



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

CHPC



NUMBER 029



1st SESSION



41st PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, May 8, 2012



Chair

The Honourable Rob Moore

Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

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•(1105)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC)): Good morning, everybody. We'll get started.

Welcome to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. Today we have two groups of witnesses. The group we have before us today will be here from 11 o'clock until 12 o'clock .

From the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, we have Margaret Huber, Charles Reeves, and Andrea Hudson. We look forward to your testimony.

From Canada Border Services, we have Calvin Christiansen.

We will have seven-minute opening remarks, and then we'll move to questions and answers for the remainder of the hour.

This is on our review of national protocol procedures.

In no particular order, we'll start with Margaret, who is Chief of Protocol of Canada. It sounds like we've invited the right person to our study on protocol.

The floor is yours.

[Translation]

Mrs. Margaret Huber (Chief of Protocol of Canada, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and honourable members of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

My name is Margaret Huber, and I have the honour of acting as the Chief of Protocol of Canada. The Office of Protocol is located within the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, and I report directly to the Associate Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. While housed within Foreign Affairs, the Office of Protocol provides protocol support and advice to the Governor General and the Prime Minister, as well as the DFAIT portfolio ministers. The Office of Protocol also provides guidance to other federal departments, as well as to provincial and territorial offices of protocol.

[English]

The chief of protocol is considered to be the most senior protocol officer for high-level international visits to Canada and outgoing state, official, and working visits, as well as for overall issues relating to the entitlements and special status granted to the foreign diplomatic community in Canada. That includes a number of international organizations, such as the International Civil Aviation Organization in Montreal.

The Office of Protocol manages and facilitates the presence and work of the foreign diplomatic community in Canada and across Canada, since we're a very large country. This includes about 8,000 diplomats and their families. We support official international visits and events of the Governor General, as well as official visits and events, both abroad and in Canada, of the Prime Minister and the ministers of the Foreign Affairs and International Trade portfolio.

Two divisions within the Office of Protocol may be of particular interest to this standing committee. The first is the official events division, headed by my colleague with me today, Charles Reeves. This division delivers DFAIT's official events management program in support of incoming official and working visits hosted by the Prime Minister and portfolio ministers and their official visits abroad.

This division delivers auxiliary, logistical, and courtesy services in respect of certain official events of the Governor General here and abroad. It also fulfills an overall advisory role regarding official events and hospitality for the federal, provincial, and municipal governments. This division has also played a supporting role for the Department of Canadian Heritage in the delivery of events for the incoming royal visits, such as last year's visit of Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. It will again be playing such a supporting role in the upcoming visit to Canada of Their Royal Highnesses the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall.

The official events division has also provided support in the delivery of state funerals, most recently the state funeral for Jack Layton in 2011.

The second division that I believe may be of interest to the standing committee is the official visits division, also represented here today by Andrea Hudson, the deputy director. This division coordinates visits to Canada by official guests of the Governor General, the Prime Minister, and DFAIT portfolio ministers, funded from the government hospitality allotment with which we are entrusted. For each visit, this group ensures coordination with Rideau Hall, the Prime Minister's Office, the Privy Council Office, the RCMP, Health Canada, Veterans Affairs Canada, the Department of National Defence, parliamentary protocol, provincial and/or territorial protocol offices, foreign missions in Canada, Canadian missions abroad, and various DFAIT divisions. As you can see, we're great believers in collaboration and coordination and working together.

As part of the oversight for incoming visits to Canada, this division defines standards of treatment for state, official, working, and private visits of heads of state, heads of government, ministers, and guests of government. Standards of treatment provide general guidelines for a visit in areas such as accommodation, local transportation, security, gifts, hospitality, and ceremonial elements.

I would also like to provide clarification with regard to visit designations. For a state visit of a foreign head of state to Canada, ceremonial elements may include an official welcome by the Governor General, military honours at Government House or the Canada Reception Centre, usually depending on the time of the arrival, a tree-planting ceremony at Government House, an official welcome on Parliament Hill, a 21-gun salute, wreath laying at the National War Memorial or the Peacekeeping Monument, a state dinner or luncheon, flag street lining in Ottawa, and red carpet for arrival and departure.

An official visit is the highest visit designation for a visit by a foreign head of government to Canada, as opposed to head of state. Ceremonial elements are similar to a state visit. Ceremonial elements can include an official welcome by a federal representative, military honours, official welcome on Parliament Hill, a 19-gun salute, wreath laying at the National War Memorial or Peacekeeping Monument, some form of official hospitality, flag street lining in Ottawa, and red carpet for arrival or departure. There is, as I mentioned, a certain degree of flexibility, depending on the circumstances and the wishes of our guest.

For all ceremonial elements, protocol works in close collaboration with other departments to work out the details of each event. In some cases, protocol leads, while for other events, we rely on the expertise of colleagues to lead on event logistics, for example, events on the Hill in which we work very closely with parliamentary protocol.

The official visits division also coordinates official travel abroad of the Governor General, the Prime Minister, and portfolio ministers, funded from the international conference allotment.

● (1110)

For 2011, the official visits division coordinated a total of 168 high-level visits, 132 outgoing and 36 incoming. Notable visitors to Canada included the President of Colombia, the President of the Czech Republic, the Prime Minister of the U.K., the Prime Minister of Kuwait, the Crown Prince of Brunei, and of course we currently are enjoying the visit of the President of Israel.

In addition, the official visits division manages the Canada Reception Centre, which includes an airport terminal lounge at the Ottawa airport and hangar 11 for dedicated aircraft. The hangar is used by our Prime Minister and Governor General for domestic and international flights, as well as by international high-level dignitaries visiting Ottawa. For example, President Peres arrived on a dedicated aircraft and will also be departing on a dedicated aircraft.

Lastly, this group that Andrea is representing also delivers the national airport courtesy program, intended to facilitate security clearances and greeting privileges for high-level foreign dignitaries transiting through or visiting Canada. As you can imagine, this group is especially busy during periods around the UN General Assembly, major conferences taking place in North America, or on

other occasions. Each such clearance does require extensive coordination with my colleagues at the Canada Border Services Agency, Transport Canada, the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and airport security authorities across Canada.

As my CBSA colleague reminded me earlier today, every airport is different, so we do make sure that the appropriate facilities are in place.

In 2011, approximately 800 courtesy clearances were facilitated in this way by the official visits division.

● (1115)

[Translation]

I would be pleased to answer any questions that the honourable committee members may have. Thank you for listening and for inviting me to be here today.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Next we will have Mr. Christiansen.

Mr. Calvin Christiansen (Director General, Border Operations Centre and Major Events Directorate, Operations Branch, Canada Border Services Agency): Good morning, Mr. Chair, and to the committee. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to you today about Canada Border Service Agency's protocols and procedures team and the role it plays in working with our partners for major events.

My name is Calvin Christiansen, and I am the director general of the border operations centre and major events directorate of the operations branch at the Canada Border Services Agency.

To put the agency's role into perspective, I'd like to begin by providing an overview of the CBSA's mandate.

The CBSA is responsible for providing integrated border services that support national security and public safety priorities and facilitate the free flow of persons and goods, including animals and plants, that meet all of the requirements under program legislation. The CBSA administers over 90 acts and regulations on behalf of other government departments and agencies, and is primarily responsible for enforcing the Customs Act and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

The CBSA provides services at approximately 1,200 service points across Canada, including 117 land border crossings, 13 major international airports, five marine port facilities, 444 small-vessel marina reporting sites, and three postal processing plants.

As such, while our international events team assists with significant national events, it does always with our mandate and legislative principles as the core guiding principles.

In addition, the CBSA is mindful of the service-level expectations of Canadians. Within the traveller stream, border services officers question people upon arrival to determine if they and their personal goods meet the requirements of applicable legislation and regulations to enter Canada. Border services officers will then make a decision to grant entry or refer a person for further processing—for example, payment of duties and taxes, issuance of a document, etc.—and/or for a physical examination.

When significant events are being planned, such as a royal visit, music festival, sports event, or concert, the CBSA must be involved in the planning to ensure that Canada's immigration and customs laws are followed. All foreign dignitaries entering Canada must demonstrate that they meet Canada's entry requirements, including the presentation of proper travel documents, such as a passport. The same rules that apply to Canadian residents and visitors to Canada also apply to foreign dignitaries and heads of state.

