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Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): Good afternoon, everyone. This is meeting number 43 of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, on Thursday, May 31, 2012. Today we are considering the main estimates for 2012-13.

We're very pleased this afternoon to have a number of individuals appearing at our committee, but certainly the Honourable Vic Toews, Minister of Public Safety and national security, we welcome you back. It's been good having the minister here on a number of occasions.

He is accompanied by his departmental officials: first of all, Graham Flack, associate deputy minister. We also have Commissioner Robert Paulson, commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police—welcome; Monsieur Luc Portelance, president of the Canada Border Services Agency; Don Head, commissioner of the Correctional Services of Canada; Richard Fadden, director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service; and last, but certainly not least, Mr. Harvey Cenaiko, the chair of the National Parole Board.

Our committee very much appreciates your appearing today. Our committee takes this opportunity to express to these officials our support and appreciation for the work that the many public servants under their command perform on behalf of Canadians every day.

I would now invite the minister to make opening statements. As most of you know, we will then go into a number of rounds. The minister has one hour with us.

Welcome, Minister.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety):

Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee. I'm very pleased to have had this invitation to appear here to discuss the Public Safety portfolio's main estimates for this fiscal year.

As you indicated, senior officials from Public Safety and the agencies I am responsible for are here as well. I'm truly a fortunate person in terms of the quality of individuals who assist me in protecting Canadians on a day-to-day basis.

The committee has before it the main estimates for fiscal year 2012-13 which, if ratified by Parliament, will result in funding approvals of \$8.37 billion for the portfolio. This represents a net decrease of \$323.8 million, or 4%, from the 2011-12 main estimates.

The main estimates for this fiscal year, I should point out, do not reflect anticipated savings for the portfolio under the deficit reduction action plan, as outlined in the economic action plan of 2012.

As a result of its strong work on safety and security issues, this committee is very familiar with the portfolio and the vital role it plays in tackling crime, strengthening our borders, protecting our children, and making our communities safe. You would also know that protecting Canadians is a priority for our government.

Getting safety and security right matters in a very practical way. The first duty of any government is the safety of its citizens. The right to be secure from harm is at the foundation of every other right of citizenship. It is the essential condition for every other freedom. Our government remains firmly committed to protecting the safety and security of Canadians.

We remain firmly committed to cracking down on crime and to strengthening the security of our borders while working to accelerate the legitimate flow of goods and people across our joint border with the United States.

In an era of fiscal restraint, we are focused on the core responsibilities of government while finding all possible efficiencies and savings. This is what the main estimates for fiscal year 2012-13 will allow us to accomplish.

The total funding sought in main estimates for Public Safety Canada this fiscal year is \$432.7 million, which represents a modest increase of \$18.1 million over the previous fiscal year. The net spending increase of the total departmental authorities is due to an increase in grants of \$8.4 million as well as an increase in contributions of \$21 million, which is offset by a net decrease in operating costs of \$11.3 million.

The increase in grants and contributions includes \$15 million for the sustainability of the first nations policing program; \$7.9 million for the *ex gratia* payments to the families of the victims of Air India flight 182; \$6.1 million for the renewal of the youth gang prevention fund; as well as \$1 million for the Kanishka Project research initiative. Yesterday, as some of you may know, I announced the first round of funding worth just over \$1 million. This goes toward six innovative research projects that will help build Canada's knowledge and understanding of the complex issue of terrorism. That fund is actually \$10 million over five years.

Honourable members will know that our government recently completed successful negotiations with the provinces and territories for a renewed 20-year contract policing agreement with the RCMP. I certainly want to thank officials from the Public Safety department who worked very closely with the RCMP and with the heads of the relevant provincial authorities in making that a reality. It was a challenging but very worthwhile exercise.

I'm also pleased to hear that the committee has decided to undertake a study into the economics of policing. This is a timely study, and I look forward to hearing of your deliberations and eventual report in this matter.

The main estimates for this fiscal year reflect a decrease of \$205.6 million due to the expiry of the previous 20-year policing services agreement that expired on March 31. Funding requirements for the new agreement will be met through supplementary estimates as the individual contracts are ratified with the provincial and territorial governments.

The total funding sought in main estimates for the RCMP this fiscal year is \$2.55 billion. This represents a decrease of \$329 million, or 11.4%, over the previous fiscal years, the majority of which, as I indicated, is comprised of the adjustment to the funding for contract police services that will then be dealt with in the supplementary estimates.

● (1535)

One of our government's top priorities since we were first elected has been cracking down on crime and holding offenders to full account for their actions. That is why the main estimates for fiscal year 2012-13 seek funding of \$3.03 billion for Correctional Service of Canada, an increase of \$44.2 million, or a slight 1.5% increase over the previous fiscal year.

As the committee knows, our government's new laws to tackle crime are starting to end the revolving door of justice by keeping dangerous criminals behind bars longer. But what is more important to note is that our efforts have not resulted in the significant increase in the number of federal prisoners predicted by officials or indeed in the outrageous figures that certain members of the opposition predicted. They indicated that there would be a \$19 billion increase in capital costs and \$3 billion to \$4 billion in operating costs.

