



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 017

Tuesday, December 2, 2025

Chair: Jean-Yves Duclos



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• (1105)

[Translation]

The Chair (Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Québec Centre, Lib.)): Welcome to meeting No. 17 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on September 18, 2025, the committee is meeting on its study of Canada's ability to remove foreign nationals with a criminal record.

I would now like to welcome the witnesses we have with us for the first hour of the meeting. From the Canada Border Services Agency, we have Erin O'Gorman, president; Aaron McCrorie, vice-president, intelligence and enforcement; and Carl Desmarais, director general, inland enforcement directorate.

Welcome to all of you.

Ms. O'Gorman, you have five minutes for your opening remarks.

Erin O'Gorman (President, Canada Border Services Agency): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

I'd like to begin by giving you an overview of the removals process, and then I will provide a breakdown of the removals inventory.

Every non-citizen entering the country is assessed for inadmissibility at the port of entry by a border service officer. If there are reasonable grounds to believe—which is the legal threshold—that the person may be inadmissible to Canada, they may be allowed to leave, be issued a removal order or have their case referred to the Immigration and Refugee Board, or IRB, for an admissibility hearing.

In other words, being inadmissible doesn't in and of itself give CBSA the legal authority to prevent somebody from entering Canada. People who are eligible to file a refugee claim and are assessed as high-risk may be arrested by CBSA and detained. All refugee claimants who enter Canada are issued a removal order when their claim is referred to the IRB, but it remains unenforceable.

Let's fast-forward approximately two years, to the point where, on average, a decision in the asylum claim is rendered. If the claim is not accepted, that is when a removal order comes into force.

[Translation]

The law states that individuals have an obligation to leave Canada 30 days after their removal order becomes enforceable, when a removal order has been issued. Despite this legal obligation, many people do not leave the country immediately and some go into hiding.

[English]

For example, in the last fiscal year, 12% of individuals failed to appear for their scheduled interview, and 7% failed to appear for their scheduled removal.

There are currently 30,000 people in the removal in progress inventory. CBSA officers are actively engaging with many of these people and working through them on the removal proceedings and making arrangements for their departure. The CBSA has already completed 30,900 removal interviews this fiscal year.

[Translation]

Reasons why the removal may not be immediate include allowing people to arrange their personal affairs, seeing through the holidays, be it Christmas or other holidays during the year, finishing the school year or recovery from surgery.

[English]

While the numbers have hovered around 30,000 since about 2020, they're not static. CBSA is removing about 400 people each week, on average. At the same time, the CBSA is seeing between 450 and 550 new people entering the removals inventory each week.

The Immigration and Refugee Board makes approximately 70,000 decisions on asylum claims each year, of which 37% are not approved. That means about 25,900 new cases will enter the removals inventory each year.

I will now say a word on our wanted inventory, which currently sits at about 33,000.

[Translation]

Over the past five years, the wanted inventory has fluctuated from year to year, but has remained relatively stable.

[English]

People on the wanted inventory are those who failed to appear for their removal processes. Once we have established that people are actively seeking to evade removal, the CBSA will issue an immigration warrant, which allows law enforcement partners to advise the CBSA if they locate them.

For the safety and security of Canada and its citizens, we place the highest priority on removal cases involving criminality, security, organized crime and human rights violations. Over the past five years, we have nearly doubled the removals of individuals who were inadmissible on serious grounds, such as criminality.

[Translation]

The Canada Border Services Agency employs around 550 personnel dedicated to immigration investigations and removal activities.

• (1110)

[English]

We employ almost 200 criminal investigators whose mandate includes investigating organizations that facilitate immigration fraud or are suspected of unlawfully acting as consultants involved with the illegal employment of foreign nationals.

To the question of why we would not assign more officers to removals, I would say that everything has consequences, and we allocate our staff across the many risk factors facing Canada at the border.

Finally, I would add that some of our challenges associated with removals relate to countries that do not provide documents for their citizens such that we can remove them. Here, we are actively working with colleagues, including those at Global Affairs, to have these countries issue the necessary documents. It's an issue that our allies face, and we exchange information on this subject regularly.

[Translation]

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. O'Gorman.

I now give the floor to Ms. Kirkland for six minutes.

[English]

Rhonda Kirkland (Oshawa, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you for being here again today. We appreciate your being here and your testimony.

The title of the study is.... Obviously, we're looking at removals. I know that the folks, the officers, involved in that are inland officers as well, which is an example of.... One of the folks, one of the ladies, living in my riding has made complaints in terms of discrimination. She was an inland officer. I have concerns that if the respect in the workplace isn't what it should be, then we will have a whole lot of difficulty with removals.

I do have a few questions regarding that and the fact that we heard testimony from the Customs and Immigration Union president. When I asked about his perspective on how widespread is the discrimination or retaliation specifically faced by women who go

through something like maternity leave or illness, his response was as follows: "The CBSA ranks last in the public service employee survey almost every year. That is not an accident. There is fear of reprisal. There's fear of reporting. There's fear of being subject to an investigation that is not impartial."

Ms. O'Gorman, could you add your comments to that? Would you agree with the union president, or do you see things differently?

Erin O'Gorman: I will say that I certainly heard the very emotional testimony that was provided here the other day. I will say that I have also dealt with employees who have had unacceptable experiences.

We—

Rhonda Kirkland: I will interrupt you briefly.

I really want to be clear. I'm not talking about experiences. I'm talking about harassment and discrimination. There's very clear terminology that is used for a reason. An experience could be something very light, and harassment and discrimination are something very heavy. That's the only clarification I'd like to make.

Erin O'Gorman: Okay, thank you. Perhaps I could have the time to unpack my whole answer.

I think people's experiences are also very important and very compelling. I'm not going to defend all of the individuals at the CBSA. We have systems and processes that are there to address issues of discrimination and harassment, but I'm not going to testify that they are all working and that people don't experience discrimination and harassment in the workplace. In fact, I think I've been quite public about the work that the CBSA needs to do across all fronts, including in its management, to make sure that we are aligned not only with our code of conduct and with our values but also with the various policies that are in place to prevent these incidents from happening and to prevent people from being subjected to harassing and discriminatory behaviour.

Absolutely, on our public service—

Rhonda Kirkland: So—

Erin O'Gorman: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. I—

Rhonda Kirkland: I do have your answer.

Erin O'Gorman: But I'm not finished with the answer.

Rhonda Kirkland: Well, I have some clarification that needs coming forward.

It sounds like, then, you're willing to admit that some investigations may not be impartial, based on what you just said.

Erin O’Gorman: I’m going to step back and say that we have some problems in the agency that include people being subjected to harassing and discriminatory behaviour. I’m being clear about that. We need our systems and processes to work. We need the confidence of Canadians. In order to have the confidence of Canadians, we need to have the confidence of one another. People need to feel that those systems and processes will treat them fairly.

In many cases, the top level of those systems and processes gets adjudicated outside of CBSA. I think that’s very important. We want to solve problems before they get there—

• (1115)

Rhonda Kirkland: Of course.

Erin O’Gorman: —but I’m not going to sit here and tell you that we don’t have issues.

I would be very happy, noting one of the studies that you’re contemplating, to come back here and go through the various actions we’ve undertaken and the actions that we need to continue to undertake.

I would also mention—

Rhonda Kirkland: Ms. O’Gorman, I have limited time, so I do have to get a few questions in very carefully.

I think the fear of reprisal is probably one of the biggest fears that members have. When they come to me, they’re afraid. When they’ve come to even their local union reps, they’re afraid of reprisal.