The international events and convention services program provides guidance to tourism and the international business community about the CBSA's visitor and goods admissibility requirements. Border procedures and processes are streamlined through the team with the goal of easing border crossings through pre-arrival strategies.

We have nine regional coordinators across the country who have successfully contributed to more than 1,300 international events each year.

In addition, I should add that not all of those international events involve the clearance of a dignitary who is coming for an event, but this is just the scale of the international events we deal with.

In addition, information and guidance on CBSA admissibility requirements for organizers of large events taking place is available through the regional coordinators or through our office in Ottawa.

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

As these events focus the eyes of the world on Canada, normally attracting significant media attention and exerting significant pressures on CBSA resources, the Major International Events Coordination and Facilitation team plays a critical role in ensuring the CBSA is operationally prepared and ready for spikes in activity related to large events such as the winter Olympics and the upcoming Pan American Games.

The unit provides information for event organizers involved in promoting Canada as a destination for their events. The major focus is to facilitate the border crossing process by providing guidance to all key partners and participants on Canada's admissibility requirements and potential remission entitlements for visitors and goods.

[*English*]

The national courtesy and expedited clearance program manages, authorizes, and maintains information on requests for all official courtesy and expedited clearance privileges. The objective of the national courtesy and expedited clearance program is to facilitate the presence in Canada of visiting foreign dignitaries who qualify for courtesy or expedited clearance.

A courtesy clearance involves the streamlining of CBSA formalities in which the primary and secondary inspections are amalgamated to ensure the efficient and secure passage of the individual or the delegation.

Courtesy and expedited clearance procedures ensure that the CBSA has the necessary information in advance of the arrival of the qualified individuals. Courtesy or expedited clearance procedures do not exempt the legislative requirements of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act or the Customs Act.

Expedited clearance is the facilitation of CBSA formalities in which the primary questioning is performed in an accelerated manner, usually at the special services or crew counter at major international airports. The program serves as the key point of contact for courtesy and expedited clearances that may be requested by DFAIT's Office of Protocol, Heritage Canada, the Department of National Defence, the Supreme Court of Canada, or provincial offices of protocol.

While the CBSA has in place specific teams to provide expert information and guidance regarding special events and visits, it relies heavily on partnerships to ensure smooth, incident-free processes. These partnerships are mostly at headquarters with other federal departments; however, there is significant work done at the provincial, regional, and municipal levels where the actual events do take place. It's the guidance at the local level that ensures these events are successful, and this is where evidence of the CBSA's expertise is seen.

The CBSA processes millions of travellers each year at our 13 international airports, and we process, in total, about 1,500 courtesy or expedited clearances each year, so that's the combination of what we have from DFAIT and from other organizations. In some instances, we'll refer to an event, but the event will have several people attached to that event as well. The majority of these take place in Ottawa, Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver.

The CBSA works hard to maintain our levels of service, and we continue to improve our service through various traveller processing initiatives, such as NEXUS and advanced border clearance terminals. So this continues to go on in the background while we have courtesy or expedited clearances happening.

The Canada Border Services Agency is a proud participant in Canada's national tourism strategy. We continue to provide a high level of service and working-level advice and guidance to organizers of special events at the national, provincial, and municipal levels. By ensuring secure and efficient border management processes, the CBSA plays an integral role in their success.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my opening statement. I'd be pleased to answer any questions the committee may have.

• (1125)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Christiansen.

Now we will move to our question and answer time. These are seven-minute rounds for the question and the answer, and I will start with Mr. Calandra.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you all for coming.

Ms. Huber, can you just guide me on how one becomes the chief protocol officer for Canada?

Ms. Margaret Huber: Well, I'm just lucky, I guess.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Outside of luck....

Ms. Margaret Huber: I am a career diplomat. In previous incarnations I worked closely with the Office of Protocol. For example, as a geographic director general responsible for our relations with north Asia and the Pacific, I had close collaboration on high-level visits to and from that area of the world. I developed a great respect for the expertise of colleagues within the Office of Protocol.

There are few of us, in fact, who are what I would call amateurs. Most have years of expertise in various areas, such as Andrea Hudson. But it also helps the office that it includes people like Charles Reeves, like me, who have also served abroad a great deal and who have seen standards of treatment of protocol in other countries. My most recent incarnation was in fact as ambassador to Jordan and Iraq.

I can tell you there is great diversity in terms of protocol around the world, but there are basic principles that remain the same under the Vienna Convention, for example, and under the principles of reciprocity of treatment—how our high-level visitors are treated when they are abroad.

Sorry, that's a rather long-winded answer to a basic question. I apologize for going on.

Mr. Paul Calandra: That's fine. There's obviously not a school of protocol, I assume, where someone would go to learn. A lot of it, then, I assume, is based on experiences both at home and abroad. How do you ensure consistency? I know the answer, but how important is it to get protocol right? If you screw up on a visit either by our Prime Minister or a foreign dignitary, a small thing could cause a big problem. So how do you avoid a screw-up? And when you bring new people in, how do you avoid their making mistakes?

Ms. Margaret Huber: We're very conscious that the details are exceedingly important. Any successful visit or event is made up of a million and one details—doing proper advances, thinking of all the possibilities, and being alert to unavoidable last-minute changes, which happen all the time. We are very conscious that in protocol we are dealing with guests of Canada, whether they are visitors or foreign diplomats who are posted to Canada. We're fortunate, if I may say, to have dedicated officers working on this, not only in the Office of Protocol, but among the many strategic partners with whom we work, whether it's CBSA, parliamentary protocol, or the long list of partners I mentioned earlier.

● (1130)

Mr. Paul Calandra: With events that take place in Canada, how do you ensure consistency with Canadian tradition? I'm assuming there's a manual you would follow. How do you ensure that Canadian tradition is always respected during an internal visit from a foreign dignitary or when the Governor General visits other communities? How closely do you work with protocol departments

in the provinces? Guide me through a post-visit debriefing. I assume that after a visit, either from a Governor General or a Prime Minister, you will review what went right and what went wrong. How do you make changes, and make sure that those changes get communicated nationwide?

Mrs. Margaret Huber: First of all, prior to a high-level visit we would be consulting with a broad range of partners. We'd also be looking at our records of previous visits made either by that individual or by the person holding the office the individual represents. We would be consulting with our mission in that country. We would be looking at what sort of treatment would best serve Canada's interests in terms of making proposals for a program that would be of interest to the guest. For example, if it would mean travel to other cities within Canada, we would consult with the relevant provinces or municipal offices of protocol. We would consult on the program with colleagues across town, working very hard throughout the visit to make sure it was a true expression of Canada's respect for the guest, that it would be honouring the visitor, and operating mightily to avoid the kinds of slip-ups you referred to, while recognizing that sometimes last-minute changes are necessary.

After each major visit we have an internal review to discuss what worked well, what we should be doing to maximize felicitous results, and what didn't work so well and needs even more careful scrutiny and attention next time.

So, yes, we do try to learn from the past.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Calandra.

Mr. Cash.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank everyone for being here. I'm sure, given the fact that the President of Israel is here right now, there's probably a lot for your team to be doing. So we doubly appreciate your being here.

You've mapped out, Ms. Huber, a very complex story. The story is really about how very professional people within our civil service work together in order to pull off the best result for Canada, either here or abroad. There's unanimous agreement that those things are executed brilliantly 99.9% of the time. That 0.1% is just because we're human.

But what I want to get at here is this. Given the complexity and the fact that, as you've said, you need to be flexible as well and respond to certain circumstances as they come up—and of course you're dealing with a multiplicity of other agencies and their agendas, etc.—is it a good idea to try to set in stone these procedures?

● (1135)

Ms. Margaret Huber: That's a very interesting question. Thank you.

The way you phrase it, “set in stone”, is something that we, operating on the protocol side, on the visits, on the logistics side.... Setting in stone is not something that would come naturally, because we are governed by very fluid environments in which we must operate.

The focus is much more on the end result, which is delivering a first-class visit or event that meets objectives. The nimbleness that is required means that, yes, you do rely on standards of treatment, you do rely on past history for what is expected or appropriate for a visit or an event, but you also look for opportunities to bring innovation, to bring a bit of a fresh approach, obviously in consultation and in accordance with the wishes of those concerned.

Setting in stone would not be something we would gravitate towards. But we certainly would like our partners to have the comfort of knowing that our approach consistently will be to deliver first-class visits or events and to avoid surprises in the sense of undesirable outcomes, or the 0.1% that you were referring to.

