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# **Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Monday, February 25, 2019**

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**Chair**

**The Honourable John McKay**



## Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

Monday, February 25, 2019

• (1530)

[English]

**The Chair (Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.)):** Ladies and gentlemen, I see we have quorum. It is 3:30 and we are now ready to commence the 150th meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

Minister Goodale.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. Good afternoon. It's good to be back with you once again to present the supplementary estimates (B) for the Public Safety portfolio, along with the 2019-20 interim estimates.

As this committee is aware, we are in the second year of a two-year pilot test of this vehicle called the interim estimates. That process will help ensure continuous operations for my portfolio, authorizing interim spending beginning April 1 until the main estimates full supply is approved by Parliament in June.

I am very pleased to be joined by the full complement of officials here today representing not only the department, but all of the agencies that are a part of the portfolio, and I welcome their assistance in dealing with the questions from members of the committee.

The men and women of this portfolio perform the Herculean task of keeping our country and our communities safe and secure. They deserve, I believe, our deepest thanks for carrying out a very ambitious public safety agenda over the last number of months and years.

I thank members of this committee for your scrutiny and your advice as that agenda has rolled forward over the last three years. We've introduced transformational changes to Canada's public safety environment, from a new national security framework to a new cannabis regime, a bold new corrections model, practical changes to tackle the problems posed in our communities by guns and gangs, and much more. We still have a lot of work ahead.

The supplementary estimates will help us make needed funding adjustments to tackle the work. Portfolio-wide, total authorities sought in supplementary estimates (B) for 2018-19 would result in a net increase of \$24.3 million over the authorities as they exist to date. That represents a 0.2% increase over the total authorities provided through main and supplementary estimates so far this year. That brings us to roughly \$10.8 billion in total funding approvals to

date for the Public Safety portfolio and all the agencies within it—that is, should these estimates be approved.

There are a few key changes to appropriations that I would like to highlight. One of those is the addition of \$9.9 million for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, which will be used to compensate members for injuries received in the performance of their duties. Every day, these members put their lives on the line to protect our own, and the government must ensure we're there for them as well when they need us.

The funding complements the Government of Canada's memorial grant program for first responders, a new grant program that we introduced last year. I thank the committee for its support of that program when it was presented. The memorial grant program recognizes the service and sacrifice of first responders who die as a direct result of carrying out their duties. Through the memorial grant program, families of first responders—that is, police, firefighters and paramedics, including volunteers, reservists and auxiliary members—who lose a loved one as a direct result of their duties will receive a one-time lump sum tax-free payment of \$300,000. That program took effect on April 1, 2018. I am very pleased to say that it's now being implemented across the country in co-operation with the provinces and territories.

You might ask, why would the provinces and territories be involved? It's because some of their social services legislation, under their provincial jurisdiction, has offset or clawback provisions written into it, and the provinces need to give us the assurance that they will not use their provincial legislation in any way to diminish the federal grant. All of the provinces are anxious to collaborate and co-operate in that endeavour. We're going through the necessary steps with each province to make sure that is the case.

I'll also highlight that there is \$3.8 million in these estimates that will be transferred to the Communications Security Establishment for the transfer of control and responsibility for the Canadian Cyber Incident Response Centre. That transfer began in October, to become part of the new Canadian cybersecurity centre.

The cyber centre is a key change to our security apparatus in Canada. It brings operational security experts from across the entire Government of Canada under one roof for dealing with cyber issues. In line with the new cybersecurity strategy, the launch of the cybersecurity centre represents a shift to a more unified approach to cybersecurity in the country. I know we'll all be hearing a lot more from the centre in the year to come. I know you'll continue to work closely with them in your current study of cybersecurity in the financial sector.

Mr. Chair, I think it would now be appropriate to turn to the 2019-20 interim estimates, to help us focus on the coming year. Ratification by Parliament of these interim estimates will result in initial funding approvals of \$2.259 billion for the Public Safety portfolio for the fiscal year 2019-20 to cover the first three months of operations. As I've noted, the detailed funding proposed will be presented to Parliament for consideration in the main estimates in April.

In comparison with the 2018-19 interim estimates, most portfolio organizations are at very similar funding levels, with the exception of Public Safety Canada—that is, the department itself. Allow me to explain that briefly. The decrease of \$104.6 million in the interim estimates for Public Safety is mostly explained by the expiry of the temporary funding for the disaster financial assistance arrangements. My department is currently working with central agencies to secure the necessary funding levels for 2019-20 and beyond in support of its obligations under the DFAA.

Mr. Chair, as I've highlighted, we're implementing extraordinary changes to Canada's public safety environment. I want to thank all of you once again for the important role that this committee plays in scrutinizing the issues and providing advice. I know my colleague Minister Blair will have more to add on these various topics this afternoon, particularly with respect to a strong and effective border.

As always, I would be happy to try to do my best to answer your questions about these estimates.

• (1535)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister Goodale.

Before I turn to questions, I would just caution members. I know there's always great enthusiasm when having a minister before a committee. Would you humour the chair and keep your questions somewhat relevant to the interim estimates that are being studied.

Ms. Damoff.

**Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.):** Thanks, Chair.

Minister, it's always great to have you here, along with your very able officials. Thank you for taking the time to join us this afternoon.

On Friday, media reported that the Senate Standing Committee on National Security and Defence had delayed consideration of crucial government legislation on national security, as well as firearms, in order to hold meetings on the number of ministers who had held the Veterans Affairs portfolio.

Dr. Stephanie Carvin, an expert in national security at Carleton University, tweeted on Friday with regard to the delay, and this is her tweet:

Not great, @SenateCA. You came to work late and you need to get the job done and pass #C59. Failure to do so will mean @NoFlyListKids will go years without redress, CSIS will not have a legal basis to store datasets crucial for ops and CSE will not have powers to protect Canada.

Are you concerned about Bill C-59, our national security legislation, as well as Bill C-71, which included really important protections for survivors of intimate partner violence, being delayed in the Senate?

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** I consider both Bill C-71 and Bill C-59 to be vital pieces of legislation that need to receive the appropriate parliamentary attention as quickly as possible. I want to thank this committee for dealing with both of those items of legislation in a very thorough way. There was no compromise on your scrutiny. You examined the issues very carefully. You made a number of recommendations for changes in the legislation and sent them back to the House in a timely way. I thank this committee for that work. Now, both of those issues are before the Senate.

I have had the opportunity to speak with a number of senators about the very heavy agenda that is before them, including Bill C-71 and Bill C-59. They do seem to be optimistic that in the time they have available between now and the summer they will be able to deal with the legislation in a full and final way.

I share the belief that this legislation is vital. It contains very important measures, such as the extensive background checks that you referred to in Bill C-71, which I believe has received support across all party lines.

In Bill C-59, issues that you mentioned included the ability of CSIS to deal properly with bulk datasets, the new authorities that are provided to the Communications Security Establishment, as well as the creation of a new national security and intelligence review agency to get out of these silos for reviewing our security intelligence organizations and to have one review agency that has full jurisdiction to examine any issue in any department or agency of the Government of Canada and follow the evidence wherever it may go.

There's a lot more to the legislation than that, but those are really critical innovations in the law, and it is important for the legislation to receive careful and timely consideration. The communications that I have heard from the Senate would lead me to believe that they are working diligently on the issues before them and are confident that they will be able to discharge their parliamentary duties in a timely way, and I look forward to that.

• (1540)

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Thank you, Minister.

I suspect most Canadians just assume that because the legislation was through the House it has been passed. They don't realize that it hasn't received royal assent yet.

My next question has to do with a study that we're conducting right now on cybersecurity. Something that's come up quite a bit is the development of the 5G network. As you know, some of our Five Eyes partners have already made the decision to prevent Huawei from participating in the development of this network.

I wonder if you could just update us on when we can expect the government to make a decision in this regard.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** The issue is under very careful review, Ms. Damoff.

I don't think that today I can predict a precise timeline. However, I can tell you that all of the engaged departments and agencies of the Government of Canada are assessing this situation with great care and great rigour.

The global movement from what we're all familiar with under 4G to this bold new world of 5G is a tremendous advancement in science and innovation. With the kinds of benefits that 5G technology can hold for our society, for the economy, for the way we live and for the success we have as a country, the potential is simply enormous. At the same time, Canadians want to be sure that the supply chain that goes into that new technology will be safe, sound and secure.

We're not examining one particular company here or one particular country. It is the entire range of supply chain possibilities and potentialities. We want Canadians to have all the advantages of 5G, and we want the system to be safe and secure from end to end. We are doing our very best to ensure both of those objectives.

The departments of the Government of Canada are working very carefully together to make sure that we get to the very best possible decision that reflects the best Canadian vital interests, and of course in that process we will not compromise on safety or security.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Mr. Paul-Hus, you have the floor for seven minutes.

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and thank you for being here today.

Mr. Minister, the RCMP has a sizeable operating budget. There are lot of resources at your service and at the service of Canadians.

After you heard Jody Wilson-Raybould say in Cabinet, on Tuesday, that she had felt pressure to intervene in the prosecution against SNC-Lavalin, did you pass that information on to the RCMP?

• (1545)

[English]

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** Mr. Chairman, the RCMP is a completely independent policing organization. It never consults with me about when or whether to launch an investigation. It makes that determination entirely on its own, and that is exactly as it should be.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** Mr. Michaud, the RCMP has a national division that specializes in corruption investigations. Following the

allegations that came out in *The Globe and Mail* on February 7, did your division begin an investigation into them? Is that normal procedure?

