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Chair

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz

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• (0900)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC)): I'd like to bring this meeting to order. This is the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, meeting 14, and we have before us today the Minister of Public Safety. We welcome the Honourable Peter Van Loan. He has with him a number of staff and support officials from the different departments under his purview, and I will let him introduce them and allow him some time to make an opening statement. Then we will proceed as we normally do with questions and comments.

The minister can only be here until 10:30 a.m. We are starting promptly so that we can make best use of our time.

Again, Mr. Minister, we welcome you to our committee and await your statement. Go ahead, sir.

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of Public Safety): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to have this opportunity to discuss the government's spending plans for the public safety portfolio as laid before Parliament in the main estimates.

I have brought with me today an entire posse of senior officials from the portfolio. I have Mario Dion, chairperson at the National Parole Board; Marc-Arthur Hyppolite, who is senior deputy commissioner of the Correctional Service of Canada; Stephen Rigby, president of the Canadian Border Services Agency; Myles Kirvan, who is associate deputy minister of public safety; James Judd, director of CSIS, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service; and William Sweeney, senior deputy commissioner of the RCMP.

While I have to leave at 10:30 a.m., as does the associate deputy minister, I do believe the other officials will be able to remain for the last half hour—and I hope I'm correct there—if there are any questions.

[Translation]

The main estimates 2009-2010 for the public safety portfolio total \$7.3 billion, which represents a modest 0.5% increase over the budget for the previous fiscal year. Subject to Parliament's approval, the Government of Canada will use these funds to fund programs to protect Canadians' safety and to continue the efforts begun three years ago to increase security in the streets and communities for all Canadians.

You can obtain more information on our priorities in the reports on plans and priorities presented to Parliament on March 26.

• (0905)

[English]

These main estimates reflect the government's decision to invest this year in new measures to enhance public safety, including renewal of the national crime prevention strategy, federal security responsibilities for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, continuing the transformation of corrections, and additional resources for the RCMP to focus on law enforcement priorities such as drugs and border security.

[Translation]

The main estimates also include government investments in public safety since 2006.

Since coming to power, the government has paid considerable amounts to improve border security, emergency preparedness and youth crime prevention, as well as to hire 1,500 new RCMP officers and reform of the Correctional Service.

[English]

Budgets since 2006 have invested in programs to help protect children from sexual exploitation over the Internet, funded the national anti-drug strategy, and established funds for the provinces so they can hire more police officers. The cumulative effects of these investments are that there are more police on the streets; there is a greater and more focused emphasis on crime prevention; we are getting tougher on gangs and drug-related gun crimes; and we have just introduced new legislation to create stiffer penalties for many of these offences.

[Translation]

We are transforming the federal correctional system and strengthening Canada's national security capability. We have also reinforced the border by making it more effective and secure. We have reason to be proud of all these achievements.

[English]

The security and integrity of Canada's borders remains an important government priority. These estimates reflect additional funding for the Canada Border Services Agency's basic operations, border security and Olympic security. In fact, the government is investing \$345 million over the next four years to ensure that the Canada Border Services Agency has all it needs to meet its mandate. I was pleased this week to announce expansions to publicly funded services provided by the Canada Border Services Agency at airports across the country.

[Translation]

With regard to the RCMP, the main estimates provide for an increase of \$48 million in spending power for 2009-2010. Furthermore, through the supplementary estimates (A), the government will seek an additional amount of \$130 million to bear the federal share of costs related to the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games and to provide for other budget allocations for police activities.

[English]

In brief, we are managing prudently. We are keeping our commitments and we are ensuring our agencies have the resources they need to carry out their mandates.

Now, since I appeared before you last, I understand this committee has been studying border security. I would like to report to you on my recent visit to Washington, where I met with key officials from the Obama administration and Congress, including both the Secretary of Homeland Security, Janet Napolitano, and Attorney General Eric Holder. I reminded them that Canada is America's closest friend, most trusted ally, and most important trading partner.

[Translation]

As part of my discussions with Secretary Napolitano, we have agreed to seek opportunities to cooperate and work together to achieve our common objectives of reinforcing security and developing trade. We have also decided to meet twice a year on an official basis to manage border issues.

[English]

These meetings will help us develop measures together. They give us greater security and facilitate trade. We will work to finalize details on initiatives that allow Canada and the U.S. to work more cooperatively on border issues. One such initiative is the shiprider program. On that front, we spoke about the need to finalize a framework agreement that will allow both countries to implement the program on a national basis. We also agreed to again explore the possibility of moving forward with land preclearance.

● (0910)

[Translation]

Later this month, I will be meeting with Secretary Napolitano once again. The positive and constructive discussions I have had with my American counterparts are encouraging. In my opinion, we have the opportunity to work with the new American government to move matters forward and develop effective approaches to solving common problems.

[English]

National security is an important concern for our government. Terrorist activity continues to take Canadian lives in Afghanistan. Extremist and terrorist activity proves to be an enduring threat around the world.

Canada has been working closely with our allies to combat potential threats to our security. However, I believe the concerted effort that has been applied since 2001 has been paying off. While the risks remain real and incidents are still frequent, I believe the

world is a safer place today. The collective counterterrorism efforts of Canada and our allies have made a difference.

Here in Canada we've had the first successful prosecution of the Toronto 18 extremist group. The recent conviction here in Ottawa of Momin Khawaja was the first successful prosecution under Canada's Anti-terrorism Act. These are tributes to the successful efforts of our intelligence and law enforcement agencies, but it's also a reminder of the reality that extremist and terrorist threats are very real and we must remain vigilant.

Another significant national security issue we face is cyber security. We've recently seen cyber attacks on the countries of Estonia and Georgia. The recent report from the Munk Centre at the University of Toronto is not a surprise to the government. Not a day goes by when someone, somewhere in the world, isn't trying to breach the security of our systems.

Our government will continue building on our work in this area. We will be working with our allies to meet this challenge, a challenge that changes and grows daily. We will also be encouraging the private sector to seriously engage on this issue, as it represents a potential threat to our economy, security, and stability.

Before we go to questions, in preparing for my appearance here today, it came to my attention that when I appeared before you last, there was one question to which I needed to correct the answer. There was a question, which I believe came from Mr. Harris, regarding funding in the supplementary estimates, an item totalling \$1.142 million for the security and prosperity partnership. I had indicated in my initial answer that it related to the security priority of the five priorities of the security and prosperity partnership, which is called smart and secure borders. I then consulted with officials, came back, and told you, no, it wasn't that. It was in fact for the Montebello summit. My initial answer was in fact the correct one. Having had it drawn to my attention last night when reviewing these notes, I wanted to clear that up for the committee so that you have a clear understanding and record of it.

I know the committee has a busy agenda to examine a range of issues. I know how broad and expansive the jurisdictions and issues in front of this committees are. I appreciate your efforts. My officials and I are happy to support your work by appearing before you. I appreciate the considerable effort that this committee puts into that broad range of very important issues for the safety and security of Canadians.

I'm happy to answer any questions you might have. I apologize again in advance for having to depart at 10:30. Hopefully, we can get a lot done by then.

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir.

We will move immediately to the official opposition.

Mr. Holland, please.

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Minister, thank you for appearing before the committee today.

Minister, I'd like to begin with the issue of oversight, specifically on the lack of legislative authority that the public complaints commissioner has and all of the agencies that still don't have oversight, despite the recommendations of Justice O'Connor.

In fact, this is despite the government stating it would implement the recommendations of Justice O'Connor and despite the fact that this issue of lack of legislative ability to oversee the RCMP was stated in the recommendations as needing to be fixed and in David Brown's recommendations on the RCMP pension scandal. The Senate Special Committee on Anti-terrorism also recommended it. We're going to be expecting it in Justice Braidwood's inquiry into the Dziekanski matter. We know that Justice Major's inquiry into the Air India tragedy will also recommend it.

Minister, how many inquiries does it take? How many tragedies does it take? How many times does a government have to be asked to put in these oversight mechanisms before it will finally do so?

• (0915)

Hon. Peter Van Loan: As has been clearly indicated, having a proper oversight mechanism, particularly to deal with the problem that exists, which is.... I have a bunch of agencies here. Several of them have their own oversight mechanisms, but often their work crosses boundaries, and that is where, according to most of those commissions you referenced, problems have arisen. The government is strongly committed to an oversight mechanism to deal with that challenge. A lot of work has been done on it.

I will be quite candid with you. In enumerating your list of inquiries, one of those you identified was Justice Jack Major's inquiry into the Air India matter. That committee has finished its work, but we're awaiting its report. In my judgment, as Minister of Public Safety, my preference has been not to proceed with our changes until we have the advantage and benefit of his advice on the problems that existed and how he feels they can be remedied, to the extent that he may provide advice on them.

That is why, at this time, although we've done considerable work and I think are in a good position to proceed very soon with a new comprehensive oversight mechanism, it would be wise and prudent to await the recommendations of Justice Major. That is where we are right now.

Mr. Mark Holland: But, Minister, the part of this that I'm not understanding is that Justice O'Connor was very clear. Essentially, his recommendations were echoed by Justice Iacobucci and all the other inquiries that I've mentioned. In fact, the Auditor General, in her recent report, also indicated that there is still not an adequate level of oversight of these bodies.