I might add that we're aided in this as well by tools such as orders of precedence, such as records, much of which, by the way, may be found either on our website or on the websites of partners, such as the Department of Canadian Heritage.

It's not that we're making it up as we go along; on the contrary, but we do like to reserve the ability to be flexible to respond to changing circumstances, changing needs.

Mr. Andrew Cash: Thank you.

I want to get to the idea of reflecting who we are as a country in the various events and procedures that your office is involved in. I would like you to comment generally about how that's done. In other words, the sense I have, that we have, is that Canada is a country with some rich traditions, but also we're a country that evolves over time. I wonder how you manage that.

Ms. Margaret Huber: We do indeed, and although it wasn't covered earlier, among the responsibilities we have, for example, is working with Rideau Hall on the presentation of credentials by foreign ambassadors—it's a good illustration of the point you raise—in which we aim for a mix of tradition, of pageantry, but also of Canadian warmth and some informal touches as well.

The ceremonies have over the years been modernized. For example, we no longer bring heads of mission to Rideau Hall in horse-drawn carriages. They no longer wear tails or even, in the morning, long ball gowns in the case of the ladies.

By the way, I was interested when a colleague who had recently presented his credentials in Europe sent photos demonstrating that there they still do it. I think it's great that they do, but I'm very proud of the way we also mix some Canadian informality—something that also shows who we are.

•(1140)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cash.

Mr. Simms.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windor, Lib.): Thank you, Chair, and thank you to our guests.

You talk about, as I guess was discussed earlier, the pitfalls of doing your job. They can be many and very subtle, and certainly I would have a hard time with that part of the job—finding out the subtleties of making a faux pas.

When the Prime Minister or the Governor General is tasked to go to another country, to what extent do you become involved in

discussing what we cannot do, what we can do? Are you involved in that process in any way—obviously, from a ceremonial point of view?

Ms. Margaret Huber: We make sure that briefings are available. For example, on visits by His Excellency the Governor General to various parts of the world—his trips to Asia most recently, to Brazil and the Caribbean—we make sure that he is aware of any possible local sensitivities. But since he's a very well-travelled gentleman, there's not much you need to instruct him on.

But yes, we do, and not just for the principals on such a delegation, but because there are other members of the official delegation or the accompanying delegation, we do provide that kind of advice.

We also provide advice, when requested by those who contact us—say from a municipal or a provincial level of government—asking for particular advice. When we don't know, we find out, in consultation with others who would have more up-to-date or more detailed information.

Mr. Scott Simms: That's another part of my questioning. I had this line of questioning at the last meeting. It seems to me that on international visits, when I listen to Canadian ambassadors or ambassadors from other nations, they talk about visits from the premiers. They're not heads of state, but it's almost as if they talk of them as such. We've had several in Newfoundland. We've had Iceland and Norway sign memorandums of understanding.

Maybe you could comment on this as well. We had an incident a while ago—I won't call it comical, but it was a real eye-opener—in which the former leader of Libya was leaving New York and heading back home. He decided he wanted to stop in Newfoundland. He didn't. Obviously, Mr. Cannon put short work to that.

What happens when these dignitaries come over and stop in a place such as Gander? They're not there for an official visit; they're just there to stretch their legs. What happens then? Do you go into...? I don't know what you do.

Ms. Margaret Huber: I was not chief of protocol at the time, but I'm sure that the then chief of protocol consulted with the provincial authorities and various others about that visit, which as you know did not take place.

Are you from Newfoundland, may I ask, Mr. Simms?

•(1145)

Mr. Scott Simms: Yes.

Ms. Margaret Huber: May I take this opportunity to thank Newfoundland, because just 10 days ago there was an economic mission of nearly 50 ambassadors based in Canada who visited Newfoundland for an economic mission and were wonderfully received. It's part of our outreach program. Thank you very much.

Mr. Scott Simms: I'll pass it on to...the provincial government was probably....

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Mr. Scott Simms: What's that? That's why we call them progressive.

Ms. Margaret Huber: As I mentioned earlier, our office works very closely with our provincial and territorial colleagues across Canada. We make a point of getting together once a year to compare notes on best practices, new approaches—for example, the use of iPads rather than large briefing books—what works, what doesn't. It's very useful, and it makes it that much easier to pick up the phone when you need help or when you want to offer help.

Mr. Scott Simms: Would you say that the partnerships, the relationships, with the provinces have strengthened in recent years because of their...? It seems to me they're reaching out more internationally. That's why I ask.

Ms. Margaret Huber: I can't speak for the previous period, but I can tell you, in all honesty, that they are excellent now. From time to time, we also exchange staff for short periods for secondments. For example, just in the short time that I've been chief of protocol, we've had two secondments from the *bureau du protocole du Québec*, with members of their staff working with us for periods of two weeks to a month. This was to exchange information about approaches. I know that my colleagues within the Office of Protocol learned as much from them as they probably learned from us.

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Christiansen, when a foreign delegation comes with a head of state...some of the pictures I see here of massive planes with a massive amount of staff. How difficult is that to manage? These people are not prone to be looked at with a skeptical eye per se, but you have to do it.

Mr. Calvin Christiansen: It's a good point. It is difficult to manage. It does require extensive coordination. I can give an example. We have advance information on any aircraft in the air right now on its way to Canada, including the advance passenger information, the personal name record data. That's how we manage the risk of what's coming into Canada.

When it comes to a situation like this, we get much more data than this. We get a full listing of the names, the passport numbers, and everything to do with everyone who's on that flight. We can do risk assessment review well before their arrival. The short turnaround arrivals, like the situation you mentioned that could potentially have happened in Newfoundland, doesn't tend to happen very often in our world.

We have a great deal of information in advance, and we have set up processes whereby we can facilitate the entry of those people. The other problem about coordination is what happens when you have an aircraft with this mass of people arriving at an airport and starting to intermingle with the rest of the passengers who are arriving on regular flights.

We have processes whereby we can keep that aside and keep the regular processing going while dealing with that, either as a courtesy clearance or as an expedited clearance. We do quite a few of these over the course of the year, and they don't tend to happen at a lot of locations either. We are familiar with process at the major airports. We wouldn't see this type of thing happen at small land border crossings, for example. They tend to happen in airports and they tend to happen in our busier airports.

We have fixed-base operators where private aircraft arrive, and these groups are taken out of the regular stream.

Mr. Scott Simms: The smaller, private—

The Chair: You are a minute over. We will have to wrap it up there, Mr. Simms.

We will go to Mr. Armstrong.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's great to know that 50 new international delegates have been "Screeched" into Newfoundland. That's a good thing for Atlantic Canada to have events like that, and we appreciate the provincial government putting those on.

If we're looking to change some of these protocols or go back to some, for example, the Governor General carrying in, what would the process be to make those changes as chief of protocol?

• (1150)

Ms. Margaret Huber: It would be through consultation—for example, with the office of the Governor General. It would be consultation as well with, say, our legal colleagues to make sure that whatever change we were proposing did not conflict with our obligations under the Vienna convention—not that it would be to provide a carriage, but you get my gist.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: I understand.

In the end it's your call, based on that consultation.

If the decision was made at some level of government that the Governor General should be carried in, and I'm not saying that's what we should be doing, but if someone were to talk to you about that and you would go through the steps to make that happen, in the end it would be your initiative, your offices, that makes that happen.

Ms. Margaret Huber: With the willing and enthusiastic consent of all concerned.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: What you would do is heavily consult with several different people before that change is made, but in the end you would be the one making that change.

Ms. Margaret Huber: That's right.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: What kind of budget do you have? Does your budget change based on the year you're going to project, if we're having an Olympics or some sort of summit here? Do you make a bunch of proposals? How is your budget formed?

Ms. Margaret Huber: We actually have budgets under the international conference allotment as well as the general hospitality allotment. These are sums entrusted to the Office of Protocol by the Treasury Board, for which we are entirely accountable, of course, and sums that are not spent are returned to the budgets. We don't keep them. We are very mindful, I should add, of costs and of value for money, and we are very often looking for ways to still have the same impact but with a more modest approach.

Charles will be very familiar with these efforts, and I'm pleased to say that they have been quite successful. At the same time, we are mindful, too, that we have standards to uphold. It is also very important that treatment of guests of government, for example, be done in a way that Canadians can also be proud of.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: We have the IPU coming, for example, in October. What would the interaction of your office be in preparation for that event in Quebec?