Can you clarify this for me? I know that you wrote a letter—it was forwarded to me—to all CBSA members about two women who came forward. You mentioned in that letter that they spoke with the minister directly. That is not something I said in my testimony here. These ladies feel that this was a bit of an intervention that would give them the reprisal that we were exactly talking about. You made it clear. It was very easy for those members to figure out who the women were, and therefore they could be targeted. That is exactly an example of the fear of reprisal that they are talking about.

Can I ask you, did you receive briefing notes for today’s meeting from the ministry or from the minister?

Erin O’Gorman: No.

Rhonda Kirkland: You didn’t have a briefing about today’s meeting at all, or the questioning?

Erin O’Gorman: I’ve come to testify on removals.

Rhonda Kirkland: Okay.

Erin O’Gorman: The material I have... I guess, may I ask more precisely what you’re asking me? I haven’t received briefings to have a discussion of particular individuals or individual cases.

Rhonda Kirkland: Okay. It just seems to be that they’re afraid.

The Chair: I’m sorry, Madame Kirkland. I’m sorry to interrupt, as always.

Let me turn now to MP Acan for six minutes, please.

Sima Acan (Oakville West, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much for coming again. I would like to start with my questions, but any of you can answer if you want to step in.

The committee motion noted that approximately 600 foreign nationals with criminal records are missing or “have failed to attend their deportation proceedings”, and CBSA is actively seeking to locate 33,190 wanted persons across its sub-inventories. We understand that absconding presents a significant operational challenge.

I know that lawful access has been the Conservative attack point since we started. How will the modernized lawful access capabilities proposed in Bill C-2 complement CBSA’s current intelligence and enforcement strategy regarding combatting threats to public safety and national security to improve the identification and location of foreign nationals who have served sentences and are now evading removal?

Erin O’Gorman: In terms of how we conduct removals and our investigations, we do work with our law enforcement partners. I understand broadly the importance of lawful access, but in terms of the way CBSA would execute its work, it wouldn’t necessarily avail itself of lawful access provisions. We do obtain judicial warrants in certain cases.

In terms of our operations, I will hand it over to Mr. Desmarais, but lawful access will not be a particular tool in the tool kit of CBSA. I understand that, to the extent that it allows our policing partners to deal with organized crime and to the extent to which some of those individuals would be on a removal order, this would facilitate for CBSA. In the grand scheme of things, that tool for law enforcement is very important.

Aaron McCrorie (Vice-President, Intelligence and Enforcement, Canada Border Services Agency): If I may add, especially in the context of removals... In the context of criminal investigations, we might avail ourselves of that tool, but in the context of removals, we would not be using it.

Sima Acan: Thank you.

Mr. McCrorie, in the past fiscal year, the CBSA removed 10,585 inadmissible people between April 1 and September 15. With 18,785 enforced removals completed as of October 31, 2025, the agency is nearing its goal of 20,000 removals by March 31, 2026.

Considering the dynamic nature of the removals inventory, which currently shows 29,542 removals in progress for all inadmissibility types, what specific metrics and operational adjustments are being implemented to ensure that individuals inadmissible on security grounds, serious criminality or organized criminality who lose their right to appeal to the immigration appeal division are efficiently processed and removed within this targeted cadence?

• (1120)

Aaron McCrorie: I think that fundamentally what we do is active management of our inventories, and this is the responsibility of my colleague Carl Desmarais. We've actually prioritized our removals inventories and looked at, you know, tier one, which is serious inadmissibility, including criminality; tier two, which is failed refugee claimants, irregular asylum claimants; and then tier three, which is others. It's active management of those inventories.

I liken our inventories to a bathtub. We're constantly scooping water out of that bathtub, but as the president noted in her remarks, the bathtub is filling up as well. You can see the results of that work if you look at our inventories, and you can look at different moments in time. If you look at our inventories right now, you will see that in all of our inventories about 1% of those in the inventories have some sort of criminality associated with them.

In our wanted inventory this week, about 2.2% of the 33,000 people in that inventory are associated with criminality. Then, if you look at our active removals inventory, which is the people we're actively working on, you'll see that 4.3% of those have criminality. So, while the wanted is at 2.2% with regard to criminality, 4.3% of our in-progress inventory has criminality. You see that in the removal results. This year so far—if you look at the last 12 months—we've removed about 22,000 people, and 3.9% of those had serious criminality, so that's about 845 people.

It's really about active management of those inventories and about focusing our efforts on serious inadmissibility. I think you see that in the results.

Sima Acan: Thank you.

The government has committed to significantly invest to strengthen border integrity, including a commitment to hire 1,000 new CBSA officers and a budget 2025 investment of \$617 million over five years to enhance detection and interception capacity.

President O'Gorman, given that you previously noted the dedication of approximately 500 officers to removals, could you please elaborate on how these major governmental resource enhancements, including the specific allocation of newly trained officers, will ensure that the CBSA not only can maintain its current successful removal operations but also can intensify focus on the reported 431, I believe, foreign nationals who have been found guilty of serious crimes?

Erin O'Gorman: The border plan allocated funding for new border services officers whom we are putting specifically to removals. They are currently in Rigaud, having their training, and they should be graduating in February.

Then, more broadly, the rest of the 1,000 officers we will certainly be putting to all aspects of our mandate, including removals. They will include the inland officers and the investigators I men-

tioned, as well as removals officers and support. As you can imagine, there's a good deal of support and file management that's involved in this for it to go well and efficiently, including for our clients who need to be removed. There's a lot of work there. We will bolster the whole spectrum of our work on removals with the 1,000 officers.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Acan.

Mrs. DeBellefeuille, you have the floor for six minutes.

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Ms. O'Gorman, thank you for coming here. I said at the outset that you almost had a subscription to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. Thank you for making yourself available.

Earlier, you talked about the whole issue of deploying human resources. How many officers are assigned to removal activities? I didn't quite understand the number, so could you repeat it for me?

Of your 1,000 new officers, 800 will be trained at the Canadian Border Services College in Rigaud and will respond at the border. What about the other 200? Will these officers be able to add to your removal officers?

• (1125)

Erin O'Gorman: There are 550 officers who handle removal files and 200 criminal investigators who provide assistance in the course of their work.

Claude DeBellefeuille: Are these employees unionized, Ms. O'Gorman? Are these 200 officers consultants or trained officers?

Erin O'Gorman: They're trained officers.

Claude DeBellefeuille: Can we say that these are FB-04 positions or FB-03 positions?

Erin O'Gorman: I believe those are FB-05 positions.

Carl Desmarais (Director General, Inland Enforcement Directorate, Canada Border Services Agency): Let me clarify that those 550 officers are law enforcement officers. Of those, 380 are trained and armed officers.

As for the 200 officers you're talking about, these are officers who are criminal investigators. They are also trained and occupy FB-05 positions.

Claude DeBellefeuille: They're not at the border. They specialize in criminal investigations. Is that correct?

Carl Desmarais: That's correct. They do the criminal investigations.

Claude DeBellefeuille: As for the 200 officers who are currently adapting, I learned that you were in the process of shuffling human resources.

These officers, who were trained at the Canadian Border Services College in Rigaud, are no longer allowed to carry their weapons, but they perform FB-03 duties while being paid at the FB-04 rate. What I'm saying may seem like gobbledygook to my colleagues, but what interests me is what you're going to do about it. I'm concerned that the agency will lose highly valuable human resources if you decide to let these 200 officers go. They can't carry a weapon, but they can certainly be put to good use by assisting removal officers or performing other duties. Right now, they're performing duties that fall under the FB-03 position, but they could be very useful elsewhere.

So, if there is a shortage of removal officers, why not take people who can't carry a weapon and put them in this sector, which seems to be in need of human resources?

Erin O'Gorman: Thank you for the question. I'm going to answer it in English, just to make sure I'm very precise, because it's a very important question.

