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## **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Monday, May 29, 2017**

**Chair**

**The Honourable Kevin Sorenson**



## Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Monday, May 29, 2017

• (1530)

[English]

**The Chair (Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC)):** Good afternoon, everyone.

This is meeting number 60 of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. It is Monday, May 29, 2017. Today we are conducting a hearing on “Report 3—Preventing Corruption in Immigration and Border Services” from the spring 2017 reports of the Auditor General of Canada.

I'll also let our committee and those in the audience know that we are televised today. It is being recorded, so please turn your cellphones off; it prevents disruption. This would be very much appreciated.

In our audience today we're delighted to have the public accounts committee of Bangladesh as well as their auditor general.

Welcome. As a committee, we look forward to meeting with you and discussing public accounts as well as the business of your committee and our committee. We very much hope you have a good time learning here in Canada.

Appearing as witnesses today from the Office of the Auditor General of Canada are Mr. Michael Ferguson, Auditor General of Canada; and Nicholas Swales, principal with the Auditor General's office. From the Canada Border Services Agency we have John Ossowski, president; and Caroline Xavier, vice-president, operations branch. From the Department of Citizenship and Immigration we have Ms. Marta Morgan, deputy minister; and Mr. Robert Orr, assistant deputy minister, operations. From the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development we have Diane Jacovella, associate deputy minister.

Each of our guests has an opening statement.

I would invite our Auditor General to begin, please.

**Mr. Michael Ferguson (Auditor General of Canada, Office of the Auditor General):** Mr. Chair, thank you for this opportunity to present the results of our report on “Preventing Corruption in Immigration and Border Services”.

In our audit, we examined the steps that Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and the Canada Border Services Agency took to address the risk that immigration and border services staff could be corrupted.

For the department, we focused on risks and selected controls related to issuing visitor and international student visas at Canadian missions abroad. For the agency, we focused on risks and selected controls related to land border crossings, where the first point of contact is a border services officer.

Overall, we concluded that both organizations recognized that their employees could be vulnerable to corruption. We also concluded that both organizations needed to better implement their procedures to address this risk.

Neither organization adequately monitored its controls to ensure that they were working as intended. Better information about the effectiveness of the controls would help both organizations improve these controls and proactively detect corruption.

Limited monitoring also meant that both organizations were unaware that their staff did not always follow control procedures. For example, we found that the Canada Border Services Agency officers did not always follow the agency's policy that officers enter all travellers' information into the integrated primary inspection line system. As a result, we estimated that over the course of a year, officers did not collect the information they were supposed to collect on people who entered Canada in some 300,000 vehicles. Without this information, officers could allow someone to enter the country who is not entitled to or who should have received further examination.

[Translation]

We also found that border services officers shared their user log-ins, even though it's agency policy that they should never do so. As a result, it's difficult to link transactions to specific officers to identify who did or didn't follow policy.

Agency superintendents are meant to monitor whether border services officers follow required policies and procedures. However, we found that most superintendents didn't believe they had enough time to do so. Over the course of a year, only half the superintendents used reports intended to help them fulfill their monitoring role. We found that they hadn't completed the required follow-ups on 56 missed lookouts.

At Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, or IRCC, we found that 14 locally engaged staff had viewed their own visa records. These actions violated the department's code of conduct. On at least one other occasion, a similar action signalled the inappropriate sharing of other applicants' information.

I would also note that, where we found effective monitoring, we also found the effective implementation of controls. For example, we found that Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada appropriately monitored who could access its global case management system, and it removed access rights when those rights were no longer required.

We made five recommendations in our report. These included two for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, two for the Canada Border Service Agency and one for Global Affairs Canada. All three organizations agreed with our recommendations, and they committed to taking the appropriate corrective action before the end of the current fiscal year.

• (1535)

[English]

Mr. Chair, this concludes my opening remarks. We would be pleased to answer any questions the committee may have.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Ferguson.

We'll now move to Mr. Ossowski of the Canada Border Services Agency.

**Mr. John Ossowski (President, Canada Border Services Agency):** Thank you.

[Translation]

Hello, Mr. Chair and honourable committee members.

I'm joined today by Caroline Xavier, our vice-president of operations, who can help me answer your questions later.

[English]

I'm looking forward to speaking to you today on behalf of the Canada Border Services Agency. I'll begin my remarks by acknowledging the findings of the 2017 spring reports of the Auditor General of Canada—in particular, “Report 3—Preventing Corruption in Immigration and Border Services”.

As you would no doubt expect, I am especially proud that no evidence of corruption was found during the audit. This finding, amongst others, speaks volumes about the importance we place on equipping our officers to prevent corruption, and more important still, the integrity displayed each and every day by those officers.

Because of the importance that we and our officers place on preventing corruption and because we know that no organization is ever truly immune from the risk of corruption, we welcome the suggestions put forth by the Auditor General on how we might build on our already strong success to make our anti-corruption posture even stronger. The auditors' ideas for improving how we monitor our internal control mechanisms are, for example, findings that we look forward to building on as we implement the management action plan that we've prepared, in line with the recommendations set out in the spring report.

Before I get into the details of what our action plan calls for, though, I'll take a few minutes to provide you with some supporting context. Specifically I'll talk a bit about both the CBSA's everyday operating environment and the Auditor General's suggestions on

how we can strengthen our anti-corruption posture within that environment.

Our mission is to help ensure the security and prosperity of Canada by managing the access of people and goods to and from Canada. We work under a mandate that is executed 24-7 across Canada and abroad by our 15,000-strong workforce, including some 7,000 uniformed staff.

At home in Canada, we operate an impressive number of service points. You will find us at more than 115 land border crossings, 61 of which operate on a 24-7 basis, as well as at 13 international airports, 10 of which also are 24-7 operations. We are also present at five large marine container ports, three mail processing centres, three immigration holding centres, a collection of integrated border enforcement team offices, and almost 30 rail sites.

In addition, we are active abroad, working hard to keep the goods and people that shouldn't be in Canada away from our borders, and to facilitate the entry of those we wish to have here.

The volume and nature of the goods and travellers we work with each and everyday speak not just to the very real complexity of our work, but also the importance of what we do. To be blunt, we are the front line in keeping the economy moving and connecting Canadians to the world. Just last year, we processed more than 92 million travellers and 16 million commercial releases, resulting in the collection of nearly \$31 billion in duties and taxes.

We know that to do our job right we need to move low-risk people and goods as expeditiously as possible, and we need to do that in way that protects Canadians' safety and security. Doing this requires us not only to be on the front lines, but also to be working hard behind the scenes in support of our front-line duties. The back-office elements of our work are not always well known or well understood.

Many wouldn't know, for example, that we make representations at immigration and refugee hearings, including all the way up to Federal Court proceedings. Fewer still would know that CBSA works with partners at home and abroad to conduct lengthy and complex investigations into suspected war criminals, national security cases, and organized crime groups.

To fulfill our very broad and complex mandate, we have developed a highly effective operational strategy that relies on sophisticated risk analysis, targeted information and intelligence gathering, comprehensive examinations, and where necessary, seizures and removals. Because no one agency anywhere in the world can be in all places at all times, we have also developed a critically important network of cross-Canada partners and international counterparts so that we, like them, can bring all the best assets and practices to our work.

As you can appreciate, being a border service officer is a line of work that not everyone can do. It requires dedication, integrity, and some very specialized training. For example, our officers must learn to administer more than 90 acts, regulations, and international agreements, many on behalf of other federal departments and agencies, the provinces, and the territories.

To prepare themselves for active duty, our officers must complete a highly demanding course of study at the CBSA College in Rigaud, Quebec. At Rigaud, the officer induction training program prepares trainees for the wide variety of challenges they will face every day, including possible attempts to co-opt them into criminal activity. Accordingly, as part of their study, officers in training are also required to complete values and ethics training. They also receive guidance and instruction from our security and professional standards division on what they might face and how they should handle it.

● (1540)

We know this training doesn't completely eliminate the risk of corruption; no training ever can. What it does do, and does well, is introduce future officers to the high standards of service and integrity that come with their chosen profession. It also introduces them to a culture of ongoing training and learning, including with regard to anti-corruption, that lasts throughout their career. In short, CBSA employees are expected to uphold the law in carrying out their duties. Let me be absolutely clear: our agency has zero tolerance for illegal activity.

