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Chair

Mr. Robert Oliphant

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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.)): I call this meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security to order. This is our third meeting of this first session of the 42nd Parliament.

Thank you to our witnesses. It is funny calling you witnesses. Thank you to our officials from the Government of Canada who are with us today and are taking time to help this new committee of a new Parliament orient itself to our shared work, which is ensuring the safety of Canadians and our public security. Thank you for the work you do every day, and thank you particularly for your work with us this morning.

I understand that Ms. Wilson will begin with the presentation and then we'll have questions.

Ms. Wilson, we will generally go through you, and you can direct to whomever you think is the most appropriate person to answer those questions.

Ms. Gina Wilson (Associate Deputy Minister, Public Safety Canada, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): That's good.

[Translation]

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, thank you for inviting us to appear before you today.

[English]

I understand that we are your first witnesses—let's say your first guests—and we're here to present you with an overview of the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, which we refer to as the Department of Public Safety.

I'm going to talk about public safety and our structure, our role, and some of our priorities. I am joined by my colleagues from the five branches within the department, and I will be introducing them as I go through my comments.

Broadly speaking, Public Safety's mandate is to keep Canadians safe from a vast array of threats, including natural disasters, crime, and terrorism.

[Translation]

The department was established in 2003 to ensure coordination among the federal departments and agencies that deal with national security, emergency management, law enforcement, corrections, crime prevention, cybersecurity, and border security issues.

The department is one of six organizations that constitute the public safety portfolio, all of which report to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Mr. Goodale.

[English]

The portfolio at large is considerable in size and scope. It has more than 65,800 full-time equivalents, our employees, and it has an operating budget in 2015-16 of \$8.5 billion.

Later today or soon after, I believe, and next week, you'll have an opportunity to hear in depth from each agency, but I'll briefly list the key mandates of each. We have the Canada Border Services Agency, or CBSA, which manages our national borders and supports legitimate cross-border trade and travel. We have the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, or CSIS, which protects Canada's national security interests by investigating and reporting on activities that may pose a threat to our security. There is the Correctional Service of Canada, which is the federal agency responsible for administering sentences with terms of two years or more, which also supervises offenders under conditional release in the community. There is the Parole Board of Canada, which is an independent administrative tribunal that makes decisions on conditional release and records suspensions as well as making clemency recommendations. Last, there is the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, which enforces laws, prevents and investigates crimes of all types, and helps maintain peace, order, and security here and abroad as part of our international deployments.

There are also three review bodies that play a key role in accountability and review functions related to the work of their respective agencies, and these are the Office of the Correctional Investigator, the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP, and the RCMP External Review Committee.

Allow me now to shift to the Department of Public Safety itself and some of our work. As of December 2015, we had 991 indeterminate and term employees. The budget approved in the 2015-16 main estimates and supplementary estimates to date is \$1.14 billion, and we manage a substantial grants and contributions program with close to \$1 billion budgeted for this fiscal year alone.

• (1110)

[Translation]

The vast scope of the department's work means that we have employees working in every part of the country and around the world.

This includes regional offices in Ontario, Quebec, Nunavut, the Atlantic region, the Prairies, the Northwest Territories, British Columbia, and the Yukon. These offices help us deliver on key priorities like first nations policing, crime prevention and emergency management.

I will now talk about the major program areas and priorities found within the department itself.

[English]

Here with me we have Monik Beauregard, who's our senior ADM for national and cybersecurity. The department works to deliver on the government's priorities related to national and cybersecurity. We're developing legislation and policies to keep Canadians safe from terrorist acts and to improve accountability and oversight of our national security agencies. We're working to create an office dedicated to countering radicalization to violence, and we're reviewing and strengthening Canada's cybersecurity strategy to build resilient cyber-networks and create cyber-savvy citizens.

Our ADM, Lori MacDonald, at the emergency management and programs branch, couldn't be here today but she is ably represented here by Craig Oldham, who manages our government operations centre, which I'll talk about in a moment. Emergency management is a significant portion of the work we do at Public Safety Canada. For example, we manage the disaster financial assistance arrangements or the DFAA program, which provides financial support to provinces and territories in the wake of significant natural disasters like floods and wildfires. Recognizing the increasing risk and costs of disasters, the department runs the national disaster mitigation program and this program fills a critical gap in Canada's ability to effectively mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from flood-related events. These are the four pillars of emergency management.

We're also supporting the government's efforts to help first responders and public safety officers coping with post-traumatic stress disorder, or occupational stress injuries. This includes holding national consultations and developing a national action plan. As mentioned, the department also houses the government operations centre—I mentioned Craig—which coordinates the integrated federal response to human-induced and natural events of all types. Also, quite recently we assumed responsibility for the National Search and Rescue Secretariat, which used to be part of the National Defence portfolio.

We also have here Kathy Thompson, who is our ADM responsible for community safety and countering crime. Public Safety provides federal policy leadership, coordination, and program support for issues related to crime prevention and law enforcement. We work with the United States and the CBSA to secure our borders while encouraging trade and travel through the beyond the border action plan. We ensure that effective policy and legislative frameworks are in place to support the RCMP and other law enforcement agencies in order to combat serious and organized crimes like drug trafficking, money laundering, fraud, child sexual exploitation, and human trafficking.

We support indigenous communities that seek to reduce violence against women and to develop community safety plans that are culturally relevant. Through the first nations policing program we also provide funding to many communities for access to profes-

sional, dedicated, and culturally appropriate policing services. We support crime prevention programs through the national crime prevention strategy, and finally, we review key aspects of the criminal justice system, including record suspensions, parole, segregation in correctional institutions, and improving the use of restorative justice approaches.

[Translation]

Now I would like to introduce Paul McKinnon, assistant deputy minister of the portfolio affairs and communications branch.

Strategic policy and planning integration within the department falls under the portfolio affairs and communications branch. Through this work, we engage and consult with stakeholders and citizens, notably through the cross-cultural round table on security.

We push forward on a significant research agenda and partner with academics, including the Kanishka program, which supports research into understanding and addressing terrorism threats in a Canadian context.

[English]

In terms of corporate management, also present on this panel is our chief financial officer and assistant deputy minister of the corporate management branch. This is Mark Perlman. That branch is responsible for financial and human resources management, procurement and asset management, as well as information management and information technology.

I trust this gives you a good overview of our department, the portfolio agencies, and some of our top priorities, and as well introduces you to some of our senior officials who you will likely come to know over the upcoming months. I look forward to the discussion and answering questions that you may have.

• (1115)

Thank you, *merci*, and *meegwetch*.

The Chair: Thank you very much. You've done this before, and you have five seconds remaining in your time.

Mr. Spengemann, you have seven minutes for questions and answers.

[Translation]

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for your excellent presentation, Ms. Wilson, and welcome to the committee.

My thanks to both you and your colleagues for the work you are doing, as high-ranking officials, on the country's behalf.

[English]

I have two areas of inquiry. Time permitting, we will get to both of them. One is domestic and one is international.

I think I speak for a number of my colleagues when I say that there is some interest among committee members on the state of our first nations, in particular in terms of vulnerabilities and perhaps also with respect to Correctional Services, disproportionalities in our prison population, and gender violence.

Could you start out by giving us an overview of the state of affairs within Public Safety? What is the thinking currently taking place with respect to providing public safety as a public good, which is really an exercise of providing effective security and safety, but also balancing our charter rights against measures that are in place?

Please bring the committee up to date on that very important area.

Ms. Gina Wilson: Personally, I'm very excited to talk about the work we do with indigenous communities. I will let our ADM talk about some of the work we do around community safety plans, as well as first nations policing.

Ms. Kathy Thompson (Assistant Deputy Minister, Community Safety and Countering Crime Branch, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): At public safety, we have a number of programs that are directed to indigenous communities and have been in place for a number of years. One of those programs that we're very proud of and that is extending to communities across the country is called community safety plans. We work with indigenous communities. Some of them have self-identified and asked us to come and work with them, and others we have approached to work with them. It's very much an engagement process, where we work with the communities and they bring the community together. We help them to facilitate, but they bring together the community members, the elders, the youth, and the community organizations.

We're also partnering with our provincial and territorial counterparts to bring communities together to develop community safety plans. This is really an integrated approach to crime prevention. The very first step is engagement. The communities develop their own plans. The plans vary from one community to the other, depending on what their priorities are. Some are at the macro level and some are very much at the micro level. To date, we have 80 communities participating in the program. So far, 17 have completed community safety plans, and others are at different stages of developing their plans. Really, they are communities across the country. Now we're working with those that have completed plans to help them to identify and match them with resources to try to implement the action plans that they have developed.

In our experience, we've seen a lot of programs. We think this is the best model for working with indigenous communities because it is very much a community-designed process where they identify their resources. They bring the groups together and they go forward with implementation.

The other program I would talk about is the first nations policing program. We provide funding for dedicated professional and responsive aboriginal community resources for policing. There are different types of agreements. In some cases, those resources are RCMP policing, and in other cases they're police services from the

community. To date, we fund approximately almost 1,300 police officers in indigenous communities. That program has been evaluated and has demonstrated to be very effective in terms of reducing crime in those communities.

