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# Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

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**Thursday, October 5, 2006**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz**

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Thursday, October 5, 2006

• (0905)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC)):** I would like to call the meeting to order. This is meeting number 12 of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. Today we are having our first meeting on Bill C-12, an act to provide for emergency management and to amend and repeal certain acts.

We have officials with us from the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. I welcome you all to the committee. We look forward to some very helpful discussions.

Mr. James Deacon is the director general for national security policy. Usually our custom before this committee is to allow you an opening statement of whatever length you need, but hopefully not too much more than ten minutes, and then if anybody else would like to make any comments they can do the same.

Mr. Deacon, you can introduce the people who are with you.

**Mr. James Deacon (Director General, National Security Policy, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada (PSEPC)):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It is a pleasure to be here, and I thank you for the opportunity to address this important proposed legislation.

With me are Michael Baker, director general for preparedness and recovery; Bob Lesser, director general for operations; Suki Wong, deputy director general for critical infrastructure protection; and Tracy Thiessen, director general for coordination, who is responsible for our regional offices.

I have short remarks prepared, and if you wish I could simply start with them.

I should note, to start, that I am here in an acting capacity, as the acting assistant to the deputy minister. That said, the two persons who would be best placed to provide you with information on this bill unfortunately couldn't make it. The senior assistant deputy minister herself is unfortunately away on training and is therefore unavailable, and the director general for emergency management policy is out of the country. Nonetheless, my colleagues and I will do our very best to answer your questions today.

Bill C-12 would provide the Government of Canada a new basis on which to meet the challenges of its own internal emergency management activities. It proposes to create the emergency management act in order to address changing risks to Canadians and the need for legislation to help address challenges associated with that.

[Translation]

The Bill strengthens the foundations for the federal role in emergency management and critical infrastructure protection in the 21st century. And it recognizes the need for a coordinated federal response that complements those of other stakeholders and which respects provincial and territorial jurisdiction and authority over provincial emergency matters.

[English]

Canada has indeed faced a range of emergencies. Just to name a few, there was the 1998 ice storm in eastern Ontario and western Quebec, the 2003 outbreak of SARS, and the electricity outages that same year in Ontario. We've witnessed numerous floods in Alberta, New Brunswick, and Quebec, as well as forest fires in B.C. Of course, there are many other examples.

Federal efforts must focus on all potential hazards that Canadians could face, including natural disasters, terrorism or crime, cyber incidents, or other impacts on critical infrastructure. In addition, events such as Hurricane Katrina on the United States gulf coast remind us that Canada must be ready to respond to disasters outside of its borders. As we share our inland border with the United States, we must develop emergency plans with our neighbour for mutual support.

One particular lesson learned from the Hurricane Katrina experience was that governments need to have clearly established frameworks in place to facilitate coordination of their efforts, and they need to have these in place well in advance of any events.

In short, Mr. Chair, the risks facing Canadians continue to evolve. This is due, for example, to the increased incidence of extreme weather and the potential for cyber incidents. Bill C-12 aims to bring our statutory framework in step with this evolution. That's why the government has outlined in the proposed legislation how the Ministry of Public Safety and other federal ministries would have the authority necessary to fulfil their roles and to protect Canadians.

Underpinning this proposed legislation are two fundamental principles.

The first is that the Government of Canada understands the need for well-coordinated federal emergency management activity while recognizing and respecting the jurisdictional responsibilities of the provinces and territories. This means in practice that the federal government respects their authority and coordinates federal planning and response with the provinces and territories in partnership, and through them supports local authorities.

The second is that the federal government continues to provide appropriate emergency financial assistance to provinces and territories, building on existing arrangements.

Under the proposed legislation, the Minister of Public Safety would be responsible to exercise leadership by coordinating federal players in their emergency management activities and in cooperating with provincial and territorial governments.

Bill C-12 also recognizes the important role played by other entities, namely non-governmental organizations such as the Red Cross and the private sector. I would note that the proposed legislation reflects that it's not the role only of the federal government to prepare for risks, but that all governments must work together to prevent or mitigate emergencies, to implement responses, and to help communities recover from the effects of emergency events.

The proposed legislation also sets out the Minister of Public Safety's responsibilities in all aspects of emergency management. In the event of an emergency in Canada, it would be the minister's responsibility to coordinate the federal response.

[*Translation*]

Through this proposed legislation, the Minister would exercise leadership by establishing policies and programs applicable to federal emergency management plans prepared by other ministers.

[*English*]

Assisting the minister, and in the future under the proposed legislation, is the Government Operations Centre, which operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, monitoring and analyzing potentially imminent or actual emergencies and which coordinates the response to the incidents. With the centre's assistance and that of other ministers, the Minister of Public Safety can advise the federal government of proposed actions and act as the primary contact to support provinces and territories.

It's also important to note that the bill sets out the emergency management responsibilities for all federal ministers to identify risks; to prepare, maintain, and test plans; and to conduct training in relation to those plans. While those responsibilities are new, the bill reaffirms and focuses attention on the importance of these matters for federal government institutions.

Bill C-12 does not prescribe the specifics of emergency management activities, rather it allows for innovation and the building of community consensus by all levels of government. However, it does provide for the development and implementation of joint programs, national exercises, training, education, and research related to emergency management, and, very importantly, the promotion of public awareness regarding emergencies.

The bill recognizes that promoting a common approach to emergency management, including the adoption of standards and best practices, can enhance the effectiveness and efficiencies in programs at all levels of government, as well as within the private sector. A good example of this is exercise training programs that test emergency preparedness, where we can and do involve the private sector.

Mr. Chair, I noted earlier that the proposed legislation provides for emergency assistance to provinces. Currently to assist a province or territory to recover from a civil emergency or a natural disaster, the Government of Canada may allocate federal financial assistance to that province or territory through the disaster financial assistance arrangements, or DFAA. Nothing in this proposed legislation would change that. In fact, Bill C-12 would become the new legislative vehicle through which the DFAA assistance would be provided to provinces and territories.

Finally, Mr. Chair, when preparing for and during times of an emergency, the government needs to obtain information from the private sector to assess critical infrastructure vulnerabilities and risks, develop emergency management plans, improve warning and reporting systems, and develop better defences and responses. I should note that the information sought is technical in nature; it doesn't include personal information.

Related proposed amendments in the bill to the Access to Information Act are necessary and would allow the government to exchange specific and reliable technical information with private sector partners for critical infrastructure protection and emergency management purposes. Those amendments would encourage information sharing by explicitly recognizing in the Access to Information Act that sensitive private sector critical infrastructure information requires protection from disclosure.

Mr. Chair, in times of emergency, clearly Canadians look to their governments to work together to manage a situation. Preparation for emergencies means that governments must have the capacity to monitor, assess, and prevent identifiable risks and have in place well-tested plans for effective and coordinated action.

● (0910)

[*Translation*]

Bill C-12, the Emergency Management Act will help the federal Government to better serve Canadians before, during and after emergencies.

[*English*]

My colleagues and I will be happy to respond to your questions.

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

That gave us a bit of an outline of the bill and its intent.

We will now move to questions by the opposition, and in the first round we have seven minutes.

Mr. St. Denis, you are going to be the first questioner.

**Mr. Brent St. Denis (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you to the officials for the presentation.

It has certainly evolved a long way since I was a child and every town seemed to have the air raid siren. Does anybody remember the air raid siren test when you were a youngster? I do. Some of my colleagues might not; I'm a lot older.

So things have evolved a long way, and by and large, I think Canadians are typically very impressed with the way the various levels of government respond to emergencies. There are always questions afterwards; it seems inevitable.

My first question, in my seven minutes, relates to this. In the first moments of a quickly emerging disaster of whatever kind, somebody, somewhere, has to make the critical decision. In the next ten seconds something has to start here. In the next few moments something has to start. In creating a national emergency management system with this bill, is there a single person or group that on behalf of all levels—accepting that it might be just a local fire, but on anything significant, is there any doubt about who is making the first, instantaneous call on what happens?

You could have a 9/11 kind of situation, which is one type of potential disaster when it involved planes in the air, or a very different kind of emergency, such as the ice storm.

It's sort of like the big bang theory. Something happens in the first instance after the big bang, which is still a mystery, but certainly you don't want any mysteries when it comes to this.

Could you just walk me through the moments of a disaster?

**Mr. James Deacon:** Certainly. I will start off, and perhaps colleagues could add.

It's important to remember the response, depending on the situation, will vary greatly. Emergency management is typically bottom up. It begins with first responders: the police, health services or others, and transportation people at an airport. It starts there, and people have to make decisions based on the specific circumstances they're faced with. They do that based on local plans.

Beyond that, sometimes there will be local arrangements at the municipal level and certainly at the provincial level as well, in terms of any infrastructure or additional support that might be needed in a given context. So we build on that. Then there's the federal level. We have an opportunity to work and exchange information further along in the process of managing an event. That's the general approach; it's very much bottom up.

• (0915)

**Mr. Brent St. Denis:** Presumably, information from the local or regional event gets to the centre quickly enough that should there be a need for a larger response, that happens fairly quickly?

