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# Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

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EVIDENCE

**Thursday, October 8, 2009**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Joe Preston**



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•(1130)

[*English*]

**The Chair (Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC)):** I call the meeting to order.

We're late getting started today because of a vote in the House. I would like to say that we are in public today.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(a)(vi), we are considering matters relating to the election of members to the House of Commons. We have with us today the chief electoral officer, Monsieur Mayrand.

We're happy to have you back with us today. We have a number of topics to cover, but I know you have an opening statement, so we'll let you start with your statement and introduce your members. Then I think we'll get into a pretty interesting discussion.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Mayrand (Chief Electoral Officer, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am pleased to appear before this Committee today to discuss four important subjects. The first of these is the draft Referendum Regulations I forwarded to the Committee in June. The second is our election readiness. The last two subjects include the Report on the Evaluations of the 40th General Election of October 14, 2008, and my forthcoming recommendations to Parliament. Because of the number of items I have been asked to address, my remarks highlight the key issues.

I am accompanied today by Rennie Molnar, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer, Electoral Events; and Stéphane Perreault, Senior General Counsel.

Let's start with the referendum question.

The Referendum Act requires the Chief Electoral Officer to make regulations adapting the Canada Elections Act so that it can apply to a federal referendum. The current regulations were last updated in 2001, based on the Act as it existed at that time. Parliament has since made several amendments to the Canada Elections Act. As a result, new regulations must be made that reflect the current Act.

On June 12, 2009, I forwarded the proposed regulations to you and sought your feedback as I intend to make the regulations in November of this year. While the drafting of the regulations is essentially a technical exercise, a number of difficulties arose when we tried to integrate the provisions of the 1992 Referendum Act with those of the Canada Elections Act, a statute that has evolved significantly since that time. I am pleased to report that we have now

found viable solutions to some of these difficulties, particularly in connection with the distribution of the lists of electors.

In other cases, however, the issues identified in the document you received in June remain. I indicated in my note that the Referendum Act provides no authority for the returning officers to appoint deputy returning officers and clerks except for those individuals recommended by parties. This could certainly become a challenge in light of the decline of the number of workers recommended by political parties, which in some provinces, amounts to as little as 2% or 3% of workers hired for an election.

We have also recently identified two other matters of which you should be aware. The first concern is that, in the current Referendum Act, inmates serving a sentence of two years or more cannot vote in a referendum. That is because while the exclusion of inmates under the Canada Elections Act was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of Canada in *Sauvé* (2002) and is therefore without effect in the context of elections, it remains formally in the Act. However, in *Haig v. Canada*, the Supreme Court ruled in 1993 that the constitutional right to vote in an election did not extend to voting in a referendum. Given this ruling of the Court, there would be no authority for me to adapt the rules to enable these prisoners to vote during a referendum. This discrepancy with respect to the treatment of inmates can only be addressed in the context of a legislative review.

The second challenge is that while the Director of Public Prosecutions Act provides the DPP specific authority to prosecute offences under the Canada Elections Act, it does not give him the express authority to prosecute offences under the Referendum Act. The uncertainty regarding the authority of the DPP may compromise the ability to prosecute.

In light of the various issues related to the age of the Referendum Act, I think that it would be highly desirable for Parliament to consider a legislative review. I would be pleased to provide you with specific recommendations regarding the difficulties that are technical in nature. In the meantime, my intention is to make the regulations in November in order for us to have an up-to-date legislative framework in case a referendum is called.

I would like to turn now to election readiness.

Let me take this opportunity to assure you that Elections Canada is ready to administer a general election whenever one is called. I recently held a teleconference with representatives of the Advisory Committee of Political Parties to share our approach and level of preparedness for a general election. When it comes, the 41st general election will be delivered with some targeted enhancements which were put into place in response to the agency's post-election evaluations.

Among these we directed returning officers to conduct a review of advance poll districts in rural areas with the objective of improving access for rural voters. As a result, 397 advance polls will be added across the country.

•(1135)

Returning officers are in the process of sharing the results of this exercise with representatives of political entities who were consulted during the review stage.

I have also made some minor changes to the List of Pieces of Identification I authorize, as Chief Electoral Officer. These changes reflect feedback from the consultations and the evaluations that we conducted on the voter identification requirements.

In addition, we have revised our approach for training election officers and have updated our training manuals. These changes should ensure a more consistent application of the voter identification rules by poll workers. Last week, I participated in several meetings that were held across the country with returning officers and training officers and found that our efforts were well received.

[English]

When I appeared before you last February, I indicated that we intended to review the tariff for the payment of electoral workers. However, in light of the Expenditure Restraint Act, which was passed by Parliament last winter, I've had to defer this review for the time being.

Before concluding on this topic, let me say that I am aware that concerns have been expressed regarding the potential impacts of the H1N1 flu virus during an electoral event. I take these concerns very seriously, as impacts may vary considerably across the country. My overall concern is to exercise due diligence by providing continuous services to electors. This may require us to adapt services to circumstances as they arise.

In many cases the steps we are taking to address H1N1 challenges are extensions of contingencies we already have in the field to address situations such as poll worker absenteeism, staff shortages, or difficulties in finding poll sites. We are applying the guidelines of the Public Health Agency of Canada by adopting additional precautionary measures to provide a healthy environment for electors and workers. This includes ensuring that alcohol-based hand cleansers are available at each polling station and that posters with information on H1N1 prevention are on display.

My next topic today is on evaluation and recommendations. The evaluation report, a first for Elections Canada, discusses the results of our evaluations of the 40th general election. It serves as a bridge between my statutory report and the report on recommended changes to the legislation, which will be coming later on.

Our evaluations, while generally positive, and in fact they are quite positive, point to a number of areas in need of either legislative or administrative improvements. In some cases we are in the process of developing recommendations to address issues raised by the evaluations; in other cases we are exploring what can be accomplished administratively.

I would like to briefly discuss three key areas: identification, political financing, and administrative processes.

On identification, according to our evaluations the vast majority of electors were aware of the new identification requirements. They accepted them, and they came to vote prepared to satisfy those requirements. However, some groups, such as students, seniors in residences, electors residing in long-term-care facilities, and aboriginal Canadians living on reserves, appear to have experienced more difficulties than the general population with the proof of address requirement. I believe one way of addressing this is to continue to engage such electors to ensure we fully understand the challenges they face with the requirements so we are able to develop proper solutions.

Over the next few months we will also be evaluating the feasibility of adding the voter information card to the list of authorized documents to make it easier for these electors and others to prove their addresses.