Now, due to this reality, the determination was made to close two federal prisons—Kingston and Leclerc. Despite the misinformation being put out by various special interest groups, I can confirm for all the committee that our government has not built a single new prison and has no intention of building a single new prison. We did build the 2,700 individual units in various prisons, and that was announced in early 2010. These closures will save the government approximately \$120 million per year, and combined with the fact that the offender population has not increased as CSC expected, we expect that CSC's future appropriation requests will be significantly reduced.

The main estimates for 2012-13 also request funds of \$1.78 billion for the Canada Border Services Agency. This represents a decrease of \$70.4 million, or 4% over the previous year. The CBSA's decrease in net spending is due to a decrease in operating costs of \$61.8

million, a decrease in capital costs of \$9.2 million, and an increase of \$0.6 million in statutory costs.

This fiscal year's main estimates request moderate increases or decreases in funding for the other Public Safety portfolio agencies. The funding requests are: \$520.6 million for CSIS, and that's an increase of \$11.6 million over the previous year; \$51.5 million for the National Parole Board, an increase of \$2.3 million, or 4.5%, over the previous year; \$4.7 million for the Office of the Correctional Investigator, an increase of 8% over the previous year; \$0.9 million for the RCMP external review committee; and \$5.4 million for the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP, a decrease of less than 1% over the previous fiscal year.

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, Canadians have made it clear that protecting our children and our communities is one of their top priorities. Our government is listening, and it has made that its priority as well. I'm sure you would agree that this is one of the most important responsibilities of government. The spending plans outlined in these main estimates will help us meet that obligation. These expenditures are critical to ensuring that the men and women on the front lines of the Public Safety portfolio continue to have the tools and resources they need to do their job in a time of fiscal restraint.

I trust that we can count on this committee's continued support for this work. I welcome any questions you may have at this time.

Thank you.

● (1540)

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

We'll move into the first round of questioning very quickly.

We'll go to Ms. Hoepfner, please, for seven minutes.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here. As well, I want to thank each one of the directors here today. Looking across the table, we can see the vast amount of work that is covered under Public Safety. I think each one of us serving on this committee are privileged that we can.... It remains a very interesting portfolio to work on.

Minister, I don't know about you, but over the last year and a half or two years, I have consistently heard from the opposition—all of us on the government side have heard—that we were going to be building new prisons. We were accused time and again of having plans to build new prisons. Then we announced we wouldn't be building any new prisons, and the opposition didn't like no for an answer. Then we told them we were going to be able to close prisons because the population that had been projected to grow didn't materialize.

I'm wondering if you could speak directly to what the prison population was a year ago, what that growth has been, and how we are able to accommodate.... In dealing with prison closures—I'm thinking specifically of Kingston, where there has been so much misinformation and so many inaccurate numbers—can you give us some of the accurate numbers and tell us what has happened with the population growth and what has not happened, and where these offenders are going to be going?

Hon. Vic Toews: Thank you very much. I am going to make some very brief introductory comments, and then I will turn it over to Commissioner Head, who has been instrumental in handling this file.

The present federal population is 14,973. That has remained fairly constant, or has been increasing slightly over the past few months. The projections that were made back in March 2010, when it was stated that the Truth in Sentencing Act would come into effect and would rapidly increase the number of prisoners, have not materialized.

When I became Minister of Public Safety, that was a discussion the commissioner and I had. At that time we decided we would go ahead with the 2,700 units in existing prisons. What this would do, committee member, is we would be able to replace some of the older infrastructure that did need to be replaced, and also this would help us should the increase be more than we had expected. The capacity of our federal prison system at that time was about 15,000—just over 14,000 at that time.

The increase in population has been about one-third, give or take, of what CSC had predicted, and certainly many times less than what the opposition had predicted. What the opposition doesn't understand is that there aren't that many really bad criminals out there, but there are bad criminals out there. Those are the ones we want to focus on. Those are the ones we want to stop from using the revolving door of justice, and make sure they stay in until it's safe for them to be released. Rather than bringing all kinds of new people into the system, for the most part what we are seeing is that many of the same old guys, instead of getting a vacation to go out and commit more crimes, are staying in. That is what is causing some of the increase.

Perhaps Commissioner Head can give you some more details in that respect. I have to say, we have had a very good discussion over the last number of years about where we are going. I feel very comfortable with the advice I have been receiving from Commissioner Head.

• (1545)

The Chair: Commissioner.

Mr. Don Head (Commissioner, Correctional Service of Canada): Thank you, Minister and Mr. Chair.

As the minister has pointed out, our projections, which were based on remand data that was three to four years old, from 2005, originally projected a population growth much higher than what we've seen. The actual growth is only about one-third.

In March 2010, when Bill C-25 came into effect, we started at a population level of 14,027. As the minister has pointed out, our count today is 14,973, so around a 950 increase, as opposed to the 3,000 that was originally projected.