Why would you wait for yet another inquiry? Is the position that as long as there is an outstanding inquiry that's going to come to the same conclusion, you'd better not implement it just in case there might be some slight minor variance? This is something that two years ago the government said they would do. This is not something that is new.

While you say you are serious about it, how serious can you be if nothing has been done in two years and we're facing the same issues and the same recommendations tragedy after tragedy? What is it going to take?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: With the greatest of respect, a considerable amount of work has been done. If you saw the report of the RCMP Reform Implementation Council, you'd have seen that they comment positively on the amount of work that has been done. The Auditor General also comments positively in her report that work is being done.

The question becomes.... You said "waiting for another inquiry" and how many more do we have to wait for? I think it is prudent to wait for the inquiry into the worst-ever terrorist event in Canadian history. Had that inquiry been started under a previous government, we'd probably have those answers now. Unfortunately, the previous government was unwilling to do that, unwilling to have that inquiry.

As a result, we're in a position now, a long, long time after the actual terrorist incident, too many years after it, where we're trying to gain the information. But there is no doubt that it is probably considered to be the worst failure of cooperation among intelligence agencies, leading to the worst-ever Canadian terrorism incident. I think that's worth waiting for advice and answers on before we go off thinking we have all the answers.

Mr. Mark Holland: Minister, two years ago Justice O'Connor's recommendations came out. You said they would be adopted. They were not, period.

On the issue of apology, when we dealt with Maher Arar, the government took advantage of parliamentary privilege and, despite the fact that there was ongoing litigation, recognized that a tremendous wrong had been done.

We have a similar situation with the conclusions that were reached by Justice Iacobucci with respect to Mr. Elmaati, Mr. Almalki, and Mr. Nureddin. I want to know if you'll take the same opportunity today that was taken for Mr. Arar and use parliamentary privilege and extend an apology on behalf of the Government of Canada for the horrible tragedy of that circumstance and the incredible pain that those individuals had to endure.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Firstly, in terms of the O'Connor commission, your assertion here is simply not accurate. Almost all the recommendations there have been largely implemented. You told the committee that none of them have. That's simply not true.

The only question that remains outstanding of significance is that of an oversight body and—

• (0920)

Mr. Mark Holland: Which happens to be the most important recommendation, Minister.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: It's a very significant recommendation and that's why we want to get it right. That's why we want Justice Major's advice. I'd be very disappointed if we put in place a new mechanism that failed to answer to what Justice Major recommends, based on the most serious terrorist incident in Canadian history. As I said, we wish we would have had that before now. We wish a previous government would have responded to requests to have a public inquiry—

Mr. Mark Holland: And I wish you would have dealt with Justice O'Connor's recommendations two years ago, but can you answer to the issue of the apology?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: —but unfortunately that didn't happen.

With regard to your other question, those matters are before the courts, before litigation, so it wouldn't be appropriate for me to comment on that.

Mr. Mark Holland: Well, if you're not going to avail yourself of the same opportunity that you did for Mr. Arar, that's indeed unfortunate.

My last question is with respect to the comments that were made this week on torture. I am deeply concerned. Let me ask the same question for which I couldn't get an answer and ask your opinion. Should we be sharing information with states that we know to be engaging in terrorist activity, a direct contravention of recommendation 14 in Mr. O'Connor's report? Are we continuing to share information with Syria and Egypt, yes or no?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: We certainly don't want to cooperate with states that conduct terrorist activities. I'm not sure whether we identify Egypt as a country engaged in terrorist activity. Mr. Judd may want to add to that.

Mr. Jim Judd (Director, Canadian Security Intelligence Service): Was your question about sharing information with states that engage in terrorist activity?

Mr. Mark Holland: Let me be specific. Are we continuing to share information and intelligence with Egypt and Syria?

Mr. Jim Judd: As a general proposition, we don't comment on whom we exchange information with. This is a matter of policy. But I can tell you that we have, in part because of Justice O'Connor's report, changed how we deal with information exchange. It is done with the most scrupulous care to avoid any such problem ever arising in the future.

The Chair: Mr. Ménard.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Welcome, minister. I'm pleased to see some enthusiasm on the part of young and new ministers. I understand that you are not yet responsible for a lot of things that are going poorly, but I would like to get a clear idea of your desire to correct them.

You spoke, in particular, about three oversight agencies: those of the RCMP, the Correctional Service of Canada and one other. I note from your proposed budget, however, that there are significant budget cuts for those three governing agencies. The amount allocated to the Office of the Correctional Investigator has been reduced by 16.3%, that of the RCMP External Review Committee by 27.7%, while that of the RCMP Public Complaints Commission has fallen from \$8.7 million to \$5.1 million, a 40.3% reduction.

Can you explain to us why these kinds of cuts have been made to these oversight agencies?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Each of those issues can be addressed separately, and each has its own reasons. The Office of the Correctional Investigator is being provided the budget that it has said it needs to do its job. That is my understanding of the number that has been arrived at.

As for the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP, the previous funding that gives the appearance of a cut was a large

portion of integrity funding, a one-time funding that expired. The amount that is carried forward is the usual amount. I will be seeking additional funding, so that the complaints commission can carry out its mandate. This will be based on their assessment of the level of funding needed to carry out their mandate in responding to complaints.

As for the RCMP External Review Committee, I'm a little less expert on that. Perhaps I could ask Mr. Sweeney to help me.

D/Commr William Sweeney (Senior Deputy Commissioner, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): I'm not in a position to answer that, Minister. The external review committee is independent of the RCMP, and we don't deal with their budget issues.

• (0925)

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Myles.

Mr. Myles Kirvan (Associate Deputy Minister, Deputy Minister's Office, Department of Public Safety): For the external review committee, the funding was temporary. It was shown in previous years as temporary funding and was made available for our backlog of cases.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Ménard: In addition, I see that the increase to the Correctional Service of Canada's budget is only 1.4%. However, for a number of years now, for more than five years, at least, the correctional investigator has been telling you that funding for the treatment of mental illness in the prisons—a growing problem every year because a large percentage of inmates suffer from mental illness—is inadequate and that this situation has persisted.

He also notes that only 2% of the Correctional Service's budget is for inmate programs. However, these are generally programs designed to prepare inmates for rehabilitation and their return to society.

In addition, as Minister of Justice, you regularly announce to us that you want sentences to be longer and you introduce bills that always give us the impression that judges don't impose harsh enough sentences. Consequently, provision should be made for an increase in the number of inmates in prisons.

Don't you believe that a 1.4% increase in the budget will necessarily force you to choose one of those priorities? Which of those priorities are you going to drop?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Of course, in government we're always choosing among priorities, and one of the ways we do that is through the strategic review process, to look at making savings where we can and apply resources where they're required more significantly. Correctional Services has gone through a strategic review process like that this past year, which is reflected in the current numbers, and it was one of the reasons why what appears like a relatively modest increase is actually a much more significant increase in the very priority areas that you indicated. Savings have been made in other areas where things were not done efficiently, or programs did not work well, in order that resources could be redirected to much higher-priority areas.

For example, on the mental health front, we will now be having assessments in the first 90 days after intake into a federal penitentiary for all individuals. Previously we didn't have that kind of mental health assessment of every individual going into our prisons. That's a new program that will be introduced. I think that is actually coming on stream this month across the entire penitentiary system. For example, in that 90-day intake period there was never any programming offered, and with shorter penitentiary sentences overall, that meant less treatment and less rehabilitation for prisoners.

A lot of what the strategic review did was provide some money to begin to introduce programming into that first 90 days. As well, there was an overall look at the relevance of programming. There has been some attention, for example, to the closure of the prison farms. Those were costing a net loss for six farms of \$4 million a year. We felt that money could be more adequately redirected to programs where people would actually gain employable skills, as virtually nobody who went through those prison farms ended up with employable skills, because they were based on a model of how agriculture was done 50 years ago, when it was labour intensive, and not capital intensive, as it is today. That might have been fine while they were in prison, but it didn't provide usable work skills. We are taking that money and redirecting it again to programs that are more likely to provide employment-based skills. This will continue.

One of the difficulties, particularly on the mental health front, is that the challenge is in part money and that more resources are being provided, but part of it is the simple ability to hire the skilled personnel. There's a need for psychiatrists, psychologists. We could give them all the money they want, but it's simply difficult to find enough available in the marketplace who are willing to work within our prison system. There is a shortage of that, so Corrections Canada is placing increased focus and attention on recruitment and retention of mental health workers, whether it be nurses, psychologists, or psychiatrists. It will take time for that to have an effect.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Ménard: I'd like to ask you one final question. I understand a lot of your explanations.

You said in response to a question by my Liberal colleague that you intend soon to establish the integrated oversight committee recommended in the O'Connor report and by many other stakeholders.

By what deadline do you promise to establish that integrated committee? Do you have a budget to do it? Do you intend to establish a parliamentary committee to oversee these security agencies? By when are you going to introduce a bill to act on that promise, which has been made a number of times?

• (0930)

[English]

The Chair: We're out of time, but if you have a brief response, go ahead.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Very quickly, obviously we will be waiting until we see Mr. Major's recommendations before we publicly introduce a solution. A solution will require legislation, so it will have to make it through the parliamentary process. I don't expect

you will see costs for it out of this budget year, but the associate deputy can help me if I'm wrong on that.