Against this backdrop the Office of the Auditor General conducted its audit. In examining our anti-corruption posture, the auditors found that there is some room for improvement. For example, auditors found that while CBSA understood its corruption risks and had controls in place to mitigate them, it could nonetheless do a better job of monitoring them to ensure they are working to their full potential. They also found that in some cases, individuals have entered Canada without having undergone the fullest inspection possible and that in other cases, border services officers had not recorded their entries as required by policy.

Finally, auditors found that many of the personnel stationed at land border crossings had not completed the full suite of the mandatory training related to corruption awareness.

As a result of these findings, the Auditor General made the following recommendations, which we accept. First, the agency should develop a monitoring strategy that specifies how we will systematically assess our corruption mitigation controls to ensure they are applied appropriately and are achieving their intended results, and define superintendents' responsibilities, in turn enabling them to fulfill their control function at land crossings. Second, the agency should ensure that personnel at land crossings complete their mandatory training.

In response to the first recommendation, I can tell you that we will incorporate the assessment of controls on corruption into our management practice assessments and our port program assessments, which are used to assess and measure operational adherence to agency priorities and high-risk areas of business at ports of entry. We will also ensure that regional front-line management accountabilities are established and that our port program assessment exercise

includes questions related to preventing corruption. We expect this work will be completed in summer 2017.

In response to the second recommendation, we have committed to the delivery of mandatory values and ethics training for all officers. To assist with this, we have already implemented an agency-wide communication plan and we will monitor results of these measures on an annual basis. On this point, I'm happy to report that as of March 31, 90.5% had completed this training.

Mr. Chair and honourable members, the management action plan that we have developed is not simply a response to the Auditor General's suggestions on how we can improve our already strong success.

It is, at base, an important investment in our workforce. Our border services officers have a strong organizational culture that rests on their deep commitment to the values they uphold and the motto they live by: protection, service, integrity.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chair and honourable committee members, I want to stress that we'll work hard to help them continue doing their job.

In closing, I want to thank the Office of the Auditor General for taking the time to study our operations. In light of its suggestions, we're determined to further strengthen our anti-corruption record.

I would be pleased to answer the committee's questions.

● (1545)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, sir.

We'll carry on now to Ms. Morgan, deputy minister, Department of Citizenship and Immigration.

Welcome to our committee.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marta Morgan (Deputy Minister, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** Good afternoon and thank you.

Thank you for inviting me to discuss the Auditor General's findings concerning Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

The department appreciates the Auditor General's review of its visa approval processes.

[*English*]

I am pleased to be joined today by my colleague, Robert Orr, the assistant deputy minister for operations at IRCC.

As you know, Mr. Chair, IRCC's role in controlling the entry to Canada of foreign nationals is to arrange their visas. From April 2015 to March 1, 2016, we approved 1.4 million visas for those wishing to visit or study in Canada. Our visa officers process visa applications at 57 Canadian missions around the world, and our staff consists of about 280 immigration officials and 1,100 locally engaged staff.

With respect to IRCC, the objectives of this audit were to determine whether we had implemented controls to address corruption among our immigration staff. I am pleased to say that the Auditor General did not find evidence of corruption and found that IRCC has various risk controls in place that work well.

More specifically, the Auditor General found that IRCC's controls are effective at preventing a single individual from inappropriately completing all visa processing and approval steps. This finding is important because the separation of duties among staff reduces the risk that they could engage in malfeasance or other activities.

Of the 1.4 million visas that IRCC approved during this time, the Auditor General identified 69 cases in which one person completed all the processing steps to issue a visa. In each of these cases, the exceptions were justified for various reasons: to correct an error on a previously approved visa or to facilitate urgent travel. While the Auditor General's findings are positive for IRCC overall, we recognize there is room for improvement. The department agrees with the Auditor General's recommendations, and we have since implemented measures to address them.

[Translation]

The Auditor General's first recommendation for IRCC is to develop a comprehensive internal fraud risk assessment, based on an analysis of the effectiveness of its various controls.

To further strengthen its programs against fraud, IRCC has since developed the international network professional conduct standard. This manual focuses on the comprehensive management of risks related to internal fraud, and provides detailed guidance on how to prevent and monitor these risks.

Essentially, our risk prevention and management strategy involves a continuous cycle of prevention, detection, assessment and reporting. We expect to be making full use of the conduct standard by 2018.

[English]

The Auditor General's second recommendation for IRCC is to further enhance our monitoring activities to ensure that our risk controls are working.

The international network professional conduct standard also contains detailed guidance on monitoring practices, and will ensure that the department captures ongoing data related to activities associated with internal fraud. This will include baseline data such as the number of incidents of unauthorized information access in GCMS, the number of allegations with respect to misconduct, fact-finding activities related to allegations and mandated investigations, and the number of single-processor visa cases. Establishing this baseline data will allow us to track our progress and better identify trends or anomalies.

During the course of this audit, a review of the use of the GCMS found that 14 locally engaged staff had viewed their own files. Although these actions had no impact on the decision-making process, they nonetheless contravened the department's code of conduct, which prohibits staff from using their roles for their own perceived or actual advantage. The department is in consultation with Global Affairs Canada and the respective immigration program

managers to further investigate the reason staff accessed visa records and to determine next steps. In the meantime, all immigration program managers have been reminded that staff should not access records they are not authorized to work on, including their own.

The department is also working to improve the values and ethics training among our staff. The Office of the Auditor General was able to confirm that only 20% of locally engaged employees had completed the mandatory values and ethics training provided by Global Affairs Canada, and it recommended better oversight to ensure the course had been completed. IRCC supports the response from Global Affairs and agrees with the importance of values and ethics training.

In addition to tracking the completion of mandatory training provided by Global Affairs Canada, the principles contained in the department's values and ethics codes are regularly communicated to staff at our overseas missions through other activities. IRCC offers values and ethics training during other training sessions on the departmental code of conduct. Immigration program managers also foster a culture of ethical behaviour through regular communication at staff meetings. In addition, as part of the annual performance management process, all IRCC employees, including locally engaged staff, must confirm in writing that they have read and understood the code of conduct.

• (1550)

[Translation]

At IRCC, we're continuously looking to improve our fraud prevention and detection methods, and this report will help us do so.

Based on the findings in the report, IRCC has adopted an even more comprehensive and effective risk management strategy for processing applications overseas. We'll also be able to monitor these risk controls more systematically.

[English]

Thank you very much to the members of the committee for your attention today. We will be happy to respond to your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Morgan.

We'll now turn to Ms. Jacovella, from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development.

Welcome.

**Ms. Diane Jacovella (Associate Deputy Minister, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development):** Good afternoon, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much for inviting me to appear before this committee.

Global Affairs Canada would also like to thank the Auditor General for the work of his office, and acknowledges the findings and recommendations of this report.

Let me start by providing some contextual data that will shed some light on how Global Affairs Canada supports its federal departmental partners like Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, and the Canada Border Services Agency, abroad.

Global Affairs Canada manages a network of 176 missions in 110 countries. Global Affairs is the employer of over 5,000 locally engaged staff, who are hired to support the department's operation and programs as well as those delivered by our partners in these missions.

Considering the differences in the environments where these missions operate and the risks they represent, Global Affairs Canada is committed to ensuring that all employees, including locally engaged staff, are properly trained and well-informed of their responsibilities in complying with the code of values and ethics. This is critical in preventing the risk of corruption or any other unacceptable behaviour by our workforce.

I can assure you, Mr. Chair, that my department takes this very seriously.

[*Translation*]

This concerns the reputation of our country and our institutions. Canadians are expecting us to work together in a coordinated and effective way. My colleagues at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, at the Canada Border Services Agency and I are committed to doing so.

While the focus of this audit was on the respective roles of IRCC and CBSA, the audit also examined certain responsibilities on the part of Global Affairs Canada for locally engaged staff in missions abroad.

The staff support IRCC's visa program. While they report to an IRCC program manager, they must take a mandatory values and ethics course provided by Global Affairs Canada. This course is part of a broad range of training provided to employees operating abroad.