Finally, we should consider whether the current provisions for vouching may be overly restrictive of electors' abilities to vouch for family members. An approach similar to that used in British Columbia, where a relative can vouch for any voters who are family members, may be better adapted to the needs of electors.

Political financing is another area of concern that I think merits your attention. Successive changes to the Canada Elections Act have placed a significant regulatory burden on participants in the political process. This is particularly acute for official agents and financial agents who are required to understand and respect the requirements. My next report will propose changes that aim to lessen this burden, within the context, of course, of the existing public policy framework.

Finally, on administrative processes, feedback from returning officers points to a growing concern about our ability to ensure sustainable services at polling sites across the country while working within the constraints set by the act. While we can, as I mentioned earlier, improve our training procedures and manuals, we believe it may be time to explore new models for voting operations. This approach could provide better service to electors and address some of the challenges involved in recruiting and training workers for increasingly complex tasks.

•(1140)

The key priority for my office is to take advantage of new technology to make the electoral process more accessible to electors. We have recently begun work on e-registration, an initiative aimed at improving registration services by allowing electors to register online. This project is at the stage of design, and its initial implementation is planned for March 2011. My forthcoming report, following consultation with political parties, will include proposals for legislative changes that would allow us to implement online registration. I now expect this report to be tabled in the spring of 2010.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my remarks for today. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to discuss these issues with the committee.

At this time, my colleagues and I would be pleased to answer any questions.

Thank you.

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

As we've seen from your opening remarks, we have a number of areas we'd like to cover today. I know there are many questions out there, so we'll get right to it.

Monsieur Proulx.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, Mr. Mayrand. I want to welcome you and thank you, and Messrs. Molnar and Perreault, for agreeing to meet with us this morning.

You talked about adding nearly 400 advance polls. Are those changes reserved for rural areas or have you also considered certain changes or increases in urban areas?

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** We've considered everything. As regards what was ready for October 1, we were talking about the introduction of new districts for rural ridings and communities. The other phase, which consists in revising all polling divisions of all the ridings, is underway and should be completed in the spring.

**Mr. Marcel Proulx:** I understand. However, some regions are still being developed and increased. That may not be the case everywhere in Canada or across the country, but it's the case in my region. We have new living areas, as it were. You're going to look at electoral boundary readjustment, but that also leads to a problem with advance polling. The polling stations are too far away and not big enough. Perhaps a review can be conducted at some point, taking into consideration all the changes that there will be in the polling divisions.

You say you've made some minor changes to the List of Pieces of Identification. I understood from your other report that you want to add another piece that would be accepted, the voter—

•(1145)

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** —the voter information card.

**Mr. Marcel Proulx:** That's it. We had previously discussed that. We were fearful, just as you are, because that card would be sent all over the place without there necessarily being any complete control by Canada Post. If Canada Post checked the names, that might be different. How do you think you can prevent fraud?

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** First I want to emphasize that the voter information card has not yet been added to the list of authorized pieces. Consequently, it will not be possible to use that card in the next election that was recently triggered.

Over the next few months, we're going to conduct a feasibility study. Some information suggests that 90% of voters receive correctly identified and correctly addressed information cards. That represents a large number of people. So we're trying to address specific situations. I mentioned the case of seniors living in residences who often don't have access to other pieces of identification. We've seen this problem during electoral events, and yet a review is being done in seniors centres. We're going to visit them, we go back and see them 10 years later and they don't have the pieces of identification. So that could be a solution for certain voter groups. In the coming months, we'll first be checking the effectiveness of that tool, if we were to adopt it.

In addition, what are the measures that we'll have to take? First we'll have to review the identity card itself and review the method for distributing and collecting the cards in order to avoid dispersion.

**Mr. Marcel Proulx:** All right.

You're talking about suggestions made by candidates and about the bureaucratic burden. This will seem trivial, but you'll remember a recommendation that I made. I asked you a question about the appropriateness of doing shredding at Elections Canada's headquarters instead of letting the regional chairs do their own shredding.

I understand that transporting all that back to Elections Canada supports the carriers, but there are definitely significant savings to be made if you have the shredding done in each riding.

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** That's something we'll have to consider, indeed. However, we have to make sure that electoral material is well identified.

**Mr. Marcel Proulx:** All right.

I have one final question on the official agents. This is an important strength, and I would like the chair to extend my speaking time so that you can answer the question, but that won't happen.

We have to reduce red tape and the ways of reporting... What are you considering doing to improve the situation of official agents?

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** Over the summer, we sent 24 or 25 discussion documents to members of the Advisory Committee of Registered Political Parties to gather their views on the various issues, a number of which concerned the regulatory burden of political entities. We're looking at the possibility of reviewing the requirements. For example, official agents that are behind in producing their reports have to go to court. That's an additional cost for them.

These are the kinds of measures we're currently examining, without of course questioning the principles of transparency and accountability that must be complied with after an election. These are more technical measures that are designed, as far as possible, to simplify or reduce the agents' burden.

• (1150)

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Lukiwski.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, CPC):** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Monsieur Mayrand.

If I may, I want to deal with some of the elements of your preparedness for H1N1. I think we all hope it doesn't become as serious as some are suggesting it might; we hope it doesn't become a pandemic. However, obviously governments, your agency, and others have to be prepared for the worst.

You're aware that there's a series of byelections. I'm going to ask you about the one in British Columbia specifically, because news reports seem to indicate that the rate of H1N1 incidence being diagnosed in British Columbia is rising fairly rapidly.

I have a couple of questions.

Obviously I'd like to know what your level of preparedness is, specifically for the British Columbia by-election, but in particular, what would happen, as an example, if someone walked into a polling station who was coughing, sneezing, and exhibiting all of the traits of someone who perhaps had contracted H1N1? Clearly, because of privacy considerations you couldn't question that person, but how do you balance the right of the individual who wants to vote with respect for public safety? That's question number one.

Secondly—and God forbid this ever happens—what would happen if, in a particular riding or a region where there was a wide outbreak of H1N1, thousands of potential voters were stricken with it and were unable to vote? Have you considered, for example, either moving or rescheduling voting day? Do you think this would have an impact on the outcome of an election? This could be quite a serious situation. I'd like to know in more detail than you've provided in your report the type of contingency plans you have been considering in case of an widespread outbreak of H1N1.

