines, we say "wheels up", as soon as the aircraft takes off. With IAPI, we will be able to get the information as much as 72 hours in advance, so we will be able to start risk assessing those travellers well before the plane departs.

Mr. Bryan Hayes: There was some discussion on targeting earlier. I noticed in the Auditor General's report that you plan on relying increasingly on scenario-based targeting. What exactly is

scenario-based targeting versus any other targeting? Why does the auditor think it is a good idea? Can you help me out there?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: We are already using scenario-based targeting. People are risk assessed on different scenarios that are essentially risk indicators. The system works with algorithms. Information provided by airlines is matched with the scenarios and algorithms we have in our system. The first level of screening is done automatically by the system.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Vice-Chair Simms, you have the floor, sir.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Thank you, sir.

Thank you to our guests.

Ms. Loschiuk, one of the themes I've noticed from this study and others is the lack of performance evaluation and just how difficult it is to keep abreast of what your goals are when it comes to technical information. By way of example, you point out the new interactive advance passenger information system, the entry-exit information system, and the enhanced scenario-based targeting system. You also point out that all three rely heavily on advance information.

In order to measure how well the data is coming in and how well we're using it, are we up to par? Are we able to keep up with the technology?

•(1620)

Ms. Wendy Loschiuk: Mr. Chair, it's an interesting question about whether we are able to keep up with the technology. The area we looked at was certainly to ask how much we know about how we're improving and what areas need to be strengthened. For example, if there are serious weaknesses in the information arriving, is there analysis of that?

I think just asking from our perspective, which was to look and understand what is known about the data, that's where we need a lot more work to identify where we can...

Mr. Scott Simms: Do you think we have a problem interpreting the data when we get it? That's one question, and I'll ask my other question in advance so I can let you answer this.

We deal a lot with international organizations, including commercial airlines. In your findings, is there a cohesive relationship between us and the international bodies about passenger names or lookouts or targets, those sorts of things?

Ms. Wendy Loschiuk: I really couldn't answer about our relationship with the international bodies. Certainly we were just looking at what information we get and how accurate it is.

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Bolduc, who slips through the system?

You talked about 51,000 people denied entry. The people who do get entry, whether they be refugees, whether they be people by air or sea or whatever, how do they get through?

Give me some common characteristics here of who gets through our system and how they're able to do it.

Mr. Martin Bolduc: Who gets through that shouldn't get through?

Mr. Scott Simms: Exactly.

Mr. Martin Bolduc: As you know, we have one of the longest unprotected borders between two countries. When I say unprotected, I mean it's not fenced—

Mr. Scott Simms: I'm going to interrupt you. I apologize.

If more than 90% of the people are coming by air, we don't have that many airports, unlike the United States, so to me it seems that even though we have the longest border, wouldn't it be easier...? We have only so many airports across the country. Do we not have enough resources?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: No, it's not a matter of resources. You are right. The largest number of foreign nationals who do show up at our borders show up at airports. That's the bulk of the traffic we have there.

You have people trying to take advantage of the refugee system here, but again it's a difficult question to answer because when they show up at a few...we do in fact interact with those people. All travellers showing up at an airport have some sort of interaction with an officer.

Mr. Scott Simms: Outside of Canada, the agencies you deal with, the commercial people you deal with, what do you think is most deficient? What do you think is the biggest problem outside of our own borders?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: It's an evolving trend.

It's trying to adjust to folks who are sometimes one step ahead. It's sharing information and intelligence among border management organizations to be able to be one step ahead. It's a very dynamic environment.

Mr. Scott Simms: In that context then, it says on page 11 of the audit in paragraph 5.27, and Ms. Loschiuk, you can weigh in on this if you want, "While all three initiatives"—and I'm talking about the technical ones I mentioned earlier—"rely heavily on advance information, none of the initiatives currently includes a plan to improve information quality".

You go on to say some improvements, but what sticks out the most? This is a big hurdle we have to cross for us to be able to do what Mr. Bolduc mentioned.

The Chair: Because of time constraints the answers have to be very brief, please.

Ms. Wendy Loschiuk: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To answer quickly, I would point out in paragraph 5.20, where the airlines submit information and CBSA can hold them responsible or not responsible for individuals who have arrived and who are not admissible. In some cases the airlines are fined for that.

There are other cases for which the airlines are not responsible, and we've found that's a wealth of information that CBSA doesn't use in its performance measures to better understand about people who are coming into Canada for whom the airlines could not be responsible. This could be indicating all kinds of things, including fraud, and we recommend more work be done in that area.

•(1625)

The Chair: I'm going to have to end it there. That puts us a minute and a half over so I hope you'll understand.

Mr. Adler, you now have the floor, sir.

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank all the witnesses for being here today.

Mr. Bolduc, can Canadians feel safe and reassured that our borders are being adequately protected right now?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: Yes.

Mr. Mark Adler: Thank you.

When Mr. Simms was questioning you, you mentioned the undefended border. We have a long history of having the longest undefended border in the world. We've also concluded that 90% of the people who arrive here in Canada come via air.

I want to focus a little on those who arrive by land entry points, and not only the entry points but also those areas in I guess what is the soft underbelly along the 49th parallel and it's undefended and open land. What precautions are taken in those areas where there are no customs points of entry?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: With your permission, Mr. Chair, I'll turn it over to my colleague from the RCMP.

C/Supt Eric Slinn: Thank you. That's probably a better question for us as the responsibility of the RCMP is between the ports of entry. That's our mandate.

We leverage our partners at CBSA, as well as our U.S. colleagues within law enforcement. We rely upon their intelligence. That's the first stopgap.

We also rely on technology. Because that border is almost 9,000 kilometres long, we can't stretch all our manpower right across the border hand-to-hand. We have to rely on technology that we have and technology that we share with our U.S. partners to be somewhat reactive to that technology and respond to alarms or sensors or cameras along the border.

