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# Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs

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Chair: The Honourable Marc Garneau





## Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs

Monday, November 28, 2022

• (1100)

[*English*]

**The Chair (Hon. Marc Garneau (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount, Lib.)):** Good morning.

I would like to call this meeting to order.

[*Translation*]

Welcome to meeting number 42 of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs.

[*English*]

We are gathered today on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe nation.

[*Translation*]

I would like to welcome the Office of the Auditor General of Canada officials who are joining us today.

We have Ms. Karen Hogan, Auditor General of Canada. With her are Mr. Glenn Wheeler, principal, and Doreen Deveen, director.

To ensure an orderly meeting, I'd like to outline a few rules that we have to follow at each of these meetings.

Members or witnesses may speak in the official language of their choice. Interpretation services in English, French and Inuktitut are available for the entire meeting today. Please be patient with the interpretation. There may be a delay, especially since the Inuktitut has to be translated into English before it can be translated into French and vice versa.

For those here by video conference, I think you know the drill. I'm not going to repeat it.

Before speaking, of course, please wait until I recognize you by name. When speaking, please speak slowly and clearly so that the interpreters have a chance to translate. When you're not speaking, please mute your microphone.

All comments should be addressed through the chair.

The Auditor General has been invited to make an opening statement of five minutes in length, which will then be followed by questions from members of the committee.

Without further ado, thank you to the witnesses for being here today. Your testimony will help inform us on our study with respect to Arctic sovereignty, security and the emergency preparedness of indigenous peoples, which is currently under way.

Auditor General, the floor is yours.

**Ms. Karen Hogan (Auditor General of Canada, Office of the Auditor General):** Mr. Chair, thank you for this opportunity to discuss our report titled “Emergency Management in First Nations Communities”, which was tabled in the House of Commons on November 15, 2022.

I would like to acknowledge that this meeting is taking place on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

Joining me today are Glenn Wheeler and Doreen Deveen, who led this audit.

Emergencies such as floods and wildfires are happening more often and with greater intensity across Canada. These emergencies disproportionately affect many first nations communities because of their relative remoteness and socio-economic circumstances. Over the last 13 years, more than 1,300 emergencies have occurred in first nations communities, causing more than 130,000 people to be evacuated and displaced.

Echoing our 2013 audit in this area, we concluded that Indigenous Services Canada had not provided first nations communities with the support they needed to manage natural emergencies.

Over the last four years, the department has spent about \$828 million on emergency management for first nations communities. We found that the department's actions were more reactive than preventative. Although first nations communities had identified many infrastructure projects to mitigate the impact of emergencies, the department had a backlog of 112 of these projects that it had approved but not funded.

Indigenous Services Canada was spending three and a half times more money on responding to and recovering from emergencies than on supporting communities to prepare for and mitigate impacts. According to Public Safety Canada, for every \$1 invested in preparedness and mitigation, \$6 can be saved in emergency response and recovery costs.

• (1105)

[English]

Despite our 2013 recommendation, Indigenous Services Canada still had not identified which first nations communities most needed support to increase their capacity to prepare for emergencies. If the department identified these communities, it could target investments accordingly.

For example, building culverts and dikes to prevent seasonal floods would help minimize the impact on people and reduce the cost of responding to and recovering from emergencies. Until the department shifts its focus to prevention and invests in infrastructure, communities are likely to continue experiencing greater effects from emergencies.

We also found that the capacity needs of first nations were not identified. For example, although the department provided funding to first nations for about 190 full-time and part-time emergency management coordinators, it did not know how many more were needed for first nations to have the capacity to manage emergencies.

Since 2009, 268 communities have been evacuated, some more than once. While the majority of these evacuations lasted less than a month, 90 were more than three months long, and some lasted multiple years. One has been ongoing for over 10 years.

Indigenous Services Canada did not ensure that emergency services were culturally appropriate and comparable to services provided in municipalities of similar size and circumstances. The department did not define comparable services. It also did not consistently monitor the services provided to first nations communities by the provinces and other service providers.

In 2011, at the end of her mandate as Auditor General of Canada, Sheila Fraser summed up her impression of the government's actions after 10 years of audits and related recommendations on first nations issues with the word "unacceptable". Five years later, my predecessor, Michael Ferguson, used the words "beyond unacceptable".

We are now into decades of audits of programs and government commitments that have repeatedly failed to effectively serve Canada's indigenous peoples. It is clear to me that strong words are not driving change. Concrete actions are needed to address these long-standing issues, and government needs to be held accountable.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my opening remarks. We would be pleased to answer any questions the committee may have.

Thank you. *Nakurmiik*.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Auditor General.

We will start with questions.

The first round is six minutes each, beginning with Mr. Vidal.

**Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Auditor General Hogan and your team, for being here today.

For the record, I had the privilege on Friday of spending a couple of hours with the folks at the table here and officials from ISC at

the public accounts committee, so we have had some preliminary conversations already, which I will be referring to, just so the context is clear.

Ms. Hogan, in your opening comments way back in November, when you first introduced the whole group of audits, and in your opening comments both on Friday and today, you spoke about a level of frustration that almost a decade later there has been little or no improvement. We had a lot of conversation on Friday about that.

Just for context, I would suggest there should be a deep level of frustration for anyone who takes time to read this report. To be frank and honest, this is an unmitigated disaster—pardon the pun.

What I said on Friday, and I want to say it again to get it on the record, is that this is not just a frustration that should be experienced in what we call the Ottawa bubble—the members of Parliament here and the people here. The frustration is for the people on the ground. The frustration is for the people in my riding in northern Saskatchewan, because their quality of life is affected by the inaction and by the decisions not being made to make a difference in this approach to emergency response and emergencies in our country.

My concern in the context of all that, or my question, maybe, becomes, are the right people upset or embarrassed? Is there an acknowledgement of what we need to acknowledge? We talked on Friday a bit about the minister's response two weeks ago in the House of Commons, when she said Indigenous Services Canada was doing a great job. I asked you on Friday if I had missed something in the report, where you identified ISC as doing a great job, and you assured me that, no, that wasn't in the report anywhere. Ultimately, it comes down to the fact that issues are not going to get fixed if we won't acknowledge the reality that they exist.

I have a number of questions in that context. Did you hear anything on Friday in the testimony from the ISC officials that would assure you that we won't be talking about these same things 10 years from now?

• (1110)

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** I'm not sure I can provide you with that assurance. Only the departmental officials can provide you with assurance that they will take action. Many of our recommendations in this audit report were very similar to the recommendations we provided in 2013. In fact, even Indigenous Services Canada had two internal audits, one in 2013 and one in 2017, that found the same issues.

