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• (1105)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Québec Centre, Lib.)): I now call this meeting to order.

Good morning, everyone. Welcome to meeting number 12 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the order of reference from the House dated October 3, 2024, the committee is meeting for its study on Bill C-8, an act respecting cyber security, amending the Telecommunications Act and making consequential amendments to other acts.

I'd now like to welcome the witnesses who are here for the first hour of this meeting, starting with the Honourable Gary Anandasangaree, MP and Minister of Public Safety.

We're also joined by officials from the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, including Mr. Richard Bilodeau, senior assistant deputy minister, national cyber and security branch; Mr. Colin MacSween, director general, national cyber security directorate; and Ms. Kelly-Anne Gibson, director, cyber protection policy division.

We also have officials from the Department of Industry, including Mr. Andre Arbour, director general, telecommunications and Internet policy branch, and Mr. Wen Kwan, director general, spectrum and telecommunications sector.

Welcome, all of you.

Minister, you have five minutes for your opening remarks.

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to Bill C-8 on critical cyber systems protection.

[*English*]

As we know from Canada's national cyber-threat assessment, cyber-threats are evolving rapidly. Cyber-threat actors, both state-sponsored and others, are increasing in number and sophistication. Canada must be better prepared to deal with these threats to protect Canadians, our critical infrastructure and our economy.

Bill C-8 will enhance cybersecurity in four major sectors: finance, telecommunications, energy and transportation. Part 1 of the bill amends the Telecommunications Act to enshrine the security of

Canada's telecommunications systems as a policy objective, bringing the security framework regulating the sector in line with those of other critical infrastructure sectors. That will allow the government to act swiftly in an industry in which seconds can decide the safety, confidentiality and ability of essential services.

The bill also introduces the new critical cyber-systems protection act, or CCSPA, which would legally require designated operators to protect their critical cyber-systems.

[*Translation*]

This part of the bill provides the tools the government needs to take further action to address a range of vulnerabilities.

[*English*]

Right now, the list of vital services and systems is comprised of the Canadian telecommunications services, banking systems, energy and transportation; however, the Governor in Council may also add to that list.

Those designated as operators of vital services and systems would be obliged to develop and implement cybersecurity programs and mitigate supply chain and third party risks, as well as comply with cybersecurity directions.

The CCSPA will also increase information sharing on cyber-threats by requiring the reporting of cybersecurity incidents above a certain threshold. Right now, there are no such legal requirements for industry to share this kind of information, which means that there could be threats that the government is not aware of. There is also a legal mechanism for the government to compel action in the face of known threats or vulnerabilities. When it comes to national security, we cannot rely on the goodwill of industry alone. We must enshrine the more robust cybersecurity framework into law.

Since the introduction of this legislation under former Bill C-26, which was passed unanimously in the House last year, there have been widespread consultations with stakeholders. We listened to the concerns that were raised.

[*Translation*]

Among these was a need for more oversight and transparency, as well as the need to ensure privacy is protected.

[English]

Canadians' privacy is already protected through a number of constitutional and legislative instruments, but Bill C-8 will provide greater certainty to Canadians that their privacy and personal information will be protected. When confidential information must be shared, it must be treated as confidential. Recipients of such information must similarly be respectful of that confidentiality.

The bill also assures Canadians that orders or directions issued under both part 1 and part 2 of the legislation will not be used to engage in surveillance or to intercept private communication. This responds directly to the concerns we heard from civil liberty groups.

Bill C-8 also includes the provision to increase the government's transparency and accountability. For example, stakeholders said that there was a potential for orders or directions to be issued without the government consulting or considering relevant factors such as whether reasonable alternatives exist to issuing an order or direction. As a result of these concerns, the bill includes a reasonableness standard and a non-exhaustive list of factors that the Governor in Council must first consider before issuing an order or direction.

[Translation]

Bill C-8 provides transparency and accountability to Canadians. It also provides further reassurances to Canadians that their privacy and personal information will be protected.

[English]

I hope my honourable colleagues will agree that Bill C-8 would provide a strong foundation for securing Canada's critical infrastructure against fast-evolving cyber-threats.

I look forward to your questions and comments.

As well, I want to take this moment to thank the colleagues who are here at the table with me.

• (1110)

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

We'll now open the floor to questions.

We'll start with Mr. Caputo for six minutes.

[English]

Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, CPC): Thank you, Minister. I've never heard anybody say that they look forward to my questions, so I appreciate that.

I'd like to also thank the officials here.

Minister, you are here on Bill C-8 and Bill C-12, so I will be asking you about both bills today.

Minister—

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Excuse me, Mr. Caputo.

If I may clarify, my understanding was that the first hour was on Bill C-8 and the second hour was on Bill C-12, but I'm more than glad to....

I don't have the officials here for Bill C-12 until the second hour.

Frank Caputo: We can ask them questions when we need to. I would just like to explore your expertise, your understanding and your knowledge on both bills organically, if you will.

The Chair: That is fine, Mr. Caputo. You have the right to do so.

With that being said and with officials not being here, you may not get the answers that you would be entitled to.

Frank Caputo: Could we pause the time, please? There was a point of order that was just mentioned.

At the end of the day, I'm not looking for answers that officials may give. If I have questions for officials, then I will ask the officials the questions. Right now, this is my time to ask the minister about what the minister knows about Bill C-8 and Bill C-12.

We actually asked for two separate meetings on Bill C-8 and Bill C-12. We didn't get them, even though the parliamentary secretary committed to them, so I will be asking the minister questions on both bills.

Why don't we actually start with one thing that's certainly germane to Bill C-8? When was the foreign interference commissioner supposed to be appointed, Minister?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: I've indicated this a number of times. They will be appointed in short order. We are finalizing and will bring forward a name to colleagues opposite for feedback.

Frank Caputo: That's not what I asked you, Minister. Again, please answer the questions I ask.

When was the foreign interference commissioner supposed to be appointed?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: As I indicated to you—and I've spoken to you a number of times on this—we have been working toward appointing a foreign interference commissioner. I wish this had been done much earlier. As you're aware, we are going through a process. We will have a name—

Frank Caputo: Minister, I asked you a five-second question. I should get a five-second answer, because it was supposed to be a date.

This could not be a more clear question, Minister.

When was the foreign interference commissioner supposed to be appointed? Give just the date, please.

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Caputo, I'm here to speak about Bill C-8 and Bill C-12. I would respectfully ask that you keep to those parameters. If you wish for me to come on another matter, I have made myself available on a number of occasions.

Frank Caputo: Apparently, when we do that, we can't actually get it, even if the parliamentary secretary agrees to it.

You say you're not here to talk about foreign interference. Are you saying that Bill C-8 and protecting our critical infrastructure from foreign adversaries...? Are you saying that our foreign interference and our foreign registry are not germane to that bill? Am I hearing that right?

The Chair: There's a point of order.

[Translation]

Marianne Dandurand (Compton—Stanstead, Lib.): Yes, Mr. Chair. We're here to study two very important bills, namely Bill C-8 and Bill C-12, but we're now talking about completely different issues.

We're fortunate to have the minister and his team here with us today. I'd really like us to focus on these important bills so we move forward and see if we have anything to say or verify about them.

We're wasting time on issues that are off topic. Mr. Chair, I'd like us to get back to the subject of today's meeting.

The Chair: Very well.

[English]

Your time was stopped, by the way, Mr. Caputo, to make sure there was no time wasted—

Frank Caputo: On the same point of order, no standing—

The Chair: I'm sorry. I'll just finish, please.

I think we all heard the comment. This is a suggestive comment. It's not a real point of order, so I'll turn back to you, Mr. Caputo.

Frank Caputo: To the Liberals' point, we actually could have been past this if the minister would just tell us the date. Foreign interference is certainly germane to protecting our infrastructure. If we can't agree on this, we can't agree on what day of the week it is, Minister.

What date was this supposed to be done? What date was a commissioner supposed to be appointed by? It's just the date.

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Caputo, I have indicated that we are working towards the appointment of an interference commissioner—

The Chair: Minister and Mr. Caputo, I'm sorry. I have to interrupt both of you.

There are two issues here. First is the topic, which is obviously open to discussion. Second is the overlapping of comments and questions.

If we want people to understand the flow of the conversation, including in the other official language, we both cannot speak at the same time. This is making the work of the interpreters impossible. I

would invite everyone to have a fluid, intense conversation if they wish to, but it cannot overlap. Otherwise, I'll have to stop everyone.

• (1115)

Frank Caputo: Well, foreign interference is pretty darn serious. We had 11 parliamentarians who were suspected.

I asked you for a date, Minister, and you won't even give that to me—to Canadians—on something that's pretty darn serious. If you say you're answering a question for me and I didn't even ask that question, when all we want to know is this....

Canadians expect seriousness on foreign interference and you, as the minister, are the one in charge. You're the one appearing here, and you won't even give us a date. For that, you should be reflective on whether or not you're doing your job, with all due respect, Minister.

Let's move on.

Sima Acan (Oakville West, Lib.): On a point of order, Chair, Mr. Caputo is talking about Bill C-70. The agenda was shared with all members. In the first hour, we have Bill C-8 and in the second hour Bill C-12.

I have difficulty with this. Why are we now discussing Bill C-70 instead of Bill C-8?

The Chair: Again, that is an appropriate comment, but it's not a point of order. It's suggestive to others of how they want to use their time.

I'll turn back to you, Mr. Caputo.

Frank Caputo: Well, we can always rely on the Liberals to try to deflect for a minister who won't give us a date.

Mr. Chair, with all due respect, I haven't interrupted my Liberal colleagues, and I would appreciate it if they would give me the same courtesy, because we're hearing more from them than we are from the minister.

Last time at committee, Minister, when we were talking a lot about foreign nationals, we talked about 30,000 removal orders, and you said:

Mr. Caputo, there are 30,000 people who are going through the system, and they are going to be removed. They are in the queue. We know their addresses.

Now, it turns out, Minister, that there are actually 62,000—or were 62,000 people—because your officials told us there were 62,000, and you said that—

The Chair: There is a point of order. Go ahead.

