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Chair

Mr. Robert Oliphant

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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.)): I'm going to call this meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security to order.

I thank our witnesses and guests for coming today. This meeting is to consider the supplementary estimates (C) for the year 2015-16. As a reminder, the meeting is televised.

We're very pleased to have the Honourable Ralph Goodale, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness with us, as well as many senior officials. It is a great honour for us to see you once again.

We're going to have two rounds of questioning. I want to leave about five minutes at the end of the meeting for the vote on the supplementary estimates, which I understand should happen fairly easily. That is my hope.

We are going to begin with a 10-minute presentation from the minister. Thank you for being with us.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): Mr. Chair, thank you very much. I offer my sincere apologies to you and members of the committee. I was stranded in another meeting that ran a few minutes over time and I apologize for not being here exactly on time.

It is a pleasure to appear before this committee for the first time as Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, and specifically to discuss the estimates.

I want to say that with respect to the estimates process, as members who study old speeches from the House of Commons will know, I very much support the efforts that Minister Brison at Treasury Board is leading to try to improve the ability of parliamentarians both to have effective oversight with respect to the spending plans of the government and to connect the budget process to the estimates process and the public accounts process, so that everyone can follow the money and make intelligent decisions about controlling the public purse. I hope that over the course of this Parliament we will be able to make substantial progress towards greater transparency with respect to government spending.

Today, I am joined by a number of familiar faces. I will introduce my deputy minister, François Guimont, who heads the public service within Public Safety Canada. I would ask François to introduce the

other officials at the table, many of whom I know this committee already knows.

Mr. François Guimont (Deputy Minister, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness):

Thank you, Minister. Good morning to all of you. I present Don Head, whom most of you probably know from Correctional Service Canada; Nada Semaan, executive vice-president with the Canada Border Services Agency; Commissioner Paulson, with us this morning as well, from the RCMP; Michel Coulombe, director of Canadian Security Intelligence Service, CSIS; and Mr. Harvey Cenaiko who is the chairperson of the Parole Board of Canada.

• (1110)

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Thank you, François.

As committee members already know from your previous encounters with officials and heads of the various agencies within the public safety portfolio, this mandate in this portfolio is both large and complex. It encompasses a vast array of responsibilities: national security, emergency management, law enforcement, corrections, crime prevention, and border security.

I am continually impressed by the work that is being done by the dedicated public servants who make up this portfolio in fulfilling the basic mandate that we have from the Prime Minister. It's a mandate that is inherent in this portfolio: keep Canadians safe, and do so in a way that respects their rights, their freedoms, and the values of this country.

No matter how assiduous public servants are, there is always more work to do.

At the outset today, I'd like to address two or three of the top-of-mind issues that we're working on, issues that Canadians are concerned about and on which they are expecting leadership and progress.

First, as members will know, we have moved ahead with real purpose and intent on the issue of post-traumatic stress injuries, or what people now refer to as operational stress injuries. They are disproportionately high among first responders due to the nature of the jobs that first responders are asked to do.

Every day police officers, firefighters, border officers, and others in high-stress situations are risking their lives for the safety of other Canadians. At the end of the day, very often they do not have access to the resources and the support systems they need to help them cope with the trauma they experience in their jobs.

We held an excellent national round table on PTSD, or OSI, in Regina, back in January. It was a first step toward an inclusive national conversation about how we can better support front-line responders.

I understand this committee is going to be studying this important issue, and I will certainly follow your deliberations on that topic with a great deal of care.

Another topic of urgency is the whole question of workplace harassment in the national police force. That was referred to explicitly in my mandate letter from the Prime Minister. We want healthy workplaces that are free from harassment and sexual violence.

RCMP members perform an absolutely critical role in our communities. Canadians expect a high standard from them in terms of professional and exemplary behaviour. I am committed to taking whatever action is necessary to help RCMP members, trainees, and employees feel safe and respected among their colleagues and superiors. I know the commissioner has been hard at work on that challenge over the last period of time as well.

In that regard, I wrote to the chair of the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP on February 4 this year to ask him to undertake a comprehensive assessment of RCMP policies and procedures in the workplace about harassment, and to evaluate the implementation in the force of the recommendations that the commission made back in 2013.

I note as well that RCMP Commissioner Paulson has asked Paul Kennedy, a former chair of the commission for public complaints against the RCMP, to act as an independent observer and monitor on the investigation that's currently under way with respect to certain allegations of misconduct at the police college. This is a topic that has been of concern to Canadians, and we need to ensure that we're responding on all fronts.

Finally, I want to mention the greatest challenge to our national security as another topic of important concern to me, and I'm sure to members of the committee, and that is the twofold threat of terrorism and radicalization to violence.

As committee members know, we are undertaking broad consultations about Canada's national security framework with stakeholders that include parliamentarians, subject matter experts, the general public, and our foreign partners.

I welcome and actively seek the input of members of all parties to contribute to this review process. Indeed, a number of MPs and a number of senators have already come forward to make offers.

• (1115)

Mr. Chair, I would welcome the advice of this committee about how this committee would want to participate in the consultative process, both hearing from other members of Parliament, but also hearing from the general public about our national security framework.

Among our top priorities is the establishment of a designated Canadian office on community outreach and counter-radicalization coordination. The goal is to find, promote, and share the best ways

with communities to prevent and combat radicalization and to build resilient communities and resilient individuals.

The Aga Khan, a very respected citizen of the world, a global activist for peace, and a great friend of Canada, has described our country as the finest expression of pluralism the world has ever seen. If we wish to continue that success, we need to work very hard to share, instill, celebrate, and practise our precious Canadian values of openness, diversity, inclusion, respect, and accommodation, and I hope our new office of community outreach will contribute to that effort.

I'm also working, as you know, with the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons to create a statutory committee of parliamentarians that will help scrutinize government departments and agencies that exercise national security responsibilities. That was a fundamental election promise that we made. Canada is an anomaly at the present time in not having a parliamentary review mechanism with respect to security and intelligence operations. All of our major allies, including those in the Five Eyes—the U.S., the U.K., New Zealand, and Australia—have such a parliamentary vehicle. We intend to fill the gap in Canada and provide that kind of review mechanism in Canada, too.

In the process we will also review what other kinds of vehicles and mechanisms we need in order to properly overview and scrutinize the activities of our security and intelligence operations. Other countries typically have a number of different vehicles including a parliamentary one. We at present don't have that parliamentary one and we will fill that gap.

The objectives are twofold here. Number one is to make sure that our security and police operations are effective in keeping Canadians safe. Number two is to make sure that in the process of doing so they are safeguarding the values, the rights, the freedoms, and the fundamental character of our country.

Mr. Chair, specifically about estimates and supplementary estimates (C), as you will see for the portfolio overall, the total authorities that we are seeking will result in a net increase of \$176 million, which is relatively modest from a government pan-Canadian point of view. It represents a 1.98% increase over the total authorities to date.

The largest request, probably not a surprise to the committee, is with respect to the RCMP. Commissioner Paulson in the past has been very candid with the committee indicating where the financial pressures, stresses, and strains are, and he's had to make some internal reallocations from other areas to national security, which has been difficult for the force to accommodate. We can't deal with all of that pressure in this one set of estimates, but we are beginning the process of trying to make sure that on a go-forward basis the A-base contribution to the RCMP is sufficient for the work that Canadians expect the RCMP to do. You can't give them a mandate and demand they perform miracles and then not provide the resources necessary to get the job done. The increase for the RCMP is \$110 million, most of which is going to the contract policing side of the equation. There's also funding here for counterterrorism work and the fight against cybercrime.

With respect to the CBSA, there's an increase of \$59.2 million, largely related to its mandate for securing the borders. It's the integrity of its front-line operations, the critical work that it has performed in respect to the Syrian refugees, and improving its capacity with respect to biometrics.

For the Correctional Service of Canada, the request is a total of \$4 million, the majority of which goes to fulfilling the requirements of the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights. The same is true with respect to the Parole Board of Canada, a request of \$300,000 in order to implement measures in relation to the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights.

• (1120)

With respect to CSIS, you will find a number of transactions in the estimates with money moving back and forth, all intended to increase its capacity with respect to software and its work with Global Affairs Canada, which is taking on increasing importance.