**D/Commr Gilles Michaud (Deputy Commissioner, Federal Policing, Royal Canadian Mounted Police):** We never comment on active cases, and we do not confirm or...

[English]

to deny any ongoing criminal investigation.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** Thank you, Mr. Michaud.

Mr. Goodale, in your caucus meetings...

Last week, the Clerk of the Privy Council appeared before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. He mentioned that the possibility of a deferred prosecution agreement for SNC-Lavalin never came up in Cabinet. Is the Clerk of the Privy Council correct?

[English]

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** Could you be a little more precise? Something got lost in the translation, Mr. Paul-Hus.

**The Chair:** I think what happened was that it was translated as "caucus meetings", when in fact it was cabinet meetings. When the translation came through, that's what it came through as.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** Yes, they did say "caucus" in the translation.

**The Chair:** He means cabinet.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** Let me start my question again.

On the possibility that SNC-Lavalin had a deferred prosecution agreement, the Clerk of the Privy Council said that the matter never came up in Cabinet, ever.

Is the Clerk of the Privy Council correct?

[English]

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** Mr. Paul-Hus, never in—

**The Chair:** Excuse me.

Ms. Dabrusin.

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, you asked us to make sure that we were staying on the estimates. I'm wondering if, perhaps, I could get some guidance as to how this is all connected.

**The Chair:** Regrettably, the first questions had virtually nothing to do with the estimates. Unfortunately, when that precedent is set, the chair himself is kind of compromised.

If the questions on the government side have little or nothing to do with the estimates, it's hard for me to hold the opposition's feet to the fire when they ask questions that have nothing to do with the estimates.

Regrettably, I'm going to have to let Mr. Paul-Hus proceed.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** If I could answer that question, Mr. Chair, to the best of my knowledge, never in 45 years have I ever violated a confidence of the Queen's Privy Council or talked about the agenda of a cabinet meeting.

The clerk's remarks will need to stand on their own.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** It is just that the Clerk of the Privy Council took the opportunity to make a statement about Cabinet meetings at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. That is why I wanted to check with you whether Mr. Wernick gave the correct information.

Now I want to talk about this case about the Canadians who have fought with the group called the Islamic State. It is important to know whether we have the money we need to deal with the matter involving those people. This is about budgets, colleagues. I would like an update on the matter, Mr. Minister.

Could you also tell us about Mr. Wernick's comment last week that raises grave concern? Mr. Michaud and Mr. Vigneault can answer too. I would like to know whether Canadians are concerned by the fact that combatants from the group called the Islamic State are back in Canada. What measures have been put in place to deal with this matter appropriately? Are the resources sufficient to address it? Is the threat of murder during the election campaign a credible one, or is the Clerk of the Privy Council making it up?

[English]

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** On the latter point, Mr. Paul-Hus, as you will have noticed, about a month or so ago, on the topic of foreign interference in Canadian elections or some kind of disturbance during the election process that would undermine or attack our democracy, we announced a new all-of-government strategy for how we will deal with those issues.

The Minister of Democratic Institutions, Minister Gould, is the minister responsible for that set of initiatives, but it does include very substantial funding, part of it from our cyber envelope. The whole objective here is to have a system in place that has public credibility if there is an untoward interference in democracy detected by our police or security agencies. They will inform the Government of Canada, and the appropriate officials within the Government of Canada will inform Canadians.

• (1550)

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** I understand.

It would be good to caution the Clerk of the Privy Council to be careful about the statements he is making.

Let me go back to the combatants from the group called the Islamic State. They are now back in the country, which is a concern to Canadians. Do we have the resources we need to deal with them?

[English]

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** Yes, indeed we do. Those measures were laid out to a considerable extent in materials that we published during the month of December, and then subsequently in two public speeches that I have given on these issues.

There is a whole suite of measures that are available to our police and security agencies to respond to every manner of threat, including returning terrorist travellers who made the decision some years ago to go to another part of the world and associate themselves with some of the most vile behaviour that you can imagine, and now some may be thinking that they want to come back home. My instinctive reaction is that they need to shoulder the burden of responsibility for their behaviour. Our primary objective is to collect the evidence to charge and prosecute to the full extent of Canadian law.

Where that is not immediately possible, or where the collection of evidence takes time, we have other measures available to the Government of Canada and to our police and security authorities to ensure that Canadians are being kept safe. For example, we can remove passports, and we can engage in further surveillance, interrogations and investigations. There is an extensive amount of information gathering and information sharing among all of our allies to make sure that we have full and accurate information. There are no-fly listings, Criminal Code listings, terrorism peace bonds and legally authorized threat reduction measures under Canadian law.

All of that is available and is applied in the proper, professional manner by the appropriate police and security agencies that act on behalf of all Canadians.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Paul-Hus.

Mr. Dubé, you have seven minutes, please.

**Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP):** Thank you very much, Chair.

Minister and all the officials, thank you for being here.

I want to ask about the \$3.8 million that goes to CSE, because in the debate on Bill C-59, there's been this question that keeps coming back, which is that CSE is an organization that exists under the National Defence Act, as you know. Given that a lot of these umbrella organizations are being created and that money is now coming from your department to fund them, do we arrive at a point where the government envisages changing whose authority is over that department?

Minister, with all due respect to your colleague Minister Sajjan, you seem to be taking the lead on a lot of the issues that CSE works on. I'm wondering if there ever is a concern that, when the legislative, budgetary and parliamentary agenda is being led by one minister and authorizations by another, it starts to get a little muddled in terms of the responsibilities.

Is there ever any thought over rejigging how that works within cabinet?

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** I think you would need to be constantly alert to the issue of national security architecture, accountability and lines of reporting to make sure that you're not in any way compromising the ability of the organizations to do their jobs or compromising the capacity to be accountable to Canadians through the appropriate parliamentary or governmental authorities.

When Bill C-59 is ultimately approved, as I hope it will be, by the Senate and becomes law, the legislation governing CSE will be a new stand-alone bill, rather than an add-on to another piece of legislation.

• (1555)

**Mr. Matthew Dubé:** Yes, it wouldn't be an add-on to other legislation.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** It will have its own stand-alone authority, which is the first time it will have that authority.

The policy area is obviously a shared responsibility among a number of ministers. It is a good thing that it's not just one minister who is keeping an eye on these important things. However, the policy authority with respect to cyber, for example, rests with Public Safety Canada. The operational side of it is a matter that would be of greater interest to Minister Sajjan.

You can see why you would have those two things separated: operations on one side, but policy authority on the other. That's a good policy decision.

**Mr. Matthew Dubé:** Minister, I appreciate that.

You'll forgive me, but my time is short. I just want to flag it as something perhaps for further debate.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** Yes. It's a fair comment.

**Mr. Matthew Dubé:** I think you'll agree that the mandates are shifting significantly with new legislation.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** Yes. It's a good point.

**Mr. Matthew Dubé:** On that note, going to the elections interference piece raised by my colleague, what I wonder about is that some of the powers that are being used or potentially will be used by CSIS and others in the plan that was put forward by you and your colleagues are going to change if and when Bill C-59 finally gets adopted.

I asked the same question of Scott Jones when he was here on our cybersecurity study. Does that mean you're then bringing everything back to the drawing board in the event that Bill C-59 gets adopted, since some of the powers that are being used aren't even clearly defined or will change under the new legislation when it gets royal assent? I'm thinking of threat disruption as an example.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** I don't think that is directly relevant to the issue of foreign interference. Could you be a little more precise in what you're getting at here?

**Mr. Matthew Dubé:** Yes, Minister, of course.

With the announcement that was made, I believe the threat disruption powers that were first conferred by what was then Bill C-51 in the previous Parliament are one tool that CSIS may use in that event, and even with CSE's role will obviously significantly change once Bill C-59 gets royal assent. They have a large role to play in the election interference piece as well.

What happens for the whole-of-government approach if and when Bill C-59 gets royal assent, just with regard to the elections?

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** One thing that Bill C-59 does with respect to the threat reduction measures is to create a very clear procedural, as well as legal and constitutional, frame that will ensure more

transparency and more accountability. Exactly how the powers can be used is laid out now more explicitly in legislation than ever before.

The one major criticism of the old Bill C-51 was that the way those powers were worded in the old law implied that you could somehow exercise those powers in violation of the charter. We have clarified in the law explicitly that it is not the case, and that indeed, if and when those powers are ever exercised, they must be exercised in a manner consistent with the charter, not in violation of the charter.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Matthew Dubé:** Thank you, Mr. Minister.

I had other questions on that subject, but my time is rapidly running out and I have other matters to bring up.

A few weeks ago, you mentioned the establishment of an interim management advisory board for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. You also mentioned that a bill would be introduced, which I imagine will be done before the next elections. However, it is going to need funding.

Could you update us on those two matters? When can we expect the introduction of the bill that will make the board permanent, and is the funding enough that other oversight organizations already in place will not be adversely affected?

[*English*]

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** We fully expect to introduce that legislation during the current session of Parliament and before the House becomes incapacitated for good electoral reasons later this year. The power to create the interim management board exists under current legislation, and we will exercise those powers in an interim way, under existing legislation, but it is important that this be a permanent change, not a temporary change. That's why we will follow up the appointment of the interim board, which as we said at the time of the announcement we hope to have accomplished by the month of April, with legislation that would make the change permanent.

The cost of that change is something that can be handled within existing resources, but obviously the future charges will be covered in the estimates put before Parliament in subsequent iterations of the estimates in the future.

• (1600)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Dubé.