Those are the areas we use, as well as obviously a human presence in some areas that, through threat assessments, we deem are high-risk areas for people to cross.

Mr. Mark Adler: Are there high-risk areas that you've assessed?

C/Supt Eric Slinn: Yes, there are.

Mr. Mark Adler: There are, okay. It's not a wide open space that somebody can just run across and not be detected.

C/Supt Eric Slinn: There are spots across the country. You have to look at topography. Some places are easy to cross, such as the Prairies, which are flat and not much of a deterrent, as opposed to going up over mountains and canyons and falling down into water. We weigh some of those issues, but we truly rely on our intelligence from our partners to look at where those high-risk areas are, and where intelligence is suggesting we need to respond with resources and perhaps more technology.

Mr. Mark Adler: I'm glad you answered that, Mr. Slinn. I was feeling sorry that neither of you had any questions posed to you.

C/Supt Eric Slinn: I appreciate that.

Mr. Mark Adler: Thank you very much for that answer.

Let me follow up with Mr. Bolduc. Walk me through what the regime will look like five or ten years from now. As a Canadian, if I go to the United States to do some shopping or on vacation and then I come back to Canada, what's that going to look like? Now we know the regime, the procedure. Is that going to change five or ten years from now?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: The major difference we will see is that when you return from your day of shopping, the officer who will interact with you will have the information that you left Canada on whatever day—

Mr. Mark Adler: They're going to have that information?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: They will.

Mr. Mark Adler: How are they going to get that?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: They'll get it with the initiative referred to as entry-exit, the one that I was explaining a little earlier, where the entry into the United States becomes our exit.

• (1630)

Mr. Mark Adler: This is for sharing information.

Mr. Martin Bolduc: Exactly. We do it as partners.

Mr. Mark Adler: Okay. When I come back, they're going to have that information. They're going to know, so I can't say I was there for 48 hours, if I was just there for the day; not that any of us would ever do that.

Mr. Martin Bolduc: No, but it also goes to risk assessing those travellers.

Mr. Mark Adler: I see.

The Chair: Please be quick.

Mr. Mark Adler: As for trade and commerce, how has that entered into the equation? How will it affect trade at the border?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: I'm sorry?

Mr. Mark Adler: Were there any assessments done on how it will affect trade and commerce at the border? There is a lot of truck and train traffic going back and forth.

Mr. Martin Bolduc: This will apply to the truck drivers, the content of the truck, the shipment. We already have numerous programs with the United States to facilitate trade, but the entry-exit will take into account the truck driver.

The Chair: That's good. Thank you, sir.

Now over to Monsieur Giguère. You have the floor.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Thank you to the witnesses for giving us such critical information.

In the Eastern Townships, in Quebec, there is a problem. The border crossings at Stanstead, Chartierville and Frelighsburg are open part time. Often, there is no guard or customs officer on duty. People crossing the border have to pick up the telephone and inform border services that they are entering the country. And there is another problem. The customs officers do not have the right, under the law, to pursue someone who crosses the border illegally. They

have to phone Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers, who are 100 kms from the border crossings.

What could we do to solve this problem? Should we expand the authority of customs officers? Should we increase the number of RCMP staff? In the Eastern Townships, the situation has become unsafe.

My question is for Mr. Slinn or Mr. Bolduc.

Mr. Martin Bolduc: One of the border initiatives will affect small offices. We will test an alternative method for processing travellers who show up at points of entry when the border crossing is closed and there is no one on site. We plan to launch a pilot project in two offices, including one in Quebec. I don't remember the name of the office, I am sorry. There, we will test new technology for clearing through customs the people who show up when the border crossing is closed.

You are correct that our officers do not have the authority to initiate high-speed chases of people who do not stop at the border. In such cases, we call upon our colleagues, be it the provincial police or the RCMP. They collaborate fully with us on this. Often, we are able to bring the people who did not stop back to the border. The majority of them are brought back to points of entry where the question is then dealt with.

If the chair will allow it, I would ask Mr. Slinn if he would like to add anything on the subject.

C/Supt Eric Slinn: Allow me to answer your question in English, otherwise you will be here until 11:00 p.m.

[*English*]

There was a project undertaken in Quebec called Project Concept, which was a cooperation with CBSA, the Sûreté du Québec, and the RCMP. We took approximately 35 resources and put them along a 120-kilometre portion of the border that covered Lake Champlain, and a few other things.

We instituted four key pieces with that. One was community engagement, which is critical from our standpoint. If you have community eyes and ears out there, you will be extremely successful. Sometimes it's better than the technology we have out there. That was one piece. There was a uniform presence. There was the deployment of technology. We also had an integrated joint operations centre. I believe that was in 2011. Through that, there were significant interdictions of people trying to cross unmanned border crossings.

That project was extremely successful. It resulted in a bit of a spike, I think, in the numbers of people trying to cross the border. Those resources are still in place, not all 35-plus, but Project Concept still continues. I think it was an excellent example of using technology, human resources, and some integrated policing and community engagement to protect those borders.

•(1635)

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Giguère: The Auditor General's report provided us with information about information transmission problems. We know that there is an extremely promising biometrics project, with electronic passports, which would allow for verification of undesirable individuals. Unfortunately, it seems that electronic information is not circulating properly.

In addition, we have heard, unfortunately, that Canadian citizens' medical records had been communicated by your services—I don't know which ones—to a foreign government. This is extremely embarrassing and it undermines all of the progress that we could be making on biometrics. Biometrics will never be allowed if a foreign government has access to Canadians' private and critical information. Can you tell us how you will solve these problems of information transmission and information safety?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: Personally, I have never heard that our organization, the CBSA, had communicated personal information, such as a citizen's medical record. Unfortunately, I am not aware of any such thing.

[English]

C/Supt Eric Slinn: It's the same for the RCMP. I'm not aware of that. We have very strict protocols on information or intelligence sharing when we're sharing with foreign governments, for obvious reasons, whether it be national security or transnational organized crime. We're very cognizant of the rules in protecting Canadian citizens in that regard.