The 2,752 new cells that will be coming on line over the next two to three years are going to give us exactly what the minister pointed out, the opportunity to address some of the levels of double-bunking that we have in some of our institutions across the country and to deal with some of the aging infrastructure we have. The average age of our infrastructure is 40 years old, and as this committee has learned in the past, it's an infrastructure that's used 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. You can imagine the wear and tear that's there.

So we have aging infrastructure and we have some double-bunking issues to address. Any new growth that we're predicting, which is much less than the original projections, will be able to be accommodated in the capacity we have across the country, including the 2,752 cells.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Thank you very much.

Minister, will you be able to just comment very quickly? Bill C-19 was passed a few months ago and reached royal assent, and the long-gun registry has ended in Canada. There have been some efforts...it appears that a backdoor registry has been created. Can you comment on the government's position on the long-gun registry and what's happening in some of the provinces right now?

Hon. Vic Toews: Well, we've made it very clear that Bill C-19 abolishes the long-gun registry and that Bill C-19 takes away any power to create an alternative registry even at the provincial level.

If there are chief firearms officers in various provinces who are administering the Firearms Act, we've made it very clear to them that there is no authority to collect the kind of data that was being collected for the long-run registry under the Firearms Act. That authority no longer exists.

There is an injunction application that has taken place in Quebec, and we are respecting that injunction. But in the meantime we are moving to separate the information and discontinue the ability of anyone to access that information outside of the province of Quebec. That process is well under way.

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

And thank you, Ms. Hoepfner.

We'll now move to the opposition side, to Mr. Garrison and Madam Lefebvre for seven minutes.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the minister for being here, and also for bringing his senior team of very impressive public servants to the committee.

I think one of the things we've managed to establish in this committee is that there's an equal concern for public safety, although we might not always agree on how to get there among all parties in the House of Commons. And we appreciate the work that all of you do in ensuring that Canadians remain safe.

Today, of course, the topic is the main estimates, so there are many issues we could explore on public safety, but we're going to try, on this side, to stay focused on the impacts of the estimates as they're presented today.

One of the concerns we have is that the services that are provided in Public Safety are of course essential to the safety of the public. So the level of reductions—the 4% cut in this budget and the projected 10% cut eventually—give us some concern about whether existing functions can be maintained and whether some new initiatives, which might be necessary, such as some of the initiatives that have been talked about for dealing with the sexual harassment issues in the RCMP, can be dealt with in this declining budget.

One of the ones we want to focus on, and I'll try to be quick, is the question of the prison closures, and quite apart from all the numbers about prisons.

My colleague, Madame Doré Lefebvre, has visited Leclerc, and last Monday the NDP members of this committee visited Kingston Penitentiary and the Regional Treatment Centre. We came away with a lot of unanswered questions, which maybe you can address today, about the impacts of the closure of those institutions.

In the case of Kingston, we know we have highly qualified and highly experienced staff working in that institution who have dealt with some of the most dangerous and notorious criminals in the country, and we've heard nothing so far about the fate of those staff.

In terms of the Regional Treatment Centre, we have a very highly talented and highly experienced group dealing with mentally ill prisoners, and we know nothing about the fate of that unit as a whole.

I'm going to ask you three very specific things.

One, Mr. Minister, will you make a commitment today to retain the experienced staff of Kingston Penitentiary within the Correctional Service of Canada?

• (1550)

Hon. Vic Toews: What I can say is that our focus is on the safety of Canadians, and our intention is to focus on that in the most appropriate fashion possible.

When we're closing Kingston, when we're closing Leclerc, and when we're closing the Regional Treatment Centre, we're not putting these people out onto the street. These people are going somewhere, and they're going into other correctional facilities. There are a number of correctional facilities right in the area of Kingston that can accommodate these individuals; therefore, many of the guards and other staff will, of necessity, be transferred to those facilities, without even uprooting their families.

Are there efficiencies? Absolutely. We can save \$120 million on an annual basis simply by closing those two prisons and then having these prisoners in other facilities.

What we are committed to doing is ensuring that the prisoners are secure, that the officers have appropriate working conditions, and mainly that the public is safe.

I think the guards themselves have been telling us for years that Kingston needs to be closed. I don't think there's any question about that. So we're on the right track in that respect, and we will work with the union and with the guards to ensure that as many individuals as can be retained will be retained in the overall plan.

Perhaps, Commissioner...?

Mr. Randall Garrison: If I can, I want to keep the focus on your commitment here.

The Chair: [*Inaudible—Editor*]...questions going through the chair.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I'd like to keep the focus then. The second question, since we didn't quite get a full commitment on that one, is, will you make a commitment to keep the regional treatment unit together at some site, whether it's at the Kingston site or a new site? We have there a highly skilled unit of people dealing with mentally ill prisoners, and it would be, I think, a real loss to Canadian public safety to have that unit broken up.

Hon. Vic Toews: One of the things I've learned in my career in law enforcement and in public safety, as a provincial justice minister, as a lawyer, is that I'm not an expert in all of these things. I have wonderful staff who advise me on this. What I try to do is stay out of operations.