Ms. Sahota, you have seven minutes, please.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to go back to the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security. I commend you for creating the centre. It's well needed. We're in the middle of a cybersecurity study. Every day our hearts sink a little bit in worry about the gaps that exist currently in our framework, in our country, to be able to secure ourselves.

Of the many witnesses who have come before us, some have come from other countries, notably Israel, that are known as model countries to follow when it comes to investments they've made in this area. They have a good partnership between the private sector, academia and the government.

How do you envision the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security being able to establish that? In order to have successful protections, we need to train our young people in this area, and I believe we're lacking right now.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** Ms. Sahota, I think this is a huge opportunity for Canadians. Much of what we talk about in the realm of cybercrime and cyber-threats can be pretty scary stuff. We need to be realistic about how vulnerable we are as a result of our extensive interconnectedness. All of that technology brings huge advantages, but it also brings very significant risks. We need to be very clear-eyed about the threats and the risks. When everybody is wired together, the weakest link can bring down the whole house of cards.

Our cybersecurity policy is intended to make sure that we have the systems in place to respond to that. At the same time, we should not be driven by fear. We should be driven by an imperative that we want to keep Canadians safe and also want to take advantage of the huge opportunities that exist in this new and rapidly exploding field of technology.

That is exactly what the Israelis have done. They have cybersecurity as a major national priority. They pursue it relentlessly. They invest in it relentlessly. As a result, they are among the very best in the world. In the process, they have created for Israelis thousands and thousands and thousands of some of the most interesting jobs you could ever imagine.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** How are we going to adopt a similar model? I don't see the academics in place. We need to invest in that area. They were talking about training their kids in cybersecurity at a kindergarten age. What role can our government play in doing that?

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** We need to support science and make sure that we're supporting science that is relevant to cyber-related issues. I note that in our last couple of budgets, we have taken the level of science investment in Canada now to an all-time record high. Minister Duncan is very proud of that. She gives extensive speeches on the level of investment in Canadian science—focused, for example, on the STEM sector, on women in information technology, and on the new training program for kids learning code.

Within the cyber package, we have the beginnings of some new programs. There is a co-op education component, for example, where, to start with, we have set aside funding to encourage university students to develop their own interest in cybersecurity issues and to pursue it in a co-op education fashion where they are in academic institutions for a period of time and then work in the field for a period of time, advancing their education and expertise.

• (1605)

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Is there any money in your department to assist the building of these programs for universities or colleges?

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** For that particular program, the money was set aside in the budget last year.

I believe it's in ISED.

**Mr. Malcolm Brown (Deputy Minister, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness):** In ISED, yes.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** That's the Department of Innovation, Science and Economic Development. The other programming in ISED can also be very relevant to the cyber field.

I would just encourage all of us to make sure that cyber priorities are reflected across the full range of science funding that the Government of Canada does. I know that Minister Duncan and Minister Bains are very alert to the potential here. You're looking at millions of terrific jobs, as well as science, innovation, advanced engineering, export opportunities—

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Absolutely.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** It's a huge field, and it will bring big dividends to Canada if we invest in it more.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** I agree.

I have one more question, about the security and intelligence review agency. What is its mandate? How broad is it?

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** It's, quite literally, everything.

Right now, some of the security and intelligence operations of the Government of Canada are subject to specific reviews. CSIS, for example, is examined on an annual basis by the Security Intelligence Review Committee. There is a review agency that looks at CSE. It's the commissioner of the CSE, the Communications Security Establishment.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** What kinds of powers are granted to them?

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** In those two cases, the commissioner and SIRC have very extensive powers to know everything that those two agencies do, the CSE and CSIS. They have very well-established relationships where the agencies report to the review agencies. If the review agency wants any information, under the law they have complete access to all of that information. The problem is that they work in silos. SIRC can look at CSIS, and nothing else. The commissioner can look at CSE, and nothing else.

The new NSIRA, the national security and intelligence review agency created by Bill C-59, will be a comprehensive review agency with the legal authority to look at the security and intelligence operations of any agency or department of the Government of Canada.

Apart from the couple I've mentioned, there are at least 17 different departments and agencies of the Government of Canada that have some security or intelligence function—for example, CBSA, the Privy Council Office, the Department of National Defence, the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Transport and so forth. NSIRA will be able to look at all of that, without limitation.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Sahota.

Mr. Motz, you have five minutes, please.

**Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister and officials, for being here.

Minister, you have said many times that the protection of Canadians is your top priority. Rural Canadians have shown that they're not safe and they're not protected. Our committee has heard from many victims of rural crime, and from defence lawyers. People, many times, are forced to choose between hiding in their own homes, hoping that nothing goes wrong, and defending themselves and their children, potentially facing criminal charges in that defence.

Rural Canadians are wondering why your words on this and your actions don't match. I don't see anything in these estimates that deals with the skyrocketing rural crime rates. I'm wondering whether you can point me to where you're going to be dealing with this response in the estimates you've provided.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** In the first instance, Mr. Motz, the principal responsibility, obviously, for rural safety and policing falls within the jurisdiction of the provinces. The Government of Canada co-operates and assists by providing, for example, the contract services of the RCMP to a vast number of rural areas and rural communities across the country. The level of policing—the number of officers and so forth—is a matter of negotiation in the establishment of those contracts. In addition to that, there is the first nations policing program, which brings additional resources into the policing of communities in rural and remote areas.

With regard to the concerns that have been expressed in the last couple of years, particularly in your province and in mine, Alberta and Saskatchewan, the RCMP have worked extensively with the provincial departments of the attorney general—or the relevant departments that deal with policing in those provinces—to ensure that the existing resources are deployed in the right manner and based upon intelligence.

The former commanding officer for the RCMP in Saskatchewan, Curtis Zablocki, made a point a couple of years ago of travelling extensively through rural Saskatchewan, conducting public town hall meetings with the local municipalities to get their input and advice. He then deployed that information to ensure the proper distribution and deployment of his officers and personnel.

A different, but similar, effort was undertaken in Alberta. I note that both the Attorney General of Saskatchewan, Mr. Morgan, and the Attorney General of Alberta, Ms. Ganley, have commented publicly that they have appreciated very much the work that's been done in the last year and a half to increase the level of awareness and collaboration.

The deployment of resources assisted in bringing down the angst about rural safety—and I don't minimize that angst because it's a very real concern. Progress has been made. Additional progress will be possible with new funding that we will be making available to all of the provinces to better deal with issues of guns and gangs, including rural gangs.

• (1610)

**Mr. Glen Motz:** Thank you, Minister. We have a long way to go. That's the issue.

Under your watch, we've lost control at our borders. Border security officers are being redeployed to deal with the crisis and are not being replaced across the country. As I said, rural crime is a major concern in many areas. The RCMP is in crisis, with both its urban and rural detachments and its crime labs being under-resourced and under-supplied. We have ISIS terrorists returning to Canada with little or no intervention. Some even get parole while they remain a threat to our country and to people. Corrections officers fear being stabbed, and, according to you, urban crime is rampant and gangs are out of control.

Your various legislations have met opposition from everyone except my colleagues across the way. Quite frankly, Canadians expected to see, in these estimates, something different. They wanted to see a plan. Instead, with all due respect, it appears as if your primary job is to protect and cover up for an incompetent prime minister.

Can you show me here, in these estimates, how you're going to deal with rural crime? How are you going to deal with gangs? How are you going to deal with cybersecurity? How are you going to deal with securing our borders? I don't see them anywhere in these estimates.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** I think you've just missed the last hour of the meeting, Mr. Motz—

**The Chair:** Mr. Goodale, Mr. Motz has run out of his time.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** You can't leave that slander on the record, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** I'm perfectly happy to let you have a response, but I want the response to be somewhat within a time limit.

I'll give you the time to respond.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** Mr. Chair, what you've heard is a drive-by smear. It really is an insult to the quality of the work that one should expect to be done by this committee. That kind of litany of abuse, innuendo and downright falsehoods and untruths is simply not acceptable. I won't dignify that barrage of garbage with an answer, because it doesn't deserve one.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Picard, the floor is yours for five minutes.

[*English*]

**Mr. Michel Picard (Montarville, Lib.):** Thank you, Minister.

Last January, you were part of a meeting related to emergency management, in fact a signature emergency management strategy for Canada. Would you expand on that, please?

•(1615)

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** This is something the Government of Canada and all of the provinces and territories have been working on for the last three years, the development of a new, all-inclusive emergency management strategy for the country. There has been excellent buy-in and co-operation and enthusiastic support from all other jurisdictions, the provinces and territories in particular. There are many municipalities and other organizations that are interested in this.

We've taken not just a whole-of-government approach, but a whole-of-society approach, recognizing that when disaster strikes, you need everybody on board responding completely and comprehensively in a way that is thought out in advance, planned and coordinated, so that the maximum benefit can be achieved for Canadians. The strategy lays that out.

It also benefits from extremely good communication and co-operation with indigenous communities across the country. One of the things included in our approach is doing a complete inventory in all of the roughly 700 indigenous communities across Canada to know the risk factors that affect those communities and the capacity within those communities to deal with those risk factors, and to determine where the gaps are and how we need to fill them. The coordination has been extraordinarily good.

At the meeting you referred to in January with all provinces and territories represented, I have never seen a more positive attitude around the federal-provincial-territorial table than that discussion. It was excellent, and we now have the strategy. We are all committed, federally and provincially, over the next five years, to take the elements of that strategy and implement those elements to ensure that Canadians are kept safe, in part, by having the most effective emergency response capabilities they can possibly have.

**Mr. Michel Picard:** Allow me to switch to French.

[*Translation*]

Most voters in Quebec are concerned about climate change. This is the message I receive from most of my fellow MPs and, as an issue, it is becoming increasingly important. Climate change brings with it its fair share of challenges.