**Mr. James Deacon:** I think it does. Perhaps I could ask Bob Lesser to discuss it from a Government Operations Centre perspective, which has responsibilities in that area.

**Mr. Robert Lesser (Director General, Operations, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada (PSEPC)):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

One of the main mandates of the Government Operations Centre is to monitor for those kinds of events. In broader terms, this act refers specifically to emergencies. It also monitors for the broader

public safety issues. So we were very actively monitoring when the shootings occurred in Montreal a few weeks ago, or months ago when there was an explosion in Tim Hortons in Toronto. Were they terrorist events? Exactly what were they?

We monitor from a number of sources, obviously from federal sources, such as the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and the RCMP. Canada Command also has a monitoring service through the United States Northern Command as well. We also monitor media to get the first, perhaps unconfirmed and uncorroborated, information, but certainly a heads-up on a lot of those things. There is a process of notification within the federal family and then also to our provincial and territorial colleagues of events that happen.

After the U.K. bombings, the federal family got together very quickly. It was four in the morning out west for our minister at the time, and we had a telephone conference call to make sure everybody, including the commissioner and the director of CSIS, etc., was up to speed. The provinces were immediately notified of what was going on. The provinces then—and I was just talking to our colleagues in British Columbia last week—very quickly notified their transportation facilities and transit companies, etc., throughout the Lower Mainland in British Columbia to make sure they had the information they needed, so they knew the risk to Canada from the bombings.

**Mr. Brent St. Denis:** I have another minute or two, I think, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** Oh yes, go ahead.

**Mr. Brent St. Denis:** Further to that, I have a large number of municipalities in my northern Ontario riding, and recently I was in the town of Hearst. The room I use happens to be the room where they have the section for the—it's a boardroom, but it has a series of cabinets for emergency response. There's a fire department cabinet, a police cabinet, one for public works, and so on. Those are at the local level, and I assume the province works with the municipalities in the creation of their municipal response plans.

If I were to look at the plan for Hearst, would there be something that says—and I assume there's a checklist—call the Government Operations Centre? You're not going to depend on the news reports to find out something serious has happened in Hearst, for example. Is there a voluntary willingness by the province and the municipalities to include the national...? Is there a protocol, an agreement, either through this legislation or past or future legislation, that makes sure you get the official call from the fire chief or the police chief that something is happening?

**Mr. Robert Lesser:** I'm going to focus on two things, Mr. Chair. One is the relationship between the provinces and their municipalities.

Ontario Emergency Management, under Mr. Fantino, has legislation that determines when municipalities must report things centrally to the province in Toronto. We have a working relationship. We have regional folks in Toronto who work very carefully with Ontario Emergency Management, and we have permanent seats in their operations centre, as do the RCMP and the Canadian Forces.

At a certain level there is always a judgment call as to what level people need to know about these things, but certainly it was clear... there were evacuations out of some northern communities over the last while to more southern communities. Hearst and some others were involved with that, Indian and Northern Affairs on the federal side, as well as our colleagues in the Ontario government. It was time to take a look at whether they needed support trying to transport people out of areas. Kashechewan was another good example.

There is no formal criteria that would go from a provincial EOC to us that says under these circumstances you are mandated to do that. And this legislation doesn't require that. What this legislation sets up is...we talk about the national emergency response system, agreements we're working on currently with all the provinces on how we can link at the federal-provincial level to have information passed forward that's appropriate to pass on.

• (0920)

**Mr. Brent St. Denis:** I would say this is part of an evolution. You continue to find better and better ways to link the communication channels—federal, provincial, municipal, and first nations. That's a work in progress then.

**Mr. Robert Lesser:** Yes, and that's the basis of the national emergency response plan. We have a federal part of it that we've done, and now we're working with our federal and territorial colleagues. Our commitment to them was to have our systems be complementary to their systems. We've identified seven key functions that we do together. We're in the process now of determining how exactly we do those seven functions.

**The Chair:** Mr. Deacon, do you have something to add?

**Mr. James Deacon:** Further to what Mr. Lesser said, we do have eleven regional offices across the country, and their job is to work with provincial and territorial governments to build those relationships in a very systematic way. We're putting a lot of resources and effort into those relationships because they are critical.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

As this discussion evolves around the table, what we really want to zero in on is what does this add, what does this do, how does this build on what we have at the present time, and what does this bill add to the whole response we make to emergencies. I hope that will be coming out as the questions are posed.

Mr. Ménard, for seven minutes, please.

[Translation]

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

I would like to know if you see a role for the federal Government in the approval of municipalities' emergency plans.

[English]

**Mr. James Deacon:** That's not a role for the federal government. Clearly, we're interested in what the municipalities are doing. And working with the provinces, we're as aware as we can be in terms of what the municipalities do. We certainly support municipalities through our relationship with the provinces, but I wouldn't say that we have a role in that particular regard.

[Translation]

**Mr. Serge Ménard:** As concerns the training of first responders or other people that might intervene in an emergency, what role do you see for the federal Government?

[English]

**Mr. James Deacon:** Perhaps I could look to Mr. Baker to address that.

**Mr. Michael Baker (Director General, Preparedness and Recovery, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada (PSEPC)):** We have the Canadian Emergency Management College that offers two key programs, both of which have been growing—the emergency management training program and the chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear training program. And that is directly involved in the training of some of the first responders.

This act supports the training. It's a very important part of this act.

[Translation]

**Mr. Serge Ménard:** If I am not mistaken, this is a very specialized training that might not be available in every province or every territory.

Why does the federal Government want to target that training?

[English]

**Mr. Michael Baker:** The federal government has been working with the provinces and the territories to come up with a framework on the training that also includes an e-based learning program, whereby municipalities and the provinces on basic training can access this information to help them in the training of their first responders. This is something we're working on now to assist, and it is a major part of this act.

[Translation]

**Mr. Serge Ménard:** In regard to recovery assistance, I suppose that Mr. Baker would be the best person to answer my question. I know that there is legislation providing a federal contribution for losses resulting from a major disaster. If my memory serves me well, under that legislation, the federal contribution is calculated on the basis of each province's population. It might not be the exact number, but I think that if it is less than \$1 per capita, the federal Government does not contribute, if it is between \$1 and \$2, its contribution will be 25 per cent or 20 per cent, etc. up to the total cost.

First of all, could you tell me if that information is accurate and be more specific if you can?

• (0925)

[English]

**Mr. Michael Baker:** As you have said, over the \$1 per capita, of the next \$2 per capita, the government share is 50%. The next \$2 after that per capita—

**Mr. Serge Ménard:** How much is it?

**Mr. Michael Baker:** It's 50%.

**Mr. Serge Ménard:** It's 50%?

**Mr. Michael Baker:** Yes, 50%. After that, it's 75%, and then the remainder is 90%.

This act will continue the disaster financial assistance. It doesn't change that, so that program would still be in place.

[Translation]

**Mr. Serge Ménard:** Some issues have been raised when major disasters have occurred in the last few years. It was not clear what damages were covered by those agreements, particularly in the case of public works which in some provinces are privately owned, and publicly owned in other provinces. Could you tell me more on that subject?

Let us look at hydro services for example. In some provinces, part of the grid is private while another part is public. In many provinces, the whole grid is public.

In such cases, does the federal cover damages caused by a natural disaster?

[English]

**Mr. Michael Baker:** I don't have the exact numbers with me, but the program itself is to restore public works to their pre-disaster condition and replace basic and essential personal property of individuals, small businesses, and farmsteads. The municipality would identify what they're seeking assistance for to the province. The province then would audit that, look at it, and then forward it to the federal government for our assistance.

[Translation]

**Mr. Serge Ménard:** My question was not clear enough. I do not want to know if you have verified the eligibility of the claims. I want to know if you cover public works that are destroyed, for instance power lines in some provinces, or if you only cover private assets that are the property of individuals or corporations.

[English]

**Mr. Michael Baker:** I'll ask Dave Neville, who is the director of my program, to give you the detail on that.

**Mr. David Neville (Director, Disaster Financial Assistance and Preparedness Programs, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada (PSEPC)):** Good morning, Mr. Chair. My name is Dave Neville, and I'm director of disaster financial assistance and preparedness programs at PSEPC.

In response to the question, I think one thing that's important to keep in mind is that following a disaster, it's the province that designs and delivers its assistance program to those affected by disaster, and the DFAA reimburses the province for eligible costs after the fact. The province is free to set its eligibility criteria as it

sees fit. The DFAA in no way restricts the province from providing assistance.

In terms of eligible costs, eligible costs are clearly outlined in a manual of guidelines that we provide. When it comes to what is eligible and what is not, some of the main ins and outs of the DFAA are that anything that is insurable is not eligible under the federal program; large businesses or crown corporations—and this gets to the issue of electrical providers in certain provinces—are not eligible. Where assistance is provided in whole or part by another federal program, those costs would not be eligible under the DFAA.

So the DFAA's guidelines are clearly there, and once the provincial government has completed making its payments, we then assess those expenditures in accordance with our guidelines and reimburse the province after the fact.

[Translation]

**Mr. Serge Ménard:** I want to make sure that I understand your answer. Let us look at the hydro-electric grid in Quebec, for instance, which is entirely owned by a public corporation: Hydro-Québec. In regard to wind power, the Government wants to call on the private sector. It wants a public-private partnership.

