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Chair

Mr. Daryl Kramp

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC)): Good afternoon, colleagues and guests. We'll call the 22nd meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security to order today. Our order of business today will be to discuss the main estimates for the public safety portfolio.

We have a number of witnesses with us today. Of course, we certainly welcome The Honourable Steven Blaney, Minister of Public Safety, and of course we're so very pleased as well to have a number of department heads and senior people with various departments today. I'll just introduce them in no particular order here.

We have, from the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, François Guimont, deputy minister; from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Commissioner Bob Paulson; from Canada Border Services Agency, the president, Luc Portelance; from the Correctional Service of Canada, Commissioner Don Head; from the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, the director, Michel Coulombe; from the Parole Board of Canada, Harvey Cenaiko, chairperson; and from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Public Complaints Commission, Mr. Ian McPhail, the interim chair.

So thank you, one and all, for coming here today. Obviously, we will have a vote on the estimates at the conclusion of our dialogue with our witnesses today, but right off the bat we will go to the minister.

Mr. Blaney, you have the floor for a few minutes for a presentation. After that, we will open up to questions from the committee members.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Good afternoon to the committee members.

First, I want to tell you that I am privileged to be here today to ask you to support the Main Estimates 2014-15 for the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

I would like to provide a brief review. This department was created following the tragedy of September 11 and the response coordinated by the Canadian government to group all security agencies under one responsible authority. I am extremely privileged to be surrounded here by representatives from these various agencies that do a remarkable job every day.

[English]

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Excuse me, I have a point of order.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Easter, you have a point of order.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Yes, Mr. Chair.

Look, a minister has a full department at his disposal. I see no reason why a minister would come before a committee and not have a statement that he can give out to us, so we can go along with his statement as he's speaking. This is happening all too often. Ministers have a full department, with a lot of agencies here. I would like ministers to come before the committee with a full statement translated the way it ought to be done.

The Chair: Fine, thank you, Mr. Easter. We'll take that under advisement. Should the minister have a statement, please be prepared to pass that around, and should he not, please continue, Minister.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Chair, my speech will be in both official languages, but I only have one copy. What I have said so far was not in my written text. However, I will be happy to answer questions in both official languages.

Basically, dear colleagues, my goal today is to provide you with as much information as possible to obtain your approval for the Main Estimates 2014-15 for the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

If I may, I will get started right away so I can respect the amount of time I have.

I would like to talk to you about two very important aspects that have come up since the last time we met. As you know, we have strengthened our commitment in relation to the Lac-Mégantic tragedy. I think it is important to mention it. With respect to the initial commitment of \$60 million, \$25 million was earmarked for public safety. Since then, we have concluded an additional agreement that would grant funds based on a 50-50 cost sharing formula for the full amount of the decontamination work. I am particularly proud of the fact that we are committed to supporting the Quebec government financially with respect to the amounts required for all the decontamination and restoration work of the site.

Obviously, we have also given our support to the Alberta communities that were devastated.

[English]

In March, our government announced an advance payment of \$500 million in funding under the disaster financial assistance arrangements for costs incurred by the Province of Alberta for the severe and tragic flooding.

[Translation]

One of the extremely important public safety issues that I mentioned in my opening remarks is our relationship with the Americans, a relationship that is based on the market and trade, and on safety. That is why Public Safety Canada is responsible for implementing the agreement signed by President Obama and Prime Minister Harper, the beyond the border initiative.

More recently, Canada and the United States launched phase two of the pilot project, which involves pre-shipment inspection of cargo trucks at the Peace Bridge border crossing, between Fort Erie, Ontario, and Buffalo, New York. I was accompanied by Minister Nicholson and some American representatives. This is one of the deliverables of the beyond the border initiative, but not the only one. There are still other results to achieve and we are currently working on them.

[English]

This past January our government launched the anti-cyberbullying campaign, Stop Hating Online, to protect youth from cyberbullying, an issue that we all know can have devastating consequences. This builds on the protecting Canadians from online crime act, the legislation introduced by my colleague, Minister MacKay, and we seek support of all members for that important bill.

The campaign includes TV, online, and cinema ads aimed at parents and youth with a focus on the potential legal consequences of sharing intimate images online as proposed under the protecting Canadians from online crime act.

The Stop Hating Online website, which provides concrete tools and tips for youth, parents, and educators is a great success. Our data is showing that this is one of the most effective campaigns the government has undertaken. We have had hundreds of thousands of visitors to the website since the campaign's launch, and Public Safety has been recognized for the high level of engagement it has seen on the Stop Hating Online initiative.

[Translation]

Let's talk now about the Main Estimates 2014-15 or, you might say, investments in safety.

The total funding for which I am seeking your approval is \$8.399 billion. That is for the entire public safety portfolio and includes all the agencies represented here today. This is a net increase of \$349.3 million, or 4%, over the Main Estimates 2013-14, which was approved and presented by my predecessor.

• (1535)

[English]

These investments will allow our government to continue to carry out vital programs needed to ensure safe and effective borders, a correctional system that actually corrects criminal behaviour and

takes care of inmates with severe mental health issues, and a safe and secure country for all law-abiding Canadians.

Let me discuss some items found in the main estimates that are of interest to the members and certainly to Canadians.

[Translation]

Essentially, the increase can be attributed to the increase in financial transfers that we are going to make as part of the disaster financial assistance arrangements contribution program.

[English]

But there's some good news in the main estimates, such as Corrections Canada is returning to the fiscal framework nearly \$119.5 million because the projected growth in the prisoner population as a result of our agenda on crime measures delivered...

As we have always said, locking up dangerous and violent criminals is the best way to reduce crime, and this is what is happening. The good news is that this is happening and the high projection of inmates is not materializing. On April 12 there were some suggestions that a lot of costs will be incurred for housing inmates. Well, we can see today that has not materialized. Correctional Service Canada is returning \$119.5 million to the fiscal framework.

Regarding the Canada Border Services Agency to fulfill the Beyond the Border commitments, this request for \$91 million is to modernize our border's infrastructure. I can give the example of Aldergrove where I was during this spring break...for modernizing our facility. These investments are important to ensure our border is safe and effective, and to allow the free flow of legitimate trade and travel, which is one of the key aspects of Beyond the Border, as well as slamming the door on criminals and terrorists who seek to harm law-abiding Canadians.

Lastly, as I indicated earlier, I would like to draw attention to funding requested directly by Public Safety Canada, notably a \$662 million increase for funding under the disaster financial assistance arrangements. As you know this program is meant to help Canadians when they need our help, and that's what is happening here.

[Translation]

Clearly, a number of natural disasters have occurred. It is important to know that the process to reimburse expenses under the disaster financial assistance arrangements contribution program can sometimes take several months, if not years, after a disaster occurs. Initially, it is the provinces that reimburse the disaster victims and then there is an approval process for the expenses. That is why the expenses that have been approved under the arrangement include expenses related to the spring floods in Manitoba in 2009, the forest fire in British Columbia in 2010, the spring floods in Saskatchewan in 2011, and Hurricane Igor in Newfoundland and Labrador in 2010.

● (1540)

In 2012, there were also torrential rains in Nova Scotia.

The budget before you today also includes \$500 million down payment, if I may call it that, for the unprecedented flooding that occurred in southern Alberta in 2013.

In summary, whether we are educating Canadians on the impact of cyberbullying, implementing the beyond the border action plan or helping communities recover after natural disasters, our government has the safety of Canadians at heart.

I would also like to mention that this budget provides for the modernization of the agency, which is under the direction of Ian McPhail, to put forward measures that we hope will strengthen the accountability process in terms of Royal Canadian Mounted Police monitoring.

I will be pleased to answer your questions. At the end of my first hour with you and when my colleagues answer your questions, I hope you will be able to support the Main Estimates 2014-15 relating to public safety.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister Blaney.

Before we start the questioning, I would just bring to the attention of the committee that Mr. Blaney will be here for the first hour, and in the second hour, of course, we will have the remaining witnesses here available for your questions.

I would just simply note, of course, that there will be votes. We will need 15 votes potentially on the estimates here, so we will reserve the last 10 minutes of the meeting for the votes. I just bring that to your attention now so you're familiar and comfortable with that.

At this particular point, we will just go right to the questions then.

First off, Ms. James, please.

Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and welcome, Minister, to our committee. It's always a pleasure to have you here as well as the other witnesses who will be present for the two hours.

In your opening remarks, Minister, you had talked specifically about supporting vital programs within Correctional Service Canada. In part they are to correct behaviour for eventual release back into the community—and we obviously want to correct that behaviour

and make sure our communities are safe—but you also specifically addressed mental health issues.

This morning, you made an announcement regarding the government's launch of a comprehensive mental health action plan for offenders that will address serious mental health issues. I think this is a topic that we are all very interested in, and I wonder if you could comment on the pillars of that action plan and also the pilot projects that will be undertaken with that announcement you made this morning. I think it's terrific news.

Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thank you, Madam Parliamentary Secretary.

Indeed this morning I was at the Royal Ottawa hospital for an announcement, along with our commissioner from Correctional Service Canada, as part of our strategy to deal with mental health in our facilities and also a response to the coroner's inquiry that was done by the Ontario government following the death of Ashley Smith. As you know, this was a tragedy that occurred in one of our facilities. This is why we took, and are taking, very seriously the recommendations of the coroner. Correctional Services had already taken initiatives under the mental health strategy, which addresses many of the recommendations presented by the coroner. Indeed, at this point in time, already a third of the recommendations of the coroner have been implemented. More than 50% of those recommendations are under evaluation and work at this current time.

What I announced this morning is that we are going further, as we had planned in December, to present the final report based on the recommendations. One interesting thing is that we are now expanding the range of services, the capabilities, offered by Correctional Service Canada, including a health facility with which we have partnered, namely the Brockville centre.

[Translation]

We also renewed the agreement with the Institut Philippe-Pinel in Montreal, which has 12 beds available to inmates with acute health problems.

[English]

We are also actively working with the east, with

[Translation]

...the Dartmouth mental health clinic in the Atlantic region.

[English]

We are currently undergoing many agreements. Those three are well advanced. We also have agreements in principle like the one in Brockville. We also have many beds within Correctional Service Canada that have been adapted to the very serious and acute needs of inmates.

This being said, the penitentiary, especially at the federal level, occurs at the end of the continuum. One of the most important things we need to do, not only at Public Safety but also working with other federal departments and provinces, is to see how we can, up front, prevent individuals with mental health issues from falling into the trap of the justice and correctional system. Obviously this is not necessarily the best place for them, but since we have some of these individuals in our facilities, we need to adjust to that. That's why we are moving forward with the strategy that was presented by Correctional Service Canada, the action plan.

If you wish, I could elaborate more on the pillars, but essentially they are aimed at making sure that once an inmate arrives at one of our facilities, we are able to assess if there are any mental health issues associated with that particular individual. We can then make the interventions that are appropriate. We can make sure that our officers are trained to deal with those particular cases, and then we can provide guidance, make sure there's good follow-up, and eventually provide them with a facility like Brockville.

In a nutshell, that's basically what the announcement this morning was all about: Correctional Services implementing the recommendations of the coroner's report, integrated in this action plan.

• (1545)

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you, Minister Blaney.

In your opening remarks, you also talked about an announcement you had made back in the spring break. I believe you said Aldergrove. I'm just wondering if you could share with the committee the funding that was committed with that announcement, and the infrastructure improvements that will be made with that as well.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Aldergrove is in British Columbia, and it's part of a corridor that is highly used by people from B.C. and Washington state. I was in Aldergrove to announce the refurbishment...or actually the demolition of the current facility, which was built in the 1970s. You can understand that with the increase in flow, the capacity has reached its total limit.

This investment of \$17.7 million is adding more lanes, more NEXUS lanes, and is state of the art with some built-in facilities, especially for...sometimes I must say "organized crime", which is trying to pass some illegal merchandise, or even individuals, through the border.

[*Translation*]

Madam Parliamentary Secretary, this announcement concerns Aldergrove.

The facility was an award recipient at the time, but it dates from the beginning of the 1970s. This facility is one of several to share investments of \$60 million. The announcement concerning Aldergrove is interesting in that it will allow not only for a modern infrastructure, but will also help those who want to cross the border where the wait times are the shortest. The representatives of the agency will in fact be able to talk about it more at length.

We expect Aldergrove to channel a part of the traffic from other, busier border crossings and deal with demand.

[*English*]

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

We'll go to Mr. Garrison, now, please, for seven minutes.

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

Thank you to the minister for being here today.

I want to go back to the announcement you made this morning, which you characterized as a response to the coroner's inquest into the death of Ashley Smith. I have had a brief chance to look at that announcement. I think there are several important things missing from that announcement, and one of those is a sense of urgency.

We all know that Ashley Smith died in custody in 2007. In 2008 the correctional investigator gave the current minister a set of recommendations that are essentially the same as those that were made following the coroner's inquest. Certainly you've had the 104 recommendations of the coroner for four months. There is a very important thing that I think is missing from this, and it's actually shocking to me. You've paid compensation to the family of Ashley Smith, so there is no need to fear consequences of legal action, but we still don't have a public apology for her death. The coroner's jury found that this was a homicide, meaning that it was an avoidable death in custody, and clearly in those cases the buck stops on your desk.

So will the minister now publicly apologize to the family and to Canadians for the wrongful death of Ashley Smith?

• (1550)

Hon. Steven Blaney: I thank you for your question.

[*Translation*]

The best way to pay tribute to Ashley Smith is to make sure that such an event never happens again in one of our facilities. That is why, as soon as this tragedy occurred, an inquiry was conducted by Correctional Service Canada and immediate steps were taken.

When we realized that there were systemic problems, a strategy was put in place and we announced an action plan.

I would like to share with you an interesting statistic from Correctional Services. Since that tragedy, there were approximately 1,379 interventions involving inmates with acute health problems, in particular persons who injured themselves. In all cases, the purpose of those interventions was to protect the inmates.

That is one direct consequence of the changes made to practices and procedures. That is why we are moving forward with the strategy aimed at assessing an inmate's status as soon as he or she arrives in one of our establishments. This allows us to act in a way that is adapted to the inmate's needs.

Moreover, we are training staff so that they adopt appropriate behaviours. You must understand that Correctional Service agents must sometimes deal with people who have mental health issues. Of course, we have to do preventive work so that these people do not wind up in our establishments. The Department of Public Safety must continue its efforts as must all other levels of government so that social services can take care of these persons.

We intend to take measures in that direction. As I indicated, even though we are working on following up on the recommendations, we have already put measures in place.

[English]

If I can reassure you, I will ask the correctional investigator to follow up on the action that has been taken and to follow up on the action plan that is presented and on the report that will be tabled by the end of this year.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I can certainly agree with the minister that the best way to pay homage is to make sure that it doesn't happen again. But in our parliamentary system of government, the minister is ultimately accountable, and the family has been waiting for seven years for an apology for the wrongful death of their daughter. So I ask you again, will you, on behalf of the Government of Canada, apologize to Ashley Smith's family and to Canadians for this wrongful death that occurred in custody?

Hon. Steven Blaney: What I can tell you is that I will do, within all my capacity, what I can to make sure that this never happens again. This is what I have committed to. This is why I was in the Ottawa health facility this morning. This is why Correctional Service Canada is working at improving the way we are dealing with inmates who have mental health issues.

Mr. Randall Garrison: What new resources have been allocated to this strategy as of today? What new resources are part of the estimates that we are talking about?

Hon. Steven Blaney: We will allocate the resources based on the needs—

Mr. Randall Garrison: So no new resources at this point have been allocated?

Hon. Steven Blaney: We've signed a financial agreement with those facilities, and whenever we are using those beds the costs are incurred. This is not a matter of money. This is a matter of making sure that we are able to provide the inmates with the structure that they need in a safe environment, where they can be dealt with properly.

I will tell you, I hope we can help them with rehabilitation because the goal of Correctional Service Canada is to rehabilitate anyone who comes to the service. I can tell you, from the conversation I had with the Ottawa health institute this morning, I believe that anyone can be helped.

This is the way we are moving forward. This is our approach, and we are confident we will get sound results. This is why this is a pilot project and I'm confident we will get good results. With those good results, of course, we'll move forward, but I will be happy to share the results with you when I come back to meet with you.