I rely on people like Commissioner Head to make the best decisions with respect to how we best deal with any particular offender, for example, the mentally ill. I've been providing the commissioner with general direction in terms of prisoners. I want to see increased mental health capacity; I want to see increased training capacity; I want to see increased educational capacity. But how that is done I leave to the commissioner, because he and his people have the expertise.

The general direction, we give; we do not specify the way it should be done, when it comes to those types of professional decisions.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Speaking through you, then, Mr. Chair, let me say that you mentioned the transfer of prisoners. One of the things we learned in our discussions is that a very high number of prisoners in Kingston are already in segregation units, and if they were to be transferred, a very high number of additional prisoners might need to be in segregation in other institutions.

Do you have a plan for these prisoner transfers worked out, and if you do not, when will that plan be in place, including an indication of where those prisoners could be accommodated in the system?

Hon. Vic Toews: Yes, the commissioner has a very clear plan for what happens to these prisoners as we begin to move these prisoners.

What I can say very generally, Mr. Garrison, is that maximum security prisoners will be moved to maximum security facilities. The mere transfer itself will not result in any lessening of the security status of an individual or a change.

There may be some individuals presently in maximum for whom it's time to go into medium security, but that's something the commissioner will address in his overall plan.

• (1555)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Rather than splitting, I'm going to continue.

In terms of the overall reduction in the Correctional Service, you seem to be counting \$120 million in savings by closing these institutions. Is that a saving simply of the overhead of the institutions? It seems hard to imagine a savings that large every year, since the prisoners will still be in the system.

Hon. Vic Toews: I'm advised that this is a net saving.

Perhaps the commissioner can go into the detail. On an annual basis it's \$120 million. It is a significant amount.

The Chair: Commissioner Head.

Mr. Don Head: As the minister pointed out, the \$119 million is net savings. We have investments coming, with the opening of the new units—the 2,752 cells across the country. That is obviously going to provide us some finances, in terms of managing the population and the staff complement.

The Chair: Thank you very much to all.

We'll now move back to the government side. We'll go to Ms. Young, please.

Ms. Young, you have seven minutes.

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): Minister, thank you so much for coming, along with your esteemed colleagues.

I want to highlight that according to these main estimates, the total funding sought for Public Safety Canada this fiscal year is \$432.7 million, which is an increase of \$18.1 million over the previous year, and that this net spending increase of the total departmental authorities is due to an increase in grants of \$8.4 million as well as an increase in contributions of \$21 million, which is offset by net decreases in operating costs of \$11.3 million.

I want to highlight that and ask you some questions around it. As a member of Parliament from Vancouver South, where we have seen some shootings—in my area, in our neck of the woods....

And in B.C. as you know, we have some concerns; I'll be asking you some questions about that a little later.

But I wanted to highlight that it appears there's an increase in funding for community programs, such as \$7.9 million in grants for the *ex gratia* payments to the families of the victims of Air India; an increase of \$7.4 million to the delivery of preventions and interventions aimed at reducing youth violence and youth gangs and a number of other safer communities initiatives; a contribution to

combat child sexual exploitation and human trafficking, which is a big issue for the Vancouver area as well.

I wanted to commend the department on this work and specifically on this work in having programs and services and grants out in the community, where some of these crimes and issues are taking place. Kudos to you for that.

Specifically I have questions around the fact that...we seem to be now on track and are hearing the people where...in B.C., we've had some concerns over disciplinary limitations within the RCMP.

Minister, can you address that for us?

Hon. Vic Toews: I want to thank you for your comments, and thank you for the comments you've made in respect to Public Safety. I've been very lucky to have a great group of individuals working there. Bill Baker, who was the deputy minister, has retired, and Graham Flack is the acting deputy at this time. I'm very pleased with the performance of all of these individuals.

I also want to say that I'm very pleased with the work of the Commissioner of the RCMP in respect of reforming the RCMP. For the last number of months, since he has been appointed, he has taken a very aggressive approach, addressing some of the issues that I think have been festering in the RCMP for a long time. This commissioner has not taken a back seat in terms of tackling these matters. It's not always easy, coming out of an organization the way he has and then having to take very strong steps to correct them. But the advantage the commissioner has is his experience inside the organization; he knows where some of the problems are. This is especially true for the issue of sexual harassment inside the RCMP. He's made it clear right from the beginning that this is an issue that needs to be dealt with.

But he has also pointed out to me that it's very difficult to take concrete steps without the legislative—the statutory and the regulatory—authorities to discipline. You cannot have a situation in which you want to discipline and the individual is then placed on leave with pay and this goes on for years. There have to be immediate consequences and an appropriate route whereby the process is fair to both the individual who is being disciplined and the overall organization, which obviously represents the public interest.

I was quite amazed to see how little authority line commanders have in disciplining officers. We wouldn't accept that in any other organization—not just in an organization like the military, but in any organization in which one needs to ensure that people are doing their job in an appropriate fashion.

The legislation we want to bring forward addresses the disciplinary issue. It also addresses the issue of the complaints from the public, that this be dealt with by an independent tribunal looking at these issues.

Perhaps the commissioner can add some comments.

•(1600)

The Chair: Mr. Commissioner.

