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Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

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•(1610)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): Good afternoon, everyone.

This is meeting 64 of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security on Wednesday, December 5, 2012.

I will remind each of you that today the meeting is televised. Please turn your cellphones to the silent mode or turn them off. I'll start by making sure that the chair's phone doesn't go off, after making the request that you shut yours off.

We are considering supplementary estimates (B) 2012-13, votes 1b, 5b, 10b, 45b, 50b, and 55b under Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

As our witness today, we have Canada's Minister of Public Safety and National Security, the Honourable Vic Toews. He is accompanied by his officials.

From the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, we have François Guimont, deputy minister. Welcome.

From the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, we have Commissioner Bob Paulson. Welcome back.

From the Canada Border Services Agency, we have Luc Portelance, president.

From the Correctional Service of Canada, we have Commissioner Don Head. Welcome.

From the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, we have Richard Fadden, director.

We also have the National Parole Board represented by its chairperson, Harvey Cenaiko. Welcome.

Our committee thanks the minister and his officials for making themselves available to answer questions from members of Parliament related to the supplementary estimates. Canadians know that the minister and his officials have appeared numerous times before our committee and have always been helpful in our deliberations.

I would encourage all members to keep their questions specific to the supplementary estimates. Certainly we want to keep them in the context of what we're here to study today.

Mr. Minister, I know your time is limited. Because of the votes we've been held back a little bit, and I understand you have to leave at 4:30.

We would love to first hear your address and then open it up to members for questions.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

My staff and the officials will be here for another hour after 4:30.

I'm pleased that the committee has shown such a strong interest in examining the expenditure of taxpayer dollars. It's a pleasure to speak to you and to answer questions that you may have with respect to the supplementary estimates (B) currently before this committee.

Since you've introduced all the officials here, I won't have to do that.

Let me be clear at the outset. I can assure you that our government will not engage in risky new spending schemes or in endless spending that will increase deficits, and we will not increase the tax burden on Canadians. Our government is committed to ensuring the most efficient use of Canadian taxpayers' dollars. I can assure this committee that this will continue to be at the core of our agenda.

In these supplementary estimates, Public Safety portfolio organizations are requesting parliamentary approval for a net request of \$447.9 million. The most significant requests include \$180 million to be allocated for the disaster financial assistance arrangements, or DFAA, and \$242 million to be allocated for contract policing. Also, following up on the Prime Minister's commitment, there is another \$50.2 million in flood mitigation investments to help communities devastated by the 2011 spring and summer floods.

As we indicated at the time, both the DFAA and the contract policing figures were not available for the preparation of the main estimates. It was therefore not possible to include these funding requests in the 2012-13 main estimates.

I think it's worth mentioning that these three items make up 99% of the funding that we are requesting.

It's important to note that in 2012-13 the Public Safety portfolio will reduce its total appropriations by \$179.4 million to reflect savings measures announced in economic action plan 2012. Savings for this fiscal year will be achieved through measures to restructure or streamline some administrative and research functions.

Building safer communities for all Canadians remains a top priority for our government. Our intention is to strengthen our already impressive track record on that front in the most fiscally responsible way possible.

If approved by Parliament, funds requested through the supplementary (B)s will be prudently invested in, among other things, disaster recovery and mitigation initiatives in communities across Canada, as well as in Canada's contract policing model and in our ongoing efforts to strengthen security at our border while ensuring that we facilitate the movement of legitimate goods and services.

Today, natural disasters across Canada have resulted in a significant increase in provincial and territorial requests for assistance through the DFAA. A recent example is the severe flooding that occurred last year in my home province of Manitoba, in Saskatchewan, and in Quebec, which resulted in significant response and recovery expenditures. The supplementary (B)s seek approval for \$180 million in additional funds for disaster financial assistance arrangements and \$50.2 million for the financial support to provinces and territories for 2011 flood mitigation investments.

For many years, the federal government has played a very important role in helping communities recover from natural disasters through programs such as DFAA. The effective mitigation of these risks is also our top priority.

This thinking forms the foundation of our national disaster mitigation strategy, which was launched in 2008 as a collaborative effort across all levels of government to develop sustainable, disaster-resilient communities across Canada. This is why our government committed up to \$99.2 million over three years in economic action plan 2012 to assist the provinces and territories with the cost of permanent flood mitigation measures undertaken in 2011.

Our government also remains committed to discussing with the provinces and territories the development of a longer term national disaster mitigation program, recognizing that mitigation can lessen the impact of natural disasters on vulnerable communities, reduce the costs associated with these events, and enhance community resiliency.

• (1615)

Committee members will know that at the time of the main estimates for this fiscal year, we indicated that Public Safety would be returning to Parliament through supplementary estimates to seek funding to reflect the full federal costs of contract policing under the new policing services agreements.

The new policing services agreements came into force on April 1, 2012, for a period of up to 20 years, expiring in 2032. However, at the time the main estimates were being prepared, the government was still negotiating with the majority of the partners, and consequently it was not possible to include this in the main estimates.

Supplementary estimates (B) seek funding of \$242 million for the federal cost of contract policing services for all contract jurisdictions and to provide incremental funding to meet requests for new policing resources requested by provinces, territories, and municipalities for 2012-13. The new agreements that our governments have reached represent the culmination of a lengthy and important negotiation

process, nearly four years of hard work and commitment on the part of our respective officials. I want to thank our officials very much for the hard work they did in that respect.

The new agreements address the key issues raised by provincial, territorial, and municipal governments during negotiations, including governance, accountability, program sustainability, and cost containment. They offer increased input into issues affecting the quality and standards of contract policing. They also provide for a sustainable police service by ensuring a fairer sharing of all legitimate and actual costs of delivering police services in each jurisdiction.

