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Chair

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz

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Wednesday, June 7, 2006

•(1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC)): This is the seventh meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. Pursuant to Standing Order 84(1), the main estimates for 2006-07, including votes 1, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 55, 60, 65, 70, 75, and 80 under public safety and emergency preparedness, were referred to this committee on April 25.

We welcome the Honourable Stockwell Day to the committee.

Mr. Day, I presume you will have some kind of initial presentation, and before you begin, maybe I would let you introduce the witnesses who are with you, as well.

The usual procedure at this committee is that after all the witnesses have finished, we will then go to questions from the official opposition for seven minutes.

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, colleagues, members of the committee.

[Translation]

I am pleased to be here today to discuss with you the expenditure plan of the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness for 2006-2007.

[English]

I'm pleased to be with you here today to go over public safety portfolio spending plans for the year 2006-07.

Right off the bat, I'll introduce the officials who are accompanying me today.

I'm pleased to introduce to you, many for the first time, the Deputy Minister Suzanne Hurtubise; Mr. Jim Judd, who is the head of our Canadian Security Intelligence Service, CSIS; Mr. Alain Jolicoeur, who heads up the Canada Border Services Agency; Commissioner Zaccardelli, who is in charge of the RCMP; Mr. Keith Coulter, who heads up Correctional Service Canada; and Mr. Mario Dion, who is now head of the National Parole Board. Each of those agencies falls under the umbrella of public safety.

I've said before, and I'll say many more times, I have always believed the prime responsibility of any government is the safety and security of its citizens. It's to that goal that these agency heads and almost 55,000 employees are dedicated.

The portfolio budget is \$6 billion, when you take into account all these various expenses. It covers everything from providing leadership to providing coordination in terms of the agencies themselves, as well as coordination of emergency services at the federal level. Of course, the portfolio delivers programs and services in all areas related to national security, emergency management, policing, law enforcement and border security, the corrections system, and crime prevention. Integrating these closely related roles and responsibilities helps to maximize not only our emergency preparedness throughout the country to natural disasters and security emergencies, but also the very issues of safety and security upon which our citizens rely.

Public safety is a co-responsibility of government, and as recent events have shown us, terrorism is a problem to address here in our own country and in fact around the world.

Accountability is also a priority. That's why, indeed, we're looking at the expenditures that are identified in these estimates to be implemented, and I look to you for your input, your questions, and your guidance on those.

As you're aware, the government is making additional changes that will not be reflected in these particular estimates, but will be reflected in the further supplementary estimates.

Budget 2006 provides a clear indication of where the government intends to go on the whole issue in the areas of public safety and security.

•(1535)

[Translation]

Since taking over this portfolio, I have met with some of the men and women working in the area of public safety. I have visited correctional institutions, RCMP detachments and land border crossings. I have been to the Government Operations Centre, participated in a briefing session given by CSIS officials, and attended a demonstration of Canada's urban search and rescue capacity in Calgary.

[English]

I've had the opportunity to visit many of our various facilities related to these portfolio items and these agencies. I've visited many corrections facilities, as well as RCMP posts and key operational elements of the RCMP, from the DNA centre to our National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre, to various facilities across the country. I've spent a fair bit of time at our border entries—land, air, and sea. I've been briefed by CSIS officials, and in fact officials from all agencies, in terms of our state of preparedness both for emergencies and in dealing with the security issues that face me on a daily basis.

I'm not the only one in government, indeed, who has visited these facilities. I make those invitations open to any of you, of course. My parliamentary secretary, Mr. Dave MacKenzie, has been instrumental in assisting and advising me and also in taking a very significant role in this whole area of public safety and security.

I can say that, without exception, what I have found when I have spent time at any of these particular agencies out on the front lines is dedicated, hard-working people who believe strongly in what they're doing. They see this as important and necessary work. I'm proud to be associated with the some 55,000 employees across the country who are committed in their area of expertise to our safety and to our security.

We've taken on a number of initiatives, which I can address during the question time. I'd like to touch for a few moments on the main estimates and the highlights. This is the projected spending for the department and the portfolio agencies for 2006-07.

In terms of the department itself—this isn't the broad portfolio, but just the department itself—with some 850 full-time equivalents in the 2006-07 budget of \$458 million, that's increase of 6.3%

There has also been an increase of \$22.9 million for the renewal of the expanded national crime prevention strategy. That brings their total to \$47.4 million.

Funding for the first nations policing program would increase by \$6.3 million.

For the Canada Border Services Agency, with some 12,348 full-time equivalents in the 2006-07 budget, that will be approximately \$1.3 billion. That's a 26.6% increase, reflecting our commitment to the integrity of our borders, a \$271.8 million increase in funding for CBSA to improve border security by strengthening the presence at the border, to respond to the increased staff requirements resulting from the redevelopment of Pearson International Airport, and to address employee health and safety concerns and to build a solid foundation for the new agency.

In terms of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, CSIS, there are some 2,449 full-time equivalents for the 2006-07 budget of \$346.1 million. That's an 18.5% increase, again reflecting our concern related to the capacity and the strength of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, \$54 million of which will help CSIS to keep pace with constantly evolving technology—and as you can imagine, in the area of information gathering this is very important; as well as to enhance the service's ability to collect national security

intelligence abroad; and to operate the Integrated Threat Assessment Centre.

For the RCMP, there are some 25,263 full-time equivalents. Obviously that's not all officers on the front lines; it also includes the administrative support. The 2006-07 budget of \$2 billion is an increase of 11.5%, again reflecting the government's commitment to increased security on our streets, in our cities and our towns. The funds are primarily for contract policing services and the real-time identification project.

Correctional Service Canada has some 14,829 full-time equivalent employees. For the 2006-07 budget, that's \$1.7 billion. That reflects an increase of 7%, \$27.5 million of which is going to be for capital projects that have been delayed from previous years, and \$15.7 million for two projects under the strengthening community safety and the effective corrections initiatives.

The National Parole Board has 465 full-time equivalents, and \$43.1 million is allotted to them in the 2006-07 budget. That's an increase of 35.5%, \$11.3 million of which is going to address some of the chronic underfunding and a growing workload, including \$1.5 million for victims of crime, and \$600,000 of that was provided for workload increases.

● (1540)

The Canada Firearms Centre has been the responsibility of this portfolio. As you know, the government has made a promise to Canadians to eliminate the long gun registry and to reinvest those savings into crime prevention, more officers on the street, programs that will assist youth, and other areas.

I also want to remind members that we were talking about bringing in the amnesty, which we've actually done. The amnesty is in place for unrestricted long guns. I know there's been a concern related to the files that are available to police officers when they are on the front lines. The requirement is still in place and will remain in place. Anyone who wants to possess or purchase a firearm must have a firearm licence of one of two sorts. You still must have a licence. That will still be a fact of life. An officer, who is pulling up to a domicile and checking on the possibility of firearms, will know if the persons resident there in fact have firearm licences. We are also maintaining the safe storage provisions and the safety course requirement. The handgun registry stays in place, as does the registry for prohibitive and restrictive weapons.

The annual operating budget for the program has been reduced by \$10 million, and of course, as you know, responsibility for it is being transferred to the RCMP.

[Translation]

I will now talk about the estimates.

Security is obviously one of the government's priorities. We have announced spending of \$1.4 billion over two years to protect families and communities in Canada, provide border security and improve our preparation time to deal with threats to public health.

• (1545)

[English]

There is \$1.4 billion over two years going towards protecting Canadian families and communities, securing our borders, increasing our ability to be prepared for public health threats and other emergencies; a \$161 million increase over the next two years for our commitment to hiring 1,000 RCMP officers, and \$37 million for the RCMP to expand its national training academy in Regina; \$101 million over the next two years to begin arming and training our border officers and to reduce instances where border officers are working alone; \$303 million will be invested over two years to improve the flow of low-risk traffic of goods and people and, at the same time, targeting high-risk travellers and goods. Secure borders are a goal we will achieve, but we also want to make sure that good access for low-risk travellers and low-risk goods is also achieved. If you have security but you don't have prosperity with it, then you have failed in your goal. We plan to achieve both of those goals. There is \$95 million over two years to bolster security for rail and urban transit; Transport Canada will take the lead on those.

There is \$20 million for crime prevention activities that target youth at risk by providing them with positive alternatives to violence, drugs, and gangs. Victims of crime will be supported by an additional investment of \$26 million. There will be \$19 million per year to improve Canada's capacity to manage emergencies of all kinds; \$5 million a year to enhance the national exercise and training program; and \$1 million per year to fund vulnerability assessments for critical infrastructure.

[Translation]

It is vital that we continue to strengthen Canada's capacity in the areas of law enforcement, public safety, border security and emergency management in order to deal with all the security threats facing Canadians.

