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Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

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•(1100)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): Good morning, everyone. We want to welcome you back to our committee.

This is meeting 16 of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security on Thursday, December 1, 2011. Today we're going to continue our study on drugs and alcohol in prison.

In our first hour we will hear from our final witnesses, and in our second hour we will go in camera to discuss instructions to the table on the formulation of the draft report on this study.

Today we have appearing before us from the Correctional Service of Canada, Commissioner Don Head—welcome back—and by video conference from Stony Mountain, Manitoba, Christer McLauchlan, a security intelligence officer.

Canadians who have been following the proceedings of our study will know that both of these witnesses have already appeared and testified before our study. This committee appreciates very much the dedication of our witnesses. Canadians appreciate your willingness to continue to assist our committee. We're indeed fortunate to have had the Commissioner of Correctional Service of Canada appear three times and generously contribute to our deliberations.

I mentioned when I walked in that he's been here so often, now that we're in December, I expect to go home for Christmas and Don Head is going to be there. We do very much appreciate your willingness to come before this committee.

I know that the last time you both appeared you brought an organizational or a subculture model chart to our committee, as well as some pictures. I know that all members of this committee from all parties were very open and wanted you to come back to continue to explain parts of that chart and of the strategy of keeping drugs out of our prisons.

Commissioner, thank you again, and if you have an opening statement we'd love to hear it. Then we'll move to Mr. McLauchlan, please.

Mr. Don Head (Commissioner, Correctional Service of Canada): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and committee members, and good morning. Thank you for inviting me back to discuss how the Correctional Service of Canada manages the issue of drugs within our federal penitentiaries.

As mentioned, I'm joined again today by Christer McLauchlan via video conference from Stony Mountain Institution.

As I mentioned at my previous appearance, CSC takes a three-pronged approach to managing offenders with a substance abuse addiction: prevention, treatment, and interdiction.

Today, I'm pleased to update you on some successes we've achieved since my last appearance. I'd also like to discuss in greater detail how we control the supply of and demand for illegal substances inside the walls of our penitentiaries.

Mr. Chair, since my last appearance, employees of the Correctional Service of Canada have continued to do exceptional work in detecting and intercepting illegal substances that others try to introduce into our institutions.

In the six weeks since I last appeared in front of this committee, CSC employees across the country have intercepted drugs and other contraband with an institutional value of almost \$200,000. This figure comprises nine major seizures of tobacco, marijuana, and other drugs, all because of the great work of my staff and the tools we employ to detect and intercept drugs.

The largest of these seizures occurred at Cowansville Institution in Quebec, where staff recovered a package along the institution's perimeter. This package contained ecstasy pills, marijuana, tobacco, and rolling papers, with a total estimated value of over \$85,000.

In all of these cases, CSC staff work very closely with the police force of jurisdiction to lay criminal charges against those who attempt to introduce contraband into our correctional institutions. We have zero tolerance for those who seek to disrupt the safety and stability of our penitentiaries.

CSC has a wide range of tools at our disposal to detect and interdict any attempts to introduce drugs into our institutions.

Mr. Chair, you may recall that at my last appearance I noted that we would be hiring more security intelligence officers, similar to Mr. McLauchlan, over the coming year, and we expect to have 250 staff in place by the end of 2012-13. We're also increasing our complement of drug detector dog teams. In fact, just three days ago we welcomed Minister Toews to a very successful demonstration of our detector dogs in action at Stony Mountain Institution in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Beyond these measures, CSC is actively seeking out and piloting new technologies that can help us control the flow of drugs. We recently installed radar/infrared external threat detection systems in two of our institutions. These systems allow us to track and image individuals approaching our perimeter day or night, in all weather conditions. Similarly, we have provided all of our maximum and medium security institutions with night vision and thermal imaging goggles for enhanced perimeter surveillance.

To combat attempts to smuggle drugs in body cavities, we have installed body orifice scanning system chairs, commonly referred to as BOSS chairs, at a number of our sites. And we conducted a trial of a millimetre wave body scanner at one of our institutions in the Ontario region, which is the same type of device you now see in the security screening areas of airports.

We have also upgraded our existing equipment, such as the baggage X-ray systems, our walk-through metal detector systems, and our ion scanner drug detection machines to improve their reliability and life cycle. Furthermore, we are continuing to upgrade visit and correspondence areas with newer devices that assist in detecting drug transfers. We are also upgrading wooden tables to glass-top tables, which make it easier for my staff to detect drug hand-offs between visitors and inmates.

Finally, although not specific to drugs, I'd like to highlight our ongoing efforts to detect and locate contraband cellphones, which can be used to plan and carry out drug throw-overs. We are also investigating how we may employ cell-jamming technologies in our institutions in the future.

These are just a few examples of the tools we have to keep drugs out of the hands of our offenders, and they only scratch the surface of what is a complex, integrated approach to drug interdiction within federal institutions.