Supplementary estimates (B) seek \$33.1 million for initiatives that support commitments under the action plan for perimeter security and economic competitiveness. This includes \$21.9 million to the Canada Border Services Agency, \$9.8 million to the RCMP, and \$1.4 million to Public Safety Canada.

We're making great progress on implementing our commitments under the action plan. More work continues every day.

Last month we launched an accompanying pilot in Prince Rupert, British Columbia, to inspect marine cargo in transit by rail under the principle of "screened once, accepted twice". This helps save time and money for both businesses and government.

We've also enhanced benefits for NEXUS members, a joint Canada-U.S. trusted traveller initiative to facilitate movement across our shared borders by pre-approved travellers. Last June we amended the three-year residency requirements to extend NEXUS eligibility to non-resident Canadian and U.S. citizens. This allows our citizens who reside abroad and who meet program requirements to benefit from NEXUS. We've created new NEXUS lanes across the country in both B.C. and Ontario.

All of these initiatives and many more will go a long way toward helping to ensure we continue to deliver on our commitments under the action plan.

Funding requested under supplementary estimates (B) addresses ongoing priorities as well as new and renewed initiatives. As well, we're seeking funds of \$20.4 million to further maintain the quality and integrity of front-line services offered by Canada border agents.

The safety of Canadians depends on our ability to run effective programs, services, and initiatives. To that end, I respectfully ask the members of this committee to support these supplementary estimates.

In the few minutes remaining, I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister.

We'll move very quickly into the question round.

For the first round of seven minutes, Ms. Bergen, please.

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

Thank you, Minister, for being here.

Thank you as well to each one of the officials. I want you to know how much we appreciate the good work you do in helping to keep our country safe.

Minister, I want to ask you about something very specific, and that is CBSA, the Canada Border Services Agency. There has been a lot of misinformation from the opposition and from others with regard to what some of our changes have meant. I think the motivation sometimes for the misinformation might not always be honourable, because we have made some cuts to fat in CBSA and to some areas where taxpayers' dollars were going that didn't necessarily produce what taxpayers would ask for, which is to keep our borders safe and secure.

I'm wondering if you could comment specifically on the investments that we have made with regard to front-line border officers, as well as what some of our changes have meant. For example, there has been misinformation out there that we've cut drug-sniffing dogs at the border. We know that this is not true.

Can you clarify our investments at the border, and what some of our changes to waste and mismanagement have meant?

• (1620)

Hon. Vic Toews: Thank you very much for the opportunity to clarify some of this. I'll have to be very quick about it.

I want to emphasize, first of all, that contrary to some of the assertions that have been made by some, front-line border officers have not decreased. In fact, since we came into government, there has been an increase of 26% in border officers. These are front-line officers.

Also, I note that some indicate the drug-sniffing dogs have been eliminated at the land borders. This in fact has not happened. There has been some restructuring in respect of where these dogs are deployed, but we do retain them at the land borders, because we feel that's probably the most effective place for those dogs to be.

In terms of some of the other details, perhaps the president of CBSA could add certain other details in respect of the budgetary issues.

Mr. Luc Portelance (President, Canada Border Services Agency): Thank you, Minister.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You're correct. In fact, the cuts at CBSA have been aligned with transforming a lot of the back-office work we're doing, realigning programs. The front line, which really is the people that you meet at primary, either at land border or air, has not been affected.

I think the way to measure success is that the volumes over the past few years have been rising steadily at about 6% a year. That's over the last two or three years. Notwithstanding that, our wait times have gone down, our enforcement actions have remained steady, and our inspection rates have been maintained. I think that's a pretty good indicator of the commitment that we continue to make, both in facilitating travel and also in enforcing the laws of Canada.

Ms. Candice Bergen: When there is an attempt for contraband to be smuggled across the border, can you tell us if it is intercepted directly at the border the majority of the time because of a front-line officer checking a vehicle or an individual by chance, or is it because of intelligence and work that's done even prior to that specific group or load coming in?

Mr. Luc Portelance: It's a combination. It's a layered approach. First, we do a lot of pre-screening, whether it's in air or in the marine mode. Sometimes it's officer intuition; other times it's through various detection technologies.

We do take a number of containers aside every day to inspect them, based on risk management and targeting, and a lot of the seizures we get come from that particular process. At other times, the tips we get from our law enforcement partners generate our own intelligence.

It's a variety of factors. Occasionally, it is officer intuition, but certainly we don't rely entirely on that.

Ms. Candice Bergen: Thank you.

Minister, I'm wondering if I could go back to something else you talked about, and that's the emergency measures, the disaster financial assistance agreement that we have with the provinces. You mentioned your home province of Manitoba, which is also my home province. Of course, some of the major flooding occurred in 2011 in my riding of Portage—Lisgar, right around Portage la Prairie.

When the Prime Minister visited the riding, obviously you were there and the Minister of National Defence was there, and there was a very firm commitment made by the Prime Minister in terms of the mitigation efforts that provinces were undertaking. Can you talk about what we've committed to provinces under the mitigation portion of fighting flooding and also about the program we have under DFAA, the disaster financial assistance?

Hon. Vic Toews: I think we have to make it very clear that those are two separate things, and you have done so.

Ms. Candice Bergen: Yes.

Hon. Vic Toews: DFAA essentially compensates provinces for eligible damages under the agreement. That is negotiated between the provinces and the federal government.

At last dollar, the Government of Canada was paying about 90¢ on the dollar, and that formula ratchets up very quickly to that 90% issue. I think in Manitoba the disaster financial assistance kicks in after a little more than \$1 million, maybe \$1.5 million. After it kicks in, the percentage basis increases very quickly.