The Auditor General indicated that Global Affairs could do a better job of ensuring that all employees take this important course by monitoring completion rates. As such, one of the five recommendations in the report was addressed by Global Affairs Canada.

[*English*]

I must note that the Auditor General, in his appearance before the same committee, confirmed that no evidence of corruption was found during the audit. That reassures us. However, we must maintain our vigilance to make sure that we are able not only to detect potential corruption risks but especially to prevent them. This entails, among other things, an increased awareness of the risks to which our missions are exposed every day.

Going forward, Global Affairs is committed to continue working with IRCC to ensure that all locally engaged staff complete the mandatory course on values and ethics. More specifically, Global Affairs will be taking further measures, including sending broadcast messages via email to all employees as well as mission training coordinators to remind them of this required training; along with an additional clause in the letter of offer of employment for locally engaged staff indicating that they must comply not only with the

code of values and ethics but also take the associated course; and producing monthly training reports to monitor mandatory training and follow-up with employees who have not completed their training as well as their managers.

We are confident that the implementation of these measures, as well as the coordinated and sustained efforts of our respective organizations, will allow us to adequately respond to the challenge.

In addition to these examples of initiatives undertaken, senior management at Global Affairs Canada promotes and enforces an environment of zero tolerance for any behaviour by any employee that runs counter to the code of values and ethics.

In 2016 Global Affairs conducted a fraud risk assessment to identify the main fraud risks and mitigation strategies. This included a clear tone at the top that promoted high ethical behaviour for all employees including locally engaged staff. All employees are encouraged to disclose any questionable behaviours that are investigated and, when warranted, appropriate actions taken to send a strong and unequivocal message.

● (1555)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chair, let me be pragmatic. Global Affairs Canada and its partners do business in places where the risk of corruption is among the highest in the world, as measured by the corruption perceptions index published by Transparency International. Despite our sustained efforts and vigilance, zero risk doesn't exist.

Therefore, we must continue our work on prevention while increasing our detection efforts, in close cooperation with all our partners. Clear and consistent communication between our organizations and increased awareness among all employees, including managers, will help effectively reduce the risks we all face.

Thank you.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you all very much for your statements. We'll now move into the first round of questioning.

The first seven-minute round is by Ms. Shanahan.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you once again to the Auditor General and to all of our witnesses for being here.

I think this is a very interesting first choice of report to be studying among the spring reports of the Auditor General, because nothing could be more timely than issues concerning our public security. I think it's going to be very helpful for us to hear what our witnesses have to say today.

However, because this is the public accounts committee, I do want to address a question the Auditor General brought up. One of the themes, Chair, you'll remember, we have been discussing as a committee is the importance of data integrity. For the Auditor General's office to do the work that it does, it needs to have full access to adequate data. Sometimes it's simply not there.

This question, Mr. Ferguson, is regarding recommendation 3.107, that “Global Affairs Canada should ensure that locally engaged staff working in Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada’s visa program complete the Global Affairs Canada values and ethics mandatory training course.” The OAG reported that due to incomplete data, it could only confirm that 20% of locally engaged staff working in the visa program had completed the course.

Can you please tell the committee if you have any further details regarding the lack of data pertaining to mandatory staff training? Overall, within the limits of this audit, did your office find other examples of poor or improper data collection and use?

**Mr. Michael Ferguson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We don’t have any additional information on what’s happened since the audit. The departments, I suppose, could give you more information on what they might have on that.

We come across this issue fairly regularly. Departments will have mandatory training, but then they don’t always have the information to be able to indicate how many of their staff members have followed that type of training. It’s an issue that comes up a number of times.

We got access to all of the information we asked for in the course of this audit, so there wasn’t a problem in that way. There were some situations, which, based on the data that we were able to get... For example, in this one, we said that we could only confirm that 20% of the staff had completed the mandatory training course, because that was the state of the data that existed. All we can tell you is that there was evidence that 20% of the staff completed that training.

• (1600)

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** So you would only know in a further audit or follow-up with the action plan.

**Mr. Michael Ferguson:** That’s right.

Again, the organizations may have more information from their looking at the issue after the audit. However, for us to know how they are doing, or whether they are making progress on the recommendation we made, we would have to go back and audit that again.

I can’t tell you right now what percentage of locally engaged staff have now completed the mandatory training at Global Affairs Canada. Perhaps either IRCC or Global Affairs could give you an update on that.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** That’s fine.

My question is for Ms. Jacovella.

[English]

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** Can I answer, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** I’m asking my question through the chair.

[English]

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** The statistics that we have from April 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017 show that 86% of our employees have completed the course. However, our learning system doesn’t differentiate between Canada-based staff and a locally engaged staff. For that we would have to do some manual—

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Can I intervene, Ms. Jacovella? Have you improved your data collection methods? Have you put something new or systematic in place? What was the problem? Why was the Auditor General not able to get the information in the first instance?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** The information was available for Canada-based staff and locally engaged staff. Since then, we have changed our learning system so we can now produce training reports by mission. We can send out to the heads of our missions the lists of the employees who have followed the course. They know exactly who has and has not met the requirement, rather than just having general numbers. They are targeted now for each of our missions. That will allow each manager to pay close attention to making sure that the employees complete the course within three months of being hired.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Thank you for that.

I wanted to address border services because my riding of Châteauguay—Lacolle has a very important border crossing. Mandatory training is also an issue there.

I want to ask about the observation by the Auditor General of the approximately 300,000 vehicles that have crossed the border without full inspection.

Who would like to take that question on?

**The Chair:** Mr. Ossowski.

**Mr. John Ossowski:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think it’s important to recognize that the 300,000 travellers the Auditor General has reported do not represent actual travellers. It’s based on probability sampling. They looked at a very small subset of 38 cases and from that extrapolated that up to 300,000 vehicles had not been properly entered into the system.

I want to assure the committee that despite the fact that a licence plate reader might have captured the vehicle, but a passport was not swiped in the system properly, it does not mean that an officer did not provide an examination of each and every person crossing the border.

I would say that there’s a hypothesis here. I find it very interesting, and we’re going to follow up on it. Obviously our policy is that everything is done completely, and we will be following up on these things.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** I would like to ask—

**The Chair:** Very quickly.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Roxham Road is not an official border crossing, as we all know.

**Mr. John Ossowski:** No, it’s not.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** But’s it’s one that I hear a lot about it. What are the surveillance techniques that are used there to ensure that people are not crossing improperly?



**Mr. John Ossowski:** In between ports of entry, it's the RCMP's responsibility. Once the RCMP finds somebody who has crossed illegally into Canada, they are brought to the port of entry for processing, if they're going to make a refugee claim.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mrs. Shanahan.

We'll now move to Mr. McColeman, please. You have seven minutes.

**Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC):** Thank you for being here today.

Mr. Ferguson, you just heard Mr. Ossowski's explanation. It was one of the very questions I was going to lead with. He challenged the methodology in noting that because the numbers were extrapolated, perhaps they didn't indicate the actual circumstances. What's your reaction to that?

• (1605)

**Mr. Michael Ferguson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll ask Mr. Swales to give the details. In paragraph 3.50, we explain what we did. At the end, yes, we took a sample of vehicles to identify whether the information had been collected or not, but as we say in paragraph 3.50, we started with 19 million records, and based on those we identified 511,000 that looked like anomalies. Then, we took the sample from those 511,000 to determine whether they really were anomalies or not. The first pass of the complete population indicated to us that there could be as many as 511,000. From the sample, we were able to reduce that down to about 300,000. It wasn't simply a matter of taking a certain number or a small sample out of the 19 million. We did start by looking at the whole population.

I'll ask Mr. Swales if he needs to correct anything I just said, or if he has any more details to add to that.

**The Chair:** Mr. Swales, go ahead.

**Mr. Nicholas Swales (Principal, Office of the Auditor General):** I'm not sure I have anything to add. That was an accurate statement, but it is clearly an estimate based on a sample.

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** Okay.

Regarding what is a full inspection, I'd like you to define that for us, Mr. Ossowski, if you would be so kind.

**Mr. John Ossowski:** On this one, I'll turn to my VP of operations, who can describe it more thoroughly than I can.

**Ms. Caroline Xavier (Vice-President, Operations Branch, Canada Border Services Agency):** Mr. Chair, I could answer that question.