•(1105)

Beyond reducing the supply of drugs inside our institutions, we must similarly attack the demand for illegal substances and intoxicants. To this end, we offer integrated programming for offenders to help them leave their addictive, criminal behaviour in the past and to return to society as productive, law-abiding citizens.

Correctional programs enhance public safety results by making offenders accountable for their behaviour, changing pro-criminal attitudes and beliefs, and teaching skills that can be used to monitor and manage problematic behaviour.

Mr. Chair, I'm proud that CSC is recognized as an international leader in the development and delivery of correctional programs designed to rehabilitate offenders and improve public safety. That being said, I realize there's concern about offenders being wait-listed for programs and that the perception is that we are not addressing their criminogenic behaviours in a timely manner. I'd like to offer some clarification. When we refer to a wait list in the correctional system, we are not referring to wait lists in the same context as being wait-listed for surgery. In our case, a wait list refers more to the schedule of when an offender will receive programming. This is determined by a number of factors.

For example, those who have an upcoming release date will be prioritized over someone who may not be eligible for parole for a

number of years. It is true that in the past few years, CSC has found it challenging to deliver programs to all offenders, given the trend towards shorter sentences. However, I'm pleased to inform you that as a result of our transformation agenda and strategic reinvestment, we have invested over \$30 million more towards programming in the past three years. The vast majority of these funds were dedicated to hiring more staff to deliver programs to our offender population.

Because of these investments, our capacity to deliver programs has increased dramatically, as have our program enrolment figures. In the last year alone, correctional program enrolments increased by over 24%. Not only did enrolments increase, but thanks to the hard work of my staff, more offenders completed the programs they participated in and started those programs earlier in their sentences. In addition, we focused resources on being able to provide certain programs to offenders as soon as they arrived at intake. This includes substance abuse programs, one of our most prevalent need areas.

I'd also like to point out that CSC has recently introduced a new program delivery model called the integrated correctional program model or ICPM for short. The new model enables offenders to take programs earlier in their sentences, addresses core substance abuse issues, and also holds offenders accountable for such things as violent behaviour. We expect that ICPM will produce positive results that will help address offenders' criminogenic factors and thereby help them successfully reintegrate into the community.

In conclusion, Mr. Chair, every day CSC employees across the country are working to ensure safe, drug-free institutions that will promote offender rehabilitation and create safer communities for Canadians. I'm proud of the work they do every day, and I'm proud of our efforts as an organization to address this very serious public safety issue.

Mr. Chair, I would welcome any questions you may have for me at this time.

•(1110)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Commissioner.

I don't believe Mr. McLauchlan has an opening statement, but he is certainly here to give us that hands-on right from Manitoba. We'll move into our first round of questions and we'll go to Mr. Leef, please. You have seven minutes.

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and once again, thank you to our two witnesses for returning to the committee. Great to see you again.

Mr. Commissioner, you spoke to us early in your presentation about the BOSS chair system. Could you describe that for us in a little more detail?

Mr. Don Head: Yes. It's a device that we became aware of through the work that our counterparts were doing in the United Kingdom, as were some of our colleagues to the south, in the United States.

Basically, it's a chair that an individual would sit in. They would place their hands and arms on the rests, and through the technology the chair would be able to...not penetrate in a significant way, but penetrate at least a few inches into the body to determine whether somebody has secreted packages in a body cavity. We've been trying out this chair. We've had some success in some places. In other places we haven't, so we're still working with the technology. It's just another tool for us to be able to quickly determine whether somebody has secreted something in a body cavity.

Mr. Ryan Leef: Do you know what one of those systems costs, approximately?

Mr. Don Head: I'd have to get back to you on that. I'm not exactly sure what the cost of the chair is right now.

Mr. Ryan Leef: In terms of the effectiveness of it, what are the challenges that are making it difficult? Is it clothing or...?

Mr. Don Head: No. One of the challenges is the size of the package and how deep it may be in a body cavity. We do know that the smaller the package, and the deeper it is in the body cavity, the less likely it is that this technology will be able to help us. But if somebody has secreted something of a substantial size, and not too far into a body cavity, we have found it's been able to detect the package.

We also know that this tool has been handy for us, because we've had individuals secret things other than packages of drugs in their body cavities—weapons—so from that perspective, this tool is useful for that as well.

•(1115)

Mr. Ryan Leef: Is this technology employed on the inmate population only, or is it something that visitors are subjected to?

Mr. Don Head: At this point, we're only subjecting the inmates to this technology, as we're still learning its capabilities and restrictions.

Mr. Ryan Leef: Are the same parameters and conditions around the use of that chair...? Are the authorities to utilize that chair similar to what you would be required to have for a frisk search or for strip search provisions?