I have one final specific point on the \$2.6 million for Public Safety Canada itself. That is largely to recognize the additional responsibilities the department is taking on for the national search and rescue secretariat. That used to be vested in the Department of National Defence, and it will now be vested in the Department of Public Safety.

That's a quick overview, Mr. Chair.

I want to close by thanking all the dedicated public servants who toil in this department and in this portfolio in very critical jobs that relate to the safety of their fellow citizens. They do a remarkable job, subject to the human frailties that we all experience, but they are a terrific group of public servants who work very hard for their fellow citizens.

I also want to say, Mr. Chair, thank you and a farewell to my deputy minister, François Guimont. He will retire from the public service at the end of this month after a remarkable career in the service of Canada in Public Safety, Public Works, Environment Canada, PCO, and elsewhere. François, I wish you well in your retirement, and I extend the gratitude of the Government of Canada for your lifetime of accomplishment in the service of Canadians. Thank you, sir.

Mr. François Guimont: Thank you, Minister.

The Chair: We begin our questioning with Mr. Di Iorio.

[Translation]

Mr. Nicola Di Iorio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good morning, Mr. Minister.

Minister, the world has known different epochs, and Canada has had its share of terrorist threats in its history. However, there is one that is weighing on us currently, and it concerns the threat posed by the radicalization of foreign combatants. We are meeting in a splendid room, Minister, but this room has also been the setting for some tragic moments in the history of this Parliament and of this country.

Could you explain to us how you intend to deal with that threat?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale: There are two ways to address it. The challenge is large and significant, and it's a challenge that's shared worldwide.

Many other countries face much bigger problems than we do, but the tragic events of October 2014 demonstrate that Canada is not immune, and we need to treat this with the full seriousness it deserves, in partnership with our colleagues and allies around the world.

Among the activities aimed at dealing with violent extremism and radicalization, the front-line efforts to combat the immediate consequences are directed by the RCMP and by CSIS and by the Canada Border Services Agency. They work with National Defence. They work with PCO. In fact, there are 17 departments or agencies of the Government of Canada that discharge national security functions and obligations.

Those people are on the job doing an amazing job for Canada constantly all the time. They are absorbing all the necessary information. They are taking the appropriate actions to deal with that information. They constantly assess and reassess the threat level that's applicable to Canada.

I would pause here to say that, while this is constantly under review and nothing is ever taken for granted, the threat level that exists today is the same as it was in October 2014, which is assessed at medium. There has been no cause for Canada to adjust the threat level since October 2014, and that remains the case today.

In terms of being more proactive about the future, we are focusing, as you know, on the creation of this new office of community outreach and counter-radicalization coordination. This is to find the very best Canadian ways to reach out to communities, to understand their vulnerabilities, and to identify the best means to intervene before a tragedy occurs.

We have some good research through the Kanishka project, which the previous government initiated. It has given us some useful and helpful insights into the process of radicalization. Some provinces, for example, the Province of Quebec has been very proactive in developing its own counter-radicalization strategy. Cities and police forces such as those in Montreal, Edmonton, Calgary, Toronto, and others have developed their own outreach initiatives. The RCMP has an outreach program. So does the Department of Public Safety.

What we want to do is pull all of this together in a coordinated national office for outreach and for counter-radicalization, with best practices, to make sure we are doing everything we can to build resilient individuals and resilient communities while avoiding the lure of radical and violent propaganda. We're going to do our very best to make the values of Canadians something for everyone in this country, those who have been here a long time and the newcomers, to celebrate.

• (1125)

[Translation]

Mr. Nicola Di Iorio: Thank you, Minister.

You just spoke of the threat due to human actions, ill-intentioned actions directed against Canada and its citizens. However, there are also unfortunate events that occur because of natural disasters.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer recently announced that the costs related to natural disasters was increasing. Could you share with us the reasons behind that?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale: There are many reasons for it, but one obvious one is the impact of a destabilized climate and the greater risk of natural disasters because of more frequent, more violent, and more consequential weather events, the floods, droughts, and the other types of problems that have befallen Canadians, and cost municipalities, the private sector, and individual Canadians literally tens of millions and billions of dollars. I think of the flood in southern Alberta a few years ago. In southern Saskatchewan and southern Manitoba, in two out of the last five years, there have been major floods. There was the flooding in Quebec three years ago, I believe.

The parliamentary budget officer has added up the consequences of all of this and taking predictable factors into account, the officer has tried to project what we can expect in terms of cost. He is saying that typically what we budgeted in the past will simply not be adequate to deal with the consequences in the future. There are two things about that. No doubt in future estimates we will need to make more cautious preparations for what the real dollar costs are going to be, but we also need to invest in prevention. There you will see something from our campaign platform that I think is very encouraging. In the streams of infrastructure investment that we intend to make in the future, there is specific reference to building resilience against the consequences of climate change. How do we better prepare for floods? How do we better manage those unpredictable water flows? What kind of infrastructure can we invest in that will make us better able to handle the disasters when they occur and avoid the downstream costs as much as possible?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

We'll go to Mr. O'Toole.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Welcome, Minister, thank you for attending and thank you to your deputy for his service. It's appreciated. I'd also like to thank your department.

We were very happy to see the conclusion of the Syrian refugee program on the modified timeline, and I know a lot of effort went into that. Many of my questions will relate to that, Minister. Under your portfolio which departments were involved in the Syrian refugee response?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: The primary front-line department, Mr. O'Toole, was obviously CBSA, but a great deal of expertise and effort was also devoted by the RCMP and by CSIS. The RCMP and CSIS in particular were helpful to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada in devising the screening process.

• (1130)

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Your own department, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, obviously would have had some involvement as well.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Oh, yes, absolutely.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Okay.

I liked your remarks at the beginning about studying old speeches and following the money. That's what I intend to do with my time today.

On December 9, in committee of the whole on Bill C-3, which was supplementary estimates (B), Minister McCallum said the overall cost of the Syrian refugee program, which was the need for Bill C-3 in the supplementary estimates, was \$700 million. He told the House that day that \$500 million of that was the total spending for Immigration, his department. Minister Brison said that other departments.... They did not allocate where the other \$200 million would be spent, but Minister Brison said that most other departments involved would cash manage their involvement in the Syrian program. Is that what your departments did, they cash managed it?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Let me ask Nada to comment specifically from the point of view of CBSA. I would note that I did mention an amount earlier of \$13.6 million for the critical role the agency played in those efforts. That's part of these estimates now. But Nada can provide more detail.

Ms. Nada Semaan (Executive Vice-President, Canada Border Services Agency): Absolutely. This money will be received, once approved. However, as you know, we worked on it quite a bit before, so there was a bit of cash management in anticipating receiving the funds through supplementary estimates (B).

Hon. Erin O'Toole: So the \$13.6 million, Minister, that you mentioned for CBSA, of the four departments you mention that's the only department that will be receiving additional allocation. CSIS, RCMP, and Public Safety, none of them require it?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: That's correct.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Do we have a breakdown on how the cash management may have affected other priorities or operations of the government?

Mr. François Guimont: At least in the case of Public Safety, and I'll let my colleagues speak to their specific portfolio responsibilities, we manage that as a priority within our ongoing programs. We did not specifically earmark an individual or a team. This was part of our ongoing activities and we just absorbed it. Very often, frankly, we do that when emerging priorities do come up.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Could I ask Commissioner Paulson or Mr. Coulombe if they have anything to add?

Commr Bob Paulson (Commissioner, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): I would just say in a similar fashion that the total cost to our organization was minimal and it was manageable within our existing reference levels.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Specifically, Minister, the government operations centre, which I understand was the hub of the entire operation, has not received additional funds in supplementary estimates (B) or (C), so did it cash manage the entire additional work?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: It did, and that's the nature of its function, to be able to respond to emerging situations quickly.