I would point to identifying capacity needs and addressing those. I would point to not having enough funding to address the mitigation needs that are identified. Where I would say it starts is by identifying those most in need and having a comprehensive understanding of all the communities that are impacted and all the communities that need support. It's not just about funding but also about creating capacity to help prepare and mitigate emergencies instead of just focusing on responding to them.

**Mr. Gary Vidal:** Thank you.

Mr. Chair, just for your information, I forgot to start my clock.

I have a follow-up question, and you've alluded to it a bit, but I want to ask it anyway. Were there any concrete measures? We've talked a lot about the importance of concrete measures and actions and outcomes instead of outputs, I think you said.

Did you hear anything on Friday that you went home feeling good about, a concrete commitment on some kind of concrete action that's going to be taken?

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** Well, I definitely heard on Friday some acknowledgement from the officials that they accepted our recommendations, and I had spent some time with the deputy minister of Indigenous Services Canada before the report was released to help ensure that they understood what we meant by identifying those most in need. When you have limited resources, you need to know that.

**Mr. Gary Vidal:** I'm going to stop you right there, because there's a question I wanted to ask you on Friday, and you triggered it for me. You spent time with the deputy minister before the report was issued, because obviously the department gets to respond that it agrees and that it is going to fix these things.

How long ago was that, when the department officials received those and had a chance to respond? Have you seen anything in the meantime that would create concrete action items that have started in the meantime? In fairness, none of these are surprises, because the vast majority of them have been there since 2013 and in the two internal audits in the meantime. Have you seen any action since the conversation around their agreeing to accept your recommendations and around change taking place?

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** Your first question was how long ago I had the conversations. Our audit would have started about a little over a year ago, so the department would have been engaged with the audit team all that time. I spoke with the deputy twice, once at the beginning and then about a month before the report was tabled.

Do we see action while we're auditing? We see that in every department, but I would point to the action plan that Indigenous Services Canada provided to the public accounts committee. I would say it's a good start. I don't believe it was a good, comprehensive action plan. It was missing clear accountabilities and some concrete deliverables with clear deadlines. I think they're getting there, but continued focus and pressure will definitely be needed.

**Mr. Gary Vidal:** Thank you.

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

We'll now go to Mr. Weiler for six minutes.

**Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair.

I'd also like to thank the witnesses for being here today and for your very important work on the report we're talking about today.

I'm joining you today from British Columbia. It's quite jarring, looking at the charts of projects where structural needs are unmet. B.C. is very much disproportionately represented here, and of course, over the last couple of years we've been through some very major events like atmospheric rivers, wildfires and droughts. There are even droughts continuing today. Just last week we announced the national adaptation strategy, which leaves out some really important actions that all orders of government are going to need to take to ensure that people can be safe in a changing climate.

I very much agree with your overall idea that investing in prevention is much more effective than just response. Some of the figures I've seen circulating are that every dollar invested can lead to up to \$15 in savings.

With that in mind and in the British Columbia context, we have had some successful stories in coordination here, in large part thanks to the tripartite agreements in B.C. I noticed that recommendation 46 in your report seems to agree with this. I was hoping you could speak a little more to how you might see multilateral agreements such as this being helpful in having the provinces at the table.

• (1115)

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** Absolutely.

What we saw throughout the audit was a shift in the department's focus from bilateral agreements between provinces, third parties and the federal government to multilateral agreements. That's where the first nations communities also need to be at the table in order to ensure that it's clear what the roles and responsibilities are of each party during an emergency, and that the communities have an expectation of the services they should receive. What we found in our audit is while money and time were devoted to that, no multilateral agreements have been established at this point.

We noted some progress in British Columbia, as you mentioned, where a memorandum of understanding has been established with the province. That is just the first step.

Again, it is about having clear roles during emergencies, so that communities know what they can expect, should they need to reach out for support.

**Mr. Patrick Weiler:** Thank you for that.

We're talking about these tripartite agreements. We have a broad diversity of indigenous communities right across the country. There are 203 in B.C. alone. I think there are over 600 across Canada.

How do you see those types of agreements being developed so that they're fit for purpose for the diverse needs of communities across provinces?

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** That's a really difficult one. In fact, I think Indigenous Services Canada recognizes some of the complexities. They have separate regions across the department, recognizing the uniqueness of different regions and what a region might be exposed to. Flooding or forest fires, for example, may be more prevalent in some locations than in others.

That's why we noted in our report that making sure every community is included or considered in these multilateral agreements is important. What we've seen is that there are many communities that haven't been included in some of the historical agreements, so you don't have a good, comprehensive picture of what the needs are in a specific region. That is the fundamental place to start.

That's why it's important to bring everyone to the table, recognizing that first nations communities begin to respond on their own and when they can't, they need to reach out for help. You don't want confusion so that things are forgotten. That's the importance of having these multilateral agreements in place.

**Mr. Patrick Weiler:** Thank you.

This is also a very timely study in that we've just completed having witnesses and hearings on this for several months, covering many of these issues that we're talking about today. In our study, we heard from many remote communities that roads and highways are critical to safety during emergencies. In many cases, there is only one road in and out, which really exacerbates much of the risk that's there. When a tree falls on the highway that connects a community that's 300 kilometres away, in many cases the province has to fix that road that connects the community.

I'm wondering if you think it's helpful if the provinces also ensure that these highways and roads are safe when responding to emergencies.

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** Absolutely. I don't think the onus is only on the federal government and the indigenous communities. That's why it's so important for the federal government to play that role of bringing together all parties that need to be there, whether they be the provinces, territories or third parties. In some instances, it is third parties, like the Red Cross, that might support responses. That's why it is important to know what everybody's role is.

You mentioned when there's only one road.... I would even highlight that when it's a fly-in community, it's even more critical to get help there in an effective and timely way in which everyone knows their responsibilities.

• (1120)

**Mr. Patrick Weiler:** Thank you.

One of the other aspects we heard throughout the study was how it's important to have culturally appropriate programs in place. I was wondering if you had any recommendations coming out of your work that also referenced such a need.

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** That's exactly where indigenous communities play a big role in ensuring not only that services are comparable to those in communities of similar size and circumstances, but that they are culturally appropriate.

In our report, we highlighted one community, Kashechewan, in northern Ontario, which took a different approach. I would encourage Indigenous Services Canada to think that way about different approaches.

During flooding season, that community asked to move to higher ground, which is their traditional hunting ground. They were able to stay on their own land. That ensured that the response to the emergency was much more culturally sensitive than it could have been if they had been flown out to another community.

It really is about defining that up front and not trying to respond and adapt during an emergency. There's some thought that's needed to make sure that cultural sensitivity is incorporated into responses by third parties, provinces and territories.