What I was very proud of the Prime Minister announcing, however, was the mitigation, which we as governments have not really gone into to a great extent. There was some mitigation back in 1997, after the big flood in 1997, where there was an agreement between the federal government and the then provincial government, which I happened to be a part of, in terms of mitigation. That mitigation has frankly saved the Government of Canada millions and millions of dollars. In some of the serious flooding, no residential homes were destroyed as a result of the mitigation. We committed for 2011 about \$100 million in respect of flooding that can go toward mitigation.

Just as importantly, we're undertaking discussions right now at the deputy level to see how we can create this national mitigation program so that we're not simply compensating year after year, rebuilding the same bridges, the same culverts, year after year, but actually putting mitigation measures in place so that we can fix it once and for all and save the taxpayers a lot of money in the long run.

• (1625)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

We'll move quickly to the opposition.

[Translation]

Mr. Rousseau, you have seven minutes.

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being here, Mr. Toews.

I do think it is worrisome to see that the supplementary estimates provide no additional funds for the Canada Border Services Agency, especially given the many revelations over the past few months and weeks. It is clear that officers are lacking financial resources. Human and material resources are lacking. Reinforcements are clearly needed. We have mentioned many situations that have been revealed—both by us and the media—and we think this really puts people at risk.

Why allocate more resources for detaining women and children who are victims of human trafficking—as was the case for the latest group of Romanians that arrived in Ontario—when cancelling the \$140-million cuts would help prevent such a situation and would ultimately really give our officers some resources? This is not mentioned in the supplementary estimates.

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews: Well, in fact, if you had been listening to what I'd said, there is an additional \$21.9 million being requested for CBSA. I find it strange to be answering the question I've consistently answered. Yes, we are putting more resources into front-line services. We are putting in 26% more officers than when we came into office.

However, it's not simply putting more officers on the street so that we can catch and release people who are breaking the law, who are actually breaking the law, part of the criminal organization; you actually have to put legislative measures into place. And you and your government—or your party—have consistently—

Mr. Jean Rousseau: In 2015.

Hon. Vic Toews: Did you say “carbon tax”?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Good one, Mr. Toews.

Hon. Vic Toews: Carbon tax, yes.

You and your party consistently oppose the measures that we bring in to facilitate the CBSA officers in actually carrying out their jobs, and that concerns me.

I mean, if you were actually concerned about the crossing by these individuals—

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Sorry, Mr. Toews, but that's not what people are telling us at the border, at the point of entry.

Hon. Vic Toews: Well, here you have—

Mr. Jean Rousseau: They're lacking material and they're lacking the money for more guards. They're lacking cameras, IT, a lot of things, and we're not seeing that in the supplementary budget.

Hon. Vic Toews: We can talk about all of those initiatives under the beyond the borders initiative. I hope your party will support the beyond the borders initiative, because that in fact is what we are going to start talking about, namely, alternate methods of ensuring that we can facilitate trade and travel across the border.

It's also about ensuring that we do stop criminals from utilizing the border, as exactly has occurred in your area where they have been utilizing the border areas, and where you—

• (1630)

Mr. Jean Rousseau: There's a reality—

Hon. Vic Toews: Wait. Let me finish.

You, in fact, have been opposing measures that will make CBSA officers more effective in stopping criminals. Instead of opposing those measures, work with us so that you can help your constituents instead of frustrating your constituents.

Mr. Jean Rousseau: This is not true.

I'll give the last question to my colleague John.

The Chair: Mr. Rafferty, you have three minutes.

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Thank you.

Minister, I don't know how you can break down the supplementary estimates into dollar figures for my question or whether they even apply in this particular case. There is a policing group in Canada that is woefully inadequately taken care of. I'm talking about first nations policing right across the country.

I will use the example that is closest to me, that is in my backyard, and that is the Nishnawbe-Aski Police Service, NAPS. It's woefully underfunded, for example, just in terms of communications equipment and infrastructure. There was an incident of a young officer in his twenties whose house was so mouldy that his spleen exploded. He had to get out. Officers routinely spend one or two weeks past the date they are due to come out for a break because there's no one to take their place. There are only a couple of communities in fact in the whole NAN, Nishnawbe-Aski Nation, region that have more than one police officer in the community. There's a real problem and a real concern.

I'll double my question here in order to give you a lot of time to answer, Mr. Toews.

There has been an initiative to hire more police officers, which is coming to an end. You'll remember that they managed to hire 11 officers. Now of course we think that funding is coming to an end. There has been no talk of continuing it so they can keep the numbers in their forces up. It's a real concern in NAPS, as you know, and a real concern right across the country.

How do we get these supplementary estimates to help with that, or is there a different way that first nations policing is funded? Is there money for that? Are we going to see an increase in that?

Hon. Vic Toews: What I can say is that first of all, we have to understand that policing, even policing in a first nations community, is an entirely provincial responsibility. However, the Government of Canada has entered into agreements with the provinces in order to fund first nations policing. We are only involved as a funding partner. We don't involve ourselves in first nations policing other than through the agreement, because it's a constitutional responsibility of the province.

Mr. John Rafferty: When you talk about contract policing and estimates, is that not part of the money we're talking about that eventually gets to first nations policing?

Hon. Vic Toews: No, that's separate and apart. That is being discussed right now. As a funding partner, the federal government has said that we should look at this particular program and see what the federal contribution should be to this provincial responsibility in terms of renewing it.

Mr. John Rafferty: I know you are aware of these issues, and I know you're concerned about them.