Basically, for us, a full inspection, a full examination, or a complete screening would include, as the president said earlier, the swiping of a passport, which would ensure that the information is placed as a record in what we call our "integrated primary inspection line".

What the OAG found was that sometimes the record of a licence plate that was read—because we also have licence plate readers at all our land ports of entry—didn't match up with the swiping of the passport, for example.

A full screening would include perhaps a licence plate reader, the swiping of a passport, and potentially a referral to secondary, if there was a target, a lookout, or something of an anomaly that referred you to secondary. That whole thing would then be closed up with some remarks by the border services officer, depending on whether or not you were referred to secondary.

In the cases where they stated that about 2% of that population was not seen by a service officer, what we are stating is that they may have potentially been seen, but what may have happened is that the full record was not completed. The licence plate reader did indeed find a vehicle and did make a record of the vehicle, but the officer did not follow full policy, as the OAG found, not completing the record by making a full reconciliation. There are various reasons why that could happen. It does happen, unfortunately.

As the president said, our intent is to ensure that the policy that is in place continues to be properly adhered to. Although they did not complete the full swiping of a passport, that doesn't mean they didn't at least have a conversation or the person was not seen by a border services officer.

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** I just want to make sure I understand, and the public understands. When you come to a border crossing, the expectation is a minimum of an automated reading of the licence plate off the vehicle, obviously, and a presentation of your passport

**Ms. Caroline Xavier:** Documentation....

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** Is it allowable at border crossings to use the new driver's licences that people carry with them that have encoded details? Is that possible as well?

**Ms. Caroline Xavier:** There is a variety of documentation that could be used at a land border crossing, including an enhanced driver's licence. The majority do use a passport; that's usually what's used. Or, you could also use a NEXUS card if you're in a NEXUS lane. There is a series of acceptable documentation at the land port of entry, but at the very least, what is expected is that documentation is presented, and that is recorded into the system.

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** Okay, thanks for that.

Section 3.25 of the report notes that CBSA "has been developing an Information Security Integrity Monitoring Strategy since 2013.... At the time of this audit, the strategy was still at an early stage of development." Its scheduled completion date was set for 2016.

What is the current status of that strategy?

• (1610)

**Mr. John Ossowski:** I'm happy to report that the information security integrity monitoring strategy was completed in November 2016, and we are using it right now.

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** Okay, has the department seen any tangible results from the implementation?

**Mr. John Ossowski:** I don't have the details in terms of specific actions that have come about since it was implemented, but I can happily undertake to find out and get back to you on that.

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** Okay, I'd appreciate that.

Can you give us a quick outline of what the program put in place?

**Ms. Caroline Xavier:** I could take that question on behalf of CBSA.

The intention here, in keeping with the recommendation by the Office of the Auditor General, is that we ensure that we do more active monitoring of our IT systems, do regular reports on it, and identify some anomalies that may come to our attention.

With the implementation of that strategy, as the president outlined, we are now having a better opportunity to monitor our systems, conduct and review the reports, and determine whether individuals are accessing the systems as they should. That is one of the things.

The other part of that strategy is the overall improvement around our training as well.

One of the things we have spoken about here at the committee is the training and our desire to ensure that as many people as possible are taking the mandatory training. That mandatory aspect is a part of the strategy as well, ensuring that all the personnel have appropriate training related to their jobs, and that this corruption aspect is also undertaken.

That forms part of the overall strategy as well. So it's the policy improvements, the monitoring improvements, the reporting aspects, and being able to do a better job in that space.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Thank you very much, Mr. McColeman. Your time is up.

We'll now move to Mr. Christopherson, please, for seven minutes.

**Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you to all our witnesses today.

Mr. Ferguson, as always, it's good to have you here. If I can, Mr. Ferguson, I'd like you to clear something up, or at least make it crystal clear for me.

On page 13 of the report—sorry, I think that's page 13 of the report; I have a printed copy—you state, “Although the data did not allow us to draw a conclusion of corruption”, then it goes on to say, “a greater superintendent presence would allow the Agency to understand why this happened.”

My question is about the choice of the words, sir: “Although the data did not allow us to draw a conclusion of corruption...”. It doesn't flat out say that there was no corruption. It also doesn't leave the suggestion that there was, except that the data didn't allow you to draw that conclusion. It's a bit like, “Well, are they guilty? Well, we don't have enough evidence to prove they are guilty. I don't know whether they are innocent or not.”

Could you clarify it for me? Does that mean that you had no reason to suspect any element of corruption in anything you looked at? Is that correct?

**Mr. Michael Ferguson:** It would be correct, Mr. Chair, to say that we didn't find anything that would lead us to suspect corruption.

What we found in the course of all the types of issues that we identified were signs that the controls were not followed. Whether it was the 300,000 vehicles that entered without the information being

collected, or the sharing of user ID information, or not following up on lookouts, we found the controls were not followed in a number of instances. Any time that a control is not followed, there is, on the one hand, the possibility that it could just have been an oversight, or, on the other hand, that it could have been deliberate. We had no way of following up further to identify whether in any of those cases they were deliberate.

I can't say that there was anything that indicated to us that there was corruption, but I think that any time these types of controls are not followed, that's a serious issue. In the case of those controls, CBSA needs to be able to use their information better to follow up quickly.

The anomalies that we identified, the situations where the controls were not followed, were all fairly easy for the department to identify. They should be identifying them and following up on them, because they could be indications that people were doing things that they shouldn't have been doing.

● (1615)

**Mr. David Christopherson:** So it's as close to a clean bill of health as they're going to get from the auditor, in the words you're saying.

**Mr. Michael Ferguson:** I can't say that there was anything that indicated there was corruption, but whenever you have 300,000 vehicles that come across a border without the information being collected, to me that's a very serious situation.

Information was captured about the vehicles coming to the border through the automatic licence plate reader process. They know the vehicles came across, but then they didn't record the information about who was in those vehicles—which automatically begs the question, why? I think the agency needs to be in a better position to be able to answer that question.

**Mr. David Christopherson:** Very good. Thank you.

On page 13 it speaks to the superintendents, and there are some disturbing stats. First of all, 74% of superintendents responded to the survey. Given they are senior management, why wasn't it 100%, and was that a problem for you? I'm speaking to border services.

**Mr. John Ossowski:** In terms of a response rate, I understand it was a voluntary questionnaire. Yes, I would have preferred a 100% response rate, but 74% is actually pretty good for a questionnaire.

**Mr. David Christopherson:** I don't know. I'm not so convinced about that. It's an audit report, and any superintendent not filling out information for an audit report should make alarm bells go off.

Now, 71% of those who responded said they spent less than 25% of their shifts overseeing border service officers. Not only that, 60% said they did not have enough time to supervise on-site operations. From reading the report, it seems pretty clear that much of the checks and balances on a lot of these things, the secondary eyeballs, and independent second view are by the superintendents. This seems to be a very worrying state of affairs. Can you comment on it, please?

**Mr. John Ossowski:** Mr. Chair, I would simply say that administration always has to be balanced properly with supervision. The Auditor General has made an observation on that. The superintendents have replied by saying that they would prefer to do less administration. I must admit I've heard that before in my travels, but it is important because that's how we track results and outcomes.

It's important that they also have a presence or be seen to have a presence on the front lines looking after their staff and dealing with situations as they arise. It's something that we've paid attention to, and we will look into seeing if we need to adjust the balance going forward.

**Mr. David Christopherson:** Because you're not sure?

**Mr. John Ossowski:** I think it varies from port to port and from situation to situation. I believe that we have the right number of superintendents supervising officers. Generally it's a 1:10 ratio. These are complicated environments where there's a lot of activity. They're very dynamic environments, and I think that I personally would prefer that my officers have more time with their staff and supervising them, but administration is important. I think the qualitative point here is in terms of what the right ratio is.

**Mr. David Christopherson:** Thank you.

On page 14, paragraph 3.64 from the Auditor General's report reads:

Superintendents are responsible for following up on all missed lookouts and for taking corrective action when a lookout is missed. We examined 9,082 lookouts from 1 April 2015 to 14 March 2016. We found that border services officers missed 56 lookouts and superintendents either did not follow up as required or the follow-up was not complete. Although there were few missed lookouts (0.6 percent), some involved organized crime and contraband drugs.