Mr. Don Head: Yes, we've been able to use the provisions in the Corrections and Conditional Release Act that govern non-intrusive searches. So for us, we're treating it in the same way as though somebody walked through metal detectors.

Mr. Ryan Leef: Okay, interesting.

Skipping ahead now to the additional information we've seen here on the transformation agenda and strategic investment, the \$30 million toward programming in the past three years, I think it's great news. We've certainly heard a little more testimony in regard to the programming you've been able to deliver in CSC, which I think is fantastic.

When we look at the effects of drugs specifically, and delivering these programs, can you give us a little more detail on how you see

the presence of drugs in the institution affecting the front-line delivery of these programs?

Mr. Don Head: Sure, I'll speak a bit, and I'll ask Mr. McLauchlan to comment as well from what he sees on a day-to-day basis in the institution.

From our perspective, the issue of drugs or any contraband is part of the underground economy, and when you have inmates who are making a demand, and you have others who can supply that, this underground economy takes on a very significant nature in an incarcerated environment.

What we see happening at times are issues of muscling: individuals being pressured to bring things in, or to carry things between areas or between people. So individuals feel that their personal safety is at risk.

For us, the whole issue of tackling drugs in the institution is as much about creating a safe environment, because if inmates do not feel safe coming out of their cells, they're not going to come out of their cells to go to recreation, but they're also not going to come out of their cells to go to programs, and I need them to go to programs. Canadians need them to go to programs in order to return to the community as law-abiding citizens. So as long as they feel that their personal safety is at risk, or that their family members may be at risk and being pressured outside, then that has a potential negative impact on delivering good, rehabilitative programming.

If you don't mind, I'll invite Mr. McLauchlan to add his observations.

The Chair: Mr. McLauchlan, please.

Mr. Christer McLauchlan (Security Intelligence Officer, Stony Mountain Institution, Correctional Service of Canada): I would agree with Commissioner Head in regard to the fact that the presence of an underground economy and the associated muscling makes all programming difficult. But in addition, I would specify that when we have drugs present in the institution, any type of substance abuse programming is compromised by that.

As I testified previously, I've actually had inmates approach me and say they are addicts and that if they have these drugs available to them, they are going to use them. They say that they need to be in a drug-free environment so they can have the time to take this substance abuse program, to take the lessons they have learned and be able to apply them. So there's a direct result on that.

In addition, in our cognitive base programming, we have things like our treatment base programming, our methadone treatment, or individuals who are on, for instance, anti-psychotic medications. They may be muscled into diverting their legitimate medications, which can be used for illegitimate means.

Mr. Ryan Leef: Thank you.

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

We'll now move to Mr. Sandhu, please, for seven minutes.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair

And thank you to the commissioner and our guest from Stony Mountain for being here today.

I want to go back to our preamble, the usual preamble, that we, as New Democrats, believe we need to take a balanced approach, that being prevention, treatment, and also interdiction. We've heard over the last number of meetings how the urinalysis rate has gone down from 13% to 7% over the last decade. I believe Mr. Head has stated in his previous testimony that over the last decade the urinalysis results having gone down is proof that interdiction is working.

I'm looking at a Correctional Service performance report from 2008-09, and I just want to read this:

The percentage of offenders testing positive during random urinalysis tests has decreased from 13.0%...in 2007-2008 to 7.9%...in 2008-2009.

That's around when we injected the \$122 million into interdiction programs in the prisons. The reason for the drop from 13% to 7.9% is, and this CSC performance report says:

This reflects removal of legitimate prescription drugs from the test results. Without this change, the results remain at 13%.

In other words, Mr. Head, would you agree that the change from 2007-08, the reduction from 13% to 7.9%, is a result of the prescription drugs not being tested? If the prescription drugs were part of the test, the rate would remain at 13%.

I'm looking at the performance report from 2010-11: in 2008-09 the urinalysis rate remained around 7.16%; in 2009-10 it remained at 7.36%; and in 2010-11 it was 7.43%.

Given that this information is from your own correctional report, can you explain to us how one could come to a logical conclusion that the new investment in interdiction is the actual explanation for a reduction in the urinalysis?

• (1120)

Mr. Don Head: It's a very good question. I think there are a couple of components to that.

When we go back to the 2008 report, which was at the time we were just starting to get the investment return in terms of starting to hire some of the drug-detector dog teams, security intelligence officers, etc., there wasn't as much of a gain being accrued. Now I'm quite confident in saying that the gains we are accruing are partly attributable to that investment, but not entirely. Some of it as well is linked to having offenders participate in the programs. There's no question that when offenders feel comfortable and safe going out and getting into the programs, some of them are starting to turn their lives around, and we continue to move forward.

So there are many different factors in terms of looking at those numbers. You're absolutely correct in terms of your observation around the discounting of prescription meds in the earlier number, but as we go forward we truly are seeing a reduction in the drugs.