In that case, you would not cover Hydro-Québec for the losses in its hydro-electric grid, but you might cover the losses of wind tower owners, is that right?

• (0930)

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Ménard. Those are very good questions, but we'll have to continue in the next round.

You may answer.

**Mr. David Neville:** In the case of the Hydro-Québec rated costs, under the DFAA, costs incurred or damage incurred by Hydro-Québec would not be eligible to be covered by assistance, but any assistance provided by the province for private damage would have to be assessed, again, making sure that the company meets the definition of small business, because DFAA is very restricted in terms of the types of business it will provide assistance to. Usually, it's an owner-operated type business, which is clearly defined in the guidelines.

We would have to see, when you talk about private industry, whether or not that entity meets the definition of eligible businesses under the DFAA. Again, that's not to say the province cannot provide assistance to that business.

**The Chair:** Thank you. If you need more clarification, maybe you can get that on the next round.

Mr. Comartin, go ahead, please.

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

Thank you for being here.

I was going to take the same approach the chair recommended. Is this legislation changing the structure that we have now in any way?

**Mr. James Deacon:** I'll perhaps ask Ms. Wong to speak to that in just a moment, but generally speaking, it's confirming existing practices. Having said that, there are some important additions. It reflects the need for a solid framework to proceed, a framework that we don't have legislatively, in particular with respect to the lead role of the minister and some of the other related arrangements and responsibilities.

Ms. Wong can provide, perhaps—

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Just before you do, do you have an organization chart as it exists now?

**Mr. James Deacon:** Of our branch?

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Yes.

**Mr. James Deacon:** Yes, we do.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Could you provide that to the clerk of the committee?

**Mr. James Deacon:** I certainly could.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Just to follow up on that, do you have an executive summary of the program you administer?

**Mr. James Deacon:** We could certainly put some material together to assist the committee, Mr. Chair, if it would be of assistance.

**The Chair:** That would be appreciated.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Then with regard to both of those, if there are going to be changes, could you note where the organizational chart is going to change once the legislation comes into effect, and the same with programming?

**Mr. James Deacon:** To the best we're able, we would do that.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Very good, thank you.

Ms. Wong, go ahead, please.

**Mrs. Suki Wong (Deputy Director General, Critical Infrastructure Policy, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada (PSEPC)):** Thank you.

This legislation does not change the organizational structure of our department. Bill C-12 brings greater accountability to how the federal government responds to and prepares for emergencies. It provides our minister with the authority to set guidelines, best practices, and principles for developing emergency management plans that affect only federal government institutions. So very much this bill brings greater accountability and greater coordination, and it recognizes the need for collaboration of provinces and territories. The scope of the act is very limited to the federal government, to federal institutions.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Where is the authority right now for what you're doing?

**Mr. James Deacon:** It's general administrative authority.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Is there a summary of the disaster financial assistance agreement somewhere? I think that's a fairly detailed piece of legislation, which is a bit complicated.

**Mr. James Deacon:** We can certainly get that for you. I should mention, too, we have the Emergency Preparedness Act in place now, so this act would effectively replace that. By and large, a lot of the activities we're discussing are carried out, not necessarily with

specific statutory authority but under general administrative authority.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** To go to that, will this take away anything from the Emergency Preparedness Act?

**Mr. James Deacon:** There are some changes.

Perhaps, Suki...

**Mrs. Suki Wong:** Bill C-12 would replace the Emergency Preparedness Act.

• (0935)

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Completely?

**Mrs. Suki Wong:** Completely, but as Jamie said, it continues the financial assistance programs to provinces and territories. Each minister continues to be responsible for preparing their own emergency management activities. The new feature is that it provides greater accountability for collaboration and coordination within the federal government.

**Mr. James Deacon:** Also, some changes from the EPA are included. For example, the requirement that there be an order in council with respect to financial assistance before financial assistance could be provided won't be there anymore, so it will facilitate quicker, more expeditious treatment of provincial claims. In addition, the provisions regarding the Access to Information Act and the implications for private sector information are new.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Okay, just to go back to the disaster financial...you'll provide us with some kind of a summary of that?

**Mr. James Deacon:** Certainly.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Just quickly regarding the ATI, has the Privacy Commissioner been consulted or had any input into the drafting of the legislation, obviously, with regard to that specific section?

**Mrs. Suki Wong:** We have consulted the Information Commissioner and the Minister of Justice as well.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** And the Privacy Commissioner?

**Mrs. Suki Wong:** In terms of information sharing that is part of this act, it does not include personal information, but the Privacy Commissioner was consulted and he didn't have any concerns.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Okay.

One of the concerns I have, quite frankly, and I suppose it's the outcome of Katrina in the United States and watching the wealthiest country in the world flounder in dealing with a natural disaster... I know from some of the investigation that I've done, and as you've already said, Mr. Deacon, the key lies with the first responders in terms of the immediate relief to the communities.

If I read it accurately, this bill does not increase the amount of contact between the local authorities—municipal authorities in most cases—any more than we are already doing. Is that correct?

**Mr. James Deacon:** I would say not in a direct way, but by doing what Ms. Wong described, which is setting out the framework and the authorities for our minister to take a lead role and to coordinate and to work with the jurisdictions, the downstream effect I think can be more effective support to local communities, working through the provinces, working with the provinces, including first responders.



Specific to first responders, I stand to be corrected, but nothing there in particular.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Are there any plans on the books to enhance our relationship, whether it is, as has already been noted, providing training...? Are there any additional things that are coming as a result of this legislation, or maybe would come anyway?

**Mr. James Deacon:** Perhaps Ms. Thiessen could address that in terms of our regional work.

**Ms. Tracy Thiessen (Director General, Coordination, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada (PSEPC)):** Thank you.

I think you make a very good point. While the legislation sets out a stronger role for the federal government to coordinate its own activities, it also recognizes the important role played by other stakeholders, including first responders.

It builds on work already under way in the department to work more effectively with first responders. We have several bilateral relationships with first responders, like the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, and others. The department does support them in a variety of ways, including grants and contributions by which we are giving money directly to them to help enhance industry activities, research, public education outreach, and also through our joint emergency preparedness program. This is a cost-shared program with the provinces and territories through which money goes directly to municipalities and first responders.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Okay, but my question—

**The Chair:** This will be your final question. Go ahead.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** My question, Ms. Thiessen, is this. Is there anything planned to enhance or expand those programs or that contact?

**Ms. Tracy Thiessen:** As a result of this legislation, I would say no.

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

Mr. Hawn, with the government.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC):** Thank you, Chair, and thank you all for being here.

I'd like to follow up a little bit on what Mr. Comartin was talking about, and that's the connectivity between the federal-provincial-municipal and U.S. operations centre authorities.

What changes do you see coming out—not necessarily as a result of the act but maybe that are covered by Bill C-12—in the connectivity between federal-provincial-municipal and at the federal level with U.S. authorities in response to a situation?

• (0940)

**Mr. James Deacon:** One of the things that legislation does, that we articulate, is provide the framework for the federal government to get its house in order, so to speak, with a clear lead role for the Minister of Public Safety, with clear responsibilities for other federal ministers.

Building on that framework, working under that umbrella, we'll be able to more effectively engage our United States partners, for

example, in the Department of Homeland Security. We do have strong working relationships. We're working on building those relationships in the wake of incidents like Hurricane Katrina, and more generally in the context of our partnership and day-to-day work with American agencies.

The objective of the legislation is to provide that framework and provide a clear set of parameters within and under which authorities the various departments and agencies will operate.

A big part of our work right now is getting our federal plans in place, confirming our federal plans, and then branching out for the national emergency response system. As someone has already said, it is a work in progress. Again, it's about getting the right framework; it's about getting the right infrastructure.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** As you're developing those plans, and obviously they need to be in coordination with the Department of Homeland Security, Canada Command, and U.S. Northern Command, when we're talking about larger-scale incidents, how far along are you on that, and what challenges are you facing with respect to dealing specifically with the U.S. authorities?

**Mr. James Deacon:** I think Mr. Lesser is better placed to speak to that.

**Mr. Robert Lesser:** I can respond to that. From an ops centre to ops centre point of view, we were very engaged with the Department of Homeland Security and FEMA down there. We had a 24/7 connectivity, both in a secure and unsecure manner. There's also a common chat frequency on the international portal with New Zealand, Australia, the United States, the U.K., and ourselves. So both on cyber and national security events, we're continually exchanging information immediately as it happens and sharing our threat assessments and our information, and likewise them with us.

In regard to this legislation—and maybe I'll just go back to where it changes—a lot of things that have happened over the last few years have just been happening because it's the right thing to do and people will collaborate and say, yes, this makes sense. This legislation provides the authority to make sure our minister has the authority to ensure that everything is consistent when we talk about the federal house being in order.