[Translation]

Marianne Dandurand: I think we're rehashing the same issue over and over, Mr. Chair. I think we need to focus on Bill C-8 and Bill C-12 and take advantage of the minister's time here. Our colleagues have been asking to have the minister appear before the committee to speak to these two bills for a long time, and yet we're speaking to other matters. I'd like us to stay on Bill C-8 in the first hour and on Bill C-12 in the second hour.

The Chair: There are two issues here. The first issue is that indeed, the first hour is allocated to Bill C-8. The second issue is that the chair cannot control the questions asked and the answers given. Members must use their best judgment to focus their statements on the agenda as much as possible.

Mr. Caputo, you have the floor.

[English]

Frank Caputo: If I could raise a point of order on that same point of order so that the time doesn't start, please, Bill C-12 is directly related to our strong border. The minister was here last time, and we are holding him to account for things he said. I don't know how that's irrelevant.

I've been interrupted three times in four minutes by the Liberals. I get it. They don't want the minister to speak. They don't want the minister to speak about relevant things. That's not my problem. That is the Liberals' problem. I will carry on, and I would ask that I can have that question, because I have to start it from the top again.

Minister, I asked you, of 62,000 people, you knew about 30,000, so you didn't know about where half of the people were. You said, "We know their addresses." Do you know the addresses of the 32,000 people who are at large without warrant? Just give a yes or no, please.

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Caputo, the numbers you're referencing are available on the CBSA website, under "Removals". I will direct you there. There are, right now, removals in progress. There are 30,733. They're individuals we have contact with in some form or another. There are currently 32,000 who are in the area "Wanted", whom we are seeking to remove.

Frank Caputo: Again, please answer my question. Do you have addresses for the 32,000 you are seeking to remove, as you told us last time? Answer yes or no.

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: We have addresses, Mr. Caputo.

Frank Caputo: You have addresses for the 32,000 people for whom there are warrants. Minister, the natural question is, if you have addresses for them, why aren't they being arrested right now?

• (1120)

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Caputo, for questions like this, you need to give me some time to answer.

If I could elaborate, yes, we have addresses. They may not be accurate. Their veracity is up to the CBSA, and it is working to expedite the removals.

As I have indicated in the past, we're on target to remove over 20,000 people this year.

Frank Caputo: There are 32,000, so it should give Canadians great confidence to know that 12,000 people will be left.

Thank you.

The Chair: I'm sorry. That's all the time we have, Mr. Caputo. Thank you.

We're turning to MP Acan for six minutes.

Sima Acan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My questions will be based on Bill C-8, as per the agenda.

Minister, some members of the opposition have suggested that Bill C-8 could allow the government to suspend an individual's Internet access, which has understandably caused confusion and concern among Canadians. Could you clarify for the committee what powers the bill provides, and whether any provisions in Bill C-8 permit the government to restrict or cut off ordinary Canadians' Internet service?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: To be very clear, Bill C-8 does not enable the government to cut off an individual's Internet service. There are very narrow areas where an individual user may pose an unacceptable level of risk. They may have a past record, and their continued access to the Internet could have repercussions for the safety and security of our critical infrastructure. In those very limited circumstances, there could be an order for an individual's Internet to be halted, and that is in the narrowest scope.

It does not apply to everyone; it applies to those who have a perpetual record of threats to critical infrastructure.

Sima Acan: To be absolutely clear, Minister, Bill C-8 imposes network-level security obligations on telecommunications operators, not individual users. It doesn't authorize the government to monitor personal communications or disconnect someone's Internet connection. Is that correct?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Yes, that's correct. We have a couple of experts here. Maybe I can turn to them for a more elaborate response.

Andre Arbour (Director General, Telecommunications and Internet Policy Branch, Department of Industry): The authorities under part 1 allow taking action to protect the Canadian telecommunications system, and any action that is taken needs to be "reasonable in relation to the gravity of the threat". In the instance of disconnecting a particular system, that would be only in the circumstance where our telecommunications system is under severe threat, and any action needs to be reasonable in relation to that threat.

Sima Acan: Thank you very much, Mr. Arbour.

Minister, this bill is fundamentally about strengthening the infrastructure for Canadians who rely on our telecommunications network. Bill C-26, the predecessor of this legislation, passed unanimously in the House last year, because protecting Canada's telecommunications system is a shared national priority.

Could you please explain what vulnerabilities or gaps in our current framework Bill C-8 is designed to address and how it enhances the security and resilience of those networks?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Telecommunications is one of four sectors that are the subject of this particular bill. As you're aware, transportation and other critical infrastructure are also subjects of the bill.

Essentially, what the bill attempts to do is ensure that there are disclosure and transparency when critical infrastructure is under attack or is attacked. There is a duty to disclose the nature and the scope of the attack to one of our agencies. The bill also imposes a requirement for each critical infrastructure unit to have its own plan to address the issues around cybersecurity.

As you may know, Ms. Acan, many cybersecurity incidents go without being reported because of issues around reputation and risk to the brand name. This imposes a legal requirement for the disclosure of specific incidents that will help other parts of our critical infrastructure to take precautions and proactive action.

• (1125)

Sima Acan: Thank you, Minister.

One of the strengths of Bill C-8 is that it requires operators to build cybersecurity programs before an incident happens.

Under clause 9 of the critical cyber-systems protection act, organizations must proactively identify and manage risks. Could you please speak to how this forward-looking approach will help Canadians to prevent attacks instead of reacting to them afterwards?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Increasingly, cyber-attacks have economic impacts, and they cause issues around confidence in our critical infrastructure and around privacy, involving the datasets of so many different individuals and business clients. There is a need for every institution that has critical infrastructure to manage to proactively develop a system that will enable them to react and have a process by which disclosure takes place, along with actions to prevent and ensure not only that critical cyber-attacks do not occur, but that when they do occur, they are dealt with responsibly.

Sima Acan: Thank you very much, Minister.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Acan.

I'll now yield the floor to Mr. Fortin for six minutes. Welcome.

Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for joining us today.

Your bill has raised a number of questions and concerns among Canadians. I'll not pass judgment as to its necessity, but we'll see that when it comes to a vote. In any event, there are some concerns.

First, I'd like to clarify something with you.

When the Privacy Commissioner of Canada testified before the committee last week, he raised some concerns and questions regarding the transmission of information as provided under the proposed new section 15.4, which section 2 of Bill C-8 proposes to add to the Telecommunications Act. The proposed section states:

15.4 The Minister may require any person to provide to the Minister or any person designated by the Minister, within any time and subject to any conditions that the Minister may specify, any information that the Minister believes on reasonable grounds is relevant for the purpose of making...

However, the reasonable grounds have not been described. They are stated generally.

In contrast, the proposed new subsection 15.2(3) of the bill states:

(3) The provisions of an order made under subsection (1) or (2) must, in scope and substance, be reasonable in relation to the gravity of the threat...

The French version says *sont raisonnables*, but I'd like to note that that's an error in translation. It should have been *doivent être raisonnables* to be consistent with the English version, which states "must...be reasonable".

Beyond that and assuming this correction is made, this protection doesn't exist under the proposed new section 15.4.

First, I'd like to know why and second, whether you have plans to make any amendments to adapt the wording in the proposed section.

[English]

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Fortin, I've been with you in many committees where you have done an incredible amount of work to ensure consistency in both official languages, so if there are errors or omissions, we'll be more than glad to look at them.

With respect to the reasonableness standard, it is one that has been defined by the Supreme Court, and there's a fair bit of clarity in terms of what that is. For the purpose of the act, it is a standard that was defined by the Supreme Court that clarifies a law on standard review and provides guidance on the application of the reasonableness standard. The primary case is *Canada v. Vavilov* from 2019, and it essentially outlines the test. I don't want to go into the finer details of it, but that's the reference I would provide to you, Mr. Fortin.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you.

In your opinion, Minister, should the recommendations made by the Privacy Commissioner of Canada be carefully considered and implemented, or should they be disregarded as unimportant?

• (1130)

[English]

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: I had the opportunity to meet with the Privacy Commissioner last week. Of the number of recommendations they put forward—five in total, I believe—there are two or three that have been incorporated within the number of amendments that were adopted earlier.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Minister, but in this case, it's a matter of qualifying or describing the issue of reasonableness.

If it was useful in the proposed section 15.2, then the same reasoning should apply to the proposed section 15.4. That's my humble opinion, but I'm not the minister, you are.

When it comes to reasonable grounds, you know as well as I do that depending on case law and the courts, interpretation of what constitutes reasonable grounds will differ from one judge to another, for all kinds of good and not so good reasons. I don't want to criticize that, but it's still a rather variable criterion.

In the proposed section 15.2, it looks as if you wanted to define reasonableness by stating that it must be reasonable "in relation to the gravity of the threat". I think that's appropriate. You do understand that it's pretty serious because it involves sharing information that would otherwise be confidential. That may well be necessary. However, the Commissioner has told us that regardless of its necessity, it must be done properly because it's a serious infringement of individual freedoms.

I think you were on the same page with the Commissioner when you decided to talk about scope and substance that is "reasonable in relation to the gravity of the threat" in the proposed subsection 15.2(3).

I apologize for repeating my question, but I think it's important. How come this language is not in the proposed section 15.4? I think it would be easy to add "in relation to the gravity of the threat" after "believes on reasonable grounds", as is the case in the proposed section 15.2.

How come you've not done that with the proposed section 15.4? Maybe it's your intention to do so, but I'd urge you to do it if that's not the case.

If you're not doing it, could you explain why you believe it's unnecessary?

[English]

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Fortin, I will take this under advisement, but let me just comment that in proposed section 15.2, the definition, I suspect, is given initially, and proposed section 15.4 would follow the same definition, but I will be more than glad to look at it closely. If I do have follow-up, I will follow up with you directly.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you very much, Minister. I appreciate that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fortin.

I'll now yield the floor to Mr. Lloyd for five minutes.

[English]

Dane Lloyd (Parkland, CPC): Thank you, Minister and officials.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, last week the Privacy Commissioner testified that the bill is lacking some key privacy safeguards, including inconsistent proportionality tests included in proposed subsection 15.2(3) but not elsewhere in the bill. There is no requirement for his office to be notified when the Communications Security Establishment...when there's a cyber-breach that threatens Canadians' private information.