D/Commr Marc-Arthur Hyppolite (Senior Deputy Commissioner, Correctional Service Canada): That's correct.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: So that would be a future year's item.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Harris, please.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for coming to the committee, Minister.

I too wanted to ask about the integrated oversight mechanism proposed by Justice O'Connor. It's pretty clear that Justice O'Connor had a full opportunity to hear from everyone concerned about the need and the issues. He studied oversight mechanisms throughout the world and did considerable work on preparing this and presenting it as his recommendation. It's been accepted apparently by everyone except you, sir, and your government. The fact that there's another inquiry on now and there may be another inquiry next year seems to me to be frankly an excuse not to act on very compelling recommendations, a very significant need explored. The fact that there is another inquiry ongoing should not stop you from acting on the very thoughtful and comprehensive study and recommendations made by Justice O'Connor. Why? Respond to the fact that this is just an excuse to put off dealing with a very important recommendation and a significant need.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: There's not much that I would disagree with in what you have said. In politics there's always a tremendous pressure on politicians to act, to show action and to show results quickly. One has to balance that against making considered decisions.

Were we at the start of the Air India inquiry, I might agree with you that it would be the time to act; however, as that inquiry is completed and my understanding is that the findings of Mr. Major are apparently very close to being completed, if not already completed—I heard some suggestion that it may be off for translation, but I don't know what the exact situation is—we are so close that it seems to me to make sense to wait that last little bit longer to get it right.

Mr. Jack Harris: To be fair, Minister, we're not talking about quick action. We're talking about a report that's already two years old, and there's been plenty of time to act by now. I realize you weren't in the portfolio for all that time.

My colleagues have asked this question, but it seems to me to be rather a different position that this government took with the case of Mr. Maher Arar, in which very shortly after the O'Connor report came down the Commissioner of the RCMP came and made a full apology on behalf of the RCMP, from the approach you're taking—saying it's before the courts—in dealing with the case of Messrs. Almalki, Elmaati, and Nureddin. It was before the courts then, I submit to you, and it's before the courts now. This has nothing to do with whether or not the government can come before this committee to say that it apologizes to these individuals for what has happened to them.

What has changed, and what is different about them? Why are you treating them differently, and why are you ignoring the fact that these individuals were also harmed by actions of this government and its agencies?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Again, I'm simply going to do the prudent thing that a Solicitor General does and not comment on a matter that's before the courts.

Mr. Jack Harris: That's an excuse, I suggest to you, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I think it's the prudent thing to do.

Mr. Jack Harris: It's an excuse, particularly when parliamentary privilege is available for this particular situation.

Mr. Minister, you submitted that public safety was better off with the actions taken with respect to the RCMP, the CBSA, and other matters, and yet we see a decrease in the main estimates for the RCMP of some \$29 million, a decrease for the Canada Border Services Agency of some \$4.8 million, and the CPC has been mentioned—\$2.6 million. How is it that people should feel safer when the budgets for these organizations are decreased?

• (0935)

Hon. Peter Van Loan: First, on the issue of parliamentary privilege and speech, I think that might be fine to extend if I were concerned about some personal prosecution of myself, that I could avail myself of parliamentary privilege. But I can tell you, I spent much of Saturday night reading a decision of the courts that was extensively filled with comments from Parliament that played into the decision-making. We have to be cognizant that what we say has consequences. The words I speak in the Solicitor General portion of my role may have weight that affects those issues.

In terms of the adjustments that appear as decreases for the Canada Border Services Agency, largely what you see there is simply a realignment of funding between fiscal years. There are matters that were originally budgeted to apply in this year—for example, eManifest—a lot of which will be moved on to subsequent years through the implementation, and therefore you don't see an actual reduction in the operating budget and in what they're going to need to do. It's really a re-profiling of money between the years.

What appears as a net decrease for the RCMP again has a lot to do with the fact that there's been a decision to leave until later, in supplementary estimates, a lot of the funding that deals with the revenue side, the contract policing money that comes in. Some of this gets into boring accounting, but the fact is that overall the RCMP is increasing the amount of money it has available for its significant obligations.

As I said, the total appropriation doesn't include the projected \$80 million to \$90 million that you'll see for the federal share of incremental contract policing; that will show up in supplementary estimates, as well as some additional funding that was there for the Olympics. Overall, you'll see that there is additional funding to allow a \$50 million increase of re-spendable revenues. That's \$79.2 million less a \$20 million decrease. So overall, you'll find the RCMP has increasing resources to deal with the issues they need to deal with.

Mr. Jack Harris: I have limited time. A lot of Canadians are very appalled at the sad death of Ashley Smith in federal custody after spending eleven and a half months in segregation suffering clearly

from mental illness and desiring mental health assistance, in fact filing a grievance to do so, which wasn't even looked at until a couple of months after her death.

The Office of the Correctional Investigator recommended a whole series of actions, and the complaint was that they had not been acted upon. I have limited time, but I hope I get the chance again—

The Chair: Just pose your question, please.

Mr. Jack Harris: One of the recommendations that he made in his annual report for 2007-08 was that the Correctional Service, in its training initiatives, make it a priority for the current fiscal year to ensure that all front-line employees are trained in dealing with mentally ill offenders.

Can you tell me, Minister, whether that has been done and how much money has been allocated for that? Has this process started, and have people been trained?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Yes, a lot of changes have been happening in there, and now mental health training has been developed and has been provided to front-line staff, both institutional and community staff. They've all received that training. As well, suicide prevention training has been provided for all staff who have regular interactions with prisoners.

The Ashley Smith issue is an important one because it's not about Ashley Smith, although it is. It's all about the whole change in our corrections system. There has been major change. I know I don't have a lot of time on this, but in a nutshell we de-institutionalized the mentally ill in our provincial facilities in the seventies, and since that time, and increasingly and likely into the future, we are simply re-institutionalizing the mentally ill in prisons. We are criminalizing the mentally ill. That's a big major issue that we need to spend a lot of time on. It's an issue that involves the provinces and the health care system, and it's something, as I've said in the past, that I intend to make a major focus and priority.

• (0940)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Norlock, please.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Thank you.

Thank you, Minister, and your officials for coming this morning. I'd like to touch on something that concerns me. It was the Munk Centre report on cyber espionage, which, as they stated, is an issue whose time has come. I'll just read you a few excerpts from their second report in the *Information Warfare Monitor*, and then I'm wondering if you and/or your officials can comment on the issue and how we're preparing to deal with it.

The investigation ultimately uncovered a network of 1,300 infected hosts in 103 countries. Up to 30% of the infected hosts are considered high-value targets and include computers located in the ministries of foreign affairs, embassies, international organizations, news media, and NGOs.

They say—and I think they're correct—that this raises more questions than it answers. It does point to a particular area of concern to many in the world and to me. We must be careful to say that they're all allegations, but there is some weight to them. It says that some may conclude that what we lay out here points definitively to China as the culprit, and of course they talk about strategic domains in cyberspace that redress the military imbalance between China and the rest of the world, particularly the United States. Then they quantify it by saying that China has, of course, the world's largest Internet population, and then they say something that I think we all need to know, which is that the Internet was never built with security in mind.

I'm just going through some of the issues. They say:

This report serves as a wake-up call. At the very least, a large percentage of high-value targets compromised by this network demonstrate the relative ease with which a technically unsophisticated approach can quickly be harnessed to create a very effective spynet.

I wonder if you and/or your officials can comment on that.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: The question of cybersecurity and cyberwarfare is really the new frontier. It's the new frontier in national security, and it's the new frontier in defence and military issues. It's one that governments are going to have to pay increasing attention to. It is also the new arms race. It's where every time you come up with a solution or a defence, there's someone on the other side trying to match you step for step.

I think it's fair to say that the Munk Centre report is really just the tip of the iceberg. There are very major problems out there in the private sector and in the public sector. Canada has been working through the Communications Security Establishment, and I think we have been very diligent in working with government departments to ensure that measures are taken to provide optimal protection.

I have a greater concern for the private sector. Some of our big institutions, the banks, have done a good job. But when you get further out there, not all, I think, are sensitive enough to the issues. You can understand, in challenging economic times, even in unchallenging economic times, that the notion of diverting significant resources to defensive protective measures in a business that's trying to make a go of it is not always immediately obvious. So I think we have a role as a government in trying to assist and persuade and heighten awareness on that front.

We have been working on developing a national cybersecurity strategy, which you will hopefully see sometime in the next year. A lot of it will be cumulative and will include what's already going on. There is a lot of activity already going on. But I believe there will also be new initiatives and directions in which we need to go. This is a major concern. It occupies us and our allies. The Americans are engaged in a very similar, almost identical parallel exercise, as are many other countries in the world. It will be something that will occupy us I think for years to come, because as we know, technology keeps changing.

We just saw—well, we may not have seen, since it may have become dormant, for obvious reasons—that virus yesterday. The architecture behind that virus is an example of the things that can be done and are done on the Internet today that we have to be aware of, especially as our business sector and our economy becomes more

reliant on the Internet for business mechanisms for our financial systems, and frankly for things like our critical infrastructure.

● (0945)

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you.

