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Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

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• (0845)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): Good morning, everyone.

This meeting number 86 of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, on Thursday, May 9, 2013.

This morning we're leaving our regular study of the economics of policing, and are responding to a motion that came before our committee and was passed unanimously. That is a briefing on security of rail transport.

With us today we have Gerard McDonald, he is assistant deputy minister of safety and security at Transport Canada; John Davies, director general of national security policy at the department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada; Chief Superintendent Larry Tremblay, director general of federal policing criminal operations with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police; Michel Coulombe, the deputy director of operations at the Canadian Security Intelligence Service; and also, from VIA Rail Canada we have Marc Tessier, director of corporate security and regulatory affairs, safety, security, and risk management; Marc Beaulieu, the regional general manager east, and chief of transportation; and Jacques Gagnon, the spokesperson for corporate communications.

Our committee thanks all the witnesses for responding to our request to appear and brief us on rail transport security. Canadians thank you and the public servants responsible for keeping Canada's railways safe. Be assured that Canadians rely on your work as they go about their day-to-day business. We place our trust in the work of the employees, the agents, the officers, and others under your command.

We will have time for questions from the members of Parliament on our committee, following the briefings that you present to us today.

I'll remind members, and also officials who appear here, that we aren't looking for any operational details, so to speak, that may put security at risk. We expect that all those security measures will be non-compromised, and that you will have the ability to determine whether or not that is the fact with the question asked.

We're looking forward to your briefings.

We'll open the floor this morning with Mr. Davies.

Mr. John Davies (Director General, National Security Policy, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It may make sense that I go first, as my comments are written at a higher level and will give context to the comments of my colleagues.

As many of you know, Public Safety Canada leads policy development on a number of national security issues. Our role's often one of convenor and facilitator, bringing together the security and intelligence community to develop and improve policy. While the recent arrests in Toronto and Montreal may raise concerns about the threat of terrorism, they also demonstrate the ability of law enforcement and intelligence agencies to work well together.

[Translation]

Today, I will focus primarily on the Government of Canada's efforts to counter the threat of terrorism.

[English]

Last February, the Minister of Public Safety released "Building Resilience Against Terrorism: Canada's Counter-terrorism Strategy". This document describes a framework within which the 15-plus members of the federal security and intelligence community organize their efforts against terrorism. These efforts are framed around four mutually reinforcing elements, namely preventing, detecting, denying, and responding to terrorism.

Activities in the prevention element focus on the resilience of communities to extremism, helping build their capacity to effectively challenge extremists' narratives. This is a long-term effort. The recent terrorist related arrests in Toronto and Montreal, particularly the supportive reaction by local communities, are good examples of many years of engagement efforts to earn their trust by the RCMP, CSIS, Public Safety, and local police. Last year, for example, the RCMP coordinated over 400 specific outreach sessions to raise awareness among youth and adults of national security issues and of the role key agencies play in countering threats and making communities safer.

• (0850)

[Translation]

Furthermore, the Cross Cultural Roundtable on Security, which advises the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Justice, brings together leading citizens from diverse communities with extensive experience in social and cultural issues to engage with the government on national security issues.

[English]

Efforts in the element of detect aim to identify terrorist threats in a manner that often requires timely sharing of information. Detection requires a strong understanding of the threat environment and the strong intelligence capacity to identify threats. Our knowledge has to keep pace with terrorist groups, their capabilities, and the nature of their plans. To accomplish this task within government, departments and agencies share information for national security purposes every day.

There's a strong link to the third element, denying. Emphasis here is on denying terrorists the means and opportunities to carry out their activities through effective law enforcement and prosecution of terrorists.

The key principle in all of these elements is that of partnership. The RCMP-led integrated and national security enforcement teams—also known as INSETs—are models of partnership and key to our work to detect terrorists and deny them the means and opportunity to carry out their intent. INSETs are staffed by employees from CSIS, CBSA, local law enforcement, and the RCMP. This approach has greatly improved the ability of agencies to work together and has led to many successes, including the recent charges in Montreal and Toronto as well as prior arrests including Momin Khawaja in Ottawa and members of the Toronto 18.

Last year, recognizing the value of this model, the government created a new INSET in Edmonton in addition to the existing ones in Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia. Note also that under the national strategy and action plan for critical infrastructure, sector networks have been established to facilitate information-sharing and risk-management activities among governments and private sector owners and operators, including rail sector stakeholders.

The rail sectors also represent the national cross-sector forum, which brings together public and private sector partners from all ten critical infrastructure sectors to set priorities and address shared issues such as cyber-security and border management.

Finally our approach to counterterrorism also includes a need for a proportionate and rapid response to any terrorist activities and to mitigating their effects. We have infrastructure in place to communicate with government, and between governments at all levels and private sector owners and operators of critical infrastructure including transportation. In the event of a terrorist incident involving transportation, the government operations centre is connected to other key operation centres across government to manage incidents, including those housed within the RCMP, DND, CSIS, DFAIT, CBSA, and Transport Canada.

Given our shared critical infrastructure with the U.S., there's also close collaboration on critical infrastructure protection and response mechanisms to threats.

[Translation]

For a terrorist incident within Canada, or for incidents overseas with a domestic impact, the Government has adopted an all hazards approach to emergency management. This is articulated in the Federal Emergency Response Plan, managed by the Minister of Public Safety.

[English]

With that, Mr. Chair, I think I'll leave it there.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Davies.

We'll move to the next one on the list. We have Chief Superintendent Larry Tremblay of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

C/Supt Larry Tremblay (Director General, Federal Policing Criminal Operations, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to address this committee on these issues of such concern to Canadians.

You are all aware of the sensitivity of many of the issues we will discuss here today. Some of my answers may reflect the care that must be taken when matters are before the court or when assets and personal security must be the priority.

[Translation]

I appreciate the opportunity to provide you with some information about programs and partnerships that the RCMP has developed to assist in keeping Canada's infrastructure, including the railway systems, safe.

[English]

The recent success in Project Smooth is a clear demonstration of the effectiveness of our integrated approach. The RCMP integrated national security enforcement teams are responsible for investigating potential threats to Canada's critical infrastructure, including railway systems that support passenger and freight trains. But we cannot do so alone.

At the detachment level, through calls for services, the RCMP works with railway police services and rail operators to support criminal investigations that directly impact rail assets and to ensure railway property is secure against potential criminal threats. Examples of regular collaboration between RCMP, rail police services, municipal police, and rail operators include joint exercises that are held throughout various locations. Scenarios from previous exercises included hostage-taking, bomb threats, hijacking, and an explosive attack against a freight train.

Based on operational requirements, members of the RCMP's Jetway team may also deploy to some train stations and passenger trains to counter organized crime and extremist elements that may exploit rail. In addition to the counterterrorism information officer program, the RCMP has provided training to rail operators on how to recognize behaviour that may be indicative of pre-incident attack planning.

The RCMP critical infrastructure intelligence team maintains information-sharing partnerships with rail police services, municipal transit police units, and rail operators throughout the country. Such partners contribute to the suspicious incident reporting program, which is a secure portal where partners voluntarily report behaviour-based incidents that may be indicative of pre-attack planning by extremists.

Having this network of security-cleared rail operators also allows the RCMP to disseminate regular intelligence reporting to these partners, including threat assessment, bulletins on ongoing investigative files, and analytical reports on suspicious incidents. These products are intended to foster strong partnerships, cultivate a two-way flow of information, as well as generate awareness to a particular issue or call for heightened vigilance where appropriate.

Existing partnerships with rail operators have provided the RCMP with a direct line into the organizations that were collaborating with us during Project Smooth. Such collaboration proved invaluable. For example, the critical infrastructure intelligence team seconded from one of the major railway police services directly supported this project by providing technical information on rail operation.

● (0855)

[Translation]

Other rail security initiatives where the RCMP has collaborated include government-sponsored classified briefings for owners and operators of surface transportation assets, including passenger and freight rail services. These briefings are hosted by Transport Canada, a valuable partner in the transportation security file.

[English]

In addition, the RCMP participates each year in Public Safety Canada's all hazards risk assessment. This year the RCMP is co-leading a scenario involving an extremist attack on rail infrastructure. Such an assessment is intended to support a future exercise intended to test rail security and emergency response.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thanks very much, Chief Superintendent.

We'll now move to Michel Coulombe and CSIS, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Coulombe (Deputy Director of Operations, Canadian Security Intelligence Service): Mr. Chair, and members of the committee, good morning.

I am pleased to be here today to discuss issues relating to security threats to critical infrastructure in Canada, and particularly to our rail network.

[English]

As members will know, CSIS is mandated to collect, analyze, and advise the Government of Canada on threats to the security of Canada. Since attacks on Canada's critical infrastructure are clear threats against the security of Canada, CSIS works closely with other departments and agencies in protecting our critical infrastructure, notably through the national strategy for critical infrastructure, Canada's cyber-security strategy, and Canada's counterterrorism strategy.

That being said, I would like to clarify for the committee that CSIS is not the lead agency when it comes to critical infrastructure protection. Questions relating to actual rail infrastructure security and practices are best addressed to Transport Canada and the rail companies themselves.

[Translation]

What I can speak to is the nature of the threat. Mr. Chair, threats to our critical infrastructure can take many forms. They include: terrorism, such as from groups or individuals directed or inspired by al-Qaeda; domestic issue-motivated extremists, whether right- or left-wing; and foreign states, which may have an interest in stealing Canada's technology or even crippling our infrastructure.