Mr. O'Toole, you do raise a point about the future capacity of the government operations centre, and I think that's something we will have to look at very carefully. This is a very important nerve centre within the Government of Canada when something goes wrong somewhere in the country. This is a place where all of the participants—not just federal departments, but provinces, municipalities, NGOs, and members of the private sector—can come together. We're dealing with a national crisis, and we're all in the same room, and we can make sure—

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Absolutely, Minister, and that's why I'm asking. In the 2015-16 plans and priorities for your department, one of the risks identified was, and I quote, "That the...GOC...may be unable to support a coordinated response to a large-scale...event." That was identified by the department before the Syrian refugee program, but you're saying they needed no additional resources and were able to coordinate this?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: That's correct, but let me ask the deputy minister to comment.

Mr. François Guimont: When that risk was identified, we wanted to differentiate between the individuals within the capacity of the team and the actual building. The building does have limitations, if you will, which is something that I have discussed with the minister. We are taking steps to address that building issue, because the capacity of the GOC to coordinate in response to a major issue is a function of the team, but also of the location, the structure of the building, and its capacity. That risk is tied more to that component than to what I would refer to as human resources, their training and their capacity to work together and deliver a coordinated response.

• (1135)

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Would we be able to get a breakdown by department of how much spending was required and how that cash management affected additional operations?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Do you mean in relation to the overall Syrian refugee initiative?

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Yes, because the supplementary estimates (B) did not have details apart from CIC's commitment to the program. I think even our new members of the family, our new permanent residents want to make sure that we spend and allocate accordingly. There's been a lot of concern that certain programs like the private sponsorship route for refugees and a number of other programs have been shelved to accommodate the timeline set during the election. Cash management is a broad term. I'd like to see how much it affected the budgets of your departments and what priorities were shifted to accommodate that.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. O'Toole, I will undertake to raise that with Mr. McCallum and my other cabinet colleagues to see if we can present to MPs and to Canadians publicly a final report on the Syrian

initiative so that people can have all the facts and figures on how it went.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Because in fairness, \$13.6 million is all we're seeing, and I'm sure it was more than that.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Let me see if we can put it together. I agree with your point.

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur Dubé.

[*Translation*]

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

I thank the minister and our other guests for being here with us today. Mr. Guimont, as my colleagues have also done, I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your services.

My question is on Bill C-51.

The following issue is still of great concern to the NDP—especially after listening to Mr. Coulombe yesterday, and also in thinking about his testimony before our committee a few weeks ago. I am referring to the fact that the powers are currently being used, even though the oversight mechanisms that are considered essential to ensure that those powers are well used have still not been put in place. The NDP is still of the opinion that this act should be repealed.

My question is about the role opposition parties should play in this regard. Minister, you have had some fine words to say on this, but the fact remains that Mr. McGuinty was appointed without any consultation of the opposition parties. You went to London. Yes, there were conferences, but you also wanted to review the best practices of the United Kingdom committee which is the counterpart of the one you want to set up. Once again, no members of the opposition were invited.

Following the letter Mr. Mulcair sent to the Prime Minister, will opposition members and parties finally really be formally included in this process?

Could you also provide us with an update on the process? Where do things stand? There is some urgency now. The powers are being used and the oversight is not adequate.

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale: I fully appreciate your point, Monsieur Dubé. I want to give you the absolute reassurance from me as the responsible minister but also on behalf of the government that this is very much intended to be a process in which parliamentarians will play an exceedingly important role in two ways.

First of all, it's by participating in the consultation about what needs to be done in specific legislative terms to fix the problems that were presented by Bill C-51. We have identified a number of those issues in the past, the definition of "terrorist propaganda", for example, the problem with the no-fly list, various other ways that have been enumerated in which the legislation has presented difficulties and has been rightly criticized by a great many Canadians. We are at the beginning of what I think is likely to be the most inclusive consultation process about national security that the country has ever seen.

[Translation]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: With your permission, Minister, I would like to ask the following question.

With regard to the creation and operation of that committee, do you commit to formally including opposition parties?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Yes, the commitment is clear. Now, when you say "this committee" you mean the committee of parliamentarians to scrutinize....

• (1140)

Mr. Matthew Dubé: The McGuinty committee, as Mr. O'Toole likes to refer to it.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: It's a legislated statutory committee of parliamentarians to scrutinize the security intelligence operations of the Government of Canada.

As I said earlier, there are probably 17 different departments and agencies that have some security function. The committee will be a committee representing all parties in the House of Commons. We are still considering the interface with the Senate. That hasn't been decided yet. I'll be meeting with senators later on to discuss that, but on the specific question of whether members of the opposition will be on that committee, yes, absolutely. If they weren't, the committee wouldn't work.

[Translation]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: I would like to specify that my concern is not about the presence of members on the committee, but about the participation of the opposition in the setting up and operations of the committee. We can talk about this again, because my time is limited.

With your permission, I am going to move on to another topic.

[English]

There was a *Globe and Mail* story yesterday, with the Prime Minister going to visit his counterpart in Washington, on the question of streamlining border services and how that's all operating. Some concerns were raised by the Privacy Commissioner with regard to removing red tape and the consequences that this can have on how information flows.

The other problem is that often when we have these agreements with Americans, it's important to remind folks that our laws and American laws are quite different especially when it comes to protecting the privacy of Canadians. Where is that process at? What's going on, and can you guarantee to this committee that the private information of Canadians will be protected according to Canadian law and not American law?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Any agreement between two countries with respect to matters of information about citizens would need to respect the laws of the jurisdiction within which the information originated. So the short answer to your question is yes.

As discussions about the border proceed, we have been very careful to engage the office of the Privacy Commissioner, to seek guidance from that office to make sure that the best practices are followed. We will continue to seek that advice, and of course, after the fact we're obliged to produce a privacy impact statement, so we will make sure that is done—

[Translation]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Thank you, Minister.

As my time is almost up, I have one last question for you and it follows upon the one my colleague Mr. Garrison put to you in the House concerning the Police Officer Recruitment Fund, which was abolished by the previous government.

Will you, yes or no, commit to re-establishing that fund?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale: That is not in the fiscal frame at the present time. What is within the fiscal frame is a commitment that we made during the election to establish a new fund, specifically directed at the battle against guns and gangs, in the amount of \$100 million on an annual basis that would flow through provinces to police forces in order to assist those forces with the very difficult on-the-ground work they need to do in combatting illegal guns and gangs.

The Chair: Mr. Mendicino.

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

I want to thank the minister for coming today to talk about the supplementary estimates.

I also want to take the opportunity to thank the deputy minister for his years of service. How many years did you say it was?

Mr. François Guimont: It was 34 years and—

Mr. Marco Mendicino: It must have gone by like the blink of an eye.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: He's a lot older than he looks.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: There's a compliment.

I want to try to cover two topics today, Mr. Minister. I want to talk a little about the oversight committee, and then I want to talk a little about the no-fly list, and if you'll permit, I'd like to ask some very targeted questions regarding oversight.

You talked about our fundamental commitment to creating a national oversight committee. You talked about Canada being an anomaly among our partners, and particularly with respect to the Five Eyes. You talked as well about the creation of that committee as a creature of statute. There'll be a piece of legislation that basically strikes a national security oversight committee. Is that right?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: That's correct.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Will this be an all-party committee?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Yes.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Will it be made up of parties from all sides of the House?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: That's right.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Will it be made up as well of both Houses? Is that what we're contemplating right now?

• (1145)

Hon. Ralph Goodale: That remains an open question. We haven't yet had that conversation with the Senate, but we're open to a good discussion of it.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Is it safe to say that we'd like to see progress so that we could include the Senate as part of this committee?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: I'd like to see it be comprehensive, but we haven't really crossed that policy bridge yet.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Will membership of the committee exclude ministers and parliamentary secretaries?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: You said "exclude"? Yes.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Okay. Will these be order in council appointments, which is to say, will the people be appointed by the Prime Minister's Office or by cabinet?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: The method of selection has not yet been determined. What will be required is an extraordinary level of security clearance, because obviously these members of Parliament will have access to very sensitive information and will need to be appointed on a basis that respects that very critical dimension of public safety and security.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Is it possible that as part of the process the screening may contemplate an order in council appointment?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: That's possible, yes.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Okay.