[English]

Mr. Chairman, it's vital that we continue to strengthen Canada's law enforcement public safety border security and emergency management capacities to deal with any and all threats to the safety and security of Canadians.

To that end, I'm respectfully asking the committee to lend its support to this spending plan. I look forward to working with you on public safety priorities, including, by the way, your consideration of the proposed emergency management act and the review of the Anti-terrorism Act.

As we look to you for questions and advice, I just want to again underline that we are served by some 55,000 employees who see safety and security provisions as a calling. They go to work every night and every day committed to the safety and security of our country. That can give us great assurance. I also feel assured by the upcoming questions and advice that I'll receive from the members on this committee.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

I believe we're ready to move to questions.

Ms. Kadis, you have the first question.

Mrs. Susan Kadis (Thornhill, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and welcome, Minister, and everyone, today.

We heard recently in the news, I think today, about the intelligence oversight committee, something very much along the lines of that proposed by the previous Liberal government, a proposal for which had been tabled prior to the government's ending. I'd just like to know a little bit more about this in terms of your timelines. I know we were considering having it modelled after the British system as opposed to the U.S. system. I'd like to have a little more detail, a little more elaboration, on timelines and direction.

Hon. Stockwell Day: An oversight committee is clearly something we want. The work that was done by parliamentarians in the last Parliament was very helpful. A lot of ground was covered. I've had some discussions with a number of individuals, some of whom were actually on that committee previously, with a variety of party affiliations.

In terms of timelines, at this point we're looking towards the fall. I don't know that we can do what we'd like to do in the remainder of this session. I was very impressed with the high degree of collegiality of members who were previously working on this, from all parties. I'm convinced that we can come up with something that's satisfactory.

Regarding your question on the British approach vis-à-vis the American, as a matter of fact the committee looked at, and we will continue to look at, a number of different models. The key factor is that members of Parliament from all parties would be able to look at certain security and intelligence information—they would be sworn to secrecy, of course, under the usual provisions of that line of work—to build confidence among all parliamentarians and among Canadians that the necessary steps are being taken to provide security, with a balanced approach of safety and security being achieved, but also carefully observing privacy rights, human rights, and individual freedoms. I look forward to moving forward on that approximate timeline.

• (1550)

Mrs. Susan Kadis: Do I have more time, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Yes, you do.

Mrs. Susan Kadis: Okay, briefly then, you referred to the arming of the border security officers. Can you also flesh out some more information on the timelines for that as well, and on how and where the new initiative will be implemented?

Hon. Stockwell Day: Thank you.

We made a commitment to have safe and secure borders. One of the things that were causing Canadians some alarm was the fact that when dangerous situations developed at the border, when they had information that possibly armed individuals were approaching a border from the United States, when maybe individuals were fleeing a crime, or maybe even planning a crime, our border officers felt they were not properly equipped. Many times that would result in their leaving their posts and other armed presence having to be called in. That, of course, is a safety and security issue, but it's also a prosperity issue, because once a border closes, especially if it's at a major border point, the lineups become considerable.

I'm going to ask Mr. Alain Jolicoeur if he would like to comment, if that's all right with the honourable member, in terms of where he sees this first emerging as the training advances, and the key spots at which you will first observe this.

Mr. Alain Jolicoeur (President, Canada Border Services Agency): Thank you.

We're planning to arm approximately 5,000 of our officers. They'll be mainly along the land border, but also in marine ports. This will also include some of our officers who have to conduct investigations inland. The plan to deploy those armed officers, as the minister said, will start at the border crossings that are most important to us, where the volume of traffic is the highest. Before we can do that, we are now working with our people through a task force involving the union, developing all of the policies and the training that are required for that. The development of the contents of the training package is fairly advanced, but those first steps need to be carried out before we deploy people. We also have a project to procure some of that training for the first phase through existing schools, and then will have training inside our own facility in Rigaud, Quebec.

We'll see the first group of 150 armed officers being deployed in those more important crossings probably in the fall of 2007. This plan needs to be refined, and we're working on doing that at the moment. We're moving toward a complete deployment of about 5,000 people in the following years.

The Chair: Could we have Monsieur Ménard or Ms. Freeman, please?

Monsieur Ménard, go ahead, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Minister, the budget for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police is being increased. How many new positions will result from this increase? It appears that the additional spending will amount to \$214,371,000.

Hon. Stockwell Day: Our promise is to add 1,000 officers over the next four or five years. The estimates contain \$161 million for that purpose.

I would like to ask Commissioner Zaccardelli to tell us which regions and levels these officers will be assigned to.

• (1555)

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli (Commissioner, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Chairman, the funding that has been allocated will enable us to hire 1,000 police officers at the federal level. We need to make a clear distinction between contracts with the provinces and territories and the work that we do at the federal level. We will begin this deployment next year.

Right now, we are in the process of determining where we will deploy all these resources. The choice will be determined by the information that we collect. We want to make sure as well that the deployment is focused on regions where the most threatening organizations are active, particularly at the federal level, which

means that we will be using most of these resources to fight organized crime.

Organized crime in Canada affects the whole country, but there are major organizations in Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia and the other provinces. According to our information right now, most of the deployment will take place in Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia. However, there will be some deployment in other regions, in the west and the east as well.

No final decision has been made regarding how the new staff will be distributed.

Mr. Serge Ménard: My question was simpler than that. In fact, I wanted to know how many positions you could get with this increase. But I understand from your answer that you will begin next year to hire the 1,000 officers that had been promised.

A number of people have pointed out that you are not even able to fill the positions when police officers leave. Do you really believe that you will be able to fill the vacant positions and hire 1,000 new police officers?

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli: Mr. Chairman, I can assure you that there are enough spaces at Depot Division to train 1,600 cadets this year. So we will be able to fill all the vacant positions and increase our staff, using the budget that has been allocated to us.

Mr. Serge Ménard: Mr. Jolicoeur, I believe that you will be hiring 500 armed customs officers.

Mr. Alain Jolicoeur: If I may correct you, there will be 5,000 armed officers, but most of them will be employees who are already on staff.

Mr. Serge Ménard: Can you guarantee that the training that will be provided to them will be equivalent to what is given to Canadian police officers, not only with respect to the handling of firearms, but also the progressive use of force and alternatives to using lethal weapons?

Mr. Alain Jolicoeur: Thank you for your question. This is a major concern for our organization as well. At the beginning, when we looked into the issue, we naively thought that a short, easy training session of about one week would be enough. But we worked with the Quebec Police Institute in Nicolet and the training centre for departmental employees who use firearms, the DHS in the United States. We acquired the expertise we needed to set up a course. The course will contain the components found in courses for police officers. We went over the structure with the RCMP to be sure that nothing was missing. The course will last three weeks. It will include these components as well as others on ethics, legal aspects and the consequences of using firearms.

• (1600)

Mr. Serge Ménard: Do you really think that in three weeks—

[*English*]

The Chair: Monsieur Ménard, a brief question.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Ménard: I will go directly to something else.

Minister, I will not discuss whether or not the amnesty program is justified, but I would like to talk about the cost, since we are considering your estimates. I have heard estimates that your reimbursement costs might be around \$120 million over five years. What is your own assessment of how much it will cost to reimburse registration fees that have already been paid?

Hon. Stockwell Day: According to my information, just for those who have renewed their permit, the cost would be about \$19 million.

Mr. Serge Ménard: What about the others?

[English]

The Chair: Your time is up, Monsieur Ménard.

[Translation]

Hon. Stockwell Day: It is for people who are eligible.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Comartin, if you're prepared.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Minister, for being here. I apologize for being late, but I was in the House giving a speech on the other crime bill.

With regards to the question Mr. Ménard just asked, the estimate we've been hearing is that if you took away the long gun registry, you would save about \$2 million to \$3 million, because the registry for restricted weapons would still be needed and would stay there, and all of the computer access that we have from the police forces around the country would remain. All of those costs would remain, as you'd have to have the services available for that checking.

Is that information not accurate?

Hon. Stockwell Day: I think we need to take a couple of steps back and look at the big picture, and then zero in specifically on the amount you talked about.

The \$2 million figure resonates in an ominous way, because that was given to us back in about 1996 as being the total cost of the entire program. Actually, at first, when the program was initiated, we were told it was going to be revenue neutral and was going to cost \$2 million. I know you shared the concerns when costs skyrocketed. The recent report of the Auditor General put the costs, if you include this year's costs, at just over \$1 billion.

Some improvements were made in administration over time, thankfully. The cost of running the entire program is estimated right now to be about \$83 million. We have identified, through the hard work of people at the Firearms Centre, approximately \$10 million in administrative savings. Now that it moves over to the RCMP, they may well come up with other cost savings, because of their former expertise in that particular area.