Managing emergencies such as those for which we have a national strategy leads us to wonder whether the amounts invested in the strategies in preparation for these emergencies and disasters matches the size and complexity of the climate changes we are seeing, as illustrated by the weather in recent days. Do the investments simply maintain operations at their current levels or is there a realization that climate change and its effects on us might warrant a much more significant response on the part of the department?

[*English*]

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** The Parliamentary Budget Officer and the Auditor General have analyzed the pattern of increasing risk over the last number of years, and in taking climate change into account have tried to project into the future what we can expect in losses and damages, particularly from floods and wildfires. The projection is that we probably need to set aside about a billion dollars a year just for cleaning up the mess after the fact.

One of the premises in the emergency management strategy, recognizing that this is the big future risk going forward, is that we're going to either pay now or pay later. You either prevent the loss, or you clean up the mess after the fact. The latter is usually more expensive.

We have tried to identify opportunities in our infrastructure spending, for example, where, before the fact, you can build structures—some of them heavily engineered, concrete structures and some of them natural habitat—to better control water flows, so that you can try to protect yourself as much as possible from the storm that dumps a year's worth of precipitation on a community or an area in two or three days and then floods everything with huge losses.

We have a federal program called the DFAA, disaster financial assistance arrangements, which compensates for some of the losses. That program has, if my memory serves me correctly, paid out more to compensate for floods and wildfires in the last six years than it has paid out in total over the full history of the program, going back to 1970.

Obviously, the situation in recent years has been getting worse and the risk is higher. Therefore, investing in more climate-resilient infrastructure in advance will save you money after the fact.

•(1620)

**Mr. Michel Picard:** Thank you, Minister.

**The Chair:** We're going to have to leave it there, please.

Mr. Eglinski.

**Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC):** Minister Goodale, your director of CSIS, who is here today, just recently said that it's becoming increasingly evident that the “hostile foreign intelligence services” that are targeting “corporate secrets” and “intellectual property” of Canadian companies pose a greater threat to our national security than terrorists do. That's a pretty serious assertion.

How has that impacted your decision on allowing a company like Huawei to participate in Canada's 5G program?

To take it even more seriously, the Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, recently said that if countries adopt this corporation or organization in their...or fail to look at it, the U.S. may not be able to do business with them.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** We're obviously weighing very carefully all the issues around the 5G supply chain. Whether it's one particular company or country, or any or all of them, we want the supply chain to be absolutely secure. That's the consideration and analysis that we're going through right now.

A final decision has not yet been taken, but it will be in the weeks and months ahead. In making that decision, we will make sure that Canadian national security and the safety of Canadians is front and centre, first and foremost in the consideration. We will obviously weigh very carefully what all our allies say and feel about this issue, because we are heavily interconnected with all of them.

In terms of the issue more specifically, Mr. Eglinski, let me ask David Vigneault for his comments, because that was his speech you were referring to.

**Mr. Jim Eglinski:** It was.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** And it was a very good one.

**Mr. David Vigneault (Director, Canadian Security Intelligence Service):** If I remember correctly, I've said that terrorism is and will remain the most significant threat to public safety. However, the point of my speech was to bring attention to the significant long-term impact of espionage and foreign interference in our prosperity, democracy and sovereignty in the years to come. It was to bring a little diversity and more specific points from a professional point of view to the public debate on national security.

I do believe that these issues of terrorism, espionage and foreign interference are and will remain the most significant issues we're dealing with.

**Mr. Jim Eglinski:** How much time do I have left?

**The Chair:** You have two minutes.

**Mr. Jim Eglinski:** Last week, Stewart Bell at Global News broke the news that an individual who had pleaded guilty to fighting with al Qaeda less than two years ago is already on parole and walking our streets. The same guy, Mr. Mohamed, has made public statements encouraging like-minded individuals to go out and do acts of terrorism in Canada. The Parole Board said this guy isn't going to change.

Yesterday on TV, there was a program from the United States dealing with a very similar individual who fought for al Qaeda and who is in custody in the United States. He's been in custody for eight years. The FBI and the superior court judge came forward and said that over the last eight years, that guy helped in their fight against al Qaeda, yet when a superior court judge looked at sentencing that gentleman, he gave him eight years. He said that was enough.

Our closest partner south of us says that a person who has proven to have been converted and has helped government authorities fight the people he had joined should serve eight years, yet here in Canada, just north of the border, we have a person who spends less than two years and is walking the streets. Do you think this is safe for Canadians?

• (1625)

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** Mr. Eglinski, the police, security, correctional and parole authorities in Canada have one overriding priority, which is keeping Canadians safe. They make the appropriate decisions to do that. They work very closely together. The particular individual you refer to is the subject of a recent decision by the Parole Board.

The chair of the board, Jennifer Oades, is here. She can comment on that, to the extent that she can with respect to a specific case. I think she can give you a sense of the factors the Parole Board takes into account to ensure that its decisions are contributing to—not detracting from—national security and public safety.

**The Chair:** Answer very briefly, please.

**Ms. Jennifer Oades (Chairperson, Parole Board of Canada):** Yes, thank you.

We don't usually talk about individual cases, but this particular case is relatively easy for the board because in fact we didn't make a decision on this case. This was not a case of parole. This was a statutory release case. As you may know, after serving two-thirds of a sentence, offenders are statutorily released and come under the supervision of the Correctional Service of Canada—of parole officers in the community—for that last one third of their sentence.

In those statutory release cases, the board is not deciding whether they're getting out or not. We know they're getting out. We work with all of our partners in terms of putting conditions on that release.

I hope that helps.

**Mr. Jim Eglinski:** Were there further conditions put on that release?

**Ms. Jennifer Oades:** Yes, there were conditions.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Eglinski.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** I would note that the law that was applied in this case is the same law that existed through the entire term of the previous government.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Dabrusin, you have the final five minutes, please.

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin:** Thank you.

Thank you, Minister, for being with us today.

As I was listening to you talk about funding for support for RCMP officers, one of the things that came to mind.... I've talked with first responders in my community about their reactions when they have come to some very difficult situations. They are the paramedics and cops first on the scene. I was wondering if perhaps you could give us a bit of an update on how we're doing with our progress on PTSD supports for our first responders.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** It's a hugely important question, Ms. Dabrusin. Thank you for raising it. I know that members around this table, on all sides, have taken a great interest in PTSD or PTSI.

We are committed to the production, later on this spring, of a comprehensive strategy with respect to PTSI. That will be forthcoming in the months immediately ahead. There are various elements of that already in place. In the last budget, for example, there was significant funding set aside for an organization called the Canadian Institute for Public Safety Research and Treatment. It's a network of universities and academic organizations across the country working with the Canadian Institutes of Health Research on the research that is necessary specifically with respect to PTSI among first responders. They have full access to all the work that is done with respect to military personnel and veterans, as well. This is new research that is being undertaken, specifically focused on the issues relevant to first responders.

The RCMP has just upgraded its mental health services. I believe about \$10 million, or perhaps \$20 million, was set aside for the RCMP in the latest budget. The last couple of budgets have invested significant new dollars in both treatment and research, but we need to pull this all together in a coordinated way with the provinces—because many of these people are operating under either provincial or municipal jurisdiction—with the academic institutions, and with the unions that represent firefighters and police officers and paramedics, as well as the chiefs and the management in each one of those areas. That's what the comprehensive approach is intended to do.

The Prime Minister was asked that question a month or so ago in the House, and he indicated that we are on track to deliver later this spring a comprehensive policy where we pull all of these threads together. Part of it is the private member's legislation.... Was it Bill C-211?

• (1630)

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin:** Yes, it's MP Doherty's bill.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** Mr. Doherty's bill—I believe it's Bill C-211—was passed by the House about a year ago. In putting together our national strategy, we will be very much honouring what Parliament adopted in that legislation.

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin:** Minister, I can never miss an opportunity, when I have you with me, to raise CBSA oversight.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** I knew that was coming.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin:** I was just wondering if you could give me an update on where we're at on setting up independent CBSA oversight.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** The legislation is in the process of being drafted, and we intend to present it at the earliest opportunity. The functions of the CBSA that touch on national security are covered by Bill C-59, just as any other department or agency of the Government of Canada that deals with security or intelligence issues is covered by C-59.

However, where you're dealing with individual officer complaints or concerns about specific functions or situations, you will need a separate instrument. That's what we're drafting now, and we will present it as rapidly as we can. It's very much in progress.

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin:** I'm looking forward to it.

**The Chair:** Once again, Minister, I see that the enthusiasm for your appearance far exceeds the enthusiasm for estimates.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** On behalf of the committee, I want to thank you and your officials for your appearance.

With that, we'll suspend while we re-empanel.

• \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

•

• (1635)

**The Chair:** I see a quorum. I see that Minister Blair has joined us, and I see that the rest of the officials haven't left.

With that, I'll ask Minister Blair for his opening statement.

**Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, colleagues.

Given that Minister Goodale earlier today provided an overview on behalf of the portfolio, I'd like to take the opportunity to focus on some of the work I have been undertaking as the Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction with various partners since the last time I had the opportunity and privilege of appearing before this committee.

I appreciate that the agency and department heads have stayed on for another hour to help with any questions that you may have. I take great comfort in being surrounded by their expertise.

As you know, my mandate as minister is to ensure that our borders remain secure and to lead efforts to reduce the impact of organized crime. These issues do not rest in any one department, so ensuring that strong links exist between so many departments and agencies is critical both within and outside the Public Safety portfolio. The latter has provided extraordinary support on issues ranging from border security to drug-impaired driving and tackling gun violence.