Ms. Margaret Huber: The IPU falls under the responsibility of parliamentary protocol, but certainly we've already discussed it with them. We offer advice and support, and for the head of the organization, we also offer the kind of airport transfer facilitation that I mentioned earlier.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Basically you're there to consult. It's up to them to contact you for what support they need. They can provide advice, and maybe some staff support on specific issues?

Ms. Margaret Huber: Perhaps I could ask my colleagues, if you agree, to what extent they may have already been involved in this.

Mr. Charles Reeves (Associate Chief of Protocol and Director, Official Events Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade): To date, I've just had discussions with parliamentary protocol about offering assistance, but we haven't narrowed down the nitty-gritty of where they would need assistance at this point.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: When the Olympics took place, was your department heavily involved in coordinating some of the wonderful events that took place out in British Columbia?

Ms. Margaret Huber: We were very busy during that period because there was a plethora of high-level visitors attending the events. It's also complicated because of course the Olympics have their own protocol as well. It was an event for which some of our colleagues were based semi-permanently in Vancouver, just to deal with the sheer volume of responsibilities. It all came off exceedingly well.

That was before I took over as chief of protocol, so this is why I turned to my colleagues.

• (1155)

Mr. Scott Armstrong: When you have large events like that, which have various levels of administration—the Olympics themselves had organizations or the United Nations were involved in events—it takes a great deal of coordination, both domestically and internationally.

Does it work well? This happens in countries all over the world on a weekly basis, this interaction that must take place. Is there that type of communication and coordination, without a lot of turf battles taking place within these different organizations?

Does the system currently, as it's set up, work well, would you say, or can you make a couple of recommendations that we could look at as a committee?

Ms. Margaret Huber: My personal view and professional judgment is that the system works very well. I am very thankful for modern technology, for a BlackBerry, for the ability to reach out at practically any time of the night or day to our posts abroad, to colleagues in the field, to make sure that it does work very well. I'm not quite sure how this was done before modern telecommunications, but then perhaps expectations were a bit different as well in those days.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Armstrong.

For three minutes, Mr. Dubé.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You said that we have many visitors from abroad and that our officials travel to other countries as well. In terms of the regulations, you said things were working quite well, as did the witnesses who came before you. How are we seen internationally? Do the countries we work with appreciate that flexibility, that Canadian informality, as you put it? Does it enhance our international reputation? Should we keep doing what we are doing? What is our reputation like?

Mrs. Margaret Huber: I would say Canada is quite fortunate. Canada's brand is very, very positive. Our approach is well-liked. People like visiting Canada and engaging in activities with us. Our goal is to show our visitors hospitality, not to be a country that offers everything. For instance, we have Hangar 11 at the airport. It's perfectly fine, but it's no Taj Mahal. We have a limited budget, and we fall within the average in terms of what we provide. Although we aren't one of those countries where visitors enjoy lavish hospitality, we do treat our visitors and guests quite well.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Aside from the budgetary issues as far as the protocol guidelines go, visitors from abroad are quite pleased with the treatment they receive here. That is what I am taking from your comments.

Mrs. Margaret Huber: I believe so, but perhaps you should ask our visitors.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Naturally, but the fact remains you do have a lot of expertise in the area, and your comments are well-taken. Could you tell us briefly about your work with other ministers. You mentioned this, but it is important to work alongside National Defence and Heritage Canada. Those are wonderful partnerships. Could you elaborate a bit on that, as we wind down?

[*English*]

Ms. Margaret Huber: The teamwork with other members, with strategic partners like CBSA, parliamentary protocol, with Rideau Hall...it's not only face to face, when we're talking about treatment handling for an event, for a visit, but it's on the telephone; it's constant e-mails. It requires teamwork non-stop, and I dare say, you would be proud of the level of teamwork. I speak not for the Office of Protocol but for the many around the country at every level of government. The wish to ensure that Canada's name remains a shining name, that brand Canada continues to be strengthened, is definitely there at all levels.

• (1200)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dubé.

Thank you to our witnesses. It was very informative and instructive for our study. We appreciate you taking the time to be here with us today.

We will break for a couple of minutes to allow our witnesses to leave and for our next group of witnesses to come forward to the table.

Thank you.

Ms. Margaret Huber: Mr. Chairman, if I may, we did bring along some illustrations so that the committee members might see some examples of photos taken during visits. It might be of interest to the members. We'll leave them with you.

The Chair: Thank you.

•(1200) _____ (Pause) _____

•(1205)

The Chair: We'll now resume.

On our second panel today we have, from the Office of the Fire Marshal of Ontario, Doug Goodings; from the Canadian Police Ceremonial Units Association, Stewart Kellock; from the Canadian Fallen Firefighters Foundation, Robert Kirkpatrick, as well as John Sobey; and from the National Alliance of Canadian Emergency Medical Services Honour Guards, Glen Gillies.

Welcome to all of you gentlemen. I know the clerk has talked to you about opening remarks. We'll try to limit those to five minutes so that our members have a chance to ask you some questions.

With that, we will start with Mr. Goodings. The floor is yours.

Mr. Doug Goodings (Executive Coordinator of Certification and Accreditation, Ontario Fire College, Office of the Fire Marshal of Ontario): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Committee members, on behalf of the Fire Marshal of Ontario and myself, it's an honour and a privilege to sit here before the committee today.

My name is Doug Goodings. I'm the executive coordinator of certification and accreditation for the Office of the Fire Marshal, and I'm also a retired member of the Canadian Forces of over 25 years.

The fire service is very steeped in history and tradition. Many of these traditions and much of the history of the fire service are incorporated into our memorials and funeral services. An example of that would be the ringing of a bell. Many years ago, a bell would ring to signify that there's a fire in a town. The firefighters would respond. Once they got back to the station, the bell would ring three times to signify that the fire was out, everything had been completed, and everybody returned to the fire station. As part of our memorials and services, the tradition of the ringing of the bell, three rings, three times, signifies that the member has completed his task and he has come home.

Firefighting is an inherently dangerous occupation and firefighters face many hazards and risks in the performance of their duties. Firefighters die in the line of duty and at emergencies. Firefighters also get cancers and diseases as a result of the hazards involved in their work, and many provincial governments have passed presumptive legislation to address these risks and hazards.

Those resulting deaths are also classified as line-of-duty deaths under the provincial governments. The presumptive legislation recognizes active firefighters and some retired firefighters. The fire services history and tradition play a large part in all memorial ceremonies, from those recognizing active line-of-duty deaths and those for line-of-duty deaths under the presumptive legislation, to historic service from retired firefighters and national and provincial memorials.

I was able to bring to the committee members a copy of the protocol manual that was put out by the Ontario Fire Marshal's office for the fire departments in Ontario.

Thank you.

•(1210)

The Chair: Mr. Kellock.

Mr. Stewart Kellock (Chair, Canadian Police Ceremonial Units Association): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Madam Clerk, committee members, ladies and gentlemen, I feel privileged to be here today, and I thank the committee for inviting me to speak to this important issue.

[*Translation*]

I apologize, but I am not proficient enough to give my presentation in French.

[*English*]

I would also like to thank and acknowledge Mr. Paul Calandra for his leadership on this issue of national importance.

I hope I am not redundant, but as a front-line user of protocol, I believe it is an important matter. Protocol, by its definition, is an etiquette or behaviour that demonstrates respect. Many venerable institutions have their own protocols—the Canadian Forces, the Royal Canadian Legion, the RCMP, and many others. However, the Canadian police ceremonial units unanimously believe that national protocol guidelines should be developed and made available to all Canadians.

Since 1985 I have had the honour of serving the Toronto Police Service as its ceremonial sergeant major, and formed at the time one of the first non-military ceremonial units in the country. Now, practically every emergency service throughout this vast land has a group or practice to recognize its fallen and pay homage to them, and also to provide ceremony and dignity to their public and institutional events. The Toronto Police Service participates in approximately 170 ceremonial events annually.

Likewise, as a Canadian army reserve officer, I've had the high honour of participating in over 50 repatriation ceremonies. I've assisted in every aspect of repatriation, from Kandahar to Camp Mirage to the coroner's office in Toronto, through to interment. I have witnessed the incredible professionalism and pride of all involved in making sure that every dignity and respect is paid to our fallen.

I was also dispatched to Haiti following the massive earthquake a few years ago to locate and prepare for the repatriation of two fallen RCMP officers. The process was likewise dignified and respectful throughout.