Notwithstanding what I consider a little bit your self-laudatory opening remarks, in which you brag about the complexity of having to deal with organized crime, one of the vulnerabilities right here of those superintendents not doing that is exactly that, organized crime.

I want to hear a little bit more about how you're going to have your superintendents wanting, willing, and able to do more of this follow-up check and balance that's not happening right now.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Christopherson.

Mr. Ossowski, very quickly.

**Mr. John Ossowski:** Yes. Thank you for the question, Mr. Chair.

Yes, we found this distressing as well. We've actually followed up

**Mr. David Christopherson:** It didn't read like that in your opening remarks.

**Mr. John Ossowski:** We followed up on each and every one of those ones. We've resolved to our satisfaction 43 of the 56, and we're continuing to investigate 13 more.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

• (1620)

**Mr. David Christopherson:** Thank you, Chair.

**The Chair:** We'll now move to Mr. Arya, please, for seven minutes.

**Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Immigration is, of course, our biggest workload, not only for me, but I think also for the majority of members of Parliament. I think almost two full-time staff of mine are engaged on the immigration workload.

There are complaints that there is a lot of delay or that the visa officers have not assessed things properly, but one thing I appreciate is that I have never heard a corruption charge. I really appreciate that because I have lived in several countries in different parts of the world.

I know you have 1,100 locally engaged staff. That's quite a big number of people spread across so many missions, but until now, in the 18 or 19 months since I've been elected, I have never heard a single complaint of corruption, though there's a long list of complaints that we can discuss at a later date.

Ms. Jacovella, you mentioned that you have 5,000 locally engaged staff. I understand, as I've visited several missions, that for some of the jobs, locally engaged staff are quite good because of their local knowledge, but I don't understand why IRCC should have 1,100 locally engaged staff. Is it because it's more cost-effective? Is it because Canadians don't want to go and work elsewhere?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** Mr. Chair, first of all, we have a mix of Canada-based staff and locally engaged staff. We find that that is really the most effective way for us to deliver the significant volumes of processing that we do—1.4 million temporary visas a year, a good portion of which are processed in our overseas offices.

It is more cost-effective to hire locally engaged staff in many cases. We have ways of managing the workflow so that locally engaged staff are doing part of the processing and, for the most part, though not in all cases, the decision-making functions stay with Canada-based officers.

**Mr. Chandra Arya:** Once again, with my background I can say that there's a lot of pressure on the staff working on visas in the immigration sections in several parts of the world. There's tremendous pressure; let me put it that way.

Have you ever fired anybody on charges of corruption?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** We have in some cases, yes. Whenever we find any evidence that staff is behaving inappropriately, we investigate, and we have on occasion had to let some staff go.

**Mr. Chandra Arya:** The Auditor General mentioned that 14 locally engaged staff had viewed their own visa records, and on at least one occasion, a similar action signalled the inappropriate sharing of other people's visa information.

Recently CRA fired an employee for improperly accessing the income tax returns of various people.

Has there been any action taken on these cases?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** Yes. Of these four—

I'll let Bob answer this.

**Mr. Robert Orr (Assistant Deputy Minister, Operations, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** Mr. Chair, we do take this very seriously indeed. There have been a number of investigations.

There were 14 investigations over the past year. Seven cases were identified in our domestic network, and of those, two employees received suspension; one received a five-day suspension; two employees were terminated; one investigation was unfounded; and one investigation is still open. Overseas, six locally engaged staff were terminated, and one locally engaged staff resigned.

That is just to demonstrate that we take it very seriously indeed, with zero tolerance.

**Mr. Chandra Arya:** Thank you.

Coming to border services, you seem to disagree with the numbers provided by the Auditor General. You mentioned 38 cases. That accounts for 2% of the total number of, I guess, vehicle crossings.

If you disagree and think that 300,000 may not be appropriate, what do you think is the right number?

**The Chair:** Mr. Ossowski, please.

**Mr. John Ossowski:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Chair.

I don't disagree with the 300,000. I just think it's important to note, as Mr. Swales acknowledged, that it's an estimate based on a sample.

Nonetheless, for me the practicality is that policies were not followed. I want to make sure that the policies are adhered to and that everyone's transaction, if you will, as they cross the border is properly recorded in the system. We've communicated that, as a result of the work of the Auditor General.

• (1625)

**Mr. Chandra Arya:** But you do agree that there are some instances where the information is not captured.

**Mr. John Ossowski:** I agree.

**Mr. Chandra Arya:** Okay.

Coming to the smaller border crossings, I believe there are no managers on site to supervise staff, nor reviews of electronic information to make sure that the controls are followed. What are you doing about that?

**Mr. John Ossowski:** Perhaps I could get Caroline to answer.

**Ms. Caroline Xavier:** Thank you for the question.

Just for clarity, you're asking whether or not, at the small ports of entry, we are also ensuring that the policy is adhered to? Yes. Basically, at all of our ports of entry, the policy must be adhered to. The size of the port of entry doesn't matter.

There are superintendents who still have to provide and perform their duties, even in the small ports of entry that exist.

**Mr. Chandra Arya:** Talking of the superintendents, I was told that they spend less than 25% of their time overseeing border service officers, because most of their time is spent on administrative tasks. What measures are being taken there?

**Ms. Caroline Xavier:** As the president was saying earlier, administrative tasks are a very important part of the overall role of a superintendent, but one balance that we're aiming to achieve is to make sure they spend just as much time in the oversight and supervisory role that is expected of them.

It is a challenge to ensure they're keeping that balance, but they are expected to be able to do the administrative duties—which are important, as the president outlined—as well as continuing to ensure the appropriate supervision of their staff.

**Mr. Chandra Arya:** Are there on-site managers at the smaller border crossings too?

**Ms. Caroline Xavier:** At smaller ports of entry, a superintendent could be overseeing more than one. That is primarily because in some cases they are fairly close to each other and are ports of entry where there are still two border service officers at a time, at the very least, on a shift. Each of the border service officers is having to hold the others accountable. Like anybody in their day-to-day job, there is not somebody watching over what they're doing every second of the day.

We're hiring our border service officers with the intention that they will have the integrity required and expected of them, and a superintendent is available to them at any point in time. They're not always physically seeing the superintendent, because they are shared between smaller ports of entry.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Arya and Ms. Xavier.

We'll now move back to the second round, the five-minute round, and Mr. Jeneroux.

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I wanted to extend my welcome to everyone here at the committee, and also to the Bangladesh delegation that's here. Welcome to our committee.

Before I get into my questioning, Mr. Chair, I want to just clarify for the record that we, as a committee, sent a very strong message a month or two ago about ensuring that we have deputy ministers at this table.

I see that Ms. Jacovella, associate deputy minister, is here. We welcome you. However, you are not a deputy minister, and we were hoping we could clarify why the deputy minister isn't here?

**The Chair:** Yes, this was discussed, and the deputy minister is out of town or out of the country. All the other departments were able to come today, and we gave a pass to the—

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** I just wanted to make sure that we're not slipping on that. We have to remember that we shut down a committee because of that, and we want to make sure that all departments are taking that seriously.

Now on to my questions. In his opening comments and as part of his report, the Auditor General said that Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada found that 14 locally engaged staff had viewed their own visa records. These actions obviously violate the department's own code of conduct, and at least one person inappropriately shared other people's visa information.

The comments from the deputy minister indicated that it should maybe go a bit more in depth. I got the sense that the answer—or the solution—is to remind them they're not supposed to do that. I have two little girls at home and I remind them not to do things, but eventually they do things again.

I would like a little clarification as to whether any action is being taken? Is there an investigation into why they by chance viewed these records? Is there any information we should be aware of, or any sort of repercussion that happens when these sorts of things occur?

**The Chair:** Ms. Morgan, also on that, could you explain the type of information they would see on their own file that would be wrongfully viewed?

• (1630)

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd be happy to discuss that.

Since the Auditor General's report, we have confirmed that the 14 persons who accessed their own information are locally engaged employees of IRCC. From the information that we have available to date, it appears that these employees accessed their own information and files to check information and status contained in them. There's no indication that they took any action on their own files. The access recorded in GCMS was “read-only”, and did not include “write” activities, which indicate action taken on a file.

