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Thursday, May 7, 2015

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Chair

Mr. Daryl Kramp

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•(0845)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC)): Good morning, colleagues.

Welcome to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. This is meeting number 68. Today the meeting is televised.

Pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), the main estimates 2015-2016, we'll be examining votes 1 and 5 under the Canada Border Services Agency; vote 1 under the Canadian Security Intelligence Service; vote 1 under the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police; votes 1 and 5 under the Correctional Service of Canada; vote 1 under the Office of the Correctional Investigator; vote 1 under the Parole Board of Canada; votes 1 and 5 under Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness; votes 1, 5, and 10 under the Royal Canadian Mounted Police; vote 1 under the Royal Canadian Mounted Police External Review Committee; and vote 1 under the Security Intelligence Review Committee. Of course, this was referred to this committee on Tuesday, February 24, 2015.

Appearing with us today are a number of departmental officials as well as the minister. I will list them.

We have, of course, the minister, the Honourable Steven Blaney, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

Our other witnesses are as follows: from the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, François Guimont, deputy minister; from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Mr. Bob Paulson, commissioner; from the Canada Border Services Agency, Luc Portelance, president; from the Correctional Service of Canada, Don Head, commissioner; from the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, Michel Coulombe, director; from the Parole Board of Canada, Mr. Harvey Cenaiko, chairman; from the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ian McPhail, chair; and, from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police External Review Committee, Ms. Elizabeth M. Walker, chair.

We welcome all our witnesses. We thank you very much for being here today while we do our preliminary examination of the estimates.

We will now open the floor to Minister Blaney.

Your opening comments, please, sir.

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): Thank you very much, Chair Kramp, and I also

want to thank you for recognizing the members of the Canadian safety community who are accompanying me this morning.

Of course, there is one simple reason why I am here today. It's to seek your support for allowing the resources necessary for this safety community to pursue its mission throughout the year.

[Translation]

In a more administrative sense, I am here to seek your support in the context of your study of the main estimates 2015-16 and of the Public Safety portfolio, as well as to answer your questions in the first hour. Experts will answer your questions in the second half of this meeting.

[English]

First things first, Mr. Chair. I want to thank all the members of this important committee for their important work over the course of the last week and the last month in their study of three major and significant pieces of legislation, the first one being the protection from terrorists act. Next is the anti-terrorism act, and I am thankful for the support we got in the House of Commons yesterday. The common sense firearms licensing act should also be on the floor very soon.

[Translation]

The Protection of Canada from Terrorists Act received royal assent on April 23 and represents the first major changes in three decades to the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act. Basically, its purpose was to clarify the powers of the Canadian Security Intelligence—

[English]

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): On a point of order, Mr. Chair, does the minister have prepared remarks? I see that he's reading from a document.

We expect the volunteers to come before the committee, Mr. Chair, and we like to see the remarks so we can follow along. I see no reason, with the reams of staff the minister has, why he can't come with a prepared text for the committee.

•(0850)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Easter. Of course, we've heard on a number of occasions your comments on this matter.

Ms. Ablonczy, on the same point.

Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Chair, when Mr. Easter was a minister he never provided written remarks. I suggest that he put his listening ears on and follow along, like everyone else has done over the years.

Mr. Wayne Easter: Mr. Chair—

The Chair: Thank you. That will be the end of that conversation.

Thank you, Mr. Easter.

You have the floor now, Mr. Blaney. Carry on, sir.

[*Translation*]

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

As I was saying, the Protection of Canada from Terrorists Act aims to clarify the powers of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, in other words to confirm that CSIS has the capacity to act outside the country and to exchange information with our allies, which is especially important in the context of individuals who travel outside the country for terrorist purposes.

This first element provides legal clarification. It confirms the existing power of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service to carry out activities abroad and to protect its informers and its employees.

This was the first significant law, but there were gaps to be filled, which is why our government introduced a second bill in 2015 dealing with our anti-terrorism measures, in order to provide tools to not only the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, but also the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and other departments and federal organizations to break this silo culture that exists in federal agencies when it comes to sharing information on national security.

The measures that were passed yesterday in the House of Commons and that will soon go before the Senate will enable the government to reduce the threat specifically in the case of jihadist terrorist activities before they manifest themselves. We will be able to intervene at the start of the process, particularly in the context of radicalization, for instance, by criminalizing the promotion of terrorism in general and by being able to shut down websites containing terrorist propaganda. Obviously, we are going to prevent radicalized individuals from leaving Canada to take part in terrorist activities. We are well aware of the growing number of Canadians who may wish to leave the country to commit terrorist acts.

I also want to point out that in the 2015 budget, which was tabled just a few weeks ago, our government is committing to increasing national security resources by close to \$300 million, especially for the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, as well as the Canada Border Services Agency.

Another important thing to note in the budget is that the Canadian Security Intelligence Service watchdog, the review committee, will see its budget doubled in order to enhance its surveillance of our security agency.

[*English*]

The third bill, the common sense firearms licensing act, as you know, will provide safe and sensible firearms policies for Canadians. You have reviewed this bill already.

The goal is simple. As you know, it's to remove red tape while keeping Canadians safe from gun crime. As Greg Farrant of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters said, this bill:

...proposes reasonable amendments to...the Criminal Code that make sense, that eliminate red tape, and introduce additional public safety measures. It does not make guns easier to get. It does not allow firearms owners to transport them at will wherever they want, and it does not put guns in the hands of the "wrong people".

On the contrary, Mr. Chairman, as you know, anyone who is convicted of domestic violence will see their licence removed. We are also reinforcing the capability for the CBSA to exchange information with the RCMP so that we have better control and can restrict the importation, particularly in the case of illegal firearms. We are making mandatory training for anyone who is willing to possess or acquire a firearm.

● (0855)

[*Translation*]

There was a major development over the winter in our relationship with the Americans in terms of reinforcing our security measures and the fluidity at the border as part of the "Beyond the Border" agreement.

I had the privilege of signing a customs pre-clearance agreement with the U.S. Secretary of State, Jeh Johnson, in Washington. It was one of the pillars of the "Beyond the Border" agreement, and we have now accomplished this important step. I tabled the agreement before Parliament when I returned from Washington.

The agreement is based on the success of existing pre-clearance operations. It has been around for over 60 years in the airline industry. These operations paved the way for customs pre-clearance for land, rail and maritime transport. So it is an important step that will help us improve the fluidity of transportation and movement of goods and people at the border, while reinforcing security mechanisms.

[*English*]

As part of our efforts to protect Canadians from violent crime, we recently introduced the life means life act to ensure that a life sentence means life in prison.

As you can see, our government has one priority, which is to keep Canadians safe. This has been a consistent theme for our government since we were elected in 2006. This commitment to protecting Canadians is reflected in the main estimates for 2015-16.

[*Translation*]

The total amount that you are studying this morning is \$8.5 billion for the fiscal year. This is an increase of about 1% in expenditures over last year. I would like to provide you with the key points.

The Canadian Security Intelligence Service is requesting \$537 million for 2015-16 to ensure national security. The Canada Border Services Agency is seeking a total of approximately \$1.8 billion, an increase of 2.2%. Mr. Portelance will be able to explain how he intends to invest those amounts. There are major capital projects to improve the physical facilities and to enable a faster flow of passengers through our border crossings.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police is at the heart of our plan and plays an important role in managing border security. With the \$2.6 billion requested for the fiscal year, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police will continue to integrate its commitments when it comes to implementing legislation related to cross-border activity within the “Beyond the Border” agreement signed by President Obama and our Prime Minister Harper.