When you look at eliminating the long run registry itself, this was a portion of the program that was very expensive, and also unreliable, according to the Auditor General. She said that the data were not reliable.

Mr. Joe Comartin: The data on restricted weapons are also unreliable.

Hon. Stockwell Day: That is possibly true also. However, we don't feel that the restricted firearms should also be deregistered. We

feel it's appropriate that every effort is maintained to verify the accuracy and to see if there are some questions there about reliability.

Other costs that are never taken into account would be the possible cost of trying to maintain follow-up on somebody who has, for instance.... As we know, because of the unreliability of data, you could be subject to a variety of legal sanctions if the data registered in the firearm licence centre wasn't correct. So it's very difficult to estimate the costs that this has and could continue to run. To maintain a program that is simply not efficient, and we're talking about the cataloguing of the unregistered long guns, when we should be directing our resources certainly into hand guns, where we see an increasing problem with gang-related activity.... Any savings that we can achieve by deflecting savings on the long gun registry to crime prevention using a variety of methods are worth doing.

Also, keep in mind that all of the other provisions still remain. The hand gun registry is still in place, restrictive firearms still in place, and the requirement to have a licence if you're going to possess a firearm is still on the registry. As I indicated in my opening remarks, a police officer approaching a house and wondering, in fact, if there is the possibility of firearms present would still have that indication, because that would be on a person's file.

And also keep in mind, as I close it out on your good question there, Joe, the harsh reality is that people of criminal intent rarely, if ever, register their firearms.

• (1605)

Mr. Joe Comartin: Commissioner Zaccardelli, now that it's transferred over to you, has the RCMP initiated any kind of an analysis of the costs and the savings, just of the long gun registry?

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli: We're in the process of a complete review and audit of the registry. We are clearly looking for savings in a number of areas, simply by being able to integrate some of their programs with the existing programs, so we expect to see some clear savings there by the economies of scale and so on. On the specific long barrel guns, we have not done anything and we haven't any specific information on that. We will clearly be looking in all areas to possibly make some savings here in terms of managing the registry.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Do you have any sense of timelines for that analysis to be completed?

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli: I've given the instructions to my audit team to do it as quickly as possible. I'm reluctant to give you a timeline, but I would like to, in the next couple of months, have a clear report on where we're at, sir.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Mr. Minister, on the issue of the oversight committee, are we going to see the legislation in the spring or in the fall?

Hon. Stockwell Day: That was just asked. You were attending your duties in the House of Commons and missed that. I'd like to see it move ahead in the fall. I don't want to state right here that that's absolutely when it's going to happen, but I'm hoping the agenda will be sufficiently open to do that.

I also indicated to the previous questioner on this that there was a very solid input from all members who were involved in that committee. I know you have some particular interest there. So a lot of it is well advanced. I'm hoping that with the briefing material that will be sent out to members who will be looking at this, everybody can make sure they're up to speed, and we can just deal with some of the issues of concern that haven't been fully addressed before.

Mr. Joe Comartin: We had have a very extensive consultation process in the last round. Are you proposing to initiate that before you table the bill?

Hon. Stockwell Day: I don't want to go over ground that's already been covered, but I want what you found out in your previous consultation available to everybody. I'm not anticipating redoing all that. I think you did good work on that before.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Brown.

Mr. Gord Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank all of our witnesses and the minister for coming today. I think it's great that we have the heads of all of our public safety agencies here today. I think I can speak on behalf of all Canadians to thank them for their role in thwarting this alleged threat that we had on the weekend. You can understand why I used the word "alleged", but it's great that we saw such success.

I happen to represent a border riding south of Ottawa, on the St. Lawrence River. I have some real interest in the Canadian Border Services Agency, so I welcome this opportunity to ask a few questions of the president, Mr. Jolicoeur.

The first one is about your marine enforcement unit in Halifax, specifically. Do you have a boat for that enforcement unit?

Mr. Alain Jolicoeur: Do we have a boat?

Mr. Gord Brown: Yes.

Mr. Alain Jolicoeur: We have very few boats in the organization. The reason is that currently the way we conduct inspections—except in special circumstances where we have concerns, say, about the crew—is that we mainly inspect containers. We need to have special facilities to scan those containers, and when we feel there is a need to open them, we need to have a building in which to empty those containers. So most of our work is done on land. We do not really have a responsibility beyond the ports of entry themselves. Other agencies have that responsibility. So fundamentally, that's how we do our business.

●(1610)

Mr. Gord Brown: Your lookout system is of great interest to me, because we've heard a lot recently about situations when there have been work refusals. Some of that may have been related to the fact that our service agents were not armed, and of course, the government has announced a change in the budget, and I commend the minister for pushing that through. I know that a lot of the agents who happen to live in my riding are very happy about that.

There is this whole business of the lookout system and the fact that it has led to some work refusals. Can you confirm that avoiding

work refusals is not something that's considered when deciding who should be on that lookout list?

Mr. Alain Jolicoeur: There is absolutely no relationship at all. The work stoppage situation was related to employees feeling vulnerable because there was information that somebody dangerous might come in at a border point, and as you say, not being armed, our officers felt vulnerable. We've had situations like that, and we might have more of those situations, because we will not be able to have completely deployed armed operations for many years.

The question of the lookout and information that's available to our officers is a very complex one. Many pieces of information are analyzed by people who are behind the border, who are in some specific centres across the country—intelligence officers—and we also have a national risk assessment centre. And that's where the information is analyzed. It uses input from our sister agencies in the field of security. It uses input from the police on occasion, and very often, in fact every day, input from similar agencies in the U.S.

All that information is analyzed, and using that information and also the commercial information we get, and pulling that together, is how decisions are made about looking at somebody in particular, looking at a container in particular, or worrying, because of safety considerations, about one individual or another. But it has absolutely nothing to do with being worried about work stoppages.

Mr. Gord Brown: I'll wind up with one more question to you. I want to mix it up a little bit.

Is it true that persons described as armed and dangerous and wanted by the FBI as terrorists, for example, who have some Canadian connection are not in the lookout system?

Mr. Alain Jolicoeur: The difficulty in answering that is in speaking strictly of the lookout system. As I was saying, the information that's available to our people when we do screening or when we face one individual comes from different databases. Some of them, for example, are in the immigration database, where we would have flagged them, in the example you gave, as wanted. That information would be in there and would be available.

There are different subcategories. One of them, which I presume is the one that triggered your concern, is the subcategory of individuals we want, but who we also want you to know are particularly dangerous. So if we have on our lists, in our system, one individual we are looking for, a match with that individual will or will not be made depending on the situation, whether it's a dangerous person or not.

●(1615)

Mr. Gord Brown: Thank you.

I want to mix it up just a little bit. I want to ask a question of Commissioner Coulter. It has to do with the number of non-citizens who are in federal custody or on conditional release and how much it's costing us to keep them in there.

Mr. Keith Coulter (Commissioner, Correctional Service Canada): I don't have the number with me today. We could get you that information, if you want.

Mr. Gord Brown: Thank you.

Is that all for me?

The Chair: Yes, your time is up.

We now move to five-minute rounds.

Mr. Cotler.

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I too want to welcome the minister and his colleagues. I share the view of the minister that, as he put it, he is assisted by dedicated, hard-working people who are committed to the protection of our safety and security. We share that characterization.

Recently, Mr. Chairman, the CSIS deputy director, Jack Hooper, told a Senate committee that CSIS was able to screen only 10% of immigrants coming to Canada from the region of Pakistan and Afghanistan. The quote was: "We're in a position to vet one-tenth of those." When asked if that meant CSIS was not satisfied about the 90% of immigrants coming from that region, Mr. Hooper replied, "Correct."

Shortly thereafter, Minister, in a letter to the Sun Media, you asserted that CSIS screens 100% of the immigrants referred to the intelligence agency. Can you explain the apparent contradiction between your remarks and those of Mr. Hooper?

Hon. Stockwell Day: Yes, I welcome the opportunity to do that, as I did in the letter that you just referenced.

I was concerned that subsequent media reports were giving the perception that of all the people arriving on our shores, only 10% were getting any kind of screening. In fact, 100% of all individuals who arrive here in Canada—100% of them—are screened in some way, right from the point of their arrival. Of that entire group, there are a couple of groups that CSIS looks at—first of all, those who are applying for and requesting permanent resident status. CSIS looks at 100% of those individuals.

Also, there are times when, for a variety of reasons, a particular Border Services officer or some other officer may have a concern and wants further screening to take place by CSIS. Of those who are referred to CSIS for further screening, they do 100%.

Those two groupings right there represent about 10% of all the people who are arriving.