Health Canada and Justice Canada have also been key to our success in the legalization and strict regulation of cannabis, helping to reinforce new impaired driving laws, which we announced very recently, and advocating for responsible cannabis use.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, along with Global Affairs Canada, have also undertaken critical work on irregular migration and on discussing the safe third country agreement with the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

Transport Canada and Global Affairs have also helped to look at opportunities for pre-clearance for Canadians travelling to the United States.

I have been reaching out to provincial, territorial and municipal colleagues, stakeholders and other partners, including chiefs of police, on a wide range of issues under my mandate, including addressing gun violence. I've had the chance to discuss that issue at a recent meeting of federal, provincial and territorial ministers as well. Over the last few months, engagement activities on reducing gun and gang violence, including in-person round table sessions across Canada and an online questionnaire have taken place. I will have more to report on that important work in the near future.

I have also met with our American colleagues in Washington, D. C., to continue co-operative efforts to keep our borders safe while also protecting citizens from crime and the dangers of illegal substances.

Mr. Chair, while we face many challenges in the realm of public safety and security, I have full faith in each and every one of our departments and agencies and in their leadership to build on the progress we have already made together. The people working in these departments are extremely dedicated, hard-working individuals, and I want to take the opportunity to commend them for the work they do each and every day to keep Canadians safe.

Minister Goodale has already highlighted for you in his remarks some of the work that is taking place. As he noted, the estimates are an important tool to make sure that funds are flowing where they need to flow. He highlighted that in supplementary estimates (B), the Public Safety portfolio as a whole is requesting total authorities that would result in a net increase of \$24.3 million over authorities to date. This constitutes a 0.2% increase.

With respect to the interim estimates, I'll note that most of the portfolio has similar funding levels to 2018-19. I'd like to focus on a few specific items, which are, as I've said, specific to my mandate.

One of my key commitments is to make sure that we're investing in keeping Canada's borders open to the free flow of legitimate trade and travel while promoting the protection and safety of Canadians. The supplementary estimates highlight transfers to other organizations for services provided to them. I raise this because it highlights how closely the CBSA works with partners to keep our borders safe and efficient. For example, Shared Services Canada provides key information technology services. The RCMP provides law enforcement record checks, and the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development provides support to CBSA officers who are located at missions abroad.

Protecting our borders is truly a collaborative undertaking across all levels of government and across many departments. It's mission-critical that we manage it effectively while also ensuring the national and economic security of Canada and the United States writ large, which in turn can have a global impact. This is central to my mandate and will remain a key focus for me as we move forward.

On that, I'm pleased to report that progress is being made on a number of files, including pre-clearance systems. Pre-clearance means that travellers can complete necessary customs and immigration procedures before they leave, instead of after they arrive. As you know, Canada and the U.S. recently negotiated an expansion of pre-clearance, thanks in no small part to this committee's careful review of the legislation that allowed it. The goal is to cover more airports and other modes of transportation and to allow for traffic moving south to north. Both countries have now passed the necessary legislation for that to move forward, and work is currently under way on expansion to new locations and to look for opportunities like cargo pre-clearance.

● (1640)

On the security front, I'll note that I'm also fortunate to have forged a very solid working relationship with the departments of Homeland Security and Justice, and other U.S. agencies that help us

meet the demands of a complex and evolving security landscape. That relationship is critical to protecting Canadians every day, supporting our efforts to counter guns, gangs and opioid distribution—things that are all central to my mandate.

Mr. Chair, these are merely a few examples of the important work that is happening across the Public Safety portfolio and beyond to the work of many departments supporting my mandate. I want to thank the members of this committee for their consideration of these estimates and for all their important ongoing work.

Mr. Chair, thank you, and I look forward to the questions of the committee.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister Blair.

Colleagues, it's my intention to call for the vote on the supplementary estimates, and the other estimates as well, immediately prior to when we usually end the meeting. I am anticipating that this will be routine and we will take very little time to do it, so I'm going to let questions run right up to the end of the time that's allotted.

With that, we'll ask Ms. Damoff to begin, for seven minutes.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Thanks, Chair.

Thanks, Minister Blair, for being with us again. It's always nice to have you here to answer our questions.

Minister, one of the things you've been doing is having consultations around handguns and assault weapons. I've been following the testimony at the Senate committee, and in particular the information that the Canadian Doctors for Protection from Guns have been talking about, as well as Dr. Alan Drummond, who has appeared before our committee a number of times. They have said that we need to be looking at firearms from a public health perspective.

Something I've brought up here at committee a number of times is not just the implication of guns in gangs and criminal activities, but also their prevalence in suicides: 75% to 80% of gun deaths are suicides. Also, in terms of intimate partner violence, 26% of deaths in Ontario involved a firearm. There are a number of other peer-reviewed studies of rural areas that point to firearms being implicated in intimate partner violence. I spoke to the director of the YWCA in Lethbridge, Alberta, and asked her in how many cases firearms were implicated in women coming to the shelter, and she said it was in all of them.

In your consultations, I'm wondering whether this has been a factor that you've been considering and whether it has come up at all, because it really is a part of the conversation that seems to get lost in all the rhetoric.

•(1645)

**Hon. Bill Blair:** Yes, Ms. Damoff, let me assure you that this is certainly a consideration that has been well canvassed in my examination of this issue as part of my mandate. We have a Canadian Firearms Advisory Committee, which I meet with regularly. There is an emergency room physician in that group who provides that perspective. The group that testified before the Senate, the trauma and emergency room physicians who spoke, I have met with them as a group as well.

I think it's very important for us to have that perspective. In my experience, applying a public health lens where we look at all the harms, both social and health, related to the issue of firearm violence in our communities, can be very helpful in ensuring that we do take measures that will actually be effective in keeping people safe, to reduce the incidence of fear. I believe that, at my last committee appearance here, we spoke about how prevalent fear is in intimate partner relationships where there's a firearm present, for example, and the impact it can have on individuals who are suffering from depression or other forms of illness that could cause them to be a risk to themselves or to others.

The public health lens is a very effective way in which that can be done, and certainly in our consultations that has been well articulated by witnesses who have come before me.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Thank you, Minister.

Something else that has attracted a lot of rhetoric is the issue of asylum seekers coming across the border. I have a question regarding investments in that, but first I have two questions, if you can just give me really quick answers.

Are we welcoming terrorists and criminals into Canada?

**Hon. Bill Blair:** Absolutely not.

Frankly, I will tell you that in my very strong opinion, this is not in any way a security or safety issue. I know the incredible work done by our officials at CBSA, the RCMP and IRCC to ensure that there are very rigorous security background checks for everyone who enters the country, regardless of how they do it. I think the work they do.... Some 95 million people are processed and screened before they come in, but those who are coming in irregularly at our borders are detained. They are subject to very rigorous background checks—biometrics are taken, photographs and fingerprints.

All of the things that are necessary to maintain the safety and security of our country are being done by our officials.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Can Canadians feel safe? Are they safe, Minister?

**Hon. Bill Blair:** Yes, they really are.

I think it's also important to reflect on who is coming across that border. Overwhelmingly, they're families, and 40% of the people coming across are children. They represent no risk to anyone. Many of them are seeking asylum, seeking the protection of this country and fleeing persecution.

We also have rigorous systems in place. They are entitled to due process, but it's also to ensure that they are in fact eligible for our

country's protection. If it is determined that they are not following that due process, they're also subject to removal.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Minister, I was reading an article about seizure of firearms. It think it was at the Rainbow Bridge where RCMP police service dogs were used to detect the firearms.

Under the previous government, I think cuts of \$500 million were made to the RCMP, and there were significant cuts—I think of the same amount—to CBSA. Our government has been investing in the RCMP and CBSA so they can get more dogs to work at the border.

I wonder if you can talk about some of those investments that have been made to make sure that our agencies that are doing this good work have the tools available to them to do their job well and effectively.

**Hon. Bill Blair:** I can tell you that there has been a reinvestment by the government into the CBSA and the RCMP on a number of fronts. Certainly on the issue of border security, additional investments have been made in CBSA to provide them with access to those dogs—which, when properly trained, can be invaluable—but also access to other technologies, because that technology is advancing and we are making investments in that.

We've been working hard to restore the capacity, and I think about \$74 million was invested in CBSA for that purpose.

Did I get that right, Tina? Was I close?

•(1650)

**Ms. Tina Namiesniowski (Executive Vice-President, Canada Border Services Agency):** In the context of the interim estimates, there is funding being made available to the CBSA for expenses associated with guns and gangs. In the context of that funding, there is funding that includes additional dog teams, and the funding is slightly less than the amount the minister mentioned.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Damoff.

Before I turn to Mr. Paul-Hus, I have a question. You mentioned a figure, Minister, of \$95 million. What did that refer to?

**Hon. Bill Blair:** It's generally for the investments in the asylum system. There are investments in improving our systems and also investments in the agencies and departments, particularly pertaining to the investment in asylum.

**Ms. Tina Namiesniowski:** The investment in asylum that was provided to CBSA through the last budget, budget 2018, was approximately \$72 million, some for this current fiscal year, as well as an amount for the next fiscal year.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Paul-Hus, you have seven minutes.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Blair, in your opening remarks, you talked about an anticipated increase in the number of customs pre-clearance centres in Canadian airports. Is the Quebec City airport one of your priorities for passenger pre-clearance?