[English]

I went back to making sure that the agency manages in conformity with all of our budget and human resources requirements.

I'm going to agree 100%. CBSA officers who are unarmed due to a workplace injury or some other reason are absolutely important contributors to the agency. What's happened is that the agency has missed the step where we accommodate officers into an actually classified position with money to it. As we've given those individuals other roles, they have brought their salaries from the front line. The exercise we're doing is to make sure that they are in classified roles and that they can contribute and bring all of the experience they have. We're going through that process.

I would say that there was not good oversight in making sure that we had regular engagement with those individuals in terms of what they were doing, their accommodation and whether that had changed over time. That is a management gap that we're fixing. Those individuals absolutely have a role, and we have an obligation to accommodate. Also, we need their skills. Whether it's with regard to reassignments or other aspects of the agency, we need to put them in positions with salaries attached to their level. That's the process we're going through now.

[Translation]

Claude DeBellefeuille: What you're telling us is that your restructuring and classification exercise for these people also includes a financial objective. However, I'm an experienced manager, and I can't understand the purpose of such restructuring in an organization like the agency when it lacks human resources. I have a feeling that the measures you're about to take could penalize the Canada Border Services Agency.

What is your ultimate goal in doing this restructuring?

[English]

Erin O'Gorman: For people who, for whatever reason, require an accommodation and are no longer tooled, as they're given work away from the immediate front line, they continue to bring their salary with them. Therefore, we have gaps in the front line. You can imagine—just for ease of example, but we could do this everywhere—a small port of entry that is now down one person. The impact of that will be that the other people will do more overtime and have to compensate.

What we need to do is keep the salary at the front line but then find a position for that individual where they can contribute. I agree 100% that they will be bringing all of their experience to bear. This is just making sure that they're in a funded position and that we're not having the people deal with fewer and fewer personnel at the front line because of those who are being accommodated.

It's a matter of putting them in funded positions and making sure that if somebody is unable to work in a fully tooled position at the front line, they are replaced with somebody who is fully tooled. We're a big organization, so I'm not particularly concerned that we won't find our way to make sure that everybody lands and can contribute.

• (1130)

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. DeBellefeuille.

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

[English]

Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you all for being here.

Ms. O'Gorman, I'm going to ask you these questions.

One thousand border officers were promised by the Liberal government. Zero have been hired to this point. Is that correct?

Erin O'Gorman: That is incorrect.

Frank Caputo: How many have been hired?

Erin O'Gorman: We have 57 people hired. By the end of the fiscal year, I would estimate that we should have over 100. We're aiming for more than that.

We're going to be recruiting our uniformed officers over three years. I think if we did it any faster than that, we would risk not meeting the standards that we have maintained for having excellent, experienced people coming in and getting the training they need.

Frank Caputo: I understand that.

Of those 57 who have been hired, were those planned hires or are those part of the 1,000 new officers?

Erin O’Gorman: The 1,000 new officers—and you’ll see in the budget—include approximately 75 from the border plan and an additional 925 from the money in the budget. It’s both, so before the budget—

Frank Caputo: It’s 57, then.

[*Translation*]

Erin O’Gorman: Wait, I’ll finish my sentence.

[*English*]

We did some risks. We have people who started at Rigaud before we got the actual budget funding—

Frank Caputo: Ms. O’Gorman, I’ve asked very concise questions. Please answer concisely.

Of the 57 who were hired, how many were part of the 1,000 promised by the government? Please just give a number.

Erin O’Gorman: Well, I’ll refer you to the budget.

The budget outlined—

Frank Caputo: With all due respect, I—

The Chair: I’m sorry, Mr. Caputo. We’ll stop the clock.

I understand that it is going smoothly, but there’s a point at which it’s impossible for people to either interpret or listen to the interpretation. Please make sure that we don’t overlap the conversations.

Frank Caputo: Ms. O’Gorman, I’m going to be very clear here. If you don’t know the answer, please just say it.

I asked you whether, of the 1,000 new officers, zero had been hired. You said that was incorrect and that 57 were hired. The implication of that is that they were part of the 1,000 promised by the government.

I’m going to be very clear: Of the 57 hired, how many were part of the 1,000 extra officers that were promised by the government? Could I have just a number, please?

Erin O’Gorman: Mr. Chair, I’m going to seek to answer the question, ideally without interruption.

The budget included the funding for the officers. Based on that funding that’s in the budget, 57 people have been hired.

Frank Caputo: Is that—

Erin O’Gorman: Based on that funding, as it’s outlined in the budget—

Frank Caputo: That’s not.... I’m asking a very simple question and I’m getting a bit of a runaround here, so I’m just going to move on.

This study was about 600 foreign nationals. We didn’t know where they were. That’s the title of the study. We thought the actual number was 600; it’s actually 33,130. Is that correct?

Erin O’Gorman: As I’ve testified before, and as is posted on our website, there are approximately 33,000 people who are on a removal order who have absconded.

Frank Caputo: That’s with warrant. You don’t know where 33,000 people are.

The minister actually said that we have addresses for those people, or we used to have addresses for those people. “Absconded” is the word you just used. That would suggest that we don’t know where they are, do we?

Erin O’Gorman: I’m going to go back to the other question, because there’s—

Frank Caputo: No, no. I asked a question here, please. With all due respect—

Erin O’Gorman: —a risk of conflating. You mentioned—

Frank Caputo: With all due respect, Madam, I’m asking questions here. I will not permit you to talk out the clock when I’m asking very direct questions. I think we have an answer to that, so let’s just move on.

You said there was screening by a border services officer to ensure that terrorists and criminals do not come into Canada, but in fact it was revealed in the committee here that up to 50% of officers at airports are actually students.

Do you acknowledge that there are frontline students who are independently evaluating, with three weeks of training, one week of which is for use of force, and doing the same work as an officer evaluating people coming into the country?

• (1135)

Erin O’Gorman: Our students are doing work at the airports. They are not doing the same work in terms of the evaluation and the risk assessment and the decisions under IRPA.

Frank Caputo: I want to stop you there, please.

Are you saying that when somebody arrives at the airport, the person who is interviewing them is not a student?

Erin O’Gorman: Are you talking about a traveller or about somebody seeking asylum?

Frank Caputo: I mean both.

Erin O’Gorman: We—

Frank Caputo: At the first point of contact, is there a student there?

The Chair: I’m sorry to interrupt. The question is obviously important, but we’ll have to wait for the answer, because the time is up.

We’ll now move to MP Ehsassi for five minutes, please.

Hon. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Ms. O’Gorman.

I must confess that you’ve been speaking very clearly in your responses. I’m not quite sure why some of the members are having a hard time following, but I want to say thank you and that we appreciate your testimony.

For their purposes, I understand, having heard the numbers that have been mentioned here today, that the CBSA is doing an extraordinary job. They're hitting numbers that are higher than ever, so thank you for that.

On the removal of individuals who have criminality or serious criminality, I understand from the testimony that you have approximately 500 officers dedicated to that task. Is that correct? In your opinion, is that number sufficient or not?

Erin O'Gorman: We deploy all of our resources based on the many risks that we have, and we did add additional officers specifically for removals. They are about to graduate from our college in Rigaud.

We're constantly looking at how we deploy our resources across all of the threats. There are officers who have particular training in IRPA, in the act. We have a slightly smaller pool that can do those removals, but we constantly move people around. I wouldn't want to find myself coming to this committee to explain why our seizures of contraband have gone down, so we are constantly looking to where the risks are, both geographically and in terms of the threats coming into Canada, be it people who might be trying to exploit our asylum system or people who are trying to bring in contraband or firearms.