Attacks against critical infrastructure and industrial sabotage are not new in Canada. Indeed, our country has a history of such attacks and plots from a variety of groups, including: the bombing of a transmission tower in Quebec in 2004; the Toronto 18 plot to bomb the Toronto Stock Exchange in 2006; and the bombing of pipelines in British Columbia in 2008-09.

● (0900)

[English]

These examples remind us all too well that terrorism is not something that happens only in other countries. There are people in groups here and now who seek to commit acts of violence in Canada and who, given the chance, would kill innocent Canadians and destroy civilian infrastructure. The plot that was foiled last month was going to be carried out here in Canada.

That said, terrorism is a globalized threat, and our security cannot be divorced from that of the international community and from the activities of Canadians abroad. We are also increasingly concerned about lone actors working from often deeply personal or plainly unknown motivations. These individuals are hard to track or anticipate, as they provide few operational leads for investigators and are difficult to profile.

[Translation]

Computer hacker groups, or "hacktivists," could also pose a threat, as anyone with a predilection for computers and malevolent motivations could cause serious harm to our infrastructure.

And of course, we must not forget the threat posed by certain states, which could target our critical infrastructure to achieve their own military or economic objectives. Given our mandate, countering state-sponsored threats to our infrastructure remains a key priority for the Service.

[English]

In today's digital world, critical infrastructure networks are almost all linked up in ways that make them vulnerable to attacks, particularly cyber-attacks, and it is not difficult to ascertain the advantages of attacking or sabotaging critical infrastructure. Such attacks could cause significant disruption in transportation and commerce, and lead to important economic losses to the intended target. They can also provide easy and predictable news coverage for the perpetrator's propaganda aims and often boost its recruitment efforts.

Finally, by targeting innocent civilians they instill a sense of fear in the general population. Certainly, different groups operate on somewhat different motives. Al-Qaeda-inspired groups and individuals will almost always wish to kill people. Issue-motivated groups may only target property to send a clear and specific message, and foreign states might seek to advance their defence or trade interests.

On that note, Mr. Chair, I would like to thank you for your attention and I would welcome from members questions on any issues I have raised.

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir.

We'll now move to the Department of Transport, to the assistant deputy minister for safety and security, Gerard McDonald.

Welcome.

[Translation]

Mr. Gerard McDonald (Assistant Deputy Minister, Safety and Security, Department of Transport): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

Thank you committee members. I appreciate this opportunity to meet with your committee today to provide information about Transport Canada's role in enhancing the security of the rail transportation system.

[Translation]

Let me begin by saying that the safety and security of transportation systems are of the utmost importance to the Government of Canada.

[English]

On April 22, 2013, the RCMP arrested two individuals and charged them with conspiring to carry out a terrorist attack against a VIA train. It's important to note that there was no imminent threat to the general public, rail employees, train passengers, or infrastructure. These arrests, however, have highlighted the importance of continued vigilance within the transportation system.

They have also emphasized that securing rail and urban transit requires a partnership approach including all levels of government, local law enforcement, first responders, operators, and industry associations, supported by a range of tools that can be implemented by operators of all sizes.

Transport Canada works closely with operators to safeguard the security of their operations. For example, in 2007 the Government of Canada renewed a memorandum of understanding on security with the Railway Association of Canada and its members.

[Translation]

As part of the MOU, rail operators are required, amongst other things, to conduct security risk assessments and develop security plans relevant to their operations. Based on the identified risks, operators develop and implement appropriate security practices.

Transport Canada works with MOU signatories and conducts oversight and monitoring activities to help industry meet the terms and conditions of the MOU and promote a more secure rail transportation system. For example, Transport Canada uses regionally located inspectors to audit the extent to which signatories meet the terms and conditions of the MOU. This evaluation process involves assessments and inspections of the important aspects of an operator's security program.

● (0905)

[English]

The government can also exercise various legislative authorities to enhance the security of the rail transportation system in certain circumstances. For example, to enhance security during the 2010 Vancouver Olympics and the G-8 and G-20 in 2010 in Toronto, Transport Canada used security authorities under the Railway Safety Act.

From 2006 to 2009, Transport Canada also managed the Transit-Secure program. This program provided financial assistance on a cost-shared basis to both small and large commuter rail and public transit operators throughout Canada to further enhance their security measures for addressing potential threats of terrorism.

Industry and government also collaborate on the development of voluntary codes of practice on such matters as conducting security risk assessments, developing and maintaining security plans, conducting security exercises, and training and awareness. Transport Canada officials also participate in workshops with rail and transit associations to promote rail security. We have also collaborated with industry in the creation of an intelligence network for the sharing of security intelligence and incident reporting.

[Translation]

In conclusion, I want to reiterate that security is of the utmost importance to the Government of Canada. Security of the transportation system is also everyone's business and is enhanced through partnerships, the promotion of a security culture and awareness across all jurisdictions and sectors.

Thank you again for offering Transport Canada the opportunity to present how it is working to enhance the security of Canada's rail transportation system.

[English]

I would welcome any questions you may have on the work we do in this regard.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

We will now move to Montreal to VIA Rail.

I'm not certain whether there is one statement or two. Monsieur Beaulieu, the floor is yours.

Mr. Marc Beaulieu (Regional General Manager, East and Chief of Transportation, Customer Experience, VIA Rail Canada Inc.): Good morning.

My name is Marc Beaulieu. I'm regional general manager and chief of transportation for VIA Rail. I'm happy to be joined today by Marc Tessier, our director of security and regulatory affairs, as well as by Jacques Gagnon, our VIA spokesperson.

[Translation]

Mr. Chair, members of the committee, we are pleased to be participating in this meeting by videoconference.

[English]

On behalf of VIA Rail Canada, I wish to thank you, Mr. Chair, for our invitation to appear before this committee.

[Translation]

VIA Rail's safety and security policies are rigorous and strictly applied. We have high training standards for our employees who work on board trains and those who serve passengers. Our mechanisms for reporting any kind of risk to police authorities are very effective.

[English]

Safety and security are paramount at VIA Rail. We recognize and salute the work of law enforcement. Passenger train travel is among the safest and we work diligently to keep it that way. As a member of the Railway Association of Canada, VIA Rail is signatory to the memorandum of understanding on railway security between the Railway Association of Canada and Transport Canada. The memorandum of understanding covers the following essential elements: security plans, training and awareness, exercises, and incident reporting. In compliance with the above, VIA Rail has submitted a security plan that reflects our current security model. The plan is risk-based, using Transport Canada's threat context statements as a basis for risk assessment.

As part of its security plan, VIA Rail has implemented the following programs and procedures. Security awareness training is mandatory for all employees. This training was developed in consultation with the RCMP. A group of front-line employees have also received face-to-face training by members of the RCMP. Management employees with security responsibilities have received training given by the RCMP officers, in conjunction with the Canadian Police College in Ottawa. Intelligence training and certification were also obtained through the Privy Council Office.

VIA Rail routinely conducts security exercises to ensure that programs and procedures are functioning as designed. Part of this process relies on participation of various police forces, including the RCMP, on training exercises that focus on familiarizing officers with VIA Rail operations and equipment, and synchronizing our respective responses. VIA Rail also has procedures in place to ensure the reporting of incidents with a nexus to terrorism to the appropriate authorities. This includes partnership with the RCMP in the suspicious incident reporting initiative and notification to Transport Canada.

Above and beyond these requirements, VIA's security plan also establishes our letter of understanding program, which involves authorizing law enforcement agencies full access to our properties. This empowers the law enforcement agencies to act on our behalf. The RCMP is signatory on several letters of understanding. It enables us to establish strong partnerships and facilitates intelligence gathering and sharing.

VIA partners with host railway police who are responsible for infrastructure protection over a significant portion of the track that VIA Rail operates. VIA also works closely with Transport Canada to participate on various initiatives, committees, and working groups. This work has led to the establishment of the codes of practice that outline industry best practices related to security, security plans, threat and risk assessment, security awareness training, and public awareness.

In conclusion, I would like to thank our law enforcement partners and Transport Canada for continuously helping us improve and be more effective in terms of security. We deliver on our promise to keep the travelling public safe.

● (0910)

[Translation]

In closing, I would like to thank law enforcement agencies and Transport Canada for their ongoing support. It allows us to keep our promise to provide secure service for our passengers.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Monsieur Beaulieu.

We will move into the first round of questioning. It's a seven-minute round.

We'll go to Mr. Hawn, please, for seven minutes.

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all our witnesses for appearing on pretty short notice.

I'd like to start with Public Safety Canada, Mr. Davies. You talked about the continuum of prevent, detect, deny, and respond. Obviously we'd like to not get to the respond part. We'd like to stop it earlier. I think the key to that is obviously detection, and to me a key to that is having access to the information that's out there. There's a lot of information out there on the Internet and in other sources.

Do you think we need some kind of legislation that would permit lawful access, under appropriate supervision, to the Internet to detect the kind of activity that leads to what we've just witnessed?

Mr. John Davies: In broad terms, access to information is intelligence. They're synonyms. They go together. Any kind of policy program or legislative improvement that helps law enforcement, our intelligence agencies, access more information to make it lawful to lower risk to Canadians, that's obviously something you want to consider. You want to consider all the pros and cons of doing that and the best way to legislate it, for sure. Obviously information sharing with the private sector, with other parts of government, anything we can do to facilitate that is a good thing in my view.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: I'm guessing that none of the other panellists would disagree with that. I'm not seeing any disagreement, thank you.

I'd like to stick with Public Safety, Mr. Davies, for a second. One of my other jobs is as the Canadian co-chair of the Canada-U.S. Permanent Joint Board on Defence. As I'm sure you know, there's a lot of cooperation on that between Public Safety and the Homeland Security side. Could you talk a little bit about...?