Commissioner Bob Paulson (Commissioner, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): I think that's right, Minister.

Thank you, Chair.

I've come out and made some very strong public statements, and I think that's absolutely true in respect of those individuals who need to be disciplined, with a view to protecting the organization. But that shouldn't give the impression that we're not focused either on the corrective sort of approach to discipline and conduct. We want to really focus on the lion's share of our members who get into difficulty—it's a very stressful job—where we can correct that behaviour early, at the lowest level. When things go bad, as they do, we need to be able to act more directly.

Ms. Wai Young: Thank you so much.

Mr. Chairman, how much more time do I have?

The Chair: You have a minute and a half, Ms. Young.

Ms. Wai Young: Minister, can you speak a little bit about the child sexual exploitation and human trafficking contribution program, which is part of this budget?

Mr. Graham Flack (Associate Deputy Minister, Department of Public Safety): Just briefly, this is part of an integrated program. As you can imagine, it's one of these complex issues, Mr. Chairman, that touches a wide range of issues. We see it on the human smuggling side internationally. We see it on the domestic side, and it integrates in ways that are complex to deal with.

The department works with the RCMP and stakeholders internationally to try to address this issue in an integrated way, with the contribution you see in the main estimates that's been in place to be able to look at those challenges. That's an overview of the program.

Ms. Wai Young: My understanding is that Canada has now become a bit of a leader in this whole area internationally. Can you speak a little bit about that?

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Young.

Mr. Graham Flack: I think it's fair to say that with the excellent work of the RCMP and others, we have taken innovative steps to try to deal with this. But I think the commissioner would probably agree that this is an area in which it's been very difficult to get at these problems. Notwithstanding the leadership we've shown, the challenge is a very significant challenge we face.

While we've taken positive steps to make progress in this area, it's one of those very, very challenging problems that is very difficult to get at, in part because of the international nature of the problem, so it requires significant collaboration with partners internationally.

While we think we've made some progress on this, I wouldn't want to leave the member with the sense that we don't have a very, very significant challenge in front of us.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Flack.

We'll now move to the opposition side, to Mr. Hsu, please.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to start with a question to the minister. It's a question I've asked before in the House and in print. It's about a decision that affects the lives of many of the minister's staff, including the correctional officers here with us today and their families.

The minister has said in the House that the true net saving to taxpayers from closing the three institutions—Leclerc, Kingston Pen, and the Regional Treatment Centre—is \$120 million per year. He said that's the true net saving. That's what we heard from the commissioner today. But if you look at the *Public Accounts of Canada* from 2010-11, it says the combined budget for all three institutions is \$112 million per year.

The taxpayer still has to pay for the 1,000 inmates who are housed in those three institutions. They still have to be put somewhere else. The new builds are not finished yet. You still have to staff the new buildings, even though they're on existing sites. You still have to build a new regional treatment centre, which holds 140 to 145 patients with mental illness.

My question to the minister is this. What is your plan? Can you show there's really \$120 million in true net savings, as the minister himself has called it in the House of Commons? How are you going to do that if the taxpayer still has to pay for putting the inmates somewhere else? How are you going to pay for the new regional treatment centre? Are you going to negotiate with workers to cut jobs in Ontario and Quebec or ask for other concessions? How are you going to do it? Are you going to tell parliamentarians, whom you're accountable to, how you're going to do it?

•(1605)

The Chair: Mr. Hsu, I would also suggest that that question has been posed and answered by both the minister and the commissioner, but go ahead, Minister.

Hon. Vic Toews: Yes. I'll defer to the commissioner, who will give the details of how he's come up with that number. That's the number I rely on in my public statements.

Mr. Don Head: Thank you, Minister.

And thank you, Mr. Chair.

There's absolutely no question, at the end of the day our budget will be a net reduction as it relates to those three facilities of \$119 million. As well, what's not seen in the budget, of course, is the budget that will be coming our way when those new units come online. We will be absorbing those inmates in new units in institutions across the country and where we do have some cell capacity in existing facilities. My budget will be net \$120 million less at the end of the implementation of this reduction.

In terms of the plan going forward, it goes back to an earlier question. We're taking a three-pronged approach to the closures. The first thing we're doing is focusing on the staff. I have a staff represented by six unions, and we're dealing with the affected unions in terms of the workforce adjustment policy and looking at what options we can pursue in relation to their members in each of the unions. Our goal, ideally, is to keep the talent we have, and we'll be guided by the opportunities that are presented today and going forward, and also through the workforce adjustment policy.

The second phase of our plan, then, is looking at the placement of the offenders. As the minister has pointed out, we're not going to be scrimping in terms of policy or legislation around classifications. Maximum security offenders will be held in maximum security space, medium security offenders in medium security space. We're just in the final throes of working out the details and options for the placement of offenders, including the treatment centre. It's not in our best interest, nor is it consistent with the direction the minister has given me in terms of addressing the mental health needs of the inmates that are in the system, so we have some options we're pursuing there.

The third phase of our plan is in relation to what we do with the existing buildings. There are several options we're looking at there. I think, Mr. Chair, the member is aware that a few discussions are going on over that.