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

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Gill, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Hogan, Mr. Wheeler and Ms. Deveen, thank you for being with us today and for making yourselves available, on such short notice, to inform our study, which addresses, among other things, first nations' emergency preparedness in the north.

I read your report with great interest. I would like to ask you a question that may seem very simple, but it will give us some context.

You mentioned reports produced in 2011 and 2013. Do you know when the first report specifically on emergency preparedness was tabled? Was it in 2013 or were there others before that?

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** We tabled our report on emergency management on reserves in 2013. The department also produced internal audit reports in 2013 and 2017.

**Mrs. Marilène Gill:** Did the Office of the Auditor General report on this issue prior to 2013?

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** I don't think any reports were produced on the specific issue of emergency management, but a lot of reports were produced on the challenges faced by indigenous communities. There have been reports on drinking water, on education and on many other issues. I alluded to my predecessors and their concerns on those issues, as well.







[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

That concludes the first round of questions.

We will now start the second round of questions.

Mr. Schmale, the floor is yours for five minutes.

[English]

**Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you to the Auditor General and her team for the testimony today.

I want to pick up on some of the testimony I heard on Friday at public accounts.

In terms of responsibility for the funding, I believe the deputy minister from Indigenous Services talked about Parliament approving the funding. In my understanding, shouldn't it be the deputy minister building budget proposals for the minister to then approve? Shouldn't the minister champion that funding and then submit those budget proposals?

It seems by your report that the money is, in fact, there.

• (1135)

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** If your question is asking me about how the traditional funding increases to permanent funding that a department gets, yes, it would be up to the deputy to put together their plan and put it forward to their minister. Ultimately, all of that rolls into the budget that Parliament approves. I believe that's what the deputy was referring to.

In our report, we looked at the specific projects related to structural mitigation for emergencies, but I did take a step back to talk to you about how I know the funding works in Indigenous Services Canada, where they have this really large envelope for infrastructure but then it is divided by many projects. There are housing projects and water treatment projects, and then \$12 million is put aside for structural mitigation to support natural disasters.

Perhaps it's about their doing it differently, on how they break down those silos or ask for additional funding if they believe it's needed in order to meet the needs and requests of first nations communities.

**Mr. Jamie Schmale:** If you're looking at the \$790,000 you talked about in your report and the fact that not one management agreement was signed, to me that shows that the money is there. Is there anything here that is giving you some confidence, even a little, that things will change by the time the next report comes out, after you or another auditor general looks through this again?

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** I believe that's why in my opening remarks I talked about how all these strong words that my predecessors used are not driving change, clearly. We looked at this issue in 2013 and are finding the exact same recommendations. It is time to do—different.

I do believe in the spirit of reconciliation. Sitting down with first nations communities and establishing that trust is the first great step that the department should be taking, but it is about maybe changing the processes. You can have all this dialogue and try to encour-

age collaboration, but if we're forcing everything into the same traditional processes, that doesn't seem to have worked over the last few decades.

I really encourage Indigenous Services Canada and the federal government to think about different ways to approach this and to meet first nations communities in a more timely way.

**Mr. Jamie Schmale:** The status quo is clearly not working.

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** I believe we have many decades of audits that show the status quo is not working. Yes.

**Mr. Jamie Schmale:** Looking at the data from page 9—I'll give Gary Vidal a bit of credit for this—and at the 112 eligible but not funded projects, the number in the report is about \$290 million, but you bring it up to \$358 million, as some of the projects had not been assigned a value yet. That's about a 1:6 ratio of savings. This is rough math, but it could have contributed to over \$2 billion in savings had the government looked at ways to mitigate and add that to climate change rather than its current method of evacuation, relocation and rebuilding—that repeating cycle.

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** Absolutely. You're referring to the statistic we put in there from Public Safety Canada, where they said that for every dollar invested in preparedness, you could save up to six dollars in responding to an emergency. I caution that it is “up to”. I think it depends on every situation and every emergency.

That would be a saving overall for the federal government. My understanding of how Indigenous Services Canada is funded is that it receives money to respond to emergencies. The money isn't sitting in the annual budget. It might be a saving overall for the federal government, but it might not be additional funding that Indigenous Services Canada can tap into.

It is a great question...to invite them to a committee and maybe ask them how they approach all of this infrastructure funding and allocation of monies that might be saved.

• (1140)

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

We'll now go to Mr. Badawey for five minutes.

**Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'd like to preface my comments by saying thank you, Ms. Hogan. Thank you for your report and for the recommendations you've put forward. They highlight the needs of indigenous communities and how pressing it is to deal with the numerous needs of those indigenous communities. I appreciate that. Speaking as the parliamentary secretary for ISC, I can say that it is something we are working on and something we are going to work on more diligently.

I want to say to the members across the floor that this is not a partisan issue, as it goes back quite some time. It goes back to different parties forming different governments of the past. Frankly, it was one of the reasons I brought this study forward for committee consideration in the first place. Unfortunately, we're getting to it now versus when I wanted to get to it, almost over a year ago.

With that said, working together with members across the floor with respect to supporting whole-of-government investments to be proactive is extremely critical. Prevention, as stated in this report, is paramount. We need to look at causes of emergencies due to climate change, such as flooding and wildfires, and ensure that communities have in place emergency preparedness planning involving all partners that are implementing the emergency measures through disciplined deployment of partnering agencies, including mutual aids.

With all that said, Auditor General, while drafting this report, did you examine other departments—Public Safety, for example, or Infrastructure—that are preparing to work in tandem with Indigenous Services Canada to bring forward, once again, whole-of-government recommendations to proactively deal with the many issues you have highlighted within your report?

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** In preparing this report, we did not reach out to those other departments. We dealt solely with Indigenous Services Canada, but we did spend a considerable amount of time talking with indigenous communities themselves to hear about their experiences and find out about their needs. I agree with you that if there is a whole-of-government, multi-governmental response, should we return to this topic we would look at it in such a fashion. However, at this time it all falls under the responsibility of Indigenous Services Canada.

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** Thank you, Ms. Hogan.

We are starting to do that with Minister Blair, Minister LeBlanc, myself, and Minister Hajdu. Yes, your point is well taken, and again, across the floor to those members I will note how important it is that we all work together to ensure that those investments are made, especially, once again, as it relates to climate change and the capacities that are needed because of the old systems we're dealing with. When I say old systems, I mean the pipes in the ground and the different emergency preparedness agreements that we have with our partnering agencies.

I want to drill down a bit and get a bit granular on that. Your point is well taken when it comes to asset management and moving towards capacity and sustainability. Its very well taken. It's something we're working on with our partners right now.