One of the things that is evident for us is the types of drugs that are being used. The more effort we put into the interdiction, some of the more serious drugs—all drugs are serious in my mind, but I think you'll appreciate what I'm going to say here—are not showing up in the positive tests.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: We've heard this number many times from my colleagues and we've heard it from a number of people. Would you agree that the drop from 13% to 7% in 2008-09 was a direct

result of the removal of prescription drugs? It had nothing to do with interdiction.

• (1125)

Mr. Don Head: No. I'm saying at that time, for those two numbers that you talked about, the answer is yes.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Without the changes, the results would remain at 13%?

Mr. Don Head: They would have if we had not implemented the interdiction methods that we put in, in the last three years.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Let me read this for you:

This reflects removal of legitimate prescription drugs from the test results. Without this change, the results [would] remain at 13%.

This is what is in the report in 2008-09.

Mr. Don Head: That's right, in 2008-09. I'm talking about the more recent figures we have.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Okay. I'm looking at the recent figures from the last three years, the reports from 2008-09, 2009-10, and 2010-11. The urinalysis rate has not changed. It's gone from 7.16% to 7.43%. Since the program has been implemented, there has been no change in increase or decrease in urinalysis of the prisoners.

Mr. Don Head: It continues to move in the right direction.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: I'm looking at the numbers here. It's gone from 1.6% to 7.43%, so it hasn't changed. In fact, it's increased by a small percentage.

Mr. Don Head: Sure. It's in the right direction. It is down. It is continuing to go down. And we're continuing to implement the rest of the interdiction measures, which won't be complete until 2012-13.

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

We're a half a minute over.

Mr. Norlock, please.

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

Through you to the witness, thank you for coming, Mr. Head. To the other witness, we'll certainly be speaking to you in our next round, at least I intend to, should I be given the opportunity.

Mr. Head, in my previous occupation I was very much involved with the encouragement of participatory management. For those who may not know, that's where you talk to the people who actually do the work. You're in senior management. You talk to the boots on the ground, the people who do the work, about working with you to achieve certain results. We used to call it management by results.

I have a couple of questions. If you wouldn't mind, you can expand on them. Do you encourage input from various levels of your staff to achieve the goal as much as you're able for drug-free prisons? Do you look to other agencies, both domestic and foreign, to see if there are best practices that Corrections Canada can adopt? To the best of your knowledge, and no one would know more than you, have other agencies come to Canada to adopt some of the policies and procedures we have?

Would you address those, please.

Mr. Don Head: Thank you very much.

In terms of the participatory management approach, this is truly the approach we take within the organization. From our perspective, it's very clear: in order to move the yardsticks on any issue, whether it's in relation to drugs, programs, or any of the other matters we deal with, we need to have processes to engage our staff, at all levels.

Through ongoing dialogue with the six unions that represent the majority of our staff, we have discussions along these lines. As a matter of fact, some of the discussions we've had with the unions have led us to explore some of the technology we've purchased.

At the local level, again, if Mr. McLauchlan were able to speak, he could talk about the kinds of discussions and dialogues that occur on a daily basis in the institutions, through what's called the morning briefing meetings, looking at what happened in the last 24 hours, the ongoing management meetings, and the labour management meetings that go on in the institutions.

As a result of the input we get from staff, we're able to move the yardstick. I'm extremely proud of my staff because they're always looking for solutions to the problems that come up. As I think I've testified in the past, when we find one avenue and start to choke it off, offenders have a lot of time on their hands and they are looking for other avenues. But through the knowledge and experience of my staff, they're able to pick up on that and bring forward solutions.

This is one of the discussions we have almost any time we meet with other jurisdictions. I just finished meeting with my Asia-Pacific colleagues a month or so ago, in Japan. This was a major topic of a discussion amongst the 24 participating countries. Every one of them is pursuing some of the things that we are, to one degree or another.

There are some interesting approaches in other countries that we're interested in looking at, including some technology. There are some things they do that we're not interested in, and we'll be avoiding those.

We also have countries from the European Union coming to look at our overall approach, which includes our approaches to prevention, treatment, and interdiction, building their approach in that integrated way. Dialogue with the Netherlands, Belgium, and the U.K. is ongoing.

As well, we'll be hosting a meeting in the new year with the Organization of American States. One of our key discussions will be on the issue of drugs in correctional facilities. Again, there's a lot of interest in what we're doing. We'll be looking at what member states of the OAS are doing as well, to see if there are some things we can beef up.

When most of the countries look to us as it relates to the issue of drugs, they are looking at our treatment programs and the programs we offer. This is where they want to strengthen their integrated strategy.

• (1130)

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you.

Do I have more time?

The Chair: You have a little more time, if you want.

Go ahead.

Mr. Rick Norlock: I am wondering if Mr. McLauchlan has any input on these three questions.