And there are those particular questions: what happens if somebody walks into the polling station who's obviously ill and may have H1N1—how do you deal with that individual?—and what happens if, before voting day, thousands of potential voters have been stricken and are literally unable to come to the polling station?

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** Again, it's a matter of serious concern that we're seeking to address, based on the advice of public health authorities, of course.

In the case of the by-election in B.C., we're already taking steps. Of course there will be material, hand sanitizers that will be distributed and available at each polling station across the riding. There will also be wipes to allow for cleaning of surfaces throughout the day. There will also be training for our workers as well as for the

information officer who greets electors when they come. They will point to the posters indicating best practice for reducing the risk of dissemination of infections, and again, beyond that, we will have to deal with the specific circumstances at hand. But our central supervisors will be trained to deal with situations as they arise.

With regard to a possible more severe outbreak, which would cause electors to abstain from attending polling facilities, again, this all depends on the exact circumstances at hand. Electors have various alternatives for voting. They can use advance polls. They can use the regular poll. For those who are truly impeded from attending polling stations, they could also vote in person at the returning officer's office or vote by mail. So there are alternatives for electors.

Again, contemplating some severe scenarios, the authority under the legislation to adapt is there to deal with specific emergencies that may arise during voting days. That being said, the act is very clear on extending hours for voting. It does not authorize rescheduling of voting days.

• (1155)

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Mr. Chair—and I'm sorry, Mr. Mayrand—I'm needed in the House for a moment, so I will cede my time to my colleague, Mr. Reid.

**The Chair:** There are two minutes left, Mr. Reid, if you'd like to take the two minutes.

**Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC):** There is just one thing that really does concern me. I've had this concern for a while. I may even have mentioned it to you at a previous meeting. One of the ideal locations from an accessibility point of view for polling stations is at seniors' residences. Obviously, they're wheelchair accessible, for one thing. But every time I go into one on election day, I have the same thought. You come in and there's that little hand sanitizer at the front and the note saying if you are suffering from a communicable disease, please come no further. But of course it's your right to vote on voting day. So that polling station, not a mobile poll but a polling station in a seniors' home for people from the outside community, produces two conflicting rights at work.

Obviously, that thought must have crossed your mind as well. I'm just wondering how you suggest dealing with that particular problem.

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** That's one of the issues that is being considered in dealing specifically with the H1N1 situation, and we did get representation from some authorities handling those seniors' homes to the effect that as much as possible we should limit having the general elector population attending those sites.

So returning officers are looking at alternative sites, to redirect the general public who traditionally have voted at seniors' homes. That's one of the measures that is being looked at right now for the by-elections, for sure.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Also, is there any consideration of doing that more generally as a general practice in the future?

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** Again, it depends. Finding sites for times that meet access requirements, as you mentioned, and also locations in terms of proximity to electors—these are important considerations, but of course they have to be balanced against the preoccupation for health of senior residents. And yes, we are looking at alternatives—always.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Can I make one suggestion in this vein, very, very briefly?

**The Chair:** Mr. Reid, do it on the next round. We'll get back. It's pretty tight today, so I want to make sure everybody gets a chance.

Monsieur Guimond.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have the same concern as my colleague Mr. Proulx concerning the 397 added advance polling stations. At first glance, that doesn't seem a lot to me.

How many advance polling stations are there in Canada?

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** The increase of some 400 advance polls is a 10% increase in the number of advance polls in the ridings.

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** Could you provide the clerk with the distribution of those 397 stations in the provinces?

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** Yes, no problem.

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** Thank you.

I also want to make a comment on what my colleague Mr. Proulx mentioned. The voter information card: don't think about it. It would be good for people who work on your team to come and conduct an election campaign with us to see. You're thinking of that, in your ivory tower here, in Ottawa, but in the field... I invite one of your officials to come into the field to do a tour of the apartment buildings with me and to see how voter cards are managed. They litter entrance halls; the Canada Post employee doesn't put them in the right place. In addition, apartment buildings aren't all like those where the mother lives upstairs in the residence of her child, who lives downstairs. That's not the actual situation in Quebec and Canada. These are buildings of 32 apartments, 64 apartments, bigger ones, condos. Come and see in the field. Get out a little and come and see how the voter information cards are managed. I'm telling you: don't even think about it. After the next election—if people still trust me—I'm going to bring you a package this thick of cards that litter the street, that litter the lawn. Don't think about it. Go into the field during an election campaign. Hire some students and ask them to go and see how it works.

I want to tell you that I'm disappointed with your presentation this morning, for three things, two in particular. Memory is a faculty that forgets; everyone knows that. You've made the headlines—and you, personally, have been forced to respond to the media—on the subject of the safekeeping of ballot boxes during advance polls. There was the case of the riding of Quebec City. It's true that I had to manage my office as whip during certain parts of your presentation. However, I don't remember hearing you talk about it or say that you're working on this issue. We'll have to look seriously for a place where they can be left when there are no advance polls. We found

them in the trunk of a car, and you were on the news. I spoke about it individually with you following the election. I don't think I'm betraying any secrets of the confessional. I told you I was sure the Chief Electoral Officer hadn't liked being on the news for two or three days during the last election. That means that I expected you to tell us this morning that you were working on that issue.

I also expected you to be working on the issue of voting with an uncovered face. That hasn't been resolved yet. What do you do with people who vote while wearing goalie masks, plastic bags, burqas, etc.? I don't think that's resolved yet. I was expecting you to act like the Chief Electoral Officer instead of making arrangements such as going into a small back room—an arrangement that shows that we don't recognize equality between men and women—since the person unveils herself solely in front of a woman. Canada and Quebec are considered secular societies. Every person must uncover his or her face in order to vote. I think that's entirely normal.

I would also have liked to talk about mobile polling in seniors residences. Currently it's the residence owners who must ask the returning officer to take the ballot box. I asked my local returning officer why he didn't do the reverse, and whether it was like the Guaranteed Income Supplement: the 82-year-old who doesn't know he's entitled to the supplement and who doesn't request it and doesn't get it. However, in this case, it's easy to survey the seniors residences and to ask the individuals responsible whether they are interested in having a ballot box.

• (1200)

Sometimes the owner has a manager, a coordinator or a nurse working evenings. They may not even vote. They can take the letter, and the owner will never see it. These are our seniors who have worked all their lives and pay taxes. They have the right to choose their representative.

I'll let you respond to that.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** You have about 40 seconds to answer all of that.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** First, the voter information card wouldn't be the only proof of identity. It would have to be combined with another piece authorized under the act. So there's already a safeguard measure in that respect.