We've kind of talked about the Canadian side of this, which obviously ultimately is the most important to us. Can you talk a little bit about the coordination with the U.S. in general terms, or if there is anything sort of specific to rail safety that you could talk about?

• (0915)

Mr. John Davies: Just maybe in general terms and my colleagues can talk about a more specific link to rail. The beyond the border initiative agreement between President Obama and Prime Minister Harper is a big driver of a lot of security-related investments and efforts over the last few years. Of course, one aspect of that is information sharing, working together also on different threat assessments, investments to make the border safer, to push the border out from a permanent perspective.

So a lot of the work we're doing with the U.S. is sort of driven by very concrete objectives linked to the border action plan. The action plan has a number of specific metrics, deliverable dates, and so on. It has really helped energize and open a lot of doors for us with the U.S. and I think vice versa. So that's a big part at least from the national security policy and information-sharing point of view. That's a big piece of the puzzle for us.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Thank you.

I'd like to turn to VIA Rail now along that same line with respect to MOUs or agreements you have with other rail companies, specifically cross-border. What kinds of arrangements do you have for information sharing, intelligence-sharing cooperation, with other operators, specifically Amtrak?

Mr. Marc Beaulieu: We have a very close relationship with Amtrak. We value our partnership with them. We're in constant communication whether it be operational or security wise. We certainly share information extremely well. As I said, it's an extension. We keep them informed as much as required to make sure that our mutual networks are well informed of any threats.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Thank you.

To the RCMP now, Superintendent Tremblay, I was lucky enough to be in Edmonton to help announce the integrated national security enforcement teams. So it's a relatively new concept, although I know

you've been collaborating forever in these areas, and this has formalized it.

Is that working as planned and is there an international component to that or could you describe at least in broad terms the international component of that with agencies south of the border?

C/Supt Larry Tremblay: Obviously the RCMP works very closely with our U.S. law enforcement partners. The INSETs here in Canada are just a formalized version of the level of cooperation amongst the agencies. Even where we don't have an INSET, there's a high level of collaboration throughout. The INSETs allow us to formalize that and work closely together. The level of sharing at the provincial, federal, and municipal levels is outstanding.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: For CSIS, events change. Things can unfold fairly quickly. I know how you're going to answer this, but I'm going to ask it anyway. How quickly can CSIS adapt? I guess I just want some level of comfort that CSIS is manned and equipped, etc., to adapt fairly quickly when new threats arise or when the landscape changes.

Mr. Michel Coulombe: We are a very nimble organization. That's the nature of the work we do, so we have to adapt all the time. If you go back to moving from more of a CI priority during the Cold War to more of a CT environment today.... The emergence of cyber was also another issue we had to adapt to. So we have the analytical capability and the operational capability to adapt to the emergence of new threats and environments.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: For Transport Canada—because I don't want to leave anybody out—Mr. McDonald, you obviously have Transport Canada's responsibility for transportation, safety, and security. What mechanisms do you use to ensure that operators—whether it's on the rail side or the air transport side, whatever—are in fact fulfilling their obligations?

Mr. Gerard McDonald: We have a number of mechanisms. First and foremost, we conduct oversight of the operators to make sure that they're living up either to our regulatory framework or to the MOUs that we have in place. We've also established security networks in each of the modes where we ensure that operators have people cleared at the appropriate level, at the secret level, so that we can share any information with them that might become available to us in the event that there is a threat to the system. It allows us in concert with them to raise vigilance as appropriate.

• (0920)

Hon. Laurie Hawn: What kind of inspections do you conduct? Do you do things like what we in the air force would call a "no-notice Tac Eval"? Do you do those kinds of exercises?

Mr. Gerard McDonald: We might do that.

In many cases what we'll do, specifically with respect to the rail industry—all of the rail industry has security plans in place—is go in and verify that they are living up to what they say they are going to do in those security plans. We'll also consult with them on the development of their plans, and if required, if we see that something is not there, we may do surprise inspections. It's more often announced, quite frankly.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Okay.

Going back to the RCMP, Chief Superintendent Tremblay, recently the government's Combating Terrorism Act was passed, giving police new tools and powers to address the threat posed by terrorism. As much as you can say, politically, what is your view of Bill S-7? Is it going to give you some more tools in your tool belt?

The Chair: Go ahead.

C/Supt Larry Tremblay: Thank you.

Obviously I cannot comment on pending legislation, but I can say that we will make use of all tools that are made available to us for law enforcement purposes.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I too would like to thank all the witnesses for appearing at short notice.

In particular I extend thanks to VIA Rail and the RCMP for their very quick action on the most recent anti-terrorism case, which of course on our side we believe demonstrates that the tool box is probably full and being made good use of.

I want to start with a question to VIA Rail about how VIA Rail is treated by the government, in terms of anti-terrorism strategies and activities. Are you at VIA Rail treated solely in the same manner as any other private institution, despite the fact that you're a crown corporation?

Mr. Marc Beaulieu: I'll defer that to our director of security.

Mr. Marc Tessier (Director, Corporate Security and Regulatory Affairs, Safety, Security and Risk Management, VIA Rail Canada Inc.): Thank you.

We work very closely with the industry and with the governing agencies, such as Transport Canada. Because of the nature of our business, we have very customer-focused and passenger-focused inspection criteria with Transport Canada. I would say that it is mostly due to the nature of our business, rather than to the fact that we are a crown corporation, that we enjoy that closer relationship.

Mr. Randall Garrison: When it came to something such as the government's anti-terrorism initiative, which started in late 2001 or early 2002, would VIA Rail have been invited to submit proposals for funding for anti-terrorism initiatives under the proposal, or were you simply left with the other, private sector groups to take care of those security things with your own resources?

Mr. Marc Beaulieu: We rely on our own operating budgets to put these plans in place.

Mr. Randall Garrison: What that would indicate is that, under the national strategy and action plan for critical infrastructure, we would find VIA Rail in the transportation sector, under that strategy in 2011. Would that be a good understanding of where you're participating in these initiatives?

Mr. Marc Beaulieu: That's correct.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I'll turn to Mr. Davies from Public Safety.

Was any of the money from the anti-terrorism initiative allocated to critical infrastructure projects?

Mr. John Davies: Are you talking about the PSAT money?

Mr. Randall Garrison: That's right.

Mr. John Davies: I don't have knowledge of the way that money was broken down.

Mr. Randall Garrison: We've had the recent report from the Auditor General that expressed concerns about identifying where the money was spent. One area in which I still have a question concerns whether you would be able, at a later date, to tell us whether any of that money was allocated to national critical infrastructure such as VIA Rail.

Mr. John Davies: I'm certain that some was allocated to the transport sector.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. McDonald?

Mr. Gerard McDonald: Mr. Chair, I may be able to provide a bit of clarification.

One of the programs under that rubric was, as I alluded to earlier, the Transit-Secure program, which identified roughly \$115 million to be spent to enhance the security of rail and urban infrastructure.

Under that program, all rail and urban transit operators were eligible to apply. VIA Rail did not apply under that particular program, but they did benefit from security enhancements that were made under the program to Toronto's Union Station and to *gare Centrale* in Montreal.

• (0925)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Going back again to the Auditor General's recent reports, one of the things they identified was some gaps in overall coordination. We have the public safety anti-terrorism initiative in 2001. We have the building resilience against terrorism, Canada's counterterrorism strategy, 2012. We have a national strategy and action plan for critical infrastructure. We have Canada's cyber-security strategy. We have Canada's counterterrorism strategy.

Who is actually coordinating all of the work on the anti-terrorism strategy? How is that coordination done? I know it is officially assigned to Public Safety, but we have this whole set of strategies covering various things. Where does that coordination occur?

Mr. John Davies: For the counterterrorism strategy, Public Safety Canada coordinates, on behalf of the security intelligence community, the implementation of that strategy, likewise for the strategy on critical infrastructure, and it is the same thing for the cyber-strategy.

I'm sorry, I've forgotten the others you mentioned, but at Public Safety, as I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks, we develop policy with the community. We put things together with them and we implement with them as well. It's our job to work with the community, document what has been going on, create the action plans, and report to ministers and to cabinet about how things are going in terms of progress.

Mr. Randall Garrison: If this coordination is going on at Public Safety, how is that related to the coordination of spending on the anti-terrorism initiatives? In other words, you have the coordination of policy aspects, but who is coordinating the assignment of resources to these anti-terrorism things?

Mr. John Davies: Again, if you're talking about the PSAT money, I think that money has run out some time ago. Most resources for departments and agencies are called A-base or normal core funding of these departments.

Are you asking if there are additional resources and who designs where incremental dollars go? Is that what you're asking?

Mr. Randall Garrison: One of the concerns the Auditor General identified was that there was a lack of evidence that proposals for spending under anti-terrorism initiatives were clearly based on threat and risk assessments. So I'm trying to determine who would be responsible for making sure that the money we're spending, whether it's department by department or overall in government, is based, as the Auditor General said, on national threat and risk assessments.

Is that the responsibility of your coordinating groups? Is that the responsibility of Treasury Board?

Mr. John Davies: Again I think you're talking about discrete initiatives of some years ago. Obviously for core spending now, there are departmental performance reports. There are various reports that are public and discussed. Whether it's the estimates, the public accounts, all that kind of normal corporate reporting, that's when those issues are discussed and debated amongst parliamentarians.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Garrison. We're out of time.

We'll now move back to Mr. Leef, please.

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all our witnesses.

Since we did really come today to talk about rail security, I'll direct some of my questions to the folks at VIA Rail.