Mr. Christer McLauchlan: Certainly. As a security intelligence officer, one of my primary roles is to provide advice and recommendations to decision-makers, including my senior management team. My advice is both valued and utilized by them because I see decisions being made based on those recommendations. We see that even at a higher level.

Now that we're expanding the security intelligence program, we're bringing in new procedures. The security intelligence officers on the front lines are currently involved in discussions as to our best practices and things we could be improving.

I certainly feel, as a front-line officer, that my input is valued by my management team.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm just going to interject here for a bit. We have a little more time on Mr. Norlock's question.

One of the reasons we as a committee wanted the commissioner and Mr. McLauchlan to come back was to explain the chart that we all have before us. I'm hoping some questions will come from our committee in regard to the chart.

I don't know, Mr. McLauchlan, whether you have this chart with you today. I know our commissioner has it. In the bottom left-hand corner is a little rectangle reading "Correctional Service Canada, Strategic Intelligence Analysis & Monitoring".

In your testimony, Mr. Commissioner, you talked about the hiring of 250 new personnel for positions in intelligence and for intelligence-gathering. Can you tell us a little more about what they do? Is there special training for these 250 who will be coming in? Are they existing correctional officers who will get a little different training? Will it mean that there will be one in each institution? Give us a little bit on how it works.

Those are things to keep in your mind. We are out of time on this turn, but those are some of the questions our committee members may be prompted to follow up on. I know it may be what we want to have in our report.

I'll move to Mr. Scarpaleggia, please.

• (1135)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Commissioner, I would like to follow through on Mr. Sandhu's point, to make sure I understood it correctly. Mr. Sandhu is saying that this decrease of positive urinalysis results from 13% to 7% is due to a decreased consumption of prescription drugs. Is that what...?

Mr. Don Head: Yes, part of the problem we had in the early days of analyzing the positive test results was from individuals who were on prescribed medications; those would be showing up.

The random testing approach we use is such that every month the names of 5% of the offender population are randomly generated. Those individuals are then tested. A positive test might come back showing that they are positive for something. But when we did further analysis, we found that a portion of those positive tests were linked to individuals who were on prescribed medication.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Is Mr. Sandhu correct in saying that there has really been no change, because once you factor out the prescription drugs, the level of illicit drugs found through urinalysis has not changed? That seems to be the point he was driving at. It seems to me to make logical sense, and you seem to confirm that there was a need to factor out prescription drugs. So is Mr. Sandhu correct, that there has really been no change?

Mr. Don Head: If you look purely at the numbers, as I said, they have levelled off, if you factor that out. But our seizures of drugs are going up. So it's a combination of issues that we're looking at.

Although you may want to draw the conclusion that nothing has changed by way of positive results as they relate to interdiction, the fact that we're stopping more drugs coming in is not moving that number up. Ideally, as we finish implementing the rest of the investments that we receive over the next year and a bit, we are expecting those numbers to drop.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: As a matter of fact, that brings me to my next point. One thing you said you would be instituting is cellphone jamming.

Mr. Don Head: This is something we're looking at. As you are probably aware, there are a lot of rules and regulations around this. We're looking at what it might be possible to do in that regard. We're engaged in discussions with Industry Canada, because there are some very specific regulations that govern anything like that.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: What regulations would prevent you from going ahead with that plan? It would seem to me that communications is the key to the whole system, really. If you cut that off, the whole house of cards comes tumbling down.

You see obstacles to your plan in the current regulations. What would some of those obstacles be?

Mr. Don Head: Some of the things we're exploring to see how far the regulations can be pushed before proposing anything to the minister for consideration include issues around.... Right now, the way the regulations are being interpreted to us is that anything we would apply for by way of cell jamming has to be for a specific reason, for a specific period of time.

For us, that doesn't necessarily work. We are looking at something that would be ongoing, to just basically eliminate the use. We have found some new technologies and are exploring how they can be used, whereby certain phone numbers that are properly registered wouldn't be jammed, but everything else would be.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: It seems to me that when we're talking about a penitentiary—am I correct in saying this?—there should be no cellphone traffic coming through the walls or over the walls. It's a pretty clear thing: there shouldn't be any. Inmates can call on regular phone lines. Wouldn't it just be a question of saying that in the regulations and the telecommunications regulations we need an exemption for penitentiaries?

• (1140)

Mr. Don Head: From my perspective, that would be the simplest solution; however, there are a couple of other factors.

One is that we have some managers, for example, who use BlackBerrys, so that would block them. As well, depending on the kind of device you use, if you got spillover, for lack of a better word, beyond your walls—and in the case of some of our penitentiaries, such as the one Mr. McLauchlan works in, there are communities basically abutting right against our fences and walls—

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: You could be harming them.

Mr. Don Head: If we were too powerful, we could be shutting them down as well.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Yes, I see.