You mentioned earlier to some of my colleagues on the other side about appointing members from the opposition. Is it the government's plan to consult with leaders of the opposition parties before including members of their party?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: There obviously needs to be very thorough consultation with party leaders and with members of Parliament in order to get this appointment process right. The exact methodology has not been settled, but we will seek advice on all sides of the House to make sure we have a satisfactory way of assembling the committee.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Regarding powers that are contemplated for the national security oversight committee, is it your vision that the committee will have the power to compel witnesses to attend and give evidence?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: That policy question has not yet been determined.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Has it been determined whether or not we'll have the ability to compel individuals to bring information that might otherwise be categorized as privileged under the national security provisions?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: That's in the same category of compelling witnesses or compelling documents. Those issues have not been resolved yet, but I do repeat the objective here. This committee has

to be real. It has to be credible. It has to be trustworthy so that when it does its work and offers comments to Canadians on the nature of its work, Canadians will be able to trust that they are being told the truth. Credibility is absolutely essential here, and we need to make sure the committee has the tools necessary and the resources and the research capacity to do its job.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: I have one last question on a national security oversight committee. Will we find any references to it in the supplementary estimates, or is it safe to say that because we're not at the stage yet where presenting the legislation is imminent with regard to this committee, it's not in the current supplementary estimates?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: It's not in the current numbers. This again gets back to my first point about the strange way in which Parliament deals with estimates. The main estimates that have been tabled are actually based on last year's budget, not the budget we'll get on March 22, so we have to change the order of things here to make it logical.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: With regard to the no-fly list, Mr. Minister, you were recently quoted in the papers as expressing some frustration on the part of certain children who continue to be flagged by the no-fly list, erroneously, it would appear. Can you tell this committee what steps your department is taking to ensure this doesn't happen in the future, or at least that we are continuing to reduce the likelihood of children being erroneously flagged by the no-fly list?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: The point is clearly this. Those children who have been erroneously caught up in the no-fly process are not on the no-fly list. The problem is that there are some adults who have exactly the same names who are on the no-fly list, and it's the confusion between the two that is causing the problem.

When the system was designed a few years ago, it did not include an interactive, internal database that would allow false positives to be easily flagged and then resolved. In fact, it relied on physical identification at the gate, and within 5, 10, 15 minutes, the problems could be resolved. But that still presents an awkward situation at the gate, so we have to find a way to improve the database and the computer system. There may be some lessons that we can learn here from the American side of the operation, because they do have an interactive system that resolves false positives faster than we do.

• (1150)

Mr. Marco Mendicino: May I just use the few seconds remaining to ask whether or not you've contemplated some sort of appeals process so that there is transparency for those individuals who have been erroneously flagged?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Yes, and that was a specific commitment in our platform.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. O'Toole.

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

Minister, a number of my colleagues have been asking about the committee of parliamentarians for security intelligence review. We've been affectionately calling it the McGuinty committee, for lack of any other description.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Your affection is overflowing, Mr. O'Toole.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Well, you see that pragmatically last week after consultations with the NDP, and the lack of consultations from the government, I sent you a letter with recommendations. Mr. Mendicino clearly read it because several of his questions to you were contained in my letter.

You were saying the exact methodology is to be resolved, and you need this to be credible. You're clearly still putting parameters on it. Why appoint a chair before even the parameters are done?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Well, we're reaching out to have a very inclusive process, and Mr. O'Toole, I would, quite frankly, apologize to members of Parliament around the table here for not being able to move as quickly on this as I would have liked to. I've said on other occasions that this department is like riding a fire hose, and trying to get up to speed on every issue is a big challenge, but we're getting there.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Certainly.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: I welcomed your letter, as I did Monsieur Mulcair's letter. It is helpful input into the process. Mr. LeBlanc and I will be meeting shortly with members of the Senate to get their input. We will have a more fulsome discussion of this.

The suggestions that you and others have made about how to structure this committee, and what power and authority it needs to have, are helpful input. We will weigh all of that very carefully.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: I appreciate those comments. I know MP Rankin and I will wait by our phones for the call.

I have one final question on this subject. You talked about the official secrets that will be involved, the credibility. Mr. Mendicino mentioned this as well.

The Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament in the U. K. has had some success with discretion over two decades. One of the points I made was that members should have some experience in security, national defence, previous experience chairing a committee, or ministerial experience, to ensure that the quality and effectiveness of the committee is safeguarded. Is that your plan?

There has been some speculation that you've already identified government members for the committee. Can you confirm whether or not that's true?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: The final decisions have not been taken, Mr. O'Toole.

The kinds of qualifications that you referred to in your letter will certainly be helpful. They may not be the only ones, but I take your point that this committee needs to have the horsepower to do a good job. Otherwise, why have it? It's not there to be window dressing. It's not there to be a buffer or a deflection. It's there to give Canadians the assurance of two things; namely, that the agencies are doing what they need to do to keep Canadians safe, and that the values, rights, and freedoms of Canadians are properly respected. I want this to be a

very high-calibre group of parliamentarians who will be able to give Canadians that assurance.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Well, certainly the Conservative Party wants this to be done right. We're prepared to work with the government, particularly to ensure the safety of the operations conducted by our intelligence agencies and their personnel.

My final question relates to the court decision in the case of Mounted Police Association of Ontario v. Canada. We spoke in the House on this subject when the government sought an extension of the court period for that case. I understand that the government will be bringing forward legislation very shortly on the new designated bargaining model, using guidance from the court to ensure that members have the right of collective action. Whether or not it will be in the Public Service Labour Relations Act...

In the estimates we see another \$110 million for the RCMP, with about half of that being for contract policing. Has your department, working with the commissioner, looked at the impact on the fiscal framework of the legislation that will be in front of the House in the next few weeks, in terms of how much upward pressure it may put on budgets?

• (1155)

The Chair: Very briefly, Minister.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: The Supreme Court has been very clear that RCMP members not having collective bargaining rights is in violation of their constitutional rights, so the legislation will remedy that constitutional defect. That will result in a bargaining process that, as with the bargaining in all other sectors of the public service, will be handled by Treasury Board.

You will find in the legislation a design to ensure that the unique nature of policing operations is appropriately safeguarded.

Commissioner, do you have some thoughts that you—

The Chair: I'm sorry, we're at the end of the member's time. Thank you, Minister.

It's hard to cut off Mr. Goodale.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Worse still to cut off the commissioner.

The Chair: Oh, I'm worried about that.

Ms. Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Thank you very much for being here and for bringing your officials with you. I'm going to change the subject just a little bit.

I've met with representatives of the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies and the John Howard Society. They've talked to me about devastating personal and financial costs to individuals because of changes that were made by the previous government to pardons or record suspensions. I wonder if you could speak to that a little bit.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: I may ask Mr. Cenaiko to comment as well, because he has the task of dealing with these challenges.

There has been a considerable backlog. Through his own good internal management within the Parole Board, he has been able to make progress in resolving the backlog. There is still some of it remaining, but as I understand it, Mr. Cenaiko is expecting to be able to deal with most of that over the course of the next year or so.

There were also changes made in terms of fees that were charged and the time that is taken, and so forth. We will re-examine all of that to ensure it is good, solid public policy, not intended to accomplish an ideological purpose but in fact designed to contribute to the well-being of Canadians and to public safety.

Harvey, do you have some comments to make on the backlog?

Mr. Harvey Cenaiko (Chairperson, Parole Board of Canada): I just have—

Ms. Pam Damoff: Actually, I have only five minutes. What you've told me is good enough that I can take it back to them. I'm sorry to cut you off, but I have a couple of other things I want to ask you about and I don't have much time.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Okay.

By the way, after I leave, the officials will be able to stay for a while.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Okay, so we can follow up on that afterwards.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Yes.

Ms. Pam Damoff: When Mr. Head appeared before the committee, he said, and I'm quoting him here, "I cannot stress enough how important that" occupational stress injury support is. He went on to say, "The way we talk about it now is on how we build and sustain the mental resilience of our staff...".

I've talked about this at all of our meetings. It's something I'm very passionate about. I applaud what you've done so far. I think we need to be removing the stigma around this in the workplace. Our public safety officers need to be on the top of their game, both physically and mentally.

Can you talk briefly about the financial cost as well as the potential need for additional funding for this issue within your department?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Well, the cost of occupational stress injuries and disabilities is difficult to quantify, but I think Canadians are coming to recognize that they take a huge toll in terms of the efficiency of people being on the job, the capacity to do the job, the time they need to be away from work, and lost talent, altogether.