This next question has to do with the Correctional Service of Canada, so the minister or the deputy can respond to it.

In my riding, I have Canada's largest federal penitentiary: Warkworth. I have been there several times and have taken an extensive tour of the facility. I must say, we hear a lot of negative things. There is, of course, justification for some of them, but what we don't hear is some of the positive things. I'd like to hear some comment on that.

One of the positive things is the repair of some of our larger military vehicles that is occurring there. Of course, there's CORCAN. They're making furniture, which helps to raise some funds and, more importantly, teaches trades to people. On the tour, one of the trades being taught was sandblasting. I was told by the instructor that save for one person, every single man—because it's a men's prison—who has received his certificate in sandblasting has had a job, often before leaving prison, and we never see him again. I wonder if you could comment on that and on what we're doing as a government to expand on that to help people, first, to get an education, because we know that one of the common denominators for criminal behaviour, of course, is the inability to read and write appropriately, and then, of course, there is getting a trade so that you don't have to rely on a life of anti-social behaviour.

I wonder if you would comment on that.

The Chair: You have time for a brief response.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: In terms of CORCAN activity, the job skills stuff, you'll have some up-close contact with some of their work when in the next 12 months they'll be reupholstering all the chairs in the parliamentary restaurant. So that'll be an opportunity for you to inspect the product and work of the folks at the Correctional Service of Canada who are receiving job training.

There is a real challenge on this front. I think there are some success stories, but there's also a recognition in the Correctional Service that we have to do a better job of having people leave in terms of rehabilitation. The most important thing is employability and job skills that are relevant. That's why the strategic review looked to divert resources from programs that were not providing job-relevant skills to new programs that would provide more relevant skills.

The chair is shutting me down.

The Chair: Yes, sorry. We can follow this up in the next round. I think it's worth doing.

Mr. Oliphant, please. It's a five-minute round.

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Thank you, Minister.

First I want to express my strong concern and regret that you and your government have yet to issue an apology to Mr. Almalki, Mr. Abou-Elmaati, and Mr. Nureddin.

Failing that, have you taken all steps to ensure that Mr. Justice Iacobucci's findings regarding these men have been taken into account and that they may travel freely and have their reputations restored?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: In terms of the implementation of the actual recommendations of the committee, I believe the bulk of them have been implemented. In terms of travel restrictions, I know in the case of Maher Arar, we made our view on that quite clear to the American government. I am not familiar that there were concerns relating to the others or problems they encountered.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I'd like to let the minister know that Mr. Almalki's family was recently detained at an airport and underwent extraordinary search measures and questions based on their family name. I'm wondering whether the minister was aware of that and if there are steps this government can take, or if you as minister can ensure that Canadians can travel once their names have been cleared.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Well, certainly I'm not going to comment publicly on any individual case, but if you gather up the facts, I'd be happy to have those looked into and get back to you.

• (0950)

Mr. Robert Oliphant: With respect to the estimates, I'm going to follow up on the concerns about the budget. You said this is an important committee to you. Do you follow the proceedings of this committee?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Yes, I do.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Were you aware of Mr. Kennedy's testimony as a witness a few weeks ago?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Generally, yes.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Were you aware that he strongly suggested that this government is starving his agency, noting that the RCMP budget continues to increase, and over five years has increased dramatically, meaning more officers, more activity, more good work? At the same time, his agency has been starved, meaning fewer activities, even though there are more police activities, and less oversight. He stated that very clearly in this committee, yet you said just a moment ago your agencies have all felt fully funded.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: The test I put to Mr. Kennedy is what is the funding he requires to carry out his mandate to respond to complaints, and the funding—

Mr. Robert Oliphant: He said precisely the opposite. We'll provide your office with a transcript if you haven't seen it. He said exactly the opposite, that he needed considerably more money to do his existing mandate, and he was hoping for an expanded mandate, as Mr. Justice O'Connor had indicated there should be an expanded mandate. And yet in the next year, you have not indicated any further spending.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I don't want to pre-judge the decisions of Parliament on supplementary estimates and on other bodies in the government, but what I have asked him to provide to me is the indication of what resources he needs to respond to his mandate to deal with RCMP complaints. My effort as Minister of Public Safety is to ensure that he has the funding to deal with that statutory mandate.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Does the government have \$20 million or \$25 million available for the next inquiry as a result of the failure to do oversight?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I believe that in terms of his work he will have the funding he requires to carry out his mandate.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: But do you have money for the next inquiry, when the next Canadian citizen is detained or subject to torture because we have not had the proper ministerial directives to ensure torture isn't taking place?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I presume that's not the citizen complaints commission. I assure you I don't think the RCMP ever goes anywhere close or near to torture.

So in terms of the broader question of information sharing among the intelligence agencies following the Maher Arar inquiry and the O'Connor recommendations, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service has implemented recommendations to change its practices with regard to intelligence sharing in particular, being cognizant of the risk of torture. I think those measures are very important. Oversight will of course provide additional reinforcement, but that oversight as a stand-in for public inquiry is hopefully something that won't be required in that case. The substantive recommendations of O'Connor relating to the question of information sharing with other intelligence agencies have been largely implemented by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service.

Mr. Judd, do you want to add anything to that?

Mr. Jim Judd: I have a couple of points, Minister.

In the case of Mr. Arar, CSIS did not exchange any information on him with any foreign entity at all.

Second, of the 22 or so recommendations in Mr. O'Connor's inquiry, nine applied to CSIS. They've all been implemented.

Third, our policies have been amended on information-sharing practices.

Fourth, our information-sharing activity internationally is annually reviewed externally by the Security Intelligence Review Committee to ensure compliance with our policy and our ministerial directives.

The Chair: Ms. Mourani is next, please, for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, gentlemen.

Minister, earlier you said that the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and the RCMP have put measures in place to change their practices regarding information obtained by torture. I suppose that's what you were talking about. However, last Tuesday, I asked Mr. O'Brien whether the Canadian Security Intelligence Service used information obtained by torture. He told me, and I quote: "Yes, we use information obtained under torture, but only if lives are at stake."

Are you aware of, or do you agree with that? What do you think of it?

• (0955)

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan: The position of the Government of Canada is quite clear: we do not condone the use of torture in intelligence gathering. Our clear directive to our law enforcement agencies and our intelligence service is that they are not to condone the use of torture, practise torture, or knowingly use any information obtained through torture.

I'll ask Mr. Judd to advise about the position of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service on this.

Mr. Jim Judd: The minister's position is reflective of the policy of CSIS. We do not condone torture. We do not rely on information obtained by torture.

Mr. O'Brian's testimony the other day will be the subject of clarification from Mr. O'Brian via a letter to the committee today.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: If I understand correctly, Mr. O'Brian lied or lost his grip. I don't understand. Why did Mr. O'Brian tell us that and why are you now telling us he will be sending clarification? I admit I'm a bit lost. Mr. O'Brian seemed to me to be an experienced person who had thorough knowledge of your agency. Are there any officers who use information obtained by torture without your knowledge? Is that what you're telling me?

[English]

Mr. Jim Judd: No, I think it's unfortunate that Mr. O'Brian may have been confused in his testimony. He will be clarifying that in a letter to the committee today, as I mentioned. I know of no instance where such use of information has been made by our service.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Let's hope that we won't have any surprises in future, because we'll remember what you've told us today if we eventually see that there are other cases emerging somewhere, other evidence of torture.

[English]

Mr. Jim Judd: I already said this publicly before Mr. O'Brian spoke.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: All right.

Minister, now I would like to talk about the Border Services Agency. You said a number of times that border security is a priority. And yet, you're cutting the budget by \$12.1 million. We know that borders are the first place where firearms entering Canada are seized. That's the primary entry point. Ninety percent of illegal weapons come from the United States, and they cross the borders.

Don't you think that, by cutting the budget, you're further weakening the agency's ability to combat not only drugs, but also illegal weapons?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I already indicated that what may appear as a budget reduction is simply a re-profiling of money because of issues like eManifest implementation. All of this money was

patterned to be flowing out in this year, at earlier stages. It's now being re-profiled to appear in later years.

In terms of the actual operations of the borders, in the personnel at the borders, in the Canadian border service officers who are there, there is no reduction. In fact, we continue to look at improved service and increasing what we have there. We're eliminating work-alone situations, for example, at some of our border crossings, so there is not a shortage of resources there. It's simply a re-profiling of money.

There are also significant capital issues from year to year in terms of their budget, and those really are a function of what projects, what border crossing facilities, you would be building in any particular year.

In terms of the actual operations, you will find that the funding is continuing to grow in pace with the needs.

Did you want to add anything to that, Mr. Rigby?

• (1000)

The Chair: A brief comment, Mr. Rigby.

Mr. Stephen Rigby (President, Canada Border Services Agency): The minister's explanation is quite correct. There has been a substantial movement of funds between years, which simply reflects the management of our large projects. In fact, the government has increased our operational budget by \$50 million for the upcoming year.

The Chair: The chair wants to apologize. I've made a mistake on the order here.

We're now going to go to Mr. Rathgeber, followed by Mr. Richards, and then we're going to come over to Mr. Holland, because it was actually the Conservative's turn when I gave it to the Bloc. I'm sorry about that.