Second, we'll have a solution for seniors. Perhaps we should offer them more opportunities to vote. They should also be given the opportunity to comply with the rules of identification.

That said, the concerns you raise are important and significant, and we will have to consider them, including methods for distributing voter information cards to ensure they aren't piled up in the entrances of apartment buildings.

The safekeeping of ballot boxes is an issue that we've discussed with the political parties, and we're still awaiting their views on that. We've proposed various options and we're examining the situation.

Voting with the face uncovered is an issue that was extensively debated in 2007. It gave rise to a bill that did not receive royal assent. I would be very happy to implement the statutory provisions as soon as they are passed by Parliament.

I'm a bit surprised by your comments on mobile polling because it is prescribed by law. One of the returning officer's duties is to identify seniors residences and to actively offer mobile polling. If that weren't the case, there might be reason to discuss the matter in greater depth.

• (1205)

[English]

**The Chair:** That's another topic to get back to.

Monsieur Godin, it's your turn.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome to our committee. With regard to people living in seniors residences, there's a problem because people of a certain age may not have all their identity cards.

Nevertheless, what can be done to help the homeless who do not have identification cards? In the past, a person could sign for a number of persons, and I don't want to cast the blame on you.

What was the problem during the last general election? What are your recommendations?

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** The homeless are indeed a group that have difficulties. We have put a measure in place to enable shelters to issue letters of attestation of residence. A homeless person wishing to vote could obtain proof of address by getting a letter of attestation from a shelter. That letter will have to be combined with another piece of identification, which may be a social insurance card or health insurance card or various other government cards that a homeless person may have in his or her possession.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** One of the problems involved in voting with an uncovered face is the following. A person may present a letter from a centre attesting to his address and a provincial health insurance card. However, in New Brunswick, there is no photograph on that card. Even if someone has a bag on his head, you have to identify him. We can't ask someone who receives these people to know everyone who appears before him. If the person has no photo to show, whether or not that person has a piece of identification, it doesn't change much if you can't see the person's face.

In addition, you don't see the faces of people who vote by mail. That was your argument. If someone wants to walk around with a bag on his head, that's his problem. That doesn't change the vote. He can be at home and vote by mail with a bag on his head. We don't know that.

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** Indeed, one of the difficulties is that there aren't any tools for comparison.

In certain other countries, the voter's photograph appears on the electoral list. However, that is not the case in Canada, and I don't believe it will be soon. There aren't any tools for comparison, particularly since, in view of developments in Canada's demo-

graphics—we shouldn't have any illusions—election workers can't claim to know all the voters. So there's no point of comparison. Moreover, the current act does not require proof of identity by photograph.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** If such proof were required, even people who vote at home would have to send their photographs. You have to tell it like it is. It may look good in front of a camera and on television because we look very intelligent, but in fact that changes nothing. We're causing a program rather than acting.

I'd like to thank you for the bingo card proposal which comes from Michel. It's a very good system. People back home liked that. They didn't all know the whole story behind the bingo card, but they wrote down the names of the people who voted and sent them to the political parties so that we knew who voted and who didn't. It worked very well.

I think you can identify only one person. Does that give the people who work for Elections Canada the right to identify people who appear and let such and such a person vote if they know them?

• (1210)

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** Only a voter registered in the same polling division can—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** What would be the punishment for someone working at Elections Canada who started to play that little game?

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** I'm not sure I quite understand.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Perhaps I spoke Acadian; so I'm going to restate my question. If a person working for Elections Canada is responsible for receiving voters and that person says he knows such and such a person and wants to let him vote even if his colleague tells him that the voter doesn't have an identification card—

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** That would be entirely inappropriate. All voters have to prove their identity and their address.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** It's not up to Elections Canada to do so.

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** Absolutely not. It's the voter's responsibility. Elections Canada's responsibility is to inform voters on the best way to do it or on their various options, but elections staff can't identify voters.

That's caused a number of problems because, in rural ridings, elections staff know the neighbours who come and vote at the polling station. That causes tension between staff and voters.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** If I still have some time, I'm going to tell you a little story. I went into a polling station to say hello to people, as the law allows me to do. I met a gentleman whom I knew very well, as well as everyone working for Elections Canada. They refused to allow him to vote, and, when he left, he said he would never vote again in his life.

I think a lot of situations like that have occurred.

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** Election workers have told us about certain incidents like that.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** That's all for the moment.

[English]

**The Chair:** All right.



That takes us out of our seven-minute round into our five-minute round. I thank you all for your cooperation so far.

Mr. Cuzner, five minutes.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Thank you very much.

I'm a little concerned about my two colleagues here expressing a little bit of trepidation with the upcoming election, and people showing up with bags over their heads. Maybe Montreal Canadiens fans, after getting beat by Vancouver last night, seven to one....

**An hon. member:** Now, play nice.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** When you were here last, I expressed concerns about university students, the abysmal numbers around young people voting in this country, and what we can do to help address that. Perhaps I could get some comments from you as to where you're going with some ideas, some initiatives on this.

I know the focus has been on trying to bring the importance of voting to the young people, and there have been some initiatives in that area. My sense is that we have to go beyond that. I raised this the last time around. For example, reading your brief, it seemed the University of Lethbridge, when they announced that people were going to be able to vote at the university no matter where they lived, thought that would be a great exercise. I see the complications around that, but at St-FX last year, which is in Antigonish, the advanced poll was in Stellarton—45 minutes to an hour away—and not a lot of university students have transportation. So the only time they could really access an advance poll was if they were home during a break weekend. When a lot of kids go to school, that's it, they're gone for the year.

What I'm looking at is an answer that will not only motivate the young people to vote, but also bring the mechanism where it's advertised that we're going to be on campus: advertise the week before and let them know we're going to be there for a week, so make sure you get your vote in the box. I'm only thinking about what we can do to engage those people.

• (1215)

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** We're working, I would say, at a more generic level, and then at a more specific level, in terms of delivering an election. At the more generic level, first of all we're doing a fair bit of research to understand the phenomena and the factors at play now, and we're trying to disseminate and broaden the understanding around the issues that affect turnout. We're looking at working with various youth organizations across the country to learn from them how to best engage youth in the democratic process. We have a number of initiatives at a broader, general level, which would be, I guess, working in the longer term.