I find these omissions from the bill concerning, so my first question is, will the officials provide, in writing to this committee, the reasons the proportionality test is not included throughout the bill but only in that one section?

Second, to the minister, for today, do you believe that the Privacy Commissioner's concerns have merit, and should they be included in amendments to the bill?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Lloyd, I had a chance to speak to the Privacy Commissioner last week. I am aware of the concerns he has identified.

There are a number of safeguards in the bill; these include reporting to both NSIRA and NSICOP, which ultimately report to Parliament, as you're aware.

We've also taken a number of amendments that he has proposed in a previous iteration. From Bill C-26, there are, I believe, two or three proposed amendments that were incorporated.

For those that are outstanding, there is reference to compliance with the Privacy Act, so I believe we have taken a number of very important steps. I am, as I've always said, open to discussions on potential changes.

Dane Lloyd: We had testimony at the same meeting from the intelligence commissioner, who receives reports from our intelligence community. We were told by officials that the information provided under Bill C-8 is going to be technical information, not private information, but the intelligence commissioner raised something very concerning, saying that when he reviews these reports, the context that he's provided does include Canadians' personal information.

What is going to be done to ensure, when providing context to these technical reports, that Canadians' private information is not impacted or revealed?

• (1135)

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Look, I respect the role of the intelligence commissioner. I also met with him last week, and I respect the work he does.

With respect, the disclosure that is part of Bill C-8 is very much of a technical nature. It does not go into the privacy issues of individuals, and it should not necessarily have an impact on the work of the intelligence commissioner.

We've taken up a number of safeguards, including reference to NSIRA and NSICOP. There's an obligation for us to report any incidents to these agencies within 90 days of the incident.

Dane Lloyd: Thank you, Minister.

Is the government required to report cyber-incidents that impact the Government of Canada itself?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: I'm going to ask Colin to answer that question.

Colin MacSween (Director General, National Cyber Security Directorate, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): The answer is yes. The Government of Canada has a response plan known as the federal cyber-incident response plan. This is available online. As part of the requirement for that, should the federal government be subject to cyber-incidents, it is to be reported to the Canadian centre for cybersecurity, the Treasury Board Secretariat and Public Safety Canada.

Dane Lloyd: Are those reports ever made public?

Colin MacSween: Are you referring to the specific incidents?

Dane Lloyd: Yes.

Colin MacSween: No, not to my knowledge.

Dane Lloyd: Are you aware of incidents when Canadian government servers have been hacked for illicit crypto mining operations, costing the Canadian taxpayer millions of dollars?

Colin MacSween: Off the top of my head, no.

Dane Lloyd: Minister, are you aware?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: I'm not, no.

Dane Lloyd: If there were an incident of illicit crypto mining on Canadian government servers that cost millions of dollars, would that not have to be reported in the public accounts as a loss?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: I would assume it would be, Mr. Lloyd, yes.

Dane Lloyd: If it wasn't reported, what would be the reason it wouldn't be reported?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: I can't speculate, but if there's a specific incident, I would be more than glad to look at it and report back to this committee.

Dane Lloyd: I'm just very concerned, because part of this bill is secrecy provisions, and I'm concerned that there could be a lack of transparency. We're trying to hold telecoms and others accountable when there are these cyber-incidents, but who is holding the government to account when it has cyber-incidents that cost Canadian taxpayers millions of dollars? If the government doesn't report those incidents, we're potentially looking at Canadians not knowing the vulnerabilities in our government system.

What do you say to that, Minister?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: On a practical level, my understanding is that reporting does happen on a case-by-case basis when incidents of cybersecurity impact the privacy concerns of individuals. I do believe that there is reporting that does occur.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lloyd.

Ms. Dandurand, you have the floor for five minutes.

Marianne Dandurand: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

Thank you, Minister, for being with us.

Can you comment on some of the things we heard during the second reading of the bill? There is a Conservative member who happens to be with us, MP Strauss, who said that Bill C-8 would allow the Liberals to kick people off the Internet without a warrant. Is that correct?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Absolutely not.

Marianne Dandurand: What is this bill going to do?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: I humbly ask all colleagues on this. It's important that when we're bringing forward legislation such as this, it should not be a politicized piece of legislation. This is meant for the safety and security of all Canadians. Canadians need to have confidence in our security apparatus. They need to have confidence that all of us are working together in the best interest of Canadians.

In that vein, I would say a simplistic assertion such as that is inaccurate.

What is accurate is that, in very limited circumstances, when an individual who may have access to the Internet through a service provider has posed a risk to the safety and security of our critical infrastructure and demonstrated the type of continued behaviour that could harm our critical infrastructure and thereby many other systems, there is, in very limited scope, the ability to terminate their Internet services. It is in exceptional circumstances; it's not on a routine basis.

• (1140)

Marianne Dandurand: Thank you, Minister. It is very clear.

I would also like to go back to Bill C-26. Are there major differences between Bill C-26, which all parties voted in favour of, and the current bill?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: No, there aren't.

As you know, Bill C-26 went through both Houses, and there was a technical issue that had to be corrected—

Frank Caputo: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

How is this relevant? We're talking about Bill C-8. Is that any different from the point of order that was made by the Liberals?

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: My earlier remark still stands here as well. Members have the right and the ability to ask the questions they feel are most relevant to the topic of debate, which today focuses on Bill C-8, or any other questions that are directly or indirectly related to the bill.

Ms. Dandurand, I stopped the clock during that intervention. You may continue.

[*English*]

Marianne Dandurand: I will ask...

Dane Lloyd: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, this is not about my colleagues, but I was just made aware that during my speaking time with the minister, the microphones were not being synced properly, so my questions were not being picked up.

I'm wondering if the clerk can take a look at that, because it's concerning. If people can't hear what I have to say at committee, that impacts the testimony of this committee.

Thank you.

The Chair: Good. That is an appropriate point of order. The technicians will look into this, and we'll come back to that in a moment, when we have clear answers.

Madame Dandurand.

Marianne Dandurand: Thank you, Chair.

We are talking about Bill C-8. I'm going to ask you to comment on Bill C-8 and its similarities to Bill C-26, which was presented during the last session. What are the major differences between Bill C-26 and Bill C-8, reminding you that Bill C-26 passed all the steps in both chambers?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: I'm going to ask Mr. Bilodeau to comment on this. It is essentially the same bill, with some very minor changes.

Richard Bilodeau (Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, National Cyber and Security Branch, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): Thank you, Minister.

To answer your question, there was an administrative error that was corrected. The other substantive difference is because of Bill C-70, which adopted a secure administrative review procedure to allow—in the context of judicial reviews—a special process to consider confidential information and to appoint special councils to assess the intelligence that might be used in an administrative proceeding.

SARP, as we refer to it, replaced the provisions in Bill C-26 that referenced a specific process. Now SARP applies to almost all judicial reviews, as opposed to piecemeal per legislation. That was the real substantive change.

Marianne Dandurand: Thank you.

Minister, there are no substantial differences between Bill C-26 and Bill C-8. Bill C-26 passed with the agreement of all the other parties.

Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Could you explain how the government is going to ensure that the powers provided under Bill C-8 will not be expanded beyond what is already provided for, meaning that they will not be expanded beyond private businesses?

[*English*]

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: It's quite clear that the scope of Bill C-8 involves, first and foremost, four areas of responsibility that are primarily in the federal domain. Any additional elements that need to be added on will require a Governor in Council change that would expand the scope of the bill.

Again, due to the nature of our federal state, anything outside of the federal domain will likely be unconstitutional. Therefore, it is very narrow in scope in terms of the areas that can have the application of this particular bill.

There are a number of safeguards in place, including reporting requirements to NSIRA and NSICOP. There's a requirement for adherence to the Privacy Act. There's also recourse to the Federal Court, in some circumstances. I believe a number of different safeguards have been put in place to ensure that there's no arbitrary application to this.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Minister. That's all the time we have for this round.

Mr. Fortin, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, I don't really see any independent accountability mechanism in Bill C-8 with respect to orders from the cabinet. Don't you think that could have been added?

• (1145)

[*English*]

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Fortin, this is, in my opinion, subject to judicial review. It doesn't end at just an order in council. It can go beyond. The decision can be reviewed by the courts.

[*Translation*]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: I understand that it's subject to judicial review. Perhaps I wasn't very clear, and so I'll rephrase my question.

Generally speaking, isn't there a basis to make sure there's a mechanism that would hold your department accountable to an independent organization? I'm not sure what organization that would be, but that's something that can be looked into. That said, while I'll not go as far as to say that waiting for a citizen to apply for judicial review is negligent, I don't think it's very proactive. It's possible to be more proactive and to provide a report annually or every five or two years. The details can be fleshed out.

In short, did you feel that it was not useful to include a mechanism to track these orders in the bill?

[English]

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: On the reason that we have NSIRA and NSICOP, they are now fairly established entities that review—particularly around issues of national security, because in certain cases there is an element of discretion required—and report. My response, Mr. Fortin, is that this is a built-in mechanism within the act that does refer to NSICOP and NSIRA for review.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Okay, but who reports to whom?

[English]

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: NSIRA ultimately reports to Parliament. They are—

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: I'm sorry to cut you off. I don't mean to be rude, but time is running out.

How often do you report to Parliament, Minister?

[English]

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: First of all, the parties are represented, if you recall, within these entities. For reference, I believe Conservatives as well as Bloc members are part of the review. It is a representative entity that reports, ultimately, to Parliament on an annualized basis.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fortin. You might have another chance later.

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

[English]

Matt Strauss (Kitchener South—Hespeler, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here. It's an honour to get to ask you these questions.

Do you believe that AI deepfakes, misinformation, disinformation and the like are threats to the integrity of the Canadian telecommunications system?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: I think they are threats in a number of ways—

Matt Strauss: That's all I need. Thank you. You agree that they are threats to our telecommunications system.