Do you believe it's a step in the right direction to move towards a sustainable, disciplined financing of an asset management approach that takes into consideration the pressures on infrastructure, water, waste water, roads, wildfires, fire departments and things of that nature? Do you think a sustainable funding structure for that asset management is critical to the recommendations you identify within your report?

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** Absolutely. Every community has different needs, and I believe if you sat down with first nations communities some might prioritize safe drinking water or a water treatment plant before they would prioritize a community centre. It would be

wrong to take a cookie-cutter approach to every indigenous community. There are so many aspects, whether it be their geographic location or the size of their community, the land on which their community is at the moment versus other lands in the area.... It has to be a unique approach, and that's why the regional approach that Indigenous Services Canada has is one that goes in the right direction, in that every region might have different unique needs that others may not have.

That multilateral approach of having communities there with the provinces and territories and the third parties with the federal government is one that could be successful. It's one that has not, however, resulted in any agreements at this time.

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** Thank you, Ms. Hogan.

To get back to the committee, I want to make this statement in closing. In this process, in regard to the report that we created as a committee and a report that we're going to pass on to the minister as well as the department with recommendations, including what's contained within this report that we're discussing today, it's going to be critical that we move forward with it. As a committee, yes, we have this in front of us, but we have so much more that we can actually discuss and bring forward as recommendations.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

• (1145)

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

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Gill, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

**Mrs. Marilène Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I must admit that I, too, am surprised that there was no assessment of all the communities to determine which had greater needs than others and that there was no agreement with all the provinces on emergency needs. Yet this is what is noted throughout the report.

After doing your audit, can you tell us why Indigenous Services Canada is not able to identify needs in the communities? Why is the government failing to see, as you said earlier, that the needs are really different for each community?

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** Let me ask my colleague Mr. Wheeler to answer that question. It's a complex issue, so perhaps he can shed some light on it.



I want to especially thank you, Auditor General, especially as it's the first time I've had a chance to talk to you since another report, called "Arctic Water Surveillance". It was an excellent report. It addresses many areas that lack attention by this government for the entire Arctic community in which many first nations communities reside. I just want to thank you for that work.

Let's get into this report and some questions that you brought up, and I thank you for doing so. I represent many first nations communities in my home riding, such as Doig, Blueberry, Halfway, Moberly and many others.

On page three of the report, it says:

We found that the department's actions were more reactive than preventative, despite First Nations communities identifying many infrastructure projects to mitigate the impact of emergencies.

We had a devastating windstorm last year that went through Doig and Blueberry. There was almost zero immediate response to what happened there. There are many trees that are still down, which brings up concerns of wildfires in the future.

It continues:

The department had a backlog of 112 of these infrastructure projects that it had determined were eligible but that it had not funded.

Can you give us some examples of what those 112 look like? Maybe list one or two examples of what one of those projects would have looked like that would have been preventative, that would have been much better suited to preventing the disaster as opposed to responding to the emergency.

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** I can try. I might steal everything Glenn might say, but if you want some more details, we can turn to Glenn.

An example would have been to build a culvert, or a dike, to help mitigate the impacts of flooding. We have highlighted only 112 infrastructure projects. There are other projects that are not infrastructure related, such as flood mapping, that would really be helpful to communities to understand where they could move, or where they should build going forward.

Glenn, is there anything you would like to add that's more specific?

**Mr. Glenn Wheeler:** Those are good examples. Additional examples would be flood and erosion protection, feasibility studies and shoreline protection. The Auditor General mentioned culvert crossings. Elevating houses sometimes in flood-prone areas is another type of structural mitigation. There's a wide variety of potential areas in which structural mitigation could make a difference.

• (1155)

**Mr. Bob Zimmer:** I'm going to ask you a blunt question. Are the current ministries responsible for responding? There's an obvious answer, but I want you to answer it for me. Are the current ministries doing a great job?

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** Do you mean about responding, or about developing mitigation?

**Mr. Bob Zimmer:** I am referring to both, developing mitigation and responding.

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** Responding to emergencies is not the federal government's responsibility. Responding is done by the provinces

or territories, or even third parties, the first responders. Federal employees who are on the ground do not respond to these emergencies. The federal government does reimburse those parties for those costs. Throughout our audit, we did not see a community that did not receive response services.

**Mr. Bob Zimmer:** Correct me if I'm wrong, but part of the responsibility of the ministry is to have a plan in place, so that when the emergency happens, adequate resources are available to respond to that problem.

I will give you an example. I know of first nations that I was personally involved in, trying to help with some of these emergency mitigation measures. We were trying to deal with them. This was even around COVID. It's kind of out of the scope of this study. We were trying to get a response around different things and how to take care of the needs today.

There were a whole bunch of people who were navel-gazing, or looking at the sky without a response, while people's lives were literally at risk. There was a lack of response. I can tell you that approaching the ministers myself on other matters, they kind of threw their hands up, saying, "Well, you know, we don't know what we can do", and these are the ministers.

If they can't respond to a crisis or an emergency on a reserve, or in a first nations community, who can? I guess I just throw that back to you. There are obviously structural issues and communication breakdowns between first nations and the ministers themselves.

How can we fix those breakdowns?

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** My initial response was just about the actual responding to an emergency, but you're right, the other side would be the preparing and being ready to respond, and then knowing whether the response is one that meets the community's needs. We definitely found that there were sometimes no emergency management plans in some of the regional offices. Those that were there were long outdated.

The department was unaware if every community actually had an emergency response plan, and then when they did receive response services, they weren't monitoring whether they were timely, culturally sensitive and met the needs of the communities. Did they meet more than just the physical needs of coming in and moving individuals? Did they meet the mental health needs and the ongoing health and education needs?

There is a lot missing on the preparedness and planning side that the department has as a responsibility that it hasn't yet addressed.

**Mr. Bob Zimmer:** How about the communication breakdown between—

**The Chair:** We'll have to wait until the next round, Mr. Zimmer.

Ms. Atwin, you have five minutes.

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses today, Ms. Deveen and Mr. Wheeler, and our wonderful Auditor General, Ms. Hogan, as well.

I'm speaking from the unceded, unsundered Wolastoqiyik territory here in Fredericton. We're a river community. We had back-to-back 100-year floods in 2018 and 2019, and we certainly have that tendency, I think, to wait until a disaster is at our doorsteps before it's really taken seriously, as you highlighted in the report. We certainly can't afford to do that anymore.

The other piece that really stands out is the savings that are associated with being proactive. I want to really highlight that piece for those watching at home.

I also just want to say that your report is really about that truth piece. It's truth and reconciliation, so I certainly appreciate how much you shared and how much it's calling for transformative change. I really feel like that's what this committee is. It's a great example of that. We're all here for the right reasons. We're here to get to the bottom of these issues and to ensure that we fix them. I think I speak for all of us when I say that I don't want to be here in another five years having the same kind of conversation.