I've been involved in the planning of far too many funerals here at home, including the ceremony for the late Jack Layton. These tragic events are a reminder to us all of two things: the sacrifice of Canadians, and the fact that Canadians desire and need a method or forum to demonstrate their support and respect for those who have fallen.

Having taken the Highway of Heroes over 50 times, I can tell you that it is an emotionally draining experience. In fact, it is so impactful that I have to share a story with you.

After having lost a comrade-in-arms in Afghanistan, a young soldier from rural Quebec was escorting his friend home. Like most, at the end of his journey he was reduced to tears and emotionally exhausted. He turned to us and said, "Before I was a sovereigntist, now I am a nationalist." They're very powerful words. The impact of thousands and thousands of everyday Canadians saluting, waving flags, *et beaucoup de drapeaux du Québec*, was so profound that his attitude to Canadians and Canada had changed.

Canadians have developed our traditions. The Highway of Heroes was one. It was started by a lone Canadian, as I recall, on Little Lake Road bridge with a single flag. With the insistence and determination of Mr. Allan Cole, a witness you will hear from later, this has grown to receive international recognition of how Canadians honour Canadians.

By developing a process that we are addressing here today, ladies and gentlemen, we are in fact defining our identity—in effect, nation-building. We are developing our identity through an energy, enthusiasm, and pride in our country. We are doing it by showing our pride in our Canadian icons, our history, and our traditions.

When I talk about creating a national protocol, it's about institutionalizing our traditions and providing a framework that either does not currently exist or is so obscure that to try to find it may not be worthy of the effort. I am even sure that the House of Commons on occasion has conflict with this.

Many groups and organizations may come before this committee and say there may be no need to codify what we do and how we do it, but I can tell you that we respectfully disagree. I would offer, if I may, a few paradigms that we face.

The first example is during police funerals. These events have become public manifestations of support by both the police force involved and those who wish to demonstrate their solidarity with the fallen officer and the institution of policing. There are many instances where there is disparity, conflict, and inconsistency in how these events are planned and carried out: the placement of flags and flag parties; the order of dress; the conduct of pallbearers; hats on or hats off; casket at the shoulder or the trail; honorary pallbearers; VIP placement; order of precedence; guard of honour, before or after service; who salutes; and the list goes on.

● (1215)

In all of this we must reflect the wishes of the family, the traditions of the service, as well as the established precedents of the profession. Often there is great need to de-conflict these issues, no matter how small. This was extremely evident during the state funeral for the late Jack Layton. Currently there is no national reference by which to accomplish this.

I have witnessed police funerals, for example, that have used 100% American protocols in drill and ceremonial, including folding our flag in a triangle, which I personally feel is an affront to our most cherished national symbol. Currently, there is no official way to fold our Canadian flag. You may find three methods on the Internet, and they're by individual organizations. But the Canadian flag is a

symbol of national importance and is owned by the government and people of Canada.

I firmly believe it is up to the people, through its government, to say how we treat our national symbols, for to do otherwise is an abdication of responsibility.

I was at an event last week, which several cabinet ministers and members of Parliament attended, and all our provincial flags were aligned completely out of order. Members were improperly dressed for the occasion, and greetings from the Governor General of Canada were filled with grammatical and spelling errors. This is just common courtesy. It is about respect, as well as nation building, giving Canadians the opportunity to reflect and demonstrate their pride in our country and its icons.

This is as important as changing our anthem or developing a new flag. In the United States, everyone knows they're expected to stand with their hand on their heart during certain occasions: raising of the flag, the oath, and national anthem. But Canadians have no visual method of displaying their respect, and often this American practice can be observed in this country.

The conflict in Afghanistan, our performance in international sport, and Canada's position in the world give every reason for Canadians to be proud. I profoundly believe that Canadians desire a method to appropriately demonstrate their pride, and it is up to the government to show leadership in this regard.

We don't need enforced regulations or laws; we need a comprehensive compendium of guidelines and suggestions on drill, dress, and ceremonial, reflecting the commonality and diversity of Canadians, something that can easily be accessed and used as a reference by individuals and organizations, and it should reflect our history, traditions, and legacy, but also look to the future and provide flexibility in its application.

Thank you very much. *Merci beaucoup.*

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we have Mr. Kirkpatrick.

Mr. Robert Kirkpatrick (President, Canadian Fallen Firefighters Foundation): Thank you very much, and good afternoon.

My comments will be brief, and I will defer to my other colleague for more detailed information.

My name is Robert Kirkpatrick, and I've been a captain with the Mississauga Fire Services for 27 years. I'm the current president of the Canadian Fallen Firefighters Foundation.

The foundation operates the national memorial service for firefighters here in Ottawa. We also give out scholarships for the children of firefighters killed in the line of duty. The new Canadian firefighters' memorial is currently under construction on Lebreton Flats, made possible by a generous grant from the ministry of heritage.

The ceremony is run for the families. They are the VIPs at our ceremony, and we do everything for them. We pay their way to come, we look after them, and we operate the ceremony. As Doug has pointed out, the foundation is not involved in funerals. We leave the funerals to the local municipality or service where the death occurred. Our next contact with the family is when they're brought to Ottawa in September for the ceremony.

I'll now pass to John for more details on what we do at the ceremony.

Mr. John Sobey (Director, Canadian Fallen Firefighters Foundation): Good afternoon.

My name is John Sobey. I'm currently an active member of the Ottawa Fire Services. I serve as the vice-president of the Ottawa Professional Firefighters Association. I've been active for 32 years, including in the municipal and military fire service, and I currently sit as a CFFF board director. I hold the position of chair of our ceremony committee.

As far as the role I would play, as Bob pointed out, our VIPs are first and foremost, and will continue to be, the families of the fallen firefighters we're honouring in a particular year. This year, by the way, will be our 9th annual ceremony. My role, as the ceremony coordinator, captures the weekend of events. Specifically to the ceremony itself, I speak to the firefighters, honour guards, the colour parties, and bands that will participate on a voluntary basis in our ceremony.

The Canadian Fallen Firefighters Foundation recognizes all branches of Canadian fire services at all levels of government: municipal; the Canadian Volunteer Fire Services Association; our brothers and sisters in the armed forces; and those in the wild lands. It's comprehensive in that we include a lot of individuals who, for the most part, certainly aren't known—and historically firefighters aren't—for their ceremonial cut. It's certainly a privilege, in my role and in my experience, to organize our brothers and sisters so that we fulfill the capacity of honouring the families the way we do.

•(1220)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kirkpatrick.

Finally, we'll move to Mr. Gillies.

Mr. Glen Gillies (Honour Guard Member, Toronto Emergency Medical Services Honour Guard, National Alliance of Canadian Emergency Medical Services Honour Guards): Thank you very much.

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, Madam Clerk, members of the committee, acting members of the committee, and attending witnesses.

My name is Glen Gillies, and I am here representing the National Alliance of Canadian EMS Honour Guards. It's my pleasure to speak to you today on the importance of adopting national protocols for ceremonial procedures across Canada.

I am a charter member of the Toronto EMS Honour Guard, a ceremonial unit that was created in 1992 and to our knowledge is the first solely dedicated, organized, and uniformed honour guard or ceremonial unit in Canada that represented emergency medical services. Its purpose was to elevate the image and public awareness

of emergency medical services and to heighten staff and civic pride in the professionalism of our service.

Since our inception there have been numerous EMS honour guards and ceremonial units that have emerged in Canada, with the largest growth being in the province of Ontario, where we currently have sixteen established guard units and one dedicated EMS pipe and drum band, the only EMS dedicated pipe and drum band in Canada.

The Toronto EMS Honour Guard is a multiple award-winning unit and boasts a roster of close to 30 members who have paraded not only in Toronto but across Canada and into the United States, paying tribute to fallen emergency services personnel, standing guard for official civic functions and visiting dignitaries, and being honoured as the only non-military honour guard ever to march on the battlefields of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, as part of the U.S. Memorial Day celebrations in 2010.

The Toronto EMS Honour Guard is a proud member of the National Alliance of Canadian EMS Honour Guards, which was formed in 2008. This national alliance was formed to unite EMS honour guards from coast to coast and to provide a computer-based meeting location. Here, honour guard units from coast to coast can meet in a virtual setting to discuss local issues, collaborate with other similar guard units, and develop policy templates to assist in whatever need a local guard unit may require.