We visited a couple of penitentiaries, and I must say that after what I saw, with the sniffer dogs and the ionizers and the right that you have, if the visitor signs a waiver, to do a cavity search, I'm astounded that any drugs can get in, to be honest with you.

Then the point was made that they can be thrown over the fence. But you talked about how the personnel in all your institutions are now equipped with goggles and infrared cameras—or are the infrared cameras only in certain institutions?

Mr. Don Head: They're in just two right now.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: But once they are implemented, that plus the fact that there are goggles for personnel to use would mean it is almost impossible for something to come in over the walls at that point, would it not?

Mr. Don Head: That's what we're hoping for. Again, as I mentioned, when we find one avenue and choke it off, there's always somebody who's a little smarter than me or my staff who finds a new way.

One of the challenges we had at one of the institutions when we put in some of these measures was that somebody got smart and decided they could stand out from the highway and use a bow, putting the drugs either in the shaft of the arrow or around it, and shoot it from a distance. So there are always different approaches. What it means, though, is that my staff, who are truly vigilant in their work, have to do a thorough search of the outside areas before we let the inmates out, to make sure that the drugs aren't there, and in the case of arrows, which can be used as weapons inside, that they aren't there as well.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll move into the second round of questioning.

[Translation]

Mr. Chicoine, you have five minutes.

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I also want to thank both witnesses who came to give us more information about the issue we are concerned about, that is drugs in prisons.

Since Mr. Head was able to answer many questions, I will ask Mr. McLauchlan to talk to us about the chart we received and to describe his role as a security intelligence officer. I would love to know more about that.

[English]

Mr. Christer McLauchlan: I don't have the IT schematic in front of me, but that was just one example of how a sophisticated network can do a drug transaction. One of the duties of the security intelligence officer is to deal with drug interdiction. Each item that I deal with can be unique. In some cases, it's as simple as an inmate knowing that he has violated his parole and putting a small amount of drugs into his rectum, so that when he's returned to the institution, he'll have something for his personal use.

Sometimes the things we're dealing with are as complex as the chart you have before you, which can involve a middleman. It can involve multiple people buying drugs, drugs coming from multiple sources going into different areas, being packaged by different individuals, and then distributed to other individuals to bring into the institution. Once they come into the institution, there's a distribution network within the institution. A drug transaction can sometimes be very simple and sometimes it can be very complex.

We use the tools and the training we've been provided to try to... If we can get a line on one aspect—perhaps we intercept a communication with regard to one person—then we'll start an investigation, which can expand from there, and perhaps we'll be applying for authorization to intercept additional conversations. Perhaps we'll monitor some individuals by video. It could involve liaising with our partner agencies in the criminal justice system: for instance, involving the police forces with regard to things that are going on in the street.

What you're seeing before you is an example of a very complex transaction, and sometimes it's everything in between.

•(1145)

[Translation]

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine: I understand. It is indeed very complex.

The commissioner told us about all the new tools you have to prevent the introduction of drugs in prisons. There are several tools. Can you tell us how effective they are?

In the past five to ten years, the equipment you have at your disposal has substantially increased. We heard about the BOSS chairs. I did not know about this new drug detection tool.

We also learned that there are a lot of drugs in prison. Can you talk to me about the effectiveness of all these tools? You have been using

dogs for some time, as well as radar/infrared systems and, as Mr. Head mentioned, night vision goggles and the BOSS chair.

How is it that there are still a lot of drugs in prison? You seem to have many interdiction tools to stop drugs from entering prisons. However, they still get in. Can you tell us more about that?

Why are there so many drugs in prison when you have all of these tools at your disposal?

[English]

Mr. Christer McLauchlan: First, it's speaking from Stony Mountain Institution's perspective. The tools we have, including our drug-detector dogs, the increase in our security intelligence staff, and things of that nature, have resulted in an increase in the number of interceptions we're making.

As an example, this year the drugs we've intercepted have an institutional value of around \$201,000, compared to their value in the same amount of time in our last fiscal year, which was approximately \$104,000. So simply put, we are intercepting more drugs using these tools.

But we're talking about extremely motivated individuals. We're also talking about the fact that you have to consider that every penitentiary is a small community in itself. Hundreds of people come in and out of the institution every day. Packages and delivery trucks are coming in. There are challenges with regard to the throw-over situation. The tools we have are great.

As an example, at Stony Mountain Institution last night, our officers detected a vehicle entering the grounds. When that vehicle was confronted by our motor patrol, it fled, nearly running over some of our officers. It was obvious to us that this person was up to no good. Without setting up a roadblock at the bottom of the hill restricting all traffic—that's the type of challenge we're facing on a daily basis.

It comes down to motivation. They're extremely motivated to get their drugs into the institution. There are multiple ways to do it. So our job is to try to stay one step ahead of them, using the technology and training we have.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm going to jump in here. I know someone else may have a question, but I would like those questions that I posed a little earlier answered.