Do you see a way forward for policing organizations, like NAPS and others across the country, that are really struggling to fulfill their mandate and to do the best job they possibly can? In light of, particularly, situations in the NAN communities where it is now estimated that about 70% of the population is addicted to oxycodone, and there are lots of issues there that require resources, do you as the Minister of Public Safety see a way that you could possibly move forward on this to help relieve the situation?

The Chair: Please be very quick.

Mr. Rafferty, your time is just about up.

Hon. Vic Toews: My time is up, but I know that my officials can answer this. I think it's a good question.

Do I see a way forward? I believe I do. I believe that we have to sit down with the provinces and determine if there is a better way of delivering these services. Should it be done in different ways? Should we be giving the provinces more flexibility in terms of how they allot the money we provide to them for this? I'm open to that. Obviously we're all subject to particular financial constraints at both the provincial and the federal levels. Of course the first nations communities themselves often face strains in budgets. This is why we need to do things better with the resources that we have.

• (1635)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Minister, and thank you for sticking around a little longer than you had committed to. We appreciate it.

We aren't going to suspend; we're going to continue.

We'll move to Mr. Norlock. All the officials are here for us.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and, through you, thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

My question will be for my favourite commissioner of corrections, Mr. Head.

Mr. Head, on our government's tough on crime agenda to put dangerous and repeat offenders behind bars, which is where they belong, I might add, are you able to speak to the projections for growth of the inmate population up to this point, and how this figure compares with the actual situation? I can recall that some time ago you were appearing before us and, of course, part of your mandate is to project into the future the needs that you're going to have, and your prison population, and then we come to the end of that time to the actual situation. I wonder if you can talk about those projections.

Mr. Don Head (Commissioner, Correctional Service of Canada): I think the committee members will recall that when we talked about the projections a few years ago, we were estimating that at this time we would be close to about 18,000 offenders incarcerated in the federal system. When Bill C-25 was passed in March 2010, we started from a base of 14,027 offenders. We were basically monitoring our growth against that. Today, our count stands at 15,050, so it's significantly less than what those original projections were, which were developed in 2008 and based on 2005 data, the only data that was available from the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics.

We have since then re-scrubbed—for lack of a better word—our data and have revised the projections. Our projections for this year, for 2012, are for us to be at 15,050, and for next year to be at about 15,270, somewhere in that order of magnitude.

These numbers are much less than the projections that we talked about a couple of years ago. For us, that has also meant some relief in terms of some of the pressures and concerns we were worried about in relation to construction and capacity within our existing institutions, and in relation to the number of new units that were being built in existing institutions, which will actually give us, by 2014, 2,752 more cells and will definitely help us in terms of just managing the reduced population growth that we are now projecting.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much. Also, thank you for mentioning the second part, the investments in our current fleet of institutions in accommodating this, because one of the assertions—as I know, because I ran in the election—was that we were going to build these megaprisons. In actual fact, we haven't built any new prisons, nor do we intend to. Thank you for that.

Part of your projections, of course, and the actuals...would I be correct in saying they are part of the reason that you have not requested any additional funds? I wonder if you can talk about how you, being a part of the federal government, were able to adjust your projections and your budget for the deficit reduction action plan, and where you were able to find efficiencies.

Mr. Don Head: In terms of the deficit reduction action plan, our reduction by 2014-15 will equate to 12.58% of our starting budget, which equates to \$295 million. This fiscal year, we are reducing by \$85 million, next fiscal year by \$170 million, and by 2014-15 by \$295 million.

Those were the plans without any adjustment to the accommodation plan. In addition to the deficit reduction action plan, when we went back and revised our accommodation figures, we projected a return back to the treasury of \$1.4 billion over six to seven years of moneys that are not required.

• (1640)

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much.

I would like to take part of what you said and expand on it a little bit. We always talk about front-line services. Would you say that the areas of reduction—and I'm looking at the institution within my riding—that were done in the office, but not in the actual correctional officer area, would be commonplace throughout Canada? Your reductions in personnel were actually at the administrative level, rather than in the—for the sake of a better term—service delivery area.

Mr. Don Head: Yes. In terms of the bulk of our reductions, of the \$295 million, the amount of \$120 million will come as a result of the closure of three institutions, whose population we'll be able to manage with the new capacities that are being built.

The other reductions are not specifically front-line service delivery positions. There are some reductions to some areas in relation to correctional officers and parole officers, but these are as a result of efficiencies in terms of how we do business.

Some of our practices have been in place for 10, 15, 20 years. The overall transformation agenda that we've been implementing since 2008 has identified some areas for us to revitalize, re-engineer, some of those practices without jeopardizing the safety or security of the staff, citizens, or the offenders themselves.

Mr. Rick Norlock: When you talk about the institutions that will be decommissioned, I can recall visiting the Kingston institution. For the folks at home who need to know why we do some things, would you let us know how old that institution is and describe its somewhat archaic architecture?

Mr. Don Head: The Kingston Penitentiary predates Canada. It was built in 1835, and it has been in operation pretty well every year since then. I mean, there have been many reconstruction projects, but as you can imagine, with a walled institution that's like a box, you

can only readjust the pieces inside so many times before it's no longer viable or useful.

It's traditionally that Charles Dickens-style prison, with open-faced bars, great big gates, armed cages. If you saw *Shawshank Redemption*, you saw Kingston Penitentiary.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

Mr. Scarpaleggia, please, for seven minutes.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): If my colleague, Mr. Dion, were here, he would say that it predates Confederation, not Canada.