Hon. Ali Ehsassi: I appreciate that you're grappling with a number of priorities and with resource management. There's no doubt about that, and it is what it is.

That said, given that this specific issue is of concern to members of this committee, are you satisfied with the number of people that you currently have devoted to removals?

Erin O'Gorman: I am. We talk about the removals inventory, but I think it's important to understand that the CBSA is working closely with law enforcement officers, and I'll just draw people's attention to the extortion announcement last week. There will be individuals who are not on a removal order who might be here on a student visa and who undertake criminal activities or abet them. We can use our legislation to remove them, and we do.

We focus on the inventories, and within the inventories, we focus on criminality, but at any other time, we're also dealing with individuals we remove for other acts who might not be going through the asylum process.

Hon. Ali Ehsassi: Thank you for that.

The other question I had is a question I generally pose to witnesses here. Is there a technology dimension to this? Would there be any more resources that should be devoted to technology to assist the 500 individuals who are focused on this challenge?

• (1140)

Erin O'Gorman: There is, and we can always do better.

At its core, this is a human interaction, as you can appreciate. At the end of the day, we have to engage with people and work to undertake their removal, but we do use alternatives to detention, to the tune of about 13,000 people who might not reach the threshold of detention. We are concerned that they may seek to abscond, so we will have electronic bracelets and telephone reporting and electronic reporting of various means. We do use technology.

Hon. Ali Ehsassi: Regarding our resources for that, would you deem them to be adequate?

Erin O'Gorman: As alternatives to detention, I would say yes. We're often increasing them, but I'll allow my colleague to add to that.

Hon. Ali Ehsassi: That's fine; if you think they're adequate, they're adequate.

My last question is this: I think you, in your testimony, touched on the fact that you require the co-operation of other governments as well. Sometimes that co-operation is not forthcoming, so how does one deal with that challenge? That must be quite a challenge for your officers, but surely we can't allow other countries to continue to not co-operate and not see consequences for that. How would you propose to deal with that?

The Chair: You have 10 seconds, Ms. O'Gorman.

Erin O'Gorman: It takes a lot of our time, and it's an issue for our allies. We work with our allies to look at countries that are not providing us and them with the documents, but it takes a good deal of our time and that of our colleagues at Global Affairs.

[*Translation*]

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

Mrs. DeBellefeuille, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Claude DeBellefeuille: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

When Mr. Ehsassi referred to the members opposite, I don't know if he was including me in what he said. I hope not.

Do you know what percentage of the 33,000 nationals who are subject to a removal order and who are wanted are criminals? I think Mr. McCrorie said 2% or 3%, but I want to check.

What we're trying to understand is our ability to remove criminals from those 33,000 who are subject to removal. How many are criminals?

Carl Desmarais: We're talking about roughly 1% of that population.

Claude DeBellefeuille: So you know that 1% of those 33,000 nationals are criminals.

When you issued a removal order for these criminals, who make up 1% of nationals, didn't you take the necessary steps to detain them, accompany them to the airport and make sure they leave the country? Is there no follow-up in the process when criminals are subject to a removal order?

Carl Desmarais: Many will actually be detained, but we don't always have the authority to maintain detention indefinitely. In some cases, there will be certain obstacles to removal. The final authority that determines whether a person will be detained or not is the Immigration and Refugee Board. This decision is therefore not necessarily up to the Canada Border Services Agency. It's important to take that into consideration as well.

Claude DeBellefeuille: Okay, Mr. Desmarais, but let's say the person has a criminal record, and we want them deported. I understand that they can't be detained for all sorts of reasons, but on the day of their removal, will someone accompany them to make sure they board the plane, for instance, or are criminals left to make their own arrangements to catch their flight, without any checks?

Carl Desmarais: A number of them will be accompanied. However, it must be said that the presence of crime encompasses several types of crime. Obviously, we're not necessarily talking about violent crime in all cases. There are going to be escorted removals in a large proportion of cases. Between 10% and 15% of removal cases may require an escort. If so, Canada Border Services Agency officers will follow the person to their destination.

Claude DeBellefeuille: Let's say it's a case of domestic violence where the person has severely beaten his wife, for example. Do you think that person should be escorted out of the country?

Carl Desmarais: It depends. It's the agency officers who conduct a risk assessment to determine whether the person represents a potential danger to people on the plane or a danger to public safety.

Claude DeBellefeuille: Above all, there is a risk that the person will flee and reoffend.

Carl Desmarais: Those factors are taken into consideration in the decision and in the removal proceedings. All of that risk assessment is going to be done—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Desmarais. Two and a half minutes is always very short.

Thank you for those interventions, Mrs. DeBellefeuille.

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

• (1145)

[English]

Dane Lloyd (Parkland, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here.

President O'Gorman, I appreciated the summary of your process. I'm wondering about the 200 criminal investigators. You gave an outline of what they do, but can you be clear? Are they tasked with finding these foreign nationals with criminal records who are being removed? Is that part of the criminal investigator's job?

Carl Desmarais: No.

Dane Lloyd: Whose job is it?

Carl Desmarais: That would be the job of inland enforcement officers. Those are the 550 officers I mentioned, roughly 400 of whom are armed and tooled officers.

Dane Lloyd: Okay. Thank you.

Can you clarify something else? We talked about some 600 foreign nationals, or around that number. Are they all convicted, or are they convicted and suspected or charged?

Carl Desmarais: Aaron, do you want to answer that?

Aaron McCrorie: In our inventories, we will see people who have various degrees of criminality. It could be crimes that they committed overseas that we have discovered here. It could be crimes they've committed here.

As Carl mentioned earlier, 1% of our total inventory are people who have some sort of criminality. They will all serve their time. These are not people—

Dane Lloyd: They've been charged, but what about people who are suspected or who haven't been charged with crimes?

Aaron McCrorie: The president referred to this when she talked about the extortion case, and it's a great example of how we work with law enforcement very proactively to use IRPA to disrupt criminal activity.

In the instance of the five cases of removals for the B.C. extortion cases, we couldn't hit the criminal threshold, and our policing colleagues couldn't hit the criminal threshold, but we could hit the IRPA threshold to say that there were reasonable grounds to believe that these individuals were involved in organized crime, and on that basis we were able to remove them.

It's a different standard from the criminal justice system—

Dane Lloyd: Yes. Thank you.

Is there currently a directive in place for CBSA investigators to opt for release of offenders without conditions into the community? Is this now the default practice of the CBSA?

Erin O'Gorman: Could you say that again?

Dane Lloyd: Is there currently a directive in place for CBSA investigators to opt for the release of offenders without conditions into the community?

Erin O'Gorman: Do you mean release from immigration detention?

Dane Lloyd: Yes.

I see there's some confusion here.

Aaron McCrorie: I would venture to say no. I think we assess, as Carl had suggested, each case on its own merits, and then ultimately, if somebody is detained, the IRB may make a decision to release somebody with or without conditions. That is not our decision.

Dane Lloyd: Are you familiar with Bill C-75 and its impacts on the bail system? What impact did that have on CBSA investigations? What impact did the principle of restraint that was added in Bill C-75 have on CBSA investigations?

Erin O'Gorman: We'll come back to you on that.

Dane Lloyd: It's interesting, because I have a CBSA directive here from January 2020. It says that CBSA officers, because of the provisions of Bill C-75, are being tasked to consider options other than arrest. I quote: For example, rather than arresting and bringing the accused to bail court, investigators need to consider unconditional release. Based on these new Criminal Code amendments, there was a directive put out to the CBSA that they must also consider the release of an accused at the earliest reasonable opportunity and the imposition of the least onerous conditions that are appropriate in the circumstances, including conditions that are reasonably practical for the accused to comply with.