The Chair: Okay, time has expired.

The matter did come up in the House of Commons. I don't know whether Monsieur Giguère wants to follow up. He'd certainly be invited to do that if he has specifics to forward. However, thank you.

We go now to Mr. Woodworth.

[Translation]

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Thank you very much Mr. Chairman.

Good afternoon and welcome to our witnesses.

I have some questions on section 5.35, which is on page 14 of the English version. Since I am not sure how to say this in French, I will speak English.

[English]

Primarily my questions will be for Ms. Loschiuk and Monsieur Bolduc.

I want to begin by asking about advance notifications.

Ms. Loschiuk, can you tell me what is the total number of advance notifications that occur in a year in the CBSA?

Ms. Wendy Loschiuk: Mr. Chair, the advance notifications that we looked at in paragraph 5.35 were for one month. I don't have the number for the whole year, but I could inquire and get back to you on that.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: You looked at 34 advance notifications. From what you just said, should I take it there were only 34 advance notifications in that month?

Ms. Wendy Loschiuk: In February 2013.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: All right, so 34 in one month. All things being equal, if I multiplied by 12, I might come out with a total.

Ms. Wendy Loschiuk: Possibly.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: I would like to know whether 34 is a reliable sample for a year, or a period, in any case. I think knowing that they are all for one month helps me. Thank you.

Mr. Bolduc, what are the circumstances that would hinder or prevent an examination from occurring when an advance notification has been received?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: With the permission of the chair, Lesley, could you respond?

Ms. Lesley Soper: We looked closely at each of the cases that were reviewed. I think a number of things can contribute to the lack of an examination. In the first instance, in some of these cases, there was evidence to show that the person didn't actually arrive after a primary inspection. There may have been a target sent to CBSA, to the port, but the person never arrived in the first place.

•(1640)

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: I note there was one such case out of the five.

Ms. Lesley Soper: Out of the five. Further, there was a case where we couldn't determine through our information systems that an examination had taken place. There may well have been an interaction with the border services officer, one that wasn't determinative, but it was never noted. This is precisely where we're looking to have 100% closure on these cases, and that they're always annotated regardless of whether there was a positive decision for a person to be entered into Canada.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Mr. Bolduc, is the goal then that there should be—and pardon me if I don't know ranks. How should I refer to you, Mr. Bolduc?

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Bolduc: You can call me Mr. Bolduc.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Thank you very much.

[English]

I saw you in uniform and I wondered.

Is it the goal, then, that for every advance notification there should, in fact, be an examination?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: An examination, or what we are requesting from our officers is that we are able to close the loop. Whatever the result is of that interaction, it's entered into the system. It also helps feed the whole intelligence cycle. One of the things highlighted in the report was that we weren't always closing the loop, so now it's mandatory for all front-line officers to close the loop on targets and lookouts.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: I understand that as a result of the internal audit, a lookout action plan was developed. Could you describe for me what the elements of that plan include?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: There are a few key areas, and I would ask my colleague to complete it if I miss anything.

One area is training for our front line and for our intelligence officers who are responsible for issuing lookouts. Another is more rigour in, as I mentioned, closing the loop, making sure that the results of the examination are noted in the system. We've also conducted a review of every lookout in the CBSA database, over 100,000 individual files reviewed, to make sure that they were still valid and that the proper intelligence cycle had been applied on every lookout.

Did I miss anything?

The Chair: Go ahead, very briefly, please.

Ms. Lesley Soper: I would only add that commencing this month, we're undertaking compliance audits of all our ports to ensure that those procedures put in place for 100% close-out are being done.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: That sounds excellently thorough. Thank you.

The Chair: Very good. Thank you, sir.

We go over to Mr. Simms, who has the floor again.

Mr. Scott Simms: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is for the RCMP.

In paragraph 5.65, it says, "We found that the RCMP has put in place an integrated risk management framework", but in the next paragraph, 5.66, you found that, "the RCMP does not use performance information to guide resource allocation for its Integrated Border Enforcement Teams and Marine Security Enforcement Teams...". These are regarding ports of entry, I gather, or just in general.

C/Supt Eric Slinn: It would be between the ports of entry in general.

Mr. Scott Simms: Before I get to you, I'll go to the Auditor General's office.

Can you give me an example of what you mean by "performance information to guide resource allocation"? Define "resource allocation" and what you looked at.

Ms. Wendy Loschiuk: What we were looking for was how it was integrated into determining where activity for illegal entry between ports of entry was matched to available resources to put towards apprehending individuals, where it was known that people were trying to cross the border.

Mr. Scott Simms: That puts a lot of emphasis on the intelligence, on expanding out and trying to find out where these people are coming from, and on risk assessment and that sort of thing. Do you feel they were lacking in where the resource allocation was going over the past few years, certainly since 2007?

Ms. Wendy Loschiuk: Where we were looking was at information that showed us how the distribution of resources was matched to known information about activity at the border.

• (1645)

Mr. Scott Simms: Yes, okay, and you felt that it wasn't up to standard.

Ms. Wendy Loschiuk: We didn't see where the two were being matched, but I will ask Mr. Swales to give you more of the details on that, the specifics.

Mr. Scott Simms: Yes.

Mr. Nicholas Swales: I think one of the key issues here is what we mention at the beginning of paragraph 5.50, which is that the performance measurement for the border programs had been revised a number of times, but for many of the measures, the information had not been gathered. If you are attempting to put in place an integrated risk management process that takes risks, takes performance, and adjusts resources accordingly, you can't effectively do that in the absence of performance information.

Mr. Scott Simms: Okay. I've closed that loop myself. I started questioning a little while ago about that.

Without injecting any more, I'm going to go to Mr. Slinn for his response to that.

C/Supt Eric Slinn: I was hopeful you were satisfied with that answer, but apparently not.