We've heard about partnerships and integrated work and education. I'm just wondering, when we get down to the client level for identifying threats, what kind of work is VIA Rail doing to ensure the passengers and clients of rail services receive the information and education they need to be vigilant?

We heard the RCMP talk about detachment-level work. We heard CSIS talk about how difficult it is to identify lone operators, and if we have threats around the rail sector, obviously we rely heavily on the general public to be aware of these threats.

How well versed do you think Canadians are right now on the actual threat of terrorism? What kind of work does VIA Rail do to encourage vigilance and encourage reporting from the client level?

• (0930)

Mr. Marc Beaulieu: We certainly have some programs that are very effective at increasing employee vigilance. Our locomotive engineers are extremely familiar with their territory, and our front-line employees who deal with our customers, either on our trains or in our stations, are very well trained and experienced at observing and identifying any dangerous situations or suspicious behaviours.

We have technology in place in our stations and facilities with many features, such as cameras, access control, remote locking systems. We have security personnel from VIA Rail and station owners to provide security guards in many locations, and we use contracted security inspectors who are former police officers who travel under cover on some of our trains.

There is no doubt in our minds that our customers are a big part of our solution. Anything that is brought forth to our attention is acted upon very rigorously and very effectively. To answer your question, I'm very confident that people who travel in our mode of transport feel safe, are safe, and we do everything possible to continuously improve our mitigations that are in place.

Mr. Ryan Leef: Thank you.

When you're using any form of public transportation or when you're in any public space generally, you just want to be able to operate, to feel safe, let your guard down, and not be constantly on the lookout. But obviously we've reached a different day. As we heard from CSIS, there are people in groups here and now that are seeking to do us harm.

I was just in Boston a few weeks ago when the attacks occurred there. I'd be the first to admit that in a venue like that, you certainly let your guard down. I'm not sure we ever want to see the day when we're inundated with warning signs. Obviously sometimes the best security is the security you don't see. But we as everyday citizens and people utilizing public transportation for this topic have a role to play.

How do you strike a balance between letting people know where and how to report or educating with signage or with security things, and at the same time, allowing people to exist in an environment where they're not on that proverbial edge of their seat all the time? How do you strike that balance appropriately with VIA Rail?

Mr. Marc Beaulieu: It's through constant training and awareness. We use every opportunity available to us to make sure that the message is clear. Our "keep an eye open" approach and training for our employees is very clear. The first skill that they use is diffusing. Suspicious issues are to be reported immediately. Our operations control centre is directly linked to whatever police forces or support that we require in any event. We test those measures regularly. We use the feedback from our front-line employees and our managers to consistently review any of our processes and procedures to ensure that a balance is reached. When in doubt, always err on the side of safety.

Mr. Ryan Leef: Chief Superintendent Tremblay, the NDP suggested the tool box is full. Would you say that today the tool box for law enforcement is full and that we are on par with terrorism organizations? Are we behind them slightly? Are there things we need to do to make sure that we continually add to that tool box? How are we keeping pace right now?

C/Supt Larry Tremblay: What I can comment on is that the complexity of the threat continues to evolve. It's critical that we reposition to deal with that evolving threat. Again, without being in a position to comment on the proposed legislation, we will make use of all tools available. If tools become available, we will put them to good use.

Mr. Ryan Leef: Thank you.

The Chair: One minute.

Mr. Ryan Leef: One minute? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You described work at the detachment levels. How important do you think the work at the detachment level is in terms of community education and engagement, in contrast to the work at the more discreet levels of enforcement?

• (0935)

C/Supt Larry Tremblay: It's absolutely critical. I think the recent arrests, and the more public recent arrests, show the level of collaboration among the various agencies and collaboration with the private sector. But prevention of terrorist-related activity is very much a shared responsibility. It can't be left to the police alone or to the agency alone. The engagement of community leaders and the engagement of the public is absolutely critical in the detect, deny, and prevent phase.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you to all the witnesses for being here. Thank you to the committee for agreeing to our Liberal motion to have this hearing. We also would have liked to have had some outside experts, not because we don't have faith in the work that you're all doing, but just to test the resilience of your responses perhaps.

I'd like to get down to a little bit of a more specific level. We've heard about strategies, coordination, and memoranda of understanding. But I was wondering, Mr. Beaulieu, if you could tell me or the committee how many incidents there have been on the VIA Rail train service in the last year. You say there are people trained to respond to incidents. Obviously we're not talking about terrorist

attacks here. We're just talking about incidents on trains where the porters or someone else—one of your plainclothes marshals—would have to intervene in some way. From something very simple to something like, for example, a passenger needing to be taken off the train.

Mr. Marc Beaulieu: To the exact number of incidents, I would not be able to answer that, but I could certainly recover it from our database as required and get you that information later. I can tell you that our employees are extremely vigilant, and they apply the processes extremely well.

Police forces across the country, when required, respond extremely effectively. To my knowledge, never have we contacted any police force for support that didn't respond swiftly and effectively to our needs. Yes, we have detained customers on occasion, unfortunately, because it was our only option at that time.

We also are extremely well skilled at identifying any suspicious baggage, and again, the police forces respond extremely effectively to all those needs. I can say that, to my knowledge, it has happened at least eight to 10 times this year, without being too specific, because I don't have the database in front of me, but numerous times. Each was responded to extremely effectively by all involved on every occasion.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: You're telling me there have been incidents and people have been taken off the train and baggage has been taken off the train. So, yes, we would appreciate getting information on the number of times this has occurred, and perhaps on an annual basis for the last three to five years. That would be helpful.

You say you have security cameras in the stations. What do these security cameras tell you? As you know, there's a debate in the United States as to whether security cameras are an effective deterrent. We know they obviously help in apprehending those who've committed offences, but there's a big debate as to whether they are a deterrent.

So I'm just wondering, have your security cameras been helpful in terms of perhaps preventing someone from boarding a train who, based on a security camera, was exhibiting maybe odd behaviour or something like that?

Mr. Marc Beaulieu: I can't answer that specific question of somebody having odd behaviour. I know that we have used our security cameras to recover stolen items and identify a perpetrator of a crime, but I don't have a specific example of having detected somebody with suspicious behaviour with our camera systems per se.

• (0940)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I would also like to, at this point, follow up on something that came out of the Auditor General's report and that Mr. Garrison raised, which is that nobody seems to be able to tell us how much is being spent on anti-terrorism or cyber-security in this country.

I remember when the minister appeared. I think it was either last month or two months ago. We asked him if he could give us a number for how much the Government of Canada spends on the fight for cyber-security, and the only answer we got from the minister was, well, consult the estimates in all the different departments that are involved. I think this is something that is concerning, not only to the Auditor General but to members of Parliament and to the public.

Mr. McDonald, in your department, in your unit, will there be any diminution of resources in the coming years, maybe next year or the year after, as a result of budget cutting, for example? Would you be considered front line or back room? If you're front line, we've been told by the government that there will be no reductions in expenditures or manpower, but we've been told that back office services could see some cuts.

I'd like to know if you're being squeezed, or if your budget is being squeezed, to the extent that you may not be able to do the fine work that you do as well in the future. Are you being asked to come up with efficiencies that maybe, quite frankly, are not there to be had?

Mr. Gerard McDonald: In response to your question of whether we're front line or back room, in fact we're both. We exercise the functional responsibility for our safety and security programs. Then we also deliver those programs on the front line through our inspectors and what have you in the regions and at headquarters.

Our programs have been subject to the same reductions that have been absorbed by other departments around the country. But that being said, we made a specific effort not to cut any front-line resources, not to reduce any of our inspectors out in the field, but to look more at administrative, organization, and overhead-type expenses in order to meet the budget reductions that have been imposed on us.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Thank you.

Mr. Beaulieu, if somebody comes to buy a ticket at the local train station and they want to pay cash, do you just take the cash and give them a ticket, or does that raise a red flag?

Mr. Marc Beaulieu: All purchases paid with cash raise a red flag. There are other indicators, such as one-way trips, nervousness, other behaviours that are communicated through training and awareness to our employees. Any such incidents can be easily reported and followed up on.

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

We'll now move to Madame Michaud for five minutes. The second round is a five-minute round.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): I would like to thank you for being here today.

I would like to build on the questions asked by my colleague, Mr. Garrison.

You mentioned that many departments and agencies, including yours, experienced budget cuts. This began with budget 2012, when the Canada Border Services Agency absorbed cuts of \$143 million, which resulted in the elimination of 325 jobs at border crossings

across the country. The Canadian Security Intelligence Service will have its budget cut by almost \$24.5 million in 2015. This is going to happen. The RCMP has been subjected to reductions of \$195.2 million and more cuts are expected in budget 2013. It is expected that spending will be slashed by 29.8% in 2013-14 compared to 2012-13.

Cuts are being made in different departments and the work is being done in silos. However, is there a global assessment of how every cut and every new measure implemented affects the capacity of various departments and agencies to counter terrorism and protect Canada's national security?

Mr. John Davies: Thank you for your question.

● (0945)

[*English*]

Is it an overall analysis, from a national security point of view, of what the totality of cuts has meant to the community across the board that you're asking for?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Éline Michaud: Yes, exactly. I want to know if the cumulative effect of all the cuts has been assessed. Different human resources are being eliminated. What are the effects on the ground of all these initiatives?

[*English*]

Mr. Ryan Leef: I have a point of order.

The Chair: I'll hear Mr. Leef on a point of order.