Do we have an internal calculation of the cost consequences of PTSD? Quite frankly, I'd like to—

• (1200)

Ms. Pam Damoff: We can get that later.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Yes, we could take a stab at putting together some estimates.

Bob, within the RCMP, what is the toll?

Commr Bob Paulson: It is \$162 million—that's why we have a \$6 million ask in the supplementals—and it's on a 12% increase, year on year.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: So it's expensive.

And we need to make sure when public safety officers suffer a mental health issue because of their job that they get the kind of support they need, that there is not a stigma attached to asking, that their friends and colleagues and superiors know the danger signs to look for, and that the treatment capacity is readily available not two years from now or six months from now, but now, when you have the opportunity to relieve that person's stress and maybe head off a bigger tragedy.

That's why we're putting such emphasis on PTSD treatment and responses for public safety officers.

Ms. Pam Damoff: That's why I push so hard for us as a committee to look at it as well. I think it's a really important issue to shed some light on.

I don't think I have any time left. Have I?

The Chair: You have 14 seconds.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Okay. I can say thank you very much.

I could have let you speak after all.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Damoff.

Ms. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Chairman, this is through you to the minister.

Just prior to Christmas last year there was a worker inside an electricity control centre. He was preparing to leave, and he noticed a cursor on his computer suddenly slide across the screen on its own. One after another, circuit breakers were turned on until substations were turned off—30 in all—for 230,000 residents, two days before Christmas, in western Ukraine, with no electricity and no heat.

The concern is that this type of sophisticated, planned, synchronized attack could occur in North America.

What measures are in place to ensure that such a coordinated attack, or perhaps a more sophisticated one, does not impede our electricity system and all the items attached to the grid that we depend on?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: That is a very good question.

I share the concern of members of Parliament about Canada's capacity to deal effectively with cybersecurity issues, the whole issue of our critical infrastructure, which you've referred to as potentially vulnerable. The incident in Ukraine, by the way, was a very active topic of discussion at the last meeting of the Five Eyes alliance in Washington a few weeks ago. It's a matter of international anxiety.

There's simply a loss to businesses and enterprises from having their systems hacked and interfered with. That probably cost businesses globally \$400 billion last year. By the end of this decade, that cost is probably going to surpass \$2 trillion U.S. per year. The dimensions of this, not to mention privacy issues and so forth, are huge.

Toward the end of last year the RCMP launched a whole new initiative with respect to being more effective in dealing with cybercrime. The Business Council of Canada, formerly the Canadian Council of Chief Executives, has launched a new exchange of information system in order to prepare business to deal with this more effectively. Federal, provincial, and territorial security ministers have had this conversation, as well.

I have been asked by the Prime Minister to lead a review of everything in the Government of Canada that relates to cybersecurity, in collaboration with the industry department and many other departments of government, to make sure that we are on top of this kind of situation and that the problem that hit Ukraine will be properly defended against in Canada. We think that is the case today, but the review will ask that critical question: are we sure? We want to be sure.

• (1205)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: The criticism I hear about the Canadian cyber incident response centre is that it's passive. There are plans and tips given, but in the event of a cyber-attack, be it commercial or otherwise, there is not an instant response.

Do the supplementary estimates reflect any efforts to stand up a coordinated command and response to these types of incidents?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Let me ask the deputy minister to comment.

Mr. François Guimont: Thank you, Minister.

The CCIRC, the capacity we have in public safety, is co-located with the government operations centre and it would be helpful if we were successful in relocating it. This group is very capable. It has augmented its capacity over the last budget, so there are more people in the group. That's the first observation.

The second one is that they're pretty active. Their responsibility is one of getting information from the operator when they face a situation. They literally keep a laboratory of viruses that they study to understand. They're very quick at disseminating information to other constituents in Canada to help them take action to protect themselves. They are at that pivot point. There is information flowing to them from inside and outside government which they pass back to the industrial sector of Canada. This is one of their key features, their key role.

We want to work more closely with the industry. The industry is giving itself a similar capacity. It's all about information sharing. It's all about the speed of the information sharing, so that people can then take action to protect themselves.

They have now invested in tools where this response will be automated. We've made investments. Therefore, instead of relying only upon individuals to pass on the information, there will be an automated system whereby this information will fan out across Canada.

Progress has been made, but I'll tell members of the committee that the cyber file, unlike other files, if you will, is always evolving. It's a little bit like all your devices that have new functionality and new applications. All that reality, which is quickly moving, is also moving on us.

I'm tempted to say that we're all only as good as we are, and therefore the idea of carrying out a comprehensive review of our cyber strategy is a very timely thing. The strategy is not that old, but the file is moving so quickly. It's time to step back, see where we are, and carry out actions where we think we may have weaknesses.

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

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Chair, could I ask if every member of the committee has changed their password today. You're supposed to do it frequently.

The Chair: Thank you.

We're going to suspend the meeting for a few minutes. Mr. Goodale is leaving to go to another meeting. The officials are going to stay. I'm going to suggest to the committee that we finish round one. We would go with Mr. Spengemann, then Mr. Dubé, and then start back at the top of the list for round two.

We'll suspend for two minutes.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Chair, thank you for the opportunity to be here. I appreciated your questions. I even look forward to coming back another time.

The Chair: You'll be invited.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Might I suggest to you on the cyber centre that was the subject of the last question, it might well be possible to arrange an opportunity when members of this committee, if you're interested, could pay a visit to the cyber centre and see it functioning. That might help with some of the background information.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you very much.

We'll suspend for a few minutes.

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_____ (Pause) _____

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• (1210)

The Chair: We're missing a few members. As I suggested, we're going to finish round one. That will be five minutes for Mr. Spengemann, three minutes for Mr. Dubé and then we will start back with the seven-minute round and the first one will be Mr. Erskine-Smith in the second round.

Mr. Spengemann, for five minutes.

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

Thank you to our six distinguished senior public servants for being here. Thank you for your service to the nation, and my thanks also to your colleagues, the women and men who are in the field keeping us safe day after day who are not here today but through you are represented here.

I have two questions. One of them is specific and the other is more general. I'll start with the more specific one.

In our ridings I think many of us parliamentarians around the table and colleagues who are not here will have received questions over the past months on the issue of marijuana. I've had folks come to me from the production side, people who are interested in holding licences to produce medical marijuana, people from the consumer side, people who are beneficiaries of medical marijuana. Also there are the pros and cons of the recreational side.

I'm wondering if you could give the committee, and through the committee the Canadian public an update on the current legal status of marijuana.

• (1215)

Commr Bob Paulson: Me?

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Sven Spengemann: That's for anybody who would like to comment, anybody who has relevant information to give.

Commr Bob Paulson: I can say that the current legal status is unchanged from where it was before the new government came into power.

I can say that we've had a struggle in the police community broadly in terms of being discretionary in recognizing the stated objectives of the government, while having to recognize the existing laws. In other words, the medical marijuana regime, and frankly, the explosion of dispensaries in many cities across the country present a number of technically challenging legal conundrums.

Certainly, we in the RCMP have applied our discretion to enforce where circumstances are exceeding the scope of the existing legislation around medical marijuana, in other words, aggressive marketing, on the street, near schools, and so on. In some communities they're even contemplating taxing and licensing.

I might point out, just technically, not as a stated intention, there's an argument to be made that licensing some of these illegal dispensaries amounts to receiving the proceeds of crime.

It's a bit of a mess right now, to be honest. Our approach has been to use our discretion at the front line to make decisions while the government sorts out their stated platform.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Is it fair to say that you have changed your enforcement strategy in the wake of recent platform policy announcements, or is it the same as it was a year and a half ago, let's say?

Commr Bob Paulson: No. I would say it's fair to say that we've changed. We understand the platform. We understand the existing laws, but we also see a proliferation of patently unlawful behaviours that need to be held in check while we get to a point where a more coherent legislative regime is in place.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thank you for that.

My second question, as I said, is a more general one. I'd like to address it to as many of you as would like to comment. I think, if we look back on this conversation this morning, what connects all our questions and the answers that many of you gave is the idea of trust in our public institutions.