Access to information would be subject to the roles assigned to staff in GCMS. That is, staff would only be able to access their own information to the extent that their assigned GCMS role provided it. GCMS roles provide for different levels of access to information held in GCMS.

We are continuing to look into these cases. We are working with Global Affairs Canada because this is a shared responsibility: while these employees report to us, they are employees of Global Affairs Canada. We're working with our program managers and the heads of missions to continue investigating these particular accesses, but at the moment our assessment is that no action has been taken by these employees improperly.

What they would generally see on the file is their own information that they might have submitted, for example, to get a temporary visa to visit Canada. It's the sort of information we request from them—their basic information that's required for a visa.

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** I appreciate that.

Now over to you, Mr. Ossowski.

There were shared user log-ins at your agency. Again, I heard that education and reminders are the solution. Is there any investigation ongoing into those cases and whether any inappropriate stuff was done with those shared log-ins?

**Mr. John Ossowski:** Do you mean in terms of the sharing of passwords?

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** Yes.

**Mr. John Ossowski:** Specifically, one of the reasons we found as a result of the audit was that when recruits came out of the college

and were assigned to their port of entry, they weren't receiving their passwords to access the system right away.

Part of your education, as you start in the field, is to be with a supervisor, so they would be using the supervisors' passwords. We have rectified that problem. They immediately get their password upon graduation, so we expect this number to diminish dramatically.

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Jeneroux.

We'll go to Ms. Mendès.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank everyone for being here to talk about a subject that's very important to me. Since 1987, I've been dealing with members of Citizenship and Immigration Canada—in all the department's successive versions—on a professional and political level. I want to look at two things, starting with training. All employees should in principle take the values and ethics training. However, according to the Auditor General's report, only 20% of our locally engaged staff have taken the training. This is a problem in itself.

As I told you, I've been working in this field for a very long time, almost 30 years. I want to know why, over all these years, we've never considered following up with users to assess the system?

You said there's no corruption. However, I could tell unbelievable stories—there are so many that it would take forever—of people who witnessed fraud in our foreign embassies. We've never followed up on these stories because, basically, these people are afraid of the consequences of making complaints.

How do you check on the people who use the system? Do you consult them afterward? Do you ask them questions about their experience? Above all, why is the training so limited and the program so rarely implemented? Why have few employees received the training?

My questions are for Ms. Morgan and Ms. Jacovella.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Mendès.

Ms. Jacovella.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** Thank you for the questions.

First, I want to specify—and I'm talking on behalf of my colleagues and our department, because we work very closely together—that the people we hire in the departments are locally engaged. However, they report to an immigration program manager. When they're hired, the new employees are clearly informed that they must comply with the code of values and ethics. We discuss the code with these people and we give them a copy of the code. They know what the Government of Canada expects, and they know the values they must adhere to throughout their government career.

The course is also mandatory. As I said, the course is now part of the conditions of employment. All new job offers mention not only that employees must comply with the code, but that they must also take the mandatory course within three months of their arrival.

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendès:** Have you just made this change?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** Yes. The change was made to follow up on the Auditor General's recommendations.

Before the release of the Auditor General's report, we had already asked our employees to speak with the staff under their responsibility about values and ethics. We don't think it's enough to give the code to the staff. They must also speak with the staff to encourage them to quickly indicate areas that need improvement. This way, the management team shows its desire to be made aware of any unacceptable situations that arise.

I simply want to say that the Auditor General was only able to see that 20% of employees had taken the training. However, this doesn't mean that only 20% of employees received the training. According to our statistics, 86% of employees are trained.

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendès:** This should include all employees in Canada.

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** The training is mandatory. I agree we should aim for all or almost all employees. Before, our system didn't allow us to analyze the data by mission. However, we can do so now. We send monthly reports to the heads of missions and the managers to let them know how many employees haven't received the training yet. These managers must follow up on the matter. It should be made very clear that the training is extremely important for everyone.

Thank you.

I'll give the floor to my colleague, if she wants to add something.

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendès:** Thank you.

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** The Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development and our department provide the same thing. We speak with employees regularly, both during meetings or as part of the annual assessment, to make sure they fully understand the values and ethics principles. Therefore, additional information is provided periodically within the Department of Citizenship and Immigration.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Ms. Mendès.

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendès:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Have you thought of doing post-service surveys—I won't dare call them satisfaction surveys—with people who actually use the system? I ask because a lot of people are afraid of telling you what's

happening to them when they apply. They won't come on their own to make complaints.

Would you consider that as a way to measure what they actually live when they make an application?

**The Chair:** Mr. Orr.

**Mr. Robert Orr:** Mr. Chair, we have undertaken some surveys, indeed, to see client satisfaction with the process. I don't think there are particular questions about fraud in there, but on the other hand there are opportunities to raise issues that individuals may have come across. We are in the process of trying to increase that sort of activity with our clients to get a better read on what's going on. Some of it has already happened, but, yes, you're quite right that we can improve that.

There are a couple of other things I would add on this score in terms of managing our staff abroad. Every year we insist that the staff reread the code of conduct and that they sign that they have done so, and we do regular quality assurance exercises to investigate what's going on and to be assured that the processing is appropriate.

Another thing I would mention is that we understand that our risks at different missions and different parts of the world are different. Thus, we manage those risks differentially as well. In some places we're very cautious and other places we can give a more expansive role to our locally engaged staff.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Orr.

We'll now go to Mr. McColeman, please.

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** I'd like to direct this question to the Auditor General.

Recommendation 3.35 states that IRCC “should develop a comprehensive internal fraud risk assessment based on analysis of the effectiveness of its controls.”

What specific elements of IRCC's fraud-risk assessment were found to be inadequate? If possible, could you please provide examples?

• (1640)

**Mr. Michael Ferguson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll ask Mr. Swales to provide the details.

**The Chair:** Mr. Swales.

**Mr. Nicholas Swales:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In this case what we were saying was indeed as Mr. Orr just said, that the circumstances in the international network can be quite variable and, indeed, the checklist that we refer and that is circulated provides insight into that by providing information.

One of the things we felt was lacking was that these checklists were not then being used to say what exactly the situation was across the network and how that could best be addressed. It was really that kind of an opportunity for improvement that we were aiming at.

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** Just thinking about it from a logistical, management point of view, what they were using were checklists. The department was using inadequate checklists. Is that what I'm hearing you say?

**Mr. Nicholas Swales:** No, I'm saying that they were collecting information on checklists and we felt they were not then using that information to establish enough of an understanding of risk in the international network. In a sense, they had a tool. That was one aspect of it. However, they were not fully utilizing the information they were gathering.

The other issue is that in the same way we were looking at information in GCMS for improper behaviour, there were opportunities for also looking at that information on a regular basis.

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** I'd offer the witnesses from IRCC an opportunity to respond to that answer, if they wish.

**The Chair:** Ms. Morgan.

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** I'd be pleased to respond.

The main response we are making to the Auditor General's findings, which were very timely and relevant for us, is that we have developed an international network professional conduct standard. This standard has enabled us to consolidate in one place all of our guidance for international program managers. Through this international standard, we're putting in place a cycle whereby we will be regularly reporting and following up on all of the issues raised by the Auditor General.

We're also putting in place a monthly calendar for each head of these program offices, for specific issues to be addressed each month in all offices. We're reporting back to headquarters on those, and then rolling that up in a report at the end of the year so we can track the baseline data. We can track it across our missions and we can see where there are anomalies or potentially emerging issues. It's really consolidation and tracking on what we were already doing. I hope that responds to the main recommendation of the Auditor General in this regard.

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** For many of us, our experience in coming from the private sector, as well as in talking to people we know who work within the immigration department—in different circles in my case—would indicate that the employees who work within these departments often recognize when something is going sour at the desk next to them or in the same department. They see the first signs of fraud.