In terms of delivering an election, I think one of the things that I mentioned today again is that students may face challenges in proving their addresses. One solution to alleviate their challenges in proving their address—again, I'm referring to the voter information card—is those students can be registered on campus. If they live in residence, they will receive a voter identification card at their residence. That could help establish their residence on campus, even though their driver's licence shows that they come from Halifax but

they're studying in Ottawa. So that would be one improvement that would facilitate voting by students.

Beyond that, we need to look at the legislation. I've heard the question several times, "Why don't we let students vote on campus?" I think we would need to put a fair bit of thought around that, and what the impact would be. What are some other scenarios or some alternatives that need to be considered? But in every case, it requires substantive changes to the Canada Elections Act.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** I simply think everybody around the table would share a similar view, that we have to do our utmost to engage young people. Even more so, we can spend whatever money we want, but we have to make it absolutely as easy as possible to facilitate that.

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** The one thing we need to do a fair bit more, I think—and it's not only Elections Canada, I think it's the whole civil society—is to engage the young generation much earlier and on an ongoing basis, not simply around election time. Over the next while, provided the pace of elections is reduced a bit, it's certainly something that Elections Canada would like to pursue with various partners.

**The Chair:** Monsieur Lauzon.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC):** Thank you very much for coming, gentlemen.

I have some concerns, as some of my colleagues have, about this H1N1. It's probably the same in all ridings. In my riding, many of the polling stations are in schools or seniors homes, which is where you have a high collection of people very vulnerable to this H1N1. Has any thought been given to...? Let's say, for example, if there were a spring election, has Elections Canada thought that maybe we'd better not go into the homes for the aged or to the schools to vote? Maybe we should go to a more private location. The other places are legion halls. It seems you always go where there is a concentration of people, which will probably cause some problems with H1N1. Heaven forbid that should happen, but as you said, you have to be prepared for that. I would be concerned, especially with the elderly, because their health is sometimes very fragile.

Another thing, the last time under ideal conditions on October 14, I believe it was, we had 60% turnout across the country. As one of my colleagues said, what if we have...? If 10% of the people are sick with H1N1 and can't get to the polls, what is the threshold? Is it 10%? If we go down to 50%, does that qualify as a legitimate election? If we go down to 30%? What's the bar? Where is the bottom? We could end up having an election and maybe having 30% to 40% of people attending, if it was at the wrong time. We have to give some thought as to what you're going to do about that.

The flip side of that is what are you going to do if on election day...? Every year we have a few phone in who can't make it. What are you going to do if 30% of your staff doesn't show up? Are you training extra in that event, so you have a built-in 20% or 30%? Has that been considered? There are a lot of things....

• (1220)

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** Absolutely, that's part of the scenario. There are two main considerations: maintaining our capacity to deliver service to electors while making sure we have enough staff. If there is a breakout.... And one thing we should always keep in mind is that these breakouts tend to be local. In a particular riding, a certain area of a riding, we may have severe shortages. We have some experience in dealing with that. We always have standby workers.

In light of the concerns around H1N1, we will be increasing the number of standbys.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** To what level?

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** Right now it's about 10%. We'll be looking at 20%. Again, that will depend on what is happening through the course of the campaign.

An alternative to that, if we are truly short of staff, is that we can merge polls. This requires less staff, but it has some impact on electors. They may have to wait longer.

If there is such a breakout, you would expect that if we're missing 30% of our staff because of H1N1, I would think that electors would be showing up in lesser numbers because they would be affected by the same circumstances. Our staff comes from the community.

In terms of sites, we always have backup sites. I shouldn't say always; in 99% of cases we have backup sites. The issue with H1N1 is that maybe we should increase the number of alternatives.

As I mentioned earlier, given some of the concerns about the use of seniors homes, we should avoid having the general population attending those locations. We'll look at that, but that may require affected electors to travel farther to get to a proper location. Close to 70% of our sites are schools, community centres, municipal halls, churches or other places of worship. We're working as we speak with the providers of those sites to understand what their approach would be if there was a breakout. We're looking at alternative options. For example, what would our option be if a school board were to close all the schools in a riding? I can't say it wouldn't have an effect. It would. We might have alternative sites, but it would impact on electors.

That being said, I think we have to be careful to monitor what the health authorities are advising. So far there is no indication an election represents any greater risk than any public or social activities the population runs on any given day. There's no indication at this time that there would be a massive close-out of sites.

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

Monsieur Guimond.

[Translation]

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Mayrand, you said—and it's written in your document—that you went to a number of meetings across Canada that were attended

by returning officers. They no doubt mentioned to you that it was hard to find election workers. I'm talking about officials appointed by the returning officers on recommendation by the parties—and even their own staff.

There are two problems, including remuneration, which is distinctly inadequate. In view of the fact that hours have been extended to encourage people to exercise their right to vote, the person who was earning \$5 an hour now earns \$3. This has become a problem. In the second paragraph on page 7 of your remarks, you say you intended to review that, but had decided to defer that review in view of the current economic situation.

That's understandable, but I'd like to know how long it will be deferred. The recession will apparently be lasting a year or two more; I don't really know. In short, are you going to consider this question again in the shorter term?

In addition, since you have to find people who aren't working, some of those people receive the Guaranteed Income Supplement. Do you think people who work from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. or from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. in a plant or office will use their leave days to go and work there? If you go into polling stations on election day, you'll no doubt see that these are retirees, students or employment insurance claimants.

Could we consider the possibility that their earnings, as a result of a legislative amendment, I agree, might not be considered as income within the meaning of the Income Tax Act and the act concerning the Guaranteed Income Supplement? There are people who are still very alert, who are 68 years old, for example, and who receive the Guaranteed Income Supplement. But what would be the appeal for them? Their supplement would be cut off. For other people, it would be the employment insurance benefits. Would there be some way of considering that aspect?

I have other questions.

You'll probably have 40 seconds to answer, which is very impolite on the part of the Chair, who is depriving witnesses of the opportunity to respond, but that's another matter.

**In the first paragraph on page 9, you say the following:** Our evaluations, while generally positive, point to a number of areas in need of either legislative or administrative improvements. In some cases, we are in the process of developing recommendations to address issues raised by the evaluations. In other cases, we are exploring what can be accomplished administratively.

I understand that the last part of the paragraph concerns the administrative aspect. However, I would like to know whether, when you talk about recommendations for solving the problems raised, that means you are currently considering draft amendments to improve the act.

Furthermore, you are concerned by the decline in voter turnout. I'm convinced that it troubles you, as much as it troubles us by the way, to see that fewer and fewer of our fellow citizens are interested in politics. I'm going to ask you the question once again: have you considered holding advance polling days on Sunday?