•(1555)

Mr. Randall Garrison: But it's a matter of concern when we look at the estimates for Correctional Service Canada, and we see there will be a reduction in spending.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Yes, there's a reduction in spending because—

Mr. Randall Garrison: It's not a reduction in planned spending. It's a reduction in real spending from this year, so where are you going to get the resources for—

Hon. Steven Blaney: Your party was expecting we would have 3,000 more inmates.

Mr. Randall Garrison: No, no, no—

Hon. Steven Blaney: Hundreds of inmates—

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Garrison. Just let—

Mr. Randall Garrison: Last year the Minister spent \$2.6 million with the main estimates and supplementary. Next year it projects to spend \$2.3 million. This is not about how many were projected in the future. This is about your actual expenditures this year versus what you're projecting next year, and it is lower. So I am concerned there will not be resources for this strategy.

Hon. Steven Blaney: No. We are investing annually for mental health services in our facilities, close to \$95 million. This amount remains, and will be adjusted, as I indicated, with the agreement we have signed. The reason why there is a reduction in the overall costs is because the expectation of increases—I would almost say apocalyptic increases that were suggested—maybe by some even of your calling, if I may, have not materialized.

[Translation]

Currently, there are 15,276 inmates.

[English]

I'm even pleased to announce to you that thanks to the good work of Correctional Service Canada, the cost per inmate has been reduced. So we are able to provide a good quality service, to provide rehabilitation, and to reduce the costs. This is best for the inmates and best for the taxpayer.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister.

Now, Mr. Norlock, please, you have seven minutes.

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

I have particular interest, of course, because one of Canada's largest prisons is within my riding, and I have a particular interest in some of the investments we've made in our prison system. But in particular, I want to talk about something that you alluded to in your response to my friend across the way. The NDP member Peter Julian said that—and this was in the last Parliament, of which I was a member—we would have to spend \$19 billion to build new prisons, even though we actually closed two.

I wonder if you could give us your thoughts with regard to what the estimates are—and we could even leave that overexaggeration—in the prison population, and what were the actualities.

Could you talk further about what our intention is to do with those moneys that have been saved, and you, of course, mentioned one of them, and that's the announcement you made today.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The purpose of correctional services is of course to ensure that criminals are behind bars in order to protect society, and also to facilitate their return to civil life later so that they may once again contribute to society; that is clear.

As you know, Mr. Norlock, our government thinks it is important to put an end to practices that caused people to lose trust in our justice system. They were, in fact, under the impression that there was a lack of balance. More generally speaking, I was proud over the past few weeks to accompany the Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, and the Minister of Justice to put victims back at the heart of our legal system.

We adopted over 30 bills or measures in that regard. For instance, we put an end to the famous two for one credit which meant that the offender had his prison sentence reduced. These measures have meant that there has been a certain increase in the number of persons in our establishments, but it is barely greater than the increase in the general population.

We see the results clearly. Statistics show that in most cases, the crime rate is going down. Of course, there are issues we must address. Unfortunately, crimes of a sexual nature are on the rise. We also see that some segments of the population are more affected by crime and we must continue to devote efforts to that. That is why we have put in place the National Crime Prevention Strategy.

Last week I was in Vancouver to announce that we are, for instance, going to assist young aboriginals who are more vulnerable. We think that this project is going to give results.

To get back to your question, essentially, the projected increase in the inmate population did not materialize. Because of that, today we are returning \$119.5 million to the public purse. However, this will in no way affect the care and services provided to inmates.

•(1600)

[*English*]

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

If I could, let's go to Public Safety and the overall budget. You mentioned a significant increase in the budgetary necessities, particularly because of natural disasters, such as the flood in Alberta.

I wonder if you could elaborate a little bit more and share your thoughts with us on the importance of DFAA, and how your department stands ready to assist provinces. If you could talk about federal responsibility and how the federal government gets involved in these kinds of natural disasters, I don't think Canadians know what the system really is in our country.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thank you, Mr. Norlock.

You're right to mention that sometimes Canadians don't really know that when it comes to natural disasters, the Government of Canada has entered into an agreement that goes back to 1970, where, after some thresholds are reached and some initial costs are assumed

by the province where the disaster occurred, the support of the government can go up to 90%. This is what takes place in major disasters, such as the flood that has occurred in Alberta.

One thing we have to take into account—and I would say this is certainly a challenge not only for our government, but for our country—is that the number of events over the last decade has increased, and the magnitude of those events has also increased, and therefore the cost of those events has increased.

If I take, for example, the first 25 years of this program, we would have an average of \$10 million per year in disasters. This year alone we are having more than \$600 million. That's why in Budget 2014 we have initiated a mitigation plan. This has been the outcome of an effort, a concerted effort, with the provinces and the federal government to make sure that we would come up with a mitigation measure. Our government has announced \$200 million. This fund will be matched by the provinces as well, so it's a fund of \$400 million. I'm eager to meet with my counterparts this June to see how we can unfold these investments to reduce and help mitigate the cost of those natural disasters.

The Chair: Fine, thank you very much.

Mr. Easter, you have seven minutes, please.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, minister and agency heads, for coming.

We can probably get into this more in depth later with the various agencies under your authority, but my question to you, Minister, is this. Did you or any of your agencies have any involvement in the 1.19 million requests for personal data on Canadians from the telecom companies and were those issued with or without warrant?

•(1605)

Hon. Steven Blaney: The answer is yes.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Okay, we'll get into it further with agencies later, because if we can't get it today, I would like a written response on how many requests were made by each agency, those with warrants and those without.

I'll go to my second question.

You seem remarkably proud that you're turning back moneys from Correctional Service Canada. However, I think an even greater concern is what will the decision you're making today to pay down the deficit by probably making harsher conditions in prisons and probably jeopardizing the rehabilitation of inmates who are going to come out into society at some point in their life.... I would refer you to the correctional investigator's annual report, which he tabled less than a year ago, and this is what he says in the report and I quote:

Today, as my report makes clear, many of the same problems that were endemic to prison life in the early 1970s,—

Some of us remember that, where there were riots, etc. Going on with the quote:

—crowding; too much time spent in cells; the curtailment of movement, association and contact with the outside world; lack of program capacity; the paucity of meaningful prison work or vocational skills training; and the polarization between inmates and custodial staff—continue to be features of contemporary correctional practice.

That's what the correctional investigator is putting on your plate, Minister, and you're paying down the deficit with these problems in a prison system. I find it hard to believe.

Hon. Steven Blaney: I'm sorry, Mr. Easter.

I'd like to respond to your second question and get back to your first question. Of course I have reviewed the report of the Office of the Correctional Investigator. There has been a long-term relationship with the Correctional Service, and they take their recommendations very seriously. This being said, I think, Mr. Easter, facts speak louder than rhetoric.

As I've just indicated, you've seen that we are ready to make sure that inmates are provided with the support and the services they need. This is good for all inmates, male and female, wherever. We have a special aboriginal program, but you are also aware that we are also taking care of those who have severe mental health issues. In that case, as you know, these require many resources: experts, specialists, and we are not afraid to deal with one of the best facilities in Canada, if not in the world, such as the Royal, to make sure we are putting the inmate in an environment where they can succeed.

I believe this is a good investment because if we are able to put those individuals in a safer environment and apply this vision of Correctional Service Canada, those individuals may be able to downgrade into a level of services, and eventually I still think every one of them can return to civilian life unless advised otherwise by a judge.

We are not fearful of investing, as you can see. If we are returning money to the fiscal framework, it is because we have closed two prisons: Kingston and Montreal.

I'd be pleased to answer your first question if you want me to, but I think—

Hon. Wayne Easter: Minister, I have another—

The Chair: No, Mr. Easter, please. You've asked a couple of questions.

You have another brief time, Minister, to answer the other question and then go back to Mr. Easter. Respond briefly, please.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Easter, if I may, regarding the telecom, this practice was.... I think your government has enabled this jurisdiction. It was supported by the New Democratic Party at that time, and it makes sure that telecommunications companies cooperate with the agencies on a voluntary basis for the greater safety of this country.

I will be pleased to answer any questions you have, as I've done in the past.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Yes, I am aware of that legislation, Minister. But we certainly believe in today's world of more telecommunication, where emails and traffic by text, etc., is a part of everyone's daily life.... We are now concerned, and the legislation needs to be improved. We're concerned, and Canadians are concerned. They

believe agencies of the Government of Canada are basically using that, maybe it's even a hole, in the legislation to spy on Canadians.