I have some statistics in response to an order paper question on the number of staff, or the level of staffing, in different regions. These cover the period 2006 to 2012. For example, the number of inmates in Atlantic prisons declined 5%, but the number of staff rose 16%. The number of inmates in Quebec prisons rose 5%, but the number of staff rose 15%. In Ontario the inmate population rose 16%, and the staff rose 28%. In the prairie provinces, the number of inmates went up 15%, and staff rose 27%.

Is this what we're cutting back on now? Did we overspend? Did we over-hire, and if so, how did that happen? If we didn't over-hire, if this personnel is required, what is the reason for the seemingly disproportionate increase?

Mr. Don Head: That's a very good question, and it gives me an opportunity to explain some of the numbers.

During the last several years there have been investments into corrections in some key areas. If I go back to 2008, during the strategic review process we actually received a \$47-million reinvestment back into corrections, which allowed us to strengthen our capacity to deliver various programs to offenders. There were increases in programs for offenders serving shorter sentences of two to three years, programs related to the community maintenance area, violence prevention programs, and an \$11-million investment in programs specifically for aboriginal offenders.

On top of that, we received investments in the area of mental health. In the period between 2005 and 2010 we received \$29 million for our community mental health initiative. That was then normalized in our budget with an ongoing \$6.1-million increase.

• (1645)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: We're not going to roll back this increase in staffing, are we?

Mr. Don Head: No. These are key investments in front-line program delivery to offenders.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: You're aware that Mr. Sapers wrote to you—I suppose so, since it says here, this is to Commissioner Don Head—about double-bunking and double-bunking in segregation cells. It sounds like a fairly serious situation.

Mr. Sapers received a response from Madam Kelly, who was CSC acting commissioner. Did she precede you as this?

Mr. Don Head: She was acting for a period of time while I was on leave.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: She said:

Pressures continue to arise at this site

—I guess she's talking about Stony Mountain—

due to presence of maximum security inmates awaiting transfer to other facilities and/or court processes as well as due to presence to the challenging dynamics of managing a complex security threat group situation.

We can say that there are fewer inmates than we anticipated, and I suppose that's a good thing, but it doesn't sound as though the pressures have been alleviated. There are still pressures in the system. We've heard, for example, that the court processes may slow down because of the elimination of the credit for time served, and so on.

How can you be so confident that everything is hunky-dory in the face of this double-bunking situation? Inmates are double-bunked, I think I read somewhere, for 23 hours.

It doesn't sound to me as though the pressures are being alleviated. It sounds to me as though maybe the reason we require more staffing in some of these institutions is that we're dealing with more complex populations. We have many different types of populations in the same institution. As a matter of fact, that's what the head of the correctional officers' union came to tell us when we were studying the problem of drugs in prisons. That's what they were protesting about on Parliament Hill. That's what they were protesting about in front of the Prime Minister's office in Calgary.

I understand that we're going to have fewer inmates, but it seems to me that the pressures are still quite strong, and maybe even growing. This would lead me to believe that maybe there are problems with the predictive ability within Correctional Services. If we predicted 18,000 and we had only 15,000, that's good news, but why are we off by 3,000?

Mr. Don Head: I'll deal with your last question first.

The issue, as I reported to this committee before, of projections was a problem related to data that was compiled in 2008 in that the only available data was for remand growth in the provinces from 2005. In 2005 all projections from CCJS, the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, indicated that the remand population was going to continue to grow, so we factored that into the calculations. The next time the statistics were available from CCJS, the numbers had actually turned around.

Regarding the issue of double-bunking, particularly at Stony Mountain Institution, Stony Mountain is unique in the fact that it's the only federal penitentiary in the province other than Rockwood, which is the minimum security institution next door, that houses medium security offenders.

The odd time when there are problems within that institution and inmates have to be segregated because they have been involved in assaultive behaviour or other activities they should not been involved in, they have to, on rare occasions, place them in segregation, and two in segregation. The number of days they've spent two to a cell in segregation has been very low. We have an exceptional warden there who works very hard at reducing those numbers in as safe a manner as possible but as quickly as possible as well.

● (1650)

The Chair: Thank you, Commissioner.

Again, I will remind everyone that when we're considering the supplementary estimates and we talk about prisons or Corrections Canada, there are, in the supplementary estimates, line items—canteen, construction, and those types of things. But for double-bunking, unless you word your question in such a format to ask why there isn't more money for that type of thing.... I'm just encouraging you to help out a bit here.

Thanks.

Mr. Garrison, go ahead, please, five minutes.

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

Thank you very much to the officials for being here today.

I want to start with a question for Mr. Guimont directly. This is related to the supplementary estimates which provide \$242 million as the federal government share of the cost for contract policing.

The thing that's no longer there is funding for the police recruitment fund. Why is that absent from the supplementary estimates? Is it true that the fund has been completely expended at this point? Is there additional demand that could have been funded in the supplementary estimates? I believe we heard from municipalities that there is unmet demand for this fund.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Guimont (Deputy Minister, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): Thank you for the question.

[*English*]

I hope as a newcomer to the department, I will have a long and productive relationship with the committee. I am happy to be here today.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you.

Mr. François Guimont: I'll raise two points. I may ask the commissioner to say a few words as well.

The dollars with respect to contract policing have been identified in supplementary estimates (B) as a result of negotiations that have been completed. I just want to be clear on that. That's obviously an increment that was not there at the time of the main estimates, but it was indicated.

With respect to the police officer recruitment fund, \$400 million was set aside in 2008. You're obviously familiar with this. Right now that program will end March 31, 2013. I would say from my perspective—and I'm fairly new to this line of business—it's felt that the program, through the recruitment, has achieved its outcome. That is why at the end of the fiscal year the program will simply sunset.