Those are two community-focused programs. We have others that are focused more broadly across different communities, but that touch on indigenous communities. For example, we have an exiting prostitution program. We have a national strategy on human trafficking that looks at issues and has worked with indigenous communities. We have a national crime prevention strategy, which is the key framework for advancing crime prevention in Canada. That program offers approximately \$40 million a year in grants and contributions to communities. There is one stream of that program that is directed to northern and aboriginal communities. Within the national crime prevention strategy, there are different priorities, but youth six to 12 are a priority, as are offenders who are no longer under community supervision. There are different streams with that, but there is one stream and dedicated funding particularly to northern and aboriginal communities.

• (1120)

Ms. Gina Wilson: Mr. Spengemann, I would also encourage you to ask that question of our colleagues from Correctional Service Canada who do significant work with the indigenous communities both in the community and the institutions.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Given the limited time remaining, I will maybe open this up as an area of inquiry and then allow my colleagues to zoom in a bit more.

My question is about the intersection between the international and the domestic. There are all kinds of threats out there internationally, and they may or may not translate into threats here at home.

In terms of the overall strategy, I'm wondering if you can give us an overview of what those threats might be, how they evolve, including movements of goods, people, and ideas across borders. Is there a strategy in place to look at international threats versus domestic ones?

Ms. Gina Wilson: In the time we have, I'm going to turn briefly to Paul or Monik to respond to that.

Mrs. Monik Beaugard (Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, National and Cyber Security Branch, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): There are a lot of ways to answer that question.

I guess I'll start by saying that we don't necessarily have a strategy in place, but we do have mechanisms in place to assess the threat. Obviously what is happening internationally does resonate domestically, and we've seen indications of that. We have seen how international events have had direct impacts on Canadians. We saw four years ago, I believe it was in 2013, when there was an attack on an Algerian gas pumping station, that two Canadians were part of the terrorist plot. I think that really brought home to us this whole idea that some Canadians are out there to commit terrorist acts.

We have also seen more recently the attacks in Burkina Faso that have taken the lives of Canadians. We've had our own threat situation right here in our capital city in October 2014 and the day before in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu.

We do have an organization that's part of Public Safety that was not mentioned in the opening remarks but sort of straddles CSIS and the rest of the community. It's called ITAC, the Integrated Terrorism Assessment Centre.

• (1125)

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Beauregard.

I'll continue with Mr. O'Toole.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you all very much for taking the time to be here. We know your busy schedules and the burdens you have. We've read about that in the papers in recent days from Mr. Boisvert, a former colleague of yours, so we appreciate your taking the time.

This was quite interesting because it is very similar to the overview the analysts provided us in our last meeting, and also very similar to the materials the committee were provided with before we sat as a committee, but it's always good to put faces to names and to see the talented people we have.

Considering some of this background I am familiar with, my question is in relation to Minister Goodale's announcement earlier this week about the hiring of a counter-radicalization coordinator. I'm wondering which senior official would be responsible for that component?

Ms. Gina Wilson: She's putting up her hand.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Are the terms of reference for that position crafted, and what would the goal and scope of that office be?

Ms. Monik Beauregard: I think we've seen from the mandate letter as well that countering radicalization to violence is clearly one of the priorities of this government.

We have been working on countering violent extremism at Public Safety for quite a long time now. You may even want to ask the question of the RCMP when they are here, because they also have a very robust outreach program to communities to help understand what indicators could identify risks of radicalization to violence.

Countering radicalization to violence is very complex. We've seen from some of the perpetrators of terrorism, whether they are Canadians or not, that there's no specific profile. A lot of it right now is also happening through the Internet as we've seen. There are articles about women who are out there now in Syria, a lot of whom have been radicalized through the Internet.

There are a number of issues of concern, and the government needs to work across. Public Safety needs to work across the government with a lot of the other stakeholders across government, but we also need to work with the provinces, the territories, the municipalities, the community groups, educational groups, mental health associations, and so on and so forth.

There is already a lot of work happening outside of government. You will likely have seen that during the visit of the UN Secretary

General Ban Ki-moon in Montreal a few days or a few weeks ago, he visited one of those counter-radicalization centres in Montreal.

At the end of the day, what we want to be able to do is to create this national office that will provide that leadership and ensure that everyone is working towards the same objectives using the same framework, and that we are sharing best practices and working together in this very complex domain.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Would the person who would administer this department be an internal hire, or would this be someone who would be hired externally? Have those specific terms been drawn up?

Ms. Monik Beauregard: At this point that has not been decided. We're still working with our government colleagues to put proposals on paper for that.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: You referenced the disturbing story many of us heard this week about the young Canadian women who travelled to start families with ISIS fighters, and you mentioned there's no specific profile. Does the department report say that radicalization in this case could have been through the Internet? It's also been reported, though not substantiated, that some were converts. Is there any specific attention being focused on that and on identifying the people on the ground who are radicalizing, and will doing that be part of specific efforts?

Ms. Monik Beauregard: We're always concerned to hear that someone has left the country and has been radicalized. Whether or not they convert, there's the whole process of radicalization to violence. In this case there was maybe not necessarily radicalization to violence, but there was enough radicalization that they wanted to join the fight for other purposes. Obviously countering radicalization to violence was already part of our terrorism strategy that was published in 2012.

Sorry, I'm catching up on the history of the department. I've been there for a month myself.

We do have a national counterterrorism strategy, of which countering violent extremism is already a part. It is part of one of the pillars, really part of the prevention pillar. We look at how to work with communities, how to build trust with communities so that they can recognize certain indicators. We're talking about radicalization whether by somebody on the ground who is in their city or through the Internet.

• (1130)

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Can I stop you there? I apologize, but my time is limited. I know my friend Mr. Erskine-Smith wants to look at Bill C-51. Bill C-51 criminalized radicalization efforts, or the support for terrorism, online and on the Internet. Can that new tool, the criminalization of that sort of radicalization on the Internet, be used to prevent some of these situations?

Ms. Monik Beauregard: I don't think I can answer that question. I'd have to get back to you.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: The final thing in the announcement from the minister's office earlier this week is that a community outreach office will be created. I'm wondering whether that will be part of the counter-radicalization coordinator's overall mandate or a separate entity being looked at.

Ms. Monik Beauregard: We're expecting it to be the same office and the same person.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: There will likely be funding in the upcoming budget to fuel this.

All right. That's all I have for now, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

We will continue with Mr. Dubé.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloil—Chambly, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to begin by thanking our witnesses for taking the time out of their busy schedules to be with us today and make a presentation.

If I may, Mr. Chair, I'd like to say hello to the member whose riding is next to mine, Mr. Picard, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. We are seeing that the Liberal government does things the same way that the Conservatives did, albeit a little more subtly. Positions have changed slightly from what they were during the previous four years.

On a more serious note, I'd like to ask you a question, if you don't mind.

Quebec currently has a human trafficking crisis on its hands, especially in Laval. The House of Commons unanimously passed a bill addressing the issue, and now we are just waiting for the order in council.

I would like you to tell me, first of all, whether that bill will be helpful to you and, second of all, whether it is on your recommendation that the minister is taking his time, let's say.

[*English*]

Ms. Gina Wilson: I would suggest that no one has taken their time. In fact, our minister is quite seized with this particular bill at the moment.

Kathy, is there anything further to add? I think we'll be contemplating moving forward with that shortly.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kathy Thompson: Thank you.

In 2012, the government implemented a national strategy, an action plan to combat human trafficking. Since then, we have had a four-pronged strategy that includes prevention, protection, and partnerships. We are working closely on the file with a number of federal agencies and departments, such as the Canada Border Services Agency and the RCMP. We are also working to make progress on other components of the action plan, on behalf of the minister.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: If you wouldn't mind, I'd like to clarify my question, since I don't have a lot of time.

I am asking specifically about the passage of Ms. Mourani's bill. My understanding was that a deadline had been established for adopting the measures in the bill. It has received royal assent; the only thing missing is the order in council.

Is there a deadline for that? Have you worked with the minister on bringing the measures into force?

Ms. Kathy Thompson: I can assure you that we are working on the action plan and considering a variety of projects. But I can't give you any specifics on time frames. I would have to get back to you with that information.

• (1135)

Mr. Matthew Dubé: That's great. Thank you kindly.

[*English*]

On the same line of thought, I suppose, there was a question posed by my colleague Mr. Garrison yesterday about the police recruitment fund and the fact that—with all due respect to my colleagues on this side of the table—there were some cuts in the department. Despite a lot of the bluster around that, is this something that the budget is going to look at? Is it something that would help in communities such as Surrey, for example, where we've seen an issue?

I know that the minister has acted, but if we were to put more money in the police recruitment fund, would it be of help to communities like that?

Ms. Gina Wilson: It would probably be appropriate to talk about that with the RCMP when they appear before this committee, but certainly as officials we're always looking at continuous improvement of our processes, our programs, and so on, and we make proposals thereon internally. As to whether it's a consideration that would be part of the budget deliberations, I wouldn't be able to tell you.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Seeing as I'm short on time, I'm going to move on to another topic.

You touched on the efforts to combat violent extremism, citing Ban Ki-moon's visits to a number of centres in Montreal. That gives us some hope that you plan to follow Montreal's example. Local authorities have a certain degree of expertise, which should not be overlooked. The intention seems to be to work with those people.