As much as other departments are gaining in recognizing that there is a need for a whole-of-government coordination, there's no legislated mandate to do that. So when the question becomes, who is ultimately in charge, this legislation provides, from a leadership point of view, that the minister is ultimately in charge of the leadership and coordination. I think that is very new, and I think it is very significant when we're taking a look at a federal response. That then places us well with our U.S. colleagues in DHS, who have a very similar mandate under presidential directives.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** Are we at the same stage of developing those plans and procedures in Canada as are our counterparts in the U.S.? Are we catching up to them? Where are we?

**Mr. Robert Lesser:** Depending on what report you read out of Katrina, that's really difficult to answer, because their system is different from ours. Number one, in their infrastructure they have a FEMA, which Canada doesn't. They have the National Guard, which is a huge response resource to New Orleans. We would have to go directly to our permanent forces. So we don't have those two big pieces of infrastructure.

As well, in the American system they have all adopted a similar response system, and it's mandated under a presidential directive that all states will comply with that system, from the lowest level right up to the presidential authority. In Canada, as we've mentioned, we've taken the approach that each province and territory has an excellent working system of their own and the federal system will be tailored to make sure we link with the provincial system. So it's a little bit difficult to totally compare and contrast.

I think for the size of our country and the disasters we'll probably face, we're fairly close to going along. They have a lot of resources, but sometimes that isn't an asset.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** On a more local level, you talked about how the federal government is not in a position to approve municipal emergency response plans, but you do review them. If you saw something in an emergency response plan at the municipal level that placed some unrealistic expectations on the federal level, whether it's assistance or notification or so on, how would you handle that?

**Mr. Robert Lesser:** Maybe I'll give two quick examples of what we did for the hurricane season this spring. It's only in the last two years that we developed a whole government contingency plan to assist provinces and territories, in this case, by and large, the eastern provinces for the hurricane. We developed a plan to identify federal resources that could assist provinces. We then worked, through our regional offices in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, and Labrador, with our provincial counterparts to identify: these are the kinds of resources we think could help you, what are your plans, do they fit in provincially and municipally with the plans you have—to make sure we develop a plan that will respond to all the needs. The province is obviously taking care of the municipal needs, but their mandate is to make sure that all that is aligned. Our mandate with the province is to make sure we are aligned with the provinces. So it's all one system that is fluid.

• (0945)

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** If you saw something in one of these municipal plans that was clearly wrong, how would you handle that? Would you go through the province? Would you go directly to the municipal authority, or...?

**Mr. Robert Lesser:** We deal with that as we deal with the provinces, and then it becomes their jurisdiction as to what they want to do with it.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** Okay. The kind of notification that goes on, again to go back to connectivity... What kinds of things would you expect to see simultaneous notification on, i.e., from the municipal responder to the province and the federal authorities, and how much would be sequential? I guess that would go to how serious is the situation.

**Mr. Robert Lesser:** If I went back to the shootings in the school in Montreal, it was very sequential, from the Montreal Urban

Community Police Service, to the Protection civile in Quebec City, and from them directly to our regional director and to us. So I would say within a matter of—and I'm guessing—ten to twelve minutes, we were aware of some basic details that were more accurate than what the media was starting to pump out.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** Even though it's sequential, virtually it's simultaneous, in effect.

**Mr. Robert Lesser:** That's pumped out from one to the other very quickly.

In other provinces, we share the same software for event management, and they can enter immediately, at the provincial level, information that we can see right away on our screens.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** In terms of response to disasters, you mentioned some examples: floods in Manitoba, ice storms, and so on. Is there anything in the act, how it's laid out or what would fall out of it, that would dictate a different approach than we used when those things happened in the past?

**Mr. Robert Lesser:** Just the legislation that provides the leadership mandate and then the mandate to make sure that federally departments have plans that are all aligned will make a big difference. Right now, different departments have developed their own ways of responding. The coast guard responds one way, the health agency has its plan, and CFIA, for avian flu and those kinds of things. This brings it all together to make sure everybody can fit into that. It's a physical location, the Government Operations Centre, but it's the place where particular functions occur. It brings the entire federal family together so we can speak one language, which we didn't have before that.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** Is there a critical missing link right now that you see in any of that connectivity? At the risk of overusing the words, between municipal, provincial, and federal, is there something missing that needs to be addressed that we're having difficulty addressing?

**Mr. Robert Lesser:** No, what needs to be there is there. The changes that need to be done are to have more of it and to improve and enhance the capabilities.

Secure connectivity is an example. It's there, but it's not the fastest. We need to get faster equipment out there, and there are projects ongoing that do that.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Hawn. Maybe you'll have to wait for the next round.

**Mr. James Deacon:** May I add just a couple of comments, Mr. Chair?

With respect to the United States, I should mention that we have a liaison officer posted down in the Department of Homeland Security in Washington. That has proven to be a very beneficial and productive arrangement for us, and I think for our American colleagues as well. It's one of the ways we are working with the United States.

On the issue of our "reviewing"—to use that word—municipal plans, we don't review them. I think I was suggesting that we are as aware of them as we can be, but certainly we're not reviewing or approving. As Mr. Lesser said, that's a question of provincial responsibility.

Mr. Chair, if I could correct a statement I made earlier, I said the order in council procedure for disaster financial assistance arrangements would no longer be in place. That was incorrect. It would remain.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

As a brief point in addition to what Mr. Hawn asked, are you aware of whether there's a plan here on Parliament Hill to deal with emergencies?

**Mr. James Deacon:** I have to say I'm not, but I just heard a yes from Mr. Lesser.

**Mr. Robert Lesser:** Yes, there is the parliamentary precinct plan that's ongoing. Kevin Vickers, I believe, on the House of Commons side, is dealing with that. I believe yesterday there was a meeting with Diane MacLaren and Mr. Vickers on that.

There are two different branches within the department: the police and law enforcement, which have RCMP responsibility, and ourselves, who have emergency management. So we're getting together to make sure that continuity of constitutional government plans, business continuity plans, and the parliamentary precinct plans are aligned.

**The Chair:** Something else the committee may want to consider at a future point is a visit to the Government Operations Centre. It may help us in understanding what's happening and what's going on.

• (0950)

**Mr. James Deacon:** You'd be most welcome, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll now move to the second round of questions. These will be five minutes in length.

Mr. Holland, you can lead off.

**Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to all of you for coming today.

I have a couple of questions. I'm going to break this into two parts. One is with respect to the Government Operations Centre that was established by then Minister McLellan. Could you talk to us a little bit about the operations of the Government Operations Centre, what its functions are, how its functions are activated, how it's resourced, how it interacts with other agencies, and also where it's located? I ask that because I think it might be valuable for this committee to visit that facility, and I wonder what your thoughts are on that.

**Mr. Robert Lesser:** I'll start off with the visit.

When we became a new department, we inherited what was there. That didn't meet anybody's needs, so we just totally destroyed it. We have a temporary ops centre that's still there, but early November would probably be a great time to come back. You're certainly welcome to tour that once we get rid of the construction helmets and those kinds of things.

As for what it does, there are a number of main functions. The first one is a monitoring and reporting function. As I mentioned before, there are different areas that it monitors for, and they're fairly wide. It's much more than for emergencies, it's for public safety writ large, if you will. Then there are a number of kinds of products that it will report on. There's one that we call an information bulletin, and it

primarily goes to our minister, the minister's staff, and the Privy Council Office, to give them a heads-up. It contains unconfirmed, uncorroborated information, and within thirty minutes we'll come back with what we call a notification. That then comes with accredited and, as best we can, certified information as to what may be occurring.

Depending on that, in the other areas that we have, we gather situational awareness. It's really that whole thing to develop, in more military terms, a common operating picture. With that kind of information, we then take a look at doing a risk assessment. We don't do threat assessments. Those are done by CSIS, the RCMP, DND, etc. We do a risk assessment that asks the questions, "What do we care? What does this mean? And if it does mean something, what do we do? Is there a particular plan that's already in place that we implement, or do we have to develop something to respond specifically to this?" There will be an immediate action plan if we don't have a plan to do that.

Our last function is operations coordination, which is done at the strategic level, which is different from the very pointy end, the tactical level or, say, the mid-level operational level. Within the operations centre right now, the director of the operations centre is from the Canadian Forces. We have a planner from the Canadian Forces who is responsible for their pandemic plan, so he's a highly trained planner. And we are integrating our planning system with the military planning system. We're finding a lot of that is then in line with the 2010 planning for the Olympics. We have former RCMP and CSIS members within the entire Government Operations Centre who look at situational awareness, risk assessment, planning, as I talked about, and ops coordination.

When something happens, if it's very small and very quick.... There are a number of times that you've probably read about in the papers when there are people who are on aircraft who are on the American no-fly list. Sometimes it's required that either Canadians or Americans under NORAD will scramble jets to do protection on that, and then they go through a series of checks to find out whether or not they can confirm a risk or deny a risk. We are immediately involved with five key departments in terms of determining the risk. If there was ever an opportunity or the occasion when it was decided at the highest levels that the aircraft would have to be shot down, we'd be involved in the consequence management of that, notifying the provinces and providing the assistance that would be needed.