Since its inception in 2008, the National Alliance of Canadian EMS Honour Guards boasts a membership contingent of 25 guard units from coast to coast, all collaborating together on issues of national significance. The mission statement of the National Alliance of Canadian EMS Honour Guards is to enhance the image of emergency medical services by unifying the EMS honour guard units of Canada through the development and acceptance of common standards, protocols, and codes of conduct. Our core values are honour, duty, integrity, discipline, and commitment. Our motto is *semper memoria*, always remembered.

The alliance holds several teleconferences throughout the year and an annual round table conference in a different jurisdiction annually to discuss relevant and important issues pertaining to EMS honour guard functions and other matters of national ceremonial importance.

Since the inception of the national alliance, there has always been a willingness to assist all those who ask in forming national templates and protocols requiring one or more ceremonial units in attendance at important functions. This is one of the cornerstones of our group, and through this deposition we hope to be part of a national strategy, working together alongside our colleagues in emergency services, other interested parties, and the Ministry of Canadian Heritage to establish and uphold a high standard when it comes to issues of national significance in protocol.

In EMS, traditionally, we all gather for line-of-duty death funerals, from all branches of emergency services, including those of field ambulance divisions of the Canadian Armed Forces, or at significant federal events such as dignitary visits, head of state functions, Remembrance Day services, or whatever deems a coordinated national response.

Typically, these events are well planned in advance, but events do spring up unannounced, which often causes a lot coordination to be done to ensure that everyone is playing by the same rule book. The establishment of a national template for significant events would make planning and coordinating these events much easier and a lot less stressful for those involved in the event. A lead agency needs to be determined, specific to the event being held, whether it's an emergency services line-of-duty-death funeral or the visit of a dignitary or other head of state. Inclusion of all honour guard units is essential, but a protocol of leadership needs to be developed and enforced to make this event a success.

As stated by my other colleagues, there need to be clearly defined templates for all Canadian ceremonial protocols. A main example, as Mr. Kellock brought to your attention, is the folding and presenting of our Canadian flag, an issue that still needs to be defined 47 years after the flag was first proclaimed and flown here on Parliament Hill.

Having been fortunate enough to have travelled abroad to many countries where Canada's military and Canadians as a whole have made a significant contribution towards liberation and basic human rights, it gives me great pride to wear our flag and to be recognized as a Canadian and shown the respect that our soldiers and fellow countrymen have secured for me in the past. The establishment of these national protocols will honour their efforts and renew a sense of pride and respect for and in Canada that their legacy has left behind for us to champion.

• (1225)

From their failing hands we have caught the torch. Be it ours to raise it high together.

The establishment of national protocols and procedures should be a priority of this government, and particularly this ministry, safeguarding Canada's national symbols, ideals, and beliefs, and indoctrinating them in nationally acceptable guidelines for their ceremonial use. There have been numerous protocols designed and made available for reference by key organizations across Canada, the alliance being one of them, so the groundwork is already in existence. A collection and vetting of these numerous documents would serve to form the groundwork for national protocols to be developed. We at the National Alliance of Canadian EMS Honour Guards would be more than willing to assist in this monumental task. Establishing or building upon national protocols and procedural policies would aid in our mission and reinforce our core values to all of Canada.

These protocols would have to be available in both official languages, and be fluid enough to adapt to uniquely Canadian situations and traditions. Once these criteria are met, they need to be housed in an easily accessible location, such as a computer-based reference library, accessible and downloadable to all those who require information pertaining to events of national significance or to

those who are simply looking for reference documents for large-scale events in their own jurisdictions.

To answer the questions sought by this Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, on the existence or development of these national Canadian protocols for conducting ceremonies, the form they should take, and how to make them available, this is my answer. I'm not sure if official Canadian protocol procedures for conducting ceremonies have ever existed, but they can be easily crafted and implemented by seeking input from all stakeholders on various protocols in existence. Therefore, a motion should be made by this standing committee to seek all input from parties of interest to submit their documents for vetting by this committee, as well as selected subject matter experts, in order to develop national protocol documents for use by external parties whenever required, transcribed in both official languages, and made available in a complimentary, downloadable format from a centralized computer database, accessible to all those who make inquiry.

In addition, for those who do make inquiry, a formal follow-up procedure should be implemented to ensure that those who do inquire have their questions answered and needs satisfied. They can be referred to a specializing agency in their field of inquiry to further assist them in preparation for their event, whether it be an emergency services line-of-duty death, a dignitary visit, a formal military parade, or other event of civic, provincial, or national importance.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today and to provide a deposition on behalf of the National Alliance of Canadian EMS Honour Guards. It has been a true honour and privilege to speak with you all here today.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gillies.

Now we will move to our question and answer time. First is Mr. Calandra.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We heard from the last witness that foreign emissaries used to be brought to Rideau Hall in a horse and carriage. We have moved on from that. Now they get driven in, and so on and so forth, and that's great. I don't think that is necessarily great if we have traditions in this country. If any Governor General comes into place and wants to revert back to that tradition on occasion or in some circumstances, should it not be written somewhere that this was the tradition that took place in Canada, so that over time—yes, we now bring them in a car—if we want to revert back to a tradition, we can easily do that?

In listening to witnesses, protocol seems to be more jealously guarded than anything else I've ever... We keep hearing the words "flexibility, flexibility, flexibility". Yes, everybody understands there has to be flexibility, depending on what goes on. Is there not a basic standard of protocol that can be easily written down, accepted, and transmitted to people so that we don't have mistakes and we don't lose basic Canadian traditions, and that would still be able to be flexible?

When we bury a firefighter who has fallen in the line of duty, are there not certain aspects at a firefighter's memorial that we would like the municipality to follow in order to make it a proper ceremony? When we do the same for a police officer, are there not certain elements that we should be following so as not to disrespect not only the fallen officer but those who have gone before him? The same with EMS. How much pressure do we, not having this written down, put on you guys and people in your position to actually do it right? When you screw up or something goes wrong, everybody talks about a screw-up; everybody notices a screw-up. What if we had given you the tools? How easy is it for you?

I have been trying to look for national protocol standards. It's all over the place. I don't think it does a disrespect to Canadians or the diversity of the country if we have a set standard. I'm going to leave it open to all of you.

• (1230)

Mr. Stewart Kellock: I could briefly speak to that. Quite frankly, that is the reason we're here and it is the reason we've been formed. It is by individual organization initiative and trying to maintain our history and our traditions of the past, because it is not codified anywhere. I may say the Canadian Forces and the RCMP have probably been the greatest retainers of their history. Volume II of CFP-201–A-PD- 201, which is the manual for drill in ceremonial for the Canadian Forces, I think is basically what we follow, with applications, of course, for the fire, the EMS, and for other organizations.

You're right. We try to keep our own history and traditions. That's where the conflict lies. For example, during the Jack Layton funeral, where the City of Toronto has had a history and tradition of doing things a certain way for its dignitaries passing.... They may not be at the national level, but when a state funeral came to Toronto, we were doing things that were in conflict with the RCMP that we were told to do in Ottawa. We're all in the same net. Where do you go to de-conflict this issue?

Likewise when we have national memorials, there are certain groups that do certain things certain ways. We try to give the host organization their respect and say it's their parade and we will do what they wish us to do.

I'll yield to my other colleagues on how we do that.

Mr. Doug Goodings: I think it's extremely critical that we have a national protocol. It is extremely difficult when we're involved in a funeral, memorial, or anything like that, first to meet the needs of the family and secondly to do it right. A lot of times we're flying by the seat of our pants to do it right.

Mr. Glen Gillies: Speaking from the EMS side of things, being the emergency service with the least amount of tradition of the three that are sitting before you today, EMS is relatively.... We used to be referred to as the baby of the three emergency services. I like to think we've grown up a little. We'll call us a teenager now. We are the teenager of the three services. Truly, we've only had a professional existence of about 50 to 60 years. We do not have a national memorial. We do not have a national recognition format for the death of any paramedic or emergency medical technician in this country. It is something we have been fighting to get for over the last decade, and it is worse than a snail's pace at progress.

Personally, I have organized, put together, and run a funeral event for a line-of-duty death that happened in Guelph, Ontario, for a paramedic. It was a very challenging process, but I relied upon my colleagues in our national alliance. We have a nationally developed funeral planning kit. We have a national document that is dedicated to EMS honour guards but is very easily manipulated to include any emergency service. The bones or framework are similar and the protocols are similar. It's simply the nuances of emergency services, policing, firefighting, and so on. The bone structure is there. It's there to develop upon.