Ms. Monik Beauregard: Absolutely.

I told you earlier about the creation of an office to combat radicalization. We plan to develop a national counter-radicalization strategy.

I said that we already have a counterterrorism strategy, but all it does is mention countering radicalization. In other words, combating radicalization isn't the focus of the strategy.

And now, a few years later, we are realizing what a significant and incredibly complex issue it really is, one that must be considered through a variety of lenses. We are going to get to work on a national strategy and we are going to work with the provinces, territories, and municipalities, as well as all the stakeholders with expertise in that field.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: That's great.

Thank you very much.

[English]

There's another question I have. We've heard a lot—unfortunately, more in the media than anywhere else—about this new committee that's going to come forward to deal with some of the fallout of Bill C-51 and such. Is there anything you're able to say about that today or perhaps give us an idea of where that process is at?

Despite our pleas in the opposition to be a part of that process, as should be the case, we're hearing more about it in the media, as I said, than we are through official channels.

Ms. Gina Wilson: We're working very closely with Minister Goodale to put together a proposal to conduct some national security consultations, which would be the first ever for Public Safety Canada, to move forward with this. As part of that, certainly, the committee will be contemplated.

[Translation]

If Monik doesn't have anything to add, that's it for now.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Excellent.

That's it for my questions.

Again, I apologize if I was abrupt. We never know if we're going to run out of time.

Thank you again for doing the work you do and taking the time to be with us today.

The Chair: Thank you.

[English]

We'll continue with Mr. Mendicino.

[Translation]

Ms. Gina Wilson: Thank you.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: That's all for now, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

I want to begin by echoing a lot of the thanks that have been provided to you, Ms. Wilson, and to the rest of your colleagues and the panel. I think we all appreciate that in most regards you are both the first and the last line of defence for Canada, and we thank you for your efforts every day.

I'd like to ask you a general question about where we are with Canada's cybersecurity strategy. Canadians' personal and professional lives have gone digital. We use the Internet, we use email, and we use texting. Some of our friends in the press gallery like to use Twitter. I see Mr. Akin nodding his head back there. We do business, shopping, research, and education online.

Business uses cyberspace not only for transactional purposes, but also for research and development. They use it to protect their patents. Government needs to use cyberspace and the digital space for the entire array of services it provides Canadians and also for its own internal governance. Whether it's in immigration, health, public safety, or national security, digital makes all this possible.

There are a lot of advantages to that. On a very practical level, we have people who can telework. It allows us to shrink distances between point A and point B. It allows us to stay connected. But there are also some things we have to be mindful of. The fact that we are now so invested in cyberspace can make us vulnerable. Whether it's with respect to criminal fraudsters.... For example, I recently met with a fairly well-known business called "Canada Goose". Some of you may wear their products, especially with the arctic freeze and the record snowfall we recently had. They're concerned about fraud and protecting their brand.

Whether we're concerned about foreign radical elements recruiting, as we've heard about, or whether we're concerned about hackers, about non-state entities like WikiLeaks, which are constantly trying to prod and test our systems and which sometimes succeed, regrettably, there are risks everywhere. My question is, where are we at with Canada's cyber-strategy, and what are your top two concerns in terms of our risk assessment?

• (1140)

Ms. Gina Wilson: Thank you very much for that.

Cybersecurity is definitely one of those issues that has risen in prominence over the years, and certainly for Public Safety that's the case. We have a national and cybersecurity branch, which is led by Monik Beauregard, who seems to be very popular today.

We also have the cyber-strategy that I mentioned in my remarks, and we're about to launch a cyber review. We also believe that critical infrastructure is a key risk for us in Canada and is certainly something that the government plans to move forward with—

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Could I interrupt very briefly? On your cyber review—and this is imminent—can you identify the top two specific priorities that you're collectively mindful of as you start to zoom in on areas of concern?

Ms. Gina Wilson: I'll turn it over to Monik for her to add anything further on the work she's doing in preparing for the review.

Ms. Monik Beauregard: Okay, in seven minutes, because we could spend a few days on this one.... We haven't officially launched the review of the existing measures that are in place to protect Canadians and critical infrastructure from cyber-threats, but we are again working with our colleagues to propose various approaches and on how to scope the review right now. Obviously, it is our intent to conduct a review that's going to be credible and comprehensive and that reaches out to all stakeholders across Canada and also to our international partners.

Minister Goodale has already had conversations on cyber-threats and what keeps people awake at night—

Mr. Marco Mendicino: What does keep people awake at night? Let me try to further zoom you in, because in the little time remaining there are two areas I'd like to hear about.

Number one is the financial sector and banking.

Number two is in regard to expressions that potentially incite hatred and inflammatory language with the use of social media. Are there partnerships being formed with Facebook, Twitter, and those types of social media providers to try to monitor that kind of language?

Ms. Gina Wilson: This particular issue is so broad and so significant that we actually have two parts of the department that work on this. One is working from the terrorism aspect, cybersecurity, particularly the international piece, in terms of working with groups like CSEC, and National Defence, and so on. We also have the countering crime aspect, which is a key part of the work going ahead.

I mentioned critical infrastructure as a priority at this point in time in terms of cybersecurity, but I would ask Kathy to speak to some of the elements around the countering crime perspective.

Ms. Kathy Thompson: As Monik said, this is an area we could take a lot of time to talk about, and I don't want to take all of your time. You asked for one or two key issues that are keeping us up at night.

If we look at the crime rate, it peaked in 1991, but really overall the crime rate has been going down over the last two decades. The violent crime rate, for the last eight years, has been going down.

However, there are some exceptions. One of those exceptions is child sexual exploitation over the Internet. That is going up exponentially, year over year. We are working very closely with our colleagues in the RCMP, who have a centre dedicated to this. Other partners we have, like CCCP, for example, the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, which is one of our partners, could tell you a little bit about the work we're doing. That is one area that is keeping us awake. We're working very actively on that. We're partnering, not just in Canada but internationally. We're part of a number of global alliances, and we protect summits on that. That's one.

Also, very quickly, there is organized crime. The Internet, as you said, is great. That's the way we work. We socialize now, but organized crime has also moved into that space. Identity theft is a big issue and so is copyright; all of those crimes have actually gone up.

While the crime rate is going down and the violent crime rate is going down, there are some crimes that are going up, in part due to the Internet.

• (1145)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mendicino. That's it.

Mr. Miller.

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to all of you for being here.

I want to switch to refugee screening. Just going back a little bit to last late October or early November, when Minister Goodale announced they were going to increase the number of refugees coming in by 25,000, I think everyone in the country pretty well, including the minister—although he probably wouldn't admit it—knew that really wasn't possible unless some things were done differently. There must have been a collective shudder in the

department that day. Was there, when that came out? Would that be a fair assessment or assumption? Yes or no?

Ms. Gina Wilson: No. As good public servants, we take on whatever initiatives the government provides to us.

Mr. Larry Miller: Okay. Very good.

Where I'd like to go is to timelines on this. Could you explain a little bit about the process, as briefly as you can, and some of the differences between government-sponsored refugees versus private. My riding's probably no different from any other riding. I have quite a number of private groups sponsoring. Could you touch on that?

Ms. Gina Wilson: Certainly, and thank you for the question. It is an initiative that Public Safety has been very involved in, particularly from the safety perspective and the security screening aspect.

Certainly there are elements of that question that would probably be best directed to officials at CBSA, who are more directly involved in the technicalities of the security screening and so on, as well as IRCC, or Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, who are dealing with the aspect between privately sponsored and government sponsored.

Craig, I would ask you if you want to add anything to that.

Craig has been very involved in this initiative from the government operations centre, so he may have—

Mr. Larry Miller: Okay, as long as we can answer that then, because if the CBSA is who I should be asking, I don't want to waste my time on it.

Mr. Craig Oldham (Director General, Government Operations Centre, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): Certainly, the differences between private and government sponsored is not something we're really qualified to answer. That should go to Immigration and Refugees Canada. Our colleagues from CBSA are here, behind us, to answer some details. But if you would like some broad overview of the program and where we are in the screening in general, we can provide that.

Mr. Larry Miller: Okay.

I have a couple of other questions. Approximately how long would each interview be with each refugee? I'm quite sure that language was an issue. How was that handled? Can you speak to that at all?

Mr. Craig Oldham: I think the key thing to understand here is that the process of screening refugees is not some sort of abbreviated process. It is, in fact, the same kind of process we use for all refugees or immigrants to Canada. It's a multi-layered approach that includes the United Nations HCR, CBSA, and immigration officers who are trained and experienced in doing this kind of work. Initially, during our planning process, absolutely translation was an issue. But that was something we were able to overcome rather quickly, and we have put a considerable number of resources on the ground overseas to help us do that. We did initially anticipate that kind of issue, but it did not, in the end, turn out to be the case.

We are using the same screening standards we use at any other time, and those include screening for criminality and human rights violations. We are screening based on recommendations from our security partners. We are screening against both domestic and United States databases, and wherever there's any sort of doubt, those cases are set aside so that we can achieve the objective of bringing 25,000 by the end of the month.

● (1150)

Mr. Larry Miller: Could you comment on the length of time for each interview or screening? Also, at any time while carrying this out, did you or the officials feel undue pressure or anything like that in any manner? Can you speak to that?