Mr. Scott Simms: Well, I have time, so I might as well use it.

C/Supt Eric Slinn: It's my pleasure to respond.

I think that from the RCMP's perspective on how we allocate our resources with our integrated border enforcement teams, we rely greatly on threat assessments that are produced provincially, nationally, and collaboratively with our U.S. colleagues. That's generally speaking how we allocate resources, so we look at the intelligence, we see there's a threat in a particular area, and we move resources there.

I think what the OAG found, and rightfully so, was that we didn't always have a record of decision that said, "We're moving our resources over to this spot to address this threat." There wasn't a record of decision in light of the performance metrics as well. So although we believed we were making sound decisions based on threat assessments and that's how we allocated our resources, we need to up our game in terms of having the record of decision to demonstrate, through an audit, that those decisions were sound and that they were based on performance.

Mr. Scott Simms: Yes, that's what the gist of my question was. It wasn't about whether it was a sound decision. It's just the record-keeping of the matter that you're hoping to strive to improve over the next little while.

C/Supt Eric Slinn: Yes.

Mr. Scott Simms: This is an issue for the Office of the Auditor General first, and I'll get to you after, Mr. Bolduc.

There was a story some time ago about the issuing of firearms, which has been going on since 2006. Was your office tasked to look at that and how that's being implemented, or no?

Ms. Wendy Loschiuk: You're speaking about the issuing of firearms to border services officers.

Mr. Scott Simms: Yes, I'm sorry, to CBSA.

Ms. Wendy Loschiuk: We haven't looked at that recently, no. I can't speak to that right now.

Mr. Scott Simms: Okay.

Since I don't have that much time, Mr. Bolduc, would you like to answer that question? Can you offer comment as to where you are now since 2006, when an implementation order was there for firearms to be used by CBSA?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: We are pursuing the arming of our front line. I think the commitment was that the front line would be armed by 2016. We're on track to meet that deadline. I don't have the latest number of officers who have been trained. If the chair would like me to, I can easily provide that number to the committee.

The Chair: Sure. Mr. Simms is nodding that he would appreciate that. Yes, thank you.

Mr. Scott Simms: Yes. Thank you very much. I would appreciate seeing the numbers on that.

I apologize if that's outside the scope of what we're doing here.

The Chair: There's a little bit of flexibility in terms of what we talk about here. It's at the discretion of the chair. You're still colouring within the lines, as far as I'm concerned. Continue.

Mr. Scott Simms: Thank you. You're a gem of a man—

The Chair: You're almost out of time, so there you go: good news, bad news.

Make it real, real quick, please.

Mr. Scott Simms: It has been a pleasure talking to you, but I think I'll just leave it at that.

The Chair: Thank you, because I let you slip past, actually. I appreciate that.

Mr. Van Kesteren, sir, you have the floor.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Thank you, Chair.

Thanks to all of you for being here. As was so aptly pointed out by the chair, this is not my regular committee, so I'm going to take a little bit of liberty and ask a question which I think most Canadians would ask. I'm going to go to the CBSA.

You know, I've watched *The Bourne Identity*, and I know how the crooks get in. When I go to the airport, though, there's one thing that really, really bothers me. When I speak to friends and other people who travel, it bothers them, too. That's how the CBSA really does a good job of shaking down the grannies. I'm curious about that.

Am I missing something or is this something that...? Are we afraid to stereotype? Is that the problem? It just strikes me as odd. Oftentimes somebody will go through and you'll think, "What in the heck are they doing checking that person?" Are we missing something? Is this a problem area where you have drugs or something else going through? I wonder if you could answer that question.

•(1650)

Mr. Martin Bolduc: Are you referring to the fact that we sometimes select somebody you would not select for a secondary examination?

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Yes. I'm asking as a Canadian. I think the folks back home want to know this. Is this something that's really necessary? Are we missing something? I was speaking to my colleague about best practices. I know in Israel, for instance, they have a different approach. I'm just curious. Is this an art that we're developing? Are we getting better at it, or is it still something that's untested?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: I believe we are getting better at it. It's a lot different from when I started 25 years ago. Working the front line with no supporting system, interacting with the travellers, that was my training. Today, officers interact with people, but the risk assessment is done well in advance.

Also, today a traveller showing up at an airport can use an automated border clearance kiosk instead of interacting with an officer. It is necessary to monitor compliance. Not everybody referred for a secondary examination is suspected of being a drug smuggler. Some people need to make a declaration. We need to document their passage. There are plenty of reasons why somebody would be referred for a secondary examination.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: I have another question I really need to have answered. I know there's a fine line. You have a tough job. You're protecting Canadians. You're protecting the interests of the nation. By the same token, you're the first line for visitors. How do you balance that? How do you keep a demeanour that is both welcoming and protective?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: It goes to the training of our officers. We put a lot of emphasis on service. The interaction with an officer lasts 45 to 55 seconds. There are a ton of things that the officer needs to assess in a manner that is respectful and also in line with the Canadian way of doing things.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: For instance, do you send in people to assess how the job was carried out?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: We assess the performance of our officers regularly. There are clear expectations on how they should conduct themselves. That's why we have managers making sure that the officers are meeting those requirements.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: I don't know if this needs to go to the RCMP or to you, but years back we had some issue with boat people. We were quite successful because we concentrated on the port of entry as well as the port of export.

Can you elaborate on how that's been successful and where that's going now?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: I'll speak for CBSA. Both organizations have a fairly robust network abroad of officers who are engaged with foreign entities and foreign law enforcement. This enables us to gather intelligence and allows us to be one step ahead instead of one step behind. It's a very dynamic environment, and intelligence is a big part of what we do.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: It has been quite a success story.

The Chair: Sorry, Mr. Van Kesteren. We're done. Time has expired.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Thank you.

The Chair: You're welcome.

Now over to Mr. Allen.

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Thank you, Chair. I'd like to start with Superintendent Slinn. I believe it's called an integrated—

C/Supt Eric Slinn: The enforcement team.