Is there any mechanism within your management structure, something that some people would term “whistle-blower” style—I don't want to use the word “legislation”—that would allow one of those employees to come forward and tell management without major repercussions within their work environment?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** We maintain very close communication with our locally engaged staff and close supervision. We do have issues raised at the management level. We are very prompt to address those issues when they are raised, as you heard from Mr. Orr's description of some of the disciplinary actions taken. Where there have been issues, sometimes they will be raised by other employees, either anonymously or not, and when that happens we will investigate in a way that protects the employee. We have a separate

unit within the department that has been set up to do those investigations, separate from our operating structure.

● (1645)

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** Mr. Chair, I hope you will indulge me here. I am curious whether any of the organizations could respond to this. There is another initiative that we've heard lots about. We've heard testimony on it. It's called the Beyond the Border initiative. Is that connected at all with what talking about here today? Is there anything happening within your scope of work that is associated with that initiative?

It's not reported on by the Auditor General here and you might not have expected a question such as this, but is there any connection between what's being attempted through Beyond the Border and any of the discussion today?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** Mr. Chair, I'll just make one quick statement about that. I don't think what's being talked about today really has any connection with the Beyond the Border initiatives, given that the special Canada-U.S. relationship and the fact that, really, those were focused more on pre-clearance and, in many cases, the movement of goods.

What I would say, though, is that I think in all of our programs we are trying to strike the appropriate balance between risk and facilitation, and trying to use not only our staff but also modern analytical tools to try to determine where the highest risks are, and to mitigate those risks while at the same time facilitating the vast majority of the flow of people or goods either across the border or into our country through other means.

I think that same theme shows up across all of our programs in many ways.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Unless there is another response to that question, I think that is a good answer.

Mr. Chen, please.

**Mr. Shaun Chen (Scarborough North, Lib.):** Thank you very much.

Thank you to all our guests today.

I also want to thank the delegation from Bangladesh for joining us at our meeting today.

As a member of Parliament from an urban Toronto riding, I can tell you that immigration case work and visitor visas take up the bulk of the interactions we have with constituents. Naturally, I was very interested in the findings of the Auditor General with respect to locally engaged staff and their access to visa records.

First of all, it's a monumental task. As was pointed out, there are 176 missions in 110 different countries. Global Affairs employs 5,000 locally engaged staff, so I understand the immense complexity of this.

I appreciate the honesty of pointing out that we cannot operate in a zero-risk environment, because we are operating in many different parts of the world where there are different cultures and standards, all of which require us to be extra diligent in what we do.

I know that in my MP's office when, for instance, it comes to accessing a file, there are controls in place. In fact, there is a designated number, as you all know, that MP offices have to go through.

It really makes no sense to me, when you have a very specific rule in your code of conduct, that locally engaged staff should be using any aspect of their job to benefit themselves, that they would have broad access to the case system and be able to even type their name into the system and pull up their file. To me, that could be prevented by implementing a simple system control.

I'd like to hear why such a control, on a system level, was not put in place? Yes, the rule exists but we all know that crimes occur out of convenience. If you have a door and it's supposed to be locked, no one is supposed to go through it, but if you leave it unlocked, someone is bound to just pull it open. Why wasn't that control put in on a system level?

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Chen.

Mr. Orr.

**Mr. Robert Orr:** I think it's important to point out that no one has unfettered access to the global case management system. There is a very serious set of controls in place. For instance, as Ms. Morgan pointed out, even if these individuals did have a look at their file, they did not have the opportunity to influence that file. They could not write into it. For sure, they should not have looked at it at all, but there are controls in place that prevent any impact on decision-making.

We do have a large number of locally engaged staff. We have 1,085 of them, and they would have different levels of access to the GCMS, depending on their level, and training, and experience, and on our trust in them as well. There are very significant controls on that.

To close things down entirely is very problematic. Often the files they are accessing are not their own. Sometimes it can be a relative's or a friend's, so it is very hard to close that down in that sort of way.

•(1650)

**Mr. Shaun Chen:** With respect to the staff who did pull up their own records, I'm trying to reconcile a disconnect, because I heard, and I want to thank Ms. Morgan for clarifying this, that while locally engaged staff report to IRCC they are in fact employees of Global Affairs.

So when Ms. Jacovella spoke earlier, she said very clearly that Global Affairs promotes and enforces zero tolerance of any such behaviour by employees. To me, me zero tolerance is very clear, in that there is clear punishment as a result for some types of wrongdoing. I'm not advocating zero tolerance in this case, but I'm saying that it's what we were told.

So if it is clear that these employees pulled up their own records and that it violated the code of conduct and, simultaneously, I hear from Ms. Morgan, that it's being investigated and looked into, where is the zero tolerance? I realize we're talking about staff here, so I just want a general response. We don't need to get into the details of any particular case, but is there zero tolerance with respect to this type of

situation? Did they break the code of conduct? Did they not? What's the finding?

**The Chair:** Mr. Orr.

**Mr. Robert Orr:** Mr. Chair, as I indicated earlier, there were a number of investigations—14, in fact— both in the domestic network and overseas, and there was very clear action taken in a number of cases where we did the full investigation. There were very serious consequences if the allegations were founded.

In this case, the 14 cases, we're not at that stage yet, and that's why I can't give you an indication of what the consequences are.

**Mr. Shaun Chen:** It's very important to me as an MP, because I have many frustrated constituents and people come into my office. They are frustrated with respect to their visa applications. They are frustrated with respect to other types of applications they are waiting to find out information about, and oftentimes they come to us and bring up cases and make comparisons with other people in similar situations who have been processed more quickly. As an MP, I want to be able to assure them that we have strict rules in place, that we are, to the best of our capacity, trying to ensure that there is fairness in the system. I want to be able to say so with confidence. That is why it is so important to me that we look at these cases and ensure that we take any action we can to be more proactive with respect to training and ensuring that when people do break the rules, there are appropriate consequences. This is very important. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I see a light on but I don't really hear a question; it's more just a statement. So that's good.

We'll go back to Mr. Christopherson, please.

**Mr. David Christopherson:** Are we not televised?

**The Chair:** No.

**Mr. David Christopherson:** Is there a reason why?

**The Chair:** Yes. We'll explain that to you later.

There are two committees that are televised, and we were not able to be televised today because of the other two committees. I think one is immigration—

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Michel Marcotte):** It's immigration and committees.

**Mr. David Christopherson:** Is there a priority list? Is that how it works?

**The Chair:** We got the room, but we didn't get to be televised, so we are recorded.

**Mr. David Christopherson:** Not even live to tape and then it's played later?



I'd like to follow up on that in committee business, but for now, I just want to say that in my opinion, this audit is not a bad one. It's not a great one, but it's not a bad one either. However, what makes it so critically important is the nature of the work. When there are any gaps at all, they have very serious implications. That's why I didn't start by being complimentary because I wanted to get at some of the stuff that's problematic, and it's not great. It's not like political mushroom cloud stuff, but it matters to what we're dealing with.

I have a couple of quick questions if I can. I don't have a lot of time.

Global Affairs, in your action plan to us, you've committed that in the matter of the locally engaged staff getting their mandatory training, that will be completed by September 2017. Is that still on track? Remember, we're going to check.

• (1655)

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** Yes, it is still, so we have—

**Mr. David Christopherson:** Very good. That's fine. Thank you.

Sorry, I only interrupt for time's sake. I don't mean to be rude.

Over to Immigration, and the Border Services Agency, your training is going to be done by June. Are you on track?

**Mr. John Ossowski:** Yes.

**Mr. David Christopherson:** Very good. I'm very glad to hear that.

A lot of this is about the mandatory training. There are a couple of things I want to address while I have the time. First of all, how did mandatory become not mandatory? If it's mandatory, there's only one explanation: you have to do it. Yet you didn't do it. So, from the get-go, at the top of the house, why was mandatory not seen as anything that needed to be a priority? Please give a quick answer.

**Mr. John Ossowski:** Well, from my perspective, mandatory means mandatory, appreciating that you will never have 100% because people are off on maternity leave or whatever the case may be. But my expectation, as the head of the organization, is that when we say something is mandatory, it is done.

**Mr. David Christopherson:** Okay. We have a long way to go on this front, because I'm pointing to page 19, paragraph 3.92. In it the Auditor General says:

We found that only 40 percent of border services officers and 69 percent of superintendents at land border crossings had completed mandatory training related to mitigating the risk of corruption.