The minister said we're balancing the provision of effective security against or with our charter rights, and when we do that well,

we earn the trust of Canadians. So the maintenance of trust, the strengthening of trust in our public institutions is not unique to public safety and security, but it is perhaps something that we should look at emphatically with respect to the area of public safety and security.

I'm wondering if each of you could comment briefly on how you are working to maintain and strengthen the trust of Canadians in the various organizations that you oversee.

Mr. François Guimont: Maybe I could say a few words to start. Trust is important for sure in the institution and Canadians can step back and look at the portfolio partners and be convinced, and I mean that truthfully, that we are professional and we do our best.

We wake up in the morning, and come to work to do a good job. A good job means we're on all the time, because this business that we're in doesn't stop at five o'clock or six o'clock.

The second point is that people are very lawful, very mindful of the legal framework in which we work. I would say as well it's a function of teamwork. We work very closely with the commissioner's people when we need to, Commissioner Paulson, and Michel Coulombe, the director of CSIS. We have ongoing discussions, relationships, built on trust, and that trust inside projects outside in the sense of Canadians. I think they can feel that we're doing our best to earn and keep their trust.

As I said, we work within the legal framework and we work within the policies and the operational procedures that we give ourselves.

• (1220)

The Acting Chair (Hon. Erin O'Toole): Thank you very much, Mr. Guimont.

Three minutes for Mr. Dubé.

[*Translation*]

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

My question is addressed to Mr. Head. In fact, I would like to go back to the topic I raised the last time he came before the committee.

The Ontario Human Rights Commissioner has spoken out about solitary confinement. That is not the preferred term, but I am going to continue to use it nonetheless. She mentioned that this practice should be brought to an end in provincial prisons or should at the very least be restricted. I continue to insist that this committee should study this matter. I know that my colleague Murray Rankin shares my opinion.

What do you think of the commissioner's statement? Does it reflect reality in federal penitentiaries?

[*English*]

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

As I briefly mentioned at the last appearance, we've made a lot of progress at the federal level in terms of how segregation, or solitary confinement, as some people call it, has been used. We have put in place a series of additional, internal, oversight processes. We have also put in place different alternatives for housing offenders other than in the institution where they're being segregated or held in special confinement conditions.

I have to say that in comparison to the provinces we have a little more in terms of resources to do some of the work that we've been doing. Even in the last year, we've been able to reduce the segregation population by almost half. We've gone from just under 800 down to 396 people who are in segregation on any given day. The challenge that the provinces have is in relation to resources and a population which is not comprised of individuals who have longer-term sentences with whom they can work to deliver programs. The provinces have a little more of a challenge than we do at the federal level.

[Translation]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Chair, do I have a little time left?

The Chair: You have one minute left.

[English]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: I have a quick question for Mr. Paulson.

I am wondering about the criminal database backlog which the Auditor General has raised a few times. I think we're closing in on seven years since this has been brought to our attention.

Can you give us an update on where that is, or do we have to wait for the Auditor General to report on it again?

Commr Bob Paulson: No, I don't think you have to wait for the Auditor General again.

We have implemented a plan to reduce the backlog on a cascading priority level, while recognizing that the transition to electronic reception into the system, the taking of fingerprints and biometric data, is a tough transition, not necessarily just for the RCMP, but also for other police services. That transition is making it difficult, but we are trying to prioritize our updates to the record database so that courts are properly informed as to what they're facing when criminal records are presented, and so that police officers, perhaps more importantly, are aware of who they're facing when they are doing their jobs.

The plan is in place and it's a massive undertaking to digitize that whole approach. I'll undertake to provide an update in more detail if you'd like.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Paulson.

Mr. Erskine-Smith, for seven minutes.

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

I'd like to deal with the estimates themselves. I'd like to start with the Canada Border Services Agency. There's a line item of \$21 million in funding to improve the integrity of the CBSA front-line operations. It's one of the largest line items we have before us.

Could you give us an explanation as to where those monies would go?

Ms. Nada Semaan: Absolutely.

This is money that has been provided since 2011. It serves to help with the program integrity in three areas. First, once we became an armed workforce we could no longer utilize students on the land borders, so we now need to supplement that in peak periods with regular officers, which is an increased cost. Second, with small and remote ports, we needed to double up our officers for safety and security purposes. That required an additional workforce in all of our small and remote ports. Third, when we became a department or an agency, we came from a number of other agencies, one being the CRA, the Canada Revenue Agency. The conversion of their status at CRA to a border force officer also required additional money. That's basically all it is.

● (1225)

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Thanks very much.

My next question is for the Correctional Service of Canada.

I note that since March 2005, the federal inmate population has increased by 17.5%. Could you comment, Mr. Head, with respect to whether funding levels have matched the increase in federal inmates?

Mr. Don Head: There are a couple of components to that.

Actually, over the last year or so the population has been coming down. As of this morning, the incarcerated population sits at 14,613. This is down from a peak when it was at just over 15,200, so it has been coming down over the last year.

We did receive money over the last three or four years for the building of additional cells and additional accommodation space; however, we did not receive additional monies to increase programming capacity. We had to find some measures and implement some streamlining efficiencies to keep the level of programming going.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: If I can, I'll jump in there.

On programming specifically related to the aboriginal inmate population, which is excessively high, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations called upon the federal government to provide more supports for aboriginal programming, halfway houses, and parole services. Under your current funding model, are you able to provide those services?

Mr. Don Head: Under the current funding model, in order to go forward I would need additional funding.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: My next question is for the Parole Board of Canada.

In your 2015-16 report you note that there's "a risk that key activities and functions could be adversely affected unless the Board is able to recruit, stabilize, strengthen competencies and capacity, and retain its workforce while ensuring employee wellness". I note that there's not a significant amount of new funding. In fact, the funding is going to implement the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights.

I wonder if you could comment on whether you are receiving sufficient funding to do your job.

Mr. Harvey Cenaiko: That's a good question. The funding we're receiving in the supplementary (C)s is really to assist us with the web portal that the Correctional Service of Canada is going to be providing us.

With that, we'll be able to provide victims with an electronic means to register and to get information for themselves. In addition, though, on our own, for those individuals who don't have the Internet or for remote communities or indigenous communities where no Internet is available, we want to ensure that victims who cannot attend a hearing personally can have the ability to access a digital recording of the hearing so they can in fact hear it themselves.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: As we move forward with the legalization of marijuana and perhaps move forward to increase pardons for those who have records related to possession and perhaps low-level trafficking offences, would you envision needing significant additional resources to process those pardons?

Mr. Harvey Cenaiko: Well, we'd have to see what the legislation brings forward before we could actually make a determination on how that might impact us.

First of all, there are no pardons. They're record suspensions. If the term is going to be changed, then the legislation would have to be changed. However, I understand what you're saying.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Sure.

My next question is for the RCMP. I note that there's \$6 million in funding related to government advertising programs. Could you fill us in as to where those monies go?

Commr Bob Paulson: Well, to recruiting, mostly to recruiting. In fact, we're on a bit of a campaign to up our numbers. The force is challenged to meet attrition and growth and attract the right people to the organization, so we've embarked on a very targeted and focused recruitment effort to bring good young people of all backgrounds into the force.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Thanks very much.

My next question is for the Canadian Security Intelligence Service. There's a line item of \$1,160,000 for software tools to process digital information. Are these software tools created in-house? Is that the reason the line item is so large?

Mr. Michel Coulombe (Director, Canadian Security Intelligence Service): Yes, that's it.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Does CSIS use these software tools as part of its own investigations?

• (1230)

Mr. Michel Coulombe: Yes.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Moving to SIRC, I note there's \$240,000 in funding to support an increase in the complexity and volume of workload related to SIRC's review of the expanded operations of CSIS. What specifically are these expanded operations that require \$240,000 more to go to SIRC?

Mr. Michel Coulombe: Could you repeat that?

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Sure. I'll take you to the line item. It shows \$240,000 for funding to support an increase in the complexity and volume of workload related to SIRC's review of the expanded operations of CSIS.