Quite a number of officers were hired, 2,500 across the country, if I remember. These people are now operational. It is felt that this top-up meets the requirement contained in the announcement made in 2008.

If it's okay with you, Mr. Chairman, I'll turn to my colleague, Mr. Paulson, to see if he has anything to add.

The Chair: Commissioner.

Commissioner Bob Paulson (Commissioner, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I don't know if I can add much about the fund and the sunset. I can speak to the contract policing in the supplementary estimates if you would like some more information on that, but I share the deputy minister's understanding.

The Chair: Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Let me turn then to the deputy minister regarding emergency preparedness.

What we saw in the original budget was a cut to funding for the colleges that offered the courses and a cut to programs funding municipalities to send people for emergency training. We heard a lot from municipalities after that time about how this was essential to their ability to build their emergency plans and carry out operations in emergencies.

Again, in the supplementary estimates, I hoped we would have seen a restoration of that funding to municipalities and a restoration of funding for the emergency preparedness courses at the college here in Ottawa, since we had so many people saying those were an important part of their emergency planning.

When we see the effects of climate change and the greater frequency and intensity of natural disasters that are taking place, it seems there is a demand here for the emergency training area which is not being met when it was previously met by the federal government.

Mr. François Guimont: Thank you for the question. I will start where the minister ended, on that very topic.

The government made an announcement regarding a mitigation fund of \$99 million, almost \$100 million, in 2012. As a newcomer, you have a choice of whether to put more resources towards reacting and curing. That's quite all right. Those are the actual DFAA payments we carry out. There's been a top-up in the estimates as we all know. However, there is probably very good logic in making sure that you try to minimize and prevent disasters from occurring. That is the whole thinking behind the \$99 million that was put forward. Right now we're seeking approval in supplementary estimates (B) for \$50 million of that \$100 million.

That leads me to the very specific question you asked on the issue of the college. It is felt that the college has done what it needed to do. Said differently, the agreement we had put in place for programming is now offered in the private sector, another level at which training can be provided. That's one segment. The other segment is that, since this decision was made, we are also developing, with the Canadian School of Management, some curriculum content to offset some of the programs that might have been available through the college.

There are really two angles. First, products are available fairly widely, and I think that's understood and fair to say. Second, we are not totally ignoring the need for training. We're going to be working through the school on a curriculum that we hope will offset some of those things.

• (1655)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Again, I will remind members that we're on a five-minute round of questions and answers, so it's very compact.

Mr. Leef, please.

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to all our witnesses. It's good to see most of you back again.

Commissioner Paulson, we've let you remain rather quiet today. I'll field my questions towards you.

We were all obviously very happy to see the contract jurisdictions signing their policing contracts. Maybe I'll just get you to comment on how important contract policing is across Canada and what investments we've made in contract policing programs.

On the heels of that, maybe you could touch on which provinces and territories have renewed their contract policing agreements with the RCMP. Also, what are the main changes in these contract policing agreements?

Commr Bob Paulson: Thank you for that question. I'll try to be brief.

Essentially, contract policing exists in eight of the ten provinces. With the exception of Quebec and Ontario, we are the provincial police force in those provinces. We share that role with the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, of course, in Newfoundland; it's the only province that has two provincial police forces. We're also the contract police force in all the territories. It essentially means that we do front-line policing, municipal policing, response-to-call policing, and provincial police duties, all policing activities.

I think the feature of the new contract that might be of interest to the committee is the new accountability measures that we're deploying to address concerns that were uncovered—or, I guess, emphasized—during the negotiation process. In other words, our contracting partners, who are contributing an important amount of money towards this service, are naturally interested in having some active say in the priority setting and the deployment of some of these resources, so there is a rather robust accountability scheme in the new contract to account for the expenditure of all of these funds.

We've had a couple of meetings now with the contract advisory management committee, comprising all of the officials from the territories and provinces. We're beginning to lay that track of responsiveness to their interests, and of accountability, opening up the books, as it were, to demonstrate that, and also, not just in money, but in service standards. I think it hearkens a new era of accountability for the provinces and territories and an ability for the RCMP to continue to serve Canadians.

Mr. Ryan Leef: Thank you.

I would assume that when provinces and territories are looking at re-entering a contract with the RCMP, some of them dabble a bit in looking at what it would take for them to engage their own policing services. You did touch on it, now that the accountability structure and the deployment of resources in partnership with those provinces obviously have become a significant benefit to each of those provinces and territories in terms of looking toward the RCMP as their police force of choice.

Can you touch on some of the variables that the RCMP engages in with the provinces, and particularly the territories, that might be unique to jurisdictions and that allow the RCMP to be not only the icon choice of force, but the economical choice of force and the service delivery choice of force for Canadian provinces and territories?

• (1700)

Commr Bob Paulson: I think that one of the features we provide to our contracting partners is a consistent level of service and professionalism and an ability to understand exactly what it is they're getting for their dollars. There is also a training standard. There is a service standard. There are performance standards that are shared with our contracting partners and that we try to live up to.

On the one side, we say that officers come into communities and then leave communities, but there is a benefit to be had by the transfer of officers across the country to strengthen that consistency of policing service across the territories and across jurisdictions. It provides for that consistency.

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

Thank you, Commissioner.

We'll now go to Madam Doré Lefebvre.

[Translation]

You have five minutes.

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the witnesses for joining us today. Hearing from you is very useful.

As the number of questions is growing, I will try to be fairly quick. I mainly want to put my questions to Commissioner Head, but I will first ask Mr. Guimont something.