My concerns with this bill are largely surrounding proposed section 15.2. It states, “If there are reasonable grounds to believe that it is necessary to do so to secure the Canadian telecommunications system against any threat”, the Minister of Industry, which would be Melanie Joly, may consult with the Minister of Public Safety, that being you, to “prohibit a telecommunications service provider from providing any service to any specified person”.

Am I “any specified person”, potentially?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: I think you're looking at the section in isolation, Mr. Strauss. Let me just say that in order to execute one of these revocations, for lack of a better term, there is a process in place. It is not—

Matt Strauss: It does not include a warrant. Is that correct?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Perhaps I could finish. It is not an arbitrary process. We need to have evidence that an individual poses a threat to the critical cyber-infrastructure of the country. Without that, their account could not be revoked.

Matt Strauss: Thank you, Minister.

Why does it say “telecommunications system” instead of “critical infrastructure” in the bill? It's your bill.

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: In this particular case....

There are some technical issues, Mr. Chair. At some point, maybe we can look at it.

The Chair: We'll stop the clock for a second.

I think it was MP Lloyd who appropriately raised a question of microphones and recordings. The system, according to my understanding, works in the following manner. If we want to be heard when we start speaking, we need to turn the microphone on a second or two beforehand, so that the system connects to the microphone. It's a matter of one or perhaps two seconds before you speak. If you absolutely want to be heard, which is the normal case, I suppose, you need to connect your microphone a second or two before you start speaking.

Having said that, MP Strauss, the floor is yours.

● (1150)

Matt Strauss: Thank you.

I have a concern about critical infrastructure. I think impingements on civil liberties to protect critical infrastructure could be justified, but that's not what the bill says. Could you allay my concern here? Instead of saying “telecommunications system”, could you change it to “critical infrastructure pertaining to the telecommunications system”?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Look, if that's an amendment that you wish to make, Mr. Strauss, I'd be more than willing to look at it. I can't give you that answer off the top without giving some reflection and getting some advice on it. We'll be more than glad to look at it.

Matt Strauss: I've been raising this in the House for more than a month. I would prefer that you would have reflected on it already.

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: If I may, the debate oftentimes brings a number of perspectives there that may not materialize into amendments. I do think that from a process perspective, if there's something you want to put forward as part of the amending process that we will have in this committee, I will be more than glad to look at it.

Matt Strauss: I will do. Thank you.

Also, proposed subsection 15.1(3) says the order that is made to any person to deny them any service, which is obviously overly broad, may include “prohibiting the disclosure of its existence”. If I did something that you and Melanie Joly thought was misinformation and you decided to revoke my Internet privileges, you could order me not to disclose that to anyone. Is that correct?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: To be clear, this is not about misinformation, Mr. Strauss.

Matt Strauss: You said that's a threat to telecommunications.

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: It's absolutely not about misinformation. This is about critical threats to our infrastructure, including telecommunications.

I think we have to be very careful. There's a delineation here. There is misinformation that happens every single day on a range of different platforms, and they are not subject to this legislation. What is subject to the legislation is if an individual causes a threat to our telecommunications infrastructure or other critical infrastructure—

Matt Strauss: Minister, it doesn't say that. It doesn't say “critical infrastructure”. You're telling me the bill is not about what it says it is.

In any case, however you interpret proposed section 15.1, if I threaten it, then you can order me not to say I've been kicked off the Internet. Is that correct?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: It is not about kicking people off the Internet, Mr. Strauss. It's about the protection of our infrastructure and our telecommunications systems—

Matt Strauss: —by kicking people off the Internet.

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: It's not based on frivolous allegations. We are living in a world of misinformation, sadly. It is a sad reality for all of us here, and all of us face that every single day as politicians.

Matt Strauss: Who decides that the allegations are frivolous? Who decides that? If it's not a judge—

The Chair: I'm sorry. I was a being bit patient, but as you know, MP Strauss and Minister, when the comments and questions overlap, it becomes impossible for a significant portion of those listening to us to understand what's going on, because the interpreters cannot do their job. I'd like to invite both of you to speak in a manner that makes it possible for everyone to follow the conversation.

I'll turn it back to you, MP Strauss, for 30 seconds.

Matt Strauss: If these secret orders are not subject to judicial review, then it is you and Melanie Joly who will decide if there are reasonable grounds and if the threat is significant. When you say it's not arbitrary, it is arbitrarily left to the ministers, by my reading of the bill. Is that not correct?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: We rely on information and advice from experts. Some of them are here today.

Matt Strauss: I'll take that as a yes. Thank you.

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: It's not a yes, Mr. Strauss—

Matt Strauss: Why would you not—

The Chair: I'm sorry, but that will be the end of this segment.

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: I would appreciate—

The Chair: No, I'm sorry. I would hate to suspend. That is the end of this segment.

We have five minutes now for MP Ehsassi.

Hon. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here with us again today.

I have to say I find the members opposite are just rambling off all the time on this legislation. I find it to be a very sophisticated piece of legislation.

Mr. Strauss just said that if someone says something you disagree with, then you could cut off their access to the Internet. In very clear language, tell me why there is no chance that would ever happen.

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: I can categorically say that will not happen, Mr. Ehsassi. The situation here is about ensuring our critical cyber-infrastructure is protected. In an exceptional circumstance where an individual's account may be revoked, it is with the clear understanding that the individual poses a continued threat and that the person's continuing the service will pose a threat to our critical infrastructure. This is not an ad hoc exercise. This comes from advice we will receive from experts.

I am going to ask Mr. Arbour, with your permission, to elaborate on the work and the analysis they do before the advice goes to the Minister of Industry, who will then bring it to my attention.

• (1155)

Andre Arbour: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The phrase “telecommunications system” stems from the existing vocabulary in the Telecommunications Act, which goes back many decades. This is speaking to the telecommunications facilities and services rather than the expressive commentary of individuals.

The types of threats that we may be concerned about would include an incident in 2016 when Canadian traffic bound for Korea was redirected to China for six months and opened up to surveillance in that regard. It can involve malware or ransomware that is threatening to bring down the telecommunications networks on which Canadians rely.

The order power in question refers to a reasonable necessity corresponding to the gravity of the threat in that instance. If other remediation mechanisms are not possible as a last resort, those are the circumstances of that authority.

In terms of confidentiality, that exists where divulging the vulnerability in question would invite greater cyber-attacks to the telecommunications services in question. It is subject to review in terms of notification to NSIRA, NSICOP and an annual report to Parliament that must describe the orders in question, including their necessity and reasonableness.

Hon. Ali Ehsassi: Last week when you were here, your testimony was very helpful.

Minister, answer one more time, just to clarify this issue: What are the safeguards in this bill and why are the assertions being made by Mr. Strauss not to be taken seriously?

Not only does this legislation have many safeguards, but in addition to that, it seems that he doesn't even understand the most basic concepts of administrative law.

Would you kindly clarify that for Canadians?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Let me broaden the issue.

I think Canadians are rightfully concerned about their privacy rights. They should be. Every Canadian should protect their privacy with the utmost vigour and their free speech with the same level of vigour.

What we're trying to do here is in no way to impede an individual's right to free expression or their individual ability to access the Internet or other telecommunications services. As Mr. Arbour has explained, under the narrowest of circumstances and as a last resort, we are going after individuals who pose a threat to our telecommunications system.

Oftentimes it's dangerous to read legislation in a manner that doesn't connect to other long-standing legal covenants. I think it's important, in the context of legislative review, to look at the established covenants and legal principles in which we're working. I can appreciate some of the concerns that are expressed, but they are ill-founded and without merit.

What is important for the purpose of this committee.... I would really implore this committee to look at where we are today with respect to the challenges around cybersecurity and what measures we need to take, as parliamentarians, to protect everyone in Canada and every piece of critical infrastructure—telecommunications and others—and to safeguard against threats.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister and MP Ehsassi, for that exchange.

This is the end of this part of the meeting.

Our gratitude goes to the officials who took the time to participate today.

We will suspend for a few moments before we turn to the second hour on a different topic.

• (1155) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1205)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order to continue with our work.

Pursuant to the order of reference from the House dated October 23, 2025, we're meeting for our study of Bill C-12, an act respecting certain measures relating to the security of Canada's borders and the integrity of the Canadian immigration system and respecting other related security measures.

I'd now like to welcome the witnesses with us for the second hour of this meeting.

We're joined by the Honourable Gary Anandasangaree, Minister of Public Safety.

We also have Erin O'Gorman, president of the Canada Border Services Agency.

We also have two officials from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, including Mr. Jean-Marc Gionet, acting assistant deputy minister, protection and family programs sector, and Ms. Tara Lang, director general, integrity policy and programs.

We're also joined by Ms. Shannon Grainger, senior assistant deputy minister, portfolio affairs and communications branch of the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

Lastly, we have Jodie Boudreau, deputy commissioner of federal policing for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Welcome, all of you.

Minister, you have the floor for five minutes for your opening remarks.

[*English*]

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: It's becoming a bad habit, Mr. Chair.

I'm grateful for the opportunity to speak about Bill C-12, the strengthening Canada's immigration system and borders act. I want to thank the committee for the work you are undertaking in advancing this legislation.

This crucial piece of legislation will provide our law enforcement agencies with the tools they need to keep our border safe and secure and communities across the country safe.

[*Translation*]

Our borders are well protected, but we need to continually evolve to keep them that way so we can address emerging threats.

[English]

Here are some of the recent successes. Last year, the Canada Border Services Agency seized over 50,000 kilograms of prohibited drugs, cannabis, narcotics and chemicals. This is in addition to seizing more than 900 firearms. The CBSA also removed over 18,000 inadmissible people in 2024-25. That is the highest number of removals in a decade and an increase from approximately 16,000 the year before.

To build on these successes and adapt to a changing world, we need to ensure that our law enforcement agencies have the necessary legal authorities to act. Bill C-12 gives them those.

After we introduced Bill C-2, the strong borders act, in June, parliamentarians and stakeholders expressed concerns about provisions in the bill. Our government listened. With this new bill, Bill C-12, we believe we strike the right balance between the need to protect our borders and Canadians' privacy rights.

Bill C-12 draws on elements of Bill C-2 that are designed to strengthen the surveillance of our borders, combat transnational organized crime and stop those who seek to exploit our immigration system.