I just want focus specifically on its being indigenous-led and culturally sensitive, culturally responsive. This piece is paramount, I think, to having the process moving forward. Can you clarify if anywhere in the report there's a distinction between Inuit communities, Métis communities and first nations communities? Were there any disproportionate impacts, or did you see it kind of across the board?

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** I agree with your remarks about preparedness and the savings dollars. I would argue that while there's a monetary savings, the impact on communities and generations of communities would be invaluable if they could stay on their lands and continue with their daily lives.

During our audit, we did not break it down to Inuit and Métis communities. We just looked at all of the first nations communities across the country, so we don't have that breakdown for you—I'm sorry.

• (1200)

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin:** That's all right.

In terms of prioritizing—because, again, the urgency is there and we want to be sure we're tackling the most pressing issues first, even though we're playing catch-up—in your opinion, would it be key to sit down again with indigenous communities, as you mentioned, to establish those emergency management plans from their perspectives first? Would that be a good place to begin?

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** Absolutely, that's a good place to begin. To know what they believe they need where they can't, perhaps, adequately respond to an emergency is the best place to start to help fill in the gaps, because the response should be led by them first and then complemented by either provinces or territories or third parties when the need is much greater than their capacity.

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin:** Thank you.

The other piece, again, is that capacity piece, identifying the needs and recommending a good path forward for building that capacity. In your opinion, what would that look like? Are we building

a database? What kind of process could be expected as far as shoring up better capacity building in communities?

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** Well, it would start with a few things. We found in our audit that the department had provided funding for about 190 full-time and part-time emergency management coordinators, so having someone whose job it is to just think about emergency preparedness is a great place to start. What we found is that Indigenous Services Canada didn't know how much more capacity was needed, so it wasn't aware of which communities were still missing that coordination role, which is a key one.

The department also didn't know how many communities didn't have emergency management plans. It didn't believe that it was its responsibility to follow up to make sure each community had one. However, I would say that starts with understanding where the gaps are.

Really, those are two key elements in those beginning steps of making sure everyone is adequately prepared for the disasters we face.

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin:** Thank you very much.

For my last question.... We heard a lot about evacuations in communities throughout our study. You mentioned that communities should have a reasonable expectation with regard to emergency situations and what to expect. Could you speak specifically about evacuations? We didn't get a lot of detail from communities about how those rolled out. Can you identify any glaring issue in the evacuations process in particular?

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** In order to maximize your time, I'm going to ask Glenn Wheeler to jump in to give you some examples.

**Mr. Glenn Wheeler:** Mr. Chair, it's a very good question. We noted that overall the department had not established service standards when it came to evacuations: What should folks be expecting when they're being evacuated from communities? For the most part, they didn't monitor how well evacuations were done.

I would point out, though, that to the department's credit there was one area in Ontario where they did establish mutually agreed upon evacuation service standards with service providers. There is a very detailed document that sets out expectations for safety, for health care and for education for children if they're pulled out during the school year. That particular document sets out very clearly what first nations can expect when they are evacuated. The issue was that we found that in only one of the seven regions that ISC has. If the department could replicate that in other regions, that certainly would be a good step forward.

After evacuations, they sometimes also do lessons learned exercises. We found that something like 14 or 17 of those were done. There were some recommendations that came out of those lessons learned exercises with respect to evacuations, but what we didn't see was the department taking those recommendations or those lessons learned and then improving on future evacuations or improving services for future evacuations. There's some potential that the department didn't follow through on.

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

We'll now start a third round, with Mr. Melillo, for five minutes.

**Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being here today and for your important work on this report.

Since this report has been released, I've heard from a number of communities in my riding. I come from Kenora, in northwestern Ontario, which includes 42 first nations and a number of communities that believe they have projects that are included in the 112 that are sitting on Indigenous Services desks and waiting to be approved.

There are a number of projects, of course, not just for mitigation necessarily, but also for making sure it's easier for communities to evacuate if that happens. One that comes to mind is the Berens River bridge project in Pikangikum. It's also known as "the road south". It's only a 15-kilometre stretch, and it would connect the remote nation of Pikangikum to the provincial road network.

I raise that just as an example of a very simple, relatively small project that would make a world of difference for a community in remote northern Ontario, one like Pikangikum, which had to evacuate three times between 2019 and 2021.

To that end, I would like to ask you—we have talked a bit about this already—what are the calculations or the cost estimates for that one and for those 112 projects? How much would it cost if the government were to be more proactive in getting out in front of that?

• (1205)

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** That's a great question, which we actually asked the department when we were doing the audit. I would point you to paragraph 8.35 of our report, which notes that the 112 projects currently have a cost estimate of about \$291 million.

What I would highlight is that many of the projects on that list had no cost associated with them yet. That assessment hadn't been done. I would also highlight that there are projects that have been put forward that haven't been reviewed yet or identified, so that is really the beginning of the dollar amounts.

I would also point you to perhaps the committee hearing last Friday at the public accounts committee, where officials from Indigenous Services Canada provided some updates. We did not look at those updates on the cost estimates, but they provided some updates, if you're interested in looking at the dollar values in more detail.

**Mr. Eric Melillo:** I appreciate that. I understand that it's a bit of a moving target, but we'll say a few hundred million dollars, or maybe a little more to start. As well, in the report, it's reported that

something like over \$800 million was spent over the last four years on emergency response. Is that right?

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** Yes. The government spent approximately \$828 million over the last four years, the majority of which was spent on responding to emergencies, so three and a half times more than on preparing and mitigating for them.

**Mr. Eric Melillo:** Three and a half times more: To me, that's a striking number. We're spending over \$800 million on emergency management. That's three and a half times more on the response than on projects like the Berens River bridge, which could help mitigate the impacts and help ensure that communities are better suited moving forward.

Another aspect of that is the fact that if first nations have to evacuate, as I understand it, they do get support from the province, of course, and from the federal government, but they also have to pay a portion of that evacuation cost. It creates quite a cost for the community as well. I'm wondering if, through your work, you've had any estimates or any indication of how much that might cost individual first nations.

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** I'm going to ask Mr. Wheeler to answer that for you.

**Mr. Glenn Wheeler:** Mr. Chair, that was one of the things we did not look at in conducting this audit. There were so many issues that were identified in 2013 and issues that we continued to see as we did this audit work that we didn't go down that road.

Having said that, with the way the emergency management assistance program is set up, first nations can submit invoices for expenses they've incurred. I wouldn't be able to say whether those invoices were paid in a timely manner, or whether all costs were covered.