Mr. Ryan Leef: Mr. Chair, I think, in fairness to our witnesses, that these broad-based questions about departmental cuts and across the spectrum cuts are not fair. We asked them to come here to answer questions about the safety of Canada's rail system. If the members opposite have direct questions about budgetary measures that would directly impact transport or rail safety, I think it might be fair for the witnesses to answer, but I don't think to ask them on a completely departmental level is fair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Leef. In fact I asked our clerk for the motion that we've asked them to appear on, and I should remind the committee that we have asked them to appear at a meeting to brief the committee on current modes, systems, and procedures for protecting rail transport in Canada, passengers, and freight against terrorism.

I think what Mr. Leef says is probably correct. I would encourage you.... The broad question of whether there have been cuts that have affected the safety of rail...but we're more specifically looking into the procedures for protecting rail transport in Canada: the systems, the modes, not the overall question of budgetary....

Go ahead.

Ms. Éline Michaud: If it's going to be a point of order and not on my time, I want to answer to that.

The Chair: It's definitely not on your time. We haven't taken your time off.

[Translation]

Ms. Éline Michaud: All right, that is perfect.

In fact, in the presentations, some witnesses told us that they wanted to look at the broader issues. Thus, I am responding to the presentations made here. The witnesses themselves wanted to address these broader issues. Therefore, in that context, I believe that my questions are in keeping with the rules.

[English]

The Chair: I'll watch it. I hadn't interjected myself yet, because I think your questioning was getting close to the edge here. We want a briefing on the systems, the procedures, and the modes of security on transport.

Continue, please.

[Translation]

Ms. Éline Michaud: I will.

Mr. Davies, could you speak to that?

[English]

Mr. John Davies: In very broad terms, during the deficit reduction action plan discussions, the national security advisor, together with other deputies from the community, met consistently to discuss the impact of cuts on national security. There was an ongoing dialogue among deputies during that time.

[Translation]

Ms. Éline Michaud: Thank you very much.

I will now ask Mr. Tremblay a question that addresses the concerns of my colleagues opposite, I believe.

I referred to the cuts at the RCMP. Does this have a direct effect on your ability to work with VIA Rail to protect the security of railways and counter possible terrorist attacks?

C/Supt Larry Tremblay: Thank you for your question.

[English]

Mr. Chair, in very broad terms we believe that the recent arrests have demonstrated that we do possess the ability, in close collaboration with the S and I community and various departments within the GOC, to work with the private sector to counter what was a very serious terrorist threat to the rail system.

I'm not sure that I can go into more detail than that.

[Translation]

Ms. Éline Michaud: Thank you very much.

My next question is for Mr. McDonald.

Earlier, you started talking about certain programs of the public security and anti-terrorism initiative, which allowed Transport Canada, among others, to collaborate with VIA Rail on railway security.

Could you expand on what you said? We know that there are a lot of programs in this initiative, and that it is difficult to track where the money was invested, the results and where any residual money went.

Could you tell us more about certain other initiatives you used to ensure the security of our railways?

Mr. Gerard McDonald: Thank you for your question.

[English]

As I indicated earlier, we've had two major initiatives. One is the Transit-Secure program that ran from 2006 to 2009, I believe. That was to improve security at railway stations and operations, and urban transit operations. That provided funding for our organizations to improve what they had.

• (0950)

[Translation]

Ms. Éline Michaud: Allow me to clarify something about this program.

[English]

The Chair: Just let him finish. We're out of time.

Mr. Gerard McDonald: It funded things such as construction equipment, training, public awareness, signage, internal assessments, surveillance technologies, infrastructure in these locations, security centres, and access control measures.

As I indicated, we also have the MOU with the railways. We work regularly with the railways to enhance the MOU, make sure that it's lived up to, and ensure that the railways are meeting their obligations in that regard.

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

We'll now move back to the government, to Mr. Norlock, please.

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

Through you to the witnesses, thank you for appearing today.

Just to set the record straight, the Auditor General said that we didn't find anything that gave us concern that the money was used in any way it should not have been. Then when he appeared before committee—

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): On a point of order. I don't think that we're talking about that anymore.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Absolutely, Mr. Chair, they're not going to get away with misinformation. I'm speaking to my constituents at home. They've been somewhat misled by the type of questioning that goes on here. There has been no misappropriation and at the department—

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. John Rafferty: It's exactly the same as Mr. Leef's point. We've left that line of questioning. I will certainly return to that if you wish, when it's my turn.

The Chair: Mr. Norlock, maybe word it in a way or—

Mr. Rick Norlock: Let me go to another issue.

One of the questions had to do with CBSA and cuts. If I remember correctly, Mr. Chair, looking at some of our past budgets—and if any of the witnesses who may be directly responsible for CBSA want to confirm this—we've increased front-line.... Number one, because terrorists are not nice people, we've armed our border guards for their safety and the safety of Canadians. Number two, we've increased front-line CBSA officers to 26%.

But if I might go to the VIA Rail folks and the RCMP with regard to security cameras, based on my 30 years of policing, security cameras have in the past and continue.... I'll go right to the RCMP. Wouldn't the proof of the pudding with regard to security cameras in areas of concern and in our cities and towns, in your opinion and based on the Boston experience.... Security cameras significantly reduced the investigation time in order to catch the bad guys. Wouldn't that be true, Chief Superintendent?

C/Supt Larry Tremblay: Thank you.

I think security cameras have been used by law enforcement in order to bring facts within the evidence chain. So we have made use of security cameras for law enforcement purposes. It has been extensively used for evidence purposes in court.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much.

This question is for Mr. Coulombe. Can you describe the role CSIS has in the counterterrorism strategy that was announced by this government in 2012?

Mr. Michel Coulombe: If you look at our mandate, we obviously have a role in all four phases—detect, prevent, deny, response—but to different degrees.

I think it's pretty obvious in terms of detect and prevent what our role would be, and response also. If there is an incident or an investigation we will collaborate with the RCMP, so we would also have a role in the response phase. We do have a role in all four phases to different degrees.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much.

I have a question again for the RCMP and perhaps our folks at VIA Rail. Can you describe specifically the collaboration between the RCMP and rail operators? I'm thinking of the CN and CP police who provide a vital function along those lines used by VIA. Perhaps the VIA folks can chime in if they see an area they want to talk about with regard to collaboration with those two police services, vis-à-vis their rail operations.

C/Supt Larry Tremblay: Because of the ongoing case, I can't go into detail now, but I can easily say that we have, from the onset of this investigation, been working hand in hand with VIA and CN police in order to assist in the investigation and ensure public safety. The collaboration was seamless. It was an open door both ways into how we can work together to prevent this threat. This relationship is established and ongoing.

• (0955)

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you.

Mr. Beaulieu, any comments with regard to—

Mr. Marc Beaulieu: Yes, I completely concur with that statement. The collaboration and cooperation is second to none. Whether it be with the RCMP, local law enforcement agencies, CN

and CP, our network is very rigorous and we communicate extremely well.

The Chair: Very quickly, Mr. Norlock, you have 30 seconds.

Mr. Rick Norlock: I have a quick question for CSIS. The possibility of a terrorist threat is on many people's minds, given recent events. Have these events dramatically changed anything in regard to the standard operating procedures of CSIS?

Mr. Michel Coulombe: My quick response is no.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Great. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now move back to the opposition and Monsieur Rousseau.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

With respect to operations, there are six border crossings in my riding. Some of them, like Chartierville, Stanhope and Saint-Herménégilde are fairly isolated. In the region, there are sometimes hundreds of kilometres of forest between different border crossings. Let us be frank. In outlying areas of the Eastern Townships, people have crossed the border and been found wandering in different municipalities. There have even been cases of mischief committed in my riding by people who simply crossed the border through the forest.

Every time that we speak to people at the Canada Border Services Agency, the RCMP, or the Sûreté du Québec—the Sûreté du Québec patrols certain areas of Quebec because other border services lack the resources to do so—they tell us that information sharing between the various services is difficult and ineffective, that there is information, but that they cannot use it.

My question is for Mr. Davies and also Mr. Tremblay, or Mr. McDonald, to whom I will address another question a little later.

Why am I hearing about those kinds of situations, when you are telling me that everything is going relatively well and that operations are very successful and very effective?

I will give you an example. Although very effective operations have been conducted in Stanstead, there have been unfortunate situations in the past, and they continue to occur, because of the fact that hundreds of kilometres of forest are wide open.

How is the surveillance carried out? How can we reassure people, tell them that there is security and, above all, that there are patrols?

[*English*]

Mr. John Davies: Unfortunately I don't have a great answer for you. The CBSA would be well placed to give you a bit more detail, operationally, on how things are working at the border and what their efforts are for interoperability, dealing with local communities, and any posts that would be isolated and the challenges they face.

I'm not sure if others have any....

The Chair: Mr. Rousseau, could you again be more specific to rail, perhaps? I appreciate you have those.... Yes, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rousseau: All right.

In my riding, there is a small railway service that belongs to the St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railroad, which only ships freight. Two railway lines cross the border in my area, the Eastern Townships. This company is owned by Genesee & Wyoming Inc., which manages the shipping. It seems that it also owns railway cars.

How does the information sharing and training that you mentioned take place? You say that communications and training keep people up-to-date on rail security. This small line only carries freight, but at least one or two trains cross the border every day. Are these trains searched. How are searches conducted?

Furthermore, there are level crossings that are in a poor state of repair. Traffic has been tied up for days because the St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railroad has not assumed responsibility for repairing and upgrading these level crossings. The Department of Transport officials say that the municipality should have that responsibility. Therefore, who is responsible for what? It seems to me that there are holes in the system.

• (1000)

[*English*]

Mr. Gerard McDonald: Mr. Chair, I think that falls into my capacity. I'm not sure if I understand all the questions.