• (1225)

[English]

**The Chair:** Will you allow an answer, or do you want us just to...? We'll have no time if we don't allow an answer.

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** Okay. I can come in on the third or fourth round, no problem.

**The Chair:** Okay. You can answer, Mr. Mayrand.

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** On the question of the tariff, of remuneration for election workers, we conducted an analysis, proposing adjustments to at least make the tariff competitive with that of other electoral organizations in the country.

However, after consulting with Treasury Board, we realized that the act, which restricts spending, has an impact and includes election workers. As a result of that restriction, we won't be able to grant an increase in the next two years. Upon the expiry of that act, we'll see what the situation is. Obviously, Elections Canada wants to find a way to give election workers adequate compensation for their work.

As to the Guaranteed Income Supplement, which is lowered as a result of the work people do on election day, that's a question that requires legislative amendments. I'm going to raise it in my recommendations report, which will be tabled during the year.

To avoid all confusion, between now and the spring, I will be tabling a report in Parliament containing a number of recommendations for amending and improving the act and facilitating its administration. In the meantime, when we can do things administratively, we try to put them forward. I noted a few this morning and others are on the way.

• (1230)

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Monsieur Mayrand, do we know when we will have that statutory report?

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** It will be in the spring. There were some delays. Earlier I indicated that it would be in December. Over the summer we released 25 discussion papers to political parties to get their feedback. Given what happened in August and September, I think everybody was busy and was focusing on other things. So I think we will need until the spring to come back to Parliament.

**The Chair:** We very much look forward to that statutory report.

Monsieur Godin, do you have anything short on this one?

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Do I have five minutes?

**The Chair:** Sure. I'm trying to get everybody in today.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** The student vote—at the universities—is a concern. A turn-out rate of 58% is not a record; we're not headed in the right direction. We have to be sensitive to that. We say we want our young people to vote, but we have to give them access to the vote.

During the 2008 election, the newspaper L'Acadie Nouvelle published an article on a person from the Université de Moncton who had had trouble going to vote. First of all, young people aren't all that interested in voting. If, in addition, we cause problems for them, we're off to a bad start. If, for example, we recognize the address of a student who attends the University of Ottawa, that mustn't prevent him from voting, if he comes from another riding. That person has simply left home to go and vote. If we want to obtain information on that person, we have to find his or her address, but there the residence has to... That person hasn't moved away forever, and that's to be hoped. In any case, the cities or ridings that have a university would benefit from the fact that there are more people who vote. Those people aren't there permanently. I don't know whether I'm making myself understood.

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** Yes. I simply want to point out that, in the case of students, the act provides that they can elect their place of residence. That can be their usual permanent residence or, if they don't really intend to return to their family residence, they may elect residence in Ottawa. For example, it may be a person from Moncton who has come to study in Ottawa and who doesn't necessarily intend to return to Moncton after university. That person can vote in the Ottawa riding; the act provides for that.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Is it different for a soldier at National Defence?

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** It's different. There is a special provision for students.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** As not all cities have universities, something particular could be provided for students.

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** You're right on that point.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** That's the problem.

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** That raises other problems, but you're right on that point.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Something else concerns me very much because it hasn't been resolved. And that's the issue of worker mobility. It's a major problem. People who leave to go and work in Alberta have had problems and have said that they couldn't vote. They're in Fort McMurray and the polling station is in Edmonton. In Fort McMurray, they're in camps and can't vote. When I phoned Elections Canada, I was told that signs had been set up in the field, in cafeterias and everywhere. I swear it's true, and I've done my work on that. I take the plane every week, I meet people who are leaving Alberta to go to New Brunswick, and they say they've never seen an Elections Canada poster. I trust them; I figure they're right.

This is a problem because it concerns a lot of people. They leave from everywhere in the country to go and work on the oil wells in Alberta, and this isn't resolved. What do you think you can do to solve that problem? It's a serious problem. Full airplanes are going to Alberta twice a day, every day. People work 20 days, 10 days or 30 days; they go there regularly. Some people have left the riding on election day at 6:00 a.m. and haven't had the right to vote the previous day because advance polling had been closed for a week.

• (1235)

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** We offer an option to those workers who are in transit, who are working temporarily, often in work camps in Alberta, as you mentioned, but also across the country. They have the option of voting under the special rules. Unless they have the opportunity to return to their riding for one of the voting days, they can vote in accordance with the special rules. There are all kinds of restrictions and requirements.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** No, I'm not familiar with those rules, but that doesn't work for them.

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** I believe my predecessor previously suggested that those rules be revised. Starting the revision, I believe, is the responsibility of this committee.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** It's not an administrative rule. The act doesn't prevent you from setting up a place to vote in work camps.

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** Pardon me?

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** The act doesn't prevent you from sending someone to the site to enable people to vote.

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** I can't use mobile polling stations in work camps. The use of mobile polling stations is very restricted by the act. It's possible in places where long-term care is provided, in seniors residences. The rules will have to be revised.

I see that the Chair wants me to stop. Pardon me.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Godin takes advantage of being way at the end.

Thank you very much.

That's the end of the second round. We're moving into the third round, and I still have five or six speakers on the list and very little time left in the meeting. So I'd like you all to take some care in asking fairly quick questions, if you'd like an answer.

Monsieur Proulx is first.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marcel Proulx:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'd like to go back very briefly to the question of remuneration for workers. As a result of its wage freeze, the Conservative government doesn't want there to be an increase.

Wouldn't it be possible for the Conservative government to make an exception? It boasts that it wants to increase voter turn-out, but, if there are fewer workers, the process will be slower and even fewer people will vote. Have you suggested that they make an exception?

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** We've had discussions with Treasury Board on the subject. The legal services of both organizations have

examined the situation from all angles, and the conclusion is that our election workers are subject to the act that restricts expenditures.

**Mr. Marcel Proulx:** Have you recommended that they make an exception to the act?

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** For that, this act would have to be amended.

**Mr. Marcel Proulx:** That's correct.

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** We could amend the act. They are informed that—

**Mr. Marcel Proulx:** They're aware, but—

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** There are issues—

**Mr. Marcel Proulx:** They're aware, but they don't want to amend it. That's a heartless approach. Don't answer, I don't want—

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** I'm not answering either.

**Mr. Marcel Proulx:** I understood your previous answer.

I'd like you to give me a detailed answer. We've spoken to you about the quality and accuracy of the electoral list. People have been working for a number of years on that permanent list, and all kinds of errors and inaccuracies have been noted for a number of years.