[English]

**Hon. Bill Blair:** Yes, there is. The airport in Quebec City is one of the airports where there are current discussions taking place. There is still a great deal of work to do, but that is certainly one of the areas where I know discussions are taking place.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** That is great. Thank you.

Since you have been a minister, you have often said in your responses to questions that the Conservative government reduced the budget of the Canada Border Services Agency, or CBSA, by \$300 million.

When Mr. Ossowski, the CBSA president, appeared before our committee on May 10, 2018, he explained that the decreases in the supplementary estimates could be a result of a number of major projects coming to an end. Funding had been allocated, but was no longer necessary. Hence the budget was reduced and returned to stability. Can you confirm for us today that the reply suggested to you from the Prime Minister's office was false, that the Conservatives did not make cuts, and that it is simply about going back to a normal budget?

[English]

**Hon. Bill Blair:** I was pointing out that there was approximately \$1.2 billion taken from the security services during the final few years of the term of your government, and about \$319 million of that came from CBSA.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** Okay.

So can you confirm that our government never made any cuts, that there was an increase in order to fund projects, and that the budget has subsequently returned to normal?

[English]

**Hon. Bill Blair:** I can simply tell you that there was a \$319-million cut—

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** Okay.

[English]

**Hon. Bill Blair:** I'm aware of that. I'm not familiar with the rationale for doing it. I'm just aware that the cut was made.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** Okay, Mr. Minister, we got it.

I want to go back to the safe third country agreement between Canada and the United States, which you talked about in your speech. For us, it has been a major problem for two or two and a half years. You say that you are currently in negotiations with Ms. Nielsen, the United States' Secretary of Homeland Security, and that progress is being made.

What are your intentions, and what are the Americans asking for in the safe third country agreement between Canada and the United States? What are the objectives, the intentions and the demands. What is the progress?

[English]

**Hon. Bill Blair:** Since 2017, people have been crossing at irregular border points in order to be exempt from the terms and conditions of the safe third country agreement, which has been in place between Canada and the United States since 2014. It's a bilateral agreement, as you know. It's an agreement that we cannot simply change unilaterally.

We have gone to the United States and we have explained to the Americans some of the challenges we are facing as a result of people crossing irregularly in order to avoid the safe third country agreement provisions. We believe there is an opportunity for the modernization of that agreement, to the mutual benefit of both countries, to deal with issues that have arisen on both sides of the border in a more effective way.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** Do you agree, as the Department of Homeland Security has stated, that the United States is a safe country? Do we agree with that?

[English]

**Hon. Bill Blair:** Yes.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** Okay.

[English]

**Hon. Bill Blair:** The United States is a country that is governed by the rule of law, and it is a safe country.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** You did not answer my question. We are all aware of the safe third country agreement between Canada and the United States and the rules associated with it. We are also aware of the problems caused by the fact that migrants are crossing at places other than official ports of entry. You say that negotiations are going well, but what are you negotiating? What are you asking for from the United States in terms of amendments to the safe third country agreement between Canada and the United States?

• (1655)

[English]

**Hon. Bill Blair:** I'm hoping that we will be able, in our discussions and further agreements with the Americans, to ensure that people do not cross irregularly, and that there is no incentive for them to cross irregularly.

I would also like to avoid a situation where people may try to enter the country without being subject to being stopped by the RCMP and CBSA, because that is one way in which our officials are ensuring the safety and security of the country. It's perhaps more complex than some might have suggested.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** I understand that it may be complex, but do you not have a specific proposal, like the ones the Conservatives have, which states that crossing the border anywhere is the same as crossing at an official port of entry?

[English]

**Hon. Bill Blair:** Regardless of how anyone enters the country, if they make a claim for asylum, they are entitled to due process under Canadian law and by international convention. We have been taking a number of measures that have been effective, and we believe more can be done to encourage people to enter the country at a regular point of entry to discourage them from coming in irregularly.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** I see that we are not going to be finding out about that today. Perhaps next time.

Let us go back to the budget and the migrants who have crossed the border illegally. Currently, the bill comes to \$1.6 billion. That's \$1.1 billion directly for federal organizations, but Ontario and Quebec are asking for \$500 million.

Do the supplementary estimates contain \$500 million for the provinces?

[English]

**Hon. Bill Blair:** I would like to clarify, if I may. When a person enters this country, regardless of whether they do it at a point of entry or irregularly, and makes a claim for asylum, their presence in the country ceases to be illegal. I wanted to clarify that for you, because you kept referring to them as illegals once in the country, but the reality is that once they've made an asylum claim—

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** No, I never said that.

[English]

**Hon. Bill Blair:** —they have a lawful—

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** I understand.

[English]

**Hon. Bill Blair:** Under our law, they are present legally.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** This debate has been going on for two years. I know; I understand completely. But I am talking about the budget, the bills. You may say that these people are crossing the border irregularly, but I use the word illegal for the 40,000 people who have crossed the border and arrived on our doorstep. We know that is costing \$1.1 billion over three years in federal government services and that Ontario and Quebec are asking for \$500 million to pay their bills for social services. Do the supplementary estimates contain \$500 million for those two provinces?

Mr. Chair, this is clearly about the budget. But the minister has no answers.

[English]

**Hon. Bill Blair:** Actually, I do. I was just getting some additional information.

First of all, with respect to that money, it is in IRCC's budget and it would be more appropriately addressed at the CIMM committee. However, I'm happy to tell you that people who have come to this country as refugees have historically been a responsibility of all three orders of government, including municipalities, provinces and

territories. We have made an effort, for many generations, to ensure that they are appropriately housed and have access, more recently, to medical services and other services while they undergo our legal due process in determining their eligibility to stay.

As a result of an increase in the number of people who have arrived recently, not unlike what we experienced in previous years, we saw that there was an impact—a cost impact—particularly on municipalities. Therefore, we have been working to provide assistance and support to municipalities, which have really stepped up and done an excellent job of providing those individuals with temporary housing.

As you're aware, there are ongoing discussions with the provinces of Ontario and Quebec and with other provinces as well. We see this as very much a cost-sharing partnership among all three orders of government, and we're working hard to make sure that it's done in an appropriate way.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Paul-Hus. Thank you, in particular, for those questions on the estimates.

Mr. Dubé, you have seven minutes, please.

[Translation]

**Mr. Matthew Dubé:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being here today, Mr. Minister.

My first question is about Bill C-415, sponsored by my colleague Murray Rankin. It provides for the removal of the judicial records of those convicted of simple possession of marijuana.

I would like to know whether the government has changed its mind and intends to support this bill. If not, when can we expect the introduction of the bill we were promised the moment the act was passed, a bill that, in a way, would suspend criminal records?

● (1700)

[English]

**Hon. Bill Blair:** I'm happy to tell you, Mr. Dubé, that, first of all, I'm very proud of the fact that, as a result of legislation we brought forward on October 17, 2018, we stopped criminalizing Canadians, particularly young Canadians. It was an acknowledgement and recognition that the consequences of a criminal record for simple possession of cannabis were disproportionate to that offence and they were lifelong consequences. We also recognize that it was disproportionately affecting poorer, marginalized and indigenous communities. That ended on October 17.

We've also made a commitment that we will take the steps necessary to deal in an appropriate way with the existing criminal records for simple possession of cannabis. The government has undertaken to do that, and I expect that we'll be moving forward on that in the near future.

[Translation]

**Mr. Matthew Dubé:** So there is no timeline for the matter, correct?

[English]

**Hon. Bill Blair:** I'm only able to tell this committee that we remain committed to dealing with them in an appropriate way. We are making pardons for that offence accessible to Canadians by addressing the issues of cost, which was prohibitive for some, and the timelines, so that it would be readily accessible to those who seek that pardon.

[Translation]

**Mr. Matthew Dubé:** Let me move to another subject. Money laundering is a subject that gets a lot of reaction, especially in British Columbia. Does the RCMP have sufficient resources to investigate the matter properly and for investigations to be duly conducted in the future? Are you able to update us on the situation? From what we read in the news and according to the report that has been tabled, something is definitely missing.

[English]

**Hon. Bill Blair:** Clearly, money laundering is an issue we take seriously. It is a significant portion of my responsibility and mandate. I have gone to British Columbia. I have met with the attorney general and the premier there. I've also met with Dr. Peter German, who has conducted the reviews of money laundering in their casinos and is currently undertaking and completing another review, with respect to the impact on the real estate industry.

We have been working very closely with that province, but it is a problem that is not limited only to British Columbia. I'm aware that our officials have recently concluded an investigation in Ontario and Quebec into money laundering, so it is an issue that the RCMP takes very seriously. In collaboration with the provinces and territories, we also think that there are opportunities to continue to improve these investigations and the prosecutions that will flow from them, so we're working on those things together right now.

[Translation]

**Mr. Matthew Dubé:** Thank you.

I have two questions on street gangs, which is also part of your mandate.

There is a lot of talk about finances and strategies. But I wonder what the money is being used for, more specifically. Before the recruitment fund was eliminated by the previous government, provinces and territories could hire front-line officers, for places not covered by the RCMP.

As a Quebec member, the example that comes to my mind is the Section Éclipse in Montreal. That could have been eliminated because the funding was terminated. In the end, the province and the municipality stepped in to fill the gap in the funding.

Do you foresee reinstating that recruitment fund, which enables provinces and municipalities to fight street gangs, especially in Ontario and Quebec? As you know, in those two provinces, the provincial police forces are part of that fight and must have the resources they need.

[English]

**Hon. Bill Blair:** I am familiar with the previous government introducing the police officer recruitment fund, in 2008. That fund expired in 2013, and it was not continued.