Some events will happen in less than twenty minutes. Other events are fairly long-term. Our role with the repatriation of the Lebanese citizens took about three or four weeks. By and large, that was a fairly simple thing for us as the interlocutors between Foreign Affairs Canada and the provinces and the local municipalities, like Montreal. Certainly Quebec did an excellent job of looking after returning citizens for the first 72 hours. Ontario and the City of Ottawa equally did some excellent work there. So we would also perform that liaison function, that situational awareness, that passing of that kind of information.

As an event grows for us to level two and then level three, simplistically we'd do more of the same, but we'd bring in people from other departments and agencies. We see ourselves as simply the experts in the process, the emergency response process. We are not experts, nor do we intend to be experts. If there was a radiological threat or a biological threat or a national security threat, we'd bring in the experts from the areas that have that expertise and they would fit into the planning process, the risk assessment process, and the ops coordination process, and they would be very key in that one.

• (0955)

**Mr. Mark Holland:** Where is the facility located, or where is it going to be located?

**Mr. Robert Lesser:** It's the Jackson Building, at Bank Street and Slater Street.

**Mr. Mark Holland:** I just put that out, Mr. Chairman, because it may be valuable. I know the committee is very busy, but it sounds to me like it's a facility that would be well worth the committee's time to visit. But I'll leave that for discussion for another time.

If I could, I just want to talk about where we're going. I think I have a good grasp on what the legislation is before us, but where do you see us—

**The Chair:** This will be your final question, by the way.

**Mr. Mark Holland:** Sure. That sounds good.

I came from the municipality of Pickering, where I was a councillor for seven years, and also from the region of Durham.

In the region of Durham, we have two large nuclear facilities, and we ran a lot of emergency preparedness drills around them. And when we had local emergencies, we ran local operations centres and saw firsthand how effectively they worked on the ground.

I understood very clearly, at that point in time, the relationship that existed between municipalities and the provinces in developing those plans. And I well understand the need for the federal government to monitor the level of preparedness of provinces and municipalities for potential emergencies, to ensure that they're properly resourced, and to understand where they are going to be.

But where are we heading? I just say that in this context. If we have three levels of government, at a certain point, if the federal government takes too much of a lead, do we risk becoming too involved and therefore actually slow down the response process?

How do we ensure, in the municipalities, in particular, which are the first responders and the ones closest to the ground in understanding the situation, that we don't move to a situation where, in trying to be helpful from a federal context, we create problems for them in terms of their response time, because we start creating an overly bureaucratic situation?

**Mr. James Deacon:** Perhaps, first, as a general observation, the federal government only provides assistance in actual events when we're requested to do so. It does start, as you say, at the local level, and it works up to the provincial level. If there's an identified need from the province, a request will be made, and assistance will be provided as appropriate.

We do have ongoing discussions with provincial governments to talk about the management of the overall situation nationally. Perhaps I can ask Tracy Thiessen to talk a little bit about that.

We have a senior officials' committee responsible for emergency management, for example, that is co-chaired by the senior assistant deputy minister in our department and a provincial colleague. They have been meeting for some time now.

Tracy, do you want to talk a little about that relationship?

**Ms. Tracy Thiessen:** Thank you.

Our FPT for emergency management is actually very active in this country.

Ministers last met in January 2005 and elaborated an action plan that includes work in a variety of areas, including emergency response, disaster recovery assistance programs, a national mitigation strategy, training and exercising, public alerting, and finally, a critical infrastructure protection strategy.

Ministers plan to meet again sometime in December, or perhaps in January. To support them, deputy ministers have met face to face twice since then and have had a variety of teleconferences, and senior officials continue their work.

So through these deliberations, we continue to develop the relationship with the provinces and the territories, which directly benefits municipalities.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll now move to the Bloc Québécois.

Monsieur Ménard.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Serge Ménard:** There is now a tendency, in industrialized countries, to develop an expertise in some types of responses to emergencies. Canada is a good example with a team that can supply very large quantities of drinking water, and this, very rapidly. Often, following a disaster, particularly in developing countries, the population is left with no source of drinking water. It is a major cause of illnesses.

I know that the French have set up a response team to intervene after an earthquake, when many people are still under the rubble, in order to rescue them rapidly. They have medical doctors who can go there rapidly and operate on the spot.

However, I suppose that there are other countries that also have that expertise. I know that Japan also has a specific expertise in earthquake response. Is there someone in your department who follows those developments in the world so that we could call on those resources if needed or we might offer ours if they could be useful somewhere else?

• (1000)

[*English*]

**Mr. James Deacon:** I'm afraid I'll have to commit to get back to you with further information on that.

Certainly we do have relationships, not only with the United States but with other countries.

The band strength here right now isn't such that I'm able to respond directly to your question. We do have arrangements here in Canada, though. There is search and rescue, for example.

I don't know, Bob, if you wanted to make a couple of comments on some of the things we do and that other countries have been interested in, in the past.

**Mr. Robert Lesser:** Earlier, I think one of your references, Mr. Chair, was to the urban search and rescue capacity. I believe there are five teams across the country. A lot of the funding has been federal, but there are municipal and local resources.

There is an agreement with the funding and training that they will assist in national events. We saw in Katrina that the urban search and rescue team from British Columbia was sent down to Louisiana to provide some assistance. It was backed up then by the Calgary search and rescue team in case there was something that happened in British Columbia.

Of course, the Canadian Forces have the DART team. If we needed a large amount of assistance that was outside the Canadian capacity to provide, our door would be right to Foreign Affairs Canada, and we'd look to them to go into the international community with the needs that the province would have identified.

There is already at Foreign Affairs and through CIDA a database of different kinds of assistance that is available worldwide that they can call upon, and we are starting to build as well, in the very early stages, a national inventory of resources. In working with our provincial colleagues, though, especially for Katrina, the preference they indicated to us was for them not to continually update a database of potential resources within each province because it changes continually and it may or may not be available when you need it. Their preference was for us federally, if we needed help, to identify what it was that we needed and then they would do a staff check to see if it was available.

[Translation]

**Mr. Serge Ménard:** I have a feeling that you never heard about that French team before, but maybe you should get some information about it. It is operational and it has intervened quite often in the Third World. However, I do not believe that we have many problems with earthquakes in Canada. In any case, our architects are designing buildings that can generally resist to the earthquakes we do have.

Nevertheless, I would like to know the extent of your knowledge. Does any one of you know of the Institute Armand-Frappier?

[English]

**Mr. James Deacon:** It appears not, Mr. Chairman.

[Translation]

**Mr. Serge Ménard:** I understand that there is a tendency to look towards the English world but sometimes you might find in the French-speaking world some institutions that have as much expertise in very specific areas like it is the case of the French in the field of research. The Institute Armand-Frappier is located in Laval and its operations can be sustained over a long period, it has water and oxygen reserves and the capacity to produce vaccines. It has relationships with other international institutions. We shall go to visit it. It is not far from Ottawa. It is only a two hours' drive.

[English]

**The Chair:** I'm not sure we're going to get all of these visits in. I think this bill is supposed to be referred back to the House in a timely fashion.

Mr. Deacon.

**Mr. James Deacon:** Just to comment on best practices, clearly we want to cast our net as broadly as we can in terms of best practices and gaining knowledge from any other jurisdictions' arrangements, institutes, or centres of knowledge. I would take that as self-evident.

One thing I should mention in this context is that we do have our relationship with non-governmental organizations like the Red Cross that are operating abroad, and we benefit from their experience in our relationship. In addition, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade has a committee of international non-governmental organizations, and working with them and through them on that we often do get information about other countries' practices and arrangements and what can work best and what we might consider here.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Norlock.

• (1005)

**Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC):** Thank you for coming this morning.

Your group is near and dear to my heart. In a previous occupation I was involved as a supervisor in a communications centre and later as a kind of partner in a tiered emergency response from a policing perspective.

Both from a communications centre standpoint and from a basis of allocating resources on a tiered response, one of the issues I've noticed is that we often view emergency responses from a vertical reporting basis, whereas in the field, often the actual application and delivery of services require a lateral or a horizontal reporting.

I was happy to hear you're concentrating primarily on the federal response and indeed recognize that in emergencies the immediate need tends to be from a local respondent, and then it goes up the food chain, shall we say.

When you view your relationship with the provinces and municipalities, as Mr. Holland mentioned, and the fear that perhaps we have someone who appears to know better than another, one of the key elements in almost every emergency is the ability to communicate directly and effectively. I was happy to hear you have software that actually dovetails with other agencies.

I know all the emergency fire and police personnel and ambulances aren't necessarily on the same radio frequencies. I know the Province of Ontario is working to have an overall communication strategy with regard to emergency responders.

Getting back to the software, I suspect Mr. Lesser would be the person to answer this. Are there any problems that you currently see in Canada in your relationship or the federal government's relationship with the provinces? You don't need to be specific, but generally, have you seen any places where the software, communication devices, and/or personnel don't fit seamlessly into the federal perspective?

**Mr. Robert Lesser:** I think it's a work in progress.

Depending on the province, a number of them have used software. I don't want to advertise any particularly, but Telus has E Team. It's been used by British Columbia for quite a while and is used extensively by Alberta. Ontario has their own software, which they wrote, and Quebec uses Neptune4. There are a number of federal departments that have started to use E Team. For example, the Health Agency and Health Canada have started to use it, as well as ourselves.