There was a directive released to the CBSA that they were to release offenders at the earliest opportunity because of Bill C-75. Are you aware of that directive?

Erin O'Gorman: We'll have to come back.

In terms of immigration detention, it's the Immigration Refugee Board that makes the decision with regard to whether people can remain detained or not.

I'll have to take the directive that you're referring to and look at it in the context of our legislation and the decision-making processes that we have.

Dane Lloyd: Okay.

Have you heard from officers who are saying that they're frustrated with these provisions and being asked to release people or to recommend people for release at the earliest opportunity?

Erin O'Gorman: I'll come back to you on that part of it as well.

Dane Lloyd: I have about 30 seconds left.

You've said that the flow of people coming in is outpacing the CBSA's ability to get these people out.

What are your recommendations on what we can do to reduce the flow of people coming in who are inadmissible?

• (1150)

Erin O'Gorman: Bill C-12 will help with that.

I think it's studying this and having recommendations, but generally, the more people come in, the more people will come into our inventory, so it's a stock and flow issue.

The Chair: Thank you very much, MP Lloyd.

We'll go to MP Powlowski for five minutes, please.

Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Thank you.

I'm new to this committee, so excuse my ignorance on this stuff.

You've talked about the grounds for inadmissibility—security reasons, criminal record, human rights abuses, organized crime. Am I right that it's the CBSA that makes that determination? That's before people go before the Immigration and Refugee Board.

Erin O'Gorman: We risk-assess people coming in. If people make a refugee claim, then they enter Canada and go through that process.

Marcus Powlowski: But that determination is made beforehand. If you're declared inadmissible, do you even get to the stage of appearing before the Immigration and Refugee Board?

Carl Desmarais: Are you speaking about refugee claimants?

Marcus Powlowski: Yes. I mean refugee asylum seekers.

Carl Desmarais: For a refugee claimant, for example, an officer would have to form an opinion that the person may be inadmissible. If it's a serious inadmissibility in this particular case, the refugee claim would be suspended. It would be put on hold, so the issue of admissibility would be dealt with separately. Once the issue of admissibility has been dealt with, if the person has been deemed to be inadmissible for serious grounds, for example, it puts a stop to the refugee application.

Marcus Powlowski: What appeal process is there for somebody who's deemed to be in one of these categories and inadmissible?

Carl Desmarais: I think there are limits to the number of appeals available for serious inadmissibility grounds.

Marcus Powlowski: There is an appeal process, though.

Carl Desmarais: Not all grounds are created equal when it comes to inadmissibility. Some of them are going to be dealing with very serious inadmissibility. There are typically fewer appeals recourses for those. Those that are perhaps on the low end of the risk spectrum would probably be granted a number of appeals.

Marcus Powlowski: How about somebody who's deemed to be a security risk?

I find that somewhat problematic. I have been involved with trying to help Afghan interpreters come into this country. I know some were determined to be security risks. I found it quite challenging to deal with this, because once they're determined to be a security risk, there's an iron curtain that comes in front of us and they won't tell us why.

In one of them, the story eventually came out that he, in Afghanistan, in Kandahar, had a used car dealership, and he sold cars to the Taliban. I would hardly consider that a serious security risk, but there was no ability to challenge that. In the case of somebody who's deemed to be a security risk, is there an ability for somebody to legally challenge that determination?

Carl Desmarais: All the allegations that are formulated by CBSA officers will be put before an independent tribunal. At that particular opportunity, the allegation itself can be challenged by an opposing counsel, by the client himself or herself. There's definitely an avenue whereby contrary information, for example, could be brought forward and debated in the context of an independent tribunal.

Marcus Powlowski: What tribunal is that?

Carl Desmarais: That's the Immigration and Refugee Board.

Marcus Powlowski: Is that different from the refugee and immigration board of Canada?

Carl Desmarais: It's the same board.

Marcus Powlowski: Oh, it's the same, so even though—

Carl Desmarais: There are different divisions of the same board.

Marcus Powlowski: Then even they would have an appeal process.

Is the determination in a pre-removal risk assessment done by the CBSA, or is that done by IRCC?

Carl Desmarais: It's IRCC.

Marcus Powlowski: Do you know if there's an appeal process there?

Carl Desmarais: In immigration, I think it's fair to say that typically a decision is appealable before the Federal Court, and a pre-removal risk assessment, for example, would constitute a decision that can be appealed.

Marcus Powlowski: Mr. Chair, how much time do I have left?

The Chair: You have one minute.

Marcus Powlowski: I need a quick answer, because I want to get to something else.

You mentioned other countries not wanting to provide documents. Why would countries want to provide documents? These are people they don't want back, especially if they have a criminal record or are in organized crime.

Is that not a problem, and what do you do in those circumstances when countries don't want to co-operate because they don't want these people back?

Erin O'Gorman: We persist. Sometimes they don't say no but just take a long time, so we persist on the diplomatic side, as well as through our channels.

• (1155)

Aaron McCrorie: If I may add, it's an international obligation. Under the International Civil Aviation Organization construct, it's an international obligation to provide travel documents in a timely fashion to the departments—

Marcus Powlowski: Thank you.

I'd like to conclude my remarks with a motion to adjourn.

No motion? Okay, I'm withdrawing my motion to adjourn.

The Chair: That would be very sad.

Thank you, Marcus. That would be sad, because we're now going to turn instead to MP Gill for five minutes.

Sukhman Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley, CPC): Thank you very much.

I want to say thank you to the witnesses, first of all, for coming here.

Chair, I do want to make it clear that I would like to give the last minute of my round to MP Kirkland.

The Liberal government says that Canada's immigration system and border system is working as intended. If so, how do they explain the roughly 32,000 foreign nationals who cannot currently be located? Also, of the 62,000 people in question, the Minister of Public Safety could confirm the whereabouts of only 30,000. Is that correct?

Erin O'Gorman: On your question about people who can't currently be located, it's really important to understand that it's not static. It's not the same number of people who cannot be located over a period of time. The 400 people we are removing every week, on average, will include people from the inventory where there was a warrant, and the individual has been found and has been removed.

Sukhman Gill: Are you confirming that every week there are 400 people being removed?

Erin O'Gorman: On average, there are, yes.

Sukhman Gill: What is the estimate? You're saying there are 400 currently, every week—approximately 400 people.

Erin O'Gorman: There are approximately, on average, 400 people a week.

Sukhman Gill: Do we know the addresses of any of these people currently, the 32,000?

Erin O'Gorman: Do you mean the people we have an immigration warrant against?

Sukhman Gill: Yes.

Erin O'Gorman: Well, some of them are serving jail sentences, so we absolutely know their addresses.

Sukhman Gill: What about the people we cannot find and who cannot be located?

Erin O'Gorman: It's mixing all of those up. For people on immigration warrants, there are approximately 33,000. Some of those are serving jail sentences. We put an immigration warrant so that when they're released, it's a signal to institutions and law enforcement to call CBSA. Other people have absconded. When we go to issue the removal order with them, they are hiding.

We're also finding them, and we are removing them, so they aren't the same individuals week in and week out. When we talk about these inventories, there will be many different people from those we spoke about when I testified on removals a couple of months ago. People in our active removals cases are leaving, and we are finding people.

Sukhman Gill: How long will it take to identify and remove all 32,000 people we still have not found and don't know their whereabouts?

Erin O'Gorman: Well, if we could hold them constant, we could do the math. As we've said, though, there are more people coming into the inventory every week. We remove people. The IRB will make decisions not to grant asylum, and those people will then come into our removals inventory.