[Translation]

We introduced Bill C-12 because there is urgency to get law enforcement services the tools they need.

[English]

So many of the threats to our border have a link back to transnational organized crime. It is imperative that we're proactive, that we stay ahead of the criminals and that we close any vulnerabilities that may exist.

Through this bill, we will amend the Customs Act to obligate certain points of entry and exit to provide and maintain facilities for any purpose that falls under the Canada Border Services Agency's mandate, including the examination and detention of goods destined for export.

The bill will also amend the Oceans Act to add security-related activities to the Coast Guard, including the ability for the Coast Guard to conduct security patrols and to collect and share information with security and law enforcement partners.

In addition, Bill C-12 will enhance the RCMP's ability to share information on registered sex offenders with domestic and international partners.

The bill will introduce measures to strengthen our authorities related to immigration documents and information sharing. It will strengthen Canada's asylum system by improving the application process to ensure that the system is not used as a shortcut to regular migration.

Bill C-12 will also strengthen Canada's anti-money laundering and anti-terrorist fundraising regime.

• (1210)

[Translation]

Finally, we know the devastating impacts that illicit drugs, including fentanyl, have on our communities.

[English]

Bill C-12 gives the health minister tools to quickly control precursor chemicals that can be used to produce illicit drugs. They will allow law and border enforcement agencies to move quickly to prevent the illegal importation and use of precursors and will ensure strict federal oversight over any legitimate use of these chemicals.

I want to reassure law enforcement that we intend to advance Bill C-2 to ensure they have the necessary resources to deal with the complex and sophisticated crimes we are seeing today. We need to be in line with our Five Eyes partners, and as members of Parliament we owe it to Canadians to work together to get this done.

Our hard-working CBSA and RCMP officers work around the clock to keep our borders and communities safe, and I want to thank them for this service.

[Translation]

We owe them a debt of gratitude and we owe it to give them authorities and tools that will increase their effectiveness and capacity.

[English]

Thank you.

I'm happy to take questions.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

I'll now yield the floor to Mr. Caputo for six minutes.

[English]

Frank Caputo: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Through you, I ask the following questions. First, I begin by thanking the officials for being here.

I'll be focusing my questions, Mr. Chair, on the minister, and where appropriate, Ms. O'Gorman.

Ms. O'Gorman, do you have addresses for 32,000 people listed on your website who are currently deportable and on warrant, as in you don't know where they are? Do you have addresses for those people?

Erin O'Gorman (President, Canada Border Services Agency): As you say, we don't know where they are, so we don't have their addresses.

Frank Caputo: When the minister says, and this was his testimony last time, “Mr. Caputo, we have addresses for individuals who are in the removal queue”, you don't have addresses for people in the removal queue. Is that correct?

Erin O’Gorman: You made reference to a particular part of the removal queue. We have removals in progress. We know where those people are. We are in close touch with them. We are ensuring they are removed. We do have warrants out for individuals who have absconded.

Frank Caputo: Right. You don't know where they are.

Obviously, people do contact my office. I'm wondering how many armed officers, because the armed officers are the only ones who can make the arrests.... Is that right, when it comes to people for whom we have a warrant for their arrest, they're the ones who literally go out and find these people? Is that correct?

Erin O’Gorman: Yes.

Frank Caputo: How many armed officers do you have looking for these individuals?

Erin O’Gorman: I'm going to expand it a bit. We have 1,000 inland enforcement officers who deal with IRPA, so they may be in our detention facilities, they may be doing IRB hearings or they may be doing removals. Approximately 500 people are doing removals. They may occasionally do a hearing. They may be dealing with somebody in detention. You're pinning me down to one number, when we have quite a dynamic workforce, but I can say approximately half of those people are dealing with removals, and they're supported by administrative help who deal with the files so that they can do the going out and finding people.

Frank Caputo: You're telling me that on a daily basis, or day-to-day, there are approximately 500 people in CBSA who are armed and looking for these fugitives. Is that accurate?

Erin O’Gorman: I'm going to say approximately, because there is a lot going on in our inland enforcement, but they relate to individuals who are in Canada who perhaps should not be here, who are in Canada and might pose a risk to Canadians and are in detention, or who are having their IRB hearing, at which our officers will be representing the minister if we have concerns.

Frank Caputo: My information is that in the GTA there are approximately only 55 people who are armed, and about 10 are on the street daily, looking for people who are on warrant. Would you dispute that number?

• (1215)

Erin O’Gorman: For—

Frank Caputo: This is for the [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Erin O’Gorman: —precision around those being armed, I am going to have to come back to you, because we have CBSA officers who may not be armed but who will be helping to execute removals. I'll come back to you with a breakdown.

Frank Caputo: Minister, do you know much money has been spent?

Let me just really drill down. I'll just ask the minister first, and Ms. O’Gorman can help.

How many dogs have been trained as drug sniffer dogs in the CBSA?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: I'm going off recollection. I will say between 65 and 75.

Erin O’Gorman: We'll come back with a breakdown. We have drug detector dogs and currency dogs, and we have food, plant and animal dogs.

Frank Caputo: How many dogs have been trained to track fentanyl?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Again, that's a new area, Mr. Caputo, so we're at the early stages of that training. We will be enhancing that over the coming months.

Frank Caputo: Again, when it comes to the number, I don't want to know whether we're early; I want a number.

How many dogs have been trained to track fentanyl, please?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: I don't know, Mr. Caputo.

Frank Caputo: Ms. O’Gorman, do you know?

Erin O’Gorman: We're doing that right now. It's quite a new area. I believe that the Americans were forerunners. We are working with them, but we're also working with allies.

Fentanyl, as you can appreciate, is a highly toxic substance, and there weren't many inert, sufficiently similar goods that we had to train our dogs. Again, we can come back—

Frank Caputo: I'm not trying to cut you off, but I'll be very direct. Have any dogs completed the training to track fentanyl for the CBSA?

Erin O’Gorman: I'm not sure if they've been completely trained.

Frank Caputo: Okay, so we may have no dogs. The U.S. has dogs to track fentanyl, I assume.

I'm not sure if anybody at the RCMP can tell us whether there are dogs to track fentanyl, but what I'm hearing is that we don't know. It sounds like there might be zero dogs tracking fentanyl at this time, even though the problem of fentanyl trafficking has been at the feet of this government, and it beckoned the response of Bill C-2 and Bill C-12.

Do we have any dogs that know how to track fentanyl at the CBSA?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: If I may answer this, Mr. Caputo, we were at the Five Eyes in the U.K. back in September, and there was a demonstration of dogs that are now trained with fentanyl, so they do have a number of dogs. The other five countries are in the process of doing the training.

Frank Caputo: Is Canada doing training?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: At this point, we are working towards ensuring that we have dogs that can detect fentanyl.

Frank Caputo: I see that my time is up.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Caputo.

[Translation]

Ms. Acan, you have the floor for six minutes

Sima Acan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

Minister, during the pandemic, IRCC faced unprecedented backlogs and delays.

If the powers in Bill C-12 had existed during COVID, how would that have helped manage the situation more efficiently and provided clearer direction to applicants and families at the time?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: I note that I think Minister Diab answered a number of these questions at the immigration committee, but I'll just reaffirm that post-COVID and during COVID, one of the challenges that we had under IRPA was our inability to cease processing, to suspend it or to turn people away from processing.

It is one of the drivers, I believe, that has brought forward provisions in Bill C-12 that enable the Minister of Immigration, through order in council, to be able to terminate or to suspend certain immigration documents.

Sima Acan: Thank you, Minister.

Going forward, how will these new authorities make us better prepared for future emergencies without disrupting regular immigration processes?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: I believe that this is very much in line with the previous conversation we had around cybersecurity. There are emerging threats to our systems. On the immigration front, there are a great number of world events taking place that will impact our intake and our processing of immigration documents. There have been, around the world, many cyber-incidents that have disabled or tarnished systems, and this pre-emptive move by our government is to ensure that we have the tools necessary if and when they may need to be used.

My sincere hope is that it doesn't have to be used or has to be used rarely, but in the event that we need to use it, those tools are available in our tool box.

• (1220)

Sima Acan: Thank you, Minister.

Bill C-12 makes important updates to both the Customs Act and the Oceans Act, strengthening Canada's ability to secure its border on land and at sea.

Under part 1 of Bill C-12, the Customs Act would be amended to give CBSA stronger authority to access and examine goods in export facilities and warehouses that were previously harder to inspect. How will the new authorities under the act help CBSA better prevent illegal goods and contraband from leaving Canada, while keeping trade efficient for legitimate exporters?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: That's a great question.

This summer I had a chance to go to many ports of entry, many port authorities. One common theme that we saw.... It's not that we don't have the legislative authority. The CBSA has the legislative authority to search outbound goods. However, we don't compel ports, entry points or exit points to provide search facilities.

What the amendments to the Customs Act will do is, essentially, provide exit search capabilities, whether it's on site or a bit far from it.

The Gordie Howe bridge is an area where.... You and I were there together a few months ago. We saw first-hand how advanced those facilities are. Many of our ports of entry are much older and don't have that facility.

This really encourages and enables those ports to have these services available to us.

Sima Acan: Could you pause my time for one second? I think, Mr. Chair, there is a problem with the microphone. The last portion didn't come to my earpiece. Did you hear the question, or rather, the answer?

The Chair: I heard the question, but for certainty, we will ask the technician to look into that.

Thank you.

Sima Acan: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

Minister, will CBSA have the resources and the technology it needs to apply these powers efficiently at high-volume ports such as Montreal and Vancouver?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: I'm going to ask the president to answer that question, if that's okay.

Erin O'Gorman: Both the border plan and the most recent budget have allocated funding for detection technology for CBSA and additional officers. We will allocate those officers based on risk. Given where the volumes are coming from, certainly marine ports are one area we would look to enhance.

The port owners and operators, I have to say, are good partners. This doesn't reflect their not providing us space, but it's also a legal certainty for them, for their board of directors, as they have to spend money to create, potentially, additional facilities for CBSA. They are quite happy with that certainty.