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Yes. Could you do a quick overview of exactly what that is? I have a vision in my mind because I live in Niagara, so I think I know what it is.

Can you give me 20 seconds' worth of what it is?

•(1655)

C/Supt Eric Slinn: Integrated border enforcement teams involve five key partners. In Canada, it's the CBSA and the RCMP. In the U.S., it's the Coast Guard, CBP, Customs and Border Protection, and DHS, Department of Homeland Security. There are 22 or 23 teams across the country. They operate under a joint management structure where there are representatives from all those core agencies. They analyze intelligence and then target the threats on both sides of the border that both sides agree are using the border as a means to exploit. It's been very successful.

Mr. Malcolm Allen: In the case of Niagara, do you use the regional police force there at all?

C/Supt Eric Slinn: Yes, they could be used on a case-by-case basis. They're not generally core partners but they will be invited. We believe in an integrated approach to fighting crime and you have to use the police force of jurisdiction because oftentimes they have better intelligence than, say, the RCMP or CBSA. It's a critical piece.

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Do you actually have a marine unit on the Great Lakes in the Niagara region, Lake Erie, Lake Ontario, up and down the Niagara River?

C/Supt Eric Slinn: Yes, there is. There is also a maritime security operation centre that's just being built in that area.

There's another key component about this border and that's the shiprider program that is integrated with our U.S. colleagues. We operate jointly on the same vessel. The U.S. or Canadian vessel goes back and forth across the borders for enforcement purposes.

Mr. Malcolm Allen: The maritime piece is a bit of a hot potato, to be honest, when it comes to the new building, but that's a local issue. I'll leave that one alone, quite frankly.

I wanted you to give us a sense of how many partners there are, because clearly the Auditor General's office has talked about it. You've given us some sense of what you intend to do. The Auditor General has spoken about the lack of ability by both agencies, the RCMP and CBSA, to actually measure.... Therefore they do not know where the resources should go or whether they have enough. Those are my words, not yours. I heard Mr. Bolduc say that they think they have enough, but the problem is if you can't measure it, I'm not sure you know that. You may have too much, in defence of the government. You may have too many, but you don't know that either. My sense is that you probably don't have enough, but that's a personal view.

With the number of agencies you have to deal with, even though you have a joint management structure, how are you integrating all of those pieces into a performance measurement system that will meet the needs that you've committed to in this Auditor General's report?

C/Supt Eric Slinn: Therein lies the challenge. Specifically it's through more discussion.

You talked about enough resources. When it comes to the CBSA and RCMP and our other law enforcement partners, we have to work smarter. There's always room to improve. We do our best to deconflict. You've got so many.... For example in Ontario, a number of law enforcement agencies are all chasing the same carrot sometimes, or in the past that was the case. Law enforcement has done an admirable job in deconflicting through provincial associations.

The next step is to define performance measures. How do you do that? How do you integrate them or weave them into all of those agencies so that it becomes meaningful?

Mr. Malcolm Allen: I hear what you're saying about doing it smarter. The sense is that if we do it smarter, then perhaps we need less or we'll manage with what we have. The problem is if you don't measure it, you have no idea. If there's a scathing piece in this report, it is that both agencies haven't at this point been able to manage the performance aspect of it, in the sense of knowing what that information is so you can actually allocate the resources.

I understand your earlier comments around understanding your business, and you do by the way. Kudos to both organizations on knowing your business. The problem is that you're not able to let us, or the Auditor General in this case, know that if you moved this resource, it was the appropriate thing to do. Your case study may say that this is how you do this; the problem is that you may have actually needed an additional person or two fewer people, or you may not have needed to be there quite as long.

That hampers your ability to do the things you need to be doing to convince us that this is how you should be resourced because you're doing the job effectively, because you can't actually demonstrate that you are, even though you probably are. This leaves both agencies in a real quandary. I'm not sure how you intend to address this, other than talking about the pieces you're going to do, and the commitments you're going to make. I'm looking at whether the action plan will tell me that these commitments are under way and are going to be attained.

This is going to have to be quick, Mr. Slinn and Mr. Bolduc.

•(1700)

C/Supt Eric Slinn: The action plan for the RCMP lays out that we will establish a working group to define what those performance measures are and to work through some of your questions. They were good points as well.

The Chair: It would be nice if we had it in front of us.

Mr. Malcolm Allen: I'm sorry for having to say it, sir, but we can't actually record a nod of your head.

Mr. Martin Bolduc: Yes.

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Allen.

Mr. Albas, you have the floor, sir.

Mr. Dan Albas: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, I appreciate all of our witnesses coming in to testify and giving us a clear picture as to what this Auditor General's report is calling for and the response that's been laid.

First, to correct the record, I said earlier that 90,000 people come across the border every day. I have to give credit to the MP for Sault Ste. Marie; he said it's actually 270,000, with 90,000 of them being foreign nationals. I stand corrected. You're a very good member for keeping an eye on the details. I see why your people elected you.

If we go to pages 28 and 29, someone brought up timelines in the report. I notice under paragraph 5.28 it says, "This plan will be fully implemented by the end of June 2014". The next one, paragraph 5.38, says by "March 2014". If you go to paragraph 5.47, it says "performance reports by January 2014".

I want to make sure that my colleagues are fully aware that in the report, the response from both CBSA and the RCMP says they will be seeking compliance and within a relatively short timeframe, which I think is helpful for the people back home. We want to see these improvements made.

In referring to that, Mr. Simms mentioned three initiatives that rely heavily on advance information. I believe it's paragraph 5.27 he was referring to that relies on advance information. Then when you look at the next paragraph, 5.28, the recommendation is to "implement its action plan to improve the quality...".

Mr. Bolduc, could you briefly cover this initiative, the accepted recommendation, and particularly talk about the timeline?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: Yes.