I would make one other point. On the discussion we had on CSC, we do have to take into consideration what the Correctional Service investigator said. It's here in writing and it's in his annual report. I'm outlining it to you as a concern. I'm also told that currently a number of kitchens are being closed within the prison system to save money. Food is being brought in, and that's one of the skills being used to train inmates that will be lost.

Anyway, here's my last question. On two occasions, I raised questions in the House on an internal memo by the Canada Border Services Agency, by the director general, border programs. It was circulated to all regional directors. It stated:

Given the significant role the CBSA plays in the [Government of Canada] export community and the limited number of resources available for export examinations; other commodities, including outbound smuggling of narcotics, unless there is an intelligence lookout, should not be undertaken.

That seems to me to be an invitation that narcotics are not going to be looked at unless specifically requested.

• (1610)

The Chair: Mr. Easter, you're out of time. Do you have a question?

Hon. Wayne Easter: Yes, I do.

The Chair: Make it quick, please.

Hon. Wayne Easter: I asked it in the House previously, Mr. Chair.

What is your response, Minister? Is there a risk here? Is CBSA not looking for narcotics under that directive? What's going on?

The Chair: Briefly, please....

Hon. Steven Blaney: On the contrary, when based on intelligence, I would say the operations are not *des coups d'épée dans l'eau*, but they are more efficient. That's why yesterday, CBSA, along with other agencies, was able to make one of the largest contraband tobacco seizures that has ever taken place in North America. It seems that the work of CBSA is remarkable in this area.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

I now give the floor to Ms. Doré Lefebvre for five minutes.

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

Thank you, Mr. Minister for being with us today. I also thank all the other witnesses who came to speak about the government's main estimates. Your presence is greatly appreciated.

I would like to talk to you about a topic that has come back into the news over the past few days. This is quite a difficult subject that concerns all of us; I am referring to the missing or murdered aboriginal women.

At this time, several sources have stated that there are hundreds of missing or murdered aboriginal women, as we thought initially. We are hearing now that there are more than a thousand missing or murdered women.

Minister, are you considering launching a national inquiry to shed light on the issue of missing or murdered aboriginal women?

Hon. Steven Blaney: No, because I think it is more effective to take concrete action rather than conducting other studies that will cause us to go around in circles.

However, I can tell you, regarding this topic which I agree must be taken seriously, that in the last budget an additional \$25 million was set aside for the particular issues aboriginal people experience, in particular missing aboriginal women.

The Minister of Status of Women will be in charge of that exercise but I am working in close cooperation with her, since we are concerned in various ways, either as regards public safety via prevention programs we have already put in place, or RCMP programs. Perhaps the commissioner can enlighten you further on this during the second hour of your meeting.

I nevertheless want to inform you that the RCMP is currently working on determining the number of missing and murdered persons in Canada, and through its advanced research was able to divide up the information according to the nature of people who had been reported missing.

The commissioner informed me that next month he will be able to disclose this data. It will be a tool that will help in the extremely important decisions that will have to be taken concerning the implementation of the strategy.

Knowing these details is important since it will allow us to define the problems and determine the appropriate approaches. That is why this data will also be used to guide the actions of the RCMP, not only regarding aboriginal persons, but also all other missing or murdered persons.

•(1615)

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: If I am not mistaken, the RCMP was to table a report on this on March 31. If I understand correctly, this report is not complete. When it is, will you make it available to the members of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security?

Hon. Steven Blaney: Absolutely.

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Very well.

The report should be complete next month. The data will then be made available to us and made public, is that the case?

Hon. Steven Blaney: Correct. As I indicated, it is a tool that will help in decision making and allow us to better understand the issue and better target the measures that will be taken.

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: I would now like to discuss a completely different topic.

I have already spoken to the former Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. In fact, our committee did a study on harassment within the RCMP.

During your last appearance before the committee you stated that the 2013-2014 budget contained a net increase of \$4.7 million for the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP, and that a part of that amount will go to funding new components of the civil

commission which examines and deals with complaints about the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

We all feel that a change of culture is necessary within the RCMP. I think we have all examined the issue well in the framework of our study of Bill C-42 and we are all aware of the problems, in particular the harassment cases within the RCMP.

I wonder if you could give us a status report on your policy regarding harassment in the RCMP. Are all of the elements you mentioned when you last appeared before the committee in place? In addition, is the RCMP making progress in its processing of sexual harassment cases, among others?

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thank you for that question.

In June 2013, Bill C-42 received royal assent. That was almost a year ago. As you mentioned, this bill strengthens the responsibility of the RCMP by creating the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP. This consolidates the oversight role of the commission. We take this issue seriously.

I will invite Commissioner Paulson to speak in greater detail about the measures adopted by the RCMP. I think he is in a better position than I to answer your question.

[English]

The Chair: It would have to be very brief at this point.

Let's save it for another round then. Thank you very much, Mr. Paulson.

Now we will go to Mr. Payne for five minutes

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

Thank you, Minister, for coming. Thank you to the department heads for coming.

I just want to make a brief comment.

Minister, you talked about the disaster financial assistance. Of course, most Canadians don't realize that, in fact, the federal government pays up to 90%. The city of Medicine Hat and that area were impacted by those floods, so I totally understand what's going on there. I think we're doing the right thing to try to make sure we can recoup the losses that our citizens have had.

I actually have a couple of questions, Minister.

We often hear about cybersecurity and breaches and about other organizations or countries potentially trying to attack whatever organizations across the world. I'm wondering if you can update us on the implementation of Canada's cybersecurity strategy.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Yes.

[English]

Absolutely, Mr. Payne. We have a three-pillar approach. The first one is cleaning our own house, which is the government. It is to make sure the government is immune to a cyberattack. We have seen that this is a challenge that we have to take very seriously in an environment where there are many threats, whether from individual hackers or a more structured approach.

The second pillar is working with the private sector. That's why, along with my deputy minister and the former minister, John Manley, we are working with key stakeholders and leaders in the industry, so that we can develop an approach. We already have a cybersecurity critical infrastructure centre. We are seeking to ramp it up, so that our nation is better prepared as we face constant and increasing threats in terms of cyberattacks.

The first stream is the government working with the private sector, as well, I would say, empowering individuals. Although it may seem very basic, security is basic. Fastening a seat belt is basic, but it saves lives. This is the same thing, like having a password on your BlackBerry, or if you receive an email from your bank asking for your personal data, maybe people should think twice because they already have that data and this is phishing.

We have put in place some initiatives that are reaching out, not only to adults but also to youth. I would say that our cybersecurity strategy goes a little bit on the cyberbullying, because there is some link, and when you share information you can attend to your own safety.

We are experiencing relative success. That is why we are seeking to move forward. Since 2010, we have already invested \$244 million in Canada's cybersecurity strategy to mitigate, detect, and respond to cyber-incidents. In the current main estimates, there is a total of \$9.6 million for cybersecurity activities.

This is certainly a priority as we see threats in the cyber-environment.

• (1620)

Mr. LaVar Payne: Thank you, Minister. There's another issue that I know a number of my constituents have been concerned about, and that's radicalization. Quite often in the papers we see that there are individuals here in Canada who actually return to Middle Eastern countries and partake in what we believe to be some terrorist activities.

I am wondering if you could fill us in on what is going on, and what our government is doing in terms of the radicalization and trying to track these individuals who are leaving the country and potentially coming back.

The Chair: Minister, I realize this could be a lengthy answer but could you make it very brief, please.

Hon. Steven Blaney: We have young Canadians who are going to Syria to fight or to be trained. When they are out there, they are a threat. So this is a Canadian problem. When they come back, this is an even bigger threat.

We need to tackle this. That is why we have established a round table. This is an issue. We are working with other countries. I invite you to ask Mr. Coulombe to elaborate on this.

This is a serious matter. It is a serious concern. But this is a Canadian problem, and we need to find a Canadian solution to it.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister. We will now go to Mr. Rousseau.

[Translation]

Mr. Rousseau, you have the floor. You have five minutes.

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

Thank you for being here, Minister.

My first question is on the Canada Border Services Agency.