Mr. Craig Oldham: I can't speak to the length of time for the interviews. I will defer to CBSA, which is coming in behind me, for that. It's a complex operation, involving over 10 time zones, in a period of time, but we are professionals, and we plan and adjust as required. We're at a little over 21,000 now, and I fully anticipate that we'll make our goal by the end of the month.

Mr. Larry Miller: Did you hear any feedback, Mr. Oldham, from your officials at any time? Did they feel uncomfortable with the process laid out and the time that they had to do it? Can you comment on that at all?

Mr. Craig Oldham: The government operations centre led and coordinated the planning and execution of this operation in consultation with our partners, including all the provinces and territories, the Red Cross, and the International Organization for Migration, all of which are working within my operations centre now to deliver this.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Oldham.

I will remind the committee that we're into the five-minute rounds now.

Ms. Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Thank you for being here.

I want to just touch on the need for our first responders and public safety officers to be able to perform their duties at their very best. It's important not only for the individuals themselves but also in a broader sense for our public safety and national security. PTSD or post-traumatic stress disorder—it's now being called an occupational stress injury, which I think is a better term—includes mental injuries themselves, as well as the high incidence of depression, suicide, alcohol and addiction issues, and marriage breakdown that we see in our first responders and public safety officers.

One of the things I've read about is how a lack of research and a coordinated national strategy dealing with OSI, and also focusing on prevention, education, and recovery, is holding a lot of institutions back from being able to deal with this. I'm just wondering where we are on the development of a national strategy, and also whether you can speak to the coordination of efforts, because this certainly covers a broad range of agencies.

Ms. Gina Wilson: Thank you for that.

I, along with our parliamentary secretary, Mr. Michel Picard, attended a round table very recently, which was called by Minister

Goodale. There were, I would say, probably 50 people involved in those discussions. First responders were well represented there. Certainly research did come up, as well as prevention, education, and all of those issues you mentioned. I certainly saw a tremendous amount of convergence at that particular table, and I would say we're well on our way to launching a national action plan per se, or to building the foundation for that national action plan. The sense was that more work needed to be done amongst the constituencies of those first responder organizations in particular. They needed to go back to the grassroots and get a better sense on some of those pieces.

Craig, is there anything else you need to add on that particular issue in terms of an update on the actual action plan?

Mr. Craig Oldham: Really, the round table with the University of Regina was very important and made great headway. The things that came out of that worked to define the problem and exactly what it is to talk about options around developing evidence-based national standards for assessment, treatment, and long-term care. That, of course, will all feed into the plan. That's where we are at this point.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Has anyone ever looked at what the cost of OSI is?

Ms. Gina Wilson: I would say that's a really difficult item to tabulate at this point in time. We've probably been able to tabulate some early key deliverables in moving the agenda forward in the next few years, but we definitely don't have a sense of the costs at this point in time.

● (1155)

Ms. Pam Damoff: I ask because one of the issues I suspect is that there's not really a definition of what's included. Is that probably a good—

Ms. Gina Wilson: That's correct. As Craig said, a lot of the discussion at the round table was about putting some definition to what we're looking at. There are probably various aspects of this that we haven't even contemplated yet in the consultations that we're moving forward with.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Something else that I've read is that it's probably under-reported because of the stigma attached to it. We likely—in fact, I know we do—have people working today who are suffering with issues and who probably shouldn't be at work but should be getting treatment.

Ms. Gina Wilson: That's absolutely the case. That too was raised as a significant issue at the round table.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Do you do any work with Roméo Dallaire's institute? He's been doing a lot on this. There's certainly overlap between veterans and public safety officers, first responders, and I know he's been doing a lot of work on that.

Ms. Gina Wilson: I can't say if they were represented at this particular round table. Certainly, Veterans Affairs was there with some of the expertise they have in working on this issue. Thank you for that note. We'll certainly follow up.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I think that's all I have.

The Chair: With the chair's prerogative, used sparingly, could I ask if there is or will be a public report from that round table, or is this an internal...?

Ms. Gina Wilson: There will be a report that comes out from that round table, and I'd be happy to make that available to the committee.

The Chair: It would be great if it could be sent to the committee.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Rayes.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Good morning.

I would like to join my colleagues in thanking you for being with us today.

I have three questions.

I'm going to pick up on what my colleague, Mr. Miller, was saying about Syrian refugees coming to Canada. Mr. Oldham pointed out that, if everything goes smoothly, we should hit the target of 25,000 refugees by month's end. We are hearing that the government wants to increase that target to 50,000 by the end of the year, if I'm not mistaken.

You said that a number of screening measures were being carried out on the ground. The process is the same for any refugee wanting to come to Canada.

My question is very straightforward. It's a fact that Syria has more terrorist cells than anywhere else in the world. What percentage of refugee applicants were denied during the screening process because they were found to pose a potential risk? Is that a figure you could kindly provide us with?

Ms. Gina Wilson: I don't think we are able to answer that kind of question. Officials from the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship would be better-suited to answer that.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Very well.

That means that the people working for you who carried out the screening—

Ms. Gina Wilson: They weren't necessarily people working for the public safety department.

[English]

I believe most of them do work for IRCC, the actual screeners.

Mr. Craig Oldham: It's a combination of screeners from different departments and agencies, and we simply don't have that kind of data at this point. Also, we need to consider that whenever there is any doubt of any sort, people are simply set aside. You could be set aside because you just don't have all your data, or it could be for another reason. We're not at the point in the operation where we've had an opportunity to go back through all of that and look at the data. The answer is simply that it isn't available to us at this point.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes: Your department is responsible for public safety. And I believe that many Canadians are worried about

terrorism, in light of all the occurrences of terrorism happening around the world. It would be helpful to have that percentage, but we'll ask the other witnesses questions.

My second question pertains to the counter-radicalization office. I'm very glad to learn that best practices in use throughout the entire country are being taken into account. I'm also very glad to see that the city of Montreal is leading the way with such an initiative. I would have preferred, however, for Canada to take that lead.

Much has been said about the desire to communicate with stakeholders such as police forces, municipalities and provinces. But there has been no mention of schools. This is an issue that affects young people. I'm wondering whether that was taken into consideration. I used to be a school principal. I have also been a mayor and a teacher. I think young people are the most susceptible to radicalization.

My colleague brought up human trafficking, which also ties into this.

What measures do you intend to take to have an impact in all those settings? There are countless elementary and secondary schools, not to mention colleges and universities.

● (1200)

Ms. Monik Beauregard: Earlier, when I was talking about the communities we wanted to work with, in conjunction with the community groups on the ground, I didn't mention schools, but there is no question that they are included.

In fact, I encourage you to ask that question to RCMP officials when they appear before the committee. I know the RCMP has done a lot of work with schools in the past to raise both student and teacher awareness, as well as with youth community centres, to help them understand what being radicalized means and what the signs are. It's also necessary to work with teachers and coaches, especially, so that they can watch for and recognize the signs. That way, when they think that a young person has been radicalized, they will be able to report it.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Actually, my question is more specific. With respect to the counter-radicalization office, I know that the RCMP, the Quebec provincial police, and other police forces engage in outreach and education. I've seen it for myself, in fact. They do an excellent job. What I'm interested in, however, are really the efforts made to detect these kinds of cases, from a public safety standpoint.

Are there policies you would like to put in place, as you are looking to do with the municipalities and as Montreal has tried to do? Do you plan to establish a direct line of communication with school principals?

The Chair: Please keep your answer short, Ms. Beauregard.

Ms. Monik Beauregard: Are you referring to measures for detecting individuals engaged in radicalization?

Mr. Alain Rayes: Yes.

Ms. Monik Beauregard: Within our portfolio, we, too, endeavour to target those individuals. But that's not necessarily part of the same outreach work. It's done more within the portfolio, in cooperation with the RCMP and the Canada Border Services Agency.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Beauregard.
[English]

We started a couple of minutes late, so I think I can give Mr. Erskine-Smith three minutes.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Thank you.

Thank you, all. I'll be brief and keep my questions as short as I can.

With respect to the no-fly list in the Secure Air Travel Act, have any Canadians been mistakenly placed on the list since its inception?

Ms. Gina Wilson: Yes.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Has the department reviewed the appeal mechanism? In the department's experience, is the appeal mechanism satisfactory or is it something this committee should look at?

Ms. Gina Wilson: In the spirit of continuous improvement, we're definitely looking at it.

Monik, are there other things to add?

Ms. Monik Beauregard: Yes. This is something that will no doubt be part of the consultation process that we want to do around the new national security framework that we want for Canada and Canadians.

Yes, we're always looking to continuous improvement.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Thank you.

With respect to the kinetic powers that have been granted to CSIS, you'll hear the word "kinetic" all the time. Can you give this committee a few examples of what those kinetic powers are in the new powers that CSIS has been granted?

Ms. Gina Wilson: I certainly can't.

Ms. Monik Beauregard: I would recommend that you ask CSIS that question.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Okay.

With respect to the information-sharing provisions under the Canada information sharing act, can you explain to this committee to what extent information-sharing has increased since that act's inception?

Ms. Monik Beauregard: We would have to come back to you on that to demonstrate how it's been increased.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Thank you.