For us, it is an interim package and it is not fulsome enough for the needs we have for a national disaster. As in our plans and response system, we will develop a system that will be interoperable with provincial systems. We won't worry about hooking in municipally. We'll work on hooking in provincially and leave the provincial folks to click in municipally.

If I may also respond on the systems, technology supports the systems and how they actually function. In most provinces, and certainly at the local level—the U.S. system equally follows it, but it is known as the incident command system—it is a system we have used and adapted federally. It is very similar to or the same as the ones used in the provinces, and a very similar one is used at the pointy end of the tactical level. It is also very similar to the military system, the continental system.

On functions, as I mentioned before, there are a lot of similarities in working with the provinces. We have identified seven key functions we all do that are the same. We're now in the process of asking, how exactly are we going to share situational awareness to develop a common operating picture?

We were down in Washington about three or four weeks ago and took a look at what they call COP, which is sort of cute. Common operational picture is software they're developing. We want to make sure we're equally compatible with their particular system. As I said, it's a work in progress.

Again, going back to this legislation, by exercising leadership in emergency management, it allows us to then take the ball and lead in the development with other folks. They're wondering who is going to take the ball with this one. In a lot of areas, this legislation lays out the department's mandate.

•(1010)

**Mr. Rick Norlock:** One of the ways we find out whether or not our systems and our plans work effectively and efficiently is to do simulated exercises. I've seen from a practical and operational standpoint that this is the best time to find out just exactly if your plan does work.

Do you, along with your provincial partners—and I suspect, through that, the municipal partners—on a routine basis do simulated exercises, using very different case scenarios, to see how well it

works and how coordinated and dovetailed you are with the provinces?

**Mr. Michael Baker:** Yes. A cornerstone of our training and our learning as we go forward is to have an exercise program that we work on amongst the federal family as well as internationally and with the provinces and municipalities.

It is a cornerstone. We need that. We need the information. We have to test our plans, see where the problem areas exist, see how well we're doing things, and then build from that.

**The Chair:** We'll go back to Mr. St. Denis.

**Mr. Brent St. Denis:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a couple of brief questions.

First, Mr. Ménard was talking about funding arrangements under the national program to assist in disasters. I don't know if the other program, JEPP, came up. The joint emergency preparedness program typically provides more modest sums to municipalities for fire trucks and emergency measures kind of equipment.

Did that program survive the recent spate of budget cuts?

**Mr. Michael Baker:** Yes, that program is still in effect. It's in place right now.

**Mr. Brent St. Denis:** That's good news.

Secondly, a couple of times “evolution” has come up, that the management coordination system is a work in progress. But somebody must have in mind somewhere what this will look like in ten years, in twenty years. I mean, you're evolving into something.

Do we have a sense of where that might be? It might shift a little bit as time goes by, but do we have a sense as a government or as a public service where that could be in ten or twenty years? Does it look, or not look, like the FEMA model in the U.S., which has, notwithstanding the problems they've had, a fairly strong national mandate?

And that's it, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

**Mr. James Deacon:** Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I'd be reluctant to make any direct comparison to FEMA, because our system of government is different. Their arrangements are different.

I think there are a couple of basics that obviously have to be in place and that people have referred to already, such as the need for appropriate infrastructure in terms of authorities, as represented by the bill at the federal level, and in terms of information systems and connectivity.

Sometimes those information systems, as mentioned, aren't always perfect, so we supplement them with real people. If there's a disaster, we will send a liaison officer immediately to the provincial emergency measures organization. Practical arrangements that facilitate the exchange of information allow each jurisdiction to understand what the other jurisdiction is doing.

Is there a crystallized plan? I would say no. But there are some basic concepts that are understood in terms of what needs to be done and what needs to be known. I think we've made a lot of progress there. The federal-provincial-territorial fora that Tracy Thiessen referred to really give us an opportunity to enhance understanding and get consensus about what are the best ways specifically to work together. As often as not, we can see a disaster that goes across jurisdictions, and we have to be ready to respond to those as well.

So there are no lines respected in terms of the emergencies.

**Mr. Brent St. Denis:** To conclude, is there built into the management system a post-disaster review? Do the various levels involved in a particular disaster meet afterwards to say here's what went well, here's what didn't go well? Is there a built-in learning ability?

•(1015)

**Mr. James Deacon:** There absolutely is. Learning from past events and practices is critical. Post-event, part of that is the exercise regime that Mike was referring to, the federal-provincial-territorial exercises. As well, the exercises in lessons learned, as we call them, are part of real incident management as well as any exercise. Even after an exercise, we look at lessons learned in the exercise, most definitely.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. MacKenzie.

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC):** Thank you, Chair, and thanks to the panel for being here.

We've talked a lot about different situations with respect to the act, but clause 6, if I can just refer you to it, certainly lays out responsibilities for ministers other than the Minister of Public Safety. I'm just wondering if you could lay out for the committee what responsibilities would involve other ministers. What would they have to do?

I think some of the questions that have come up today, responsibilities of those ministers, other ministers, the Minister of Public Safety, and what they have to do, are actually covered in clause 6. The other part, and I think you've made it clear, is that it is not the federal government that does the hands-on in a situation with an emergency; it is the umbrella that's there to help and guide.

As the last part, I think a few years ago we saw where the largest municipality in the country utilized the services of the military to remove snow. Is that really what we would expect in the future?

**Mr. James Deacon:** I'll ask Ms. Wong to respond to questions on the legislation.

**Mrs. Suki Wong:** I will respond just on the first part of the question, with respect to clause 6.

Clause 6 obviously is a really important section of this legislation. It brings together how the federal government approaches emergencies. One of the key features of this piece of proposed legislation is a common and standardized approach to emergency management, so that in an emergency, it's absolutely clear who is responsible for what aspects of the emergency.

That was an important lesson learned from Hurricane Katrina. It was very difficult. The rules were unclear. So one of the lessons learned from Katrina was that in an emergency, clear rules and responsibilities are absolutely important. This brings us to clause 6, that each minister is responsible for preparing emergency management plans in their own area of expertise. Our minister is not an expert in every aspect of emergency management; he plays the lead in terms of coordinating emergency management activities.

So in terms of clause 6, each minister is responsible for preparing an emergency management plan in their respective jurisdictions or with respect to their mandate. They have to test and maintain those plans to make sure they're current, that they're not sitting on a shelf, and that they're also complementary to other ministers' plans, because there is an interdependent aspect of emergency management.

Each minister is also obliged to consult provinces and territories to make sure that those plans are also complementary. What's distinct or new in this act from the EPA is that the Minister of Public Safety provides guidance on how these plans will be conducted, how they will be maintained, and how they will be implemented. Our minister provides that guidance to ensure a common approach to emergency management at the federal level.

**The Chair:** Okay.

I don't have anyone else on my list.

Is there anybody else on the committee who would like to ask a question?

Mr. Comartin.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** I have a long list, Mr. Chair.

Actually, what I'd like to do is ask all the questions and then see in the three or five minutes you're going to give me if we can get answers.

So let me do that as quickly as possible.

First—

**The Chair:** I'll just ask our witnesses to try to make notes and keep track of them.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** First, was the Federation of Canadian Municipalities consulted during the process of this legislation?

Will there be any change in funding for this part of the department, and have there been any cuts in the department, either in the last budget or in the cuts that occurred last week?

Ms. Wong, on ministerial responsibility, all ministers clearly have to develop these plans, but unless I'm missing something in the legislation, I don't see any mandate for either the Minister of Public Safety or anybody else to monitor those plans to make sure they are complete and updated on an ongoing basis. If I'm right about that, maybe that's happening somewhere internally.

Mr. Baker, you described the drills and testing we do of the systems. From some of the reports I read on FEMA, they did the same thing, and if we'd asked them the questions before Katrina they would have been satisfied that the drills were successful and effective. So I'm just wondering what we do to test the tests and drills we're conducting—if they're real to real-time situations.

Because of my experience during the blackout in Ontario, Mr. Lesser, I have this picture of the minister sitting here in Ottawa not being able to communicate with anybody. I think you said that's been taken care of, but I'd like specific confirmation.

Along the same lines of communications—Ms. Wong, you may need to answer this—one of the problems we had in Windsor at that time was that the local CBC station went off the air. It's both an English and a French service. It was crucial that communications go out in French because between 5% and 7% of our population rely on that as a tool, and they didn't have a backup generator. They were off the air for over an hour. Of course, there was some panic as a result of people not being able to get any communication in their language.

Is there some follow-up for crown corporations, rather than just departments? Are we going to monitor the emergency preparedness plans of crown corporations? I'm thinking in particular of not just the communication industry but the nuclear industry.

The other problem I ran into at that time was I had no idea what I was supposed to do as an MP. Since then I have made several inquiries of our local emergency preparedness people—the head of them is a friend of mine—and they can't tell me what I'm supposed to do. So I'd like to know if there are any plans to give instructions to all MPs or their offices, and I'm talking about their constituency offices rather than their offices on the Hill.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1020)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Deacon, maybe you can direct the questions to the various people.

**Mr. James Deacon:** Thank you.

I'll give the first question on the consultation process with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to Suki.