Mr. Rathgeber, please, for five minutes.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Minister, and thank you to all your officials for their appearance here today. And thank you for the roles your respective agencies play in keeping Canadians safe and secure.

I do have a couple of questions about the main estimates for 2009-10.

The first, Mr. Minister, deals with credit for time served and what the Minister of Justice accurately refers to as truth in sentencing. As you know, Bill C-25 was introduced into the House of Commons last Friday. It is going to severely restrict judges' discretion in granting two-for-one and occasionally three-for-one credit for time served in pre-trial custody allegedly because of the content of dead time and the alleged overcrowding in the provincial remand system. That's a bill and a purpose that I support very strongly, and I'm glad to see it.

It's going to have some ramifications because it's going to move people through the remand system quicker, and ultimately, if they're given longer sentences, that's going to create some pressure on the federal penitentiary system.

Could either you, Mr. Minister, or Mr. Hyppolite—we have not heard from you today—comment on whether the federal government has the plan and the resources in place to deal with the ultimate changes that are going to occur once Bill C-25 is passed and implemented?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: First of all, that bill is obviously not law yet, so in considering legislation we've reviewed what resources are available and what will be needed. Should it pass, there will be additional resources needed.

The effect of the legislation is in fact a significant lessening of the burden on the provinces. They will have fewer people or shorter times in remand, so that's a cost saving. Likelier, people will come to conclusions at their trial sooner because there is less incentive to lengthen your time in pre-sentencing custody. That will result in a savings on administration of justice, for which provinces are responsible. Also, more people end up with sentences that are two years or more, putting them in federal facilities instead of provincial ones. So the provinces save tremendous amounts of money out of this.

That does of course mean, however, that there will be an increased federal burden. Our assessment is that with the existing capacity—and there is capacity within our prison system—any of this that may start flowing in this year can be accommodated. However, over the years that come there will be a need for additional investment. One can only give one's best guess at projecting what that is. We have done that, but we will have to be coming in the future to the House of Commons for additional funding to accommodate that.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Mr. Hyppolite, do you have anything to add?

D/Commr Marc-Arthur Hyppolite: No. The minister's position reflects the reality of our position as well.

[Translation]

Normally, if sentences are longer, that will probably enable us to act more quickly and give us the time to work on the social reintegration of inmates returning to the community.

[English]

We think the existing facilities...obviously, on a short-term basis we will have to make sure we have recourse to measures like double-bunking, so we have long-term accommodation, but the minister indicated that will require further investment in accommodation.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Thank you.

My second and final question is with respect to gang violence and organized crime. There's a bill before the justice committee, Minister, that you'll be aware of, Bill C-14, which is an act to tackle organized crime.

We heard testimony before committee yesterday, and previously, from criminologists and defence lawyers who question the deterrent effect that bill might ultimately have. I disagree with her assessment. I think it will be an effective bill.

I want to talk specifically about youth. I think it's well accepted that individuals who are not yet embedded in a life of organized crime, but perhaps are being pressured into doing so, may very well be deterred from entering organized crime by the stronger sentences.

I was wondering if you, and perhaps Mr. Sweeney, might comment with respect to plans or your views on how you're going to deal with youth and any preventative measures to keep them out of a life in organized crime.

•(1005)

Hon. Peter Van Loan: The federal government has significantly increased our investment in programs aimed at diverting young people from involvement in street gangs and in organized crime. Increasingly, young people are used for a series of reasons by criminal gangs, by drug gangs. That has been a focus for us, and that's why the funding was increased so significantly. A commitment list from the last election is being provided. That is done largely through programs in the community.

For example, in January I announced five different ones in Vancouver that were aimed at gang diversion, some at aboriginal youth, some at other at-risk youth, and they are programs that target at-risk youth. For example, they will work together with the school, try to identify young people who are at risk of getting in trouble, and then encourage them to get involved in programs that give them other positive activities to be involved in. Those social activities also reinforce the undesirability of poor choices in life and encourage them to make the right choices.

I think that kind of investment, if successful—and we will be measuring very closely the results of programs like this to see if they pay off in the long term—are certainly far more efficient and far more effective than any deterrent value in any mandatory prison sentence.

Frankly, I'm one who believes the deterrence value of sentences is fairly limited, because not a lot of young kids go around with a copy of Martin's Criminal Code in their pocket. What they're concerned about is: Are there enough police? Am I going to get caught? Am I going to get away with this?

By the time they're worrying about what's in the Criminal Code, they're already pretty deep into it. So we want to keep them from getting there in the first place.

The Chair: Mr. Richards, please.

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Thank you.

Thank you, Minister, for being here today. We certainly appreciate your taking the time.

Like my friend, Mr. Rathgeber, I'm certainly happy to see the emphasis our government has put on dealing with serious crime and bills like the ones we've brought forward now to deal with drug crimes and gang crimes, and of course the important truth-in-sentencing bill. When he and I visited the Alberta Solicitor General, I know that certainly that bill in particular was something they specifically identified they wanted to see us address, and I know other provincial ministers do as well. So it's very good to see we're doing that. I'm certainly hoping the opposition will end its pattern of blocking, delaying, and stalling legislation that deals with serious crime and help us to pass those important bills.

I'm also happy to hear there are plans and thoughts on the process of how that will affect our federal prisons.

I know the last time you were here at the committee, and in response to one of my questions, you mentioned our mental health strategy in the prisons as well. I'm happy to hear there's been thought put into how we'll deal with mental health issues and some of the new processes being put in place to improve the screening and address mental health issues in the prisons.

My questions will relate to prisons and to mental health, because as you're well aware, this committee will be doing a study on mental health issues in the prisons. I'd like to hear your comments and suggestions, or any requests you have of this committee, in terms of areas you'd like to see us address with regard to mental health issues when we're looking at that study. Maybe at the same time you could highlight and focus a little bit on the continuing transformation agenda we see with Corrections Canada as well, and some of the things that are being done and will be done.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Well, I could go all day on all these. Let me just talk about the mental health part of it, because it is an important one in my view.

What I would like you to study is not specific questions, which I think Corrections Canada is doing its best to respond to on a program level, in terms of what there is in the prison to deal with a psychiatric patient. A lot of changes have been made. We're going to have to evaluate them, see if they're the right changes, whether there are enough resources, and so on.

It's the broader problem I'm more interested in. Why is it that we're having to convert our prison system into a mental health hospital system? Why is it that people are ending up in prisons who shouldn't be? The fundamental problem is this. Why are we not getting adequate health care to individuals? Why, when they have their first couple of encounters with the courts, do they still not get adequate health care?

There are some significant differences in different parts of the country on how this gets dealt with. Some places have pretty good interventions through the courts, which might divert people away from the courts toward the mental health system. In other places there are none. The Ashley Smith case, for example, falls into one of those problematic areas.

Understanding how you get there is important, because by the time someone has had serious enough problems that they're in the federal penitentiary system, it's pretty hard to put the puzzle back together again. What we want to do is find ways to deal with it well before that happens, and that's better for society. It's better for the individuals involved; it's better for the taxpayers; it's better for our prison system. I'd like our corrections system to be a corrections system, not a mental health system.

• (1010)

Mr. Blake Richards: Great. Thank you.

In terms of the transformation agenda, I've toured some of our prisons recently, and I certainly heard from the prisons how happy they are with some of the changes that have been made in regard to drug detection, be it drug-sniffing dogs or ion scanners. I wonder if you would maybe just highlight a few of the things and the importance of some of those measures from the transformation agenda, and outline where we might be going in the future.

Mr. Hyppolite, if you have any comments you'd like to make on that as well, I'd welcome that.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: The concern is that we have an increasing gang presence in prisons. That is part of the changing profile. As an adjunct to it, there is also an increase in the presence of drugs in prisons, if you can believe it. You wonder how they get in there, but apparently they do, and they continue to.

Part of what the Sampson report sought to do was identify ways in which we could limit that. It's a very important issue from the perspective of those who work in the prisons, for their safety and maintaining a safe prison population. The presence of drugs and their influence contribute to all kinds of difficult behaviours among prisoners, which put those who work in our prisons at risk.

Ion scanners have been introduced to deal with questions of visitors bringing in contraband, with some success. I'll ask Mr. Hippolyte to speak to that. Drug-sniffer dogs are not everywhere. They're not dealing with everyone coming in, but there is that resource available, and increasingly available in the prisons.

Perhaps you want to add to what I've said.

D/Commr Marc-Arthur Hyppolite: I am very impressed. You're very familiar with the things that are happening in the penitentiaries.

Obviously, as the minister mentioned, we have serious challenges with respect to gangs, substance abuse issues, and organized crime. In some parts of the country it's more serious.

On the transformation agenda, we have made some very, very significant wins. There are quick wins in the area of employability and drug detection. We have an entire drug strategy. We also have adopted a series of static and dynamic measures such as ion scans, drug detections, staffing to eliminate the entrance...to eliminate throw-overs. We also make sure we have a communications strategy so the visitors know about our zero tolerance against drugs. We also make sure we have interaction and partnership with law enforcement, so that when visitors get caught introducing drugs, there are normal prosecutions that take place as a deterrence.

Our staff, obviously, receive information, and then we monitor all these activities seriously. We've seen an increase in terms of violent incidents, drugs, and gang activities as well.