So we want to just make it clear that it's 100%. Nobody just arrives in Canada and waltzes through a gate without being looked at in some way, shape, or form. The 10% figure gives you an idea of what percentage of all those arriving here are looked at by CSIS. One hundred percent of these are looked at by CSIS.

Hon. Irwin Cotler: I would pursue this line of questioning, but I want to ask another question. With limited time, I will go to the second question.

CSIS has both a limited foreign intelligence mandate and a security intelligence mandate. In recent years the security intelligence mandate has been interpreted to allow it more latitude to engage in activities outside of Canada, activities that appear to be more than just liaison with other similar agencies for limited purposes. Recently it was stated that CSIS may have as many of 50 of its staff engaged in activities outside of Canada.

Can you describe for us the mandate of CSIS with respect to its activities outside of Canada and include what types of activities it engages in as part of this mandate? Second, are there procedures in place requiring approval by the director and the minister for such activities outside of Canada?

Hon. Stockwell Day: First, I'll obviously not get into operational details, for obvious security reasons. The director may be at liberty to put out certain numbers, and I'll leave that up to his discretion.

On the broad question, right now under the CSIS Act, CSIS, its employees and its agents, can acquire and gather information outside of Canada if it is directly affecting Canada. Anything that is gathered, anything that is accumulated, is done according to the CSIS Act and according to all of the laws and provisions that we have. Information that is gathered and requires extra capability, anything that is done along those lines, is also done within the act, within the law, respecting what Canadians would value in terms of privacy, human rights, and elements related to that.

Clearly, whether we're talking about CSIS or the RCMP, or various policing forces—though I wouldn't be responsible for, say, the municipal forces directly—when it comes to intelligence gathering and certain types of surveillance, certain types of invasive procedures, all have to be signed off by me and also by a Federal Court judge—the reasons for it, the length of time that certain provisions and certain capabilities will be required—and those are subject to review and subject to Canadian law.

• (1620)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Ms. Freeman, for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): As you know, the government has tabled Bill C-9 in the House, which deals mainly with conditional sentencing. Minister Day would like to do away with the option that judges have to impose conditional sentences. According to Justice officials, this measure would affect 15,000 people in Canada right now, of whom one third would be expected to go to jail immediately because of the special conditions of their house arrest. Can you tell me to what extent the Correctional Service is prepared to deal with the bill if it is passed? How much would this cost?

Hon. Stockwell Day: That is an interesting question, since there are experts who can give us their estimate of the increase that would result in the number of criminals and people affected by the change in the law. It is difficult to come up with an accurate estimate, since we do not know whether these changes will affect how criminals think. We are aware, however, that we will see an increase in the number of people incarcerated as a result of this change. That is why the estimates include funding to build another medium security institution and more maximum security institutions if necessary. As I mentioned, the exact number is difficult to estimate. We will be looking into it, and I certainly hope that we will see a decrease in the number of people wanting to commit crimes over time. If that does not happen, if there is no decrease and we see an increase, we will be prepared to build more institutions using this funding.

Mrs. Carole Freeman: If I understand your answer correctly, if this bill were passed immediately, 5,000 people out of 15,000 would already be affected. As a result, you are not prepared to deal with these 5,000 people in your correctional institutions right now. You are prepared to earmark funding, but these 5,000 people may not be incarcerated. You would not be able to enforce—

Hon. Stockwell Day: It is not just in the prisons where we will see an increase. After people get out of prison, there are other ways in the community to serve them. That is why it is difficult to give an estimate.

We are confident that, with this funding and professionals, we will be able to provide services for criminals and communities.

• (1625)

Mrs. Carole Freeman: Very well.

I would like to ask two other questions, if I have time. Do I have more than one minute left?

[English]

The Chair: One minute.

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Freeman: I have one question for Mr. Jim Judd, but I am afraid that he will tell me that it is a security question and that he cannot answer me, once again.

I will go to a question that Mr. Day will surely be able to answer.

Nine RCMP detachments in Quebec were closed. Can you tell me whether they will be opened, when that will happen and how?

Hon. Stockwell Day: Two weeks ago, I met with—

Mrs. Carole Freeman: —the mayors of municipalities?

Hon. Stockwell Day: Yes. I asked them what pressures they were under, what their concerns were and what they wanted to have done. I noted down what they told me and I explained to them that I would look into this with the RCMP to see how we could deal with their concerns. I am in the process of doing that. I received the information from the mayors and I made a promise—

Mrs. Carole Freeman: Yes, because the mayors are very keen.

Hon. Stockwell Day: Yes, they are very keen. I am pleased to see that.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll have to move over to Mr. Hawn.

Thank you.

[Translation]

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Minister, for being here. I also wish to thank the other witnesses for attending.

I would like to ask you some questions on intelligence gathering in security, police and military operations.

Good information is key to the success of any operation.

[English]

Specifically on CSIS, right now there are 2,449 members. I'm interested in how big it used to be and how big you see it becoming with the addition, hopefully, in my view, of some robust foreign intelligence capability.

Hon. Stockwell Day: In terms of how large it will get, there are some combining pressures there. The director obviously brings the needs to government and what he sees as being the requirements for the future. Some of that will obviously be determined by the final resolution of the question in terms of increasing foreign intelligence capacity: do we go with expanding the capacity of CSIS itself or do we look at the formation of a new agency? That will depend on the input from this committee and the input from our fellow parliamentarians. It's difficult to make that kind of prediction until parliamentarians have made a collective decision on which way we're going.

I'll also ask the director if he can reflect on growth over the years, where it's been—you've already mentioned the FTEs today—and where he sees it going. Of course, he knows that his request for more resources always falls on very interested ears, but the guarantee of receiving all those in their total fulfillment is another issue.

Mr. Jim Judd (Director, Canadian Security Intelligence Service): Just let me check my numbers, if I could, Mr. Chairman.

To give you an idea of the change in size, 15 years ago the organization had about 2,750 people; five years ago, pre-9/11, it hit a low of 2,000; and post-9/11 it has grown by about 300 personnel.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: With what's been going on recently—and obviously the recent operation was a success, thanks to the organizations we have here—do you see any changes in the coordination of intelligence between the RCMP, CSIS, local police forces, foreign intelligence services, military intelligence? There are a lot of people who need to be touched in all those things to get a complete picture. With what we've learned in the last little while—and I'm not just talking about last weekend—do you see any changes, and without getting into classified information, what those changes might be?

• (1630)

Hon. Stockwell Day: I'll ask either the director of CSIS or the RCMP commissioner to reflect more specifically. I can tell you that in general we all know there's been a concern in the past ten or fifteen years about information sharing and operational sharing between the two agencies. I was assured by both of these gentlemen and their colleagues that the information sharing had reached a very high stage of cooperation and collaboration, but that, whether it was fair or not, there were concerns ten or fifteen years ago about people operating in silos and not sharing information.

I can't reflect on the veracity of those concerns then, but I am very confident about the level of information sharing that goes on now, and not just between these agencies but also with CBSA and our various border agencies.

As a matter of fact, in this last operation, though it doesn't reflect directly on these estimates, the number of officers from RCMP, CSIS, CBSA, and local policing forces was very impressive and required a high degree of coordination and information sharing. I can say with confidence that not just the information sharing itself but the desire to make sure information is shared for the security of Canadians is a real priority for these agencies.

If any of them want to reflect more specifically, they may feel free to do so.

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli: I think Canada is an example to the world, and this past weekend was simply one more demonstration. There is always room for improvement, but I can assure you, and you saw it in this operation, there is tremendous collaboration and sharing, not reluctantly but willingly. There is a seamlessness in this country that is in my view the envy of the world.

The Chair: The time is up.

The minister asked if anybody else had comments. No? Okay.

We'll have to come back to you.

Ms. Sgro.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Minister, I'm glad to see you here, and my thanks to the other officials. I'm well aware of the amount of coordination that is going on and has been going on for some time now between all our various officials in keeping Canada and our neighbour safe.

Given the events of this past weekend and some concerns you're clearly hearing from our U.S. neighbours, what are you doing to deal with the issues in and around the media of scaremongering to some degree over there? But we've always had ongoing issues involving concerns about the safety of our borders.

Can you tell me, Mr. Zaccardelli, and you as the minister, what else is being done, given the events of this past weekend, to assure the U.S. about what competent organizations we have working in conjunction with others to ensure the safety of Canadians and our neighbours?

Hon. Stockwell Day: I'm glad you raised that, Ms. Sgro, because what certain individuals will say south of the border, and of course how it gets broadcast, is an area that has concerned me.

To take just the last two weeks, for instance, it has been gratifying, in looking at the U.S. administration from the President on down, to see them reflecting on their confidence in Canada as their neighbour and in our capabilities when it comes to security and borders. They have expressed a very high level of confidence.

