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—
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Mr. Garry Breitkreuz

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• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC)): I'd like to call to order this sixth meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), briefings on the public safety and national security are going to be our focus of attention today.

I'd like to welcome our witnesses to the committee. We look forward to the information they will convey to us.

I would like to introduce at this time Suzanne Hurtubise. I will give her the liberty of introducing her colleagues and then making a presentation, which I understand will be approximately 15 minutes. If anybody else has another presentation, that person could follow you up and do that. Then, of course, we'll go the official opposition for the first round of questions.

For your information, questions usually are around seven minutes, including the answers, from the opposition parties and the government in the first round; thereafter we go to five-minute rounds. If it's really engaging and we're getting a lot of information, we do stretch the rules.

Suzanne, go ahead.

Mrs. Suzanne Hurtubise (Deputy Minister, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

If you don't mind, I'll give my presentation in both official languages.

[Translation]

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I'm delighted to be here today.

I am the newly appointed Deputy Minister, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada. With me are Ms. Patricia Hassard, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Emergency Management and National Security; Ms. Diane MacLaren, Assistant Deputy Minister, Policing, Law Enforcement and Interoperability; Ms. Chantal Bernier, Assistant Deputy Minister, Community Safety and Partnerships Branch; Mr. Marc Whittingham, Assistant Deputy Minister, Portfolio Relations and Public Affairs; and Ms. Elisabeth Nadeau, Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Management. The entire management team has joined me today.

Protecting citizens is a fundamental responsibility of any government and the creation of this department proves that the government recognizes the need to better integrate public safety and

national security issues. The Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness has a mandate to protect Canadians from all potential dangers, from natural disasters to criminal activity and terrorism.

We carry out our mandate by playing a leading role across the country in areas related to public safety and by coordinating the activities of all federal departments and agencies responsible for national security and for the safety of Canadians.

[English]

Public safety is the largest non-military portfolio within the Government of Canada. It has a national presence, with over 55,000 employees and a current budget of over \$6 billion.

The Department of Public Safety is a bit smaller. It was created in December 2003 and incorporates the former Department of the Solicitor General, the Office of Critical Infrastructure Protection and Emergency Preparedness from the Department of National Defence, and the National Crime Prevention Centre from the Department of Justice.

The statutory base for the department is the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Act, which received royal assent in March 2005. The act outlines the key responsibilities for national leadership, portfolio coordination, partnerships, and information sharing for the department. For 2006-07, the department's budget is \$458 million and we have 848 employees.

The department maintains close relationships with the agencies in the portfolio, namely the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, CSIS; Correctional Service Canada; the National Parole Board; and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The responsibilities of the former Canada Firearms Centre have now been integrated into the RCMP.

The fifth agency, the Canada Border Services Agency, was created at the same time as the department, with employees and programs formerly from the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

[Translation]

The portfolio also includes three independent review bodies, namely the RCMP External Review Committee, the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP and the Office of the Correctional Investigator. A one-page description of each agency that makes up the portfolio will be distributed to committee members for information purposes.

The department itself is comprised of five sectors, represented today by assistant deputy ministers. These sectors supply strategic advice and manage programs related to a range of public safety issues. They also provide advice to all portfolio components. Finally, the Office of the Inspector General of CSIS, which operates independently from CSIS, is also part of the department.

[*English*]

Mr. Chairman, partnerships and coordination are the most critical aspects of our work. To protect Canadians, the department helps coordinate the work of its portfolio agencies, other federal departments, other levels of government, non-governmental organizations, and the governments of other countries.

The department also delivers a range of programs designed to promote community safety, improve our collective capacity to handle emergencies, provide disaster assistance relief, better protect our critical infrastructure, and increase our science and technology capacity.

Grants and contributions make up almost two-thirds of the department's budget—some \$300 million. The grants and contributions administered by the department—and I won't go in to any detail, because I will allow for questions, if they are so desired—include the first nations policing policy, under which first nations policing services are cost-shared at 52% by the federal government and 48% by the province and territory; the national crime prevention strategy, which provides funding for community-based projects designed to develop, implement, and evaluate methods that help to prevent crime; the joint emergency preparedness program, which provides for training activities, the purchase of emergency response equipment for first responders, and joint emergency planning on a cost-shared basis with the provinces; and not least, the disaster financial assistance arrangements, which assist provinces and territories to offset the costs of disaster response and return infrastructure and personal property to pre-disaster condition.

Three branches of the department generate most of our policy and manage programs. Patricia Hassard, Diane MacLaren, and Chantal Bernier will make brief presentations after mine, if you will allow, to explain in more detail what those are, so I don't take up too much of the committee's time.

I will mention, however, that the portfolio relations and public affairs branch provides strategic policy advice about the entire portfolio and coordinates policy, planning, and communications activities. Our corporate management branch oversees all financial matters, human resource and information technology requirements, as well as administrative functions for the department and review bodies.

• (1540)

[*Translation*]

Mr., Chairman, in the event of a national emergency, the government must assume a lead role and take effective, decisive action while upholding at the same time fundamental rights and maintaining the public's trust. To improve the lines of communication between all Canadian communities potentially affected by national safety policies, last year the Minister set up a Cross-Cultural Roundtable on Security.