[English]

As you know, the Correctional Service of Canada contributes to public safety by making sure that the correctional system actually corrects criminal behaviour. To perform this vital function, the Correctional Service of Canada is seeking total funding of approximately \$2.4 billion for the coming fiscal year. This represents an increase of approximately 1% over the last fiscal year.

[Translation]

My colleague who is with me today, Mr. Guimond, is the Deputy Minister of Public Safety. He coordinates all public safety operations with the agencies, but also those that relate to natural disasters. He is seeking funding of approximately \$1.2 billion for the 2015-16 fiscal year, which is an increase of 2.5% over the previous fiscal year.

It is worth noting that this request from Public Safety Canada is an increase of \$86.4 million, but that it affects the disaster financial assistance arrangements, so that in 2015-16 we expect to transfer \$848 million to the provinces that were hit with natural disasters. These amounts will make it possible to meet existing and future obligations to communities seriously affected by flooding and other natural disasters.

● (0900)

Mr. Chair, you will probably remember that in January, our government announced a modernization of the disaster financial assistance agreement, which adjusts the eligibility threshold to take into account inflation and ensure the program's financial viability. This also includes additional measures for the national disaster mitigation program. The goal is to support the provinces in their projects to reduce the impact of natural disasters.

It is also important to keep in mind that the fixed maximum rate of 90% for large-scale disasters is maintained. Our government is there to help. In early April, I invited the provinces to submit projects to reduce natural disasters and their impact, especially with respect to flood risks. It may include measures and studies relating to flood areas.

To conclude, I am pleased to present to you today an impressive track record realized by our agencies. I will be pleased to answer your questions. Obviously, these are large amounts, but they are necessary to ensure the safety of Canadians. I would like to assure you that this money is being well used by the representatives of our agencies. I would like to congratulate them on the important work

they have done over the year, during which they have been particularly called upon, and I'm thinking about what happened just a few metres from here.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister Blaney.

We will now go to the rounds of questioning. We will start with Mr. Norlock, please.

You have seven minutes.

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

Minister, in your opening remarks you mentioned the additional fiscal room, particularly around the \$300 million in budget 2015, which will be going towards national security measures. I'm wondering if you could expand on that a little by talking about the fiscal support and what that enables in terms of the tools and the additional support our security agencies need to do their jobs.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thank you, Mr. Norlock. As you are a former police officer, your support at this committee is appreciated.

We've seen over the last months an increased demand for tracking of individuals who would be willing to travel abroad to commit terrorist attacks or to do so on our soil. We've heard loud and clear from both Commissioner Paulson and the head of our intelligence agency that they have had to temporarily reallocate resources related to tackling that threat.

That's why in the budget we are providing additional resources to recognize the fact that while there is a terrorist threat in this country, there are other issues that need to be addressed. We are well aware of the role of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, our national police. They are dealing with organized crime, money laundering, and drugs. They have a large mandate. We have to make sure they are fulfilling their mandate in all their capacities as well our intelligence service. That's why there is a provision of \$300 million in the budget.

You may also notice, as I've mentioned in my remarks, that we are increasing the funding of the watchdog for the intelligence agency, which will increase and expand their capability to monitor the work of our intelligence agency, as they've done over the last 30 years.

But there is also funding for increasing security for the parliamentary precinct. As you know, there has been a motion, voted on by both the House of Commons and the Senate, to invite the RCMP to coordinate the security activity here on the Hill. This again is a great outcome and will ensure there are no silos among different security agencies here on the Hill. That will be implemented in the coming year.

So there is funding for the RCMP, the CBSA, and the agency in terms of security, and there is additional funding for the parliamentary precinct.

Also, we don't want to neglect the increasing threat our country is facing in terms of cybersecurity. That's why in the budget there is additional funding for increasing the capability of the government to protect itself from cyber-attacks.

Also, to be able to keep on reaching out to industries, I am co-chairing with our deputy minister and with former minister John Manley in working with the executive officers of many major telecommunications companies and those in the banking industry. We need to make sure that Canadian industries are protected from cyber-attacks that would try to paralyze our systems or do espionage. That's why we are increasing funding in the cyber-strategy that we introduced already a few years ago: we feel there's a growing need to be filled.

In a nutshell, there's \$300 million for increasing public funding for our security agencies and for increasing the security for the parliamentary precinct, and there's also additional funding for cybersecurity.

● (0905)

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

Perhaps I could change topics a bit. You mentioned, of course, in addition to your previous remarks, the national disaster mitigation program. As we know, in many areas, and in particular in western Canada, there was some major flooding. I wonder if you could talk about the proactive or preventative program—because it makes a lot of sense—and how it should help the provinces plan for future events and mitigate damages.

Hon. Steven Blaney: It's fairly simple. In 1970 the government introduced to the provinces a program to support local communities faced with flooding and natural disasters, whether they be in Alberta, the Atlantic provinces, or Quebec. This funding has some mechanisms that can provide, in the case of a large disaster, up to 90% of the cost of the natural disaster.

What happened, actually, is that the program had not been modified or updated since 1970. What we realized is that \$1 in 1970 is now worth \$6 today. There was a disproportionate contribution, I would say, from the federal government when compared to the original concept at the time the program was launched, so what we did is increase it. We actually took half of the indexation. We are now at \$3 instead of being at the actual current value, which would be \$6. We've gone halfway. We've put what was \$1 in 1970 up to \$3 now, which would in fact be \$6, and from now on it will be indexed. This is to ensure the sustainability of the program.

Also, in the meantime, we've launched our mitigation program, which is providing funding for all provinces and territories up to \$200 million. It is there to help build the intelligence and the knowledge in order to be better prepared for natural disasters. We are also reaching out to the private sector. We are seeing very nice initiatives now, such as in Alberta, where some private insurance companies are beginning to offer private flood insurance.

There are a lot of things happening in that field. We are willing to keep a leading role by providing funding and working with the provinces and territories to shift from fixing what is broken to preventing those natural disasters from having costly impacts on infrastructure by mitigating and preventing these impacts.

● (0910)

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Garrison, you have seven minutes, please.

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

Thank you very much to you, Minister, and to your officials, for being present today on this important topic.

I want to begin by raising an urgent public safety issue on behalf of Ms. Sims, the member for Newton—North Delta, and Mr. Sandhu, the member for Surrey North. Unfortunately, because of scheduling conflicts, neither could be here this morning.

The concern is that as of May 6, there have been 25 shootings in 8 weeks in the municipality of Surrey. Residents there are asking where the federal government is on this. If I may, I will read briefly from statement by Ms. Sims. She said:

This is going to take all three levels of government working together. ...All I know is I live in a community where seniors are scared, families are scared and there isn't any part of Surrey where people feel safe right now.

Mr. Minister, Mr. Sandhu has asked you twice in the House for commitments for federal action on this urgent crisis in Surrey, so I'm going to ask you again this morning. Do you have a timetable or will you make a commitment for meeting the request of the municipality of Surrey for more officers, more RCMP officers? Secondly, will you make a commitment today that there will be more money put into anti-gang strategies to help combat the plague of gun violence in urban areas?