We heard that from the White House. We heard very positive comments from Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice; she specifically reflected on border integrity and their confidence in that area. I was in discussions again today, and a couple of times over the last few days, with the head of Homeland Security in the United States, Secretary Michael Chertoff. We talked about the confidence they have in Canadian capabilities when it comes to security, and specifically when it comes to borders. I received a call from Attorney

General Gonzales yesterday or the day before with the very same message.

This expression of confidence is from their highest levels. That's why it's frustrating for us, obviously, when an individual in the United States who is not fully aware of the high degree of professionalism, let's say, and the high degree of accomplishment of our own security forces, comes out with statements—I'm trying to maintain an air of diplomacy here—that are absolutely unfounded in fact and that create a bit of a stir.

The Leader of the Opposition the other day asked questions along these lines. In one of his questions he asked—and I think it was a fair question, but I was rather chuckling because he was asking—what we were going to do to control the media in the United States, who zero in.... I think the Leader of the Opposition quite rightly was saying that he recognizes the high quality of professionalism in security we provide here in Canada. He was asking what we were going to do to control these media, and I was thinking, we can't control the media in Canada; I don't know how we're going to do it in the United States.

• (1635)

Hon. Judy Sgro: And we would never want to control the media.

Hon. Stockwell Day: Of course not. In a democratic society, we want absolute freedom of the press at all times, and we celebrate that.

But I can tell you that each time it's raised we don't just dismiss it. First of all, there could be an individual who doesn't have full information. There may be the motivation, as there is on the political side, with pressure from constituents, to send out certain messages. In each one of those cases, calls are made either by me or, if it's a matter of foreign affairs, by Minister MacKay, right to the key individual, saying, "This has popped up again. Could you deal with it?" When we've made those calls, there's always been a degree of angst expressed by high-level officials, who have said, "We don't know. It's unfortunate that on an individual basis this continues to come out."

Myths easily spin out. You'll recall that after the devastation, after the tragic events of 9/11, one of the first stories that came out within 24 hours was that the terrorists had crossed the border into Maine from Canada. There was absolutely no substance, not a shred of truth to that, and yet when a story like that first spins out, it grabs headlines. The correction was later made, and even the Americans corrected it and said, "No, you're right". We reminded them that actually those people were from within their borders. They trained at their flight schools, not ours.

So it's a problem we have, Ms. Sgro. It's one that is frustrating. I met Congresswoman Slaughter, who I think at this very moment is testifying here in Canada for the Senate committee on banking. She is working with us very closely on some of the WHTI concerns. She is just as frustrated when her own counterparts come out with messages like that. She, along with her other comrades and colleagues, is going to be aggressively pursuing that.

So I'm glad you raised it. We get aggressive on it when we hear it. It is difficult to control once a misguided statement is made and then amplified by the media. Corrections are made, but it does send out a perception that just has no foundation in reality.

The Chair: Mr. Norlock, go ahead, please.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Thank you and the officials with you, Minister, for coming here today and for filling us in on your department. I think you know my background is in policing, not with the RCMP but with another one of Canada's major police forces.

The question I have for you is with regard to the increase in numbers of police. Will provincial police and municipal police forces see in the allocation of this funding some resources to increase their human resources, which of course are in need also?

Hon. Stockwell Day: Yes, we made a commitment in the election campaign, which we are going to fulfill, that there would be allocation, on a cost-shared basis with municipalities, for provision of an extra 2,500 officers at the municipal level. That is separate from and above the 1,000 to which the RCMP has committed.

As I meet with municipal and provincial officials, we're just starting that engagement process to look at their ideas on this cost-sharing approach. The commitment is there for 2,500 extra officers at the municipal level over the next four years.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you.

I have one other quick question. There's been a promise of a national victims' ombudsman office. I wonder how you see that coming about. Is that coming soon, or is that in your plan?

Hon. Stockwell Day: The area of victims of crime is something that we are clearly seized with. I think I mentioned in my remarks an increase in funding related to victims of crime. The ombudsman's office provision is something we're looking at. I don't know if I have the details of timelines right here, but among the initiatives that we're undertaking for victims of crime, including an increase in the compensation fund, we're also looking at that. I just can't give you a date on that right at this moment.

• (1640)

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you.

The Chair: Are you're finished, Mr. Norlock?

We'll then move to Mr. Chan.

Hon. Raymond Chan (Richmond, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome to the minister and his colleagues, many of whom I have worked with before on different occasions. I also thank the minister for the meeting that he granted me when I was the critic on his file. I have since moved on, but this file is a very important one for British Columbia, and particularly for my riding.

I have three questions, Minister, and the first is on the gun registry.

We had the former firearms chief as a witness, and also the person in charge of the Canada Firearms Centre in the Ministry of Justice was with us last week. Through the discussions we had, we came to the conclusion that the savings would be minimal. Our estimate on the outside would be less than \$3 million or \$4 million, which is significantly less than the \$10 million you talk about. The major reason is that the long gun registry is an integrated part of the overall registry, in which the shot guns, handguns, and long guns are in one system.

Also, when I chatted with you at the table about the figures submitted today, there's no significant saving between the year 2005-06 to the year 2006-07. So I would like to ask you, Minister, is the estimation of \$10 million accurate?

Because the Auditor General also said that since 2002 the firearms monitoring system has been under control, many of us in this committee feel that cancelling the long gun registry is not a smart move.

I look forward to your answer.

Hon. Stockwell Day: Time will tell whose figure is most accurate. The immediate savings of \$10 million was identified for us by the former person in charge of the Canada Firearms Centre, Mr. Bill Baker. I think he was here. He identified at least \$10 million in savings. As indicated before, the RCMP, although they haven't put an actual figure on it, will be looking for increased savings too. So when you look at our four- or five-year budget projections, a saving of \$50 million is significant.

On our overall policy on the monitoring system, maintaining a part of the program that simply is not functioning correctly is an exercise in futility. I don't want to stretch the Auditor General's remarks beyond any intent she had, but when she says that data is unreliable, and when she pointed out that the computer system.... As you will recall, there was an initial system that was contracted. That system proved to be deficient, apparently. It couldn't keep up with the registrations. We're talking about registering some seven million pieces of equipment—long guns, and of course, handguns are included in that. The first system could not handle that load or, apparently, the complexity of it, so a second system was contracted. At the time of the Auditor General's report, and to this date, the second system could not accommodate what had to be done, so they went back to using the first system while paying out huge amounts of money for that second system.

By eliminating the requirement to register the unrestricted long guns, we're going to take a significant load off the system itself. I can't speak right now to the operational end if the RCMP decides to go with the original system, which is in fact being used, but whichever one they're going to use, the load is going to be significantly lighter and it will have the capability to be far more accurate with respect to the other firearms elements, the handgun registry for instance, and restricted and prohibited firearms.

Once you've taken out these other several million pieces of equipment, if you want to call them that—incidentally, the Auditor General also reflected on the verification process: is it truly this specific firearm, does it have that type of capability, and is it that calibre?—we can really focus on the area of licensing for those who want to acquire, hold, or buy firearms, and on the areas where we see the greatest increase in terms of criminal activity, homicides with handguns having gone up over the last two years.

Next year, should we still be here in this present form of government, and should the Prime Minister still deign to have me in this position, either he'll be able to look at me and say, see, it was only \$3.4 million, or I'll be able to look at you and say it was \$10 million plus. We'll find out then. Either way, it's a lot of money. I remember somebody saying once—and it wasn't from anybody around this table—"Well, a million dollars here, a million dollars there, pretty soon we're going to be talking about real money." I think \$1 million is a lot of money any day of the week, and \$10 million is even more, and over five years, what you could do with \$50 million in terms of policing and crime prevention programs is significant.

• (1645)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. MacKenzie, you have the floor.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Minister, I wonder if, through you, I could ask Mr. Zaccardelli if he could clarify something that we frequently hear, particularly from those who are opposed to getting rid of the long gun registry. We hear numbers of 5,000 hits a day on the current registry. Can the commissioner, if he knows, tell us what automatic checks are done, when a police officer does random checks on CPIC, that go to the registry, as opposed to my understanding, which is that there is not that number of direct requests for the registry.

Hon. Stockwell Day: You should just explain CPIC, too, for those who may not be familiar with the story.

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli: CPIC is a Canadian law enforcement program that came on stream in 1972—the Canadian Police Information Centre. Almost 34 years later, it is still the best system in the world. It's a remarkable system. Last year we finished a total overhaul of it, and it came in on budget and on time. I'm very proud of that. It was one of the major projects in the federal government.

In terms of the 5,000 or 6,000 hits that have been talked about in the papers, you're correct, when CPIC checks are done, there is an automatic connection to the registry. The police officer automatically does that.