Mr. Guimont, earlier, you mentioned a \$400-million fund while answering my colleague Mr. Garrison's questions. You actually confirmed that the fund was no longer necessary according to your data. You said that fund would not be renewed in March 2013. However, according to the information I have gathered by consulting a number of police forces—mainly in Quebec, but also across Canada—this fund is extremely necessary and is still very topical.

Quebec's portion of the \$400 million over five years was slightly more than \$92 million. That money is currently being used to fund joint forces involved in the fight against street gangs. Since those joint forces were established, cities have been working together, and it has been proved that the initiative helps reduce street gang activities, such as crime, murders and related activities.

Have police forces been consulted to ensure that the \$400 million was no longer necessary? Are you sure that this fund will not be renewed and that it is really no longer necessary?

[English]

The Chair: Deputy Minister, would you respond, please.

Mr. François Guimont: Thank you for the question.

[Translation]

First, this is not about the fund not being necessary. The fund has achieved its purpose, which was the recruitment of officers. Second, once the investments were made and officers were recruited, I think there was certainly a need for various police forces to work together to the best of their ability to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of those new recruits and to establish good co-operation between police forces. That is what I would say.

As for your question about whether consultations had been held with police forces, I have to defer to my colleagues. My colleague Graham Flack, Assistant Deputy Minister, is confirming that relevant discussions did take place.

[English]

Mr. Graham Flack (Associate Deputy Minister, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): There have been continued discussions.

[Translation]

We held ongoing discussions with provinces regarding that. You are right in saying that other jurisdictions have always expressed an interest in a permanent fund. However, when the fund was announced five years ago, the government said it would inject a one-time amount of \$400 million. The fund was set to expire at the end of this fiscal year. So, that was planned. However, you are right in saying that the provinces would have preferred to receive this funding on an ongoing basis.

• (1705)

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Thank you very much for confirming that. It is greatly appreciated.

I will now turn to Commissioner Head. I enjoyed your exchange with Mr. Norlock and Mr. Scarpaleggia. You raised some points I found extremely interesting regarding double bunking in prisons. The number of inmates was also discussed. You did some math regarding the potential increase in the number of inmates over the next year, and you also talked about the new cells that were going to be built.

To make a long story short, one of the three institutions that will be closed is in my riding. The Leclerc institution is actually located in my riding. I have also visited the Kingston Penitentiary. Those two institutions are totally different.

Given that new cells will be built, but others will be closed, will there ultimately be more or fewer cells in total?

[English]

The Chair: Reply very briefly, please.

Mr. Don Head: Mr. Chair, I thank the member for the question. I'd also like to thank her for her interest in Leclerc. I know the staff very much appreciated the visit and the engagement.

[Translation]

Thank you very much for that.

[English]

At the end of the day we will have more cells, even with the closure. When we net out approximately the 1,000 cells from the three institutions we're closing with the 2,752 we're building, we're net about 1,700 more.

The Chair: Thank you very much both.

We'll move to Mr. Hawn please for five minutes.

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the witnesses.

I just want to ask Mr. Flack or Mr. Guimont a question one more time on the hiring program that we promised in the 2006 election, I think it was. It was very specific, for 2,500 members, and that was done, so the program is finished and it's time to move on. It was never intended to be a permanent program. Is that correct?

Mr. Graham Flack: That's correct. In the budget announcement, the Minister of Finance indicated it would be a one-time injection.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Commissioner Head, I want to thank you, or commend you, for not asking for anything more this year. I think that's a good example to set for folks.

Mr. Fadden, I'd like to ask you a question about some concerns that have been expressed in some areas about oversight and accountability in CSIS because we are merging the responsibilities of the Office of the Inspector General and SIRC, the Security Intelligence Review Committee. Can you just explain how SIRC will continue to provide vigorous independent oversight over CSIS? Is that merging of any particular concern to you?

Mr. Richard Fadden (Director, Canadian Security Intelligence Service): No, I don't think so. To begin with, the specific responsibilities of the Inspector General that are enumerated in the statute, that is to say certify my annual report, have been transferred to the SIRC and a small number of FTEs have been transferred as well.

The other thing to remember is that at the time the service was created some 30 years ago, the environment was quite a bit different. Today the Federal Court is far more active in monitoring what we do and how we do it. They have amicus. They have special advocates. There are all sorts of things of that nature.

As well, 27 years ago, the public service and the service did not have an independent internal audit system certified and controlled by the Treasury Board.

If you put all this in the pot—if I can put it that way—I think we're still monitored quite effectively. One of the things that I advocated at the time the government was considering this change was something called unity of monitoring or unity of oversight. There was, when there was an inspector general, occasional overlaps in what they were doing. In the end, the government agreed that this wasn't an effective use of the taxpayers' money and they moved in this direction. In the final analysis, we're saving about \$1 million a year.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Very good, thank you.

Commissioner Paulson, contract policing is in place. We've talked about that a little bit. I don't know about other provinces, but in Alberta, as I'm sure you're aware, they've initiated a sheriff's department. Do you see that as a positive thing? I'm sure you probably would. How does that impact the duties of the RCMP in Alberta in terms of their assuming some of the responsibilities, for example, traffic?

Commr Bob Paulson: Yes, traffic, and thank you for the question.

What we want to do, and I'm on my folks about this all the time, is try to innovate our delivery of policing services both in the contracts and in our federal primary mandate. The RCMP started a long time ago. We've done a lot of things in law enforcement, including transporting prisoners from court to the correctional facility. We do traffic. We're always looking for opportunities to save money.

In fact, we have a couple of programs within the RCMP that are looking at different ways of delivering services that don't attract the sort of.... We were talking about transfers before, and there's the aboriginal community constable program for example. It's a new way. It's a new kind of an officer. We're looking into aboriginal communities to bring those officers forward and then send them back to their community to stay there.