**Mrs. Suki Wong:** They were consulted.

**Mr. James Deacon:** There have been no specific changes to departmental funding as of yet. There have been no cuts to the department tied specifically to this legislation.

**Mrs. Suki Wong:** On your question about ministerial roles and responsibilities, paragraphs 4(1)(b) and 4(1)(c) are the areas where our minister would be responsible for providing advice to other ministers on their emergency management plans, as well as analyzing and evaluating those plans.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** That wording does not require you to follow up. You do the initial...and then a year from now, two years from now, or four years from now.... I don't see that responsibility in those paragraphs.

**Mrs. Suki Wong:** It provides us the background, with a framework to establish policies and programs to make sure we have a monitoring or evaluating auditing unit in place.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Do you have that now?

**Mr. Michael Baker:** Under the BCP process we have that mandate. This is just enlarging that BCP program into emergency plans.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** But do you have that now in terms of doing the follow-up?

**Mr. Michael Baker:** We do. The emergency management mandate is given to us under this act.

**Mr. James Deacon:** I believe you had a question on FEMA.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** It was to Mr. Baker about testing the tests.

**Mr. Michael Baker:** We go through various levels. We could start with a seminar, going right to a full-scale testing. It will involve that process. We document; we go from our lessons learned. So yes, we do go through that.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Did we learn anything from FEMA, in the sense that when they went back and looked and said they had tested this and thought their system would work...? And I know the system is different; I'm quite aware of that, Mr. Deacon. But did they learn anything? They would say yes, we had these drills, we conducted them in the abstract, and in the practice they worked, but in reality, when we got hit with this, they didn't. Did we learn anything from that?

• (1025)

**Mr. Robert Lesser:** Maybe I can quickly answer that one. One of the challenges was that those whom the feds would normally help were no longer available. By and large, a lot of the first responders were dead or gone. So you didn't have a state asking to assist its first responders, because the first responders were no longer there to ask for assistance.

No one had planned and practised that kind of event. The U.S. government is now taking a look at whether federally they would impose their assistance on a local jurisdiction if they saw this happen again. That is something they are dealing with.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** What about us?

**Mr. Robert Lesser:** We're not looking at that area, that I'm aware of. What we are doing, though, is making—

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** What I'm asking is, have we built that eventuality into our drill, that the first responders may be dead or may have been evacuated?

**Mr. Robert Lesser:** In the ones we've been involved in, just from an ops centre point of view, we haven't. But we have addressed that with the provinces. Most provinces have redundancy. They have regional offices, so that if one area went down, the rest could act.



I think New Orleans was a very unique area. If it had not been for the dikes failing, it would not have been that big a deal. But one of the things they learned from this was that they didn't exercise enough, and although they had a system in place that acted quite similarly to ours as far as its command system was concerned, the officials who were supposed to take the lead on it weren't trained. They hadn't done the training and hadn't done the practising. They found that where the people were well trained and knew the system, things worked well. Where people didn't know the system and hadn't been engaged in training and exercises, it tended to fail.

Another thing that failed was the communications system. They found by and large that the Internet system worked, but there was a real challenge in getting information from New Orleans to Baton Rouge, where the joint field office was, and from Baton Rouge back up to Washington.

There were also indications of officials failing, individual failures of not responding, as was expected of them.

**The Chair:** Were there any other questions that haven't been answered?

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** There were several more that dealt with the issue of communications.

**Mrs. Suki Wong:** About whether or not our minister would have the responsibility to review or to ensure that there would be backup plans for crown corporations.... The answer would be yes, that "government institution" in Bill C-12 does include crown corporations.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** And in the system now, we're not going to have the minister sitting in the dark again?

**Mr. Robert Lesser:** In our operations centre we use the system on a regular basis to test the generators, so we have that. The phone systems as well have been upgraded so that the phones don't die. I think that was a major problem with the blackout.

As well, we have a site that, although not ideal, we will use as an alternate site—it is used to run major exercises from—in Gatineau. It is on a different power grid. So there are those kinds of backups.

Our minister has a variety of communication equipment with him that, as long as it is charged up, should work.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** The other one was what role there was for the member of Parliament.

**The Chair:** Let's wind up with that. You're double your time already.

**Mr. Robert Lesser:** I can't remember the event when it happened, but there were special packages developed for members of Parliament that would give them information on the background. There are usually evergreen lines that are shared very quickly. Within the last two years there were packages put out to members of Parliament saying what they could do. Our role is to support, obviously, ministers and the Government of Canada generally. Usually, out of the communications group in Privy Council Office lead spokespeople are selected, and they are usually the spokespeople. I would think individual members would feed off the main government lines.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie:** I suggest we get out of town and let the professionals take care.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** You know, Mr. MacKenzie, I happened to be down in southwestern Louisiana and met with local officials there—after Rita, actually. That area of the state got hit at that point. They would very much have liked to have senior levels of government involved, and they were nowhere to be seen.

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie:** With all due respect, I think there is a difference—and we have to understand that—between the American system of governance at the municipal level, through their states, and the federal level. Some days, that state level sort of disappears in the American system somehow. I don't know how it happens. But it is different in Canada. The municipal level is very strong and independent. Equally, too, the provinces. So when the municipalities are no longer able to handle something, it quickly goes to the province, whereas down there they seem to look for their federal government to step in.

• (1030)

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Mr. Chair, on that last answer about the MPs and that package, I'm not aware of it. I'd like that information to be sent to the committee, please.

**The Chair:** I'm wracking my brain as well. I do not remember seeing that, but that can sometimes be a problem with our offices.

**Mr. James Deacon:** Mr. Chair, we'll follow up as to what exactly was sent, if that's acceptable.

**The Chair:** Yes, okay. Thank you.

Monsieur Ménard.

[Translation]

**Mr. Serge Ménard:** First of all, Ms. Wong, I appreciate your answers which are accurate and brief. I shall then ask you a tougher question to which you might answer as briefly as you did earlier.

How do you make a distinction between critical and non-critical infrastructures? I do not see any definition in the Bill. Are you referring to a definition? You have certainly talked about the extent of your mandate. Could you speak to that?

[English]

**Mrs. Suki Wong:** You're right, that's a tougher question.

With respect to the definition of critical infrastructure, you're absolutely right, it's not in the legislation. In terms of whether we are referring to a specific definition, we intentionally did not describe it because how each province and how each sector looks at what is critical is different from province to province. For our purposes, to respect jurisdictional responsibilities, it's important that the provinces themselves decide what is critical within their own jurisdiction. As to the federal government, from our perspective we will be identifying critical infrastructure within the federal government as well.

[Translation]

**Mr. Serge Ménard:** Now, could someone explain to me the meaning of the provisions in section 3 and I quote:

3. The Minister is responsible for exercising leadership relating to emergency management in Canada [...]

As you can see it doesn't say "in the Government of Canada", but "in Canada".

Then what is the extent of the lead role played by the Minister in the management of emergencies in Canada?

[English]

**Mr. James Deacon:** Perhaps I can make an initial comment. It includes some of the coordination work that we talked about in terms of working with and bringing jurisdictions together while at the same time totally respecting provincial jurisdiction and their responsibilities and integrating what needs to be done. So it's a coordinating role at the federal level, clearly, and it's a facilitating role in terms of bringing jurisdictions together. At the most basic level, that's the way I would characterize it.

Ms. Wong may have further comments based on the proposed legislation.

[Translation]

**Mr. Serge Ménard:** Now I read and read again paragraph 4(1)(h). I read it in French, I read it in English but I still cannot understand what is its purpose. That paragraph says and I quote:

(h) coordinating the provision of assistance to a province [...] other than the provision of financial assistance and the calling out of the Canadian Forces [...]

I can accept that the federal Government should coordinate the calling out of Canadian Forces if a province requires it, but why that exclusion? It is the same thing for "other than the provision of financial assistance". I think that the federal Government has a useful role to play under the legislation that I mentioned earlier.

Does "coordinating the provision of assistance" means the assistance given by the federal to a province? Is it really what that means?

[English]

**Mrs. Suki Wong:** Paragraph (h) is very specific to non-financial assistance because there are other provisions in the legislation specifically for financial assistance that triggers the DFAA. So in terms of this section, it's very much to coordinate non-financial assistance, in term of federal resources, federal expertise, as well as to make sure that our DFAA, or our non-financial assistance program, doesn't overlap with other government programs. It's to distinguish between our minister's role and other ministers' roles.

•(1035)

**Mr. James Deacon:** Could it be something as simple, Ms. Wong, as, if there were three or four federal departments providing assistance in a given instance, coordinating the work of the federal departments and agencies in that regard?

[Translation]

**Mr. Serge Ménard:** We shall discuss amongst ourselves if it is necessary to better clarify that it is the assistance of the federal

Government that is coordinated and that it is generally provided on the request of a province. That's fine.

Now, Mr. Deacon, in your presentation, you have raised the issue of the requirement for businesses to reveal the risks related to their activities. I do not find anything about it in the Bill. You insisted that you would guarantee them that their trade secrets would be respected. I know that it is a very sensitive issue in high technology businesses that deal with dangerous products. Those businesses would certainly not be very happy to see their information concerning dangerous products and potential disasters in case of an accident published in newspapers on the one hand, or that their statements might be used by their competitors to get their trade secrets, on the other.