In terms of searching these trains when they're crossing the border, that's a CBSA responsibility. I can't respond to that.

With respect to the security of the operations of an organization like the St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railroad, they're part of the MOU with the Railway Association of Canada, so they have a responsibility to have a security plan. They have to assess what their risks are and have a plan to be able to respond to mitigate those risks.

Obviously a short-line railway, with the type of merchandise it's carrying, is not going to have as detailed a plan as VIA Rail, which is carrying passengers across the country. So they have that plan. They work with us. They work with the Railway Association of Canada. We assess their plan to make sure that it meets the requirements, that they have adequately assessed the risks, and that they have mitigation measures in place to address them.

Finally, with respect to level crossings and how they get funded, as you may be aware, we do have a grade-crossing contribution program to which all railways can apply. It's funded on a 50-50 basis between the federal government, and the municipalities and the railways. The federal government is one side; the municipalities and railways are on the other. That is one way to get funding to improve level crossings.

Yes, there is a jurisdictional issue, obviously, between railways and municipalities. It exists everywhere in the country. We try to work through it as best we can. In many cases we are successful in doing that and in improving the safety of those level crossings.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McDonald.

We'll now move to Mr. Payne, please, for five minutes.

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses for coming in. It's certainly important to talk about some of the issues we've heard already.

Mr. McDonald, just on your point, I actually just recently announced a number of dollars that went into funding right across my riding. There are probably at least a half-dozen different crossings that are being upgraded for safety purposes, which is extremely important, I think, for the communities, for the citizens who might be using those roadways. That's an important aspect.

Mr. Davies, in your comments you talked about how we have infrastructure in place to communicate with government at all levels, private sector, and operators of critical infrastructure—obviously including transportation. Could you maybe give us a little better feel for what “critical infrastructure” might be?

Mr. John Davies: Do you mean what the 10 sectors are, how the plan worked, and so on?

Mr. LaVar Payne: Yes.

Mr. John Davies: I'll do my best. Critical infrastructure is not my direct responsibility, but in 2010 the Minister of Public Safety, together with his counterparts in the provinces, announced the national strategy for critical infrastructure. Essentially this is a plan to address threats to vital assets in systems, like financial systems, transport networks, electricity grids, and so on. It's more or less a vision for building public-private partnerships, improving information sharing among levels of government with the private sector on risks and threats, and conducting risk management activities and exercises.

The chief superintendent talked a bit about those kinds of exercises, but there are a number of working groups by sector, and those sectors roll up once a year into a national forum. They receive classified briefings on threats and risks, exchange information on building risk methodologies, and so on. There's also, in a sense, a counterpart to that of work with the United States, given how our critical infrastructure entwines with theirs to some degree.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. McDonald, I just wanted to touch a bit more on the railway. I'm from western Canada, and in my riding I have a couple of major petrochemical or fertilizer producers. Of course, they do ship a lot of goods such as ammonia and methanol, and they do travel across the border. That's done through CPR because that's the only railway we have. I'm just wondering what the communication is between Transport Canada and CPR, their plans, particularly with carrying these types of products. Obviously when you think about it, certainly terrorism could be a major issue.

If anyone else has a comment on that, I'd certainly appreciate that as well.

•(1005)

Mr. Gerard McDonald: With respect to that, those are goods we would classify as dangerous goods. They are covered under the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act. First and foremost, they have to have an appropriate means of containment to transport those goods. They also have to have what we call an ERAP, an emergency response activation plan, so that if anything goes wrong, they have a plan in place and they can activate that plan should it be necessary.

We also have provisions now within the TDG Act for security measures for goods that could be considered for the use of terrorism or what have you. We're in the process of developing regulations in that regard as to what measures we might want to use should a security situation arise.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Is there anyone who wants to comment on those? No?

Certainly we want to commend the RCMP on their recent performance in stopping the potential terrorism act. I'm wondering if you could describe what work or collaboration occurred to make those arrests possible, without, obviously, divulging sensitive information.

C/Supt Larry Tremblay: Thank you, sir, for your comment.

I think it's critical. We all recognize that terrorism is a global phenomenon, so the response must be in line with that reality. Any terrorism-related investigation will activate cooperation not only within the Canadian government but with partners and allies, most often with our U.S. ally's law enforcement agency. This project was just another example of that.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Okay.

How much time do I have?

The Chair: You have five seconds. We'll just maybe credit you with that until the next meeting.

We'll go to Mr. Rafferty, please.

Mr. John Rafferty: Thank you very much, Chair.

I do appreciate Mr. Leef's point of order because we've already heard in this committee previously from the RCMP that their cuts to 2015 of \$195.2 million are not going to impact public safety, and also from CSIS that a \$24.5 million cut is not going to affect public safety. We don't need to talk about budget cuts anymore. Thank you, Mr. Leef, for that point of order.

I guess it's good because you were just wasting that money before.

Let me ask a question about who's in charge. You talk about building resilience against terrorism, about the 15-plus members of the security network, and about shared responsibilities. We've heard that a couple of times. Where does the buck stop? Who is actually coordinating that? Is there a pyramid there, or is everybody sort of acting independently and helping each other whenever they need some help?

Yes, Mr. Davies, please.

Mr. John Davies: The Prime Minister, I think, is where the buck stops. Under him is the Minister of Public Safety, and obviously the counterterrorism strategy is something that he released, but it was

done in cooperation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Transport, and so on.

In terms of the kind of binding leadership role, the Minister of Public Safety plays a big part in that, given his portfolio includes CSIS, the RCMP, and CBSA, and those are three core members of the security intelligence community.

Mr. John Rafferty: Is there a coordinating body that sort of keeps an eye on all those agencies, that sort of gives direction?

Mr. John Davies: Certainly there's a series of deputy-level committees that meet frequently, almost weekly, to talk about emerging issues, whether those are threat issues or new policy or legislation. Those committees advise ministers, right up to the Cabinet Committee on National Security, which is a new creation of the Prime Minister. I believe it's two years old now.

•(1010)

Mr. John Rafferty: I guess I'm just trying to get a sense of the relationship between the agencies and then maybe the Prime Minister, who, as you say, is the boss.

This is a question for VIA Rail. Let's say you call in a police service and the incident is resolved. Do you get billed for that? How does that work? Let's say you're using the RCMP services, or in Ontario, the OPP. Do they send you a bill later for the help they gave you?

Mr. Marc Beaulieu: No. We don't get billed for such incidents. If the police are called in for dangerous situations that threaten security or safety and take whatever action is necessary according to their experience, they do not invoice us for that.

Mr. John Rafferty: Okay. That doesn't happen anywhere in the system, right? There's no cost recovery there anywhere. Everybody just sort of helps when they're called upon.

This is also a question for VIA Rail. As you know, you have kilometres and kilometres of track that is unsupervised—

Mr. Marc Beaulieu: It's 46,000.

Mr. John Rafferty: It's 46,000? Really, no one can police that; it's so huge. I know that in northern Ontario, where VIA Rail is not, but CN and CP are, just stopping people from trespassing is almost an impossible task. How does VIA Rail monitor that, to the best of your ability? How does that happen?

Mr. Marc Beaulieu: We rely heavily on the experience of our locomotive engineers and on-train employees, who are well trained in identifying any areas of concern. They immediately report any incidents to the rail traffic controllers, who then in turn immediately contact police for intervention. They are of course very skilled individuals who operate over this territory for a living, and they know every turn and switch along the way. They are very good at immediately reporting any incident or behaviour that needs to be reported.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now move back to Mr. Gill, please, for five minutes.

Mr. Parm Gill (Brampton—Springdale, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I also want to thank all the witnesses for their time. I know that it was short notice, so we appreciate you appearing before the committee.

My question is first for VIA Rail. Obviously, this is basically related to your clients, your customers, who take the rail on a regular basis. What sort of cooperation do you get from them in terms of any concerns or any issues they may have or may be concerned about? Do you regularly get any sort of reporting from individuals, just your customers, such as, “Hey, we're concerned about a certain individual”, or a package, say, or just on general safety concerns?

Mr. Marc Beaulieu: Yes, we certainly receive such information, and we act upon it quickly. We regularly call upon local law enforcement, or whatever enforcement we need, to further those investigations. They're acted upon very promptly and effectively whenever they're brought to our attention by a customer or one of our employees using our “keep an eye open” approach.

Mr. Parm Gill: How would they normally contact you? What's the method used most often?

Mr. Marc Beaulieu: Usually through contact with our employees, or I suppose they would call 911. All the police forces can get a hold of us very quickly. The network works extremely well. We rely heavily on our infrastructure owners as well, who do an extremely good job of having track forces out there and signaling any incidents to us. Our primary contact is our employees, our operations control centre, or simply by calling the local police.

•(1015)

Mr. Parm Gill: Are there any educational components available to your passengers, to the general public, any sort of signage—be it on the rail itself, or in the waiting areas, and so on—of what to look for if they feel unsafe, or if there's any sort of suspicious activity or a suspicious person? Are there telephone numbers of a law enforcement agency posted, or is it just 911?

Mr. Marc Beaulieu: My understanding is that the best way to alert somebody of a dangerous or suspicious situation quickly is to dial 911. We rely heavily on our partnerships with all the police forces, and CN and CP police forces, and our operating partners, to respond quickly and effectively.

Mr. Parm Gill: But is there actual signage available or an educational component of what to look for and who to call in case?

Mr. Marc Beaulieu: We have “travelling better together” programs to inform passengers of behaviours that are and are not tolerated. Again, we don't have a public awareness campaign with the number to reach us if there's a security threat. They're to use the quickest means to alert the proper authorities.