The Chair: Thank you. We'll have to follow that up on the next round.

Mr. Holland, please.

Mr. Mark Holland: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, these questions are for you specifically, if I could. Mr. Judd is going to remain; I'll follow up on some of this when Mr. Judd leaves.

This strikes me as remarkable. We had Mr. O'Brien come before the committee. This is a gentleman who has been a manager with CSIS since its inception in 1984. In fact, he had enough authority that CSIS sent him to come before this committee to testify for two hours. Now I feel as if we're being told to just pretend he wasn't here; ignore what he said.

Let me ask you very directly. Do you believe that information obtained by torture is unreliable and should not be used by the agencies under your ministerial control?

• (1015)

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I'll respond to a couple of aspects of what you said. First, in terms of Mr. O'Brian's specific comments, my reading of them was that he was engaging in a kind of philosophical discussion of a hypothetical situation, not akin to what—

Mr. Mark Holland: It wasn't hypothetical for Mr. Elmaati or Mr. Arar.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: What Mr. Ignatieff responded to in his book, *The Lesser Evil*, where he went on at quite some length about the occasions in which torture—

Mr. Mark Holland: Can you answer the question? It is a direct question about something very serious, and that is the use of torture. Do you believe it is unreliable? Do you believe the agencies that are under your direction should be using information obtained by torture?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: You've raised several issues.

Mr. Mark Holland: I'm asking that question, Minister.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Okay—

The Chair: A point of order. You have to give an opportunity for the minister to answer, sir.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: In terms of information obtained by torture, the view of the government and I believe the practices of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service are quite clear. Information that has been obtained by torture is not reliable. It should not be relied upon. There is ample understanding in the world that this is the case. That's why western democracies do not engage in torture to gather information, because it is not reliable. It's also because it's a fundamental violation of human rights, but the probative value is limited as well. As an intelligence service, I know Mr. Judd is reluctant to explain their operational practices, but they gather intelligence from everywhere in the world. It's a giant pot. All the intelligence that goes into CSIS perhaps is intelligence that people gave to CSIS. They've had it come to their attention. Part of their job is to evaluate its probative value, and if there's any evidence that it's come by way of torture, they do not rely upon it.

Mr. Mark Holland: Unfortunately, both the examples in Guantanamo Bay, the reports of Iacobucci and O'Connor, would beg to differ with what you just said.

Let me ask you a very clear and direct question. Would you immediately provide a ministerial directive stating what you just said so that there is no ambiguity, so that people like Mr. O'Brian or others working for CSIS who are involved in information gathering have no confusion on the matter? Would you provide a ministerial directive where you state unequivocally that information obtained through torture is unacceptable in all circumstances?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Well, we made it quite clear. I had exactly that discussion two nights ago, with Mr. Judd again, and he confirmed to me and has reassured me that this is in fact the case and the practice of CSIS. I'm happy to write it down and put it in any kind of directive, any kind of memo, and continue to restate it in any form. There is nothing controversial or new about that decision of ours.

Mr. Mark Holland: If you could provide that directive, that would be helpful.

The second component.... I don't know whether or not you have to wait for an inquiry to be started before you do something about it, but the issue of oversight is something that came up in all of these reports with respect to information sharing. One of the problems that was listed was this. Remarkably enough, in some of these cases CSIS would state they didn't know that Syria did torture or they didn't know that Egypt conducted torture. This was all a surprise to them.

Can you give me specifically reasons why you haven't implemented the recommendations with respect to oversight in those areas? How do we make sure we just don't have this directive going around, as it has in the past, by saying "Syria tortures? That's news to us. It's a surprise."

Hon. Peter Van Loan: There is a division between the role of the government and the role of arm's-length bodies like the RCMP and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service. We provide direction to them. We provide a policy to them. Our policy on this matter is quite clear. It is their job to follow that policy.

Mr. Mark Holland: You made a comment with respect to our leader. Let me quote from his book:

So torturing someone to divulge terrorist actions is wrong, no matter what useful information is extracted, and hence no democracy should ever have anything to do with torture.

I understand you want to try to score some cheap political points, but, Minister, can I ask the question of where you are getting this information and why you're trying to launch an attack when I'm asking questions directly on this?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I don't believe I'm launching an attack. I'm simply indicating that he wrote a book where he talked about these things at length, as a hypothetical discussion, and said that sometimes you have to be willing to rely on lesser evils. That was his whole point—

• (1020)

Mr. Mark Holland: That wasn't his quote. That's a misrepresentation of the quote.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I don't have the phrase in front of me, but I believe he said that to defend democracy sometimes you have to resort to things like coercive interrogation and even violations of—

Mr. Mark Holland: I'm quoting from that book.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: —civil rights, was one of his phrases. I think another phrase is to defend democracies you can't rely on herbivores; we need carnivores. Those are some of the things in his hypothetical discussion.

We aren't into those hypothetical discussions as a government. We have a clear policy. Our clear policy is that we don't condone the use of torture.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. McColeman, please.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): I, too, want to express my thanks to the minister and the officials here today.

I want to get it back on track as to why you first came here, which is about the main estimates. It has been a short six months, approximately, that I've served as a parliamentarian, and first I want to comment that I truly appreciate, Minister, your work in strategic review of programs, expenditure, and operations.

Because I have a small business background, it surprises me immensely, as a newcomer to this environment, that it seems that the order of the day is to automatically accept increases to expenditures instead of decreases, when operations can be streamlined and efficiencies met, and how political that becomes for the opposition in terms of always saying we have to increase the spending.

I truly appreciate the review. It's my understanding that this is done on a frequent basis. Can you answer, Minister, how frequently that strategic review process is done?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I believe it's every fourth year. Every fourth year agencies are subject to it, and all government departments. In our case, the National Parole Board, the Correctional Service of Canada, and the RCMP went through it last year. There will be a new round this year from within the department.

The credit for the effectiveness of those strategic reviews should really not lie with me. It should lie with those agencies that were responsible for their own internal reviews and that did, I think, a very, very good job.

The thinking was creative. The efficiencies that were achieved reflected the right kind of thinking: let's stop doing things the way we did in the past just because that's the way we always did them. For example, at the Parole Board there was a particular type of hearing where the decision was always yes. It was always the same thing. It could be decided on paper. Why do you need to hold a hearing when it's always the exact same decision, to continue residency? They said, let's just do that on paper. Staff can review the stuff on paper, and we'll save all kinds of money that way. That kind of creative thinking makes sense.

They also had a situation where they were always having hearings with panels of three people. Agencies and tribunals at the provincial level, which I'm familiar with, had long ago gone to two- and one-person panels. They said the third member doesn't make a difference so let's use our resources more efficiently and have two-member panels; they're not going to make any worse decisions. In fact, statistically, if you look at how the members on those panels determined matters in the past, it would never have made a difference if there were two or three members. So they said, "Let's be efficient; let's spread them out; let's have more return for our dollars." It's that kind of practice that has allowed reinvestments in things that do matter, that are priority areas.

I can tell you, all the agencies under the public safety portfolio represent priority areas for this government, because we believe that national security and public safety are very significant priorities.

Mr. Phil McColeman: I appreciate your work on this, and the work of the agencies.

In my world it would be probably more appropriate to do it on an annual basis instead of every four years, but I know that would be a tough undertaking.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: You're frightening all these people up here.

Mr. Phil McColeman: I certainly think it's work that is well invested in.

On another note, if I have time, Mr. Chair—

The Chair: You have less than a minute.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Thank you.

Just quickly, on Mr. Norlock's comments about training in prisons with people who are incarcerated, and then the comment about weaving in the time served where we'll have more people.... Frankly, I think it presents a bit of an opportunity, if you're creative about this, to help individuals who find themselves in that circumstance. Of course, my background is in construction, so I'm thinking that people who can hammer and get the construction trades under their belt will definitely have work available to them.

It's more of a comment than a question. I think Mr. Norlock hit on a huge success there, and to the extent that we can expand that, I think we're absolutely going down the right track.

• (1025)

The Chair: Thank you. There's no question there.

Mr. Kania, please, for a brief round. The minister has to leave in four minutes.

Mr. Andrew Kania (Brampton West, Lib.): Good morning.

Minister, you signed a letter dated March 9, 2009, to Mr. Alex Neve. You're familiar with that letter?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I sign an awful lot of letters, so you'll have to refresh my memory.

Mr. Andrew Kania: This is the one with respect to O'Connor and Iacobucci. Now, a few weeks back, one of the Conservative members of Parliament, Mr. Richards, referred, in speaking with Paul Kennedy, who you're familiar with as well, to the civilian oversight of the RCMP as "bureaucrats and paper pushers". I'd like to know if this government actually supports civilian oversight of the RCMP and security agencies.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I very much support that. The issue that has sometimes arisen is whether some of these bodies stay within their mandate. Oversight bodies are there to ensure that agencies stay within their statutory mandate. Those oversight bodies, however, have to stay within their mandates as well. The role that the RCMP complaints commission plays in responding to complaints is an important one.