As my colleague, Mr. Kellock, said, to codify a specific protocol... I believe it does have to be the bone work as we discuss it. And yes, nuances for policing, nuances for firefighting, and nuances for emergency medical services do have to be included. That is something that you work out with the individual unit that has experienced the loss. But a framework can be very easily manipulated and very easily put together. The three representations here at this table do have the resources. By compiling them all together, working together as a group, we can come up with a structured document that we can distribute on a national basis that anybody can benefit from.

• (1235)

Mr. Robert Kirkpatrick: Thank you. I do agree with everybody.

As a little aside, although I agree with what you're saying about the need for a basis, it can't be written in stone. For example, we've had some of our directors attend funerals in northern British Columbia where basically they've shown up. In this particular case it was for a forest service member. The funeral was organized half an hour before it happened.

So if you have things written in stone, such as you have to ring the bell and you have to do this or that, some of those things won't be available, so you still have to be flexible.

Having said that, I have to congratulate the Ontario Fire Marshal's Office, because it has an excellent manual. In fact, we have it on our website because every once in a while we'll get someone from a small town.... Of course, this situation doesn't occur in a large city where they've had funerals for line-of-duty deaths before and they have people who know how to run them. But we've had people in rural Canada contact us when they've had someone die in the line of duty and ask us what to do. One of the resources we give them is the Ontario Fire Marshal's manual. It is very comprehensive and pretty well based on the Canadian Forces drill, etc. But there has to be leeway in there for some local traditions. For example, if it said the casket must be carried on a fire truck to the gravesite, well, there are some communities where that wouldn't be possible.

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Calandra.

We'll go to Ms. Sitsabaiesan.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much for all of your depositions.

Just to be clear, I seem to understand that you feel that national guidelines would be useful. Could you maybe elaborate on or clarify what you'd like to see in these guidelines? Would it be a strict manual that would say that these are national protocols that must be adhered to for all of our fallen heroes?

I think it doesn't matter which service you're from. I think you are a fallen hero.

Would they be something that must be followed, or would they be helpful hints, if you don't have something established already for your particular municipality, neighbourhood, or community? And if there are guidelines, how would you like to see them developed? Would you like them to follow the Ontario Fire Marshal's guidelines? Do we borrow from all three and then make guidelines that are a mishmash. Would that be okay, or is it disrespectful if they are a mishmash of the different practices that already exist?

Mr. John Sobey: I'll kick off here. My first thought is that a guideline in the form of a template would be appropriate. We have referenced the word "memorial" in the respective services in this particular case, but there is also the actual funeral process itself. Speaking as someone from the fire service, the two are not the same. How we conduct the protocol or the sequence of events for a memorial is different in the event of a line-of-duty death.

Just a short while ago, we had such an LODD occur to a firefighter in Chalk River. I was seconded to go up to Chalk River to help run the ceremony for the firefighting community up the valley. It was certainly a privilege to go up.

That said, here in Ontario, the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association certainly plays an active role in all line-of-duty deaths, regardless of whether they are professional or volunteer firefighters, and they probably will continue to. It's certainly a privilege to do that.

They are quite different. What we do with respect to a line-of-duty death for a firefighter is different from what we would provide in the event of a memorial service, whether it's the one at Queen's Park, which I'm privileged to assist in leading, or the national one, which is where I am. As an Ottawa fire fighter, we also host the municipal one.

Guidelines as a template would certainly be the right step.

Yes, you're right. There would have to be a component representing, at least in our world, and I'm sure my colleagues would agree, the three branches of emergency services.

● (1240)

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Thank you.

Mr. Stewart Kellock: If I may briefly add to that, I see them being developed in the form of a framework, initially, where there are commonalities of the types of incidents we're talking about. You're going to have VIPs. You're going to have to look after the families, the seating arrangements, guards of honour, as opposed to honour guards, because in Canada we say guard of honour, and the dipping of flags, which we don't do in this country.

We're getting this Americanization coming in, as I said in my initial remarks, because we can't find anything in this country. Everyone is seeing what they see on TV.

Then they could be broken down into perhaps chapters or components that would have specifics for fire, EMS, police, military, etc.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: To follow from what you also said earlier, Mr. Kirkpatrick, you do not want to have them written in stone, to quote you. They would be guidelines that would help, rather than a steadfast manual. Is that what all of you would—

Mr. Robert Kirkpatrick: We're all in agreement with that. But I think as Stewart has said, and I didn't think of it until someone brought it up today—and I've attended many funerals across Canada—the folding of the flag is a huge issue. I don't know why I never thought of that. But that is a huge issue, because it's Americanized. It's Americanized big time.

As I think Doug said, you can find three or four different ways to do it. But there's nothing from, for example, Canadian Heritage that says that at a funeral for whomever, whether it's a VIP, a firefighter, or a police officer, it should be folded this way and done that way.

Those certain aspects, such as saluting the flag at *O Canada* or folding the flag coming off the casket should be done the same way all the time. It doesn't matter if it's police, fire, ambulance, a politician, the mayor, or whoever,

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: For sure, yes.

Mr. Doug Goodings: I recently attended a funeral for a fire chief in Ontario, just two weeks ago. I was the parade marshal for that, as part of the fire marshal's office. When we folded the flag, the "alternative" Canadian way to fold the flag, which is square and not triangular, and we presented it to the spouse, she said, "You folded it wrong", because it wasn't in a triangle that she's used to seeing on TV.

That's what we need. We need our heritage back, our traditions.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Right.

It's funny that it is the flag folding that we're talking about, because this morning we looked it up to find out what was the proper way to fold a flag. One option is provided on the Heritage Canada website, but there's no official way.

Mr. Doug Goodings: There is no official way. They classify that as an "alternate way".

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Chair, do I have more time?

The Chair: You have 30 seconds for the question and answer.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Gillies, in 30 seconds, did you want to add anything?

Mr. Glen Gillies: Basically, ditto.

Heritage is very important in all line-of-duty death funerals, be it any service.

I agree with my colleagues here. A bare-bones structure...certain things must be maintained, but the fluidity to allow for each individual service to add their own specific nuances and....

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Thank you.

If I may, Mr. Chair, I'm also realizing that within any of our emergency services we also now have newer immigrant Canadians, who may have different religious practices or different cultural practices. Maybe within our template or our guidelines we should also have some room for manoeuvring to accommodate for people's religious and cultural practices.

Mr. Stewart Kellock: We definitely need diversity.

One of the largest things facing us right now is that the vast majority of Canadians are opting for cremation.

● (1245)

The Chair: Thank you.

Before we move to Mr. Simms, the office of Mr. Goodings, the Office of the Fire Marshal, has a protocol for the Ontario fire service. They've brought along copies.

As you know, the rule we have at committee is that we can only distribute things if they're in both official languages, unless we have the unanimous consent of the committee. This booklet is in English. Is it the committee's wish that we distribute this to members?

No? Okay. It's out there. It's available.

Thank you, Mr. Goodings.

Mr. Simms.

Mr. Scott Simms: Thank you.

A few years ago my father passed away, and he was a volunteer firefighter. He was actually a charter member of the fire service in my town of about 3,000 people. I've always watched the television coverage and attended funerals for police officers, firefighters, or even emergency attendants. The ceremony of the event is compelling for the average person watching. I never realized how touching a moment it was, and how important it was for the family, until that moment. From the funeral itself, I'll take with me the image of the firefighters lined up to escort the casket to the hearse. The flag presentation was there too. It means so much to the families. To me, this was the most endearing moment of the whole funeral. It's a recognition of service, but it's also a recognition of community. For the family it was a recognition of what a loved one did for the community and how much it was appreciated.

At the ceremony, I asked the chief about the protocol. He said it was something they discuss at their annual convention. It literally is word of mouth. The folding of the flag takes place before the coffin is brought out of the church. Before the family is dismissed, everybody in uniform is asked to line up to see that the coffin is escorted from the church to the hearse. Nowhere is that written down.

Mr. Glen Gillies: Except in our own individual guidelines.

Mr. Scott Simms: True, and I'm not even sure that where I come from in Newfoundland it is actually written down. It is something that is shared among us all and blogged about. The comprehensive guidelines have to be wide in scope. It is a national document. I'm beginning to feel that you get into jurisdictional confusion. The Royal Newfoundland Constabulary would do things differently from the Toronto Police Service or the OPP.