I don't have the specific number, sir, of when somebody checks the registry directly. Obviously you can see the connection, because it's always good to make that check. If you do a CPIC check, it means you're checking to see if somebody has a criminal record or if there is a warrant for that person, which would automatically give you reason to be very concerned. So there is an automatic link to the registry. If there's a firearm associated with that person, if you're worried about whether there's a warrant for that person, you would want to make that connection.

So it's an automatic connection. The system was built to kick in for that double-check.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: All I'm trying to indicate to Canadians, though, is that there are not 5,000 checks a day just for firearms registry. Those are automatic checks done by police officers on the street, for names and for a variety of things.

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli: They're automatic CPIC checks that they automatically go over. I don't have the number of how many are direct checks.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Okay, I appreciate that.

Hon. Stockwell Day: Perhaps I'll just add on to that question, because it's an important issue.

In the future, when a CPIC check is done, if you are a person who has a firearm licence, that information is still going to be there. So a police officer would know that there is a possibility of firearms there, just as now they know there's a possibility, but the data are not that reliable.

As I understand it, although I am not an expert on policing, when an officer is approaching a house where a situation has been reported—and we have officers around the table, Dave MacKenzie included—there are always certain methods you put in place, assuming that there will be a firearm there, whether there is or not. That's my understanding, Commissioner.

• (1650)

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli: That's right. If there is any suspicion that there is a firearm, then certain procedures go into place.

The question of the reliability of the data is being looked at. We obviously are going to be looking at that and trying to make sure the information is absolutely reliable. It's essential for the registry to have the confidence of Canadians.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: The only other question I have, Chair, is for the minister. I think we've been a long time without a contract with the prison guards. I understand that perhaps that has been completed.

Hon. Stockwell Day: Great steps have been made, yes. I'll ask the commissioner to comment on the specifics, but we've been over four years without a contract, which is untenable.

Those officers who serve in our correctional facilities have an incredible job to do. I've visited the facilities, spent time there—visiting—and I will continue to do that. There are pressures in that vocation that are unique to any other profession. It's quite incredible to see.

We really felt that four years was just too long to have elements related to, for instance, their early retirement and also to have occupational elements not addressed. I was pleased that our Treasury Board president and others—and I congratulate the commissioner also for his input—and from those representing the union.... There was a good meeting of the minds, and it appears as though a resolution has been achieved.

I'll ask the commissioner if he wants to comment any further on that.

Mr. Keith Coulter: There isn't much more to add, really, because we have to respect the process. There's a tentative agreement. As we speak, the union leadership is out briefing the rank-and-file members. There'll be a vote later this month.

From my perspective, this was an issue that we absolutely had to get past as an organization. I started nine months ago, so we're three years and three months into this. Four years, the minister said, is too long. From my perspective, the best part of the tentative agreement, really, of all the things that are in it—and it's been publicly announced—is that the new contract would run until 2010. This would give our organization a chance to regroup, to get labour management relations in absolutely the best possible zone, and not have to go into another round of collective bargaining right away.

I have all my fingers and toes crossed that this is it and that we'll go by this problem, because as an organization we certainly have to move beyond it.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Kadis.

Mrs. Susan Kadis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

On the same line of discussion and questioning in terms of the registry and the issue of reliability of information, in our previous session with the Auditor General and former firearms commissioner, it was mentioned that approximately 7,000 affidavits have been provided by the registry to support prosecution of firearms in court proceedings. This, with other information, obviously very strong passionate information from our Canadian chief of police, and Chief Armand La Barge, the president of the Ontario chiefs of police, seems to be quite compelling in terms of being reliable, highly useful, and an integral part of their approach to enhancing safety in the community and the country.

I'd just like to get some comment on that, knowing there is no price on safety. Obviously, I'm sure we agree that there is no price on individual safety.

On this issue of reliability, I find it's very much at odds with other information. I'm not yet able to see the reconciliation of that, because I understand that essentially your government wants to kill the gun registry based on finances. We've shown that on finances there isn't great gains, and yet there is so much information that flies in the face of dismantling it.

I would ask that you comment on that in terms of the reliability of information and the usage of this information.

Hon. Stockwell Day: Thanks.

First—and I'm not suggesting your one phrase was not well intended, your comments are all well intended, and I take it that way—we are not in fact killing the gun registry. The firearms registry will be alive and well, other than the requirement to register unrestricted long guns and the requirement to continue to renew licensing. That's the only portion we're talking about.

To be honest, we've had mixed reaction from the heads of policing agencies. I don't know if I have the quotes with me, but I could send them to you. You've probably seen them; we quote them in question period from time to time. Some chiefs and others across the country are saying, good, we're glad that the long gun registry portion is being taken out of the loop; it's saves us a lot of frustration and helps us to really focus in terms of gun crime. Others have said that they wish we would leave it in place. Many of the rank-and-file frontline officers, through their various associations, have also expressed great

relief that the long gun registry portion will eventually be eliminated so they can concentrate on the handguns and on restrictive and prohibitive firearms.

I guess the debate will just continue in terms of reliability of the information. It's not only the reliability of the information, but there are tens of thousands who have been unable to effectively register their long guns either because of the system not working properly or rule changes. As I think the member knows, the first amnesty that went into place, because of the inability of the system itself to be able to properly register all the information, was in 1996 or 1997. There have been a total of eight amnesty provisions, allowing more time for people to comply with the law. A law simply cannot be seen as effective if you're asking people to do something where a huge percentage of them find it virtually impossible. And the main problem has to do with the registering of the long guns. That was why it was taken out.

Affidavits will continue to be available for measuring crime with firearms. We really think that with the ability of officers now, especially those on the street and front lines being able to focus on the things they need to focus on, that's going to be a great advancement. We think you're going to see reduced crime with firearms. There will be more crime prevention programs, more resources for crime prevention, and more officers on the street. Those are the things that really go to reducing firearms.

So, Ms. Kadis—somewhat similar to my response to your colleague when we were talking about reliability of data—time will tell just how unreliable it was. Those were the comments of the Auditor General in some areas. The reliability data was questionable. A program that's not functioning well needs to be moved to the side and the resources put to true protection of our citizens and true reduction of crime with guns.

• (1655)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Monsieur Ménard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Ménard: Minister, there has been a lot of talk about savings through the amnesty. As a result, I imagine that the amnesty was taken into account when the figures provided here were prepared. If we look at the section for the Canadian Firearms Centre, we see under "Registration, licensing and supporting infrastructure," that you expect to spend some \$78,270,000 over the next year, whereas last year this function cost \$82,284,000. So there are savings of \$4,014,000. Does that correspond to the amount that you expect to save?

Hon. Stockwell Day: Yes, but when you see the supplementary estimates this fall, you will see the difference. You will see the \$10 million. Not all of that money is reflected here.

Mr. Serge Ménard: So it is clear but not reliable. Can you tell me whether the information is both clear and reliable somewhere in these documents?

•(1700)

Mrs. Suzanne Hurtubise (Deputy Minister, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): The estimates were prepared before the government's announcement. Consequently, the \$10 million reduction will be reflected in the supplementary estimates which will be tabled by the government in the fall.

Mr. Serge Ménard: Is it really a reduction of \$10 million?

Mrs. Suzanne Hurtubise: Yes, Mr. Ménard, there will be a further \$10 million reduction. The amount for this year, which is \$83,595,000, will be reduced by \$10 million, and this will appear in the estimates this autumn, in accordance with the government's commitment.

Mr. Serge Ménard: We will see that when we get there.

On the other hand, I would like to know how the invoice for the RCMP services is drawn up for provinces who have no provincial police, which means all provinces except Quebec and Ontario.

Hon. Stockwell Day: The commissioner can give a more precise answer, but I can tell you that there are contracts. Most contracts will be renewed in 2012, but we will start negotiations with the provinces in 2007.

Mr. Serge Ménard: I would like to know on what principles you base the amount that a province must pay. How do you calculate it?

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli: According to the agreement reached by the federal government and the provinces or territories, the principle requires provinces and territories to pay 70 per cent of the cost while the federal government pays 30 per cent. There are also contracts with municipalities. If a municipality has more than 15,000 citizens, the agreement requires that the municipality pay 90 per cent and the government 10 per cent of the costs incurred by police services in general. Those are the basic principles.

Mr. Serge Ménard: All right. This has answered my second question, which was about the proportion, if it was other than 100 per cent.

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli: There's only one municipality that pays 100 per cent of these costs, which is Moncton, New Brunswick.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Moving to Mr. Comartin, do you have a question?

Mr. Joe Comartin: Ms. Hurtubise, we heard from Mr. Baker—and I don't know if it was at this committee, because he was in front of another one I was at—but the \$10 million savings had already been identified by the Canada Firearms Centre, and it had nothing to do with any savings from stripping out the long gun registry. Is that correct?