Commissioner Head or Mr. McLauchlan can answer. Are the 250 that you're hiring existing correctional officers with extra training? Are we working towards a model in which there are one or two or three in each institution? How does it work?

Mr. Don Head: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Those are new staff that we're hiring through our staffing processes. They may come from existing staff or they may come from individuals outside.

In terms of the security intelligence area, we're hiring additional security intelligence officers and additional security intelligence analysts. This is one area in which we were weak in the past. We have a lot of information. Previously there was only one security intelligence officer—someone like Mr. McLauchlan—per institution. With 400 or 500 inmates in an institution, you can imagine the volume of information that flows. That's a lot of information for one person to collect, to analyze, to share findings with, and then to disseminate back out.

So we are increasing the number of security intelligence officers in institutions. We're moving to two, and in some cases, at some of our larger institutions, we'll have three security intelligence officers.

Our security intelligence analysts at the regional and national headquarters will be helping the officers analyze that information so it can be readily returned to front-line staff who have a need to know, so they can do the work they need to do and keep an eye on those inmates who need to be watched.

We are expanding the training for security intelligence officers. There is some standard training, that, again, Mr. Chair, with your permission, I'll let Mr. McLauchlan describe. We're also reaching out to groups such as the RCMP, as well as other agencies that have much more experience in analyzing intelligence information, to help equip the new staff we're hiring.

At the end of the day, when we're finished the hiring, particularly in the security intelligence area, we'll have two to three security intelligence officers per institution; we'll have security intelligence analysts at the regional and the national level; and we'll have greater connection with other law enforcement partners, such as Mr. McLauchlan talked about—not only the police forces in jurisdictions where our institutions are located, but also others such as CSIS and groups like that, with which we have some common interests in relation to individuals who are involved in very serious situations.

Through you, Mr. Chair, I'd invite Mr. McLauchlan to talk about some of the increases and the training he's seeing and experiencing.

• (1150)

The Chair: Mr. McLauchlan.

Mr. Christer McLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

From a personal perspective, as security intelligence officers we had a training program in place that was really an amalgamation of other agencies' training philosophies. One of the things I'm very excited about in the security intelligence department is that we have a brand-new training program for all of our security intelligence officers that was actually developed and is being facilitated by experienced security intelligence officers in the Correctional Service of Canada. This training is much more practical for what we're actually doing, for what our actual jobs within the institution are, than some of the theoretical training we were getting in the past.

In addition, it's been recognized that the training we receive and that's available within the Correctional Service of Canada may not be sufficient in and of itself. One of the measures taken was to give the security intelligence officers a training allotment. It is basically a budget we can utilize to seek training from other agencies. As a result of that, I've been able to access training with CSIS, with the RCMP, and with other outside agencies, which has helped to expand

my personal repertoire and expertise. I'm very excited about that as well. The training is there.

With regard to staffing, on a personal note, and to bring some of this into perspective, I'd like to speak specifically about Stony Mountain Institution. When I started as a security intelligence officer a couple of years ago, we had two SIOs—security intelligence officers. That was our full complement for 575-plus inmates with a high gang and drugs percentage. We currently have three security intelligence officers in the office, and we occasionally use a fourth. In addition to that, we've received an administrative assistant, which has greatly reduced our workload when it comes to things like filing and data.

In addition, we have security intelligence analysts at our regional headquarters. They are helping us take some of the volume of information we're developing, the forms we're producing, and the intelligence we're producing, and look at it from a top-down perspective. They are also able to correlate it with what's happening at other sites, which really wasn't happening in the past. I was dealing with Stony Mountain Institution as an island. What they're able to do is connect things happening here with things happening at other institutions. It's definitely made things easier for me as a security intelligence officer at Stony Mountain Institution.

• (1155)

The Chair: Thank you.

We have also heard from Darcy Thompson in Drumheller. He has given us testimony as to how they have incorporated it into their local penitentiary in Drumheller.

We'll go to Ms. Hoepfner, very quickly, and then to Mr. Aspin.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Thank you very much.

I had a very quick question I wanted to ask Mr. McLauchlan to follow up on his description of when a vehicle was on Stony Mountain's property and it turned around and left. I assume that you couldn't pursue them and they were able to get away. There was probably a strong suspicion that they were involved in something potentially illegal.

I'm wondering if there's anything you can tell us we could be doing and changing to help you. What would you need so that you would be able to actually pursue this vehicle, or I guess send a message? What we want to do is send a message that you can't try to smuggle drugs or commit crimes in penitentiaries or outside penitentiaries. Is there anything we could do to help you do that job better?

Mr. Christer McLauchlan: Thank you.

One of the things the members may not be aware of is that correctional officers are not peace officers when they're off the penitentiary reserve and do not have immediate custody of an inmate. What that means is that, literally, the officer who was pursuing the vehicle did the right thing, which was to stop at our penitentiary reserve. Once they were gone, he could not pursue them. He would not be a law enforcement officer once he left the penitentiary reserve. That's one aspect.