**Mr. Eric Melillo:** I appreciate that. Thank you. I may have time for one more question.

You talked quite a bit about the envelope of Indigenous Services funding and all of the silos within it. That leads me to the conclusion that Indigenous Services is far too prescriptive and dictating far too much about where the funding should go, instead of being responsive and listening to first nations on the ground and the indigenous communities across the country. It should be ensuring that its funding is reaching those it needs to reach. It's the cookie-cutter approach versus the approach of responding to individual communities.

I'm curious to get your thoughts on that. Is this funding structure creating some long-term dependence on the government, because of its inability to fund projects properly?

• (1210)

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** I would have two reactions to that. I talked about the larger, broader envelope. We've been able to most recently look at safe drinking water—that's how we know that's a big bucket of infrastructure money—and then divide it among programs within the department. That may be a way to tackle it.

I know, in talking with the deputy minister, that they are sitting down with communities and trying to understand by community what their priorities are and then directing them to the right program to apply for funding. That's where I would challenge that a different way forward might be more responsive to the unique needs of every community, but that is one that the department would have to study, and it would have to be prepared to dramatically change the way it approaches funding structural projects.

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

We will now go to Mr. McLeod for five minutes.

**Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the witnesses for presenting today. I really appreciate this level of discussion.

I come from the Northwest Territories. We've certainly started to see more than our share of communities being put in emergency situations. We're starting to see more and more communities flooded and more and more communities threatened by fire. I see the sense to be prepared of communities that are in harm's way and that have historically been in flood zones and threatened by floods, and communities in areas where there are high fire rates. Every community should have an emergency response plan. Most of them do in the Northwest Territories.

As there are more emergencies, there are fewer resources to respond when it comes to evacuations. I watched when my small home community had to accommodate a community that was totally wiped out by a flood. A couple of days later, a second flood hit another community, so we had two communities trying to come in to a small community, and people weren't ready to accommodate them.

I want you to talk a bit about how important it is—if you look at it in your study, I think you referenced it—for communities to be able to respond to receiving people who have been evacuated, sometimes with very few clothes and blankets, and little food, so that no one seems to be scrambling.

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** Mr. Chair, if you will allow me, I will start, and then I might turn to Glenn to see if he would like to add some more details.

What we saw during our audit was that Indigenous Services Canada had not assessed the capacity of host communities to be able to support communities that needed to be evacuated. As you mentioned, that is a big element of being prepared and ensuring that the response meets the needs of communities.

I don't know, Glenn, if you want to add something to that.

**Mr. Glenn Wheeler:** I might add, Mr. Chair, that it points to the importance, from our point of view, of there being emergency management services agreements among the federal government, ISC, and the provinces and territories, so that roles and responsibilities are clear and that when an emergency happens, there's clarity and certainty about who's responsible for what, whether it's providing blankets or...how many people are evacuated from one community to another. When you don't have those agreements in place, there's a heightened risk that there will be negative outcomes.

In our report, we recommend that ISC sign agreements—negotiate agreements with those provinces that have not yet signed agreements—so the exact situation you described does not happen.

As the legislative auditor for the territories, I might also add that we audited municipal and community affairs in 2016 in the Northwest Territories and highlighted some of the very issues you're raising. We looked at emergency management planning and fire protection. The points you're raising were issues in 2016, and I imagine they remain so today.

**Mr. Michael McLeod:** Thank you.

Mr. Chair, I think I'm splitting my time with Marcus.

● (1215)

**The Chair:** We have a separate slot for him. If you want to continue—

**Mr. Michael McLeod:** Okay. I have another question.

I liked the reference you made about communities being able to stay on the land. You talked a bit about how that worked during COVID.

I watched with interest when there was a fire heading in the direction of one of my communities, one that's 100% indigenous. They wanted to move them to a neighbouring community and put them in hotels. The elders and chiefs said, "No, we don't want to go to a hotel." Historically, when a fire came to their camps or communities, they moved out of the way. They just wanted some help to get a place set up a little out of the fire's way—out of harm's way. They were perfectly happy there.

When COVID hit, we saw a lot of similarities. People wanted to be out on the land rather than in a different community or a place where they weren't comfortable.

Could you talk a bit about the benefit of that?

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** Absolutely.

You referenced how community members are the ones who best understand their community and land, and who know where to go. We raised a case study about Kashechewan in northern Ontario. That was a response the community asked for, and the federal government supported them in doing it. Staying on their land was so much better. They moved to higher hunting grounds during the flood.

It's hard to find a sustainable solution. It speaks to the need for having first nations communities at the table in order to figure out the best responses to emergencies. They are the ones who best know what their communities need.

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

We'll now go to Madame Gill.

[*Translation*]

Go ahead for two and a half minutes.

**Mrs. Marilène Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a question in relation to what Ms. Hogan mentioned, at the beginning of the meeting, about accountability and timelines.





**Ms. Karen Hogan:** If you would like an update post the audit period—our audit period ended on March 31, 2022—I would have to point you to Indigenous Services Canada to provide that update as to whether any of those communities have returned. I know in some of the instances during our audit, when we looked at them it was a lack of housing that meant they couldn't return. The housing was not yet safe enough for residents to return. That's definitely the case with the Peguis community, but it would really be Indigenous Services Canada that could provide you with all that detail in a written format, not my office.

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

We'll now go to Mr. Vidal for five minutes.

**Mr. Gary Vidal:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to carry on a bit with the conversation that was started on Friday afternoon. It got a little contentious Friday afternoon, and that's not my intent today. It was a conversation with my colleague, Mr. McCauley, around the performance bonuses that were discussed with the ministry.

I want to put a different flavour on this. He talked about \$3.1 million of bonuses to people at or above executive level, representing 95% of the people...that was 193 people. The push-back on this kind of discussion is always that individual performance pay holds executives accountable for individual results, and it's not related to departmental results, which measure strictly the organizational goals.

That's the context of the discussion. I put a little side note on my notes here. In my opinion, that's ludicrous.

That goes back to my history. I had the responsibility of managing an executive compensation system for a Crown corporation at some point in my past, and I very distinctly remember that our executive management compensation system was a combination of individual performance and corporate performance. Corporate goals had to be met as well for you to achieve these standards.

I'm coming to this place where I don't think it should surprise us sometimes that we see failures when we don't link personal performance to organizational performance. That's where this is coming from. I'm asking your opinion on whether you would agree that this significant disconnect between individual performance and organizational outcomes is potentially one of the reasons we're having this conversation. I get that it's a government-wide thing; it's not just ISC.

Do you think there would be merit in our saying that we have to connect individual performance pay to organizational goals, not just individual goals?

• (1225)

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** While doing this audit, we didn't look at how the department mapped its strategic objectives or organizational goals all the way down to the individual personal goals that it would have put on its executive team or other layers of the department.