Mr. Parm Gill: The other question I have is, when it comes to railway security, how well equipped would you say we are here in Canada in comparison to some of the other countries that have a similar railway system in place?

How would you rate us, as a country, in being prepared to tackle any of these threats—safety, security?

Mr. Gerard McDonald: I'll try to answer that.

Obviously, it's very different. Probably the biggest similarity to the rail structure we have in Canada is that of the States. With Europe and the Asian countries, their systems operate in a highly urbanized environment, which is much different from how we operate in Canada. Given the threats we have in the system, we feel we have adequate response plans prepared to address the risks we perceive to be there.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gill.

It's still another government-round question. I'll ask one quick question and then we'll go to Mr. Leef.

After asking all of you not to give away any operational type of issues that might hinder security, I guess I would ask this. How often do you meet with the RCMP? For example, in the last event, I take it that you didn't just wake up one morning and see that VIA Rail was in the news. You obviously must have been aware of some ongoing investigation.

Is this a natural thing, where you meet with them once a week or they'll give you a heads-up that there may be an investigation under way and to tighten up some of your security? Does that type of thing happen, Mr. Tessier or Mr. Beaulieu?

Mr. Tessier, go ahead.

Mr. Marc Tessier: Yes, thank you.

We have regular contacts with the RCMP. As far as the recent event, yes, we had received previous notification. As I said, we have ongoing communication between VIA Rail security and the RCMP, as well as other law enforcement agencies, and Transport Canada.

The Chair: In terms of notification, then, are there certain steps you take immediately, based on that, which your locomotive engineers, or your porters or conductors, would realize are out of the norm?

Mr. Marc Tessier: As far as the last incident is concerned, VIA Rail was notified, and we were under the guidance of the RCMP. That's all I can say about that.

•(1020)

The Chair: Whatever process or whatever strategy you took, it obviously worked, so we're very pleased. I think we all have confidence that.... Obviously, the communication, then, between the RCMP and VIA Rail was very good. You were able, in whatever way you did it, to contact your conductors without giving away anything. I think Canadians can be confident in that.

We'll go to Mr. Leef, please.

Mr. Ryan Leef: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This is another question for VIA Rail. We have talked a lot about the prevention strategies that are in place. Of course, it's a priority for our government, and I think obviously a priority for you at VIA Rail, to make sure that incidents don't happen in the first place. But maybe we can move to the response end of it, because I don't think we've touched on that a lot.

It is recognized a lot of times that when disaster strikes, your survivability of an incident, or the mitigation of harm, has as much to do with your response to it as it does the event itself. On that end, what kind of work is VIA Rail doing with integrated partnerships to ensure a safe and appropriate response to anything that might occur on a medium or larger scale?

Mr. Marc Beaulieu: We've participated in exercises with local police and the RCMP to develop our skills and knowledge on first response. Depending on the location, the site could be taken control of by the infrastructure owner themselves. We work very well in partnership with the infrastructure owners, with the RCMP, and with Transport Canada to coordinate these exercises, to practise how they go.

We have an operations control centre that is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in constant communication with whatever governing bodies we require, or infrastructure owners, to keep an eye. For anything that is signalled to us, we have identified an appropriate response per type of occurrence. We use it efficiently whenever required.

Mr. Ryan Leef: Do you engage other emergency services, such as local fire and ambulance or other emergency responders, in that training?

Mr. Marc Beaulieu: We would contact any agency required, depending on the type of emergency it is, whether it be fire, ambulance, police, or Transport Canada. For any means that we need to mitigate the risk that has been identified to us, we have an appropriate response plan.

Mr. Ryan Leef: Thank you.

Mr. McDonald, we're focused on rail, of course, but does Transport have similar plans with other public safety transport, and does that include appropriate legislation for public transport? Some of these transport systems are integrated. You take a bus to take a train to take a plane.

Maybe you could just touch on that a bit.

Mr. Gerard McDonald: Sure. It really depends on the type of mode. Some of the requirements we have are legislated, and we do have regulations in that regard. With others, as with the rail industry, we work through a memorandum of agreement.

The objective for us is to achieve a certain behaviour as opposed to passing laws and regulations. It's making sure that the industry's prepared, that they've assessed the risk, and that they know what they're doing and how to respond to it.

Mr. Ryan Leef: Great. Thank you.

I'll go back to VIA Rail again. Obviously, with the security market nowadays, there's a host of products, programs, and systems available to choose from. When you're making decisions about the suite of security programs and security measures that you buy or

integrate into your system, at even the smallest of levels, how do you go about making those decisions? Are they evidence-based, operationally appropriate decisions, keeping in mind sound financial management, or do you just try to invest in everything going and see what works?

Mr. Marc Beaulieu: We rely on our partnerships with experts in the field, whether it be Transport Canada, the RCMP, or other railways. We seek whatever expertise required.

All of our risk assessments are done using proven models to make sure that the mitigation we're aiming for is properly considered in our assessments. We get full cooperation from everybody and anybody who is involved in our safety and security network.

•(1025)

Mr. Ryan Leef: Thank you.

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

We'll now move back to Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Let me assure everybody that I'm going to have a very specific question for VIA Rail, but given some of the interventions from the other side, I just want to step back for a minute.

The terms of reference for today are fairly narrow, but we on this side think it's important to set the rail transport question of national security in the larger context. It was implied, for instance, that the audit of the Auditor General didn't really apply to what we're talking about today, and I just want to point to two of the objectives of that audit.

The Auditor General said that their audit was to "determine whether the management framework for the Public Security and Anti-Terrorism initiative was adequate to ensure that funding decisions reduced risks to Canadians by the maximum extent possible". For that reason, we've asked a number of more general questions, because that audit I think is relevant to determining where our resources are going, and whether rail is one of the places it needs to go.

Second was to "determine whether intelligence services work efficiently together and provide enforcement personnel with adequate information". Again, I'm going to have a very specific question about that with regard to VIA Rail.

We've asked the question on the overall impact of cuts being made in various departments, and whether anybody is examining the coordination of this to make sure that those individual cuts don't have an unintended impact on national security. We've asked about the allocation of resources to try to make sure that they're clearly based on threat and risk assessment. We've asked some questions about the coordination of those activities.

Finally, I think one of our perspectives has been that there seems to be, in the strategy, the treatment of VIA Rail as just another railway, when clearly VIA Rail, both as a crown corporation and as a passenger carrier, probably needs some special treatment in these areas.

With that in mind, I'm going to ask about—again from the Auditor General's report—a question that was raised. My question is to VIA Rail. When you sell tickets to people, do you check ID? What kind of ID would be checked?

Mr. Marc Beaulieu: We only check ID when necessary, in other words, if we have a doubt as to the transaction that is going on. We do not as a rule ask all of our customers for ID.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Has that policy been evaluated in a threat and risk assessment? I'm not arguing that it's necessary. I'm just asking the question of whether that policy was viewed through that lens of risk and threat assessment.

Mr. Marc Beaulieu: Well, as part of our ongoing review of our security plans, we're always exploring further risk mitigation in consultation with our partners, and law enforcement, and Transport Canada. We're constantly assessing further controls. That is one of the controls being assessed.

Mr. Randall Garrison: It seems to me this might be a good example of where, by VIA Rail perhaps checking ID, it might be of assistance to law enforcement officials by flagging people who are otherwise on watch lists in other places. So here's one of my questions, then, very specifically: does VIA Rail have access to the information on lost and stolen passports?

If someone were to use a lost or stolen passport at VIA Rail, would you know that it's a lost or stolen passport? Because one of the concerns raised by the Auditor General was that this information isn't getting to front-line people.

Mr. Marc Beaulieu: No, I'm not aware of receiving any information on lost or stolen passports.

Mr. Randall Garrison: My follow-up question, then, would be to Mr. Tremblay.

In the Auditor General's report, he points to what he considers serious delays in processing information on lost and stolen passports, from the passport office to the RCMP. He was talking about delays of over a month in processing that information. Can you make any comment about that?

C/Supt Larry Tremblay: I'm sorry. I'm just not personally aware of the specificity of your question.

Mr. Randall Garrison: His concern was that obviously if we're dealing with terrorism factors, the timeliness is important, and that the information needs to pass quickly from Citizenship and Immigration Canada to the law enforcement authorities so that the information is out there.

One of the things he does say is that he suspects that a lack of resources for what is considered sometimes a routine operation is one of the reasons for that delay. I wonder if maybe Mr. Davies or anyone else has any comment on that.

● (1030)

Mr. John Davies: We certainly have to talk to Passport Canada about what information they push out now. Obviously, they would be looking at what's lawful to push out—if they had information—to make sure there's a lawful basis for that information to move.

I haven't heard the concern that there's an issue. Usually if a passport's stolen or lost, my understanding is that information goes

to the security agencies and so on. But I think we'd have to talk to them to get more details on what constraints they may be under. I don't think the constraint would be a resource constraint. I think it would be an issue on whether it's lawful to push that information, to whom, and when.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now go back to Mr. Del Mastro.

Welcome to our committee, Mr. Del Mastro.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have a couple of questions for the witnesses.

First of all, I think certainly what we've witnessed—and I've just talked to my colleague as well—we seem to have very good collaboration with the United States. We seem to have very good collaboration between agencies, and indeed, with VIA Rail. I think that's very encouraging to everyone hearing the testimony here today.

Mr. Rafferty pointed out that there are, in fact, thousands of miles of track—in the railway industry, we do still talk miles—and it seems to me that most of it is not of great concern. Where we do have greater concerns seems to be in urbanized areas. Threats are exposed or highlighted when we see people gaining access to tracks in areas where they shouldn't be. We had an unfortunate incident just a couple of years ago in Montreal, for example, where some younger folks got down there with spray-paint cans or what have you. But it demonstrates that access to the tracks is still perhaps too easy.