Mr. Ted Hsu: If I could, Mr. Chair, I'd like to ask the minister, will the minister make public the plan and the calculations, so that I can verify for the taxpayers I represent that the net saving is actually \$120 million? If the commissioner is saying that he would like to keep all the valuable employees we have, the taxpayer is still paying for those salaries. I don't see how we can get true net savings.

My job is to make sure the taxpayer understands what the minister is saying, and I can't do that without information. Will the minister make it public? Will the minister let me do my job?

Hon. Vic Toews: You can do your job with or without my consent.

Mr. Ted Hsu: Oh, really.

Hon. Vic Toews: I will, in fact, cooperate with you. I think the commissioner will provide you with whatever information is publicly available at this time, given the state of the planning process. But as the minister responsible, I am ultimately accountable for the plans he's making. I rounded it off to \$120 million; he says \$119 million. I'll go to the \$119 million that he's been saying, but we're in that ballpark. That's what I've been assured, and that's what ultimately I'll have to defend in Parliament.

•(1610)

The Chair: One minute, please.

Mr. Ted Hsu: Thank you.

I look forward to seeing that calculation. It's a fair defence, and not just hiding behind ignorance.

I would like to ask the minister about CSIS. According to section 30 of the CSIS Act, the role of the inspector general is to monitor the compliance of CSIS with operational policies and directives. The IG is entitled to have access to any information under CSIS control that relates to the performance of these duties. The Security Intelligence

Review Committee, on the other hand, can only monitor and conduct investigations after the fact, so the IG monitors and SIRC reviews. Why is the minister now cutting the ability of his office to actively monitor CSIS by getting rid of the inspector general?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hsu. Unfortunately, we're out of time on that. Your seven minutes are up. We'll come back. There may be a way that some of those questions can be answered in a subsequent round.

We're going to move to Ms. Doré Lefebvre. Thank you for waiting. You have five minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I wish to thank you, Minister, and all of you gentlemen as well, for being here.

I also noted the presence of several corrections officers at the back of the room. I am delighted by their presence here. They too will probably suffer the repercussions of the prison closures.

I have questions regarding the prison closures, but before getting into that, I would like to come back to some of the questions regarding discipline within the RCMP that were put by my colleague opposite.

Mr. Minister, do you have concrete proposals? And, more particularly, do you have a schedule setting out when these proposals will be tabled?

[*English*]

Hon. Vic Toews: I have very specific proposals and I have a very short deadline in terms of bringing forward legislation.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: When might we expect to see something?

[*English*]

Hon. Vic Toews: Very soon.

Voices: Oh, oh!

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: That is excellent.

[*English*]

Hon. Vic Toews: Very soon.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Thank you very much. That is nice.

[*English*]

Hon. Vic Toews: I can tell you one of the delays. I don't mean to make light of this. One of the delays in getting these things forward....

I know the commissioner has been very concerned that we move forward quickly on this. I appreciate his concern, but there was the whole issue of the RCMP unionization. There were court judgments—very confusing court judgments. Those judgments have been appealed, and they're still before the courts.

Quite frankly, we couldn't wait any longer for the courts to render their decisions, so we're proceeding legislatively without addressing the issue of the unionization.

So the delay that has occurred has occurred, by and large, as a result of our inability to move ahead on that entire package. I just want to make that clear.

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Very well. That is fine.

I was also pleased to hear you and Mr. Head say that there has been an increase in the prison population. According to the documents obtained by the *Globe and Mail* through access to information, the prison population's increase would be closer to 7% per year. Furthermore, a certain number of bills have been brought forward, for example Bill C-10. However, in your opening statement, as well as the announcement you made on April 19th, you mentioned the closure of Kingston Penitentiary and the Leclerc Institution, which is located in Laval, in my riding. You also mentioned that you do not intend to build new prisons. To my mind, that is clear proof of a lack of planning on the part of the department.

It is also no surprise to learn that inmates in Canada's federal prisons sometimes sleep in trailers, in interview rooms and in gymnasiums, while the percentage of inmates sharing cells designed for one person has nearly doubled over the course of three years. We are also witnessing an increase in the violence inside penal institutions.

Mr. Minister, how can your department ensure the safety of corrections officers and of inmates in these circumstances?

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews: Let's take a look first at the prison numbers. I think that's about right, 7%, in terms of the increase, but that would be in about two years, I would think.

Mr. Don Head: That's right.

Hon. Vic Toews: So it's 7% over two years, not one year—much, much smaller than has been predicted.

On the issue of double occupancy in cells, that is something that is done. I believe currently it's somewhere in the range of 15% double occupancy.

I make no apologies for double occupancy. It's an appropriate utilization of space. It's not appropriate for every prisoner, but where it can be done in a manner that is safe and appropriate and mindful of the costs, I certainly do not in any way discourage the use of double occupancy in cells.

In terms of the violence, I think you want to be very careful when you state that violence has increased. I'm not sure from what facilities you're talking about, because there are some facilities where in fact, because of policies that have been brought in by this commissioner, we have actually seen a decrease in violence quite significantly.