Sima Acan: Thank you for that, Ms. O'Gorman.

Of course, securing our borders isn't just about what leaves or enters through land crossings; it also extends to our waters, as mentioned. Under part 4 of Bill C-12, the Oceans Act would be amended to give the Canadian Coast Guard a formal security mandate, including the authority to collect and share intelligence with CBSA, the RCMP and Public Safety.

How will this new authority improve coordination among agencies to help Canada respond faster to smuggling, illegal fishing and other transnational threats at sea?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: I believe we already have a great deal of coordination that takes place among the agencies, both within Canada and with many of our partners south of the border. The Detroit operation centre, for example, and our customs, our CBSA, as well as the RCMP, have ongoing dialogue. In every area along the U.S.-Canada border, we have ongoing communication that is essential to guard our border.

The expansion of the role for the Coast Guard in [*Inaudible—Editor*]

The Chair: You have 10 seconds.

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: —but particularly in the north, will advise and allow us even greater coordination.

Sima Acan: Thank you, Minister.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Acan.

I now yield the floor to Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe for six minutes. Welcome.

• (1225)

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's very kind of you.

Thank you to the minister, and the government officials, for joining us today.

Minister, the current situation is that an individual who crosses the border illegally, hides illegally for 14 days and then shows proof that they have been on Canadian soil for 14 days can file a proper claim for asylum.

Can you explain the logic behind this provision?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Thank you for the question, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*English*]

The logic is built within the safe third country agreement between Canada and the United States, as you're aware. We came to an agreement—I believe it was early last year—with respect to irregular border crossings between Canada and the U.S. The 14-day period was embedded as part of one of the exemptions to the safe third country agreement.

The IRCC has found that it is an area in which those dates could be manipulated. In order to ensure that those loopholes are not used in an adverse way.... That is the primary reason it's embedded within this legislation.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: No, I think you might be wrong there. The provision I'm talking about, which relates to the 14-day period, has been in place since an order was signed with Mr. Biden. You're talking about what happened last year—that's different.

Originally—

[*English*]

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: My point is that it's in the safe third country agreement.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Yes, but you haven't explained the logic behind it.

From what I understand of Bill C-12, a person's asylum claim will not be accepted even if they show they have remained within Canada for 14 days. I have to say that this provision is somewhat schizophrenic, when you think about it: In order to be able to properly file an asylum claim, you first have to have broken the law. That really is quite something.

Bill C-12 says that this type of asylum claim will no longer be accepted. On the other hand, will an individual be able to apply for a pre-removal risk assessment if they've crossed the border irregularly, hidden for 14 days and provided proof of this?

[*English*]

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Those who either are deemed to be ineligible through the safe third country agreement or are in Canada for a year will both be eligible for a pre-removal risk assessment, yes.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I'm not sure I understand your answer.

Under Bill C-12, will the person in the example I just gave you—which I will not repeat needlessly—have access to the pre-removal risk assessment, even if their claim is illegitimate? Yes or no?

[*English*]

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Yes.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I imagine there are cases where people cannot be returned to countries where the situation makes this impossible.

Do you know that migrants are being exploited by human smugglers who demand astronomical amounts just to take them across the border, as well as an additional amount nowadays to hide them for 14 days? They now charge migrants almost double the amount, to help them cross the border and then hide them for 14 days.

Are you aware of this practice by human smugglers?

[*English*]

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Look, I think there's a range of criminal activity that has taken place over the years, and an exploitation of individuals, many of whom may be very vulnerable. It does impact certainly on their well-being, but also, it exposes Canada to a level of risk through transnational organized crime that we are trying to address here as well.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I really would like to come back to this 14-day provision, because I believe it's a vital issue.

We're currently hearing the same thing from immigrant-serving organizations on the ground on both sides of the border. They tell us that this 14-day provision is doing more and more harm, because people are coming much less often to regular entry points and are continuing to use this type of loophole that can be found in the Canada-U.S. Safe Third Country Agreement.

Bill C-12 may not resolve this situation, because as I've already said, they will be entitled to a pre-removal risk assessment anyway. So it remains a motivating factor for migrants and something human smugglers can use to promote their services.

We're currently seeing that a lot of young women who cross the border are at the mercy of these people for 14 days, because they have to remain in hiding during this time. What we're talking about here is prostitution and sex worker networks. I don't see anything in Bill C-12 that will resolve this situation.

Some organizations on the ground are sounding the alarm, warning that people are being exploited due to this infamous 14-day provision.

Isn't this a clear opportunity for the Canadian government to have discussions with the U.S. authorities about reviewing the Canada-U.S. Safe Third Country Agreement and just removing the 14-day provision? This way, human smugglers will no longer be able to use this point to further exploit these people, who in most cases are desperate and being exploited both monetarily and from a safety standpoint.

• (1230)

The Chair: That's a very good question, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, but the answer will have to wait, unfortunately, since your time has now run out.

I'll now yield the floor to Mr. Lloyd for five minutes.

[*English*]

Dane Lloyd: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, it's interesting that Bill C-12 is legislation that has evolved from the previous legislation in Bill C-2, the strong borders act. I just find it an interesting kind of unintended admission that if you have a bill coming forward called the strong borders act, it's really saying that our borders are not strong at all.

I'd also ask, Minister, since our last meeting when I raised the issue of the Mexican visas being lifted in 2016, have you had a chance to review the information that I raised to you? Do you have any other thoughts on the impacts that your government's decision to lift those in 2016 had on weakening our border and our immigration system?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Thank you, Mr. Lloyd, for the question. Look, whether it be Bill C-12 or Bill C-2, it's very much premised on the fact that we need to do more to strengthen our border and to strengthen law enforcement's ability to enforce by giving them additional tools to make sure our border is stronger. Our border is very strong. That's a starting point. It's not perfect, but of course it is the longest undefended border in the world. It's one where, over time, we've had very good co-operation—

Dane Lloyd: Thank you, Minister.

Given the information I gave you last week on the statistics we received about deportations for Mexican nationals since 2016, are you now willing to recognize the evidence that your government is largely responsible for the rapid increase in deportations from Canada...resulting in people who shouldn't have been here?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: First of all, last year we closed the ability of Mexican nationals to come here without a visa. I think that's been an important step. Additional measures that we've taken at the border, including the bill that's in front of you, I believe, address many of the concerns that were identified on that.

Dane Lloyd: Thank you, Minister.

I just want to provide some more details, because we had some redacted documents last week, and I've received some more information. In 2016, the first year your government lifted the visa requirement, there were about 128 people from Mexico detained at the border. The visa requirement worked. It prevented people from coming here who had questionable backgrounds.

Do you have any idea what that number was in 2017, after your government lifted the visas? It went from 128 people in 2016 to 2,471 people in 2017. That is a massive, massive change. In fact, if you look at it cumulatively, from 2016 to 2024, 11,000 out of 16,000 people who were detained at the border were Mexican nationals. That's 68% of all the people who were detained at the border since your government lifted the visa requirement. This is huge work for the CBSA to do. These people were also released on a 48-hour alternative to detention.

Minister, do you not recognize that there was a cause and effect? You said in the last meeting that you saw no correlation, that you lifted this visa requirement and your government opened the floodgates for this to come to Canada.

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Lloyd, I don't like to target a particular community or a particular nation. I can speak to you in a broader sense. What's important, I think, is that we take measured steps to, first of all, put in restrictions. As of last year, in the case of Mexico, we have done that.

It's also about ensuring that within Canada there is enforcement and there are tools for law enforcement to be able to address those who are coming across our border who are ineligible to be here.

• (1235)

Dane Lloyd: Minister, you say you don't want to target communities. By your own admission, your government reimposed the visas on Mexico in 2024. In fact, in 2023 over 3,000 people were deported from Canada to Mexico: 40% of all the deportations by Canada in 2023 were from that one country.

If you're coming here and accusing members of targeting specific countries, Minister, the statistics show that it's your government—

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Let me be very clear, Mr. Lloyd: I'm not suggesting that you're targeting; I'm suggesting that I don't want to get into that frame of discussion. What I can tell you is that Mexico and the United States are our closest trading partners, with long-standing trade links, including the USMCA. There are economic reasons where certain decisions were made—

Dane Lloyd: Yet, Minister, prior to your government's lifting the visa requirements, this wasn't an issue. We had great bilateral trading relationships with our Mexican allies and our American allies, and yet your government's decision resulted in this absolute chaos at the border. That's why this legislation is before us today.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you for your questions, Mr. Lloyd.

Ms. Dandurand, you have the floor for five minutes.

Marianne Dandurand: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm very pleased with the direction in which my Bloc Québécois colleague Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe is taking this inquiry, and I would like to continue that line of inquiry, Minister.

There's a lot of concern about irregular entries and what will happen afterwards.

Can you tell us how an "irregular entry" is currently defined and explain what will become an "irregular entry" once the amendment made through Bill C-12 is adopted? The intent of my question is really to see how we'll improve the situation.

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Thank you for the question.

[*English*]

I do want to acknowledge the work that you're doing at your border and a given number of border crossings in your communities and the area you represent.

Bill C-12 by itself doesn't necessarily change the process by which individuals, either through regular ports of entry or through irregular ports of entry, come into Canada. What this does is... There does appear to be a loophole, as Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe indicated, on the 14 days. It merely clamps down and makes that exemption within the Safe Third Country Agreement... It nullifies that and ensures that those who are coming in through the regular ports of entry have to file a claim right away.

Notwithstanding their ineligibility, they will get a pre-removal risk assessment, which is a very different process from a referral to the Immigration and Refugee Board.

Most experts and most refugee advocates would suggest that the IRB is well placed for refugee determination, whereas we're of the belief that, in line with our obligations to the Refugee Convention of 1951, the hearing will be part of the pre-removal risk assessment, which is a very different type of process.

There is some tightening of regulation that will enable us to streamline these processes.

[*Translation*]

Marianne Dandurand: Thank you.

Over the past few years, we've seen a lot of irregular entries into Canada, especially in Quebec. These are people who stay here while their file is being reviewed. I get the impression that the system is backlogged and that some people are arriving in Canada under false pretences, claiming to be asylum seekers.