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thank you for your question, Mr. Garrison.

I was on the streets of Surrey last year. I did a tour with an RCMP officer in some troubling areas of Surrey. At the same time, I was impressed to see how the community is reacting to this important challenge of making their community safer.

As you know, since 2006 our government has been committed to tackling violent crimes and gang violence. You may be aware that more than 30 bills and measures have been undertaken, especially on drive-by shootings, which is a factor and is an important measure in terms of increased mandatory minimum sentences.

The first pillar of our approach is to strengthen the tools that our police officers have to tackle gang violence. Mr. Sandhu was given the opportunity to support those measures in the House and unfortunately we did not benefit from his support, but I'm glad that I was able to move forward—my predecessor was as well—on those important measures by the Conservatives.

That being said, it is the first pillar. We have also invested more than \$3 million in the community of Surrey to prevent youth from being radicalized. We have put in place our national crime prevention strategy that has proven to be effective in its results. We are always looking at opportunities to work with the community and the provincial government to increase the measures that are taking place to reduce gang violence.

I've also met with member of Parliament Nina Grewal, who is the member from Surrey. I've met with community leaders. Once again, I cannot stress enough how this community is getting involved in making their community safer by supporting the efforts of the police.

Third and lastly, and as important as the two other pillars, we are also working with the Government of British Columbia and the City of Surrey to provide more boots on the ground. I've been working on this issue with the commissioner. He's been a great support.

These are the three measures we have taken. I would suggest to your colleague and you that one way to make sure that we are able to continue to support the community of Surrey is by supporting the budget, in which there is \$300 million. This funding will be allocated to terrorism, will relieve the RCMP from the reallocation of resources, and will also make it easier to send more police officers into the streets of Surrey.

Mr. Randall Garrison: With respect, Mr. Minister, there's still no commitment there for anything specific for this urgent crisis in Surrey.

Since you raised the general question of resources, I want to turn to what I really believe is a sleight of hand that you're playing with the budget here. You talk about more resources being available. In fact, you appeared before us in 2012 and very proudly talked about cuts of \$195 million that you would make to the RCMP. Those cuts went ahead.

In this year's estimates for 2015 to 2016, the budget for the RCMP is actually down slightly, and that's down almost \$200 million on cuts that you previously made. When you talk about adding money back in the new budget, you're talking about something four years off. In 2015-16, there's only \$57 million dollars for terrorism. Even if all of that went to the RCMP, it's still \$150 million short of where it was when you began your cuts to the RCMP, so I think it's quite disingenuous to talk about new resources.

You mentioned CSIS. You say that the budget for CSIS will be up. In 2015-16, it is indeed up by some \$17 million; however, in 2012, you began implementation of cuts of \$24.5 million. That still leaves CSIS \$17 million below where it was in 2012.

I can't see how you can have it both ways. You can't have made significant budgetary savings and say you're putting in new resources at the same time. The two can't both be true.

• (0915)

The Chair: Very briefly, please, Minister.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Once again, we've increased the budget of the RCMP seven times over the course of the last decade. Since we got into power, there was an increase of one third. That's the reality. There is an increase this year of \$2.6 billion.

Once again, the best way for the New Democrats to support more resources is to support the current budget in which there is additional funding for the RCMP.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

You have about 15 seconds, Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Minister, once again, as I've said, they can't both be true. You can't have made cuts of \$200 million to the RCMP and call it an increase. It's simply not true.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Garrison, I ask you to take a look at the 2006 budget compared to this one. There has been an increase of over 30%. That's the reality. The reality is that we have invested in improving security. I will also tell you frankly that we are not going to hide to carry out a rationalization exercise. Remember, Mr. Garrison, that we are here to manage taxpayers' money. It is important that they get something for their money, and the best way to do that is with rationalization. That's what the RCMP did but, at the same time, there is a budgetary increase.

When it comes time to vote, I encourage you to support the budget to provide more resources to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and to our security system.

[English]

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

We will now go to Ms. James for seven minutes, please.

Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to you, Minister, as well as the representatives from each of the agencies, for appearing today.

First of all, Minister, in your opening remarks, you mentioned Bill C-44 receiving royal assent. As well, congratulations on having Bill C-51 pass through the House last night on the vote. I'm very pleased to see that as well.

I'm a bit concerned that there are still people—maybe members of Parliament, even some of those who are on this committee—who cannot come to terms with the fact that terrorism is a real threat to Canada. During Bill C-51 testimony, we heard from many credible witnesses from our security agencies, including some who are here sitting beside you, who talked about the fact that the threat of terrorism is real, that it has evolved, and that it is a growing problem here in Canada and around the world.

Add to this the fact that during debate in the House on Bill C-51, one member of the NDP referred to the attacks of October 22 that left one member of the Canadian Armed Forces dead—and of course one was an attack here in Parliament—as merely “an unfortunate incident”. As we talk about terrorism, I want to get your opinion on why you feel that Bill C-51 is so important and on the fact that Canadians should be listening to the credible witnesses who deal in areas of intelligence gathering and law enforcement, and to those who have studied terrorism, as opposed to the opposition party.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thank you very much, Ms. James. If I may, I will answer in my mother tongue.

I had the opportunity to meet the sister of Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent and all of his family members. Prime Minister Harper invited his mother and members of his family to Ottawa to present them with the flag that was flying atop the Peace Tower on October 20, the day Mr. Vincent was hit by a vehicle driven by an individual.

The members of the committee must remember this because they were there when Patrice Vincent's sister, Louise Vincent, came to testify. She told this same committee that she deeply believed that, with the measures adopted last night, the perpetrator of this horrible act, Martin Couture-Rouleau, would have been behind bars and her brother would still be alive. At that time, she encouraged committee members to support Bill C-51, which aims to provide additional tools to our police forces.

A few days after the attack, the President of France, Mr. Hollande, visited Ottawa. He clearly described both acts that took place in Canada as terrorist acts. We had a visit from the U.S. Secretary of State, John Kerry, who described with no hesitation the acts that took place here as terrorist acts.

As I often say, we have to call a spade a spade. What is a terrorist act? Under the Criminal Code, the definition of a terrorist act is, above all, a dramatic gesture that attacks the authorities. It is ideologically or politically motivated and is also a violent act. Those three elements describe the attack that took place in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu and the attack by the individual who roamed these halls on October 22, 2014.

I would appeal to the intellectual honesty of the individuals taking part in the debate. We need to rely on the facts and recognize the reality for what it is. In fact, there is a danger in not recognizing the reality for what it is. If we do not make the right diagnosis, we cannot provide the right solutions.

That is what our government, the Department of Justice, the Department of Public Safety and all the agencies have tried to do in preparing the anti-terrorist measures that were tabled in the House at the start of the year. If I may, I would like to quote an Ontario court judge who described the work that is being done. It is important to mention it because the Canadian Security Intelligence Service works in the shadows. We never have an opportunity to tell them that they are doing important work and that they are saving lives.

There is a lot of fuss, a lot of brouhaha. At some point, we need to take the time to thank the people who make sure that we can drive our children to daycare, do our grocery shopping in peace and do our jobs. That is what these people do. The judge was talking about a 34-year-old individual who was found guilty of a terrorist act.