I think that's a very positive development where we can look for efficiencies and continue to partner with any number of agencies to help us do our job.

• (1710)

Hon. Laurie Hawn: I assume it would provide some financial relief in terms of money that you would otherwise have to ask for and expend on contract policing.

Commr Bob Paulson: That's exactly right.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: I have a question for you, Mr. Cenaiko, because we haven't picked on you at all.

There have been some changes in regard to criminal record checks with respect to pardons or—there is new terminology and I forget what we call pardons now.

A voice: Record suspensions.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Can you outline some of those?

Mr. Harvey Cenaiko (Chairperson, National Parole Board): With the changes in the legislation, they now are called record suspensions instead of pardons. There were basically two areas in that process. June 29, 2010 was when the major legislation changed and new decision processes came into place for record suspensions. It really talks about two concepts. The first is whether the record suspension would provide a measurable benefit for the applicant. The second involves a series of factors that board members have to determine to ensure that the granting of a record suspension would not bring the administration of justice into disrepute.

The Chair: Thank you very much for the question and the answer.

We'll go back to the official opposition.

Madame Doré Lefebvre.

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: If possible, I will let Mr. Rafferty use the remainder of my time.

[English]

The Chair: Monsieur Rafferty, for five minutes, please.

Mr. John Rafferty: Thank you very much.

Mr. Guimont and Mr. Flack, my questions are for you.

You heard my question for the minister regarding first nations policing. I wonder if you could give us some idea of the amount of money that is being spent this year. I gather it's all being transferred to the province for first nations policing, at least that's my understanding from the minister.

You did subsequently answer one of my questions on the police recruitment fund, which is now gone. That creates some further hardship on first nations policing, particularly those who have hired officers and are underfunded already.

How much money is being transferred this year for first nations policing across Canada?

Mr. François Guimont: Thank you for the question. I will look to my colleague, Mr. Flack, to top up my answer as required.

Mr. Chairman, the first point I would make is that this is a cost-shared approach. There is 50% that is paid by the federal government and the difference of 48% is paid by the provinces. That's an important first point to make.

The second point is that in budget 2011—and that's a direct answer to your question—\$30 million was provided for two years to augment the program. Essentially, for 2012-13 the program is \$120 million. You were asking the minister if there was anything in supplementary estimates (B) with respect to this program, and the answer is yes. With regard to the \$120 million that I just mentioned, there is a segment of \$1.75 million which is on the table to be approved. That money, which is part of the \$120 million, but is part of the supplementary estimates (B) before you, would be given to the RCMP to purchase the services through that program.

Mr. John Rafferty: With regard to a province that does not have the RCMP in a direct role in provincial policing, how does that work? How does that work in Quebec and Ontario, for example?

Mr. François Guimont: Now I am outside of my depth and I will turn to my colleague, Mr. Flack.

The Chair: Mr. Flack.

Mr. Graham Flack: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I think the committee members may be aware it's a tripartite program, so it's negotiated with the first nations as well. The delivery vehicle varies by first nation. In some cases it's a first nations police force, a local police force, that provides the services. In some cases, those services may be provided by RCMP members, or with the support of the RCMP. It will depend on the community. It could involve provincial police, as well, depending on the community.

We leave that up to the community to determine the best way to deliver it. Ultimately those arrangements vary, regardless of whether it's a contract jurisdiction or not.

• (1715)

Mr. John Rafferty: I could certainly make a comment on that.

If I use the same example of NAPS, the Nishnawbe-Aski Police Service, they police 47 communities, so it's not just one community that we're talking about. This is increasingly so, because policing right across the country is getting crunched. All budgets are getting crunched, whether it's federally, provincially, or municipally funded, and increasingly so. A few years ago, NAPS, for example, could depend on the OPP to help out in certain instances. They're no longer able to help out.

It becomes even more critical in a policing situation like NAPS, in northern Ontario, where the demands increase considerably but the funding does not. We're talking about basic things. We're not talking about operational money here. We're talking about money for infrastructure, for communications, the sort of thing that's been neglected at the expense of... There are that many communities and you need to hire a certain number of officers to police those communities, and it becomes increasingly more difficult.

I know you are new, Mr. Guimont, but you've probably seen some correspondence from first nations police forces across Canada—or maybe you haven't—about the dire straits they're in.

The Chair: Your time is right on the five minutes.

If you're going to give him an opportunity—

Mr. John Rafferty: I wonder if you could comment quickly on whether you're aware of these issues that exist in first nations policing communities.

Mr. François Guimont: I will only say, Mr. Chairman, that I had some briefings on this from my colleague, Mr. Flack.

There was a top-up, so obviously there is an acknowledgement there was a gap between the requirements and what should be done. That's the famous \$30 million.

No, I have not seen, at this point, correspondence on that. It's obviously a topic of interest to the committee.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll move back to the government side and to Mr. Payne, please, for five minutes.

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thanks to the witnesses for coming.

I have a couple of questions. I want to go back, through you, Chair, to the commissioner.

The Chair: Mr. Payne, as we can hear, the bells have started to ring. I'm held to the orders that when the bells start to ring and the vote is called, our meeting is basically concluded. We will wait.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Thank you, Chair, for that wonderful opportunity.

The Chair: You have tweaked our interest in your question, Mr. Payne. We'll have to wait for another time.

I want to thank our guests for coming today and for answering the questions regarding the supplementary estimates.

Mr. François Guimont: Thank you.

The Chair: To our minister, who left earlier, and to the head of each of the departments, thank you so much.

The meeting is adjourned.

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