Will the measures set out in Bill C-12 help remove this backlog and make more room for genuine asylum seekers? Is that the goal?

[*English*]

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: I'm going to ask President O'Gorman to comment, and then let me just complete that.

Thank you.

● (1240)

[*Translation*]

Erin O'Gorman: I'll reply first, and then invite my colleague from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to add his comments.

First of all, I'd like to say something about the 14-day provision.

[*English*]

It removes the incentive to come between the ports.

[*Translation*]

As we have said, it's dangerous and people become victims of human trafficking.

As far as the efficiency of the system, I'll now turn it over to my colleague.

Jean-Marc Gionet (Acting Assistant Deputy Minister, Protection and Family Programs Sector, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): Thank you for that question.

This bill contains measures intended to make the system more efficient. When people file a claim—regardless of how they entered the country—we will use a consistent approach and this will be easier for them. We'll ask them for the information once, at the right time. We'll also ensure that both we and the Canada Border Services Agency receive the information before passing a file on to the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, or the IRB.

As far as new grounds for ineligibility, we recognize that there are a lot of files working their way through the system, so a measure is in place to protect it. People whose applications will be deemed inadmissible by the IRB will nonetheless be entitled to a protective measure, namely, the pre-removal risk assessment process, which is intended to prevent people from being sent back to a country where they would be in danger.

The Chair: You have five seconds left, Ms. Dandurand, so I think we can move on to the next person.

Marianne Dandurand: Thank you. I'll give those five seconds to my colleague, since we're asking the same type of questions.

The Chair: Okay. Members on both sides of the room have evidently come to an acceptable agreement.

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I therefore have 2 minutes and 35 seconds, in fact. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This bill refers to "compliance with Canada's international obligations in respect of *mistreatment*". Before this, it used to be an explicit prohibition on conveying information in cases with a risk of political persecution.

Isn't the new wording a little too broad? Why has it been changed?

Are we ready, all of a sudden, to provide sensitive information to people who may use it inappropriately?

[*English*]

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: We have international legal commitments not to share information with any country in which that information could essentially impact their safety and security. The name of the convention slips my mind, but it is a principle that we work on. It's any information that is shared, and we routinely share information, especially with the Five Eyes countries on a range of issues, including biometrics.... We do that for regular immigration processing, whether it be TRVs or other security checks, and that happens on an ongoing basis.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Minister, this is a fairly simple question. Why is the wording being changed? Why are we not using what was there before, i.e., an explicit prohibition on transmitting documents?

It frightens a lot of people. I'm asking you this because some groups have made us aware of this issue. I don't understand why the wording is being changed. People are worried, and perhaps with good reason.

[*English*]

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Alexis, if that's an amendment that you want to make, we would be more than willing to look at the proposed changes. It is really led by the Minister of Immigration, so I will bring it to her.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Do you have anything to add, Mr. Gionet or Ms. Lang?

[*English*]

Tara Lang (Director General, Integrity Policy and Programs, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): There are a number of different changes that are happening in the bill with regard to information sharing.

The first is in IRPA. It's a regulation-making authority to allow IRCC to disclose information for the purpose of co-operation with federal partners in prescribed scenarios. This would require future

regulations and information-sharing agreements to be put in place before that would happen.

This authority mirrors what exists in IRPA for making regulations for co-operation with provinces and territories, and also parallels the same authorities in the Citizenship Act.

The second part would be amendments to the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Act. The changes here are breaking down barriers to—

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Ms. Lang, I'm going to cut you off, unfortunately.

Thank you for your intervention, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

Ms. Kirkland, you have the floor for five minutes.

● (1245)

[*English*]

Rhonda Kirkland (Oshawa, CPC): Thank you very much.

I might use all of my minutes. If not, I may give some to Mr. Au.

Minister, I respect some of the things you said in your opening statement. You mentioned some things like keeping safe and secure, and keeping borders across our countries safe. You used the word "proactive" and you used the word "urgency" to get law enforcement the tools they need. You also applauded the hard-working CBSA and RCMP officers and said that we owe them a debt of gratitude. These are some of your words, and I couldn't agree more.

We've had discussions in previous committee meetings with Mark Weber, who is the union president for CBSA agents. He indicated to us that there would be some difficulty in getting 1,000 new border agents. I don't really want to bring that up, and I know it's going to take time to get 1,000 new border agents.

My concern is with what he said. It brought some discovery to committee in terms of attrition for CBSA agents. We train 600, and 600 leave through attrition. He referenced some toxicity in terms of the workplace for them—inland officers as well as border officers—and I'm wondering if you can comment, or if you're aware of some of that.

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: I appreciate the question, and I appreciate where this question is coming from.

First of all, I've been to maybe 15 ports of entry. I have met with a number of leaders as well as those who are working on the front line. I make a point of talking to people.

I can't assess the workplace just based on those visits. I do leave it to...and I have regular meetings with the union. If there are issues, I would be more than willing to engage them.

I do have full confidence in our president and the work that she's been doing on that.

Rhonda Kirkland: That's fair. I may refer some questions to Ms. O'Gorman as well.

Minister, you and I were saying earlier that we live near the same area. You're in Scarborough, and I'm in Oshawa. I learned recently from a constituent of mine that there are currently 450 grievances that officers have brought forward, just in the GTA.

Ms. O'Gorman, you're aware of these, I'm sure.

Erin O'Gorman: Yes. I'll tackle a couple of issues.

It's a large workforce that, in many instances, operates in difficult and stressful circumstances. We have professional standards. We have a large labour relations group. There are many doors that people can go to if they have concerns, and I'm regularly briefed on that.

I need to make sure people know where to go and that we can make decisions as quickly as possible. We work actually quite closely with the union to try to bring the number of grievances down. Some will be policy grievances, and there might be many policy grievances—

Rhonda Kirkland: Okay. I want to get to the next point, because I am getting somewhere, and I want to get there quickly if I can.

Are you noticing a toxic culture? Has it come up at all that there's a toxic culture, specifically for women officers? Have you heard that at all?

Erin O'Gorman: We've had some cases that were difficult cases that resulted in discipline. Are there more cases relating to women in the workplace than men—

Rhonda Kirkland: I'm asking specifically about discrimination against women in the workplace.

The reason I'm bringing this up is that we want to have 1,000 new border officers. How are we going to get there if the attrition is so high because it's such a toxic culture? I do want to bring this up specifically, because I'm aware of several women who have felt afraid to actually bring a grievance forward for fear of reprisal from CBSA. They're afraid to bring them forward.

Can you please comment on that?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Ms. Kirkland, if you'll permit me, let me answer that.

First of all, I want to thank the president. I know the leadership she offers to CBSA.

Any allegations of this sort are something that both of us, but I particularly, would want to hear more about. I would invite you... During constituency week, I'll be more than willing to come to Oshawa to meet with some individuals on a without-prejudice basis.

Rhonda Kirkland: That sounds like a great plan. I would love to do that.

My time is up, so I want to say that's very important, specifically if we're going to increase security at our borders. If we're not taking care of the attrition and the toxic culture for our officers, whom we respect so much, then we're not going to be able to do that. I think it needs to be a top priority.

• (1250)

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: I make my commitment to you on this and—

Rhonda Kirkland: We need to be proactive and urgent. Thank you.

The Chair: Sorry to interrupt that great conversation.

We now need to turn to MP Ehsassi for five minutes.

Hon. Ali Ehsassi: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. O'Gorman, I note that my colleague opposite has taken a sudden interest in K-9s that are fentanyl-sniffing dogs. I wanted to clarify a few things on that.

We heard from the minister that at the Five Eyes gathering last month in the U.K., there was a lot of discussion on these dogs.

Would it be fair to say that this is a very new and emerging tool that the various countries are considering?

Erin O'Gorman: It is. The safety of our officers and trainers is paramount, and the nature of fentanyl has meant the ability to get adequate inert but sufficiently close materials to train the dogs has been difficult. We're working with the U.S., and we're working with others. We have people actively doing that right now. I believe training is under way.

Hon. Ali Ehsassi: This is a very new and emerging tool that's being used by the U.S., Canada and our other Five Eyes partners. Is that correct?

Erin O'Gorman: It is, to the extent to which we can deploy dogs to fentanyl.

I would also say that our detector dogs are an excellent tool, but one of many.

Hon. Ali Ehsassi: I know this is very cutting edge. I find it quite disheartening that the Conservative Party is always trying to undermine the credibility of the RCMP and the CBSA officers, but it would be fair to say that the RCMP and the CBSA are just as pioneering in their efforts as other authorities around the world are on training these fentanyl-sniffing dogs.

Would that be a correct assessment?

Erin O'Gorman: Yes, we speak to the Five Eyes and other countries regularly. They learn from us, and we learn from them. Our officers will be very up to speed on what others are doing. We often have countries come to visit our facilities in Rigaud, where we do our training.

Hon. Ali Ehsassi: Right now we're also collaborating very closely, not only with all the Five Eyes but with the U.S. in particular. Is that correct?

Erin O'Gorman: Yes.

Hon. Ali Ehsassi: Thank you. I just wanted to clarify that.

Would the RCMP commissioner have anything to say about that?

Jodie Boudreau (Deputy Commissioner, Federal Policing, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): I can confirm that we are also under way with training. I can't tell you if any have finished. I visited the training centre in Innisfail in Alberta in May. I saw how they were training. They explained to me how they were going to train with fentanyl. I can't tell you if any of them have completed, but we do work very closely with CBSA. That is one of the many profiles that we train our dogs on and one of the many different types of drugs.

Hon. Ali Ehsassi: I presume that it's a very complicated process, because it depends on the age of the dog, and the training is rather lengthy. You want to make sure that the dog is physically and mentally fit and that a trainer is assigned to each one of them. Is that correct?

Jodie Boudreau: It is a lengthy training. Most of our dogs have multiple profiles, which means they might do tracking; they might be bomb dogs or they might be drug dogs, so they have multiple profiles. I can't recall the exact time, but it's approximately four to six months of training. The complication with fentanyl, as President O'Gorman said, is the toxicity of it compared to cannabis or some other drugs—the toxicity for trainers and for the dogs as well.