With respect to preventative detention, to your knowledge has it been used since the inception of the act?

Ms. Monik Beauregard: I don't think it has, but that's a very precise question that we can get back to you on.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Thank you.

To move away from that topic—I'll ask CSIS those questions, perhaps—my colleague Mr. Mendicino raised the issue of cybercrime. I'd like to explore the issue of financing a little bit more, specifically such tools as Bitcoin, Silk Road, and the darknet market, as a topic of study that perhaps this committee could look at.

Can you speak to what tools the department has looked at and is currently using, and the tools it's currently looking to use in the future? As well, is this an area of study that you would suggest this committee look at?

Ms. Gina Wilson: Many of the questions you've asked are very focused and very targeted indeed. We'd be glad to come back with some kind of briefing that's more specific to that particular line of questioning.

At this point in time, I would ask my colleagues if they have anything to add about the tools that we specifically use.

• (1205)

Ms. Monik Beauregard: Given the time we have, I would just invite you to the Public Safety website. We have a very full page on cyber. It walks you through all the cybersecurity programs that we have in place. It gives you a sense of who we work with and what our objectives are.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Thanks very much.

The Chair: To our guests, thank you for your time today.

Ms. Gina Wilson: It's our pleasure. Thank you.

The Chair: We'll take a couple of minutes as we switch over to our next guests.

• (1205)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (1205)

The Chair: Thank you very much for joining us.

We are beginning the first session of a new Parliament. We are a new committee, getting our feet wet on a variety of issues. Among the vast number of issues within the public safety and national security umbrella, CBSA is certainly of keen interest to us. Thank you for accepting our invitation to come today.

I understand that Ms. Semaan will give a presentation—

Yes, Mr. O'Toole.

• (1210)

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order with respect to the chair's violation of Standing Order 108(2). I'll lay out the grounds for my point of order.

This Parliament has been sitting for over 100 days. We've had 30 sitting days. This is our third meeting of the standing committee. As all members know, at the first meeting I asked for the committee to look at two specific items: radicalization and terrorism related to domestic radicalization, and the security screening of Syrian refugees.

My question today is based on *The Globe and Mail* story on the 12 young radicalized women from Canada. The minister's spokesperson's comment in that story about a community outreach office and a counter-radicalization coordinator and strategy are all issues this committee should be seized with. Ms. Beauregard—I didn't want to interrupt that first session—said that the radicalization issue was one of the priorities of the government.

The violation, Mr. Chair, was that yesterday, in conversation on the Hill with MPs and staff, you were heard to directly say that the strategy on the security and public safety committee was to delay new work of the committee because of the heavy workload on the physician-assisted dying committee.

I certainly respect the fact that you are juggling a lot of things. You're very talented. But when that comment was relayed to me, having raised these specific issues in our first meeting, having read in the paper about the minister's comments on new programs....

Standing Order 108(2) says that committees are “empowered to study and report on all matters” relating to their mandate. I feel that this is being purposely delayed. I suggest that we cease all agenda items, have an immediate meeting, or that one be scheduled today, of the subcommittee on agenda, and have those two items placed on the agenda.

We've now had two meetings that are essentially review—

The Chair: I think we're into debate on this as opposed to a point of order, so—

Hon. Erin O'Toole: No, this is a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I think that the chair decides if it's a point of order. You may suggest something is a point of order. Let me be very clear that the work of this committee is continuing exactly by motion. There was a motion passed to set the agenda items for these three meetings. Let me assure you there is no delay taking place. We are continuing to do our work.

There was a motion passed that requested our analysts do a briefing with us at our second meeting. We had a similar motion passed that we are now continuing to do and that is to invite officials for continued work, to lay the groundwork. We will continue to do this work as has been passed by motion of this committee. There is no delay. The work is proceeding as you as a committee have voted, as opposed to anything to do with me whatsoever. It has to do with the motions passed.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, on Tuesday with MPs and staff, did you not say that—

The Chair: I did not say anything about delaying the committee or this work. Absolutely categorically I did not say that we delay this work, especially about another committee.

[Translation]

Mr. Nicola Di Iorio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): May I speak? I'd like to comment on what Mr. O'Toole said.

[English]

The Chair: I don't think this is debatable. I have ruled it's not a point of order so we're going to continue with our work.

Thank you very much and excuse us.

Ms. Nada Semaan (Executive Vice-President, Canada Border Services Agency): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and good afternoon everybody.

[Translation]

I am pleased to appear before this committee to provide an overview of the Canada Border Services Agency and outline some of our key priorities.

[English]

My name is Nada Semaan and I'm the executive vice-president of the Canada Border Services Agency. I'm joined today by two members of our senior management team, Mr. Martin Bolduc, our vice-president of programs branch and Ms. Caroline Xavier, our vice-president of operations.

● (1215)

[Translation]

We have prepared a brief overview presentation for the committee's reference and will be happy to answer your questions.

[English]

In particular, Mr. Chair, we look forward to working with the members of this committee as you move forward on your mandate. The Canada Border Services Agency was established in December 2003. Its creation integrated border functions related to customs, immigration, enforcement, and food, plant, and animal inspection.

[Translation]

Today we are the second-largest law enforcement organization in the country.

[English]

While the environment in which we operate continues to evolve, the CBSA's dual mandate remains the same. We support both national security and economic prosperity by preventing the entry of those travellers or goods posing a potential threat to Canada while at the same time facilitating the flow of people and legitimate goods across the borders.

The Canada Border Services Agency Act is our enabling legislation. It sets out the responsibilities, mandate, powers, and duties of the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, as well as those of the president. We administer and enforce the Customs Act, which outlines our responsibilities to collect duties and taxes on imported goods, interdict illegal goods, and administer trade legislation and agreements.

With Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, we share responsibility for administering the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, also known as IRPA. IRPA governs both the admissibility of people into Canada and the identification, detention, and removal of those deemed to be inadmissible under the act.

[Translation]

Finally, the agency enforces over 90 other statutes on behalf of federal departments and agencies.

[English]

To support this work, the agency has a total budget in 2015-16 of approximately \$1.87 billion. Most of this budget covers operating expenditures required for ongoing border management. Included in this amount, the agency was allocated \$223 million for investments in information technology and ports of entry, as well as \$182 million for employee benefit plans.

We are a big operation and we function 24-7, 365 days a year. Our workforce of 14,000 employees includes approximately 6,700 uniformed border service officers who operate across Canada at airports, marine ports, land ports of entry, and remote border crossings, as well as overseas.

[Translation]

Our staff are proud and professional, and take their responsibilities seriously.

[English]

We have shared with the committee some presentation slides that give a sense of our operating environment, in order to highlight the important role the agency plays in supporting Canada's security and prosperity both at home and abroad.

You'll also see that we shared with you a little handy cheat sheet that shows that we processed last year approximately 97.5 million travellers who entered Canada, which means that the agency processed over 260,000 travellers on an average day.

[Translation]

One-third of these travellers arrived by air and close to two-thirds, by land.

[English]

We processed tens of millions of commercial shipments. In terms of trade between Canada and the United States alone, the CBSA facilitated approximately \$1.4 million in goods every minute last year.

[Translation]

We collected about \$29 billion in duties and taxes, which accounts for 10% of the Government of Canada's revenues.

[English]

We made over 8,000 drug seizures worth over \$400 million; 7,400 weapons and firearms seizures; and 43,000 seizures of prohibited food, plants, and animals.

Finally, we removed over 11,000 individuals who were deemed inadmissible to Canada.

[Translation]

The CBSA is the first point of contact for travellers and goods arriving to Canada. We are, in effect, the face of Canada.

[English]

As such, underpinning our efforts is a strong commitment to service excellence rooted in our core values of integrity, respect, and professionalism. For travellers and trade partners, our goal is to help them reach their destination with minimal interventions. For

importers and exporters, we want to ensure that appropriate regulations and laws are applied and that duties and taxes are collected.

[Translation]

We publish and report on our service standards on our website. There are a variety of internal and external complaint and redress mechanisms available for both the public and businesses.

[English]

Our work is organized along four major business lines, plus the internal services that are required to support the agency. First is the traveller program, which aims at facilitating the flow of admissible travellers. The commercial and trade program concentrates on the importation and export of commercial goods. The enforcement and intelligence program identifies high risks and targets before people and goods enter Canada, enforces customs and immigration laws, and pursues criminal prosecution. The border services management program involves the development of our frontline border service officer workforce, our supporting infrastructure, and our innovation in science and engineering.

• (1220)

[Translation]

Internal services refers to the information technology and corporate processes that support our business.

[English]

Border management is increasingly complex and requires global co-operation. By 2025 it is expected that global trade, the flow of goods and services and finance, will be worth approximately \$85 trillion dollars. Up to 50% of the world's GDP is based on trade, with most growth expected in emerging economies. Trade flows and what we do at the border impact Canada's GDP.

At the same time, we must keep pace with emerging security risks like cyber-attacks, and improve our security monitoring to detect, for example, synthetic designer drugs, or insects and organisms that could compromise our food supply or our natural environment.

[Translation]

Organized cross-border crime is increasingly networked and tech-savvy, which demands vigilance.