Mr. Andrew Kania: Why has the government taken no steps to comply with the O'Connor report in respect of setting up a civilian oversight agency? You indicated in this letter of yours that the Government of Canada was moving forward with this. What have you done, and do you have any documentation that you could provide to this committee? I'm asking for it to show that you've actually done something on that recommendation.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Actually, considerable work has been done on that front. We're dealing with oversight for the RCMP and the broader question of inter-agency oversight, which is the more serious element that O'Connor and other commissions have pointed to. We're waiting for the report from Justice Major's commission on Air India, which deals with our worst failure in that area and led to the worst terrorist incident in Canadian history, to finalize those conclusions.

If you're looking for some evidence on paper of the work that's been done, I direct you to the report of the RCMP implementation committee, which was released this week. It sets out in some detail the good work that has been done and the progress that has been made.

Mr. Andrew Kania: I'm looking for evidence that the government has taken steps to comply with the recommendation of Justice O'Connor for an overarching review agency. Based on everything that I've seen and your letter, nothing's happened on that. Correct?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: No, that's not true at all. As I just said, a lot of work has been done. I said this earlier to one of your colleagues. There's a great pressure on politicians to go out and show that something's being done just so they can say so. We want to make sure we get it right, and we think it's incumbent upon us to wait for the work of Justice Major in the Air India inquiry before we decide we have all the answers. Frankly, I could probably introduce legislation on this within a matter of days if I wanted to, but I think it's best that we first make sure we have it right.

The Chair: I'm sorry, I'm going to have to interrupt. It's 10:30 and we're going to suspend for one minute to give the minister an opportunity to go to his next appointment. Then we will reconvene, and you'll have one minute, Mr. Kania.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Thank you.

The Chair: Sorry, Minister, did you have a concluding comment?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I just wanted to thank the committee for the exchange this morning and encourage you to continue your good work. I appreciate all that you're doing.

• (1030)

The Chair: Thank you.

We are suspending for one minute.

• _____ (Pause) _____
•

The Chair: Okay, let's reconvene.

Mr. Kania.

Mr. Andrew Kania: Thank you.

To Director Judd and Senior Deputy Commissioner Sweeney, they currently are not permitting Mr. Abdelrazik to return to Canada, is that correct? Do you both understand that?

Mr. Jim Judd: I understand that there is an issue with that, yes.

Mr. Andrew Kania: Okay.

Now, will you agree with me—individually, both of you—that both the RCMP and CSIS have cleared him of any involvement in either terrorism or crime?

Do you agree with that statement?

Mr. Jim Judd: We were asked for an opinion on Mr. Abdelrazik and we said that we have no current information of substance regarding his activities, because he's been out of the country for a number of years.

Mr. Andrew Kania: Okay.

Do you have something—

The Chair: Andrew, we're going to have to wrap this up. We'll come back to you later. It's actually the Bloc's turn. You only had one minute.

Monsieur Ménard or Ms. Mourani.

Mr. Serge Ménard: Ms. Mourani.

The Chair: All right.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: I would simply like to clarify one point with respect to Mr. Judd. I'd like to understand why Mr. O'Brien told you that. As my colleague mentioned, we spoke with him for nearly two hours, and I don't believe he was hired by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service yesterday. That man knows the agency's practices.

I'd like to understand why he said that. How do you explain his remarks?

• (1035)

[English]

Mr. Jim Judd: My supposition is that he was venturing into the hypothetical. Just as the minister indicated earlier, I would return to the fact that our policy is clear with respect to information sharing and with respect to any information that may have been obtained through torture.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: So you're telling me he was venturing into the hypothetical.

Ms. Pollak said that you occasionally use information obtained under torture. Will she also be issuing a disclaimer?

[English]

Mr. Jim Judd: That was based, I believe, on a report that her organization had done some years ago. As I say, our policy and practices are changed.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: So your policies have changed. You've done it in the past, but you'll never do it again. Is that correct?

[English]

Mr. Jim Judd: It may have occurred in the past, where information was received by the service that had been obtained through torture, but it's clear now that our policy is that such information is not to be relied upon, and that we, under no circumstances, condone the use of torture for any reason.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: You have two minutes, Mr. Ménard.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Ménard: My question is for Mr. Sweeney from the RCMP.

I see that this year your budget has been cut by a further \$30 million or even more. Some services assigned to the RCMP could very well be assigned to another agency, such as the DNA analysis service, for example. Only 1% of cases are considered urgent. It takes a considerable amount of time to handle all the other requests, far more than the deadlines given.

In addition, very simple requests are submitted to you, such as those to determine whether someone has a criminal record. A person may need this kind of information to prove that he does not have a criminal record, in order to get a job or to travel outside Canada. However, it takes about a year to respond to these requests.

Will you be trying to cut down those time periods or will you continue trying to convince me that an agency like a forensic laboratory would enhance its credibility and efficiency if it were detached from the police forces? If it doesn't increase its efficiency, we could at least give it budgets that would enable it to do so.

In view of this cut to your budget, wouldn't assigning all these other functions to other agencies be a better solution?

[English]

D/Commr William Sweeney: All solutions that improve levels of service in law enforcement certainly are solutions that should be examined with all seriousness to determine whether they're more viable options for the Government of Canada and the provinces and territories to invest in as opposed to the current model. We should always challenge the models that exist in law enforcement, to ensure the best service is provided to the Canadian public.

As it relates to the forensic laboratory services, there's no question there's been an explosion in terms of the demand for biology casework analysis. It is the best evidence available in many instances, and right across this country law enforcement agencies are looking for expansion of access to biology casework.

We have recently undertaken a complete audit of our business processes within the RCMP forensic laboratories. We had the United Kingdom come in, iforensic, to provide us with some advice to ensure that our current reference levels allow us to invest in the most efficient way possible so that we can deliver those services. We have amended those business processes, and we are continuing to amend those business processes.

We will require additional resources on biology casework, but before we present a business case to anyone, we want to be absolutely confident that we can say we are using our existing capacities in the most efficient manner possible. And we're near that point.

• (1040)

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Ménard: Does the RCMP give the Americans lists of people who have a criminal record? A large number of Canadians

have come to complain to our committees that American authorities are clearly familiar with their criminal records. They're increasingly denying these people access to the United States, even for very old offences.

[English]

The Chair: Just a brief response, please.

D/Commr William Sweeney: Yes.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Harris, do you have any questions?

Mr. Jack Harris: Yes, I do, as a matter of fact.

The Chair: Okay, go ahead.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Judd, with all due respect to the testimony you gave this morning about the change in policy—the now policy, that your agency doesn't make use of torture or information obtained through torture—how can we, in this committee, or the public in general have confidence that this is something everyone in your agency follows, when we had Mr. O'Brian giving the perhaps admittedly speculative answer to our committee on Tuesday? If he, who is the legal adviser and adviser on legislation to CSIS, can engage in that, what about all the activities of the agents and the people who are operating in your service? What confidence can we have that they are aware of that policy and are actually implementing it?

Mr. Jim Judd: I have two comments, sir.

First of all, to clarify, Mr. O'Brian is not our legal adviser. He works on legislative issues. But legal counsel is provided by the Department of Justice, which has a large office of lawyers working in the service.

With respect to the issue of confidence, I would say to you the following. CSIS is the most reviewed intelligence service in the world—externally reviewed. It may be the most reviewed agency of the Government of Canada. We are subject to review by all the various agents of Parliament, including the Privacy Commissioner and the Access to Information Commissioner. We have two statutory independent review agencies: the Inspector General, reporting to the minister, and the Security Intelligence Review Committee. Both conduct annual reviews of our operations and both report on those and any instances of non-compliance with the law or policy.

In addition to that, in the just over four years I've been with CSIS, we have been involved in four major inquiries, one of which has yet to report. They were conducted by Mr. Justice O'Connor, Mr. Justice Iacobucci, Mr. Justice Major, and the fourth one was conducted by Mr. Bob Rae on the Air India issue. So we have internal measures, policies, and so on, to deal with these issues. We have a large body of Department of Justice lawyers acting as legal counsel to us in virtually all our operations. And annually two external review bodies, over and above whatever independent inquiries are called, look through everything and anything we do and report on that.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you.

On another matter, Mr. Hyppolite, I'm interested in some of the comments. The minister made a comment that I agree with. We don't want to turn our correctional institutions into mental hospitals, although once people are incarcerated, they need whatever treatment they deserve while they're in your custody. But neither is the Correctional Service a trade school. Certainly the fact that someone can get training that is specifically useful for a particular job outside is a good thing, but surely, Mr. Hyppolite, the operation of a prison farm, where prisoners are engaged in physical activity, actively producing food for themselves and other prisoners and institutions, engaged in a working life on a daily basis, meeting expectations to do work, some of whom never had a job before...this is good for the mental health of prisoners, good for the protection of the public. When they're released you have people who are used to doing that. Isn't that a positive thing? Why wouldn't the Correctional Service keep that operation if it can contribute to the rehabilitation of prisoners?

● (1045)

The Chair: Give an opportunity for the response here.

D/Commr Marc-Arthur Hyppolite: In terms of the link you make to mental health, obviously, when we occupy an offender, it is always better for the offender to do his time peacefully and then prepare himself and concentrate on the criminogenic...and the needs that have been identified in the correctional plan to prepare him for a safe and early release to society.