Mrs. Suzanne Hurtubise: I don't want to speak for Mr. Baker, but my understanding is that at the request of the government there was an examination of the expenditures of the Firearms Centre and a reduction in the budget. Through the analysis that Mr. Baker and his management team did, savings were found, and they will be reflected in the budget of the Firearms Centre in the supplementary budgets tabled in the fall.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Ms. Hurtubise, that doesn't answer my question.

That \$10 million in savings has nothing to do with reducing the registration of long guns. There are going to be some additional savings if that happens, but the \$10 million has already been saved. It has nothing to do with the long gun registry savings.

Mrs. Suzanne Hurtubise: My understanding is the \$10 million will happen no matter what, Mr. Comartin, and there may be additional savings.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Thank you.

Hon. Stockwell Day: I identified that in my opening remarks too, Joe, before you got here.

Mr. Joe Comartin: I apologize for that.

You may have addressed this as well. There is legislation required if you're going to strip out the long guns. If you addressed that, I apologize for asking the question.

Hon. Stockwell Day: No, I haven't addressed that one yet. Did you want to ask that question?

Mr. Joe Comartin: When are we going to see the legislation, Mr. Minister, so we can vote it down?

•(1705)

Hon. Stockwell Day: I can't guarantee. I don't control the agenda. But I would like to have that proposed legislation on the table in front of you this month, June, with time for parliamentarians to look at it and time for us to consult with others who may, through any of you, suggest improvements.

I'm hoping that. I'm not subject to controlling the agenda; we're in your hands in that particular area. But I'm hoping this June you'll see it.

Mr. Joe Comartin: My concern—just because of the democratic process—is that you'll take action to reduce the long gun registry, then lose that vote in the House, and then have to put it all back.

Have you considered how much that's going to cost?

Hon. Stockwell Day: I wouldn't—and neither would the government—be tabling legislation that we intend to have defeated. I am hoping that when you see the new legislation, sufficient numbers of members of Parliament will be convinced as to its efficacy and will support it. I can't guarantee that. There's no control, at least in our caucus, on how people vote. We'll wait and see.

I really do think a majority of MPs in the House will see this as good legislation and will support it. I hope I'm right on that.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Don't you think it would be prudent, as opposed to irresponsible, to wait until the vote takes place before you start stripping the long gun registry out of the firearms registry?

Hon. Stockwell Day: It had to be dealt with immediately for the reason that literally tens of thousands of people were, for a variety of reasons, not able to comply with the law as we have it now. My feeling is that it's an untenable situation when you require people to comply, yet you don't allow the provision for them to do that. In a country like Canada, which believes in the rule of law, that is an untenable situation.

So first what we had to do—we took the lead from the previous government—was put an amnesty in place. As you know, an amnesty does not say you can avoid the law; it says you must comply with the law. We hope that by next May 17, people will be complying with the law that will be there. Time will tell if it's the new law or the old one.

We just felt it was an untenable situation to require citizens to do something that so many sources were indicating was not effective. The Auditor General raised great concerns. There were so many questions being raised. There was the whole issue of the separate 25-page report related to funding that wasn't booked in the right year. To have all that confusion out there about the efficacy of the law itself was just not tenable.

That's why the amnesty was put in place.

Mr. Joe Comartin: There's nothing in the Auditor General's report—

The Chair: We'll have to come back to you, Mr. Comartin.

Mr. Ménard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Ménard: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask a technical question. I will spare you a debate. I am withdrawing the motion I already tabled and am replacing it with this one. I was told that I really must table it. I sent it to the clerk, it was translated and the clerk has it. I'm giving you a notice of motion for the next sitting, and I have sent you that notice.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Hawn.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Ménard: Is it all right, Mr. Chairman? Was it tabled? Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, go ahead.

Mr. Hawn.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Minister Day, you said you asked for questions and also advice. Predictably, my advice to you is to keep doing what you're doing with respect to the long gun registry. I know a lot of frontline police officers in the RCMP and local police forces—as probably many of us do—and some at considerably more senior levels. I have not spoken to one who thinks that the firearms program, as it's constituted for the popular idea of its usefulness, is in fact useful. No police officer goes into any situation without assuming that there are firearms present, until proven otherwise.

My question, however, is on foreign intelligence. Will there be a significant increase—and I hope there will—in Canada's foreign intelligence gathering, in conjunction with our allies? From my point of view, the further out you can move things like intelligence and other protective measures, the better. Is there going to be a significant increase in Canada's ability to gather intelligence offshore?

Hon. Stockwell Day: We made it clear, as a campaign commitment during the election, that the capacity to gain foreign intelligence to protect Canada will be increased, and you can be confident of that.

• (1710)

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Will it be in conjunction with our traditional allies or with new allies as well?

Hon. Stockwell Day: That capacity will open up. Our various forces do information sharing, but it's at different levels, depending on the quality of the relationship we have with another country. Again, I don't know if Mr. Judd wants to comment on this further, but there are countries that wouldn't be regarded as democracies with which we still share information on a limited basis. We don't restrict it just to our allies. Of course, it's done with an understanding of the limitations you have when dealing with people whose values on human rights, individual freedoms, and rule of law are different from yours. Even at those levels in those countries, where it's possible, there's information sharing.

I don't know if Mr. Judd wants to comment on that further.

Mr. Jim Judd: We do occasionally require information from countries, such as those described by Mr. Day, and particularly if it relates very specifically to our national security interest or, as another example, to the safety and security of the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: We talked about the prison guards and obviously about the recent contract that was long overdue. Are there any other personnel issues of a similar variety that are brewing at the moment, Minister Day, within any of the areas you're responsible for?

Hon. Stockwell Day: Related to corrections?

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Not just related to corrections, but that's a big one that's hopefully been solved. Are there other personnel issues, relating to a similar kind of overdue contract situation or to difficulties brewing, that we should be aware of?

Hon. Stockwell Day: I think it's fair to say there are always human resources challenges in any organization, and those are dealt with as effectively as possible within the capacity of the various organizations. Those are always out there and always will be. Of course, they are overcome by the degree of willingness, on all parties' part, to overcome them, but that will continue and be ongoing. We hope to keep that to a minimal level in the way our various agencies approach these problems.

I'm not aware of any that have been out there as long as that four-year-plus problem. That was a long, aggravating situation. I'm not sure if there are any out there.

Does anybody else want to address this? If you have any surprises, you can tell me later.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Alain Jolicoeur: If I may, Mr. Minister, there is one issue that started a long time ago in my organization, which was the question of the safety of officers, specifically at the land border, and the arming question. I could report—and my colleagues from the union would probably say the same thing—that at the moment, there are better labour relations in our organization because of the decision on arming. That's another one where probably a difference was made.

Hon. Stockwell Day: Thank you.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: I have one question for Commissioner Coulter, if possible.

You talked about capital projects. Could you outline some of those capital projects for us? There are a number that I'm aware of from discussions I've had inside maximum security prisons for day visits also.

The Chair: That will be your final question.

Mr. Keith Coulter: We're constantly trying to update our infrastructure in a number of places. Recently we have had a major project going on at Kent Institution. We have another one going at Sask Pen. Those are the current big ones, but there is a very long list of this going on, from fairly minor construction up to significant projects.

The biggest problem we have right now as we look ahead to our future is that our population is getting a lot more complex. We have more extensive histories of violence, more mental health cases, more gang-related affiliations, and what not. The aboriginal problem is also with us in spades. It's a question of getting options and developing our infrastructure so that we're up to this future. I think one of the undertakings my colleague Don Head made when he was here was relayed this week. We can provide you with a list of ongoing infrastructure development projects, but it's a very long list.

• (1715)

The Chair: Thank you.

Hon. Stockwell Day: If I could add to that point, Chair, with a supplementary, different members of Parliament from all sides of the House have expressed interest to me that within their constituency, if they feel there's going to be an increased need for capacity, their particular constituency would be amenable to that and geared to that. When anybody sends me that information, I send it right over to the commissioner. This is always approached with a business case analysis.

I just wanted to make that clear, that I wouldn't be in that decision loop but I'll make sure that's passed on.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Ms. Minna.

Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to ask the minister this. I'm trying to understand the rationale around the amnesty. I heard the minister say that he's doing what the previous government did, but to me it sounds somewhat

quite different. The amnesty was used to give people time to comply with the law. My understanding, from what the minister just said before, was that this amnesty is not to comply with the law, but to comply with the law that will be coming into effect, hopefully, if it passes the House next May. I find that rather strange, don't you? Can you clarify that for me?