I can tell you what we've been doing with respect to guns and gang violence. First of all, Minister Goodale convened a summit of law enforcement and other community officials from across the country to gather information, and based on the feedback we received, an announcement was made by Public Safety Canada and \$347 million was committed to a number of different initiatives in response to gun and gang concerns across the country.

Some of that money was dedicated to both the RCMP and the CBSA for the important work that they do in interdicting the supply of guns and conducting criminal investigations into the individuals responsible for it. Also, a significant portion of that funding, some \$214 million, is to be allocated through the provinces and territories to various initiatives, including, but not limited to, law enforcement initiatives. Those discussions are currently taking place with the provinces and territories for the allocation of those monies.

• (1705)

**Mr. Matthew Dubé:** I have a minute left, Minister.

One of my colleagues, Ms. Dabrusin, asked about CBSA oversight. It feels like it's been three years now that Mr. Goodale has been telling us over and over that it's coming, so maybe we'll get a bill that we can adopt before the election.

Glibness aside, I do want to address this issue. I don't know if you could comment on this, or if this is for Minister Goodale. He did mention that the new review body created in Bill C-59 would look into issues relating to national security. However, many of the issues that have come forward, especially in the media, that such a body could look at—in particular, allegations of harassment in the workplace and things of that nature, or even some of the security issues that have been raised—could be looked at by a more specific mechanism that doesn't necessarily fall under....

There's some debate about whether everything the CBSA does, as a national security body, falls under that committee. Can you comment on that specifically? What's being done to address some of those issues in the workplace and some of those security screening issues, for example, that oversight and review could help us address?

**The Chair:** Please answer very briefly. Mr. Dubé is out of time.

**Hon. Bill Blair:** Very briefly, that's primarily the responsibility of Minister Goodale, and I know he's better positioned to speak to that issue for you.

[Translation]

**Mr. Matthew Dubé:** Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Dubé.

Ms. Sahota, you have seven minutes, please.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Thank you, Minister, for being here today.

I don't know if you're aware, but I think Mr. Paul-Hus and one of our Liberal members recently filmed an episode of *Political Blind Date*, where they went to the Quebec-U.S. border to see the situation of asylum seekers first-hand. He may be under duty not to say what happened in the show at this point, because I don't know if it has aired or not, but there was a little segment in The Hill Times about it. I believe that during the whole time they were there, they didn't see a single irregular border crosser.

The purpose of the show is to bring issues...when members from different parties have different views on issues, to try to see where they can be brought together in an unusual circumstance. I thought it was quite interesting. I wanted to hear first-hand from you about the numbers, and if, in fact, the numbers of irregular border entries have decreased.

Can you shed some light on that? If that is the case, if they were there for many hours and there was no occurrence, how have you been able to accomplish that?

**Hon. Bill Blair:** First of all, if I may, let me commend the members for going to Lacolle. I think it's a great opportunity. I would encourage all of my colleagues in the House who have any concerns about what's taking place there to go and watch the incredible and excellent work done by our officials to maintain the safety and security of our country and to process those people in an appropriate way.

There has been, just over the past number of months, a reduction in what we have seen in previous months. It's certainly a lower number. Quite frankly, we remain vigilant and maintain a presence there. Although we've made some real progress in reducing the number of people who are crossing irregularly, we remain there and the resources are there to make sure that whatever comes is properly and safely dealt with.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Other than the processing of people at the border, through the different techniques and agents, what methods of communication or education have you been undertaking in order to achieve this?

**Hon. Bill Blair:** We've done a fairly significant amount of work. First of all, in some of the outreach, we've gone into those communities from which people were originally coming to seek asylum here, to make sure that they clearly understand Canadian law: that crossing the border irregularly is not a free pass or ticket to permanent residency or citizenship; that they would be subject to due process to determine their eligibility; and that if they are not eligible—if they are not truly in need of our protection—they would be subject to removal. We wanted to make sure that was clearly communicated.

What we have seen, in some of those places, is that this had a very positive effect in disincentivizing and discouraging people from making the mistake of getting in the wrong line. If they were trying to come to Canada for reasons other than seeking asylum and protection, we wanted to make sure they understood that it wasn't the right way to come in. It had some positive effect.

We've also been doing a great deal of work with U.S. authorities. We found last year, for example, that a number of people in the early part of the year were coming to the country in possession of temporary tourist visas issued by the United States. People were

coming into the United States and then presenting themselves at the Canadian border. We worked very closely with the United States, pointing out the difficulty. We deployed CBSA officers to work with the Americans on the ground where these tourist visas were being implemented, and we saw a 73% reduction in people coming from that location.

There are a number of very effective things that our officials have been undertaking to make sure that people have a better understanding of Canadian law and how it would be applied in these circumstances. I think that has contributed significantly to the reductions we've seen in the number of people presenting themselves at our border.

• (1710)

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** You must look at comparative numbers in other western countries. During the last few years, has there been an increase in migration to other countries as well?

**Hon. Bill Blair:** It is very much a global phenomenon, Ms. Sahota. Literally tens of millions of people are fleeing war and persecution. There are also a number of economic migrants who are very much on the move. Countries all around the world, certainly developed countries and countries that are considered safe—and Canada is one of the safest and most livable countries anywhere—

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Where are we on the charts when it comes to the number of people entering the other developed countries?

**Hon. Bill Blair:** We have the benefit of our isolation. In order to come to Canada, one has to cross one of three oceans or enter from the United States, so we are not as vulnerable to the migration of people as other countries that share more common borders.

At the same time, we are a country with a very good reputation as a place that is welcoming to refugees. I think we have a long and very proud history of various refugee groups that have sought asylum and protection in Canada and have become contributing and outstanding members of our country. It is an attractive place for people seeking asylum, but they need to understand the law and the rules, and that the rules will in fact be applied.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** I want to switch gears a little bit. I know that, under your mandate, you're looking after gangs. On the other side, there are many who fall victim to these gangs. There are human trafficking victims. I hear many times from constituents who feel lost because they've been victims of violence or some type of tragedy. Unfortunately, we've had quite a few.

I know that a National Office for Victims has been opened within Public Safety. There have been other initiatives that I was looking up, like the Canadian benefit for parents of young victims of crime, coming from Employment and Social Development. I was wondering if you could speak a bit about what is being done to help serve the victims of these crimes.

**Hon. Bill Blair:** As you've alluded, we have a victims' ombudsman, a person who is available to those who are victims. We also work very closely.... In most jurisdictions across the country, there are various victims services units, people who provide service to those who have been either the victim of a crime or related to someone who is the victim of a crime.

Very recently, we had the terrible tragedy on the Danforth. I spoke to victims services earlier this week and then met with and spoke to some of the people who have been deeply impacted and traumatized by that event, to make sure that they are, in fact, connecting with the services that are available to them. We continue to work with them.

You speak to another issue that I think is very important, and that is the notion of fear. I think fear is the greatest enemy of public safety, and when we become fearful in our own communities, we become less safe. People don't go to public space, they don't shop on their main street, and they don't take their kids to the park. They stop interacting with each other, and they stop interaction with law enforcement officials. Fear is something that I think we as a society need to make sure we address in an appropriate way. We need to help people be and feel safe in their own communities.

**The Chair:** Ms. Sahota, I think we have to leave it there.

Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Motz, the chair fervently hopes that you revert to your usual excellent questioning, as opposed to the last.

• (1715)

**Mr. Glen Motz:** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Minister. There are so many questions I have, and so little time.

Minister, you indicated in your initial remarks that illegal border crossers are fleeing persecution.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Point of order, Mr. Chair.

I know there are two terms that are used, but the fact is that they're not illegal.

**Mr. Glen Motz:** Yes, they are.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** It's not just me saying that. Alex Neve, when he appeared before the immigration committee from Amnesty International, was quite clear about the term "illegal".

Words do matter. It really troubles me when I keep hearing the opposition saying the word "illegal" and referring to people who are asylum seekers as "illegals". It does matter what we call people who are fleeing persecution. These are international treaties that set out what our obligations are.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** Mr. Chair, I am...

[English]

**The Chair:** If you wish to debate this, it's...

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** As a committee vice-chair and a representative of the Conservatives, I clearly do not agree with my colleague's comment.

I go back to what Ms. Sahota said about the people crossing the border. I have been there three times. When you get there, you see clearly that crossing the border is illegal. Minister Blair said in the previous question period that crossing our border is an illegal act. We agree that the immigration process becomes irregular as a result, but the act of crossing the border is illegal.

That is why we call those people illegal immigrants, pure and simple. You are saying that they are fleeing persecution, but they are coming from the United States. Minister Blair has confirmed that the United States is a safe country. So they are not coming from a country where there is persecution.

Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** I don't care to get involved in a legal interpretation as to one word or another. I tend to accept the Minister's interpretation of the distinction between "illegal" and "irregular". I'm going to leave it at that.

I think that Ms. Damoff makes a very important point that words do matter. Unless people have a legal opinion that these irregular crossings are in fact illegal, I think they should stay with the wording that the Minister has been using.

With that, Mr. Motz, you have a few minutes left.

**Mr. Glen Motz:** Thank you.

My opinion doesn't change. They are still illegal border crossers. You indicated that they were fleeing persecution in the United States, and then in answer to one of the questions from committee members, you indicated that you considered the U.S. to be a safe third country, which is the conflict in itself. Your statements are confusing, to say the least.

I want to get to an issue that is certainly front and centre for many Canadians, and that is the whole issue of gangs and guns, and your mandate. Your mandate letter makes no mention of cracking down on guns or illegal weapons; all it says is that you're supposed to deal with handguns and assault weapons and get them off our streets. I don't know what an assault weapon is in Canada. I've never heard of it, and I've never seen one.