On API-PNR, there are a couple of things that we have started. First, we needed to improve the quality of information, so a working group was set up with the airlines to engage with them on the importance of providing accurate information. Also, CBSA will be producing for each airline a sort of report card on their performance vis-à-vis the transmission of information. These things have started.

We will also make sure that we have a better understanding of the correlation between the system capacity and the transmission of information from airlines. Finally, there will be a message that will be sent to an airline upon completion of the information transmittal on a per flight basis.

There are a series of commitments. Some of them have already been started, and it is the commitment of CBSA that by June 2014 all of those action items will have been completed.

Mr. Dan Albas: I'm very happy to hear that.

So I get a sense here, under the list of recommendations on pages 28 and 29, this is almost like an action plan in itself. I imagine that some of the pertinent information that would accompany the RCMP's as well as CBSA's action plan would probably be very similar to what has been identified here.

Is that correct?

•(1705)

Mr. Martin Bolduc: Correct.

Mr. Dan Albas: And you, Mr. Slinn?

C/Supt Eric Slinn: Yes.

Mr. Dan Albas: Okay, good. Well, a lot of the information, including the timeline, is laid out for us.

I want to go back to a question Mr. Carmichael asked the Auditor General's department. Mr. Harris also mentioned talking about cuts.

This question is for Mr. Bolduc. Has the government increased front-line border guards since 2006?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: I don't have the specific number with me.

I can tell you that the front line was not affected by the recent deficit reduction action plan initiative. The CBSA committed \$143 million, but no cuts were made to the front line.

Mr. Dan Albas: Again, you feel that it's staffed well, and you have enough staff also to complete your action plan that you will be sending in, or the recommendations, I should say, that the Auditor General has made.

You feel that with the staff you have you can carry out the accepted recommendations, all of them.

Mr. Martin Bolduc: Yes. There is no resource implication with the commitments we've made.

Mr. Dan Albas: Is that it, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Yes, I'm afraid so.

Mr. Dan Albas: Thank you again to all of our witnesses. I appreciate it.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Albas.

Colleagues, I've done quick base touching with the leads of the three caucuses, and to my understanding there would be agreement to continue the balance of the meeting.

We've gone through our rotation once. Our normal practice is that by agreement, we continue to use up the allotted time of the meeting. We would then simply go back to the beginning with the party slots in place, and individuals would drop into those, as we do in the regular round.

Do I have agreement to continue?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Very good. Thank you, colleagues.

We'll start again, and Vice-Chair Carmichael will kick things off.

You have the floor, sir.

Mr. John Carmichael: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to address these questions to you, Mr. Slinn, if I may.

The Auditor General's office found that the RCMP does not use performance information to guide its resource allocation decisions. That's from page 21 of the report, paragraph 5.66.

You also state the following in your brief:

The RCMP's Management Action Plan will include: A new Program Alignment Architecture (PAA) and Performance Measurement Framework (PMF); a new approach to managing operational information; and new Service Delivery Model and dictionary.

You go on to talk about 2015-16 as an implementation target date.

What happens between now and then? What basis does the RCMP currently use to make resource allocation decisions for its integrated border enforcement teams and its marine security teams? How does the RCMP ensure that its resource allocation decisions are effective at mitigating the risk for Canadians?

C/Supt Eric Slinn: First of all, with the federal policing program of the RCMP, we've re-engineered that in the past year to year and a half. The premise of reorganizing our federal policing program was to become more effective, more efficient, to target the criminal groups, the criminality that poses the greatest threat to Canadians. We needed the flexibility to target those greatest threats.

One of the things we've implemented to do that is a prioritization matrix. Within that prioritization matrix, we have a number of categories that we look at. Is it a Government of Canada priority? Is it a priority to the RCMP? Does it impact on the economic integrity of Canada? Is there violence involved?

There's a litany of things we measure to determine where we're going to focus our efforts, where we're going to focus our resources, and through that we hope to be able to measure more effectively the impact we're making.

One of the other areas within federal policing that we've sort of realigned is an area called operational information management. It's there to collect that statistical data that will tell us, first of all, if we're making a difference, or if our resources are allocated appropriately. We're also still using provincial and national threat assessments, which also incorporate some of other law enforcement partners.

When we bundle all that together, we're hopeful that we'll be able to tell that story to Canadians, to be more efficient and effective in terms of the money we're given through the public coffers, that we are doing the job that we're paid to do.

In answer to your question, we will have that statistical information going forward right now, but as months go on, we will get better and better and we'll have perhaps a broader area of information to provide.

• (1710)

Mr. John Carmichael: As I understand it, then, we're talking more of an integration of the various levels of information that are flowing to you right now.

C/Supt Eric Slinn: Correct.

Mr. John Carmichael: When the AG's office is saying that information is not available, or you're not measuring today, how will the new tools that you're going to implement in 2015-16 actually change the way you do business from what you're doing today?

C/Supt Eric Slinn: We're going to institute different systems and practices.

A lot of that information was potentially there, but for the OAG to spend an inordinate amount of time to extrapolate that, it would not be fair to them. That wouldn't be doing our job.

The information is within our systems, but we need to retool those systems and our practices to demonstrate that, yes, here is the information, so that the next time an audit comes around, we can demonstrate that clearly.

Mr. John Carmichael: From an operational perspective, as you work to integrate the information flow to make better decisions, your overall decision-making capacity is improving, you're creating matrices. They'll be readily available. I don't want to put words in your mouth. I'm just trying to interpret here, so correct me if I'm straying from the message. You're creating matrices that are helping you to make better decisions as you work your way through reallocation of resources.

C/Supt Eric Slinn: It will help us make better decisions and demonstrate to you and the Canadian public that we have a reason behind our decisions. I think that in the past we couldn't necessarily justify to the extent we should have, for example, that we're going after that organized crime group in that portion of the country with that amount of resources, and here's why. We couldn't tell the story as effectively as we should have been able to. I'm confident that going forward, with this prioritization matrix and the systems and practices we've put in place, we'll be able to do that.