Hon. Stockwell Day: The amnesty is put in place to provide people with the opportunity to comply with the law, period.

Hon. Maria Minna: The existing law, not future laws that are not yet in place.

Hon. Stockwell Day: Exactly. With an amnesty, you look to the end date of the amnesty, so by May 17, 2007, people are going to have to comply with the law.

Hon. Maria Minna: Which law? The existing law, or—

Hon. Stockwell Day: I guess we'll see whatever laws and regulations are in place. There may be more changes contemplated by Parliament than even I'm thinking of.

Hon. Maria Minna: But, Minister, your amnesty is not giving people time to register. It's basically telling people they do not have to register, which is not compliant with the law. Am I right?

Hon. Stockwell Day: No, we make it very clear that because of all of the difficulties incumbent with the firearms registry, which we've articulated in good detail today, we recognize the problem, and because of that, they have until May 17, 2007, to comply with the law.

Hon. Maria Minna: That is, to register the weapons—the rifles, the long guns?

Hon. Stockwell Day: Whatever the law requires, they will be required to do on May 17, 2007.

Hon. Maria Minna: But I'm going back to a statement you made earlier, though, which was interesting because you said three things, and they got me thinking and a little bit off-track. You said, first, that the legislation, if placed in the House now, will not pass, so therefore why bring it; secondly, that there'd be an amnesty until next May, at which time hopefully there would be a new law, and in which case then they would comply with the new law. What I'm reading from this is that the government has decided that because it can't pass legislation in the House, it's chosen not to table it, to amend the existing legislation, and it's giving long gun owners amnesty so they don't have to register until next May, at which time the government hopes to have a law in place that will then never allow them to have to register.

That's what I understood you to say a few minutes ago. Am I right?

Hon. Stockwell Day: You're, of course, permitted to put your own spin on it, if I can use that word. I use it in a positive way, because I don't think you were trying to be negative.

For instance, I didn't pose the question, why bring it? It was one of my other colleagues here who posed that question; it wasn't me.

The firearms registry situation was a mess. There was \$1 billion spent on a program that at first was supposed to be revenue neutral—

Hon. Maria Minna: I think, Minister, we've gone over that. It's at a place now where it's stable. I would like to move on with the realities.

Hon. Stockwell Day: It was supposed to be revenue neutral and—

Hon. Maria Minna: Let's not rehash history.

Hon. Stockwell Day: —it spiralled out of sight in terms of the costs.

The latest Auditor General's report was suggesting that there were still very significant problems, even though there were administrative improvements, which we acknowledge. The former government didn't even have the second computer system in place, and—I'll use the words again—"data was unreliable". It was untenable that people—

Hon. Maria Minna: Can you answer my question?

Hon. Stockwell Day: I'm trying to do that.

It was untenable that people would continue to be required to comply when the situation was in a mess. So we said, look, we want to fix the situation, and until it's fixed, you will have until May 17, 2007, to comply with the law. Period.

• (1720)

Hon. Maria Minna: Then I would like to ask two questions to Madam—

The Chair: Your time is just about up, Ms. Minna. Ask very quickly.

Hon. Maria Minna: Okay, I'll ask very quickly.

First, can you tell me if we know the number of murders or homicides committed by long guns, aside from the ones we already know about? And second, was the system in such a mess that we needed to suspend it and give amnesty in order to allow for long guns to continue to be registered?

Hon. Stockwell Day: The first question is an administrative one, the answer to which I don't know. I'll let my officials address that if they've got the numbers. And the second one is clearly a policy question.

Hon. Maria Minna: I addressed my question to Madam Hurtubise.

Mrs. Suzanne Hurtubise: I don't have the answer to your first question on murders. We can get you that information, Madame Minna.

Hon. Maria Minna: I'd appreciate that.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Freeman, or Monsieur Ménard, do you have any questions?

Ms. Freeman, do you have a question?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carole Freeman: With regard to the Chabanel project, an astounding 22,500 kilos of hashish were recently seized. This operation, which was carried out last May, was a resounding success. It had very special logistics. This monumental drug bust was carried out abroad.

I would like to know if you think that it would be good for the RCMP to go on intervening abroad in this way. We were told that this was a big opening performance, but I think that some 10 years ago, in Thailand, there was an intervention that went wrong. This may not be the first. Could you answer this question?

Hon. Stockwell Day: It was an extraordinary situation. However, had there not been another breaking story about terrorists last weekend, this story would have made all headlines.

[*English*]

In any other news environment, if it had not been for the appropriate and understandable headlines generated by this effort on terrorism—this is a huge story—it would have been a stand-alone headline-filled story that that amount of drugs was seized. It got somewhat buried—and I understand that—by the other headlines.

But it also shows that as focused as we are on making sure terrorism does not become a reality and terrorist acts do not take place in Canada—and it was proven that we have the ability to do that—at the same time the RCMP and other police forces were continuing their efforts on many other fronts, including this one. I'll ask the commissioner if this was the biggest in history, but it was an operation that involved surveillance and was in play for quite a period of time and was then successfully executed. It shows the capacity of our intelligence and RCMP forces at a time when they were also focused on other things.

I don't know if that was a record seizure, Commissioner, but you may want to comment further on that.

[*Translation*]

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli: Thank you, Honourable Minister. This really is a record seizure of hashish.

Ms. Freeman, I would like to comment on what you said. This is not the first time that we have gone abroad, we have been doing this for some years now.

Mrs. Carole Freeman: We heard that this was the first time. I was very surprised because we knew about what had happened in Thailand some 10 years ago.

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli: Just like terrorism, organized crime is global in nature. Sometimes, you have to go abroad. Seizures are made with the help of other countries that work with us. This is what we did in this case, it was a joint operation. We were helped by several agencies both in Canada and abroad, and we are very proud of our success.

Mrs. Carole Freeman: Are you intending to carry out more such operations? This was an astounding success, but it is very resource intensive. Are you going to go on doing this on a regular basis...

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli: You are right, it is very resource intensive. This is why we are trying to pool our resources more efficiently. Sometimes we have to close down some offices and redeploy resources to other parts of the country, so that we can pursue these organizations and make these seizures as we have done, as a service for Canada.

Mrs. Carole Freeman: What would be the estimated cost of this kind of activity abroad?

• (1725)

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli: It can go into millions. These operations are very expensive, Ms. Freeman.

Mrs. Carole Freeman: They could well be very expensive. Do you have a column in your budget with a heading “not expensive”, and that has figures in it?

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli: These are federal resources. Thanks to the government, we had a budget increase, which allows us to carry out more...

Mrs. Carole Freeman: Here's my question: do you have a budget for your activities abroad?

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli: Not directly, because we have an overall budget.

Mrs. Carole Freeman: So I can gather that nothing has been specifically set aside for activities abroad?

Commr Giuliano Zaccardelli: You are right.

[English]

The Chair: I was going to give Mr. Norlock another question, but I think we're completely out of time.

I'd like to thank our witnesses for the information they have given us today. I appreciate their coming to the committee.

Thank you, Mr. Minister and all of the people for the meeting.

For the rest of you, if you could just remain for a minute, we want to decide whether we're going to meet Monday.

Monsieur Ménard, you had interrupted the meeting. Do you wish to discuss your issue on Monday?

Mr. Serge Ménard: Yes.

The Chair: Okay, so that will be our agenda item for Monday. Does anybody have any problems with that?

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: What are we going to do?

The Chair: Monsieur Ménard has a motion on the table. He wishes to discuss it Monday. That will be our agenda item.

Also, the first meeting of the Subcommittee on the Review of the Anti-terrorism Act could be held Tuesday, June 13, at 9 a.m. Does anybody have a problem with that?

Mr. Rick Norlock: It's a duty day, but I'll get a replacement, or I'll try.

The Chair: All right.

Mrs. Susan Kadis: Mr. Chair, I just want to clarify who is on the subcommittee. I wasn't sure if you had said each member.

The Chair: Maybe I'll ask the clerk to answer. There are members from each party. I don't have the list in front of me.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Louise Hayes): I can do that now, or I can come and tell you afterwards.

Mrs. Susan Kadis: I knew there were three people who were carried over from the original committee from before.

The Chair: No, there are three Conservatives, two Liberals, one Bloc, and one NDP.

Mrs. Susan Kadis: I'm interested in being on that subcommittee. Am I presently on that subcommittee?

The Chair: You have to go through your whip.

Mrs. Susan Kadis: Oh, I see, but we didn't clarify which people yet?

The Chair: Yes, your names have been submitted, I am quite sure. But I do not think it's any of the members on this committee, just to answer your question. I think it's two other members who were on the committee previously.

I was just told it's Mr. Wappel and Mr. Cullen. That's not something that is decided at this committee.

Is there any other business? The meeting is adjourned.

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