As you know, the threats weighing on our country know no borders, and our actions to deal with these threats cannot be confined to our territory. We are therefore working closely with our international allies. For example, last year the Government Operations Centre coordinated Canada's efforts to assist the US government in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

The Department is also working very closely with the United States and Mexico on the security aspect of the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America.

[*English*]

Finally, Mr. Chairman, with the Department of Justice, the department shares responsibility to protect Canadian communities by tackling crime. The Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness will collaborate with federal, provincial, territorial, and international law enforcement and border agencies to develop policies that address Canadians' concerns around gun crime, urban and gang violence, and organized crime. Through our crime prevention programs, we will continue to back community initiatives that address the root causes of crime.

If you permit, Mr. Chairman, I would now like to ask Patricia Hassard to provide a brief outline of the work carried out by her branch, and then ask Diane MacLaren and Chantal Bernier to do the same.

The Chair: Okay, that's fine.

I will inform the committee that we probably have another 10 minutes or so before we all have to leave. So I think we'll hear the rest of the presentation, and at that point we'll have to decide when we can reconvene, maybe at a later date, to finish this committee's deliberations.

If you can fit it in in 10 or 15 minutes, that should give us time to get back to the House for the vote.

Mrs. Suzanne Hurtubise: Let's try to do that.

If you would like, I will provide my written comments to the clerk for distribution once they're written up, perhaps tomorrow or the next day.

The Chair: That would be fine. That would be appreciated very much.

For those people who are new to the committee, these are 30-minute bells.

Mrs. Suzanne Hurtubise: So we're okay then.

The Chair: We're okay. It's not a 15-minute bell.

Mrs. Suzanne Hurtubise: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Patricia.

Mrs. Patricia Hassard (Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Emergency Management and National Security, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Madam Deputy Minister. Good afternoon everyone.

[English]

As our deputy minister has just stated, the government's first responsibility is to protect the safety and security of our citizens. My branch, the emergency management and national security branch of the department, supports activities that contribute to protecting the security of Canada and Canadians.

In our branch, we have approximately 300 employees who are located in Ottawa and our 11 regional offices, in all 10 provincial capitals and Yellowknife.

The branch has essentially four key functions. The first is emergency planning, warning, and response, including the Government Operations Centre and the Canadian Cyber Incident Response Centre; second is emergency management policy; the third would be national security policy; and fourth is programming for emergency preparedness and recovery.

I will tell you a little bit more about each of those. On operations, we have a directorate that deals directly with events and emergencies and is responsible for a number of activities. It develops and implements the national emergency response system by providing effective coordination of the numerous national players that must act swiftly when national emergencies arise. It also manages the Government Operations Centre. This is a centre that monitors emerging threats and provides around-the-clock coordination in support of federal activities in a national emergency. It produces, disseminates, and analyzes daily threat information and it does national contingency planning.

[Translation]

Regarding emergencies, Canada has adopted an all-hazards approach that combines emergency management, the protection of essential infrastructures and national security with policies, programs and operational initiatives representing the four phases of emergency management and national security, namely: prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery.

The Emergency Management Branch is responsible for advising and assisting the Minister with emergency management; for reviewing federal legislative provisions in the area of emergency management; for developing a national disaster mitigation strategy; for protecting vital infrastructures and ensuring cyber security; and for implementing the public safety science and technology program.

In the area of national security, the National Security Branch provides independent advice and assists the minister with national security matters, including advice on CSIS activities and review, ministerial certificates and directives, advice and recommendations pertaining to parliamentary commissions and reviews, particularly with respect to the Anti-Terrorism Act and the O'Connor Commission, immigration issues such as security certificates, advice on lists of terrorist organizations and the funding of terrorist activities, legislative provisions relating to national security issues and finally, international partnerships such as the G8 and the Canada-US partnership.

[English]

The third area is preparedness and recovery. This directorate deals with planning for both an emergency and the recovery phase. It's

responsible for, among other things, the Canadian Emergency Management College and the national training program. We also have a national exercise program. We're responsible for a certain aspect of business continuity planning. We're also very heavily involved in coordinating the work of the Government of Canada on pandemic influenza planning. There are also the programs the deputy minister mentioned on joint emergency preparedness and disaster financial assistance.

I think, to be brief, I'll note some of our key achievements this year so far. One is that we've developed an emergency management framework doctrine. We're hoping to have it approved at the federal-provincial-territorial meeting of emergency management ministers in the fall. We've also introduced the proposed new Emergency Management Act, which I'm sure you'll be talking more about. And the minister and the department have ratified a new agreement between us and the Red Cross for surge capacity and their expertise.

I had a number of other facts and figures, but I think we'll save those for later.

Mr. Chairman, we do see public safety as definitely a work in progress. It's never done, and we need to maintain our vigilance. Our focus this year in the branch will be the continued development of our national emergency response system with all of the stakeholders—the provinces; the territories; the private sector; and the international players as well, the Government of the United States in particular.