What I would tell you is that, more generically, a really good approach to ensuring that everyone within an organization is aligned to help meet your strategic goals is if you hold them accountable

for the achievement of them, but we didn't look at what Indigenous Services Canada did in that context.

**Mr. Gary Vidal:** However, you did hear the deputy minister respond on Friday and say that's not what this is about. This is only about individual goals, so there was no recognition by the deputy minister that it's aligned. She said that individual performance pay holds executives accountable for individual results, not departmental results.

I'm going to push a little and ask, in your opinion, if we would not achieve better results if we connected these things? That's just a simple yes or no. I want confirmation that I'm not way off on this.

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** I really can't speak to the deputy minister's comments, but I can tell you that, in my organization, I hold my executive team accountable for not only personal goals but the achievement of our strategic corporate objectives, because I think it's a best practice in ensuring that your leadership drives the organization where it needs to go.

**Mr. Gary Vidal:** Thank you.

I have a very short amount of time left, so I'm going to try to really shorten my preamble here.

We talked briefly on Friday about the PBO report. I talked about the executive summary saying that the increase in spending didn't lead to commensurate outcome and the ability of the organizations to meet their objectives.

There is some further information in that report that talks about spending being 48% of the time greater than what was planned. That translated into \$863 million, and that report said that the department clearly spends more money than it plans. It had similar comments around the use of human resources.

One of the questions I asked you on Friday was around this idea that what gets measured gets done, and you commented back to me, and I quote, "Government is excellent at measuring outputs, but not at measuring outcomes, and that needs to be fixed."

I know you don't have a lot of time, but can you answer the how and who? How do we fix that, and who's responsible for that?

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** Do you mean across the government or in this department?

**Mr. Gary Vidal:** It's this department specifically, for now.

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** Well, I think it starts with whoever sets up the way they're going to measure the outcomes of a project.

Here we looked at two individual programs. It would be that the strategic targets they set in those programs were not aligned to outcomes but to how many communities or how many projects had been funded. That's an output measure.

The responsibility lies with each department, as it designs a program, to set it up with the right goal in mind. I think it's just easier for many to think about outputs instead of outcomes, because it's hard to measure outcomes. It doesn't mean we shouldn't, because that's the best way to drive change.

**Mr. Gary Vidal:** Thank you.

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

We'll now go to Mr. Powlowski for five minutes.

**Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.):** Thank you.

Your report is highly relevant to my riding. I'm the MP for Thunder Bay—Rainy River, going from Thunder Bay to the Manitoba border. You may or may not know that we had considerable flooding in the western part of my riding this spring and summer. It's the Winnipeg River system, so communities like Fort Frances and Rainy River were affected, but also a number of first nations communities like Seine River, Lac La Croix and Couchiching.

In looking at how to mitigate the further risks, because this is probably going to happen again, given climate change, I've had to talk to a number of ministries about it, starting seemingly with environment, but then also emergency preparedness and also infrastructure. Trying to mitigate the risks seems to involve many other ministries, not just Indigenous Services.

Far be it for me—and these guys will tell you—to be defensive of our government, but it seems somewhat unfair for you to be criticizing Indigenous Services for not putting money into mitigating the possibility of future risks when, in fact, the government's response to such things, when you look at the whole Winnipeg River system, involves not only Indigenous Services, but also non-indigenous communities. It's really a whole-of-government response, which also includes environment, which also includes emergency preparedness, which also includes infrastructure. Really, if you're following the buck, shouldn't you have also been looking at what money they're putting into...? It's not just the Winnipeg River system. There are similar systems all across Canada, especially dealing with flooding, so shouldn't you have included that?

• (1230)

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** I'm not sure, Mr. Chair, if the member knows, but I lived in Thunder Bay for almost five years, so I know the community well.

We highlighted in our report, in paragraph 8.30, that “We...found that Indigenous Services Canada did not make use of data” that was available “from other sources” that could have been used to help identify those communities that are most in need. For example, we talked about an “Indigenous Emergency Management Capability Inventory” that had been “led by Public Safety Canada and the Assembly of First Nations”. It is really that approach of actually seeking out information, not only from first nations communities but from other federal partners that might have information to help identify the communities that are at higher risk and of most need. This draws us back to a recommendation we made in 2013 that has still not yet been addressed, and that's why we refocused on that, which is the leadership role that Indigenous Services Canada has to play in bringing all these parties together. I would agree with you that they should consider what other departments are doing in order to have a more global, comprehensive response.

**Mr. Marcus Powlowski:** You've concluded that Indigenous Services ought to be taking the lead, but how do you know that? Perhaps it should be emergency preparedness, which is better placed to be the kind of umbrella group looking at the whole-of-government response rather than.... You've determined it's Indigenous Services,

but I would question why them. Why not one of these other ministries?

**Mr. Glenn Wheeler:** Mr. Chair, it's an interesting question. I think we go back to the legislative base for the provision of emergency management services. The Department of Indigenous Services Act sets out specifically that it's ISC that's responsible for emergency management on reserves, and we can even go back to the Indian Act. Your point about a whole-of-government approach is a good one, but the accountability rests with Indigenous Services Canada. It can ask other departments for help, and it can collaborate with other departments, but at the end of the day, Indigenous Services Canada bears full responsibility.

**Mr. Marcus Powlowski:** If you're looking at the Winnipeg River system, though, which is a massive system that involves both indigenous and non-indigenous communities, and you're saying, well, it starts and ends with Indigenous Services, I would have thought if you're going to have an effective response, you have to look at the whole system, rather than picking out little parts and saying, well, you have to deal with this and this. Maybe the government would be better off approaching a whole system, and that's a more effective approach than a piecemeal approach looking at individual communities.

**Mr. Glenn Wheeler:** That's an excellent point and it goes to another observation in our report about the fact that ISC has not signed emergency services agreements with all the provinces. The Province of Manitoba is an excellent example. If there were an agreement in place, I think it would allow for a more coordinated approach to dealing with those particular emergencies.

You raise an important point, which is the fact that it happens year after year. I think that's another reason multiple jurisdictions need to be working together to better prepare for and mitigate against such emergencies.

Your point is a very good one.

• (1235)

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

Colleagues, we'll now start a fourth round. Thank you to our witnesses for their forbearance with us as we begin this last round. We may not be able to complete it, but we'd like to start.

We'll begin with a Conservative member. We'll go to Mr. Badawey.

I beg your pardon. It's Mr. Schmale. You have five minutes.

**Mr. Jamie Schmale:** Thank you.

I get mistaken for Vance all the time. I appreciate that.

To the Auditor General's team, thank you again for this amazing testimony that you're coming through with today.