[English]

The effects of the global refugee crisis led last year to the largest mass migration since World War II, and one that the agency has been particularly involved in with the screening and admission of 25,000 Syrian refugees. At the same time, we work with global and domestic partners in countering or preventing a range of threats, be they posed by organized crime, human smugglers, terrorists, or global human and/or animal health.

[Translation]

Partnerships are key to our agency's effectiveness.

Naturally, we work closely with our Government of Canada partners—most closely with other agencies in the public safety portfolio, who you will be hearing from next week.

[*English*]

We also have strong working relationships with provincial and municipal law enforcement agencies across the country.

[*Translation*]

We consult frequently with airport and bridge authorities, where there is significant interest in working with us to modernize infrastructure.

[*English*]

Industry stakeholders as well, such as the Business Council of Canada, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, as well as the Canadian/American Border Trade Alliance, and the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region are all key interlocutors and important partners in our modernization efforts. Internationally we have an important relationship with the United States for both security and economic prosperity. The CBSA also works mostly with the Department of Homeland Security and its constituent parts, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

[*Translation*]

We have a growing relationship with Mexico, where there is an opportunity to expand co-operation in areas such as trusted travellers.

[*English*]

The CBSA also participates in an intelligence alliance with Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States. We engage with these countries bilaterally and in different fora on border, trade, and security issues. We also play a constructive role through the World Customs Organization to work with large trading partners and with developing countries to promote common approaches and facilitate global trade flows.

Mr. Chair, I'm nearing the end of my presentation. I would end my opening remarks and conclude with a few words about some of our key priorities to improve border management.

We take pride in the agency's contribution to the whole-of-government effort to help resettle Syrian refugees. Over 21,000 refugees have arrived in Canada to date. The CBSA has been a key player, both through overseas security screening and through the processing of newcomers upon landing.

[*Translation*]

We continue to help strengthen trilateral North American co-operation with the United States and Mexico.

[*English*]

This includes working in areas that improve border security while supporting trade and facilitating the movement of people. The CBSA continues to innovate in order to better serve clients and modernize border efficiency and security. To this end, we have a number of transformative information technology projects under way.

Finally, we are making a significant effort to upgrade more than 70 land ports of entry located across the country.

For these reasons, Mr. Chair, it is truly a rewarding and exciting time to be working at the Canada Border Services Agency.

I do thank you for your attention while I went through our processes. My colleagues and I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

● (1225)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Semaan.

Mr. Di Iorio.

Mr. Nicola Di Iorio: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[*Translation*]

Good afternoon, Ms. Semaan.

I would like to begin by echoing the comments of my colleague Mr. Spengemann, when he welcomed the previous witnesses to the committee. I want to thank you very much for the work that you and your thousands of colleagues do every day. We are extremely grateful.

You made an important point. You and your colleagues are the first point of contact for travellers arriving to Canada. You even called yourselves the face of Canada.

Two things concern me, so I'd like to discuss them in order to get some clarification from you. I'm referring to best practices and a review process. Allow me to explain.

Canada sees itself as a friendly and welcoming country, and that idea is founded on two important elements. The first is that it reflects Canada's true identity. It's in our nature as Canadians to be warm and welcoming. Clearly, then, that's the image the country wants to project. Second, a very important practical consideration comes into play. By being a welcoming country, we will attract more people. It improves our capacity to attract the best immigrants, the best tourists and the best partners in business.

Now I'm getting to my point. I mentioned best practices and review. Is there a review mechanism in place to ensure that, physically and materially, officers present themselves in the best manner possible when a traveller arrives at Canada's borders?

As far as best practices go, we pay attention to how we stack up against other countries. We have all travelled to other countries and noticed that the material manner in which officers present themselves differs from country to country. Officers who welcome people to Canada look a certain way. The way they present themselves materially is comparable to that of the U.S., for instance. But when we travel to countries such as China or Israel, which do, after all, have major concerns around security, we can see that the way in which their officers present themselves is entirely different. And that outward presentation can deter ill-intentioned people.

In other words, we want to attract tourists and business people and we want them to have a positive image of Canada.

Do you have some sort of review mechanism to ensure that the outward presentation of our officers is in line with best practices around the world?

Ms. Nada Semaan: Thank you very much.

I will begin. Afterwards, I will see if anyone wants to add something. I will be speaking French, but—

Mr. Nicola Di Iorio: Please feel free to answer me in English.

[English]

Ms. Nada Semaan: First of all, there are a lot of mechanisms for review. As part of an agency within the Government of Canada, we have agents of Parliament such as the OAG, the Privacy Commissioner, the Information Commissioner, and the Commissioner of Official Languages, and all of them review our services.

However, internally, which I think was more what your question was about, what do we have for review? We have an internal recourse program that is separate from operations. Anybody who has any complaints whatsoever, or who has an appeal, or who has had a reinforcement action and doesn't agree with it, can call the recourse program and they will be heard by an independent person in terms of what happened at the border—

Mr. Nicola Di Iorio: I'm sorry if I interrupt you. My question is more specific.

I want to know if you compare the way Canadians and foreigners are welcomed to our borders with best practices around the world. How are we welcomed when we go to China, for example, or when we go to Israel, which are countries that have very high security concerns? But materially, the way their agents are dressed and the way they physically address foreigners is very different from the way we address foreigners and our own citizens. Do you review those processes, do you review those practices, on a regular basis?

Ms. Nada Semaan: Absolutely, part of my introduction was also how we work with the World Customs Organization. We have a number of partners we work with, but absolutely, we always review for best practices. We review both in terms of a security perspective but also in terms of a welcoming perspective. It's easy to enforce our security while at the same time making sure that the face of Canada and that welcoming of Canada is also presented at the same time.

For us, that's very important. The service and the enforcement weigh equally in terms of our delivery.

You're right that some countries lean more towards enforcement. For us, you don't have to compromise enforcement while still being respectful and providing excellent service. There is no difference between Canadians and foreigners who come in—the respect is equal.

• (1230)

Mr. Nicola Di Iorio: But my point was the exact opposite. The impression when going to countries like China or Israel—I name those because there are very high security concerns in those countries—is that often people don't have the same approach and their authorities don't have the same approach as ours. Ours is more similar to the U.S. where there is more of a notion of brute force that is being projected than what you will see in those countries where

their methods have been refined. Therefore, it is either neutral or even more welcoming.

That's my question. Do you compare with what other countries do?

Ms. Nada Semaan: We do, and I will let Caroline, who is our head of operations, discuss what we currently do, but absolutely, we do.

[Translation]

Ms. Caroline Xavier (Vice-President, Operations Branch, Canada Border Services Agency): I would like to add that service is primordial to us at the agency. I can tell you that we in fact examine the practices and standards of other countries, including those of the Group of Five, but we go beyond that. As Ms. Semaan said, we are a member of the World Customs Organization.

Given all the work we do to strengthen our capacity and other aspects, the agency is highly regarded for its services and its professionalism. In fact, other international organizations often contact us to see how we provide our training.

At the CBSA College in Rigaud, we put a lot of emphasis on service and that continues to evolve on a daily basis. We want to ensure that we are always up to date, as you said, with regard to what other countries are doing. We are always renewing the training we provide our officers.

As Ms. Semaan mentioned, we examine the complaints we receive to see how we can improve our services; we learn from those complaints. However, we receive a great many compliments about our services. It is true we always receive more complaints than compliments, but those who complain come and tell us immediately.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Xavier.

[English]

Mr. O'Toole.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much to our witnesses. I appreciated your testimony.

Ms. Xavier, it's nice to see you again.

In particular, on page 7 of your presentation you talk about the role of CBSA in screening and that hundreds of thousands are done at the border here in North America. It's very impressive work. The last government was very proud of trying to give new tools and resources to handle the volumes you face, so we appreciate that.

When it comes to the Syrian program you mentioned 25,000 in your report, but this morning Mr. Oldham mentioned the number was 21,000 currently screened. When we had questions about the screening he deferred to you. You were the second act today. My questions are going to be focusing on that.

How many CBSA officials were involved on the ground in the three locations overseas in the screening for this program?

Ms. Nada Semaan: I will ask Caroline to jump in on the detailed numbers, but we're happy to be the second act in this. You're correct, it is 21,000 to date but the goal is, as you're aware, 25,000 to the end of February.

But the security....

You can answer the numbers and then we can go to the other questions.

Ms. Caroline Xavier: I won't be telling you what the numbers are. For reasons of security we're not divulging how many officers we have in situ who are performing the duties.

I can tell you that we have had a series of rotations of staff who have gone abroad to support the initiative, and we're doing so through a couple of mechanisms. We are lending them to the IRCC as visa officers, and they are also participating as part of the interviews and providing support to them with regard to document integrity, guidance and so on for the screening.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: I certainly don't want to stray into areas that could violate sensitive information.

Have you been on the ground yourself to see any of the work?

•(1235)

Ms. Caroline Xavier: I have not yet been, but I will be there by the weekend.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Have a safe trip.

We won't say the number, but of your officials who have been on the ground, how many have language skills for the region?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Again, I won't speak to the numbers, but in general all our officers are supported by translators. Some of our officers who have been stationed in situ have language skills, and we have the same capacity at the port of entry.