Tell us what Elections Canada has done to date to correct the situation.

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** A number of things have been done that I can explain without providing all the details.

First, information is received more quickly from the vital statistics centres—the offices that report on deaths. Amendments made to Bill C-31 now enable those that make declarations for deceased persons to authorize the Canada Revenue Agency to transmit the information to us, which should somewhat offset the fact that certain deceased persons sometimes wind up on the lists.

Second, we have the phenomenon of business addresses that is being monitored very closely. Targeted address revisions are made, for example, when it is felt that the address given in the information that we receive may be a business address.

There's the “pile-up” phenomenon, or— how to say it, pardon me—the multiplicity of voters at a single address. That's also being reviewed systematically. As soon as we realize that more than five voters are at the same address, we ask the returning officer to go to the address in question to confirm that five voters are there, since it may happen that these are people who have already moved. This is systematically done on the occasion of an election, and we will be doing it as well, under Bill C-31, between elections. Now we can use the returning officers to improve the electoral list.

That said, you will be receiving the annual list in November with a quality study. You'll be able to see that nearly 94% of voters are registered on the list and that the accuracy of the information for all electors, including those who are not on it, reaches approximately 85%. I know it means nothing to you when a specific case is cited. On that subject, I invite you to inform us of incidents that you witness and of inaccuracies that you see on the list. It is important that the errors be brought to our attention so that we can take action and continue to improve the list.

• (1240)

**Mr. Marcel Proulx:** Thank you.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for being frugal with your time.

Mr. Albrecht.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank also Mr. Mayrand and his colleagues for being here today.

There are two concerns that have dominated most of our discussion today, one surrounding the turnout of university students and young people and the other the health concerns regarding the potential H1N1. In relation to the turnout of youth, certainly it's our obligation to remove any unnecessary obstacles and make it as easy as we can.

What kind of follow-up occurs? I'm familiar with a number of schools that use the Student Vote practice, whereby a high school will have all-candidate debates and an election and so on. Has there ever been any follow-up to see whether those practices are productive in carrying through to encourage those same young people to continue voting? For example, in a certain area where a high number of schools use that practice, does it translate into a greater turnout for those youth later on?

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** Student Vote is a program that we've sponsored for the last several general elections, and we'll continue to sponsor it for the next one, for sure.

One of the things that struck us is how to measure the impact of these efforts. We're looking now with Student Vote at building an evaluation framework that would allow us to assess the long-term effectiveness of that program and how we can make it better. This is something we're working on with Student Vote authorities.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** I would encourage you to pursue that. Anecdotally, for me it has been a very positive experience to go into these schools and engage in the all-candidates debates and see the high level of interest that's there. I'm very encouraged by it.

Secondly, concerning the health concerns surrounding the potential H1N1, my colleagues have raised the issue surrounding seniors' homes and elementary schools, in light of recent reports that H1N1 may also be highly likely to be transmitted through airborne spreading. Yes, hand-sanitizers are necessary, and we need to keep doing everything we can. This heightens the need for us to be cautious in entering seniors' homes and schools.

One perhaps administrative detail—it may seem I'm interfering in administrative detail—is about a simple thing: having up to a

hundred people walking behind that little booth and using the same pencil that previous people have used. Is that a consideration we should be concerned about as well?

**Mr. Marcel Proulx:** I have pencils for sale.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** You probably have a company.

**Mr. Marcel Proulx:** No, but I will have.

**Mr. Harold Proulx:** The follow-up question would be, have we examined at all what the extra potential costs of doing all of these things might be—hand-sanitizers and whatever other measures may be necessary?

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** As I mentioned earlier, we will have hand sanitizers in all polling stations as well as disinfectant wipes at all polling sites to make sure that the common surfaces are clean.

We are considering the issue of pencils. We will have to discuss this matter with public health authorities in terms of whether that would be an effective measure or a useful measure. If need be we will have to look at securing, again, an adequate number of pencils. We're talking about one per elector. We're talking about a potential... I think we need to balance that, of course, with the situation as it evolves, the effectiveness of the measure, and of course the cost. Once again, our first preoccupation is ensuring safety and health.

• (1245)

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** It sounds as if Mr. Proulx has an RFP ready for you.

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** We may have some procurement issues around this.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll go to Madame DeBellefeuille.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Mayrand, it's thought that it might prove impossible to hold a general election day on a Sunday. However, to go back to Mr. Guimond's idea, I would like to know whether you think it would be important to consider holding advance polls on a Sunday, not only to increase voter turn-out, but also to recruit more election officials.

In addition, one of the objectives of your 2008-2013 strategic plan is accessibility. You talk about testing innovative voting methods. It seems that one of the methods you're considering is Internet registration. Could you tell us where you stand in that regard and how registration could be done?

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** All right.

One of our concerns is that, despite all the efforts made over the past 10 years, between 1.5 million and two million voters are still not registered. In addition, voters do not have access to tools enabling them to determine easily if they are registered. The first service that would be offered to them would be to check whether they are registered via the Internet. There is also the possibility that people could update their personal voter information, such as people who have just changed addresses and want to report it, but have neither a driver's licence nor any other source of information and want to use an electronic service that links them directly to Elections Canada.

The third level of service would require that the act be amended, from what I understand. The idea is to enable unregistered voters to register for the first time. This involves all kinds of issues, whether it be privacy, security or fraud prevention in particular. We are examining those implications. We definitely don't want to compromise the integrity of our lists. We think we'll be able to offer a level of on-line registration service starting in March 2011. We'll definitely be able to enable voters to check and see whether they are in fact registered and whether they are registered at their right address. We may be able to amend their personal information. However, the addition of voters by electronic means will require that the act be amended, which I'm going to propose to your committee in the coming months.

Things are progressing, but the situation is still subject to the vagaries of potential elections. Whatever the case may be, we think we can start offering those services to voters starting in March 2011.

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille:** I think e-registration and the option of checking to see whether you're registered would be very appealing for young people, particularly if they turn 18 shortly before the election. These are administrative mechanisms that young people aren't used to, but, as parents or adults, we can urge them to inquire into the matter and to use this service. It could facilitate matters. I encourage you to continue in that direction.

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** Young people expect to be able to conduct their transactions electronically.

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille:** I'm not really in favour of electronic voting, but I think that registration and data verification are a good solution.

What do you think of the idea of holding advance polling days on Sundays?