● (0920)

[English]

Here's what she said about the terrorist:

You are now a convicted terrorist. ...You have betrayed the trust of your government and your fellow citizens. You have effectively been convicted of treason, an act that invites universal condemnation among sovereign states throughout the world.

But here's what she had to say about the work of our Canadian Security Intelligence Service. The evidence presented in court indicated that the men were seeking to establish a functional terrorist

cell in Canada. They might have succeeded if not for—to quote the judge—“the vigilant and tireless” work of our national security agencies.

When do we take the time to thank those who are keeping us safe? The judge did it when she gave that sentence to that individual who was trying to harm other Canadians.

So to answer your question, the first duty of a government is to protect its citizens. This is what I would say we are able to achieve with your support, Madam James, for which I thank you, and with the support of your colleagues and the support of those who have supported this bill, including Mr. Easter here, who yesterday voted in favour of the bill.

I want to thank you because I believe that this is important legislation that will enable us to fill those gaps that were exploited by terrorists to harm other Canadians.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister. The time is up now.

We will go to Mr. Easter, please, for 10 minutes.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome, Minister and officials.

First, Mr. Minister, while we agree with more money for the Security Intelligence Review Committee, I would strongly disagree with your statement that it is oversight. It is not. It's after-the-fact review. I think the government has failed the country miserably by not providing proper parliamentary oversight to the combination of security agencies that we have in this country, as all our Five Eyes partners have. I strenuously disagree with you on your point on SIRC. It's not oversight.

We're here to talk about the estimates, but one of the problems with the government budgets that we're seeing from this government is that even though you allocate moneys in your budget, and it passes this committee and Parliament, it doesn't mean it's real money if what happened last year is any indication. Last year, it seems to me—and Randall went through the lapses in the funding—there were lapses to the RCMP and there were lapses in terms of the spending with regard to CSIS, the Correctional Service of Canada, the Canada Border Services Agency, and the list goes on.

This wording may be a little too strong, but I'll put the question to you this way. It seems to me that last year the minister quietly whispered in the ear of agency heads and asked them to kick back some money to the consolidated revenue fund. Is that going to happen again or is this real money?

● (0925)

Hon. Steven Blaney: I thank you for your question, Mr. Easter. While I recognize your support yesterday of the important anti-terrorism measures, I strongly disagree with your view of the state of our intelligence community.

In terms of review and oversight, let me take this opportunity to clearly state the difference between oversight and review. On the side of oversight, Mr. Easter, you may be well aware that CSIS itself has an oversight mechanism of its activities that are monitored and supervised by Public Safety. They are to have an oversight of their activity, as I am.

That being said, as you know, there are already existing provisions, but there are also provisions in the bill you supported which provide that every time the intelligence agency infringes on the rights of Canadians, they have to seek consent from the Attorney General and the Department of Justice, and also seek a warrant from a judge. This is the robust mechanism we have in place for oversight. Let me remind you that, to my knowledge, we are the only country for which, in terms of disrupting threats, CSIS, our Canadian intelligence agency, will have to seek a warrant from a judge. This is not happening in other legislation. That is it for robust oversight.

In terms of review, you are right to say that the Security Intelligence Review Committee is doing its job. I would quote for you the director himself, who acknowledged that to have this distance from the ongoing activity gives them more latitude and enables them to do a better job of reviewing the activity of our intelligence agency. As you know, the Auditor General can do review activity at any time, as can the Privacy Commissioner. The Supreme Court itself—this is why I've been saying that SIRC is a Canadian model that is the envy of the world—is saying that SIRC is establishing this balance between procedural rights and privacy and also the national security issue.

Just to conclude, if I may, because this goes right to your question

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Chair, I think the minister is limited to the same amount of time that the question was, and I think he's over that time.

I do have a question to—

● (0930)

The Chair: You have the right to interfere.

Hon. Wayne Easter: I have a question for Commissioner Paulson. I know that the commissioner is in a somewhat difficult position.

One, you're responsible to the rank and file in terms of their training and equipment and the force as a whole. Also, you have some responsibility to the government not to complain, I guess, that the government's not giving you enough money, but I believe that the responsibility to the rank and file is paramount.

You're aware no doubt, Commissioner, of the Global Television *16X9* documentary called "Under Fire". It raised serious questions about proper training and about equipment being provided by the RCMP, etc. Answers haven't been forthcoming.

I can tell you that in my office we've received a lot of e-mails from the rank and file that worry me. One of them is that although the RCMP had indicated long ago that they would be rolling out the carbine program—we'll not get into the details of the Moncton incident—

The Chair: Very briefly, to allow time for the answer.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Can you respond to that program in terms of training and equipment that rank-and-file RCMP members think you're short of?

Secondly, you indicated before the committee last time that you'd moved 600 resources to anti-terrorism from other areas of federal

responsibility in terms of criminals. Has that situation been redressed now? Is there enough money in this budget to redress that situation?

The Chair: Very briefly, Mr. Paulson. I'm so sorry, but Mr. Easter has used up most of the time.

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

We still have the reallocation of resources to address the highest-priority most threatening files. We are managing that day to day. Nothing has changed from when I last spoke about that.

Let me go back to your previous question about the *16X9* program. You characterized a cascading series of responsibilities, and you left out Canadians in there. I view my primary responsibility as keeping Canadians safe, along with the rest of the employees, the "rank and file", as you put it.

That story raised some issues around equipment and around training, sensationalized around the Moncton murders, which was offensive in some respects. It spoke of officers bringing their own weapons to work and so on. I'm not aware of any of those instances.

The carbine program is rolling out. We have over 2,200 weapons rolled out. It's rolled out on a purposefully risk-assessed framework that is being cautious around putting these—effectively—assault rifles into the hands of our police officers, recognizing that there's a need for our officers to have that kind of arming, but with conditions, policies, and guidelines around the use of that. That is progressing on schedule.

We've made commitments in respect of the MacNeil report on the Moncton case. We're meeting those commitments. Hard body armour has been deployed on a wide basis. Cars have hard body armour in them. Members need to know how to put it on. In the Moncton case, that was widely available.

We continue to work on our training and we continue to work on our equipment, but I am very concerned about the safety of Canadians, our members, and working with government.

The Chair: Thank you, Commissioner Paulson.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Doré Lefebvre, you have five minutes.

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

I would like to thank all the witnesses and the minister for being here today to answer our questions.

My first question is for the Minister of Public Safety, Mr. Blaney. It has to do with pardon applications.

Pardon applications have piled up over the past few years because the Parole Board of Canada, the PBC, doesn't have the resources needed to process them. You are probably aware of the issue. We're talking about thousands of applications that have accumulated, and the situation isn't changing. A PBC spokesperson mentioned that she wouldn't be able to allocate the resources required in 2015-16 to process all the pardon applications that have been pending for several years.

As you know, this has a real impact on our communities, and also on the efforts to socially reintegrate these individuals into our communities. Some of these people are being asked to withdraw the request and re-start the process whereas they have been waiting for an answer for years. Moreover, there are fees involved in applying for a pardon. There's no point in hiding it: often they are people with low incomes and their applications, which are fairly expensive, must be started over.

Does your government have a plan that would allow it to resolve the situation as quickly as possible? This situation doesn't affect just one riding. It's happening across the country.