Mr. Michel Coulombe: Yes, as SIRC is expanding the number of reviews they're doing—

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Oh, sorry. It said “expanded operations” of CSIS, so that may be incorrect, then.

Mr. Michel Coulombe: Well, that's it, but as we're expanding our operations, SIRC might increase the number of reviews they're doing of our operations and we need more people to actually support the work that SIRC is doing in terms of those annual reviews.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Is the expanded work the new disruption powers, the new information sharing, and the new powers under Bill C-51 specifically?

Mr. Michel Coulombe: That's part of it, but it's also the expansion of our operation overseas and the expansion of operations here in Canada.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: That makes sense. Thanks very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. O'Toole.

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

Thank you to our witnesses for remaining with us.

Mr. Coulombe, you are not as busy as you were yesterday before a committee, so I'm going to spend a little time with you. The minister outlined in his remarks the focus on counter-radicalization and stopping those threats before they gather. I think all sides want to proceed on that. We've been trying to look at that from day one as a committee.

Yesterday in front of the Senate committee you mentioned the disruption powers that have been used two dozen or so times. Without revealing any specifics, could you in general terms discuss what type of disruption it was and what the risks were of a general nature? I know this might be hard for you, but I'd like to understand the type of disruption that has been engaged for public safety reasons.

Mr. Michel Coulombe: As I mentioned in my last appearance in front of this committee, the threat reduction measures used so far did not require Federal Court warrants. That's the first thing that needs to be understood.

Generically, the type of activities we're talking about go from conducting an interview and overtly letting the subject of the investigation know that they are under investigation, to asking family members, friends, and community leaders to intervene when somebody is on the path to radicalization. Trying to bring a counter-narrative to stop that radicalization would be another example; it could be about preventing a terrorist target of investigation from accessing a potential target facility.

Those are the types of measures we've used so far. The risk is minimal because again, we're not talking about warranted threat reduction measures.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: You've mentioned working in some cases with family members or community members to halt the risks of radicalization. Have there been any instances you can speak of, without specifics, where there has been foreign influence, either through connections through an organization or through the flow of money to an organization on the ground in Canada?

Mr. Michel Coulombe: Well, most of the time actually there is, if you want to qualify it as a foreign influence. It's usually through the Internet and social media, from organizations such as Daesh, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: About the money piece, is there an ability to watch the flow of money to see if that's supplementing what can start as radicalization online but can lead to a cluster, as we've seen in Ottawa and Calgary? Has money flowed?

Mr. Michel Coulombe: Money flow is something that the service is looking into as a subject of investigation. Money flow is certainly something that is of importance. It's part of our investigation in collecting intelligence on the activities of the target.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: The minister has mentioned the counter-radicalization coordinator and a national office. We've read a lot about it in the media, but we haven't received any specifics on it in Parliament. Are some of your operations and outreach within the counter-radicalization community and the groups tackling this informing the minister as he creates this position and the scope for the department?

•(1235)

Mr. Michel Coulombe: Yes, the role of the service and the work we've done so far, for example, being part of the Kanishka project and the analysis the service has done itself in terms of factors leading to radicalization, are certainly informing Public Safety as they're working on this project.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Thank you.

Commissioner Paulson, thank you. You've both been here within a few weeks of previous appearances, so we appreciate your time. I have a question for you.

Mr. Spengemann outlined somewhat the uncertainty with respect to marijuana, in that there was an election promise with regard to legalization, yet there's a period before legislation or a regulatory review is coming forward. There's a kind of wild west being created by people who want to push the envelope forward.

The discretion that you noted, Commissioner, appears to be similar to the position that the chiefs of police of Canada took, in that the best way to approach this might be to empower law enforcement with the ability to issue a ticket in the circumstances where use is recreational and there's no impact on youth or things like that, or to lay charges for more serious incidents near schools or for someone who might be trafficking or dealing and that sort of thing.

That was a recommendation as opposed to legalization. Is that in effect what is happening now in this sort of grey zone between the election promise and future legislation?

Commr Bob Paulson: Yes, I don't think we should overstate the greyness of it. I would draw a parallel to coming across someone with a still who is making whisky for commercial purposes. We wouldn't issue a ticket, right? There are ample other statutory paths to prosecuting them. That's somewhat analogous to this situation.

The people who are exploiting... Maybe I shouldn't say exploiting, but there's a misunderstanding, it seems to me, in the Canadian consciousness about what the state of the law is. People are trying to take advantage, frankly, and make some money. Where those people are identified as organized crime figures or serious criminals with criminal enterprise intentions, or where they are doing that around schools, or marketing that overtly and affecting children, we're taking action. I think that's a reasonable course.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: We're three or four months past the election when the promise was made. Do you find that the aggressiveness of some players in this space is becoming more pronounced as time passes?

Commr Bob Paulson: No, it seems to be pretty steady.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Monsieur Dubé.

[*Translation*]

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

Mr. Paulson, I would like to discuss another aspect of the criminal activity intelligence database. We know that the situation may have changed and perhaps you could provide us with more detail on this.

In Quebec, according to what the Auditor General said, processing times are longer for requests in French than in English. According to the information I have, the wait time is 14 months for requests in English, whereas in Quebec it is 36 months. Is this due to a lack of sufficient resources to meet official languages commitments? Is that what explains that difference?

Commr Bob Paulson: Unfortunately, Mr. Dubé, I am not in a position to explain what is going on. What could explain this difference is that in Quebec there are several police forces, whereas elsewhere in Canada, the RCMP does this type of frontline police work. I do not have the figures, but there are hundreds of police corps in Quebec and each one has to adjust its policy to manage—

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Forgive me for interrupting you, but my time is limited.

Ontario has a provincial police force like the one in Quebec, and yet the situation is not the same. Do you have a shortage of resources to meet official language commitments in Quebec? I understand what you are saying, but once again, the situation is the same in Ontario, but it does not have the same problem.

•(1240)

Commr Bob Paulson: There are also challenges in Ontario. Even though they may not be as serious as the ones in Quebec, we still have to meet the challenge which consists in changing the processes to provide information.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Very well. I have taken note of this.

[English]

Mr. Head, if I may come back to you, once again I'm going to come back to the topic of solitary confinement.

I heard what you said, and I appreciate that the situation is different provincially and federally. That being said, I will ask once again, given that I think it's an important topic to study, do you still believe that this committee should undertake a study on the use of solitary confinement, and how we can see that going forward?

Mr. Don Head: It's a really good question. When I talk to my colleagues around the world, probably the common theme that is coming up at their management tables is the issue of segregation. Part of the reason it's at the table is there is a misunderstanding about what's going on, so I think that even having someone appear before you to talk about what segregation is, and what happens federally, provincially and around the world would be a good start to getting some facts out there.

As we go forward, looking at the whole issue, I think there is going to be an opportunity to consider possible policy, legislative and regulatory changes that will address some of the issues you see in the newspaper and playing out in our facilities.

M. Matthew Dubé: All right. Thank you.

[Translation]

I have a question for all the witnesses. Mr. Paulson may also want to answer.

Several members raised the issue of the legalization of marijuana. I think the government is beginning to realize that there is a difference between an electoral commitment and actually changing the laws involved. There is a certain vagueness at the moment, no matter what your opinion is on this topic, and this is causing a problem with regard to your work. We need some concrete action and more information as to the direction the government is going to take. Would you say that is an accurate statement? That seems to be the gist of your comments.

Commr Bob Paulson: In my opinion, changing the legislation and the regulations is very complex work.

[English]

It's a complex area. I think folks are going to be challenged to make that transition, and we want to help to the extent that we can.

[Translation]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: The situation remains uncertain because we do not know what direction the government is going to take. There seems to be more reluctance than there was before. This seems to be causing problems for you with regard to—

Commr Bob Paulson: The government's anticipated direction is clear enough, but with such a complex project, you have to expect that it will take some time.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Fine.

Mr. Coulombe, given your line of work, you are a man of few words, often quite rightly so. Yesterday, you spoke of several decades of combatting terrorism. I would like to understand why you made such a statement, which could be worrisome for people.

How do you justify such a statement?

Mr. Michel Coulombe: I will give you an example.