Budget 2014-2015 does not seem to have had much of an effect on it as compared to the 2013-2014 one. However, on the ground needs sometimes seem quite acute. For instance, there are six border posts in my riding. There was the case of the illegal immigrants who entered at Stanstead, which lasted almost five years.

Whenever we go and see officers in the field, they talk about the lack of resources, in particular technological and human resources, since for a few years they have seen that when a person retires or is assigned elsewhere he or she is not replaced.

How can the Canada Border Services Agency continue to ensure security when its budget stays more or less the same from one year to the next?

• (1625)

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thank you for your question.

To answer it directly, there was an increase of 3% to a substantive budget of \$1.736 billion. As you know, we increased by 26% the number of inspectors at the Border Services Agency.

I think your question touches on an important issue. Over the past decade, we saw the emergence of an agency that is occupying an increasingly large place in the life of Canadians, be it at borders or in controlling illegal immigrants. Canada Border Services Agency is called on to play an increasingly high profile role. Indeed, it celebrated the 10th anniversary of its creation. As you know, although we also have the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, the Agency is responsible for the enforcement of the Immigration Act.

To get back to border posts, no changes are necessarily planned regarding their hours of business. Of course, we continue to put resources in place. The Agency has many draws on it be it to ensure the free circulation of goods at border posts or to intercept dangerous and illegal goods or drugs.

To get back to yesterday's example the seizure that was made in cooperation with the Sûreté du Québec, one sometimes has the impression that the cat cannot jump on the mouse because the mouse is running, but when the cat uses its claws, it hurts. That is all of the more true when the Agency in cooperation with other agencies targets its activities to attack the heads of a network. We saw the results. So at the Border Services Agency there is an increase in the budget and a consolidation of its activities.

We know that border services officers are now armed. We also note an increase in traffic at borders. How can we manage an increase in air traffic while maintaining an interesting client experience in airports? In other words, we have to determine how to allow the honest citizen, those passengers, to circulate freely while being able through various mechanisms to intercept undesirable individuals.

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Thank you, Minister.

You referred to operations conducted with the Sûreté du Québec. One of the discussions I have had with the Sûreté du Québec in my riding involved the surveillance of the Great Lakes. We have Lake Memphrémagog and in a neighbouring riding there is Lake Champlain.

The Sûreté du Québec seems to say that it is the RCMP that should patrol these two bodies of water, since its means have been severely curtailed over the past few years. The organized crime networks use speed boats. These are vehicles that neither the Sûreté du Québec nor the RCMP are able to chase.

I would like to know if funds have been allocated specifically to surveillance activities for these lakes? As I was saying, there are two large lakes in the Eastern Townships alone.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Yes, absolutely.

Regarding the 2014 budget, we would have liked to receive your support for additional sums to combat drug trafficking at the borders.

As you know some sums were set aside in budget 2014. I am talking here about an amount of several tens of millions of dollars, which was increased. We also indexed taxes on cigarettes, which had not been indexed for some time. These additional sums are allocated to improving border surveillance.

I think you are well aware that the surveillance of border posts is done by the Canada Border Services Agency of Canada, whereas the surveillance of borders is done by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. In that regard additional sources are set aside for this year and will be integrated in the request we are submitting this afternoon.

[English]

The Chair: That's fine.

Thank you very much, Minister. We've finished our first hour now, and we certainly thank you very much for your attendance.

We will suspend for one minute while you make your arrangements and leave, and then we'll go right back to our questioning of our remaining witnesses. We will be starting off with Mr. Maguire, who will be followed by Mr. Garrison.

We'll suspend for one minute.

•(1625) _____ (Pause) _____

•(1630)

The Chair: We're back in session.

I thank our remaining witnesses. We certainly appreciate your attention to the first hour as well as your staying here for the rest of the time.

Colleagues, we will stay on five-minute rounds, as we of course will be cutting the meeting short by about 10 minutes in order for us to get our votes in prior to this for the remaining time. We have about 50 minutes left with our guests. We will simply start right off the bat now.

We will go to Mr. Maguire.

Yes? Is there a point of order?

Ms. Roxanne James: We're doing another round of questions. Do we not start back at seven-minute rounds?

The Chair: We can start back with seven-minute rounds if you think....

Ms. Roxanne James: I think that's best. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Do we have concurrence here? I'm just thinking that we have a limited amount of time.

We'll go to seven-minute rounds after the first round? Okay.

We will finish our seven-minute round. We have two five-minute rounds or we can go to seven minutes right off the bat. Do you want to start all over right here?

Ms. Roxanne James: It's a new second round or do we start at the beginning?

The Chair: We'll start again right now.

Ms. James, you have seven minutes.

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm actually going to allow my colleague Mr. Maguire to start the first seven-minute round.

The Chair: That's fine.

Mr. Maguire, you have seven minutes, sir.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank my colleague for that opportunity.

I want to thank all of our guests for being here today and appearing before our committee.

There are a number of areas that come into question, but I'd just like to start off with Correctional Service Canada, if I could, and ask the commissioner if he could please update the committee on the funds that were being returned through the main estimates.

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

The \$119 million that the minister mentioned earlier is a result of the amount of moneys that were placed in the fiscal framework for us based on the earlier forecasts that were done back in 2008. When we started to review those forecasts, we found that they were not accurate. Unfortunately, at the time those forecasts were developed, they were based on data that was available from Statistics Canada and the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, which was only up to date to the years 2004 and 2005. The following year was when we started to re-review those numbers. There was more up-to-date information available to us, which caused us to then adjust our forecasts, which we have seen for the last couple of years to be much more accurate, to the point that they've been accurate to within 1% of the projections. So the moneys that are being returned, \$119 million, were moneys that were set aside in the fiscal framework based upon a projection that we would have been at 18,000 inmates this year, and currently we're at 15,276 incarcerated.

Mr. Larry Maguire: So you have a gap of several thousand there that aren't in the process.

We heard earlier about the issue of double-bunking. Can you share with the committee your thoughts and information from the literature regarding the claim that double-bunking has any impact on the rate of violent incidents behind bars?

•(1635)

Mr. Don Head: Thanks again for the question.

We've been monitoring the whole issue of double-bunking very closely, particularly as it relates to both the modest increase in the population and the impact as a result of us closing three facilities: Kingston Penitentiary, the Regional Treatment Centre, and the Leclerc Institution in the Laval area. As a result of those increases, we've put in an additional double-bunking measure, which saw us on average going up to having about 20% of the population being double-bunked.

Concurrently, we were in the process of building new units. Most of those units will be coming online in the next several months, which will be creating 2,752 new cells, which will allow us to help to move down very quickly from that 20%. Even as of today, we're already just slightly under the 20% figure. We have 2,700 offenders double-bunked and we're at just 19.6%, *grosso modo*, double-bunked.

In terms of issues around violence, there's been a lot of discussion about whether security incidents in our institutions have been directly linked to double-bunking. We've monitored this very closely. None of the incidents that we've seen, particularly some of the more serious ones, are directly linked to double-bunking at all. They're linked to the behaviours of individuals who are problematic and individuals who should be in federal penitentiaries.

We've done a lot of studies on this. I think we actually shared a copy of a report earlier with this committee. They've demonstrated that there is no direct correlation between the increase in the double-bunking for the last couple of years and the increase in security incidents.

Mr. Larry Maguire: I want to follow up, Mr. Chair, with a question. We hear concern about problems with drugs in prisons, and I'm wondering if you can inform us as to whether you're seeing any

reduction in drug use following the increased interdiction and drug testing that is presently going on in our Canadian institutions.

Mr. Don Head: Yes, most definitely. As the committee is probably aware, we increased the rate of urinalysis testing among the incarcerated inmate population, and we've started to see a decrease in the positive tests. Now, we still do have positive results, which are of concern to us. Our goal is to have zero positive tests in our institutions, but we have started to see a decline.

We have a better sense of the kinds of drugs that we should be looking for in the institutions, primarily the positive tests are for THC—marijuana—opiates, and amphetamines. So having that knowledge is allowing us to target those kinds of drugs and the manner in which they could be introduced.

As well, we've made significant investments over the last several years to enhance the training of staff to do searching of visitors, contractors, and even searching our own staff coming into the institutions. As well, we've also put in place various measures that have allowed us to acquire new pieces of technology and equipment to help us better detect contraband that individuals are trying to introduce into our institutions.