Hon. Ali Ehsassi: Thank you.

Now I have a very brief question for the minister. There was some discussion about 2016 and what the government was doing then. I do recall vividly that, at the time, the biggest concern was that the previous government in 2014 and 2015 had dismissed a number of CBSA officers. Is that correct, Minister?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: I think it's important to bring it back to Bill C-12 and why we're here. Without relitigating the past, I think it's important that we move forward. I sincerely hope that we'll have the support of all the parties here—

Hon. Ali Ehsassi: Let me ask you a question on a very different matter. If someone were to come around and dismiss 1,000 CBSA officers and RCMP officers, what would be the consequence of that for the safety and security of Canadians?

• (1255)

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: It certainly would have an impact. I can tell you that adding 1,000 CBSA and 1,000 RCMP officers, again, will have material impact, a positive impact on the ability of law enforcement to do their work at the border. I know that's what we're investing in now, and that's what I think is critical, whether it's the budget, Bill C-12 or the additional border investments we made in December. It all adds to strengthening the border.

The Chair: Thank you. That is, unfortunately, all the time we have.

Let me turn to MP Au for five minutes.

Chak Au (Richmond Centre—Marpole, CPC): Once again, thank you for coming.

My time is very limited, so I will go straight to the question.

We could have the best legislation on paper, and we also might have the facilities to intercept illegal drugs at the border, but, if there's no deterrence, those measures will be useless. My question is this: Given the harmful effects of fentanyl, why were harsher

penalties not included in the bill, particularly for possession, production and trafficking offences?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Au, I think everyone at this table shares the frustration that you have and the concern you have around fentanyl use. I've mentioned this before. I've personally been impacted by someone who died as a result of an overdose. I've seen many people over my lifetime in the work I've done who were impacted by it, so I think we all share the same objective.

Bill C-12 contains our border measures, important border measures that are meant to give additional tools to law enforcement. Correspondingly, I think the work that Minister Fraser has done with respect to Bill C-9 does speak to what you're talking about, the need to strengthen sentencing, including consecutive sentencing, ensuring that bail is not available and so on.

I do think it's a comprehensive approach. We're in different committees with those discussions, but it is very much a sequence and a constructive approach that we have towards—

Chak Au: Yes, but the fact is that we are addressing the fact that people are dying from using fentanyl, and we are seeing that fentanyl coming into our country in large amounts, so why are we not doing something faster and being more effective?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: You would know that I'm trying to be as apolitical as I can at this committee. What I will suggest is this. If you want to help on this issue, help us pass Bill C-2. Help us bring forward issues around the postal service, because if you talk to communities—if you talk to indigenous communities up north or in any remote areas—they will say that the number one way fentanyl comes into their communities is through the post office, and that's why we have those provisions in place. That's why we have issues around—

Chak Au: This is exactly what I'm hearing from the communities, though. They want to know why they have to wait for more people to die before actions are taken.

Going to the point that you just raised, I want to ask another question. Given that over 90% of fentanyl actually comes to Canada through B.C.—and we know that—why are resources not being distributed accordingly, so that we can address the problem in B.C. more effectively?

In your recent budget, I did not see any increase in resources devoted to B.C. to address the problem. We know that 90% of those illegal drugs come to Canada through B.C., so why is there no increase?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: B.C. is certainly an area where we have an incredible amount of resources. I can ask either the RCMP or CBSA to speak about it.

I can give you the broader examples. The 1,000 new CBSA officers and RCMP officers will be deployed to ports of entry in areas where there is high need.

B.C. has not only a high volume of traffic that comes in, but also probably one of the fastest-growing areas of port use. For example, the Prince Rupert port is expected to triple its capacity over the next decade.

The investments we're making right now, which are in this budget, will be going—and I can tell you with certainty—to B.C. They will be going to areas around the ports of entry.

• (1300)

Chak Au: Again, you're talking about the future.

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: No, we're talking about now. We're talking about today. We're talking about the budget that's in front of us today, which will ensure that resources are going to British Columbia and that resources are going to the borders, through the investment in 1,000 RCMP officers and 1,000 CBSA officers.

Chak Au: Again, this is not happening today.

That brings me to this question. You promised that there would be testing labs in Vancouver and Toronto, so may I have an update? Are those facilities already in operation?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: The labs are available. If you would like a breakdown of where the labs are, I'd be more than willing to share that with you. I'd also invite you to go there. I would be more than willing to provide that access through our agencies.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much for that input, Mr. Au.

I'll now yield the floor to Mr. Ramsay for five minutes.

Jacques Ramsay (La Prairie—Atateken, Lib.): I'd like to allow Ms. Lang to finish her response to the question that Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe asked just now, since she didn't have the time to do so.

[English]

Tara Lang: Thank you very much.

I was saying that the second changes have to do with the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Act.

This is helping us improve integrity within our own system so that we can share information among ourselves in lines of business. As it stands right now, whenever you apply for a temporary resident visa, you have to apply once, and then as a PR, you apply again.

As a department, our officers currently cannot look at those applications. We have to ask the requester again for the material. This will help break down fraud, and also, it will be a client service piece if you have to tell us only once.

The part about onward sharing to foreign governments and other entities is strictly outside the scope of this legislation. I would want to say very specifically that it contains a prohibition against "onward sharing by provincial or territorial government partners to foreign entities, except with the [written] consent of IRCC and where this would happen in a way that complies with Canada's international obligations in respect of mistreatment, as defined in the Avoiding Complicity in Mistreatment by Foreign Entities Act".

There is no onward sharing. This is strictly to be proactive in sharing information with provinces and territories as well as other federal agencies with information-sharing agreements and/or regulations.

Jacques Ramsay: I'd like to go back to Bill C-8, if possible.

Minister—

Rhonda Kirkland: I have a point of order.

Jacques Ramsay: I think this has been discussed already.

Rhonda Kirkland: There were three points of order in the first hour regarding the discussion of bills that weren't in that hour, so I just want to make a point of order for that on our side.

Thank you.

The Chair: My answer is the same as I gave earlier.

[Translation]

Did you hear what I just said, Mr. Ramsay?

[English]

Jacques Ramsay: I allow myself to go back to this because of the precedent ruling.

On Bill C-8, there are some critical structures such as hospitals and universities that are not in the law, for good reasons. It's because they are not under our jurisdiction.

I just would like for the minister to elaborate on what steps he's taking to inform our provincial partners, so they are up to speed on the protection of these critical structures.

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Our cybersecurity centre has ongoing dialogue with the PTs. Certainly, when we met two weeks ago in Kananaskis, although it wasn't formally on the agenda, we did have a number of conversations around the impact of cyber-attacks on local infrastructure.

I do think it's an area we need to expand, because the disclosure will benefit.... If something happens in a provincial institution, it could happen federally and vice versa. I think that, operationally, the information will flow from us, but we'll need to get to a point where information also flows back.

There's a lot of suppression around this type of attack, because people either are embarrassed or don't want Canadians to lose confidence in the actual system itself, so there's a fair bit of apprehension in reporting.

I think we have to normalize that reporting is required for the betterment of everyone, because we are interdependent in many ways.

• (1305)

Jacques Ramsay: Still on Bill C-8, the minister has been meeting with the Five Eyes partners. I'd like to know if he thinks that Bill C-8 matches what he's seen in other countries.

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: It very much does. Bill C-8 is an area.... Everybody is concerned about cyber-attacks. Many countries have been impacted by them.

The G7 meeting is coming up with the ministers of interior, and I believe this is on the agenda there. It is something that is critically important to the world. We do routinely share best practices. The G7 will be an opportunity for us to have that conversation.

I do want to just make a final pitch, because on the Five Eyes, one of the things that I want to underscore is that Canada is the only country that does not have a lawful access regime. It was pointed out to us, and we pointed it out to many of our colleagues.

I sincerely hope that we can get to a point where the elements of Bill C-2 that were left behind are incorporated into legislation.

The Chair: That is appreciated. Thank you. I have to stop you.

[*Translation*]

To complete the third round, I now yield the floor to Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe for two and a half minutes.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll try and keep it brief, since I don't have much time.

To the best of your knowledge, Minister, for how long has Canada been compiling data on departures from this country?

[*English*]

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: Could you repeat that question?

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: To the best of your knowledge, for how long has Canada been compiling data on departures from this country? Canada compiles data on entries, but when did it start compiling exit data?

I thought you would know, as Minister of Public Safety.

Erin O'Gorman: I don't have dates, but as you know, we're sharing information about the land border with the United States.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: How long have you been doing this?

Erin O'Gorman: I'm sorry, but I don't have this information at present. I can provide you with the dates later.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Since 2019.

Erin O'Gorman: Their exits have been—

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: As I said, it's been since 2019, when the plan was put into place. It's been working since around 2020.

What about the airlines?

Erin O'Gorman: I don't have dates, but it's the same—

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Minister, it's important to compile data on entries into and departures from the country. I can guarantee that it would be a good thing if the Minister of Public Safety knew if data on departures from this country were compiled. These are, after all, important data.

I'm not the minister of public safety, but from what I understand, we have only been compiling data on overland departures with the United States since 2020, but we aren't doing it for ports or airlines. I've been told that airlines do compile the data, but they're not obliged to pass them on to the government.

Don't you think you could have used Bill C-12 to improve this situation? It's not acceptable for a G7 nation like Canada to be unable to compile data on departures from the country, while more and more people are entering and leaving the country. Would this not help you secure the borders?

[*English*]

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree: I take your point, and what I can assure you of is that this is not the only new legislation that we plan to bring forward. In future iterations, we will assess the need to do this.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you. That's all the time we have.

That ends the third round of questions.

For information, here is the committee's agenda: On November 18 and 20, we'll hear from witnesses as part of our study of Bill C-12. You have until noon on November 21 to submit amendments to Bill C-12. The clerk has already sent us an email on this topic. On November 25, we'll review Bill C-12 once again. We'll

hear from witnesses for one hour and then start the section-by-section study of this bill at noon.

That said, thank you very much, Minister, and all the witnesses.

I wish you all a good day.

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