Mr. John Carmichael: Very good. Thank you.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you so much.

Moving along, you have the floor, Monsieur Giguère.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Giguère: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

A little earlier, we saw that no one took responsibility for illegally transferring medical files. Unfortunately, we know that the medical files of Canadian citizens were passed on to a foreign government. I hope we will identify the person responsible for that mistake — I hope that it was one — and that the necessary changes will be made.

That causes a problem for biometrics. During a meeting of another committee, the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, representatives from various services told us that biometrics were the way of the future and would truly protect Canadians from individuals who lend their passports to their brother, their sister, or to people who should not enter Canada. The problem is not with the reliability of biometric technology, which is highly developed, but with the safety of information transmitted to you, in particular information on Canadians.

We have already been told that it's almost impossible, in the case of problems that are relatively much simpler, to bring information together so that people don't enter Canada when they are not authorized to do so. That requires a major change. How are you going to undertake that change?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: When you talk about biometrics, you are in fact referring to a Citizenship and Immigration program. Thanks to that program, when a person shows up at a point of entry with a visa, our officers can use the system to ensure that the person who is in front of them is the person to whom the visa was issued, so as to prevent people from substituting photos.

With regard to protection of personal information, the two legal documents that we use a great deal are the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and the Customs Act. Those two acts impose very strict conditions on protecting personal information and sharing it.

Moreover, the Privacy Commissioner of Canada ensures that the various departments address that issue very carefully. There are very strict guidelines regarding information that may be shared and used.

• (1715)

[English]

C/Supt Eric Slinn: I can't add much to that other than to say that organizationally the RCMP balances the charter rights of people. We're inherently aware of the charter and our obligations to that and to protecting private information in investigations. We've been involved in national security investigations and we've been through some inquiries, so I'd like to think we're well versed in protecting those privacy interests.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Giguère: Ms. Loschiuk, perhaps you have some information to share with us on that subject?

Ms. Wendy Loschiuk: In fact, we did not deal with the issue of protecting information in our report.

Mr. Alain Giguère: Mr. Chairman, briefly, may I ask another question?

[English]

The Chair: Okay.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Giguère: You said that front line services for the RCMP and services for border security were not affected. However, in that kind of battle, which is often against organized crime, what is important are the investigative services, in other words, investigating what is happening beyond our borders.

Moreover, a tactical unit was created to counter human trafficking. Do units like that have the resources they need?

[English]

C/Supt Eric Slinn: I think my colleague from CBSA answered appropriately earlier in that the RCMP and the CBSA have liaison officers strategically positioned around the world. The role of those liaison officers is to build networks with other law enforcement intelligence agencies to ensure that we can disrupt, or bring to justice, those individuals who are potentially organizing ventures to bring illegal migrants back into the country.

I think if you look historically, if we go back 10 years, we typically waited for the problems to come to our border. We've been very aggressive and very assertive in taking the fight offshore and quite effective and efficient in doing so. This is where it gets down to performance measures again. If we interdict or stop a venture from coming to Canada, we save Canadian taxpayers a significant amount of money which we wouldn't if that venture boat landed on our shores.

I think we're doing a very good job collectively. We leverage the authorities of CBSA that the RCMP doesn't have in their intelligence networks abroad. We work very cohesively in that regard to protect Canadians here.

The Chair: Very good. Thank you. Time has expired.

We go now to Mr. Woodworth. You have the floor, sir.

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

I'll continue on the question of advanced notification and those items. I'll ask Ms. Soper if she knows how many advanced notifications are issued on average in a year by the CBSA.

Ms. Lesley Soper: I think that goes back to the earlier question about how many targets are issued by our targeting centre. Is that the question?

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: It is if that's the same thing as an advance notification. The Auditor General's report refers to advance notifications from targeters, so I assume it's the same thing.

Ms. Lesley Soper: We can certainly provide that to the committee.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: You don't know off the top of your head?

Ms. Lesley Soper: I don't.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: I understand as well that advance notifications might be entered in one or both of two computer systems, the field operational support system, FOSS, and the integrated customs enforcement system, ICES. Will the new lookouts action plan result in those advance notifications being entered in both of those systems so they can be tracked appropriately?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: Maybe we can ask my colleague, Mr. Chénier.

Mr. Maurice Chénier (Vice-President, Information, Science and Technology Branch, Canada Border Services Agency): Mr. Chair, definitely right now the agency is using the field operational support system, in which we store part of the immigration information system. We also use other agency systems to actually provide additional information needed to do full risk assessment.

When we look at the replacement of the FOSS, which is targeted to be done for December 2014, the agency is currently looking at a plan to centralize all of the lookout information into one information base during 2014. Right now we are on plan to actually deliver design in the requirement for March 2014. In the meantime, the agency will continue to use the FOSS and the ICES to manage both kinds of information.

• (1720)

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Will all of these lookouts be entered in both system, or will it continue to be the case that someone would have to check each of them in order to be sure they didn't miss one?

Mr. Maurice Chénier: Until we have the new system in place, which will be probably later in 2014, they will continue to be entered in both systems, which is the current practice, to make sure we have information continuing in both systems.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: I also have some questions regarding what I think I heard earlier about the development of a national targeting centre in response to the 2007 audit.

It'll begin by asking if you can tell me when the national targeting centre became fully operational.

Mr. Martin Bolduc: It opened on April 1, 2012. The approach was to transfer what initially was done in the regions phase by phase to the national targeting centre. That transition is still continuing. Because it was a new centre, we wanted to ensure we had the proper procedure in place to do a good job in risk assessing, both people and goods. It's still ongoing.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: When do you expect that to be complete?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: I don't have the specific date, but I could provide that to the committee.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: How many personnel are employed in the national targeting centre? Are you able to tell me?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: I would also provide you with that answer. I don't have it with me.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: The point I come away with, though, is this is still a work in progress, and the full impact and benefit of it has not yet been felt, but will soon be felt. Is that correct?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: I think it has been felt, and it will only get better.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Thank you very much.