The Chair: You have 30 seconds more, Mr. Maguire.

Mr. Larry Maguire: I just wanted to follow up. Is there any difference, really, in the types of drugs that you're seeing in the prisons? Or is it consistent with what's been there in the past?

Mr. Don Head: There is a bit of a change. Some of the harder core drugs that we saw earlier have diminished because it's a little harder to get those in. So, as far as I'm concerned, any drug in an institution is dangerous, but some of the more significantly serious drugs have started to decline.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Maguire.

Now we have Mr. Rousseau and Mr. Garrison. You are splitting your time, I do believe?

•(1640)

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Yes, thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

I have a question concerning the Parole Board of Canada.

We know that you are busy dealing with a backlog of close to 20,000 pardon requests. Those are decisions having to do with the clearing of criminal records and recommendations concerning clemency.

How can you free up some resources, both human and financial, so as to process those pardon requests since the budget in your department has for practical practices not changed? What type of measures are you going to take to process those 20,000 pardon requests, which are important? We are talking here often about people who want to rejoin the labour market and this pardon request is important for them.

[English]

Mr. Harvey Cenaiko (Chairperson, National Parole Board): Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Chair. The numbers as of Tuesday, as of two days ago, we have decreased that pardon backlog from 22,320 files to 12,066. So over the next year our goal is to reduce that right down to zero, obviously.

However, we have funding in place now for the next six months, until September, and we're cash managing within our own budget to ensure that we can look at efficiencies as we go through the year and at opportunities to ensure that we can effectively spend the budget that we have. However, we hope to be, by September, at approximately 6,000 left to review.

One of the major concerns that we have as well is working with our partners in the community, with the local police agencies, and with the courts to ensure that the final documents that are being provided by applicants are final. So those are taking some time as some policing agencies have been swamped with requests from the Parole Board, from ourselves, asking for the information. However, we have made great strides over the last year, and we'll continue to do that over the next year.

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Thank you very much. I'll pass to Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you very much.

I want to go back to Mr. Paulson and ask about something we talked about the last time I believe he was here, and that's PTSD and RCMP members. If I recall correctly, there were some changes in programming taking place and some cooperation with the defence department that was no longer going to be there.

So I would just ask you for an update on the RCMP programs for dealing with PTSD.

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

As a matter of fact, just today we've announced and released to our membership another phase of our mental health plan. Like Corrections, we've partnered with some agencies in developing capacity to help us work with those individuals. We've appointed a champion within the organization and the plan is rolling out. There's an action plan that's coming forward to get it out into each division. We've made quite a bit of headway in terms of trying to address those operational skills injuries.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you very much for the attention you've obviously given to this. I know it's a great concern among members all across the country.

Commr Bob Paulson: It is, yes.

Mr. Randall Garrison: No criticism of you as commissioner, but I think we've been slow as a public to recognize PTSD in our emergency services.

Commr Bob Paulson: Well, it's an insidious sort of side effect to stressful work. I think we recognize that, and our mental health plan recognizes that and is focused on proactive measures.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I want to ask a question. In the absence of the minister, I guess it will go to the deputy minister.

I asked the minister previously about the question of armoured cars and what's happening with armoured cars in this country. We have about four companies that have bought up most of the armoured cars, and they are in the process of reducing crews on those armoured cars from three to two. It's caused a safety problem. We've now had a shootout in public in Longueuil and we've had a shootout in Toronto.

The minister's answer to me in question period was that it's not a federal jurisdiction. I guess my question is about that to me there seem to be several ways in which it is a federal jurisdiction. One, of course, is that it's part of the banking and finance industry. Second, federal government firearms licences are issued to people operating armoured cars. In the past, there have been Canadian labour relations board decisions dealing with armoured cars. Finally, of course, there is public safety. If we end up with organized crime identifying armoured cars as easy targets, we're going to have a public safety problem.

Do the deputy minister and the government see a role for the federal government in making sure that the reductions in crews and staffing that have been happening in armoured cars do not become a public safety problem and also an occupational problem for those working in industry?

• (1645)

Mr. François Guimont (Deputy Minister, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): Well, Mr. Chairman, I must admit that I'm coming here well prepared and I have my briefing notes. I did a sit-down with my staff and we went through everything. That one, I don't have.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. François Guimont: I would simply and politely defer to what the minister said, quite frankly. The only observation I would make, and maybe the commissioner can add to it, is that law enforcement and public safety are a continuum. That's a fair statement. Municipalities play, the private sector ought to play, and we do have a role federally. This is not the type of situation where you specifically look to one jurisdiction only. That's the extent of what I can answer to the question.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Obviously that was my approach, that it's at least a shared jurisdiction here. If we continue to see these kinds of reductions, we are likely going to see the "bad guys", as we like to call them, figuring out that we have a softer target. Just today, one of the unions sent me a picture of a company's new so-called armoured car. It looks a bit like a crew cab pickup with different paint. It's a serious concern given the large amounts of cash that are moved around to ATMs, which are refilled often at night under very difficult circumstances.

I guess I would ask the commissioner if he has run across this.

Commr Bob Paulson: No, I haven't, but I think it's perhaps symptomatic of the occupational health and safety angle being taken in our workplace. I think perhaps you can direct those people to start to research on how they're engaging in their negotiations with their employers, frankly, but—

Mr. Randall Garrison: They have previously filed with the Canadian labour relations board—some time ago—and did receive an opinion that the reductions in crews were potentially dangerous, but they didn't get a definitive one.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

Now we will go to Mrs. James and Mr. Payne. I believe you're splitting your time.

Ms. Roxanne James: Yes, thank you. I will be splitting some time with my colleague.

My question is for CBSA and Mr. Portelance.

It is within your mandate to remove those individuals who are here in Canada illegally. I think the statistics last year were that since the Conservatives came to government in 2006, it was roughly about 115,000 illegal individuals who had been removed from Canada. Do you have an update on those statistics? Has that increased? Or is that roughly still the same? Could you comment on that, please?

Mr. Luc Portelance (President, Canada Border Services Agency): Thank you for the question. That briefing note I do have.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Ms. Roxanne James: It's because it's within your mandate.

Mr. Luc Portelance: Enforcing the immigration act is a key part of our mandate, obviously. That number is based on the last 10 years of the existence of CBSA.

This past year, I've seen some recent numbers for the last fiscal year and I think we're still tracking at around 14,000 or so removals. On average, that's pretty much what we're removing per year, and that remains consistent.

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you.

You did mention our immigration system, so it's really twofold what you do. You're maintaining the integrity of our immigration system, but at the same time some of these individuals obviously have histories of serious criminality. They should not be here in Canada, so it becomes a community safety aspect as well for our families and our communities.

That leads me to the second question that I wanted to ask you before I pass my time over to Mr. Payne.

Just recently in Toronto, I had the privilege to join members from CBSA to do an announcement on additional individuals who were added to the CBSA's wanted list. I think that has been a hugely successful program in engaging the public to come forward with information regarding individuals. These are individuals who are here illegally in Canada. There are histories of serious criminality. Some of them have failed to show up to their last hearings and so forth. So it's very important, and you've engaged the public in this regard.

I'm wondering if you could talk about that particular program. I guess briefly because I do want to share time. But also, what are the numbers of actual individuals whom you've located, physically removed from Canada, or in some cases been able to prove that

they've already left Canada and they're no longer a threat here on our Canadian soil?

Mr. Luc Portelance: Thank you for the question, Mr. Chair.

Just going back to the first part of the question, it's correct to say that at the upper end of the individuals we worry about most are the ones who have serious criminal antecedents who should be removed from Canada.

The CBSA last year set a target of removing 100% of individuals with criminal records who were ready for removal. That means people who have gone through the process, who are ready to be removed. We challenged ourselves to ensure that 100% of those individuals would be removed from the country, and we were successful, so that is a fairly high watermark for the CBSA.

On Canada's most wanted list or CBSA's most wanted list, in fact, that has been very successful. In terms of individuals that we've either located, removed, or demonstrated they'd already left Canada, it's well over 50. I think the actual removal number is just high of 40.

But these are individuals who are, again, either criminals or people who are war criminals, for instance, who have been removed as a result of the collaboration of the public, frankly, who have contributed to our efforts.