Aaron McCrorie: If I may add a piece of data, over the last two fiscal years, we issued 7,041 warrants. However, we closed 9,578 warrants. This fiscal year to date, we've issued 4,706 warrants and closed 3,231. It's very dynamic. To the president's point, that 32,000 isn't static. People are coming, and people are going. It's reflective of the overall numbers we're dealing with.

Sukhman Gill: Okay.

The government says that public safety is its top priority. If that's true, how many of these foreign nationals under the act removal order have been apprehended in the past 12 months? Please provide a specific number.

Aaron McCrorie: We've removed 845 individuals for serious inadmissibility over the last 12 months.

Sukhman Gill: All right. Thank you very much.

I would like to give the rest of my time to MP Kirkland.

Rhonda Kirkland: Thank you, Chair.

At this time, I would like to move to resume debate on the motion I made November 25 regarding the undertaking of a study. Do you need me to read that motion again into the record, or are you good to go? It's been moved.

The reason I want to do that, and I promise I won't—

The Chair: I'm sorry to interrupt, but if you do wish to table such a motion, we need to proceed to a vote immediately and see whether it's the will of the committee to do that.

I will ask the clerk to see whether there is agreement to do that.

• (1200)

Frank Caputo: What is the precise question on which we are voting, please?

The Clerk of the Committee (Andrew Wilson): The motion would be to resume debate on Ms. Kirkland's motion.

The Chair: We'll suspend for a few seconds to make sure we all understand.

• (1200)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (1200)

The Chair: We'll resume.

Mr. Clerk, if you can repeat the motion, as you were invited to do, we'll turn to a vote.

The Clerk: The motion is to resume debate on Ms. Kirkland's motion.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 9; nays 0)

[Translation]

The Chair: Before we get back to the debate on the motion, I would like to thank you, Mr. Desmarais, Mr. McCrorie and Ms. O'Gorman, for spending this time with us and sharing your important and useful comments. We wish you a wonderful day. Maybe we'll see you next time.

I will now give the floor to Ms. Kirkland.

• (1205)

[English]

Rhonda Kirkland: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will not be long, I promise you. I will just quickly remind you that the reason for my motion was to raise urgent concerns regarding systematic discrimination, procedural misconduct and the lack of accountability at Canada Border Services Agency. The findings come at a time when CBSA is seeking to hire thousands of new officers. The agency's credibility and the ability to provide a psychologically safe workplace need to be addressed before expansion can legitimately proceed.

Multiple former CBSA employees have come forward with serious allegations of systematic discrimination, procedural corruption and retaliation within the agency's internal human resources and integrity processes.

We would just seek to cover three things: systematic discrimination against pregnant employees who go on maternity leave, as well as those with serious illness; manipulation and misuse of internal HR systems to justify discrimination; and the national integrity centre of expertise, NICE, including internal investigation processes and the breach of confidentiality in investigations.

With that, I'll just say that this should not be a partisan issue in any way. We want to make sure that the workplace is safe for all of our officers. If we want a safe border, we need a safe psychological place for our officers to work.

With that, I hope that we can potentially just move to a vote to adopt this study, but of course I will cede the floor if any of my colleagues wish to debate or if they have anything they wish to say.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Kirkland.

Mrs. DeBellefeuille, you have the floor.

Claude DeBellefeuille: I think the vote earlier said it all, Mr. Chair.

For my part, I agree that we should do this study. I suggest that you put it to a vote right away. Ms. Kirkland explained at length the importance of this study last time, at the meeting during which she tabled her motion.

I would therefore be in favour of us now moving to a vote on this motion.

Jacques Ramsay (La Prairie—Atateken, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would like clarification on something.

[*English*]

How many meetings?

An hon. member: It's a minimum of five.

The Chair: Ms. Kirkland.

Rhonda Kirkland: The reason there's a minimum of five meetings is simply because of the number of people who need to come before the committee. I don't know that we would be able to accommodate them with with fewer than five meetings.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Kirkland.

Is there any further discussion?

In that case, we will proceed to a vote on this motion.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Mrs. DeBellefeuille, you have the floor.

Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Chair, it's my turn to move a motion that I hope will receive the support of committee members. I prepared it in both official languages. I believe everyone has received a copy. If not, I'll give it to the clerk so that it can be distributed to committee members.

The motion is as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study of at least two meetings to examine the material requirements set out under the agreements concluded between Canada and the United States to allow for the clearance of containers at Canadian ports;

that the committee invite representatives from the Canada Border Services Agency, Transport Canada, Sectus Technologies (in Laval) and other relevant stakeholders to appear during this study; and

that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House.

I'm trying to do everything I can to study the whole issue of customs clearance for small ports along the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River. In this motion, I'm proposing this particular study because we can't get accurate information about the agency's requirements for container clearance services. I think that, in these two meetings, if we invite the right witnesses, all the port organizations that can't get that information will finally be able to get it.

If my motion were to receive the committee's support, it would also be a pleasure for all members of the transpartisan marine caucus, which was recently created and which also calls for further exploration of the CBSA's container clearance requirements.

I hope my colleagues will support the adoption of this motion. It will be a short study, but it will be a game changer for communities all along the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River where there are small ports.

• (1210)

The Chair: Thank you for that notice of motion, Mrs. DeBellefeuille.

Mr. Caputo, you had your hand up to speak.

[*English*]

Frank Caputo: I believe I was out of order. I was going to seek to intervene, but the clerk mentioned to me that it's simply a notice of motion and we're not debating the motion, which is correct.

I will give the floor to Ms. Konanz, please.

Helena Konanz (Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, CPC): Thank you.

I would like to make a motion.

The Chair: I want to make sure we all understand what's happening.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. DeBellefeuille just—

Claude DeBellefeuille: Actually, I didn't say it was a notice of motion. It's a motion that I would like to see adopted. I think it's a motion that isn't complicated and that everyone agrees on, so I didn't just give a notice of motion.

The Chair: The procedural rules we adopted last June require that a notice of motion be tabled at least 48 hours before the committee can hold debate on this motion.

Mrs. DeBellefeuille, you have just tabled a notice of motion. The rules of procedure therefore require us to consider this motion at a future meeting.

Claude DeBellefeuille: Excuse me, Mr. Chair, but when we're discussing committee business, this 48-hour requirement no longer applies. I'm quite familiar with the rules of procedure.

Jacques Ramsay: Mr. Chair, I have a point of clarification.

The Chair: Mr. Ramsay, the floor is yours.

Jacques Ramsay: We agree that the motion should be moved. We're not opposed to that at all.

The Chair: Okay.

Mrs. DeBellefeuille, you are indeed right, according to the clerk. I apologize for the confusion, but what was a bit confusing was that, during the meeting, we went from our study on foreign nationals to considering a motion that had already been tabled and presented previously. We haven't returned to the study on foreign nationals. We're therefore discussing committee business, which allows motions of any kind—

[English]

Helena Konanz: Mr. Chair, I have a notice.

[Translation]

The Chair: Yes, it won't take long.

This therefore allows motions of any kind, even those that haven't been put on notice, to be discussed and debated if the committee agrees, of course.

[English]

Sometimes I find myself confusing people more than I wish. We are now going to discuss the motion being tabled and proposed in the committee business section of our meeting today.

Are there any remarks on the content of Madame DeBellefeuille's motion?

Monsieur Powlowski, go ahead.

Marcus Powlowski: I like it. I agree with it. There are several ports along the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway that are looking to be able to clear customs, including in my riding in Thunder Bay.

I certainly agree with this study and thank Madame DeBellefeuille for the proposal.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Powlowski.

[English]

Are there any further remarks on this motion?

If there are no further remarks, is the committee in agreement with the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you, Madame DeBellefeuille.

We'll now turn to Madame Konanz, and then to Mr. Ramsay.