• (1250)

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** From what I know, a bill that is currently under examination by Parliament is proposing to increase the number of voting days. One of the suggestions it contains is that an advance polling day be held on a Sunday. There would thus be four advance polling days. That represents administrative challenges in terms of staff recruitment and availability, but these are matters that we're going to have to manage. I think the intention is to make voting more accessible. To do that, we'll have to offer voters more options. If being able to vote on a Sunday suits them more, I don't see why we should oppose it in the short run—on the contrary.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Madam Jennings.

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Thank you.

I would like to come back to the issue of the remuneration of election workers. When was the last time the salary, or the tariff, or whatever you call it, that they receive was increased?

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** I believe it was in 2007.

**Hon. Marlene Jennings:** Was that an actual increase of the lump sum, or was that through indexation?

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** It was mostly indexation, but also a bit for additional work and additional responsibility that they were taking.

**Hon. Marlene Jennings:** So what is it right now?

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** It didn't reflect the additional responsibilities that were given under Bill C-31.

**Hon. Marlene Jennings:** So if I understand you, in 2007 they received a slight salary increase and an additional increase through indexation. There were two prongs.

Was the slight salary increase to take in account the increased responsibilities, or not?

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** It did not take into consideration the Bill C-31 new responsibilities that they have.

**Hon. Marlene Jennings:** Thank you.

When was the last time there was an actual door-to-door enumeration?

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** I believe it was in 1996 or 1997.

**Hon. Marlene Jennings:** You talked about there being more than one million electors who are not registered, and this is now without enumeration. What was it when we had the door-to-door enumeration?

**Mr. Rennie Molnar (Deputy Chief Electoral Officer, Electoral Events, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer):** There was about 5% that we never got. Enumeration got about 92% of electors. We picked up an additional 3% during the election, and we kind of maxed out at 95%. So it would have been around the same amount.

**Hon. Marlene Jennings:** So whether it's door-to-door or the methods you're using now, it comes to approximately the same thing.

**Mr. Rennie Molnar:** Correct.

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** Interestingly, if I may add, Australia, which has mandatory registration, gets about the same number: 95%. The last 5% of the population is very difficult to reach.

**Hon. Marlene Jennings:** Does Australia have mandatory voting?

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** Yes, and they have over 90% turnout.

**Hon. Marlene Jennings:** What do election employees actually earn?

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** The poll workers, the deputy returning officers and the poll clerks, earn \$153 or so on polling day. Often it's 12 hours of work officially, but they spend 15 hours on that side. The poll clerks earn a little bit less.

They're also getting \$35 for training.

**Hon. Marlene Jennings:** How long is the training?

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** It's less than three hours, but that's an issue that we have. Again, the processes are becoming ever more complex.

**Hon. Marlene Jennings:** So three hours isn't really sufficient.

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** No. We would need to add hours, but again, given the constraint on recruitment and the timelines, it's very difficult to add time.

**Hon. Marlene Jennings:** At some point you're going to be making another report to this committee. I know you had discussions with the government through the Treasury Board about increasing the remuneration of poll clerks, etc., and you were told no, they're going to suffer the same freeze.

Given the questions you've been asked here, would you be prepared to make a report to this committee about the actual situation now, the actual reality through the experience of the last election, as to how many hours people are really putting in, what they're actually being paid and what the breakdown of that is, so that we have an actual portrait of how we as a society and as a government are treating our Canadians who step up to the plate to help protect our democracy and put in time, hours, etc., and this is how we're treating them?

•(1255)

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** I could certainly add a section in the report on the issue of remuneration. In fact, one of the things that you will see in the report is some proposals as to how we need to modernize the way we are managing the voting process. If we start looking at that, of course, we'll need to look at the tariff structure for workers.

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

Mr. Lukiwski, please.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Very quickly, I don't think I heard a definite answer for my colleague's question on costs. You identified many costs just in the polling station, like hand sanitizers and the like, but you have to have 20% increased staff.

Have you done any minimum cost estimates as to, at bare minimum, how much the preparations for the H1N1 are going to cost Elections Canada?

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** At this point I can confirm to the committee that for the basic measures we have in place, we have spent a little bit over \$700,000. As we go about—

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** No, my question is how much will it cost, not just what it has cost you to date. But to employ all of these extra considerations across Canada at every polling station, have you done an estimate for how much that's going to cost at the end of the day?

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** The short answer is no, because there is an infinite series of scenarios there. Mostly it is cost displacement.

There may be some additional costs because we will have recruited more people, let's say 10% or 20%, but basically these workers are paid strictly for the training in those cases, which is \$35 per worker.

Again, in terms of costs associated with finding alternative sites and what the options are, right now we're not in a position to forecast all of those costs, given what we know about the situation.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Right.

The last question is off the H1N1. Are you prepared to give us a sense of some of the proposed changes you're going to make on the regulatory side for official agents and financial agents? You mentioned you'd be bringing those forward in your next report, and I know that the burden that is placed on them is a concern of many official agents. Can you give us a sense of some of the things you're considering to ease the burden on those individuals?

**Mr. Marc Mayrand:** I may ask my colleague to deal with this more specifically, but basically it's on the reporting side, the timelines, the need to go to court for getting authorization to file after the expiration. There are also some issues regarding audit requirements that at times are not absolutely necessary. I'm not talking here of the basic audit, but for supplementary reports, or each time you change your report you're supposed to have another audit. We don't think it's necessary.

They are changes of that nature.

**Mr. Stéphane Perrault (Senior General Counsel and Senior Director, Legal Services, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer):** If I may add to this one issue, a source of a lot of burden is dealing with the unpaid claims after the election, so that's one area we are looking to streamline, the requirements on reporting for unpaid claims.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you all for your cooperation in trying to get through this for one o'clock.

Monsieur Mayrand, there are just a couple of questions. We spent no time at all on the Referendum Act today, and I know you are looking to try to finish it up. I'd like to ask if we can have you back for just that purpose at some time soon, because I know you want to move it forward. Maybe we should schedule the next appropriate day, and I'll leave that for your schedulers to do.

Monsieur Guimond asked for a list of the new advance polls you are looking at, so I know you will supply that to the committee.

I thank you for the rest of your thoughts today. Hopefully we were able to accomplish what we wanted to on H1N1 and on some of the other stuff. When we have you back to talk about the riveting matter of referendums, if there is something else on our mind you will also let us speak to that.

All right, is there anything else for the good of the committee today?

Thank you to the witnesses.

This meeting is adjourned.







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