The phenomenon of people going abroad to take part in jihad, in terrorist activities, is not new. We have seen it in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Chechnya. However, even if we add up all of these conflicts, we see that the number of people involved now in Syria and Iraq is probably 10 times higher. But we are still working today on the files of individuals who took part in these conflicts.

At the present time there are between 25,000 and 30,000 foreign combatants in that region who are neither Iraqi nor Syrian. As I mentioned yesterday, even if the Islamic State group is defeated militarily, these 30,000 individuals will leave the region to return to their countries of origin or go elsewhere to take part in jihad. Even if only 10% of them do so, we are talking about 2,000 people who will continue to participate in terrorist activities.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Concerning the fight against radicalization, do you think that an approach that would include the communities concerned would have more impact than military measures? If I read between the lines, I believe that is what you were saying.

● (1245)

Mr. Michel Coulombe: I do not think the issue is whether one would have more impact than the other. It is really a continuum. We certainly cannot solve this matter simply by collecting information, or enforcing the laws and carrying out military operations. Nor will the issue be solved through deradicalization programs alone. What matters is that there truly be a continuum, with action all along the spectrum.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We have time for one more seven-minute round. We'll go to Mr. Mendicino and then Ms. Damoff.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to return to the topic of the national security oversight committee. Given that the minister has now taken his leave, I'm going to direct my questions to the deputy minister.

Within the broader context of oversight, we've heard about the distinction between real-time oversight and post hoc or after-the-fact oversight, which is more akin to what SIRC does. It looks historically at whether or not the departments are complying with the balance between the need to protect Canadians and to also safeguard their values under the charter.

We presently get real-time oversight through the national security adviser. Is that a fair statement?

Mr. François Guimont: Well, if by “we” you mean the government—

Mr. Marco Mendicino: I mean that the Prime Minister gets real-time—

Mr. François Guimont: Yes. It is a combination of Public Safety, the agency heads, the deputy minister, the minister, and the national security adviser and the apparatus around that unit.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: It's channelled through the national security adviser. Is that a fair statement?

Mr. François Guimont: For the PM, yes.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: It requires ongoing information and assessments provided to the executive branch, namely, the Prime Minister.

Mr. François Guimont: Yes.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: It also requires coordinating all of the various branches within the broader intelligence community. Is that right?

Mr. François Guimont: Yes.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: In the course of exercising that function, there is some oversight. Is that a fair statement?

Mr. François Guimont: Well, the oversight—I would use the word “review”—is separated along a number of lines at the agency. The director of CSIS has SIRC as a review mechanism. Commissioner Paulson also has the capacity, a review mechanism, to look at the operations of the RCMP. It's separated. It's not integrated. Also, they're not parliamentarians. That's the big difference. It's people who are from the outside, so they're at arm's length. They're not tied to Parliament.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: My question is this: where do you see the national security adviser's role within the national security oversight committee? Do you see this particular official being the most appropriate one to brief the national security oversight committee on ongoing real-time exercises of government authority as provided for under the relevant statutes?

Mr. François Guimont: Mr. Chairman, if I were to look at the dialogue we had in the U.K. when I was there with the minister in January, I would say that they will go where they need to go to get the information they need in carrying out their duties. It could be calling upon the NSA, but I can see the director of CSIS being called forward, and it's the same thing for Commissioner Paulson, me, or anyone.

I will again repeat myself. They will go where their mandate essentially allows them to go to get the information they need to carry out their work.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: This is in keeping with my question earlier to the minister about the ability to compel witnesses to come and provide evidence to the statutory committee.

Mr. François Guimont: That's a question that will need to be discussed.

In the U.K., they have the power to compel, if I remember, but they have been using an approach whereby in calling people to come forward to the committee the individuals contribute or collaborate quite freely.

That point will have to be discussed and decided by the government.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Thank you very much.

Ms. Pam Damoff: On this International Women's Day, I want to go back to Commissioner Paulson. We talked about putting women in leadership in the RCMP. I appreciated your support that this needs to happen if we're going to change the culture to create a healthy workplace that is free from sexual harassment.

One of the things I had asked, and I might not have been clear about, is that we need women to enter policing. You're doing some promotion on that. We need them to remain in policing and also to take on leadership roles.

I'll give you an example of one of the obstacles I've heard, which is child care. For women, working shift work or working 12-hour shifts when day cares are open from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. makes it very challenging to get into policing.

I'm wondering whether you need more funding to look at issues like that: why women aren't entering and staying in policing, and are there ways we can make it so they are able to both enter and stay in the RCMP?

• (1250)

Commr Bob Paulson: That's an excellent question, and it's something we've turned our mind to in the last several years as we've tried to advance on the gender and respect issues that we've been working on.

Just quickly, women have a retention rate in the force on par with men up until 25 years. That doesn't answer your question, but it's interesting that once they qualify for a pension, they leave. That affects our ability to advance a greater cohort of women into the executive and senior executive ranks.

Putting that aside for a second and going back to your question, in terms of accommodating families, that's where our concentration is now. In large urban centres where we have a sizeable representation, that's not a problem. We—at least I and the senior executive—are moving towards a more innovative approach to HR. For example, job sharing has been something which women have raised with me, and we're completely open to it. We need to get the mechanics and the practical arrangements done, but the authorities are all there and the support from senior management is there.

The challenge is in the more remote areas. We police, I think, 78% of the geographic land mass of Canada, and in some very remote circumstances. In terms of our postings and our policies around postings, it presents a challenge. We'll have a two-person detachment, and it can be very difficult for families.

We're completely open to innovative approaches. Do we need more money for HR practices? Yes, we absolutely do. We are embarking on our review—the minister referred to it briefly—of our funding demands, and it is being put out to contract as we speak. That will provide an opportunity for the government to understand how to rightsize the RCMP.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I suspect that in remote areas, getting the right people, whether they're men or women, is a challenge because of those families.

Commr Bob Paulson: Right.

Ms. Pam Damoff: So you're really limiting who is able to take those postings because it would only be certain people with certain family situations who could do that.

Commr Bob Paulson: Right.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Okay, thank you. I think that's my time.

The Chair: That's your time, and that will end our questioning.

I have three questions for the committee members.

You have in front of you the list of the 12 requests regarding voting on the supplementary estimates. Do I have unanimous consent that we will agree to them as they are stated, or would you prefer to vote on them one at a time?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: It's okay to accept them. Are they accepted then unanimously?

An hon. member: On division.

CANADA BORDER SERVICES AGENCY
 Vote 1c—Operating expenditures.....\$43,936,130
 Vote 5c—Capital expenditures.....\$8,960,703

(Votes 1c and 5c agreed to on division)
 CANADIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE
 Vote 1c—Program expenditures.....\$1

(Vote 1c agreed to on division)
 CORRECTIONAL SERVICE OF CANADA
 Vote 1c—Operating expenditures, grants and contributions.....\$1,788,446
 Vote 5c—Capital expenditures.....\$2,311,554

(Votes 1c and 5c agreed to on division)
 PAROLE BOARD OF CANADA
 Vote 1c—Program expenditures\$299,150

(Vote 1c agreed to on division)
 PUBLIC SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS
 Vote 1c—Operating expenditures.....\$1
 Vote 5c—Grants and contributions.....\$1

(Votes 1c and 5c agreed to on division)
 ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE
 Vote 1c—Operating expenditures.....\$71,330,241
 Vote 5c—Capital expenditures.....\$26,020,296
 Vote 10c—Grants and contributions.....\$6,600,000

(Votes 1c, 5c and 10c agreed to on division)
 SECURITY INTELLIGENCE REVIEW COMMITTEE
 Vote 1c—Program expenditures.....\$270,262

(Vote 1c agreed to on division)

The Chair: The second question is, shall I report the supplementary estimates (C) 2015-16 to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: The third question—I was waiting until one of the members requested this—is with respect to lunch. I believe in public disclosure on this. We have not been serving lunch to the committee, even though we are over the lunch hour, and I just wanted...

Is there general agreement that we should have sandwiches and soup available over the lunch hour? Is there unanimous consent for this? Are we all agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: I think that is all the business. I'll just remind the committee that we will begin our study on PTSD/OSI on Thursday. We'll have a brief agenda committee meeting before then to go over the witnesses beyond Thursday.

The meeting is adjourned.

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