Do you have a plan that would make it possible to grant resources to the Parole Board of Canada to resolve the situation, which is untenable for many individuals?

• (0935)

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thank you for your question, Ms. Doré Lefebvre.

I am pleased to tell you this morning that the backlog of summary convictions has been completely eliminated. It's important to note that our government has, in a sense, modernized the criminal records suspension process and that the user-pay principle has been introduced.

That said, I must remind you of one thing.

[*English*]

I'm going to turn to Mr. Cenaiko, our director, but I just wanted to mention this.

[*Translation*]

At one point, there was a backlog of over 30,000 applications, which has been reduced by close to 25,000. Therefore, as we speak, what is left to liquidate are the pardon applications for indictable offences, since they are under the former system. There are a little over 5,000 left. Mr. Cenaiko and his team confirmed that they had the financial resources needed to continue to process this backlog and that they truly intend to achieve that goal.

[*English*]

I will turn to Mr. Cenaiko for additional comments.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Mr. Cenaiko, I will come back to you later because I would like to take advantage of the little time I have to pester the minister with my questions. I don't want to be impolite, but I have only a few minutes left. So I'll continue with you, Mr. Minister.

Thank you for your answer. I greatly appreciate it.

I know of another case involving Correctional Service of Canada programs, and I would like to talk about it before this committee. I will give you a brief overview.

There have been cuts to programs that are relatively important for the social reintegration of our inmates. Unfortunately, it was announced that these programs were going to be cut in the coming months. The ones I'm thinking of include ARCAD, which has been working with inmates for about 50 years, as well as support and responsibility circles. They are concerned for their funding in the coming years because it isn't recurring. They feel like they are always walking a tightrope when it comes to this funding.

What is the situation for those particular programs? Will their funding be renewed in the next few years? Cuts have been announced in this regard.

Can we give them some good news today and tell them that their funding won't be interrupted?

[*English*]

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thank you, Ms. Doré Lefebvre. I am always happy to answer your questions during committee meetings or during question period in the House.

Your questions have to do with agreements between the Correctional Service of Canada and non-profit organizations. The Correctional Service of Canada establishes a balance between the resources it already has internally to meet these needs and the services provided by the organizations. Given that I don't have much time, I will ask the commissioner to answer your question in the second hour of the meeting.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm sorry. Thank you very much. I apologize to Mr. Cenaiko as well, but we're out of time on this. Perhaps on another round you can make a response.

We will now go to Ms. Ablonczy for five minutes.

Hon. Diane Ablonczy: Thank you.

Thank you to everyone for appearing.

Minister, we thank you for your leadership during these troubled times. I just read a recent article outlining jihadist training camps in the Mexican desert, so threats are close to us and very mobile, and I congratulate you on getting the new anti-terrorism bill through. I know that it was a delicate balancing act, because we are very determined to protect rights and freedoms in Canada but also to protect our security.

During the debate on the anti-terrorism bill, I heard some contradictory messages from the opposition. One was that this bill would allow our security forces to spy on all Canadians, especially peaceful protesters and so forth, but then also that our security forces are underfunded and unable to do their job under the bill. I wonder if you could comment on the enhanced funding for our security forces in these main estimates.

● (0940)

Hon. Steven Blaney: I thank you for your question, Ms. Ablonczy, and also for your keen interest in public safety.

Up front, I would like to reassure you. I've used the expression "so-called experts" when we've talked about our anti-terrorism measures. Why? Because anyone who dares to read the bill will see that there are many provisions where the bill is in full compliance with both the office and regulations regarding the privacy of Canadians, and with the Charter of Rights. There are a lot of checks and balances, as has been mentioned earlier, regarding seeking a warrant and the consent of the Attorney General. There also have been amendments to make it clear that in no possible or imaginary way could a protester be targeted by this bill.

There's one thing that we have to be reminded of. This year is the 30th anniversary of CSIS. The director can comment about it. One has to be well aware that intelligence officers are not law enforcement and don't have the capability of making arrests or detentions. It is in their genetic code. That being said, I want to highlight the fact that you have made me aware of those intricacies and links between organized crime, drug trafficking at the border, and terrorism. This, I would say, is certainly an explosive and dangerous cocktail. That is certainly a justification for ensuring that our police officers and the CBSA have the resources they need to keep our border safe and also to work with our partners.

As I've mentioned, there is a provision of \$300 million in the budget. I feel that this is needed regarding the threat we are facing, and it's also making sure that we are not putting all our eggs in the same basket. I don't know if this is an English expression, but it certainly is one in French. That is why we need to keep an eye on all the public safety challenges, but once again, terrorism remains the national security priority.

Hon. Diane Ablonczy: Minister, you mentioned our border. We are aware that the jobs and incomes of many Canadians are impacted, either directly or indirectly, by the flow of goods and services across our border with the United States. You have just signed a preclearance agreement with the United States. It allows U.S. border officers to carry firearms on Canadian soil, and there have been concerns raised about that. I would like you to comment on this new agreement with the U.S. on preclearance.

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

I can certainly reassure you. thanks to the excellent work of our negotiator. The principle of reciprocity is embedded in the agreement, which is in front of the House for in-depth examination. Whatever privilege or mechanism is put in place for U.S. border officers who would be in Canada is reciprocated for any Canadian border officer who would be operating in the United States.

We also built on the long experience we have with the preclearance mode at the airport, which I believe began in 1952. We updated it, built on it, and that's what is in front of us. It is a comprehensive agreement that includes rail, land, marine, and air modes and was received favourably on both sides of the border.

We are also going to work at making the border less of a barrier for trade, especially for what we call visas without... We will allow Canadian truckers to go into the United States and get back into

Canada to shorten their route without having to stop at the border. There is a pilot project. The truckers are really pleased with it. This is a demonstration of the CBSA working at making the border smoother and more fluid for people who legally are just doing trade and willing to increase our trade relationship with our U.S. partner.

● (0945)

The Chair: We have now finished our first hour.

Minister, thank you very much for attending. We will start our second hour very shortly.

We will suspend for a few minutes.

● (0945)

_____ (Pause) _____

● (0945)

The Chair: Colleagues, we are back. The chair would like to advise the committee that we have both some challenges and scheduling things that we have to deal with right away, in that the chair of course is aware, as we all are, that we have potential votes coming very shortly, which is going to mean that we do not have the time that is necessary and/or allocated for the rest of our witnesses.

There are some options on the floor. The chair will outline three options and wait for direction from the committee as to how it wishes to proceed.

Number one, according to Standing Order number 115(5), when the bells are sounded, we have the option of staying a little longer at the discretion of the committee. It would take unanimous consent of the committee to do so. Being as the votes are in Centre Block and we are in Centre Block, this is a possibility you could consider.

The second issue is on the actual votes themselves, on the estimates. There are 16 votes. They can be voted individually or they can all be grouped. It would take unanimous consent to group them. They do not have to be voted on today, but that is an option that is before you.

The other issue is that we have other legislation that is coming before the committee, and we said that we would set aside 10 minutes or so for committee business today to allow our schedule to move forward at the next meeting.

Those are the issues that are before the committee right now. The chair is asking for some direction as to which way you would wish to proceed.

First of all, let's take them point by point. The chair would like to know whether or not you wish to proceed a few minutes after the votes are called. I'm asking for direction on the first option.