Helena Konanz: Thank you, Chair.

MP Lloyd put the following motion on notice. I am now moving it, as follows:

That, given the Department of Agriculture has advised the Penticton Shooting Sports Association that their lease is to be terminated at the end of 2025;

The range has operated for 42 years and is essential not only for recreational shooters but also for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, British Columbia Sheriffs, and Cadets who depend on it for training;

The planned closure of the range would deprive the community of a safe area where residents can legally and responsibly use their firearms;

The proposed divestment of this land has been met with widespread condemnation from the community and the South Okanagan RCMP;

The committee call on the government to rescind the divestment plan and that this be reported to the House.

I appreciate everyone listening to this extremely personal and important decision that has been made or that is imminent—or not imminent, hopefully. It's a deeply personal issue, a decision that will affect our community significantly.

First of all, we've passed out a handout. I apologize that there's no translated version of it. Basically, it's a letter from MP Fuhr supporting the club.

This club has a history of 43 years. It's a family club. At that club, they do safety training, hunter education, youth and cadet training and family-oriented shooting sports. There have been absolutely no complaints or issues from the local community, ever. They completely coexist. This facility creates connections between law enforcement and the public and youth. There are not many clubs left anywhere where youth and adults can engage and interact together. RCMP and youth also engage together at this club. I don't know anyone around this table who can think of a club that does that in this day and age.

This will be of detriment to the local RCMP. Staff Sergeant Bob Vatamaniuck sent out a letter to the public, telling about the costs our local municipalities and region will have if this club closes down. Right now, as you can imagine, the RCMP is the biggest cost for local government. They'll have to drive many hours to get to another shooting range in order to practice.

The clubhouse and range represent significant investments of time, resources and community effort that cannot be easily replaced. It's actually in the millions of dollars. Through the years, they've built, all through volunteers, clubhouses and archery ranges that really support the community. The range has strong ties, as I said, to RCMP and border services. My riding has six border crossings in it. This is one of the ranges used by the border crossing nearest, Osoyoos. It's the nearest range for what they need to practise. There's also Parks Canada, air cadets, scouts, local youth groups and the hunting community.

I think it's important for members to know that in a rural area, you don't want people practising their shooting out in the woods. We have a huge problem in our area with wildfires. We can't have local people practising out in the woods, because it sparks fires. For safety reasons as well, we really need to keep this club going.

Again, Liberal MP Stephen Fuhr sent out a public letter that you should have in front of you. In it, he says, "I believe that the Penticton Shooting Sports Association has made a strong case for why their continued presence on this site is in the best interests of the community. As such, I very respectfully lend my support to their request for a renewed long-term lease".

● (1215)

MP Dan Albas tabled a petition recently, signed by almost 10,000 Canadians, highlighting the vital role this club plays in education, safety and training.

I believe it's time to reconsider and end this flawed process that no one in the local community is in favour of. It's a case that the government needs to leave well enough alone. There's no problem with this club. In fact, it's going to leave a real hole in our community if this lease is ended.

What I ask is that you end this divestment and please extend the lease of the Penticton Shooting Sports Association. Our region will be grateful. Everyone will be grateful if you suspend this and follow the text of the motion, which calls on the government to “re-scind the divestment plan and that this be reported to the House.”

• (1220)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Konanz.

Mr. Ramsay, the floor is yours.

[*English*]

Jacques Ramsay: Mr. Chair, I'm not denying the merit of Mrs. Konanz's motion. I think the chair should call the subcommittee to organize the agenda at a later date.

With that, I move to adjourn the debate and move to the budget debate instead.

The Chair: There's a motion to adjourn this debate and move to a debate on the budget. We will now move immediately to a vote. It's a straightforward motion to vote on, I understand.

Does the committee agree with that adjournment motion?

Mr. Lloyd.

Dane Lloyd: On a point of order, I believe dilatory motions are motions that cannot be debated. Is that correct? Because Mr. Ramsey has put a qualifier on the motion, it is now a debatable motion. I don't believe it would move to a vote. I believe it would be open for discussion, so I'd like to put my name on the docket.

The Chair: Simple motions are easier to understand than more complex motions. That motion was indeed more complex than the usual dilatory motion, because, as MP Lloyd correctly stated, there was a move to a second step, which makes the dilatory motion more complex and subject to debate. At this point, that is not possible, because we're discussing a motion.

We will return to Madame Konanz's motion. Is there any input on that motion?

MP Lloyd.

Dane Lloyd: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that.

I had the pleasure of visiting the Penticton Shooting Sports Association facility just north of Penticton. It's an absolutely beautiful facility. It's extremely functional.

The loss of this facility due to this divestment plan would be a huge loss to the community and a loss to the country. We live in a much more dangerous world, as we've seen with Russia's invasion of Ukraine and other aspects that we see in our allied countries. Poland, for example, is taking real steps to strengthen their civil defence. There was a recent story in *The Globe and Mail* that talked about citizens getting more involved and receiving firearms training. I know it's been a topic in the news.

The Department of National Defence has put forward a paper in which it's considering expanding civil defence training to 300,000 Canadians. I would simply ask how we are supposed to train these 300,000 or more Canadians in civil defence if we do not have facil-

ities such as the Penticton Shooting Sports Association. We're going to need facilities like this across Canada, not only to train the RCMP, CBSA and cadets; we could possibly need these facilities to train in civil defence.

I think the government would be making a very costly mistake by divesting this facility. I know there are good reasons for divestment, but after touring the facility, it's become very clear that this facility is right next to an experimental farm that deals in testing for diseases in plants. I don't think there is any use for this facility other than a certified firearms range. I don't know how this divestment makes any political or economic sense for the government to undertake, and we'd be losing a tremendously valuable facility.

MP Konanz, MP Albas and many others have been champions of this community range. It's not just a community range that promotes responsible firearms ownership; it's a range that's used by our law enforcement to train. They've written to the government and to this committee, I believe, with their concerns about the closure of this facility. It's incumbent upon us to take a look into this and put forward our opinion as a committee that the closure of this range would be detrimental to public safety.

With that, I'll end my time. Thank you.

• (1225)

The Chair: Thank you, MP Lloyd.

I have MP Caputo and then MP Konanz.

Frank Caputo: I believe MP Kirkland asked to intervene before me.

The Chair: MP Kirkland.

Rhonda Kirkland: I would simply just say that, obviously, I support this motion. My riding is the headquarters for the Canadian Shooting Sports Association, CSSA, and I know that they would support this motion. That's really all I would say. In the effort for safe shooting sports, of course I would support this motion.

I know that others would like to speak on it as well, but I'd be happy to go toward a vote rather quickly to adopt the study.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Kirkland.

Mr. Caputo.

Frank Caputo: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would echo my colleague's sentiments. I'll remind the committee, too, that I believe he's still an acting member of our armed forces. We thank him for his past service in the forces and our service. It's people like him who really do keep us safe. It is people like that we need to contemplate. Law enforcement needs this. Perhaps the 57 officers—we don't know whether they're of the new 1,000 officers—and people like that would be using this facility.

At the end of the day, I think we need to listen to the people on the ground, so I support this motion.

Thank you.

The Chair: MP Konanz, go ahead, please.

Helena Konanz: Thank you.

I would ask the clerk to pass out the letters from MP Fuhr supporting this club and asking for an extension of the lease. Is there a possibility of doing that? What do we need to do to make that happen?

The Clerk: Subject to the routine motions adopted by the committee at our first meeting, I am only able to distribute things to committee members if they are available in both languages.

Helena Konanz: Can't we have a vote on that? Can we vote on passing it out? I apologize for not having it in French, but can we have a vote on passing out that very important letter, which proves that it's a bipartisan issue?