He found that 78 percent of superintendents had completed the mandatory course on security awareness for managers. Flip it around and that's almost one-quarter of the superintendents who did not take a mandatory course on security awareness for managers.

Paragraph 3.98 says:

We found that 60 percent of border services officers had completed the Values, Ethics

—that means that 40 percent didn't—

and 58 percent had completed the security awareness training.

That means that 42 percent would not. Moreover:

Just 40 percent of border services officers had completed both. Only 69 percent of superintendents had completed both.

Again, these are pretty devastating numbers, and the thing that just drives me the most is how could it get to this point that you would be so far behind? Superintendent training on security—give me a break.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Christopherson.

I'm going to ask whoever wants to respond to do so.

Mr. Ossowski, perhaps.

**Mr. John Ossowski:** Sure.

**Mr. David Christopherson:** I actually don't want.... It was just as much a rant as anything. I'd accept that. If they want to respond, fine.

**Mr. John Ossowski:** I have some updated information, if I may, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. David Christopherson:** Great. I'd appreciate that.

**Mr. John Ossowski:** Completion rates have improved since the time frame of the audit. As the Auditor General himself said, this was at a point in time, so on any one given day you're never going to see 100%. But that said, as of March 31, 90.5% of officers have completed the values, ethics and disclosure of wrongdoing course, up from 60% in the report.

Seventy-two percent have completed the security awareness course, up from 58% in the report. For superintendents, 92.9% have completed the values, ethics and disclosure of wrongdoing course, and 62.9% have completed the security awareness course.

I would also mention that in addition, last October we promulgated a new course on insider threats, a mandatory course. As of March 31, 60% of my employees have competed that course.

**Mr. David Christopherson:** That's proof positive that the Auditor General public accounts system works. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Christopherson, for that vote of confidence.

Ms. Mendès.

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendès:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm going to make a little comment, and this is not for theatre.

I do take objection, Mr. Ossowski, to the comment on maternity leave. Why would you give maternity leave as an example and not sick leave period? That just puts it on women.

**Mr. John Ossowski:** Well, it's just a simple fact. You could be off for a year and you wouldn't get captured.

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendès:** You could be on sick leave too. It's just part of the mentality to put it on women to be at fault for whatever is....

• (1700)

**Mr. John Ossowski:** Well, I might just add that I took parental leave when my son was born.

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendès:** I'm sorry. It just rubbed me the wrong way.

If I may go back to my comments on immigration, my favourite topic, of course, could I ask you what progress has been made with online applications for temporary visa permits? I know this has been going on for over 10 years. The Auditor General has looked at this numerous times. We still don't have it. Whereas Australia has a phenomenal system, a very efficient and quick system for temporary visas issued online, we're still not there. I'm asking the question because it takes out a lot of the arbitrary controls that people have when issuing visas or making decisions on visas.

**The Chair:** Ms. Mendès, that's not specific to the audit, right?

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendès:** No, but it sort of falls out of it, because it takes away all the involvement by people in the decision-making.

**The Chair:** Ms. Morgan, could you comment on that?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** I'll start, and then Mr. Orr may want to add to what I'm saying.

One of the things we did this year was to put in place the electronic travel authorization for travellers who do not require visas—and that is a fully electronic system. It's a light touch. It allows us to push out the border and provides a platform for future initiatives in this vein. Two things are at play here. One is allowing online applications, but the other is more automatic processing, and I think the question, Mr. Chair, goes to both of them.

With respect to lighter touch processing, our ETA is like the front end of the Australian visa system, which provides one electronic input, but then the visa itself can be more or less time consuming, depending on the triage it goes through. We're not there yet. We still have a visa system that requires decision-makers to look at visas, so we're not quite where the Australians are, but the Australians also have a back end to what the person who's applying sees, which does involve people having a look at those that are triaged into their more visa-like visa, as opposed to their more ETA-like visa.

**The Chair:** Did you want to go a little longer?

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendès:** No, that's fine.

**The Chair:** I don't have any other questions from our members.

I do have a question for our Auditor General, or perhaps for other department heads. Our Auditor General has done this audit, and I know we've talked about international professional standards. I guess that other countries undoubtedly look at the same types of information you looked at in this audit.

How would we stack up in comparison to some of those countries that are undoubtedly auditing the same types of things?

**Mr. Michael Ferguson:** Mr. Chair, we didn't do it in this specific case. It's always difficult to do because we can't audit the numbers of any other country we are comparable to. The best that we would be able to do on a lot of these things would be to try to determine whether another country is reporting numbers in a similar fashion, and then we have to be able to determine whether we could rely on it.

Again, I would give the example of our going through the 19 million records of vehicles that came across the border and identifying the anomalies in the database. That's not the type of

information that we're going to see other countries reporting—and even at that, it was the function of the audit that identified that sort of problem in the way the information was being captured.

Overall, while the comment made earlier was that the results were not bad, what we were looking at here is a critically important area. I think when I look at this audit overall, I'm very concerned about the results that we found, including the missed lookouts or there not being an appropriate rationale for issuing temporary resident permits, or the 300,000 vehicles coming across the border, or not having all the mandatory training done. I'm very concerned about all of those things.

I think the good part of this is that every one of the things we found is fixable, and fixable fairly quickly. The departments can look at the types of information we looked at and can give you updates, and we've already seen progress on mandatory training. It's difficult for us to make that comparison with other jurisdictions.

I think the issues that we identified, including the instances of controls not being followed, are very concerning, as opposed to a lot of different audits where we will come here and report problems that, quite frankly, are very difficult to fix. In this case there are a number of issues we've identified that can be fixed very quickly, and some probably already have.

● (1705)

**The Chair:** That's good news, I guess. I fully understand what you're saying. You are concerned about the numbers, but the problems are fixable and we see action, as shown by Mr. Ossowski, already with increased numbers of people having received their mandatory training on some of these issues.

I have a wife and a daughter who are registered nurses. It seems there are always updates, seminars, or conferences they're required to attend, or they're always dealing with safety or health-related issues. Although these are mandatory, do you have similar types of things where you remind some of these guys abroad that although they've done their mandatory training, they need to be refreshed on it?

**Mr. John Ossowski:** Thank you. That's an excellent point, Mr. Chair.

I believe those regular conversations that you have at the beginning of shifts and/or conversations between a director or a port manager and his staff talking about values, ethics, and leadership are just as important as any online training or courses that you might attend. It's the reminder. It's the constant narrative about the importance of values and ethics.

**The Chair:** Ms. Morgan.

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** One of the things we are really excited about in our new professional conduct standard is the monthly plan for each program manager. Every three months out of 12 we have required supplementary training related to fraud, values and ethics, and codes of conduct. The idea is that the program manager will tailor that training to the needs of that particular mission.

I was at one mission where, as part of their training, the locally employed staff did skits on values and ethics issues that could come up in their work and how they would deal with them. So they are communicating with one another about the issues that could arise and how they would address them. That's just one example.

Our goal is to require the manager to do it systematically but to utilize the knowledge of the locally engaged and the Canadian-based staff to do it in a way that makes sense for that environment.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Go ahead, Ms. Jacovella.

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** I want to add that we also offer training for heads of missions before they leave Canada. One of the things we reinforce with them is the importance of values, ethics, fraud, and

creating an environment of well being, looking at the mental health of employees and making sure that employees are allowed to raise, and feel confident raising, any issues with mission heads if they see anything happening. This is done very collaboratively with other federal departments.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I want to re-emphasize what Mr. Chen said. As members of Parliament, we continually get individuals coming in whose family members have been denied a visa. There are all types of accusations made about fraud, or about employees hired in some countries whom the relatives weren't willing to pay, or who weren't willing to do those things. Your being here today is very important, so that we all understand we are committed to a standard that is above reproach. It's just part of what we have to communicate better and work toward.

I want to thank our Auditor General for this audit, and each one of you for your responses to it. Typically, to be quite frank, departments show up and rubber-stamp the report and check all the boxes and say they accept all of the recommendations of our Auditor General.

We do follow up on them, and so we are pleased already. I can tell that we've seen some improvement in some of these numbers on mandatory training. Hopefully, when we come back to this in a few months, we'll continue to see improvements.

Thank you all for being here.

The meeting is adjourned.

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