I really wonder how you could guarantee to those businesses, in this era of industrial espionage, that you will be able to keep their secrets. This is my last question.

[English]

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. James Deacon:** Just to restate what I was saying, we do need to obtain information. There's no obligation for the private sector to provide the information. That being said, we are developing relationships and looking to develop relationships to get the information we need in order to carry out the emergency management functions appropriately.

With respect to the Access to Information Act, the proposed amendment would make a mandatory exemption from disclosure for this kind of information. That is the purpose: to provide that safeguard, that security in terms of private sector information.

**Mrs. Suki Wong:** Right now the Access to Information Act does not specifically reference information that you just spoke about in terms of vulnerabilities to an electrical grid or a nuclear facility specifically, so it doesn't actually say that information shared with the Government of Canada on specific vulnerabilities on a networking system will be explicitly protected. Having this provision does provide each minister with clarity in terms of what protection could be afforded to the private sector when this information is shared with us.

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

I have two more questioners on my list, and then as a committee, hopefully, we'll have a few minutes at the end to deal with some other items that would not concern our witnesses here.

Mr. Hawn, go ahead, please.

[Translation]

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a very short question. I think that my friend Mr. Ménard is looking for the boogie man where there is none. It's a private joke.

[English]

Are you having any difficulty, just following on with what Monsieur Ménard said, in getting that kind of sensitive information from companies or facilities, or have you really started looking for that yet?

**Mr. Robert Lesser:** Maybe I'll respond from the cyber point of view. It's probably the best example, because within the Government Operations Centre is also the Canadian Cyber Incident Response Centre. It's a CCIRC, similar to those in four or five other countries.

We are now, particularly over the last few months, seeing a very large growth in information that companies are sharing with us. They talk about their vulnerabilities, though not with Microsoft. As a result of Microsoft, there are other vulnerabilities out there. They are sharing a lot of information with us, so for one thing, if you look on our website under the CCIRC page, Canadian Shield, or CShield, we list the ten biggest threats and how you describe them. That comes from the information we get from the private sector. It also talks about ten or so origin countries. I think China is number one. That just means that the original attack comes from that country, and it could be connected to many other countries in behind that.

Certainly from the cyber point of view, and with the telephone companies, we're seeing a lot of information. We have to be very careful, though, to receive it in a way that's generic so that we don't compromise until we can get this kind of protection in. We're able to provide some kinds of services and give them a general overview of the threats, and tell them what they need to take a look at and what may be coming down their way from other countries. That has started very well, and it's been successful.

• (1040)

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** There is a level of confidence and trust that's starting to be built up.

What about the oil patch generally? There is a lot of vulnerability to pipelines and refineries and so on. Is that progressing the way you want it to?

**Mr. Robert Lesser:** Do you want to answer on the CIP?

**Mrs. Suki Wong:** Yes.

In terms of this legislation and the amendment to the Access to Information Act, the amendment is not just for the Minister of Public Safety. It extends to all ministers, so information shared with the Minister of Natural Resources in terms of what you just raised—pipelines or oil patches—would be protected as well. Protecting their information would I think create a trusting environment in which they would feel more confident in sharing that information.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Our final questioner is Mr. Brown.

**Mr. Gord Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a couple of comments. I visited New Orleans a few months ago and saw the devastation, and I'll agree that had the levees not broken, it probably would have been just another hurricane that we probably wouldn't have been talking about.

I learned quite a bit when I was there about how things worked. Maybe Mr. Comartin was down there as well afterwards. There were a lot of issues surrounding communications; that seemed to be a problem as well.

When I was in municipal politics in eastern Ontario, we had the ice storm. Of course nobody anticipated that type of emergency. I'm

happy to hear, and Canadians should be reassured, that people are talking about this and thinking about potential disasters or emergencies. I'm happy to hear ministers and deputy ministers are meeting.

Our real purpose here today is to understand how the act will affect any eventuality. Is there anything in the act we should be concerned about? Is there anything potentially missing? I'll just throw it out to our witnesses. Is there anything there in the act that we should be looking at, or are you pretty happy with what's there?

**Mr. James Deacon:** I think the bill was intended to provide for, and does provide for, a complete, integrated framework that covers the issue of lead and coordination at the federal level—the responsibilities of the ministers within the federal ministry—and reflects the appropriate connections and appropriate relationships with provincial jurisdictions. That's its purpose, and I would suggest it's complete in that respect.

**Mr. Gord Brown:** That's really my concern.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Deacon, do you or any of the other witnesses have any concluding remarks? Were there any loose ends you don't feel comfortable with in some of the comments that have been made?

**Mr. James Deacon:** I think not in that respect, but we have made note of the various information requests that members of the committee made. We'll follow up with the clerk on those requests as soon as we can.

Thank you very much for the opportunity.

**The Chair:** We thank you very much for coming. I think this has been an informative session. You came at very short notice, and I think things went very well. Thank you again very much.

We're going to break for a minute as you leave the table. I would like to ask the MPs here not to leave, because we're going to deal with two items very quickly before we adjourn.

**A voice:** Did you want to go in camera for that?

**The Chair:** No.

• \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• **The Chair:** Let's reconvene and deal with a couple items.

As soon as Mr. Comartin can give us his attention, we'll ask him to clarify.

You had suggested that the committee invite the Canadian Nuclear Association. We need to make a final decision on this matter as a committee. Do we want to invite them here? Maybe the reason we'd like them to come is self-evident, but could you briefly describe your request?

•(1045)

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** I think it is self-evident in terms of one of the major risks, and I would like to have their input as to whether they are satisfied that the bill is extensive enough and that we have not missed anything. I was saying earlier today, Mr. Chair, as well that if we're going to have them, to augment them we may want to bring somebody in from either Hydro-Québec or the hydro system in Manitoba or Ontario, although with Mr. Hawn's point about the oil industry, I just wondered. All three of those obviously have to be concerns for it, and I would think they must have done some extensive thinking—perhaps not as individuals, but the associations that represent them may have done some extensive thinking about what's needed at the governmental level and the federal level. That's where I'm coming from.

**The Chair:** Can I put this out for the committee's consideration: is there any risk to them in coming here?

We were talking about access to information and the fact that they would be exempted from some of this. Would we be exploring any sensitive areas here that may put them at risk in any way? Might the committee want to take this into consideration when we invite these people?

Mr. Hawn.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** I think all of those people in those organizations would be very well aware of what they don't want to tell us or what they don't want to make public. I think they would couch their comments accordingly.

**The Chair:** Mr. MacKenzie.

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie:** I would agree with Mr. Comartin, because I think the petroleum industry indicated that they did wish to appear before us.

The part that is absolutely right is that we are looking at those groups and the need for critical infrastructure or whatever we call it. But we should also be concerned about what their needs are for protecting their proprietary interests. It would do the committee well to hear that need, so that we're comfortable with it when it is drafted.

**The Chair:** Do we have a consensus on that, then, that we will invite them? Everybody agrees on that? Very good.

That includes one of the hydro companies, either Hydro-Québec or Manitoba Hydro.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Mr. Chair, my thinking is that actually it would benefit us if they were all here. Perhaps there could be a panel if they were here all at the same time. That would save the committee time.

**The Chair:** We'll all agree that they will try to come at the same time.

What came up at the meeting today was a visit to the Government Operations Centre in November. They may be able to accommodate us by then. Do we want to follow up on this? Sometimes during a meeting it seems like a good thing, but on sober second thought maybe it's not possible. How does the committee feel about this?

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** I would like to, just because of the history of what happened during the blackout. But I would suggest, Mr. Chair—again because of the schedule we have as a committee—that if we do, we still have our regular committee meetings, and do it at an off time.

**The Chair:** You know that involves preparing a budget, travel, and all this kind of thing. It's just one of those rules.

**Mr. Brent St. Denis:** Just do it here.

**The Chair:** A visit to the Government Operations Centre would be a few blocks off the Hill.

**Mr. Philip Rosen (Committee Researcher):** If I may, Chair, they're in the Jackson Building, which is at Bank and Albert. It's a block away.

**The Chair:** I realize that, but the rules of the House of Commons are such that.... Okay, I'll handle the travel.

Are we agreed that we would like to go when we can find the time that will accommodate all of us? Do you realize that would then delay referring the bill back to the House?

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie:** Would it have to? It doesn't have to be in conjunction with this.

**The Chair:** It wouldn't have to delay?

**An hon. member:** It's just an information session.

**The Chair:** So we may refer the bill back to the House.

I want to tell you all that I really appreciated the tone of the meeting today. I gave some of you a lot of leeway in your questions, but I didn't sense any partisanship, so that's just an explanation as to why I let the questioning continue on. I appreciate your cooperation on this.

•(1050)

**Mr. Gord Brown:** If you hadn't, you wouldn't have?

**The Chair:** If there's a lot of partisanship, I have to enforce the five and seven minutes. That's my role.

Is there anything else before we adjourn? No?

Seeing that there is nothing else on the agenda, this meeting stands adjourned.







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