Mr. Easter.

● (0950)

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Chair, is it a half-hour bell? If it's a half-hour bell, there's no reason why we can't stay until we have five minutes left on the bell.

The Chair: Yes. It's a half-hour bell.

Ms. James.

Ms. Roxanne James: I would ask for 10 minutes in case anyone needs to visit the bathroom between voting, but I think we should be able to continue going as long as possible.

The Chair: Would the chair have unanimous consent to move forward and leave 10 minutes at the end?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Okay. That is done. We will add very close to 20 minutes, I would expect, once the bells go.

That is our first issue.

Now, we can continue with questioning today, and we can deal with committee business near the end of this. The chair will allot five minutes for committee business and leave 15. I throw that out on the floor. I'm asking for a very quick deliberation. If I don't get any sense of it, the chair will make an arbitrary decision, but I'm looking for your input first.

Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Since we have both the question of voting on the estimates here at the committee and committee business, might I suggest that when the bells sound we move immediately to voting on these and committee business?

The Chair: Ms. James.

Ms. Roxanne James: I'm okay with that.

The Chair: Mr. Easter.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Chair, there are some important questions to be put to the heads of agencies here, and we really do need an hour with them. If we don't have an hour today, I would suggest that we find another hour somewhere else. We get more answers from officials than we do from the minister. I think it's important we spend as much time as we can with officials.

The Chair: Your point is taken, and I would certainly have to get a motion to bring witnesses back if that were to be the case, but that would of course come under committee business, so first of all we'd have to get to committee business to discuss that.

Ms. James.

Ms. Roxanne James: Given that there's legislation that will be coming to committee, we need to do committee business today. I would suggest that when the bells ring and we go in camera to do the committee business, we actually cover the committee business portion first, and then go to the votes on the main estimates, because those votes can occur, as you said, at any point. They do not necessarily have to be done today.

The Chair: That's a reasonable suggestion. Are we comfortable with that so that we may move on without delay?

Some hon. members: Yes.

The Chair: That's fine. Thank you very much. I do appreciate that.

We will now immediately open the floor to rounds with our witnesses while we have them here.

Mr. Falk, you have the floor for five minutes.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for attending committee here this morning.

I'd like to begin my questions with the RCMP commissioner.

Commissioner, we've seen some of the media articles regarding some of the equipment that's offered to some of your members. I know that you commented on it briefly during the time the minister had with us here, but could you also perhaps correct the record for some of the claims made about the equipment that the RCMP is alleged to have been using?

● (0955)

Commr Bob Paulson: Okay. What I was referring to is that there were some discussions in the media. I think they were actors pretending to be police officers, who were speaking from transcripts. I didn't see the show, but they were claiming to bring their own weapons to work. That is not something I'm aware of, and were I to become aware of it or were any of my supervisors or decision-makers to become aware of it, we would act on it, which is not to say that we're not mindful that our members need to be properly equipped to do the job. In that regard, they are, and in that regard, we continue to train them on various techniques that are evolving given the threat Canadians are facing.

Mr. Ted Falk: Also, these main estimates do not include the additional resources that were allocated in budget 2015. Could you comment on these additional resources that will be allocated in supplementary estimates (A)?

Commr Bob Paulson: Well, I know that there are this year's.... Well, I cannot, in fact. I'm not in a position to offer you any elucidating info on that. I don't quite understand what you're driving at. I'm sorry.

Mr. Ted Falk: One thing that I've noticed on many of the RCMP vehicles is that you're always soliciting for people to consider the RCMP as a source of employment and a career. Can you comment briefly to the committee on whether you have the resources necessary to attract people, to train people, and to retain people?

Commr Bob Paulson: Yes, we do.

The challenge in bringing the resourcing of the RCMP up to snuff, to everybody's sense of snuff, is the idea that pressures are changing all the time, but in terms of balancing the intake to Depot, with the attrition that we forecast in the force balanced against real decisions taken in the contracting jurisdictions about what money is available—not just what hope and desire exist, but what money is being made available to bring people in—then we secure and we ramp up our intake at Depot.

For example, this year I think we're looking at close to 30 troops, projecting attrition and growth within the contracts, so we need to advertise. I know there is money being sought from the government to help us with that. Our training capacity at Depot turns on the number of cadets we're taking in. We also have some employment equity issues to make sure that we're targeting the right people at the right age and in the right areas of our country. All in all, it's a complicated system, but it's functioning.

Mr. Ted Falk: And there are recruits available?

Commr Bob Paulson: Yes, there are recruits available.

I'll tell you, though, the recruits are available and the labour market availability is strong, and we need to get the right people in the organization, but we're competing with other police forces. While we have no difficulty in bringing in people, neither do other police forces have difficulty in attracting our officers once they're trained. That is getting to be a little bit of an issue.

The Chair: You have one minute, Mr. Falk.

Mr. Ted Falk: Mr. Coulombe, I'd like to direct a question towards you.

Last night we voted on Bill C-51. We passed it in the House and we moved it along to the Senate. You had a chance to speak to the bill here at committee, as did another 48 other witnesses.

We heard from some groups that felt the bill was actually targeting protestors instead of terrorists, that CSIS will become a secret police organization through the information sharing act, and that spying on protesters will happen.

I know that former assistant deputy Ray Boisvert testified at committee and said people shouldn't be so flattered as to think they're going to be targeted by the new measures in the bill. Can you comment a little on that as well just to set the record straight?

The Chair: Very briefly, please.

Mr. Michel Coulombe (Director, Canadian Security Intelligence Service): As I testified before on Bill C-51, the info sharing act, there's nothing hidden in there that changes the CSIS Act in terms of the types of activities that we can or cannot investigate. In the CSIS Act it's clear that lawful advocacy, protest, and dissent are not something we can investigate unless it's done in the context of using violence. Nothing in Bill C-51 changed that.

The Chair: Thanks very much.

Your time is over, Mr. Falk.

Mr. Garrison, you have five minutes.

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

I have two things I want to try to pursue here in five minutes or less. We'll see if that's possible.

I want to ask Mr. Paulson this, because I believe the allocation for enhancing national security falls largely in his purview, but if I'm wrong, maybe the deputy minister can comment on this.

When you look at the estimates for 2015-16, you see that \$18 million is allocated for countering terrorism. Who is eligible to access that money and how will it be used? We met with the Canadian Association of Police Governance, as I know many MPs did, and the police boards at the municipal level, who bear a lot of the front-line work in countering terrorism at the community level. Their question was about whether any of this money is available to them and, if so, how are they going to be able to access that money?

The "countering terrorism" money of almost \$300 million the minister refers to is of course over four years. This year, just \$18 million is allocated. So who does it go to? Are municipalities eligible for it? If so, how would they access that money?

That's for whichever of you, since we don't know who has the money.

• (1000)

Mr. François Guimont (Deputy Minister, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): I'll take a stab at this, Mr. Chair.

Public Safety runs the crime prevention strategy, for which we have a budget allocation of \$40 million. As you were asking the question, I was trying to find the actual number.

This envelope exists, and this envelope is for crime prevention. It has sub-elements to it. For instance, there's a sub-element related to the gang-related types of activities and to prevention of crime in youth, and these subcomponents, measured in millions—I don't have the details here, but I will provide them to you—essentially are available for proposals coming forward to be supported and then approved by the minister.