Second, I've studied the Bill C-10 proposals. One of the provisions in that bill that's very positive, from my standpoint, is the fact that it would actually make it a separate offence to traffic drugs within a penitentiary. Again, some of the members may not be aware of the fact that it is not illegal to bring drugs into Stony Mountain Institution. It's illegal to have possession of drugs. The fact is that when we're taking these cases to court, typically the court is looking at amounts that are typically smaller than what they're dealing with on the streets. If I have an individual trying to smuggle 10 grams of cocaine into the institution, it is looked at as a street charge of simple possession, because 10 grams is not a substantial amount as far as the court is concerned. One of our challenges is to try to provide expert witness testimony to try to explain how 10 grams coming into the institution is more significant.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Hoepfner.

Mr. Aspin.

Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC): Thank you, Chair. I'm pleased that you mentioned this institutional drug subcultural model because it's prompted a few questions in my mind.

I would like to direct this question to Mr. Head. I am looking at this chart. I was always under the mis-impression before I joined Parliament and joined this committee that a lot of privileges were taken away when one encountered such institutions.

I see the same things such as joint bank accounts and telephones and whatnot. I'm still having a hard time with how these connections are made and why they're allowed to be made. I'm having a difficult time, Mr. Head, in appreciating how money is flowed from an inmate to, say, a joint bank account. I'm particularly having a difficult time with telephones.

Just this week I had one particular individual call one of my staff, who talked to him for half an hour in terms of advocating for some type of task force or some type of committee. Can you help me with that? Why are these privileges allowed to continue, and how are they allowed to continue?

Mr. Don Head: I'll speak specifically to the issue of telephones. Telephones are in all our institutions. Inmates can access them to keep in contact with their family, with their lawyer, with the Office of the Correctional Investigator. Inmates get a card with approved phone numbers on it. And we have the ability to monitor and record those phone calls. Under certain conditions we can listen into them and do whatever necessary follow-up if we have a certain suspicion.

Usually what happens is that it's not as direct as phoning up and saying, "Mr. Norlock, I want you to bring drugs in." Mr. Norlock would never do that, of course. But it's not as direct as that. What would happen is—and Mr. McLaughlan has probably as many, if not

more, stories than I do. A phone call will be made to somebody. Some code or discussion will lead them, then, to have another phone call outside, and they make the contacts, put the pressure on people, and things start to go there.

This chart that you have in front of you, as Mr. McLaughlan pointed out, is a more complex one than most cases, but there are others that are even more complex in terms of how that reaching out occurs. It will go through several people, as opposed to just the direct contact, say, between me and Mr. Norlock.

It's something that we try to stay on. As I say, our biggest problem is not so much the use of the phones that inmates have access to through their control card. It's when they smuggle in the cellphones and then we're not able to record or pick those up. Then there's more direct contact and more specific direction given as to who to contact, what's needed, what's to be brought in.

• (1200)

Mr. Jay Aspin: I was just wondering, though, in terms of today's technology.... You're spending a lot of money in terms of intervention-type equipment. You used the term "cell jamming technologies" here. Is there not a way to eliminate that kind of activity?

Mr. Don Head: There is. As I mentioned before to the question of the other committee member, it's looking at how we are able to first work within the existing legislation and regulations that govern things such as cell jamming. Where we've identified the shortfalls, now we're looking at whether we need to bring proposals forward to the minister for some other opportunities.

We know there's equipment out there. We know its limitations, we know its capabilities, and it's finding the right balance. For example, if I were to put in a full-blown device, similar to what I saw being used by the military when I was in Afghanistan, not only would I blanket the institution, but I would blanket the surrounding community that abuts against it. I think I'd have many neighbours or many constituents of the minister screaming at me because they can't use their cellphones.

It's just trying to find the right equipment and using either existing legislation or looking at whether we need to bring proposals forward to the minister.

The Chair: Thank you.

I see that our time is up; however, I have one little question on this chart. You've referenced both medium security institutions and minimum security institutions. Is that just the fact that you just kind of put them out there...? Is there as big a problem in maximum security institutions with drugs?

Mr. Don Head: No, the maximums, because the flow of people in there is more restricted than in medium, and definitely more restricted than in minimum.... Each of those institutions has different challenges. For maximums, we pretty well know the sources and we're able to contain that a little better. Mediums are a little more problematic. Minimums are a different situation altogether, yes.

The Chair: That makes sense.

All right. Thank you very much.

I thank you, Mr. McLauchlan from Manitoba, for joining us via teleconference today, and I also thank Commissioner Head. We appreciate it very much.

We are going to suspend for about five minutes. For the second hour of our committee today we will be going in camera and giving instructions to the table on the drafting of a draft report on this study.

We are suspended.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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