Can you tell the committee how many firearm-related crimes occurred in 2017 and 2018 by licensed firearm owners?

**Hon. Bill Blair:** I don't have that number.

**Mr. Glen Motz:** You don't know it. If you don't know the number, then why—

**Hon. Bill Blair:** I'm sure the number exists. I just don't have it.

**Mr. Glen Motz:** Is it a huge number? We've been told by this government that you're evidence-based.

**Hon. Bill Blair:** Absolutely. Let me be clear. In my experience—

**Mr. Glen Motz:** I'm not done with the question yet.

**Hon. Bill Blair:** Oh, I thought you had asked me a question.

**Mr. Glen Motz:** If you are asking Canadians and proposing the potential of a handgun ban, as you're going around now in what you call your consultations—which I will get to in a minute—how are you making any proposals when you have no evidence to support that there is a problem?

**Hon. Bill Blair:** Mr. Motz, I actually have a great deal of evidence.

In my experience, the overwhelming majority of lawful firearm owners in this country are law-abiding and responsible in their ownership. That has been my experience and the data will pull that out.

**Mr. Glen Motz:** It does prove that.

**Hon. Bill Blair:** However, also from my own personal experience—and I have a great deal of data that I'm aware of—unfortunately some of the firearms that belonged to or were a part of lawful firearm owners' collections do, in a number of ways, end up in the hands of people who would commit violent crimes with them.

Therefore, one of the things I'm looking at is how to keep those guns from getting into the hands of people who would commit violent crimes with them. As I'm sure you will acknowledge, there are a number of ways that can happen.

• (1720)

**Mr. Glen Motz:** You yourself have said that domestic-sourced firearms account for about half the violent gun crimes that occur in Toronto, as an example, yet Toronto's own statistics have proven that to be absolutely false. It's less than 6%.

**Hon. Bill Blair:** Mr. Motz, let me just tell you my own experience with it.

**Mr. Glen Motz:** I'm not done asking the next question.

**The Chair:** Mr. Motz, you are done.

I'm going to let Mr. Blair answer the question. I gave additional time to reflect the conversation between Mr. Paul-Hus and Ms. Damoff, and I'm going to let Mr. Blair finish his response. Then I'm going to go to Monsieur Picard.

Mr. Blair.

**Hon. Bill Blair:** I'll try to be brief.

During my time in the Toronto Police Service, both as the chief of detectives and then for 10 years as the chief of police, we made an effort to trace the origin of all guns that were used in crime in our city.

During that period of time, some 13 years, the evidence was very strong and fairly consistent. About 70% of the crime guns we came in possession of had been smuggled across the border. Also, because we traced the origin of those guns, we were able to determine if they were domestically sourced, if they had been brought legally into this country, purchased and acquired legally, and then ended up in the hands of criminals.

I can also tell you from my experience that, in a significant number of cases, there have been thefts of lawfully owned and possessed guns, and those guns have been subsequently used in

criminal offences by people who resolve their disputes through violence, and there have been other means of diversion as well.

In my experience, about 70% were across the border, and 30% domestic. When we use the figure of 50%, we are relying on information. First of all, the current chief of police in Toronto says it's about 50%. I've also heard from the Regina police chief, Chief Evan Bray, who said that, in Saskatchewan, 50% of the firearms they seized were domestically sourced as well.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Motz.

Monsieur Picard, you have five minutes, please.

[Translation]

**Mr. Michel Picard:** Thank you.

I would like to go back to the issue of money laundering. First I want to highlight the work of the RCMP in investigating a hawala system in British Columbia. It is probably one of the most complicated systems when it comes to proving that money is being laundered. The system depends on the honour and the word of the people involved, which greatly reduces the possibility of following trails during an investigation.

Along these lines, another area is associated with money laundering that generates trails, but creates major headaches for those trying to penetrate its mysteries. I am talking about trusts and who owns them. In the context of money laundering, what is the minister doing about trusts ownership?

[English]

**Hon. Bill Blair:** I believe the issue you're referring to is beneficial ownership.

**Mr. Michel Picard:** Sorry, my fault. Yes, it is.

**Hon. Bill Blair:** It can be referred to in a number of different ways, so I wanted to make sure I was answering the question you were actually posing.

**Mr. Michel Picard:** Yes, it is.

**Hon. Bill Blair:** Yes, we know that in a number of different jurisdictions, other jurisdictions, the clarity of beneficial ownership can be very helpful to our financial institutions to maintain their integrity and for law enforcement conducting investigations.

We recognize there is work that can be done to improve that. There have been discussions already with our provincial and territorial partners, because they also have a role in that. The issue has been well identified. It's part of the discussion we've been having most recently with British Columbia, but all of the provinces and territories are involved in this discussion. It's a concern that is well understood and there are ongoing discussions on how best to deal with it.

**Mr. Michel Picard:** One of my favourite units was the IMETs unit. Last year, there were a number of initiatives where we were talking about how to recruit new skilled persons, new talent, and do business differently. What is the evolution since last year with respect to how the IMETs unit is working on this financial crime business?

**Hon. Bill Blair:** I'm aware of the acronym, but for everyone else, it's the integrated market enforcement teams, which were established by the RCMP. The complexity of financial crime does require a set of skills and sometimes things that are not necessarily taught at Depot or in other police academies and do require a higher level of skill.

Again, I'm reluctant... I wouldn't presume to speak for our officials. I will tell you that it's very clear to me that they understand the need for a broad range of skills in these very complex investigations, and some of the successes they've achieved most recently in those investigations I think are evidence of that commitment.

• (1725)

**Mr. Michel Picard:** With respect to the border, when it comes to the asylum seekers, we talk a lot about the number of persons getting in, but we have never established the comparison with how many get out. They don't all stay in Canada. Can you talk about the real impact, in fact, of those asylum seekers after a while? Not everyone stays in the country.

**Hon. Bill Blair:** I can tell you that the important work.... It's primarily the responsibility of CBSA to conduct removals. Once a person has been determined not to be eligible and has exhausted the available appeals processes and due processes in our law, they are subject to removal. I believe that in 2017-18 the CBSA removed approximately 8,000 people, and they've set their own goal for themselves to increase that to 10,000. They've redeployed some resources to effect that.

What we have seen is that because of the length of the processes, our legal processes of determining eligibility, we're only now beginning to see people who have come into the country irregularly beginning in 2017 actually subject to removals, but there has also been a greater concentration on ensuring that we expedite the determinations for those who enter irregularly.

Again, there are a number of issues that we are addressing in order to facilitate the timely removal of those who are not eligible to stay, which includes working with countries to ensure that travel documents are issued in a timely way, for example. Again, CBSA has been working on the efficiencies with those removals and making real progress.

**Mr. Michel Picard:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

That brings us to the close of our questioning. On behalf of the committee, I want to thank Minister Blair and his colleagues for their presentation.

As I indicated earlier to you, colleagues, I'm going to be calling the votes on the supplementary and interim estimates.

The first vote is on the supplementary estimates. I believe you have copies. It's a vote on Correctional Service of Canada, vote 1b; Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, vote 5b; and Royal Canadian Mounted Police, votes 1b, 5b, and 10b, as referred to the committee on January 28.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE OF CANADA

Vote 1b—Operating expenditures, grants and contributions.....\$6,556,326

(Vote 1b agreed to on division)

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Vote 5b—Grants and contributions.....\$1

(Vote 5b agreed to on division)

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Vote 1b—Operating expenditures.....\$10,174,531

Vote 5b—Capital expenditures.....\$1,738,000

Vote 10b—Grants and contributions.....\$9,900,000

(Votes 1b, 5b and 10b agreed to on division)

**The Chair:** Shall the chair report that to the House?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**An hon. member:** On division.

**The Chair:** On interim estimates, there are quite a number of other votes, all of which you have in front of you. If you wish, I can read them all, but I'm assuming that all of you can read. Shall the interim estimates pass?

CANADA BORDER SERVICES AGENCY

Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....\$387,553,464

Vote 5—Capital expenditures.....\$31,182,156

(Votes 1 and 5 agreed to on division)

CANADIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

Vote 1—Program expenditures.....\$133,898,201

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

CIVILIAN REVIEW AND COMPLAINTS COMMISSION FOR THE ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Vote 1—Program expenditures.....\$2,425,100

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE OF CANADA

Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....\$515,737,745

Vote 5—Capital expenditures.....\$46,952,171

(Votes 1 and 5 agreed to on division)

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....\$32,533,994

Vote 5—The grants listed in any of the estimates for the fiscal year.....\$149,413,839

(Votes 1 and 5 agreed to on division)

OFFICE OF THE CORRECTIONAL INVESTIGATOR OF CANADA

Vote 1—Program expenditures.....\$1,183,926

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

PAROLE BOARD OF CANADA

Vote 1—Program expenditures.....\$10,444,350

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....\$812,003,729

Vote 5—Capital expenditures.....\$62,173,355

Vote 10—The grants listed in any of the estimates for the fiscal year.....\$71,618,371

(Votes 1, 5 and 10 agreed to on division)

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE EXTERNAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

Vote 1—Program expenditures.....\$1,538,473

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

SECRETARIAT OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE  
COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS

Vote 1—Program expenditures.....\$817,831

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

SECURITY INTELLIGENCE REVIEW COMMITTEE

Vote 1—Program expenditures.....\$1,157,257

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

**The Chair:** Shall I report that vote to the House?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**An hon. member:** On division.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, colleagues.

With that, we are adjourned.

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