We're going to provide ongoing support for the review of our national security system, including the review of the Anti-terrorism Act and ensuring that the department and the branch have adequate capacity to do the role that is ours.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

● (1550)

The Chair: Thank you.

[Translation]

Mrs. Diane MacLaren (Assistant Deputy Minister, Policing, Law Enforcement and Interoperability, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): Thank you, Madam Deputy Minister.

[English]

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to begin by outlining the minister's responsibilities for policing and law enforcement and how my branch supports him in this regard.

The Minister of Public Safety exercises a statutory leadership role in policing and law enforcement matters. This role involves policy coordination with portfolio partners such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Canada Border Services Agency and consultation with the major national police associations and provincial, territorial, municipal, and international law enforcement partners on issues of common concern.

Under section 5 of the RCMP Act, the RCMP Commissioner has the control and management of the force under the direction of the minister. The minister may issue directives with respect to the RCMP's various roles and responsibilities. The minister may also facilitate the sharing of information where authorized to promote public safety objectives. This includes the development of specific initiatives or, more globally across government, public safety and security interoperability.

[Translation]

The Policing, Law Enforcement and Interoperability Branch provides strategic advice to the Minister to help him assume his leadership role with respect to RCMP policing services, and his broader responsibilities in the area of law enforcement and interoperability.

The sector is comprised of myself, the ADM, three directors general, nine directors and approximately 112 full-time employees.

The sector's three branches carry out the following responsibilities.

Law Enforcement Services Policy provides strategic advice on a range of RCMP related issues, including international policing services and peacekeeping, security at major events in Canada and the international protection of witnesses. The Branch is also responsible for firearms policies.

The Law Enforcement and Border Strategies Branch provides strategic advice on a broad range of law enforcement issues, including organized crime, illegal drugs, economic crime and genetic data analysis, as well as on border security issues, ranging from the presence of armed agents at the border to cross-border crime.

The Public Safety Interoperability Branch is involved in various information and interoperability exchange initiatives. Employees are often called upon to act as project managers with a view to advancing the federal government's capacity to exchange information of a sensitive nature.

For the current 2006-2007 fiscal year, the sector's operating budget totals \$31 million.

I would now like to discuss the sector's role within the portfolio.
[English]

Within the portfolio, our branch is most closely linked to the RCMP and the Canada Border Services Agency. However, many of our policy areas, such as certain aspects of border security, organized crime, and drugs, also have implications for the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and the Correctional Service of Canada.

On our role within the law enforcement community, while the Minister of Public Safety has line responsibility for the RCMP, he also plays a national leadership role in regard to policing and law enforcement in Canada generally, with over 61,000 sworn police personnel in Canada. This is no small task. I'd like to be clear that the national leadership role does not mean that the minister or the department exercise line control over police or policing policy for any police force in Canada.

There have been a number of challenges within the policing community over the past few years. These challenges point to the need for a national approach that effectively builds on the intelligence and investigative capacity of the law enforcement community. To give you a few examples, some of the challenges include changing demographics, the globalization of crime, new and more complex criminal trends, and the focus on accountability.

I'll now move to some of the major programs and initiatives of our branch.

• (1555)

[Translation]

To further illustrate my sector's roles and responsibilities as well as our approach to working with other portfolio components and the broader public security sector, I'd like to talk to you about our main programs and initiatives.

My sector plays a key policy role in the area of contractual law enforcement services. The RCMP provides services to provincial and municipal police forces in eight provinces, three territories and some 200 municipalities under cost-sharing agreements. We work on a regular basis with the RCMP and with provincial and territorial officials to ensure the efficient administration of these agreements.

With the help of our US counterparts, we head up the Canada-United States Cross-Border Crime Forum, which focusses on components of the Smart Border Declaration related to law enforcement and national security. This Forum brings together senior Canadian and US officials in a quest to devise solutions to common cross-border problems.

[English]

Internationally, my branch plays a significant role in the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission.

You'll be aware that some Canadian cities have seen an escalation in firearms violence in recent years. Firearms violence, with its numerous causes and connections to gangs and drugs, requires an integrated multi-faceted response.

We act as the lead on a pilot project to advance the ability of the federal government departments to share classified information.

I've given you a brief overview of what we've done. I've tried to be brief, and I've really only scratched the surface, but I apologize for taking all of this time.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mrs. Suzanne Hurtubise: Thank you very much, Diane.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I apologize. We're really rushing through this, but we're trying to give you a bit of flavour.

I'd like to give the last five minutes of our brief time to Chantal Bernier.

The Chair: We'll then have to finish.

I think we have about three or four minutes left. Can you squeeze it in, in three or four minutes, or do you want to wait until we meet again?

Mrs. Suzanne Hurtubise: It's up to you, Mr. Chairman.

Many of us will be back on Wednesday with the minister, when he appears on main estimates. There would be an opportunity then to answer some of your questions, but we are of course prepared to return at a time that's convenient to the committee.

The Chair: Thank you.

I've been informed that we have about 10 minutes to get organized. We're going to adjourn this meeting and reconvene at another time.

This meeting is adjourned.

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