What are we doing, specifically, to eliminate that kind of access to what is really a very dangerous area? If you can get down there with a spray-paint can, you can get down there with just about anything else. What are we doing to secure the tracks in urbanized areas, not only from a public safety perspective for the people who might access it, but also for the people on the trains?

Mr. Gerard McDonald: Mr. Chair, obviously, as the member points out, access to tracks is a very big concern for us, on both the safety side and the security side. What we expect each railway organization to do is to conduct an appropriate threat and risk assessment of all their infrastructure, identify those areas requiring the highest need of improvement, and develop the appropriate mitigation measures to address those.

We're working with the railways, on both the safety and the security side, to help them identify those areas where there are specific instances—such as in Montreal where access to the tracks was a concern—then we work with them to see what can be done. It's my understanding that changes have been made to that particular area to make it more secure.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: When we look at VIA, for example, they tend to operate at speeds faster than freight trains. That's expected. It's part of their business plan. These specific areas become of greater concern. If people can access the tracks, they don't have a lot of warning. People often, frankly, mistake the speed of trains. They don't have a lot of warning, specifically with passenger trains and the speed they're travelling at.

Has there been consideration given—and, again, it speaks to all aspects of rail security—to greater mitigation efforts, such as fencing and so forth, that would really block access to railway yards in urban areas?

Mr. Gerard McDonald: It's not an area that we regulate specifically in a general sense. But if there is a specific area of concern, we can work with the railway to look at where further mitigation measures might be necessary, and if necessary, try to come to an agreement with the railways. That is what we do to address those.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: At this point, it's optional whether the railways may choose or not—

•(1035)

Mr. Gerard McDonald: It's the railway's responsibility.

We work with them. If we find an area that is a continuing concern, we can bring more force to bear on finding a potential solution.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Okay.

To VIA Rail, as I said, we've seen some incidents where there have been concerns about access to the tracks. I know CN is a principal railway whose tracks you operate on in the corridor. There's also some interaction with CP.

Are you working with those railways specifically to enhance security to prevent access along those tracks?

Mr. Marc Beaulieu: We rely strongly on the infrastructure owners to provide that safety. We report very quickly and efficiently to them whenever we find there's a risk area that needs to be addressed.

We work very closely with Operation Lifesaver, which obviously creates awareness campaigns on the dangers of being on or near infrastructure. We work very closely with Transport Canada. In fact, we've had a very successful private-crossing closure program that was funded by Transport Canada to improve rail security on the short distance of infrastructure that we own. All incidents and reasons for suspicion are quickly reported to the infrastructure owner for their information and furtherance.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Thank you.

The Chair: We'll move to Mr. Scarpaleggia, please, for five minutes.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. McDonald, I'm looking at a newspaper article from a couple of weeks ago. It says: In its latest plans and priorities report, Transport Canada noted that security "systems and processes in place may not be sufficiently robust to respond" to a major incident.

Perhaps you could comment on that. Is it a misquote?

Mr. Gerard McDonald: No, I don't believe it's a misquote. It's from our report on plans and priorities. Part of that is that you outline

what some of the risks in the system are and how you might mitigate them. One of the risks identified in that report is that our plans aren't robust enough. Obviously, to mitigate it we're going to ensure that we enhance those plans to ensure their robustness.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Okay.

Mr. Beaulieu, just to come back to the marshals, you have plainclothes marshals on VIA Rail trains in Canada. You did say that, correct?

Mr. Marc Beaulieu: I did.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Okay. I don't know if you can answer this, but on what percentage of trains would you have them? Is it 5%, 10%, 20%?

Mr. Marc Beaulieu: To reveal more information about some of our measures would defeat the purpose of the measures that are in place, so I'm going to choose not to answer that.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Understood.

That's why, actually, Liberals more and more are calling for the establishment of a public safety and national security committee that would meet in camera. As you know, Senator Dallaire has been discussing this, and I brought it up a couple times at this committee. That's precisely why—so we can get some of these answers.

On the issue of passenger lists, when it comes to air travel, Mr. McDonald, correct me if I'm wrong, but every time someone gets on a plane in Canada, their name is checked against an RCMP list or some kind of list to see if they're a person of interest. Or is it just people travelling in and out of Canada, especially to the United States?

Mr. Gerard McDonald: Their names are checked against what is called a specified persons list.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Is that done for people getting on VIA trains? If not, would it be very expensive and complicated to do it for VIA passenger lists as well?

Mr. Gerard McDonald: It is not done for VIA trains. One would have to assess what the value of that would be before determining whether it would be a worthwhile exercise and whether it would mitigate any security risks.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Well, I would think that if it mitigates security risks in one area, it would mitigate them in another. We're talking in both cases about mass transit. Obviously, in some ways, I suppose, there's more concern about air travel, but we're talking about probably the same passenger loads, and so on and so forth. Given that there's no screening of baggage that gets on a VIA Rail train, probably there's a good reason to screen the lists.

I would suggest that this is something that VIA Rail and the government might want to look at, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to turn to the big issue, I guess, Mr. Beaulieu and Mr. Tessier, as representatives of the government. Is anyone in a position to compare and contrast our rail security here, especially in the busy Montreal-Quebec City-Windsor corridor, with how Amtrak tackles security in the busy New York-Boston-Washington corridor? Apparently all their baggage has to go through sniffer dogs and so on.

I'm not suggesting that this is what we should look at, but are you regularly comparing and contrasting, and maybe sharing best practices? Or are they out of the picture, in some way, from your concerns?

• (1040)

The Chair: I think that was, perhaps, to Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Marc Beaulieu: We constantly review safety and security measures by other railways, whether it be Amtrak or Europe or Australia, to see what their best practices are. Based on our risk assessments, we determine what actions we should take.

If I may, I'm going to go back to your passenger list question, just for a clarification. Every person who gets on our trains has their ticket scanned so we know exactly how many people and what people are aboard our trains. This is consistent with the safety and security plans we submit to Transport Canada. We know who is on our trains based on ticket scanning, and we've implemented that technology.

The Chair: Your time is just up, very quickly, please.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Are you comparing that with a police list? For example, he may not be a terrorist. It could be somebody who's known to have a firearm and has threatened someone in the past.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Scarpaleggia.

We'll now move to Mr. Rafferty.

Mr. John Rafferty: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

If we have a little bit of time, Mr. Beaulieu might be interested in answering that question.

I have a question for you, Mr. Davies, but you may find that it's better answered by Mr. Coulombe or Mr. Tremblay. In your opening remarks, you talked about terrorist-related incidents. That got me thinking that we have a number of incidents of civil unrest or civil disobedience. I'm just wondering, what is the definition of a terrorist, in relation to public safety, that you use in Transport, in the government, and in the agencies? What distinguishes a terrorist from someone who is blocking a railway line, for example?

Mr. John Davies: I'm referring to the CT, counterterrorism, strategy. We tend to not define terrorism directly. We talk about the terrorist activities that you see described in the Criminal Code. That's an act or omission undertaken inside or outside Canada for a political, religious, or ideological purpose, which is intended to intimidate the public.

Mr. John Rafferty: So that would include first nations blocking a rail line, for example?

Mr. John Davies: Ahh...

Mr. John Rafferty: Under that definition....

Mr. John Davies: I think there's an element of subjectivity in how you look at this.

Mr. John Rafferty: I have a second question for you.

It's about the INSETs, which I didn't know about until your opening remarks. They sound like a good idea but I didn't see the railroads represented. Are railways represented on INSETs?

C/Supt Larry Tremblay: We have a member of the CN police on secondment to national security here at headquarters for that specific purpose.

Mr. John Rafferty: I'm curious as to what the response has been to INSETs. The RCMP, and maybe Mr. Coulombe, might want to answer also. You're also part of that group. Perhaps if we have time, Mr. Tessier might want to respond as well.

How are they working?

• (1045)

C/Supt Larry Tremblay: They're in Montreal, Toronto, Ottawa, Vancouver, and now Edmonton. They are an extremely efficient and effective way to pull multi-agencies together. They are very focused and ensure timely information sharing. They also ensure that there's notification. Overall, they make investigation of terrorist-related activity far more efficient and timely.

Mr. John Rafferty: Mr. Coulombe, would you care to comment on that, or agree with Chief Tremblay?

Mr. Michel Coulombe: I can only echo Mr. Tremblay. When I was in Montreal, in charge of Quebec, we had a member of CSIS seconded to INSET at C Division. This facilitated the exchange of information. The CSIS member had access to her own database. INSETs facilitate liaison and are a good approach to counter-terrorism.

Mr. John Rafferty: Mr. Tessier, do you care to make a comment, or Mr. Beaulieu?

Mr. Marc Beaulieu: We're not members of INSET, but we certainly receive information from them. I echo the comments of the RCMP and CSIS that it's a very effective way of receiving the information.

Mr. John Rafferty: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, everyone, for appearing and helping the public safety and national security committee understand a little more about rail safety and security.

Mr. Del Mastro asked the question about young people and paint cans. I guess different people view different things in different ways. Many aspiring young artists see a canvas every time they see a grain car, so they're down there. Terrorists may very well see potential for a terrorist act.

Different people have different roles. Your role is to protect Canada, to protect the security of Canadians. We thank you very much for the very important work you're doing, seemingly in an organized fashion, where issues of the past—turf wars and things like that—don't seem to be as present today as maybe 20 years ago. So thank you very much.

We are adjourned.

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