I heard a figure mentioned earlier about 100,000 files being reviewed. I think it was Ms. Soper who mentioned that. I was thinking it might be the total number of lookouts you have on record, but I don't know. I wonder if you can elaborate on what that is about.

Mr. Martin Bolduc: It is. It's the number of files we had in our lookout database. Every single file was reviewed to make sure they were still accurate and they needed to remain active in our system.

The Chair: Sorry, Mr. Woodworth.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Thank you.

The Chair: You're welcome.

Colleagues, that wraps up our questions and comments, and gives a close to the hearing.

First off, again—

Mr. Alain Giguère: Mr. Chair, excuse me. Just a few moments please.

[*Translation*]

My colleague Mr. Woodworth and I asked some questions and we would like some follow-up on them.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police was supposed to provide information on why medical files of Canadian citizens were transferred. Will you do that follow-up yourself or do we need to draft a question for the RCMP? Could you tell me what the steps are? My colleague Mr. Woodworth also asked for information on that subject.

[*English*]

The Chair: Fair questions.

My understanding of the question Mr. Woodworth was asking was that I was seeing quick nods from Monsieur Bolduc, who is now nodding again—

• (1725)

Mr. Martin Bolduc: Yes.

The Chair: —saying that he was in the affirmative, saying he can get that.

On your issue, and I stand to be corrected, but what I heard the witnesses say was that they weren't familiar with the details of what you were raising, and therefore it would logically be impossible for them to comment.

My remarks at the end were that if you wanted to follow up you should provide them with some details, ask some questions, and hopefully you will get as fulsome a response as you would like to see.

That's kind of where I see it right now. Is that fair?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère: Will they send the information through you or should I ask for it myself?

[*English*]

The Chair: I think the request should come from you, and you can ask for it to come directly to you. At some point it needs to come to the clerk because everybody needs to see it.

If you want to send it, and send a copy to the clerk, and ask that the response be forwarded to the clerk, that would close all the circles. The important thing is that whatever any member receives from our witnesses, it's shared with everyone. That would be the key thing.

Some circumstances would have me saying differently, but I think in this case the fair thing is for you to initiate a detailed question, providing the background material and asking for answers to be forwarded to the clerk.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, I understand that you want to give discretion to individual members, but again, if the testimony has not been heard today and it doesn't directly relate to the questions in the report, I don't think it would be appropriate to be entering any additional answers as testimony. To me, that's why we have a hearing, to have all those things mentioned. I think Mr. Giguère was actually outside the report somewhat.

The Chair: Yes. I'm not surprised I'm hearing from you. We're getting into areas that are not exactly defined. You will note that I worded it that way. It was a personal follow-up. At this point I don't see it finding its way into our report because it wasn't germane. It's a judgment call that Alex would have to make, and then, as he did at our last meeting, he would provide an explanation to the committee as to why something is in or out of the draft.

If it were directly pertinent, then we would get into an issue of how long we would hold up the report to receive that answer. I don't believe we're into that.

I do agree with you that this is somewhat outside where the report will be, but as I mentioned, this is the one area for all members where we try as much as possible to give people a little more room than the House provides because it's very constrained as to what you can say and what you can do. The tradition of standing committees in a parliamentary system, at least ours, is that there be a little more latitude. In this case, I felt that it was all right, similar to Mr. Simms' question, similar to Mr. Van Kesteren's. They weren't necessarily exactly drawn from the report but they were germane, and I didn't see any reason to shut them down. But I do not see this per se as something that we need to hold up our work for.

Mr. Dan Albas: That was the concern, yes.

The Chair: You will also notice that I was very careful—at least I tried to be—in the instructions I was giving to our witnesses in terms of their response, that they would respond as best they could. I think I made a reference that hopefully Mr. Giguère would be happy. But you will see that it wasn't quite the same if it was a detailed question about something in the report. A vague response wouldn't suffice. In this case it's in that category.

Have I explained myself enough?

Mr. Dan Albas: Yes, I think I understand what you're talking about. To me the concern is, if it didn't come up in the hearing and it isn't directly related to the Auditor General's report and its findings, we wouldn't find that this issue would be in our eventual report because we didn't hear this at the testimony.

The chair has to show some discretion here, and I appreciate your explaining that.

The Chair: Thanks. If we can stay in that cooperative let's-be-friends zone and see how this goes, I think we'll be all right. If the answers come back beforehand, though, then it would go from the clerk over to Alex, and Alex would make a judgment call on whether he thought it was in there. As I said, then we have the follow-up system that we have.

On this point further, Mr. Harris.

Mr. Dan Harris: This is just a very quick comment. Until we actually receive the answers from the witnesses, we don't know how pertinent or relevant they will be. Absolutely, it should be up to the analyst's discretion as to how relevant it is. Then we can talk it out during the report writing stage.

• (1730)

The Chair: Yes, I like that.

Mr. Woodworth.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Thank you.

The other comment I would have is that the question that needs to be answered is whatever question was put here today to the witness. I think it might be inappropriate if any one of us was to go off and start on our own asking other questions about unrelated matters. I hope that it will stay within the confines of the question that was put today.

The Chair: Thank you.

If there are no further points on that we'll follow through that way.

Again, I and this committee have the undertaking from you, Chief Superintendent Slinn, and from you, Monsieur Bolduc, that those action plans will be here in the clerk's office tomorrow.

C/Supt Eric Slinn: Yes.

Mr. Martin Bolduc: Yes, sir.

The Chair: That's very good, thank you.

With that, unless there are interventions from colleagues, and seeing none, I'll thank our witnesses. We appreciate your answers. For the most part they have been very fulsome and very helpful, and the Auditor General should keep up the great work. We love the work you do.

Thank you, witnesses. Thanks, everyone.

Colleagues, this committee now stands adjourned.

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