Mr. Stewart Kellock: There may be some variation.

Mr. Scott Simms: Sure, but you've never had a similar document in front of you. I treat this with a great deal of importance. Some people might think it's not important. But I have seen this regarding someone I didn't know and also regarding a family member. I've never been more compelled to talk about this than now, because I think your frustrations are manifested here. Let's hope something will be done. This report could do that.

When you go about doing this sort of thing, it's frustrating, especially with regard to someone who's fallen in the line of duty. Having someone there in uniform is one thing, but the ceremony itself is equally important. I think the average citizen doesn't realize that. Would you agree?

Mr. Glen Gillies: I agree. You have Mr. Kellock's story about the soldier from Quebec. I had a similar experience in Guelph with a paramedic when I was planning that service. When we all arrived, I showed up in uniform, and the first thing he saw was "Toronto". He said, "What's Toronto doing here? This is a Guelph paramedic." He saw later on what we were doing. Multiple units started to arrive and I was just coordinating them. That same gentleman is now the guard commander of the Guelph-Wellington honour guard, because he saw the importance of what we do.

● (1250)

Mr. Scott Simms: Several years ago, there was a service for a fallen police officer here in Ottawa, and I found it quite moving. Your hair stands up when you see someone there in the parade and the uniform says, "Pennsylvania State Trooper". Boy, that's powerful stuff.

Mr. Stewart Kellock: May I make a further point? The ceremony is part of it. The funeral planning guide in Toronto is about this thick, and it starts the moment of the death. It involves the transportation of everybody there. For Sergeant Ryan Russell, for example, 14,000 police officers attended his funeral. You have a huge logistics issue. You've got transportation, communication, feeding, motorcades, hotel rooms, flights, and you've got to work through our friends at CBSA to get the American folks in here. There are a lot of commonalities in those types of things, depending, sometimes, upon the circumstances of the death.

Unfortunately, because I've done so many, when something happened in Toronto, I was always volunteered. I went down to Windsor, for example, where they had never had a police death. They didn't know where to start. When you start bringing in things and breaking them down into their component parts—traffic, barriers, parking—you wonder about things like where to park cars when 14,000 people come into your city. So you've got staging areas. You've got the transportation of the people from the staging area to a form-up area, and they're going to march to another area, closing down the street. There is all of that coordination, and media is a huge portion of it.

So the ceremony, yes, it's important. But there are all of these auxiliary and tertiary issues that can ruin it, and people walking away from that say it was the worst best funeral they've been to, or the best worst funeral they've been to, because it had such an impact; it went smoothly, they got fed, they got their flights, and all those types of things.

Mr. John Sobey: Stewart and I both provided examples, as well as Glen, of having been called upon to reach out to other areas within our jurisdiction. In my case it's here in eastern Ontario, but I did mention other leaders who've been asked to take on and lead a line-of-duty death funeral, because they really don't know.

In my most recent example, communications being another component, the equipment I brought...having radios, so that where the firefighters were to muster for the march would be different from the chapel, or the funeral home for the escort service. So there's a communications component. There are a lot of things that smaller departments just don't know because of isolation, or location, or lack of experience, so they call on those of us who, sadly, have that experience.

The Chair: Finally, Mr. Armstrong, you have the last question of the day.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: I'll try to be quick, and maybe Mr. Simms can grab the last minute for his question.

We're doing a broad study on protocol. What I'm kind of feeling now is that you almost have to take a look at line-of-duty deaths and the protocol around that as a separate issue, because I do think this is an important issue that has jumped out at me, anyway, during this meeting. I'm sure my other caucus colleagues would share that on both sides of the table.

If we work to establish some sort of framework, would you agree it would be easier now than, say, 15 years ago because of the use of technology and the Internet? Now you can have a hyperlink to one central website with a framework laid out, with links underneath for specific ceremonies, or specific divisions of emergency services. Is that the type of direction you think we should aim at going in?

Mr. Glen Gillies: Most definitely. The Alliance of Canadian EMS Honour Guards has that structure in place for EMS specifically, obviously. It is a great resource tool, and the minute we're notified of a line-of-duty death funeral, the very next communication to the service reporting is to go to this website—here is the framework—and then we provide a delegate to them to guide them through the process.

Yes, I wholeheartedly agree 100%. If we had a database that we could refer people to, and take the structure and then obviously customize it to the specifics of the service involved and the area involved, it would definitely be a great starting point.

• (1255)

Mr. Scott Armstrong: You could even show videos of previous ceremonies to show people how to fold the flag. If you had one site that was established by the Government of Canada, being the national government, that's the type of thing you're asking us for today, I'm assuming.

I'm going to turn it over to my colleague, Terence Young, who has a question, and then maybe Mr. Simms can take the rest of my time.

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Thank you very much for being here today, and thank you very much for this input. It's exactly what the committee was looking for.

I'd like to ask Mr. Kellock, and maybe Mr. Gillies as well, a question with regard to the Canadian flag. Americans pledge allegiance to the flag. It has a somewhat higher symbolic level to them. We swear allegiance to the Queen, who holds the crown, which is holding the power of the Canadian people in trust. How should that make a difference in how we treat the flag? Do you have any suggestions as to what role our flag should play in our ceremonies?

Mr. Stewart Kellock: Quite frankly, it is the cornerstone of the ceremonies, and in the funeral business it is placed on the casket, when it comes to other presentations in the colour party of a marching group, if you will, or it is front and centre at a dignitary's arrival or departure.

I think the war in Afghanistan is giving Canadians a new interest and a new pride, frankly. The Olympic Games held in Canada did the same thing. You saw the Canadian flag being displayed everywhere, on uniforms and the like, and spontaneous outbursts of the national anthem. Canadians want to be proud of their heritage and their history and their icons, but we're not giving them the information they need to do what's appropriate. There may be inappropriate uses of the Canadian flag, perhaps on slippers or something like that, but we want to provide people with the ability to make the decision themselves on what they're doing.

Mr. Terence Young: Mr. Gillies, do you have any comment?

Mr. Glen Gillies: Echoing Mr. Kellock's report, yes, the pride and the expectation that surrounds our national symbol, the Canadian flag, is something that needs to be officially indoctrinated by Canadian Heritage, this federal government.

We're a unique system in EMS, specifically Toronto EMS, as we have a Queen's colour. We have our own standard, which was given to us in 2004, I believe, that we also use in ceremonial functions. Not all emergency services do. We were one of the first civilian agencies to be granted a Queen's colour, so we were quite honoured by that.

We use our Canadian flag in events all across the country, and yes, we need to have a cornerstone, a definitive way of dealing with our flag. It instills pride. It instills responsibility.

Mr. Terence Young: Thank you.

Mr. Andrew Cash: On a point of order, since we didn't set aside committee business, we would like to know when we can expect the minister to appear before this committee before May 31 to discuss the estimates.

Thank you.

The Chair: That's not really a point of order, Mr. Cash, so we're going to continue with the questioning, unless Mr. Calandra wants to comment.

Mr. Paul Calandra: May 29 between twelve and one.

The Chair: There we go.

Okay. We have one minute left.

Mr. Simms.

Mr. Scott Simms: Thank you, Mr. Armstrong.

To my colleagues across the way, thank you very much. I appreciate it.

I'll start with you, Sergeant Kellock. Who spearheads the national, comprehensive guidelines with the built-in flexibility?

Mr. Stewart Kellock: Who would produce such a document?

Mr. Scott Simms: Who would take the lead on this, in your opinion?

Mr. Stewart Kellock: It would make sense that it would come under the office of the chief of protocol. However, it seems that the focus of that particular office is on international visits and those types of things. It probably should be under the Department of Canadian Heritage.

Mr. Scott Simms: Would anybody else like to comment?

●(1300)

Mr. Glen Gillies: I agree, and using subject matter experts from the different services to develop such a document should be investigated.

Mr. John Sobey: Obviously, the members of the armed forces and the RCMP were mentioned as well, and one of the drill and ceremonial documents that those of us with a prior military background have utilized to fulfill our experiences and apply them to the respective ceremonies...it would certainly play a huge role. But insofar as someone at the pointy end, I would agree it would be through Heritage and protocol.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Simms.

Thank you to our witnesses. Your testimony today was very helpful. We really appreciate it.

With that, the committee is adjourned.

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