Mr. Randall Garrison: But in your table 4.3.1, where it says "Enhancing National Security" and "Countering Terrorism", there's an \$18-million allocation. That's not the crime prevention fund. That seems to be something else. It's not clear who has that money and how it's being allocated.

Commr Bob Paulson: If I understand your question properly, that money is coming through the budget in the phased-in of that \$300-plus million, right, so to the extent that we in the RCMP are getting some of that money in the first year, recognizing the ramping-up phase, we disburse that to our investigative resources in the field. Our national security approach is built on integrated teams.

That's a long story to say, at least to my understanding, that there's no direct path for municipalities to get that money. That's money we're going to put in these integrated teams, which sometimes members from those municipalities are partnered into. In that sense, it's a very long way round to get money to them.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thanks very much. They were concerned that this was the case: that there was no allocation directly for them. That's not to criticize any additional allocation for the RCMP. We all know that there's a real threat of terrorism and that money is very much needed.

I want to turn to Corrections. Given the report that we received from the Auditor General—and I know that the members on the other side have argued that the Auditor General should appear at the public accounts committee and talk about Corrections—I'd like to talk about that report here in this committee.

Again, looking directly at the main estimates, there's something that is a little confusing to me. It says that the "Correctional Interventions" budget from 2014-15 to 2015-16 will be reduced by \$50 million. That, I'm presuming, is the programming that goes on in the correctional institutions. Then the second line there, "Community Supervision", is being increased by about the same amount of money.

Given the Auditor General's report, which says there's a problem in getting people into community supervision that he thinks needs to be investigated, I don't understand this allocation. If the blockage is in the programming in the prison, then how will we be spending more money in the community? Don't get me wrong: I think spending more money in the community is the right thing to do.

Mr. Don Head (Commissioner, Correctional Service of Canada): Thank you for the question.

The adjustment you see is actually a technical adjustment. What it is is really a shift in where we account for the spending of resources in relation to psychological services. There's actually no reduction in services. It's an accounting under the sub-activities of the program activity architecture.

The Chair: I'm sorry. Your five minutes are over. It goes so quickly, Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Payne, you have five minutes.

• (1005)

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

Thanks to the witnesses for coming today.

I'll try to be brief.

My first question goes to Mr. Coulombe, director for CSIS.

There's certainly some additional funding, as I understand it, in the estimates. I know that some of that funding is very delicate as to where you might be spending it, so you won't be able to give us directly where that's going, but I wonder if you could comment on the value and purpose of the roughly \$20 million in the 2015-16 estimates.

Mr. Michel Coulombe: The vast majority of that money you see in the main estimates is actually reprofiling of money for projects that were delayed. The bulk of that \$20 million—in fact, close to over \$19 million—is reprofiling of money.

Mr. LaVar Payne: I don't quite understand what that means, but

Mr. Michel Coulombe: It's money we have for specific projects, such as infrastructure, for example, that were delayed. We're reprofiling that money to this fiscal year.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Thank you.

My next question goes to Mr. Portelance, director for the CBSA.

Again, they have increased funding in the main estimates. The minister did talk a bit about where some of that funding would be going, but I wonder if you could give us any further detail.

Certainly I understand the strides that are being made on the beyond the border action plan. Could you could update us on that?

Mr. Luc Portelance (President, Canada Border Services Agency): Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the question.

The bulk of the money is going to be allocated towards infrastructure technology and projects associated with beyond the border action plan. Some of this is to refurbish major ports of entry. Some will be going to technology at ports of entry, such as the implementation of RFID. Some will be associated to trusted traders programs, where we'll be adding lanes.

The majority of the funding is to enhance our ability not only to secure the border but also to facilitate new technology and new border infrastructure. Significant investments are being made in that area.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Thank you.

Mr. Portelance, the minister also made some comments on the preclearance. I wonder if you have any other information that you'd like to talk about in particular on the U.S. Customs and border officers working in Canada. As I understand it, there's a regime so that Canadians can work on U.S. soil as well. Could you update us on that?

Mr. Luc Portelance: I think the greatest advantage—certainly for the CBSA—associated with a preclearance agreement is that it paves the way for meeting one of the key commitments of the beyond the border action plan, which is to develop a preclearance operation in Massena, New York. It's a key element of the CBSA's operations. As the U.S. will have the opportunity to establish preclearance operations in Canada, in a reciprocal way the CBSA will also be able to position itself at a key location, which is Massena.

The preclearance agreement was a fundamental element towards paving the way towards achieving that objective, and we're having some good cooperative discussions right now with CBP, our U.S. counterpart, to advance that initiative.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Thank you.

How much time do I have left, Chair?

The Chair: You have about a minute, sir.

Mr. LaVar Payne: That's perfect.

I'd like to go back to the director of CSIS. Certainly, I have had an opportunity to read the public report on CSIS that was tabled yesterday, and, as I understand it, terrorism continues to be the highest national security threat. I wonder if you could comment on that report.

Mr. Michel Coulombe: To be brief, I would qualify the terrorism threat at this time as persistent and unparalleled, and the volume of the tempo is something that we haven't seen before. That is happening at a time when the other threat, cyber espionage, is also increasing. It's a very challenging time in terms of the threats that this country faces.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Payne. We will now go to Mr. Easter.

You have five minutes, sir.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll turn to Commissioner Paulson again.

Commissioner, I am concerned about the answer that you gave to a government member. You actually suggested that a major TV network might use actors to make the point. I wonder if you might want to rephrase that. I can tell you that since that program was on, I have had a lot of emails, and I called back quite a number of people, and I don't believe these folks are imitating something or not...and I do believe what rank-and-file members feel is a lack of proper body armour in some cases, a lack of weapons in another, and a lack of training that is affecting morale. If it's a money issue, we as a committee need to know about it.

Would you respond to that? I am concerned about that comment you made.

• (1010)

Commr Bob Paulson: Okay. Well, I didn't see it, so let me say that first of all. I didn't see the program. Somebody told me that there were people who were representing members who were actors. I don't know, so I probably shouldn't have said that.

What I will say about that is that, look, what I find disturbing is not the members' characterization of the nature of the threat they face and the way in which the organization prepares them to face that threat. That's a fair conversation. We should have it and we do have it every day. What I find troubling is the characterization of the Moncton murders, the use of the Moncton murders, to represent a shortfall and make a leap in analysis that I don't think is supported by the facts. It's a very complex situation.

I think the report we did and the changes that we're bringing as to how the organization is run is a transparent, full, thorough accounting of shortcomings on the organization's part and a plan to fix them. I just didn't think that was a fair characterization of the challenge.

Hon. Wayne Easter: I'll read you what one individual, an RCMP dispatcher of eight years, said in a letter: "Members and staff have no voices—our jobs are put on the line by speaking up and whistle-blowing..." They're thanking Global for producing that program. It's

Commr Bob Paulson: That's not true, Mr. Easter. Mr. Easter, that's not true, and I have to stop you there, because people couch these criticisms in the blanket of repercussions, and there are no repercussions. What we are building—what I've built and what I insist on having—is an organization where those conversations take place without repercussions.

Hon. Wayne Easter: I think it's good that you make that point, and any other calls I get, I'll—

Commr Bob Paulson: Refer them to me.

Hon. Wayne Easter: —make that point myself.