On the issue of the farms, obviously, as you know, we're one of the 21 agencies that have undergone a strategic review. We identified the farms and the work there as not being, strategically speaking, an enhancement to our capacity to deliver marketable skills to offenders. So we have decided to close the six farms around the country and invest in areas that are more strategic to our priorities and to link to the provision of better public safety services and make sure the offender, in the continuum of care, when released to society, can be employable and employed and have a meaningful job and be a law-abiding citizen.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Jack Harris: Is that your decision?

D/Commr Marc-Arthur Hyppolite: We have decided that within the strategic review. I believe a presentation was done to cabinet, and this measure was identified as a strategic move to enhance our capacity to do it—

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

Mr. MacKenzie, please.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the officials for being here today. It's important to this committee.

I'd like to start with you, Mr. Judd, because some of my friends have spent a great deal of time talking about Mr. O'Brien's comment with respect to torture. My recollection is that you joined CSIS in late 2004, I believe, and you indicated how long you've been there. This government took office in January 2006. It's also my recollection that all of the issues in those inquiries dealing with torture occurred under a previous government, prior to 2006.

Mr. Jim Judd: In the early part of this decade, 2002, 2003, I think, yes.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Right. My friends would indicate that somehow this government condones torture. I believe the minister was explicit in what he said, I believe you were explicit in what you said, and I believe the RCMP who were here on Tuesday were very explicit in what they said. Has change occurred within your organization since you took over in late 2004 to today with respect to policy and practice in the information you receive or in just dealing in the general sense with torture?

Mr. Jim Judd: Yes. As I indicated earlier in my comments, we have implemented all of the recommendations in Mr. Justice O'Connor's inquiry, a number of which dealt with information-sharing internationally. A number of other changes have been made in our policies and our ministerial directives, which provide us with policy instruction from the minister. They have been, I think, completely revised and were reissued to us last year.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: We heard what Mr. O'Brien said, and I'm certain that on this side we thought he was talking about hypothetical situations.

I have a little quote here and I'm wondering if it's not very much the same: "In a war on terror, I would argue, the issue is not whether we can avoid evil acts altogether, but whether we can succeed in choosing lesser evils and keep them from becoming greater ones." This is a quote from *The Yukon News* on August 7, 2006. Does that sound like somebody also talking about a hypothetical situation, as opposed to a practical one? If I told you that quote came from the current leader of the Liberal Party, would it sound as though he were also talking hypothetically rather than practically?

● (1050)

Mr. Jim Judd: Hypothetically speaking and practically speaking, I don't engage in hypothetical answers to hypothetical questions.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: I think that's extremely wise.

Mr. Rigby, I wonder if we could talk about border security, the changes that have occurred, and its budget issues. In particular, I would like to know about an increase in funding for border security, with the stand-alone positions, and how this is affecting your organization.

Mr. Stephen Rigby: We received funds a couple of budgets ago to implement both the arming initiatives and what is generally referred to as the doubling-up initiative. This was to ensure that we would not have any ports of entry with an officer working alone. I can report that both of those initiatives are on schedule, on budget. We're approximately halfway through the implementation of the doubling-up initiative, and we expect to see it completed in the next couple of years.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: As a result of this, are you seeing fewer instances of border guards, CBSA officials, leaving their posts because of threats made to them?

Mr. Stephen Rigby: Both of these initiatives were designed, in part, to respond to concerns that our officers were working under difficult, sometimes dangerous, conditions. My sense of it is that our officers feel that these two initiatives have gone some way towards responding to these concerns.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Commissioner Sweeney, I wonder if you could give us a sense of what's occurring in depot, with the recruits now being paid for their time at depot. Is this having an effect on recruitment?

D/Commr William Sweeney: It's very early to associate any change to the cadet allowance with our recruiting initiative. But according to the last update I had with respect to the troops we had programmed into the academy, all of the seats have been filled, which is somewhat unusual for us. We have had some challenges on this head. Whether it's attributable to cadet allowance, I can't yet say. But our depot is going at an incredible pace. This year we're forecasting that 1,824 cadets will go through our academy. By contrast, when I joined the RCMP in 1974, and we were in a growth period at the time, we were putting through less than 1,000, so it's almost doubled. It's unprecedented in our history.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Oliphant.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: My question is for Mr. Judd. You may or may not be the most overseen agency in the government, but on March 31, the Auditor General said that at the time of her audit, "security and intelligence agencies were still not undergoing a level of independent review proportionate to their intrusion into people's lives".

Would your agency welcome more oversight?

Mr. Jim Judd: I'm not sure I would agree with the comment. In order to authorize any intrusive activity our agency might need to direct against Canadian citizens or residents of Canada, we must first go to Federal Court to get a warrant. The warrant itself is reviewed by independent counsel, by justice department counsel, by our own operations people, and by the minister, before we proceed to court. The execution of the warrant powers, whether it relates to communications interception or anything else, is subsequently subject to review by the Security and Intelligence Review Committee and the Inspector General. In the light of this, I'm not sure that additional external review—

•(1055)

Mr. Robert Oliphant: What I think Justice O'Connor was pointing out as well is that perhaps CSIS is under review, but the linkages—the conveyance of information between the agencies and among the agencies, and among intelligence activities happening in other places—are not appropriately reviewed. There are those cracks in between agencies and in between operations in the 20-odd agencies that are operating. Do you agree that that's a lack?

Mr. Jim Judd: I think the point you make about a broader, if you will, inter-agency review mechanism is one that certainly Mr. Justice O'Connor has recommended. And as the minister indicated earlier, the government has been doing work on that. He is awaiting the results of the Major inquiry.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: No budget for it yet, but....

Mr. Jim Judd: Well, there will be, I presume.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I wanted to ask both of you this. We had representatives from CSIS and the RCMP in earlier this week on this study. Both of them declined the opportunity to use parliamentary privilege to apologize.

Former Commissioner Zaccardelli apologized for Mr. Arar before the government did. Would you be willing to offer apologies on behalf of your agencies for Mr. Almalki, Mr. Elmaati, and Mr. Nureddin?

Mr. Jim Judd: If I could, sir, I would point out that one of the cardinal principles of public service is that one does not contradict the minister before a parliamentary committee. The minister has already spoken to the issue.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Have your agencies been instructed not to issue apologies?

Mr. Jim Judd: As a general matter of policy in our service, we do not make public comments on issues that are in litigation.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Mr. O'Brian suggested on Tuesday that government lawyers had, indeed, indicated that they should not be offering any apologies while litigation continues. I'm just wondering whether the directive came from government lawyers or from the minister.

Mr. Jim Judd: No, I think the issue is a broader policy issue for us, sir. It is highly inappropriate for us to comment on a matter that is in litigation, be it civil or criminal, while the litigation is still—

Mr. Robert Oliphant: So Mr. Arar was an exception—the apology to Mr. Arar, which happened while litigation was ongoing?

Mr. Jim Judd: Which apology are you talking...?

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Mr. Zaccardelli's and Mr. Harper's.

Mr. Jim Judd: I believe the Prime Minister's apology took place after the settlement of the litigation. I'm not sure. I'm going on my memory.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Okay. Mr. Zaccardelli's didn't, though.

Mr. Jim Judd: I won't speak for Mr. Zaccardelli.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Lastly, I would just like to ask you how often you pray, where you pray, and where you go after you pray?

Mr. Jim Judd: It's none of your business, sir.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Would that be none of the business of CSIS agents when they meet my constituents, who are Muslims?

Mr. Jim Judd: I'm not sure that those questions are currently asked—

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Those are questions that are regularly asked of my constituents by CSIS agents. I have many, many documented cases that this is a principal question they ask.

And I'm very glad it's on record that it is none of my business. I would hope that it is none of CSIS's business as well, because it could be the subject of oversight, if we have appropriate oversight.

The Chair: We'll have to wrap this up.

Thank you.

Mr. Rathgeber, you have two minutes.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Thank you.

In the two minutes that I have, I'm going to return to estimates, which is what I understood was the reason that we're here today.

Deputy Commissioner Sweeney, the Vancouver Olympics are less than 10 and a half months away, and we keep hearing stories of cost overruns with regard to security. I was wondering—and you may not have the exact numbers at your fingertips—if part of the reason why there have been exorbitant cost overruns with respect to the budgeted and projected budgets for security for the Vancouver Olympics is a result of the current out-of-control gang warfare that we see and hear about in the streets of Vancouver?

D/Commr William Sweeney: No, I wouldn't attribute any of the costs of the Olympics to the crime issues that are currently being experienced in the Lower Mainland. These are just generally driven by economic conditions as a consequence of supply and demand. People are recognizing that as we get closer to the Olympics, construction is going to be more expensive, labour is going to be more expensive, and private security is going to be more expensive. Suppliers that are providing equipment to the security forces will obviously try to capitalize on that market. I think those economic drivers are primarily the issues that we're contending with.

•(1100)

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: I'm from western Canada, as you might know. As the western Canadian economy is catching up to the eastern Canadian economy, in terms of going into a downturn, is it projected or estimated that those costs might actually begin to reverse themselves slightly?

D/Commr William Sweeney: I suppose there's always that possibility, but at this stage we're not relying upon that.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Thank you.

Those are my questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We want to thank our witnesses for coming before the committee today. We appreciate the testimony you have given to us. We wish you all the best.

This meeting stands adjourned.

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