The program started almost three years ago. We will continue. We are continuing to add names, as you know. It's a very important component of our enforcement effort.

• (1650)

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you. I would like to pass my remaining time over.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Thank you, Chair. I probably only have a brief time, right?

The Chair: You have three minutes.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Well, I have all kinds of time. Thank you.

First, my question will be to Mr. McPhail.

Mr. McPhail, obviously I talked earlier about the floods in Alberta, and of course High River was a huge issue there. In particular there were a lot of questions around the RCMP and the taking of weapons. I know that you're working on a report, and I'm wondering if you can give us an update on when we can expect to hear the report on the RCMP's issues in High River. I had a number of phone calls and emails as a result of that, and I'm quite a ways away from High River actually.

Mr. Ian McPhail (Interim Chair, Chair's Office, Royal Canadian Mounted Police Public Complaints Commission): Thank you, Mr. Payne. I'd be very pleased just to advise the committee that the terms of reference the commission established were to review the policing of public intoxication. The areas of interest involved the RCMP members' entry into buildings and residences, the search of those buildings and residences, the seizure of items, as well as the communications surrounding the incidents.

What we found was that we have reviewed some 15,000 documents relating to this matter. It's turned out to be a major undertaking. The documentation is found with detachments all over western Canada, because there were large numbers of RCMP members who did attend to assist with this emergency.

We've conducted numerous interviews in High River with people directly affected. We've conducted interviews with members of the RCMP. We've retained outside experts to review the issue of the legality of police entry into people's homes. We've retained a communications expert to help us with the review of the RCMP communications strategy.

I'm optimistic that our final report will be released to the public this summer.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

You have just half a minute.

Mr. LaVar Payne: I'm fine.

The Chair: You're comfortable with that, okay.

We will now go to Mr. Easter, please, for seven minutes.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Thank you, and welcome again, gentlemen—I guess it's all gentlemen.

My earlier question to the minister on the information released by the Privacy Commissioner on the 1.19 million requests is a fairly worrying matter in the public arena. We're hearing a lot of concerns about private information being made available through current technology. There was the metadata issue that was huge at airports; that was the Communications Security Establishment Canada. On March 25 there was a news story about 18,849 requests. I believe that was for the CBSA. Now we're hearing from the Privacy Commissioner about 1.19 million requests.

You may not be able to provide it today, but the minister said some of your agencies were involved. There is the RCMP, I suspect, and CSIS and CBSA. Can you tell us now, or can you provide it later, how many requests for information were made by those various agencies, and whether they had warrants or were they without warrants?

Who wants to start?

• (1655)

Mr. François Guimont: I will start, Mr. Chair.

It's nice to see you, Mr. Easter.

I will simply make two points that are worthwhile for the committee to look at, because they go in the direction of the question you are asking.

A question was posed to our minister, a formal question.

[Translation]

This is an information request addressed to the government. It is question No 233 on the *Order paper*.

[English]

I have it here, Mr. Chair, and obviously, it is available to you. This was not a brief answer. It was a comprehensive look at the type of

information that we seek, why we seek it, and it provided numbers, which generated the questions on the CBSA side. I can file this with you. It's available, and I would encourage the committee to at least look at it. It's a start.

The second point I would make briefly, and this goes, Mr. Chair, to the specific questions about what is warranted and how many, is that Public Safety on a yearly basis makes public a document entitled "Annual Report on the Use of Electronic Surveillance". This report, which was made public in 2012—if I remember, last August—will be updated and will be provided over the summer as well, the same way we've done it.

Those are two reference documents that will provide answers to quite a number of your questions, which are understandable questions, and I would really encourage the committee to have a look at this as a good starting point to understand the mechanics, because we cover why and how it's tied to the Criminal Code, our mandate, etc., the sections, and it also gives numerical information along the lines of what you're looking for.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Thank you very much for that answer. In terms of some of the media coverage, though, and I might be somewhat wrong on this figure, it is stated—I believe it's 800,000 requests without warrant. Is there any legitimacy to that statement that there are 800,000 requests without warrant?

Mr. François Guimont: Mr. Chairman, I'm at a bit of a disadvantage and I'll explain why. I would say that we haven't really had the details, if you wish, of the number, the 1.2 million, of which 800,000 would be a subset of that number. I'm looking at my colleagues here, and we're not given the details, if you wish, now. We should be getting that. We should sit down and then understand what the number is composed of.

Is it federal? Is it national, meaning, is it federal institutions plus provincial institutions and municipal institutions? There are a number of elements to the number that would be helpful for us to be able to position ourselves vis-à-vis that information in view of my earlier answer to your question.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Yes, and I appreciate your answer and I certainly recognize the need to balance national security versus privacy concerns, and that's always a difficult balance. I think the huge concern out there, though, is if one is obligated to get a warrant then that means there's that second check that any of your agencies or Security Establishment Canada does not get out of hand in terms of somebody on a witch hunt for whatever reason. That's why warrants are so important.

I want to come back to CSC. I'll be quite honest with you, gentlemen. I believe with the current situation with CSC and punishment, Canadian society is going to pay a huge price down the road, because these people do come out.

I mentioned earlier the correctional investigator's message. We know the prison farms were closed by CSC, and that in my view was one of the better rehabilitation approaches within Correctional Service Canada. I'm told—and I'll have you give an answer, Mr. Head—that currently within CSC more people are spending more time in their cells, and that the kitchen facilities in some institutions have been closed and the food is being brought in. That was another skills development tool within CSC. So where are you at on that?

• (1700)

Mr. Don Head: Thank you for the question. I think there's some really good information to share. As was pointed out, the farms were closed and our research did not suggest that it was providing any significant changes in terms of issues around recidivism.

One of the things we have been pursuing is looking at how we modernize our overall program delivery infrastructure, as well as how we deal with the employment skills of offenders. One of the things I should add is that we have also increased our capacity to deliver programs to offenders. Since I've taken over as commissioner in 2008, we have increased by 50% the number of offenders who are completing a nationally recognized program before their federal parole eligibility date. For us, that is really significant given all the other challenges that we've been dealing with.

But to the longer-term issue, one that's always at the forefront of our minds is how do we best prepare offenders to get back into the community? We've been reaching out to industry leaders now to look at how we can have them invest in the training of offenders so we can train them and in turn, turn out workers for them. So we've started, for example, discussions with a couple of the major construction companies across the country. Getting offenders building and framing houses has become a major activity for us. Involvement in Habitat for Humanity—we've been producing a significant number of houses, and houses even for first nation communities. We also have discussions going on right now with the oil and gas industry as to making investments into Canadian citizens, giving them the training so that when they come out they can find jobs and go back into the community as law-abiding citizens.

We're taking a totally different approach than in the past where we had to own everything and pay everything. We are looking for those kinds of partners out there. We're seeing a number come to our door, saying they think there's a good opportunity. We have a potential workforce; they have a need and some money. Let's get them together.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Doré Lefebvre, you have the floor for five minutes.

[*English*]

Ms. Roxanne James: I'm sorry, I didn't hear. Did you say it was for seven minutes or five minutes? It should be five minutes.

The Chair: Five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I will begin with Mr. Paulson.

We were a little surprised during the last question period. In fact, could you give us a brief follow-up concerning what is happening with the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the sexual harassment cases in the RCMP? What is happening at this time?

[*English*]

Commr Bob Paulson: The last time I spoke to you, I was talking about the implementation of our gender and respect action plan, which was a 37-point plan we had brought forward to address many of the underlying drivers. That has been completely implemented, or has pieces of it that are ongoing. We have deployed and stood up respectful workplace initiatives in every one of the divisions.

As I've said several times, we've succeeded in centralizing our oversight of harassment complaints and the process that attaches to those complaints. I can tell you that in 2012, I want to say, we had a little over 200 harassment complaints—not all of them sexual, by the way, a small portion of them sexual harassment—but now we're down, in the first quarter of this year, to about 22, I think, or 24 complaints. So the number of harassment complaints are going down. Our ability to investigate them properly and efficiently and quickly is going up, and the mood of the organization is on the upswing. The operations, I can tell you, are succeeding in numerous areas.

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Do you attribute the decrease in the number of cases to the new way of doing things at the RCMP? Have any funds been put in place to help you in processing cases? How are things going?

Commr Bob Paulson: Yes, RCMP funds have been allocated to that. Another amount of \$10 million a year was set aside.