We've ensured that as refugees arrive, they are being welcomed by some of our officers who have the language skills as well as by the translators who are supporting the effort.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Would it be fair to say that's mainly through translation?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: It's fair to say that the majority would be through translation, because we have officers both from the IRCC department and from our organization who are there with some language skills to assist us in confirming that the translations are of the quality they should be.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Does each rotation you talk about being sent over to this special duty receive special training on culture and security for the region, or is someone pulled off the Ambassador Bridge and sent to Lebanon? How does it work?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: It's all of the above.

Training is provided in advance of somebody being sent overseas. We provide additional support to the visa officers in terms of training and awareness with regard to the types of questions and intelligence information on the country itself, so yes, training is provided to all officers and all staff who are sent abroad.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Would you be able to share with the committee the types of questions asked?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: No, we will not be able to share the types of questions that are asked.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: How long is each interview and how many people are involved? For example, if it's a family, are there four or five people in the cubicle?

I've seen some of it on television. Are these interviews 10 minutes, 15 minutes, or 20 minutes, on average?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: In terms of the process, the preliminary interview is done by the IRCC department, so the visa screening officer does the preliminary interview overseas. As I mentioned, it's a multi-layered approach to security.

On average, that interview can take up to an hour, and it is guided by indicators as well as guiding questions that we, along with intelligence and security partners, provide. We are there to provide that additional support to IRCC with regard to the interviews.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: So we're talking about 40 minutes per interview. Is there an average length?

Obviously, when you're planning an end date for the end of February, and you have 4,000 left, you kind of know how quickly....

Ms. Caroline Xavier: On average, we estimate a maximum of an hour, but for clarity as to whether or not that's being respected, the question should be referred to the IRCC, because they're the ones actually doing the interview in situ.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: In terms of biometrics, Mr. Oldham mentioned screening against Canadian and American databases. Certainly if there's a dislocated Syrian family that's been in a refugee camp for a year or more, it's not going to appear on CPIC or any of our databases in North America. How is the biometric data used? What useful comparisons are made?

I think that comparing a fingerprint against our database is irrelevant. We really need databases and intelligence from the region.

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Biometric screening is only one element of the overall screening apparatus that is being used as part of this process. It is only one of the multiple layers of security.

You're absolutely right that sometimes information on some of the biometrics against which we're screening may not be found, but that's why we have the additional support of the interview and a series of other security layers that are being used as part of the process to ensure that we know as much information as possible about the individuals who are coming in.

As Mr Oldham mentioned, and as our minister has mentioned, anybody we're not certain about at this point in time and anybody we require additional information or review on is set aside.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Is it fair to say then the biometrics, which the minister has referred to quite regularly, are less about checking the background of the person and more about making sure the person screened is the person who gets on the plane and gets off in Canada?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: I'd say it's both. I wouldn't say that one is less or more. I'd say that we're doing it for both of those reasons.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: You said earlier that in many cases, a comparison to North American databases isn't as helpful. Have there been cases where biometric screening has led to a flag with a North American database?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: I can't specify exactly that just because somebody was screened, it was hit against X database, so I won't get into that level of detail with you. But I can tell you again that if there was a screening case and there was a concern, and additional information or time was required to review the case, it would be set aside for that purpose.

• (1240)

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Xavier.

Mr. Dubé.

[Translation]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank our witnesses for taking the time today to speak to us about these important issues.

I have several questions about the no-fly list. There was a case that received a lot of media attention recently, about a young boy who was going with his father to the Boston Winter Classic. This prompted the minister to ask questions, which was a very good thing. Today, we read in the media that the investigation is following its course. That is what the minister seems to have said also.

Can you give us a status report on that situation? Having the same name as someone else on the no-fly list is particularly problematic when it involves a child. Has the file moved forward? If not, do you know when these problems will be solved, when these mistakes will be corrected?

Ms. Nada Semaan: There are many reasons why an individual might encounter problems with an airline.

Mr. Bolduc can talk to you about this particular incident.

Mr. Martin Bolduc (Vice-President, Programs Branch, Canada Border Services Agency): Thank you for the question.

The CBSA does not deal with the list as such. That list is managed by Public Safety Canada and Transport Canada. Consequently, if the name of a passenger who comes to the counter is on that list, Transport Canada will inform the airline company that that person cannot board the plane, because he constitutes a threat to airline security.

Ms. Nada Semaan: Airline companies also use many other lists. Certain companies do not have the Canadian list, but use the American no-fly list. We have nothing to do with that list.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: That interests me. We may have run out of time with the previous group of witnesses. I want to take the opportunity to talk to you about this, since your work is related.

The situation is similar regarding cooperation with the Americans. Whether we like it or not, we have our public policies on security and the lists of people who are allowed to fly or not, and the Americans have theirs.

Over the years, even before the recent incidents, we have often seen problems involving lists that are not compatible. Is that problem close to a resolution?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: I will not refer to particular lists, but I can tell you that we co-operate with our American colleagues on a daily basis. There is an American officer in our National Targeting Centre, and a Canadian officer in the American Targeting Centre.

Our approach is to secure the perimeter. With that in mind we have daily exchanges on various files. This does not only concern national security files, but also criminal organizations and so on. We co-operate on a daily basis.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: That is good, thank you.

[English]

On a completely different line of thought, the industry committee did a study a couple of years ago on counterfeit goods that crossed the border. I was wondering if there had been any progress made. I know the committee had some recommendations. I was wondering how that was going.

I know that sports jerseys and things like that were some of the bigger issues that came up. Perhaps we could have as brief an update as possible, being mindful of time, of course.

Ms. Nada Semaan: As you are aware, the CBSA does administer the provisions of the Combating Counterfeit Products Act. When we do detect any potential counterfeit goods that are destined for Canada, while we would stop them, we actually call the RCMP. They're the ones who pursue the enforcement action. We would stop them, but the RCMP would then take over.

One thing is that we do encourage rights holders to file requests for assistance to protect their intellectual property. We've put that on the website, but also they can apply online. You spoke about Canada Goose. That's a great example of people we would encourage to put their products up and apply for it, so that we could then file for assistance and look for it. Then if we did encounter it, we'd call the RCMP.

[Translation]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Perfect, thank you.

I have another question about the products that cross the border. It takes about 40 or 45 minutes by car to go from my riding to the United States. We know that the Canadian dollar is in a sorry state at this time, which may lead some people to change their habits. Do you see a difference in the habits of consumers at the border, as compared to a few years ago, when the dollar was at par, or almost?

• (1245)

Ms. Caroline Xavier: We observe the movement of passengers and goods at the border on a daily basis. We do not see an immediate difference as soon as the dollar goes down, but we observe a change over a longer term. It is too soon to see immediate repercussions.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: I will conclude on the other aspect of this question. Without talking about volume, is there a change in the type of product being consumed? For instance, when the dollar was at par, we often heard about people buying cars in the United States and bringing them into Canada. I understand that it is still too soon to see an impact, but are you already seeing changes with that sort of thing?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: I cannot answer you. I'm going to let Mr. Bolduc answer that question.

Mr. Martin Bolduc: The products that are being imported are mostly products that are consumed daily. Of course when the value of the Canadian dollar is low, luxury goods may be less attractive. But from day to day, we generally see the same type of merchandise being imported.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Of course, thank you.

How much time do I have left, Mr. Chair?

[English]

The Chair: You have 40 seconds.

[Translation]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: I am going to use those 40 seconds to thank all of you again.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

The Chair: Monsieur Spengemann.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to split my time with my colleague, Marco Mendicino.

In the three and a half minutes that I have, I wanted to zoom in on something that was raised with your colleagues earlier, the virtual global commons. As my colleague, Monsieur Dubé, just said, goods and products cross the border in physical form. People cross the border in physical form. Ideas, payments, transactions, documents, and projects cross the border in virtual form. Those of us and members of the public who have had the chance to watch the series *Border Security: Canada's Front Line* will have seen to what extent your colleagues at the enforcement sites are going with respect to reviewing electronic communications, cellphone messages, text messages, and so forth.

My question is twofold. How important are the virtual commons as an enforcement space for you? What are the emerging trends? Then perhaps more specifically, what are two or three key priorities, gaps, or challenges that you see in being able to do your work well through virtual enforcement mechanisms?

Ms. Nada Semaan: You are right; e-commerce is growing and digital commerce is growing exponentially, but at the end of the day they still have to enter Canada, mostly through postal or courier systems. For courier systems, we have information that comes through them. We risk-assess. We can review and assess as it comes in. On postal systems, we also have quite an extensive review. You probably have seen our postal reviews in the border services show.

Goods that come in, whether they come through marine, postal, any format, are reviewed in the same way. We basically have a

number of systems that help us identify, but there are also a lot of manual checks in terms of what we are looking for.

You had other questions.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: At the intersection of goods crossing the border with organized crime and people planning to smuggle goods, a lot of which will be virtual electronic communication, what is your enforcement reach? What are your gaps? What are your challenges? How can we help you to do your job better?

Ms. Nada Semaan: Our enforcement reach is quite extensive with regard to what we see. We have many tools at our disposal, as I mentioned. Not only can we take a look at what's coming in but we can risk-assess. We also do some scenario-based targeting. We look at open source. We do a lot of assessments in terms of looking where goods are. I won't get into the details from a security perspective, but we do have a lot of tools at our disposal to be able, first of all, to identify the goods that may be misrepresented, then look into them and investigate them.