The Chair: Thank you. This would be one more motion to discuss, and we are not allowed to do that now.

Helena Konanz: Okay.

The Chair: We'll have to focus on the current motion.

Helena Konanz: All right. Thank you, Chair.

I want to tell everyone that there is a letter. It was made public by MP Fuhr, who lives in a riding about an hour north of our area. He totally supports the extension of the lease for this club.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Konanz.

MP Ehsassi.

Hon. Ali Ehsassi: I'm fine, actually. Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you.

MP Au.

Chak Au (Richmond Centre—Marpole, CPC): I also want to speak to this motion.

Now, I'm not a firearms person, nor do I have the hobby of shooting. This is something new to me. However, I visited two shooting ranges, one in Richmond and the other one in Prince George. I can see that they serve a very important purpose. It's not only that people have social activities and gatherings in those kinds of shooting ranges. They also have a place where it's safe for them to practise. I see the support and the enthusiasm of the people who are into the sports.

Again, I don't know the details of this particular situation, but if we know that there are so many people from different backgrounds, different walks of life and even across different parties supporting the keeping of this shooting range, then there's no reason we should allow this to be closed.

With that, I support the motion.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Au, for that.

MP Ehsassi, I saw your hand raised.

Hon. Ali Ehsassi: I'd like to bring a motion to adjourn.

The Chair: We are now going to vote on the motion to adjourn the meeting, having heard the earlier comments. Is the committee in support of the motion to adjourn?

(Motion negated: nays 5; yeas 4)

The Chair: We'll keep the discussion going. We're back to the motion of Madame Konanz.

Madame Kirkland.

• (1230)

Rhonda Kirkland: Can we call for a vote on the motion that's on the table? Is that possible?

The Chair: The vote will follow whenever everyone is ready for it.

So let's go to a vote on that particular....

Madame Acan?

Sima Acan: Is the motion open for amendments?

The Chair: Obviously, we can amend a motion.

Frank Caputo: I have a point of order, Chair. You just called for a vote. I don't know that we can be asking for amendments.

You just called for a vote. I think we need to proceed to the vote.

The Chair: The flow of this is rapid. I understand the challenges there may be in understanding the interconnection between motions and amendments and adjournment motions. As you noticed earlier, I was initially confusing on the move from the witness session to the House committee business session. Allowing for everyone's understanding is, I believe, the right thing to do.

Madame Acan, you're asking whether an amendment can be put to a motion, and the answer is yes.

Frank Caputo: On a point of order, Chair, I would challenge the chair's interpretation there. You had called for a vote. I am challenging your decision to allow an amendment when you had called the vote.

The Chair: So you'd like to move to a vote now. Moving to a vote is not a motion or not an acceptable motion in a committee.

What exactly are you asking for?

Frank Caputo: You had called the vote. You had said we were proceeding to a vote. At that point, I believe the vote should have occurred or should have commenced. You said we were calling the question, essentially, and then an amendment was brought forward. I believe we should be voting, because you had called the question at that point.

The Chair: I had asked whether we wanted to have a vote, and I turned around and saw that Madame Acan wanted to ask a question on the proceedings, which I understand are a bit complex to follow. I believe that members of this committee deserve a fair chance at making their full participation in this particular meeting.

Madame Acan, you can proceed with your earlier intervention.

Sima Acan: Are we going to do the amendment, or is there a challenge to the chair? What are we doing right now?

The Chair: I'll suspend for a few seconds.

• (1230) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1235)

The Chair: Having had time to get some turkey or ostrich or anything else—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: —we'll start again.

[*Translation*]

Thank you for being patient for a few minutes.

Mr. Lloyd is challenging the decision of the chair. I therefore ask the clerk to proceed to a vote to see whether this decision—

[*English*]

Dane Lloyd: No, no, I did not challenge anything.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: I'm sorry, it was Mr. Caputo.

You're a great team, Mr. Lloyd and Mr. Caputo. People sometimes confuse you with each other.

A voice: They're different.

The Chair: Apparently, according to the polls, you're both equally handsome and intelligent. Of course, polls aren't always perfect.

We'll now go to a vote on Mr. Caputo's challenge to the chair.

[*English*]

Frank Caputo: I will withdraw it.

I would like to go to Ms. Acan's amendment.

The Chair: Mr. Caputo, are you dropping the motion?

Frank Caputo: I'll drop the challenge.

The Chair: Okay. We'll turn to Madame Acan.

Sima Acan: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Caputo.

I would like to amend the motion and remove the “report to the House” from the motion.

The Chair: Let's make sure that I understand and certainly that you understand what that means.

Mr. Clerk, when you have a moment, can you perhaps explain what the motion would then look like with this amendment?

The Clerk: This is my understanding. Please correct me if I'm incorrect.

Ms. Acan is moving to remove the final clause from the motion. The final line would read, “the committee call on the government to rescind the divestment plan.”

Is that correct, Madame Acan?

• (1240)

Sima Acan: That's correct.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Is everyone clear on that?

Mrs. DeBellefeuille, you have the floor.

Claude DeBellefeuille: First of all, when motions are moved, it would be good to have a written version in both languages. Mr. Lloyd moved this motion last week, so I don't think there's any excuse for the fact that I don't have the French version of the motion we're discussing and voting on in front of me.

What the clerk summed up doesn't ring a bell. Could he read the entire motion as it would be amended by the amendment, so I know exactly what I'm voting on?

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Clerk.

The Clerk: The motion has been distributed to committee members. You should have it in your emails.

In French, the motion would read as follows:

Étant donné que le ministère de l'Agriculture et de l'Agroalimentaire a informé la Penticton Shooting Sports Association que son bail prendra fin à la fin de 2025;

que le champ de tir est en activité depuis 42 ans et qu'il est essentiel non seulement pour les tireurs amateurs, mais aussi pour la Gendarmerie royale du Canada, les shérifs de la Colombie-Britannique et les cadets qui en dépendent pour leur entraînement;

que la fermeture prévue du champ de tir priverait la communauté d'un endroit sécuritaire où les résidents peuvent utiliser leurs armes à feu de manière légale et responsable; et

que la cession proposée de ce terrain a été largement condamnée par la communauté et la GRC du sud de l'Okanagan;

le Comité demande au gouvernement d'annuler le projet de cession.

The Chair: Mrs. DeBellefeuille, you have the floor.

Claude DeBellefeuille: What the clerk just read out is what we have to vote on. Is that correct?

The Chair: Absolutely.

Claude DeBellefeuille: So the words “*et d'en informer la Chambre*” have just been removed. Is that correct?

The Chair: That's correct.

Claude DeBellefeuille: Okay, thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for asking for that clarification. It's always important to know exactly what we're voting on.

We'll go to a vote.

(Amendment agreed to)

(Motion as amended agreed to)

The Chair: Now that the debate on this motion has concluded, I would like to take this opportunity to ask the clerk to present two budgets that we will need to decide on.

[*English*]

These budgets are on Bill C-8 and Bill C-12.

Mr. Clerk, can you proceed, please?

The Clerk: Yes, of course.

These budgets were distributed to members by email on November 18. They are routine study budgets. These are adopted by committees for all studies that they do. The one on Bill C-8 is in the amount of \$18,700, and the one for the study on Bill C-12 is \$15,000.

I'm happy to answer any questions if you have any.

The Chair: Are there any questions?

Jacques Ramsay: Is there going to be enough money to go on location in Penticton to see the shooting range?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Helena Konanz: I'll be your tour guide.

The Chair: That's good. So, there are no more questions. Therefore, I presume that these budgets are adopted.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

• (1245)

The Chair: Seeing the time and no further interventions, I will adjourn the meeting.

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