[*English*]

It's for the implementation of our new legislation, which will go a long way to affecting the cultural issues within the force by pushing down responsibility to our leaders, to engaging our leaders at the very front level. There is some money put aside for that. In fact, I can tell you that the first training for the implementation of Bill C-42 has come up this week.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Is that beginning this week?

Commr Bob Paulson: Yes, that is beginning this week.

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: That is excellent. I want to wish you good luck in those undertakings and we are going to continue to follow that file very closely. It will be interesting to see what happens; I hope we can talk about it again in the coming months.

I would also like to do a brief follow-up concerning what was said about double-bunking in our correctional institutions. I will speak directly to you, Mr. Head.

There were three penitentiaries in my riding, the Leclerc Institution being one; unfortunately it closed its doors last year. In fact, I am quite close to representatives of the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers. I often go to visit facilities to see how things are done there, and in particular, I ask a lot of questions of the officers about their work. I ask them about operations but especially about health and safety, theirs as well as the inmates.

Concerning double-bunking, what we hear within our penitentiaries is not exactly what we hear outside of them. Correctional service officers do not feel safe when there are two or more inmates in one cell. Sometimes there are three inmates in the same cell. However, these cells were built to contain only one person. Moreover, often it is not just the fact that they don't feel safe, but also that they cannot adequately ensure the safety of the inmates there.

For instance, I was speaking to a female correctional service officer who told me that often, in cells built for one person only, they could not see the second person on the cot up above. They cannot ensure that that person is alive. I think that there is a check done every hour on the hour during the night to make sure inmates are alive.

So this makes it extremely difficult for the officers to do their work. They don't have the necessary equipment to do it. In fact, they don't feel well supported with regard to this double-bunking. They fear for their own safety and feel that they cannot do their work properly.

So, is this simply a temporary measure?

[English]

The Chair: Madame Doré Lefebvre, you're over time. If you'd like a brief answer...

Mr. Don Head: It is yes, and if we get another opportunity I'd be glad to give you some of those details.

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

Mr. Norlock, please.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much.

I'll start my questioning through you, Mr. Chair, to Commissioner Paulson.

Commissioner, from one former policeman to another current policeman, in my 30-year career or in the careers of those people I had around me, I never directly saw or was privy to direct political intervention. Reading a media report—and I always read those with caution because they're often not accurate—I noticed your letter to Mr. Angus of the NDP after he accused you and the RCMP of being influenced by the minister. I wonder if you could share with us, not only the contents of that letter but your sentiments and your experience and what you would do if you received this kind of influence.

Commr Bob Paulson: Thank you for that question, Mr. Chair.

I think my operational independence has been a topic of great discussion lately, and it's one that I'm very interested in setting the record straight on. Of course I received the letter to which you're referring. I read on the CBC news that it was addressed to me, and it was about what was going on with one of our investigations.

I thought there had been a previous press item questioning the ability of the organization to have executed its responsibilities in accordance with peace officers, sort of oath—

• (1710)

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Paulson. I want to interrupt you for just a second. We have some technical difficulties. If you could just bear with us for a few seconds, we'll hopefully get them cleared up.

Thank you very much. We'll suspend for two minutes.

• (1710)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (1710)

The Chair: Colleagues, given that we're getting on with the meeting, the situation is this. The mikes are working. However, the recording transcripts are digital, and that is not working at this particular point, so if any members are concerned that any testimony might not have been picked up for a digital recording over these last few minutes, that is the situation.

The chair has no control over that. We are awaiting tech, and they have not and will not arrive, so we can trust the attention of our analysts and our clerks to the testimony. I'm pretty sure you would be comfortable with their assessment of what is going on. Either that, or we would have to excuse the witnesses at this point.

You have a point of order, Mr. Norlock?

• (1715)

Mr. Rick Norlock: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I believe we need to have accurate recordings of the meeting. I believe that the analysts generally give a good overall view of what was said. In the likely event that this meeting must come to an end because of the technical difficulties, I would respectfully request that my question be fully answered by the commissioner in writing, not before the adjournment, so there can be an accurate reply to my question.

The Chair: That's fine. Any further conversation?

Yes, Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I believe we're obligated to adjourn the committee. I don't believe we can proceed without official transcripts of committee meetings.

The Chair: From the point of testimony with the witnesses, the chair certainly agrees with you, and I think most members would agree to that. However, I still do think that we would be able to proceed with the votes, for the very simple reason that it is something that can be recorded quite accurately by the analyst without any major conversation on that, because it's either a yes or a no.

So at this particular point, then, having no technical capacity to be able to record, on behalf of all of the members of the committee I would certainly like to thank all of our guests for coming in today. On behalf of the citizens of Canada and the Government of Canada, we do thank you for your good work on all of our behalf. Thank you very kindly.

We'll suspend now for a couple of minutes, prior to voting on the issues.

• (1715) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1720)

The Chair: Okay, colleagues, we're back in session here. We will now go to the votes. I'd just bring to your attention two things. Most people here, I think everybody, should have this control chart for the main estimates, just so you know exactly what you're voting on. Of course we had interim supply, so we are voting on the estimates minus the interim supply that was already approved. You of course are voting now on what is left to approve. Are we all clear on that just so we have the totals that you're actually voting on?

We have 15 votes here. Potentially, if we have consistency on every vote from all of our colleagues, regardless of how you vote on the issue, with unanimous consent, the chair would accept a motion to do all of the votes at once. But I would like to first see if we have consistency on your voting pattern. I would simply ask you the question going around: Are we consistent with the opposition on your voting?

Mr. Randall Garrison: We'll be voting against all of them.

The Chair: Well whatever your vote is, as long as you're consistent on every vote.

How do you wish to vote, Mr. Easter?

Hon. Wayne Easter: Yes, we'll be consistent on them all.

The Chair: That's all we're asking, okay. Are we consistent with that?

So we have the main estimates. All the votes you have before you, everybody has a list of them.

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Are we in camera now?

A voice: No. The meeting is still public.

[English]

The Chair: All in favour of the votes as presented?

CANADA BORDER SERVICES AGENCY

Vote 1—Canada Border Services Agency—Operating expenditures.....
\$1,397,915,271.

Vote 5—Canada Border Services Agency—Capital expenditures.....\$161,905,641.

(Votes 1 and 5 agreed to)

CANADIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

Vote 1—Canadian Security Intelligence Service—Program expenditures.....
\$468,824,514.

(Vote 1 agreed to)

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE OF CANADA

Vote 1—Correctional Service of Canada—Operating expenditures.....
\$1,913,020,536.

Vote 5—Correctional Service of Canada—Capital expenditures.....
\$184,244,519.

(Votes 1 and 5 agreed to)

OFFICE OF THE CORRECTIONAL INVESTIGATOR

Vote 1—Office of the Correctional Investigator—Program expenditures.....
\$4,120,298.

(Vote 1 agreed to)

PAROLE BOARD OF CANADA

Vote 1—Parole Board of Canada—Program expenditures.....\$41,357,732.

(Vote 1 agreed to)

PUBLIC SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Vote 1—Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness—Operating expenditures.....
\$115,159,335.

Vote 5—Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness—Estimates and contribu-
tions.....\$993,008,766.

(Votes 1 and 5 agreed to)

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Vote 1—Royal Canadian Mounted Police—Operating expenditures.....
\$1,766,280,232.

Vote 5—Royal Canadian Mounted Police—Capital expenditures.....
\$246,469,709.

Vote 10—Royal Canadian Mounted Police—Estimates and contributions.....
\$163,636,131.

(Votes 1, 5, and 10 agreed to)

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE EXTERNAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

Vote 1—Royal Canadian Mounted Police External Review Committee—Program
expenditures.....\$858,554.

(Vote 1 agreed to)

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE PUBLIC COMPLAINTS COMMISSION

Vote 1—Royal Canadian Mounted Police Public Complaints Commission—Program
expenditures.....\$9,049,115.

(Vote 1 agreed to)

SECURITY INTELLIGENCE REVIEW COMMITTEE

Vote 1—Security Intelligence Review Committee—Program expenditures.....
\$2,477,760.

(Vote 1 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the chair report the main estimates 2014-15 now to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: That is it. Thank you very kindly.

The meeting is adjourned.

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