When I toured the British Columbia prisons—

• (1615)

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: I really do not want to contradict you, but I have substantiating statistics that show that the number of violent incidents has increased.

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews: All I want to say is be careful about provincial statistics and federal statistics.

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Yes.

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews: Sometimes in these articles, they just blur the distinction, and they don't really concern themselves with facts.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Lefebvre. So many questions and so little time; I know.

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: I know.

The Chair: We will now move back to the government side, to Mr. Norlock, please, for five minutes.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and through you to the witnesses, thank you for appearing today.

Mr. Minister, I heard you and Commissioner Paulson talk about sexual harassment in the RCMP. You mentioned some legislative changes that you are contemplating. I wonder if you contemplate these legislative changes occurring in the next short while.

Hon. Vic Toews: Very soon, I said. What we want to make clear is that the issue of sexual harassment and the issue of the disciplinary process are separate, but they are related. The commissioner presently has the power to deal with the issue of sexual harassment in a systemic fashion, and also in an individual fashion. The problem is that when you are dealing with it in an individual fashion, you don't have the disciplinary powers to move quickly in certain circumstances. The legislation will move, if I'm correct, in order to allow line commanders to make decisions at a very local base, and very quickly. They are related, but the legislation itself.... I don't want to get into the specifics of the legislation. You will see it very soon. It will certainly go a long way in assisting the commissioner and his commanding officers in dealing with this particular problem.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you.

Switching now to Air India Flight 182, it is showing Canadians that we're not immune from the threat of terrorism. I wonder if you can make comments to this committee on the measures and compensation efforts the government has taken in response. If you would work into your response, Minister, your announcement of the Kanishka Project and the first rounds of funding for that....

Hon. Vic Toews: The *ex gratia* payments are still being—that process is still in place. The cut-off for the application for the *ex gratia* payments is July 31, so that families who have been affected by this crime will have the ability to apply to that fund. *Ex gratia* payments, of course, are not compensation for the actual loss of the families. It was as a result of the treatment at the hands of the bureaucracy that those families experienced. We have to make a very clear distinction between those.

We have consulted extensively with the family in the development of this process, as we have with respect to the Kanishka Project. We wanted to see, and I think the families wanted to see, some kind of lasting legacy. What good can come out of this horrible crime? One of the things that is very clear to us is that we do not understand what causes Canadians to involve themselves in terrorist acts against their fellow citizens, or to involve themselves in terrorist initiatives overseas, to train themselves in terrorist activities, and then come home. What these grants—we announced about \$1.1 million yesterday—are doing is establishing a theoretical basis and an insight into this problem so that those who have to deal with the problem on the ground—the police, judges, lawyers, communities, and families—have that theoretical basis that can then be put into a practical application.

• (1620)

The Chair: You have 40 seconds.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Well, 40 seconds....

I wonder, Minister, if you could comment on what we are doing to assist disadvantaged youth from the allure of street gangs.

The Chair: Very quickly, please.

Hon. Vic Toews: Essentially, I have indicated that we have \$6.1 million for the renewal of the youth gang prevention fund. It's very important work. This is something our government has increased actually quite significantly since we came to power in 2006. We work together with the provinces and other NGOs in order to get the best value for our dollar in that respect.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

We'll now move back to the opposition side.

Mr. Rafferty, please, for five minutes.

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you, everyone, for being here.

Originally, Mr. Chair, I had questions about Border Services, and I may have an opportunity to do that. But what I am most concerned about, listening to the testimony here today, is that we're not getting any answers on the Regional Treatment Centre, and I want to concentrate on that with Commissioner Head.

I'm sure, Commissioner, you'll agree with me that the physical space the Regional Treatment Centre has is not suitable; it doesn't work any more within the Kingston Penitentiary. One of the things that struck me about the Regional Treatment Centre and all the staff at Kingston Penitentiary was the pride they take in their work; they do it so well. I'm sure you'll agree with me that they do a wonderful job.

The treatment centre doesn't just deal with issues as they arise, but they do wonderful work in preparing patients to return to the general population. We really didn't get any answers, and I'm concerned about a comment the minister made about keeping on as many staff as possible.

I'm sure you have plans for the Regional Treatment Centre, Commissioner. Can you tell us if you intend to keep the centre and the staff as an entity when it does move? You'll probably agree with

me that it should be expanded, but I'm not asking that. Will it remain as an entity and be put in suitable quarters to ensure the staff can continue the good work they've been doing?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rafferty.

Mr. Commissioner, please.

Hon. Vic Toews: Yes, I think the Commissioner has the background.

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

I agree with the comments that have been made that the staff at the Regional Treatment Centre.... Overall I agree that all my staff are the best correctional service staff in the world, and I have no problem making that statement and no problem backing it up. The staff at the Regional Treatment Centre are equally as exceptional in comparison to any of the provincially based treatment facilities you would find in the country or in North America.

Absolutely, I agree the space they're working in is outdated. We're talking 1905 space. It's not conducive to the best mental health care for those inmates.