I will ask Caroline, who runs our operations, if she would like to add anything to that.

Ms. Caroline Xavier: We work in partnership, as was mentioned previously, so we rely heavily on intelligence-led information to better advise us on where we want to risk-assess and put our resources. Intelligence information and risk assessment form a great foundation with regard to how we determine where we want to put our resources.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: In terms of individual officers, how accessible are the enforcement tools at the border checkpoints? Reviewing somebody's cellphone is a great way to make sure that the story they tell is veracious and accurate. Are there other enforcement mechanisms at the disposal of the officers, and are they well equipped enough to do their job at the border level?

• (1250)

Ms. Caroline Xavier: As Madam Semaan said, our officers have a series of tools at their disposal at the port of entry, especially when somebody is referred to the secondary inspection, when they have multiple tools at their disposal, including, as you've said, the cellphone and other open-sourced tools and a series of other law enforcement databases. Of course, this is something we continue to review on a regular basis, and it's part of our border modernization to continue to look at what tools we need to put in the hands of our officers to make them more effective at their jobs.

Ms. Nada Semaan: We also have a number of imaging systems as well, where we can actually scan a parcel or something else and can see right then and there if there are any abnormalities.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thank you.

The Chair: You're at four minutes, if you....

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

In the remaining time, let me just begin by saying thank you and echo many of the other comments that have been made today by all of my colleagues.

I think that next to our own staff, we probably interact more with your branch as members of Parliament than anybody else. We see you at the airports and it's always nice to enjoy your service.

It's an expansive department. You have an extensive mandate. In your own words, you interact with customs, the immigration file, the refugee file, intelligence, and conventional law enforcement. You service approximately 267,000 people a day. I think it's actually quite exceptional that we don't hear more concerns from people. However, it's on that last point that I just want to ask you a specific question about oversight.

You mentioned earlier that there are internal mechanisms. I think you called it the internal recourse program. Can you give us some brief stats from the last year about how many files or complaints you had, if those are the right words to use.

The second question I have is with respect to external oversight. As a department, have you begun conversations internally that would build upon recommendations stemming from the Arar inquiry and other public inquiries and coroner's inquiries that have come up in the last several years?

Ms. Nada Semaan: First of all, thank you very much for the question.

We do have a number of other internal processes as well as our recourse branch. In terms of the recourse branch, last year we had 94 million travellers who came to Canada, of whom 2,100 people filed some form of complaint. That represents 0.0023% of all travellers, so we are very proud, as my colleague said, in terms of the number of complaints. We have received a number of compliments as well.

Of those, only 23% were founded. Sixty-seven per cent were actually unfounded, and 10% were undetermined, where you'd sit there and were not quite sure, as it was a he-said-she-said situation and there wasn't enough evidence to go either way.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: And oversight? I ask now just because I'm mindful of the time.

Internally, have you started to have conversations about the appetite to embrace—

Ms. Nada Semaan: Yes. Our minister has been very clear. He wants to consult Canadians on oversight and what they want, and we welcome that. We welcome hearing what Canadians would like, and whatever the results of that will be, we will be absolutely thrilled to put them in place.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Thank you, again, and to your colleagues as well.

Ms. Nada Semaan: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Miller.

Mr. Larry Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our guests for being here.

Ms. Xavier, I think this question will be for you.

We're all aware that in the process at the UN refugee camps—I'm not sure of the numbers and what have you, it doesn't matter—the UN has screened refugees. Do your people still go through the same

process regardless, or do we simply take the UN's words that so-and-so is fine? Can you tell me a little bit about that?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: As you mentioned, many of the refugees we are dealing with are referrals from the UNHCR. We have a long relationship with the UNHCR, who have a great many of years of experience in the screening they do. Having said that, we do receive what they have, but we still do a thorough screening from that perspective. As I mentioned earlier, it's a multi-layered approach to screening. It isn't a case of only accepting at face value what the UNHCR does. We take what they have. It's a good beginning indicator and then we proceed from there.

Mr. Larry Miller: Okay. So basically there is no difference whether they're UNHCR?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: That's correct. We treat security too seriously to just take it lightly like that.

Mr. Larry Miller: That's very good. I'm glad to hear that.

Mr. Martin Bolduc: Mr. Chair, just as a point of clarification, most of the 21,000 refugees who have made it to our borders were not housed in camps. They had been living in theatre for a number of years, renting apartments, so I just wanted that for the precision.... They were not housed in camps administered by the UNHCR.

• (1255)

Mr. Larry Miller: Can you give me a breakdown? How many from camps and...?

Mr. Martin Bolduc: I wouldn't be able to tell you how many of the 21,000, but very, very few came out of camps. Most of the people were already living in the countries where we are operating.

Mr. Larry Miller: Could we ask that those documents be filed? I don't expect you to have them today.

Ms. Caroline Xavier: We'll refer that question to IRCC, as they would be the best to confirm that. We can ask them.

Mr. Larry Miller: Thank you.

I want to switch gears to the difference between “government-sponsored” versus “privately sponsored”. I asked the previous group this question and they had to refer it.

One of the reasons why I ask this is that I've had a number of groups who have been told of the refugees coming to the various communities—and they even know their names—but two and three months later, those privately sponsored refugees still are not there. Yet they have the names of them and what have you. From both a security standpoint and a practicality standpoint, it just kind of perplexes me how it could be that way.

If you know their names and where they're going, why don't you get them on a plane and get them out of there? I know that's easier said than done, but still, once they're out of there, you can concentrate your work on a new group. Could you touch on that?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Sure. Fundamentally, for anything related to GARs and PSRs, definitely IRCC is the expert. They're the ones more specifically to ask the question to, but what I can tell you is that with regard to those who are coming as part of this initiative, PSRs and GARs are having to pack up their lives and then potentially load planes.... I can't speak specifically to the cases you've just mentioned, but there may be a possibility that, although the end point for the PSR knows their name and that they are coming, the "when" is still being confirmed by the actual traveller, because sometimes they're not yet ready to take that plane.

I'm not exactly sure how I could better answer the question without knowing the particulars.

Mr. Larry Miller: That's fair. We won't waste any more time there.

Could you tell me approximately, if you can, what percentage of refugees who come in to be screened basically tell you at the end of it, "Look, we really don't want to go anyplace and we'd sooner stay here because we're hoping to go back to our homeland"? That's normal enough.

Could you give me any idea of what the numbers might be there?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: No, I'm not the authority to tell you what those numbers are. IRCC would be the better authority to confirm those numbers.

Mr. Larry Miller: Could we also get that information?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: We can pass that on to our IRCC colleagues, for sure.

Mr. Larry Miller: I think we've covered my questions on interview, length of time, and what have you. Do you or your people in the field at any point feel uncomfortable with the process that has been shoved upon you?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: As an official of the CBSA, we take security very seriously, as mentioned earlier, and this is not being compromised. I can tell you from an official's perspective and from the one who runs operations that I feel very comfortable, and my officers both overseas and here are doing the job they need to do to ensure the protection of Canadians.

Mr. Larry Miller: Do you have enough—

The Chair: Thank you very much. We're at our time.

Since there are only two minutes, we can take one and a half minutes.

Mr. Erskine-Smith.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: All right.

In your opening remarks, you mentioned that organized cross-border crime is increasingly networked and tech savvy. You went on to say that the CBSA is working on a number of transformative

information technology projects that are under way. Can you give us an example of a few of these, what their statuses are, and what the projects are?

Ms. Nada Semaan: Absolutely.

First of all, we have scenario-based targeting systems we're looking at that allow us to look at screening indicators to identify higher risk, whether it be travellers or cargo. That's a new tool that has been helping us.

In terms of our transformation, I could probably break it down better from a traveller perspective and then from a commercial perspective, in terms of how we're facilitating.

On the traveller side, things such as the NEXUS program, which you're very aware of I'm sure, actually help us pre-screen, identify risks, and allow us to facilitate travellers a lot more.

On the commercial side, we have things such as the single window initiative, which is basically an automated.... Previously if somebody wanted to bring goods, they needed to let us know. They would have to apply to, potentially, the CFIA and a number of our colleague departments. Now they can go through one department and identify all their requirements and get the regulatory requirements done once.

We have a trusted trader program as well, which allows us, again, to pre-screen trading and allows us to facilitate. Other programs that we're working on are enhanced facilities for trusted programs as well. The radio frequency identification initiative basically allows people with the radio frequency identification card to be able to... such as a NEXUS. When you're at a land border, if you scan it through, we get the information right away, so that by the time you've driven through we have the information on the screen, allowing you to be processed quicker.

Also on the commercial side, we have our e-manifest—

I could go on and on, so I guess I should stop.

We have also our e-manifest solution, which will allow us to pre-look at cargo before it comes here and risk-assess it. It allows cargo to then move a lot faster from a trade perspective.

• (1300)

The Chair: Thank you very much, and thank you for your public service. Thank you for being with us today and being so helpful.

It being 1:01 p.m., we are now going to adjourn this meeting and we will reconvene on Tuesday at our last meeting of foundational meetings with briefings from the department officials so we can continue our work.

Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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