Another area related to the RCMP is that we're getting an awful lot of complaints on security checks for jobs from people who can't get the security checks and the criminal record checks, etc. through the RCMP fast enough. You have employers wanting the employee, and the potential employee is waiting for the record check. Where is that at the moment? Why aren't the technology and human resources in place to get this done fast?

Commr Bob Paulson: Thank you for that question.

The technology is, I'm happy to say, in place. What we need are the users in the field, all of the police forces and agencies that are not part of the RCMP, to subscribe to the idea that we're doing this real-time ID. This real-time ID system is an amazing piece of gear. It's working. It's working for those people who have the equipment. There is some upfront cost to getting that equipment, but when that equipment is purchased—and we're in the new age of digital communication—that is streamlining that process incredibly.

It's in place. Folks around the country need to subscribe to that and we need to make that a reality.

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

We will now go to Mr. Rousseau for a few minutes.

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

National safety in my riding is a big, big issue. I have seven points of entry, Lake Memphremagog, militia training in the *Appalaches*, and two RCMP offices, so it's a very big thing. Because I don't have much time, I'll ask my question in French.

[*Translation*]

My question is for Mr. Portelance.

The budget indicates a decrease of \$20 million resulting from the gradual elimination of funding for front-line operations. What impact will this decrease have on front-line operations? These small cuts here and there are really worrying RCMP and Canada Border Services Agency employees.

• (1015)

Mr. Luc Portelance: Thank you for that excellent question.

These funds will basically disappear. However, I am pleased to tell you that this \$20 million is included in the 2015 budget. So there will be no changes in our front-line operations.

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Has it been a while since you've been to the Beebe crossing in Stanstead? It's a little bit rustic and could really use some renovations.

Mr. Luc Portelance: The other good news is that the 2015 budget provides for major investments to that end. We are getting ready to renovate and refit over 70 border crossings. I believe the Beebe crossing is one of them, but don't quote me on that. We are going to renovate most of the small and medium border crossings over the next three years. We are well aware of the condition they're in. Unfortunately, I've never been to Beebe.

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Beebe is where you're in the United States on one side of the street, and in Canada on the other. It's unique.

Mr. Paulson, my question is for you.

There are two RCMP offices in my riding, one in Stanstead, which has just been renovated, and another on Bourque Boulevard in Sherbrooke, very close to my constituency office.

There have been budget cuts since 2013-14. Will one of the offices be affected by cuts to staff or resources, particularly the one for Stanstead, which operates along the border?

Commr Bob Paulson: Thank you for the question.

I don't know. We are making changes in how we are managing federal resources in Canada. We don't intend to close any offices or detachments, but it's one option we're looking at. I can't give you an answer on this today.

Mr. Jean Rousseau: You should also go visit these offices, Mr. Paulson.

Mr. Coulombe, do you know that there are training operations for foreign militias and even Canadian militias in the forest along the border and on Mount Pinnacle, not far from the municipality of Coaticook? Is any monitoring going on and what's happening with these operations? People in the surrounding villages are aware of it and are talking to me about it. What is going on with these activities?

Mr. Michel Coulombe: Thank you for the question.

You will understand that I cannot comment on specific points concerning the operations. All I can say is that if there are any activities that represent a certain threat and that fall under the definition of a threat as set out in the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act, we are doing what we have to. I cannot answer more specifically on that matter.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rousseau.

Now we'll go to Ms. James briefly, for five minutes or less.

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The bells are ringing, so....

My question will be directed to Mr. Coulombe—

Mr. Randall Garrison: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I thought our agreement was that when the bells started, we would go directly to committee business.

The Chair: No, we agreed to go....

We were going to go 20 minutes, and we were going to go up to 10 minutes to finish off with the witnesses. We would then go to committee business for the last 10 minutes.

That was the chair's understanding. If the chair was wrong on that, I stand to be corrected. We thought we would just finish a round, and that way hopefully we'd get everybody in. But I will check that with the clerk.

I've just checked with the clerk, and the chair stands corrected. The chair was apparently under the wrong impression. We will now suspend.

Thank you to our witnesses for coming here today.

We will now go in camera to discuss committee business.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

• (1015) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1025)

[Public proceedings resume]

The Chair: Colleagues, I'll bring this to your attention. I'll paraphrase very quickly. I can read the full explanation should it be necessary.

The basic tenet of my discussion is the fact the amount we will be voting on is in the initial, less, of course, the interim supply that went out on them, leaving us with the balance that we are voting on. Are we all comfortable with that or would you wish the chair to read out the process?

First of all, the chair would like some direction. Are we doing these one by one or can we do them in one motion? I would need unanimous consent to.... No unanimous consent? We will go one by one. Is that correct?

Mr. Randall Garrison: I can give you unanimous consent to do all but the last one.

The Chair: That's fine. If we're comfortable with doing everything but the last one, do we have unanimous consent to go that way?

We are going from vote 1 right straight through until vote 14. Okay? So vote 1 right straight through—

Mr. Randall Garrison: I'm sorry. We don't have a good list here to work with on the number of votes. The vote on SIRC is the one that I would like to treat separately.

The Chair: Yes, that is the extra vote, Randall. SIRC is not included. It's all of the votes up to SIRC.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you.

The Chair: The chair is not going to read out each one because they're all separate amounts. As long as we have an understanding that this does not include the vote on SIRC and that this does give you the amount less the interim that was put out there, we're voting on the balance forward now.

We'll vote now on numbers 1 to 14.

CANADA BORDER SERVICES AGENCY
Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....\$1,411,403,312
Vote 5—Capital expenditures.....\$180,203,476

(Votes 1 and 5 agreed to)

CANADIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE
Vote 1—Program expenditures.....\$488,215,677

(Vote 1 agreed to)

CIVILIAN REVIEW AND COMPLAINTS COMMISSION FOR THE ROYAL
CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE
Vote 1—Program expenditures.....\$9,032,529

(Vote 1 agreed to)

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE OF CANADA
Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....\$1,928,746,713
Vote 5—Capital expenditures.....\$176,944,519

(Votes 1 and 5 agreed to)

OFFICE OF THE CORRECTIONAL INVESTIGATOR
Vote 1—Program expenditures.....\$4,106,381

(Vote 1 agreed to)

PAROLE BOARD OF CANADA
Vote 1—Program expenditures.....\$40,021,838

(Vote 1 agreed to)

PUBLIC SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS
Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....\$113,188,545
Vote 5—The grants listed in the estimates and contributions.....\$1,022,476,287

(Votes 1 and 5 agreed to)

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE
Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....\$1,726,192,674
Vote 5—Capital expenditures.....\$261,996,018

Vote 10—The grants listed in the estimates and contributions.....\$180,351,933

(Votes 1, 5, and 10 agreed to)

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE EXTERNAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

Vote 1—Program expenditures.....\$848,114

(Vote 1 agreed to)

The Chair: We will now go to vote 15, which is vote 1 under the Security Intelligence Review Committee, less the amount of \$619,830.25 granted in interim supply.

SECURITY INTELLIGENCE REVIEW COMMITTEE

Vote 1—Program expenditures.....\$2,479,321

(Vote 1 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the chair report the 2015-16 main estimates to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you very much, colleagues.

Is there anything else on future business? I see none, so this meeting is adjourned.

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