As we go forward, our plan is to look at how we keep the Regional Treatment Centre entity together so that we can continue to try to provide the best mental health care we can, given the mandate we have under our legislation. We have to look at the available space. We're working through a few options at this moment. I wouldn't want to declare them right now because we have to work out a few details, and then we have to talk about the staff implications, and those are discussions that are best for us to have with the unions.

• (1625)

Mr. John Rafferty: Thank you, Commissioner, for being clear.

Let me just go to Leclerc for a second; there's a hospital there. What would you say about the hospital at Leclerc?

Mr. Don Head: As the minister has pointed out, the facilities that are closing are not at the upper end of the scale. These are facilities that are not effective, not efficient, and were built in a different era for a different purpose. We're going to look at how we use the new cells that are coming online in the best way we can. All this is being taken into account in relation to our planning of the placement of offenders.

Mr. John Rafferty: Let me just be entirely clear, then, Commissioner. If I understood you correctly, you wish to keep the Regional Treatment Centre together as an entity in a new facility so they can do their job to the best of their ability.

Mr. Don Head: It's my desire to keep the Regional Treatment Centre entity together. What actual space they go into.... We'll have to make some modifications to any space we move them into. For example, a negative pressure room—we'll probably have to build or modify cells, but the plan is to keep that entity together.

Mr. John Rafferty: After visiting that centre and Kingston Penitentiary, if you can do that, if that is your desire, I think that is a worthy goal in this particular exercise. To not have patients in cells that are 177 years old is a good way to increase the treatment.

The Chair: You have about 10 seconds.

Mr. John Rafferty: What it will also do, if you go down that road, Commissioner, is ensure that the Regional Treatment Centre stays accredited, because they are on the line now, where they are in this particular facility. So I hope you will continue down that road.

Mr. Don Head: The short answer about accreditation is yes.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rafferty, and thank you, Commissioner.

Hon. Vic Toews: Could I have a very brief minute?

The Chair: Go ahead.

Hon. Vic Toews: I'm sure Mr. Rafferty would also like to congratulate the commissioner and the Correctional Service of Canada for the international award they won in respect of mental health programming in our facilities not that many months ago. I'm sure if Mr. Rafferty had had the time, he would have taken time to congratulate the commissioner.

Mr. John Rafferty: Mr. Chair, with your indulgence, I will in fact agree with that. Considering what they have to work with—

The Chair: Very quickly. Thank you, Mr. Rafferty.

Mr. John Rafferty: —I think they do a fabulous job, and it's a well-deserved award.

The Chair: We'll now go back to the government side for the last round. Mr. Rathgeber, please.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Minister, for your attendance with all the members of your team.

I want to return to Mr. Norlock's questions with respect to pending legislation regarding discipline at the RCMP. Perhaps I could start with the commissioner.

Commissioner Paulson, you indicated earlier this week some frustration over the current discipline process. I think you referred to it as an antiquated discipline process, and I'm curious to know if you've applied your mind to what a more modern or less antiquated discipline process might look like for members of the RCMP.

Commr Robert Paulson: Thank you for the question.

More on what I said earlier, and as the minister has pointed out, we want to have corrective behaviour. We want to call it a conduct management system. We want our members, where possible, to correct their behaviours. In order to do that, you have to do it as soon as possible and at the lowest possible level of supervision. So that's one of the principles that I'd like to see incorporated into the system.

The other one is on the removal of the bureaucracy and the legalistic.... Although I appreciate that there needs to be a legal dimension to the discipline process, where we are going for dismissal is that we have to do that in a manner that both respects the need for fairness and also the organizational interest. That would be my ideal.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: As you might know, I represent Edmonton. There was an incident very recently regarding an officer at K Division who faced a disciplinary hearing. My simple question is, is the recommendation of that disciplinary hearing binding on you, and is it binding on the force? Or is that advisory? Is the finding of the disciplinary hearing binding on the force and on you as commissioner?

Commr Robert Paulson: It is actually binding on me in the sense that I cannot appeal or substitute a sanction. I could take the matter to Federal Court and seek to have the Federal Court substitute it, and I tried that in a recent discipline process. The advice I received was that it was unlikely to succeed, and therefore it would have been a waste of everybody's time and money.

• (1630)

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: And in my final minute or so—

The Chair: Forty seconds.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Forty seconds.

Commissioner Head, how does the disciplinary process differ in comparison with the Correctional Service of Canada? Certainly there are more well-publicized incidents and cases coming out of the RCMP, but we don't seem to have comparable problems with some of the other Public Safety commissions. I'm curious to know if there's a different process in play with respect to your officers.

Mr. Don Head: We follow the Treasury Board policies that govern the core public administration, so part of what Commissioner Paulson is talking about is trying to replicate some of those aspects. The processes that are available to us are available to all federal government departments, but the RCMP has a different status and therefore different rules, as it stands right now.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Thank you.

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

Again, we want to thank Minister Toews for appearing before our committee today, as well as the heads of the departments. Some got more questions than others, but thank you for your input into the estimates.

We are adjourned, and we will reconvene in about five minutes.

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