We continue to hear about challenges that have been held within the department itself and some challenges with pre-existing legislation that enable the department's failures to almost continue year after year, as we've seen outlined in your report many times, over and over again.

I asked you a bit about this in the last round.

Do you see us moving away from the status quo and really relying on a bottom-up approach, where communities are telling the government what they need and seeing more responsiveness and more reaction from actual departments at that point, rather than the cookie-cutter approach that we seem to be doing over and over again? I don't know if it was you or your colleague who said it.

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** That is why we made a few recommendations about doing it differently or getting a more comprehensive picture. The two programs that we looked at here are really application-based programs. These are waiting for the bottom to drive it up and not coming together and working on it collaboratively.

These solutions are not only solutions that first nations communities need to come up with, with the federal government joining in. It requires the provinces, territories and third parties in order to ensure that there's good preparedness and a mutual understanding of what is needed should an emergency occur and responses are needed.

I would argue that repeating what's been done is not the right way. Doing it in collaboration with so many others going forward is hopefully going to result in a better outcome than what we've been seeing over the last few years.

**Mr. Jamie Schmale:** Did I hear correctly when you mentioned—and I know it's in your report—that the department is not signing the agreements fast enough in terms of...? I believe it was you who said the province and the Department of Indigenous Services have yet to sign any sort of meaningful agreement to outline who would deal with a potential emergency if one should happen.

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** I would point to two things in our audit report. We have a little chart with a map that talks about where there are some existing agreements signed with provinces and territories. Those are really bilateral agreements.

What you're referring to is a multilateral agreement. The department, as of April 2022, had spent \$790,000, which had been devoted toward signing these multilateral agreements, where the federal government, other layers of government, third parties and indigenous communities would come together. That's where no agreements have been signed since that approach was taken.

We highlight that in B.C. there is a memorandum of understanding, which is a good step in the right direction, but there is not a multilateral agreement signed yet.

**Mr. Jamie Schmale:** In terms of following up on those needs in those exact areas that you just outlined, it seems that with the department itself—when we've looked at even the departmental plan and their failure to meet targets—the goalposts just keep getting moved every time we meet with them.

I remember asking the deputy minister.... There were all these strategies and all these meetings taking place, but there were really no actual outcomes. It just means that they didn't get to it and they'll do it next time or next year.

I just can't imagine this being accepted in the private sector. This would be a complete failure.

• (1240)

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** What I could say in response to that is we've seen that a lot and it's a recommendation or a comment I've made throughout many of the COVID response programs. When things have been identified and commitments are made to take action, it isn't enough to just have a commitment and an action plan. It's really about the follow-through. What we've seen here—and we've talked about it over the course of the last little while in this hearing—is that there is a will within the department and a desire to really help and support communities, but the follow-through is just not there. We're seeing good action plans but a lack of follow-through. I would argue that we see that in many areas in the federal public service. It's not unique to this department and this issue. That is really one that needs to change. That's where it's no longer the words, but concrete actions that will drive meaningful change.

**Mr. Jamie Schmale:** I think my colleague, Gary Vidal, is going to take the rest of my time, Chair.

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

We're at the time. There might be a minute or two left at the end. We'll see.

We'll now go to Mr. Badawey, the real Mr. Badawey, for five minutes.

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Schmale. I appreciate those questions.

Again, I want to preface my comments by saying this. I appreciate the efforts by the whole committee, because we are looking at the business of good government. This is the business of good politics, and I truly appreciate that. This is only a part of the process of achieving the outcomes that we all expect within indigenous communities, and quite frankly even beyond that, in all communities. As Mr. Powlowski was referring to, we have geographically many who can benefit, not just indigenous communities but our additional communities that surround those communities, especially with respect to infrastructure and the capacities that may in fact be shared, as well as mutual aids in terms of a preparedness plan.

My question to Ms. Hogan, as well as Mr. Wheeler, is related to the fact that you did not look at a wider, whole-of-government approach, and I want to drill down on that, because I think it's relevant. I think it's relevant because we are looking at embarking on and finalizing a study on this. We want to ensure we utilize what you've presented to us as part of a bigger picture with respect to what we're going to present to the minister based on this study and the additional testimony we received.

Considering that you did not look at a wider, whole-of-government approach, such as other government departments—Infrastructure, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Environment and Climate Change—are currently embarking on, do you feel a report from this committee needs to include what is being embarked on by these departments to complement your report and therefore form a more accurate basis for additional proactive mapping of next steps? I think you get the gist of what I'm asking for here.

Mr. Wheeler, I'll ask you that question, because you were drilling down a bit further with Mr. Powlowski on that. It's all about getting to the outcomes, and how best we can do that.

Ms. Hogan, I'm sure that's the whole premise of why you did this and the recommendations you've brought forward. We want to get to those outcomes. Beyond the talk, beyond the words, let's roll up our sleeves and get to that.

To my question, do you think that to achieve a more accurate basis for additional proactive mapping of next steps, it should include those areas you didn't, in fact, look at?

Mr. Wheeler.

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** I think I will start, and Glenn will absolutely add to it.

My comments will be more high level, about having a horizontal initiative across the government, and what I have seen over the last couple of years, which is that when there is a horizontal initiative, you need one department or one deputy minister to be accountable for achieving that, and that deputy needs to have the ability to compel other deputies to do the jobs they need to do in order to support the achievement of outcomes. All too often, when we look at horizontal initiatives, we see exactly that as the reason they don't achieve the outcomes they want. That is, no one feels they can compel other departments, and no one really feels like they are the lead.

If the government goes that way, or if your report makes that recommendation, I would still make it clear there needs to be an accountable party.

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** On that—that's a great point—by having a discussion with the other departments, you may, in fact, find out that it is happening. That goes to my point.

With that, and I want to get granular on that, and that's the basis of my question, when we look at that involvement from other departments, that, quite frankly, isn't happening based on the leadership of the minister.

I go back to my question, then. Do you find that for us to map in the next steps, that dialogue with those departments, that information, can be injected into this committee, and then, therefore, the final recommendations of this report? Do you feel that would be advantageous to advancing the mapping over and above what you've recommended within your report?

• (1245)

**Mr. Glenn Wheeler:** To reiterate what the Auditor General has said, ultimately accountability rests with Indigenous Services Canada. To get a bit more granular, because I think that's where we want to go, an organization like Public Safety Canada, which is responsible for the Emergency Management Act, would no doubt have some advice and perspective that Indigenous Services Canada, provinces and first nations should consider as they're looking to address the weaknesses we've identified. That's an example of where another department could be brought into the fold and its expertise could be relied on.

Other examples I think you've alluded to are Environment and Climate Change Canada and Natural Resources Canada, organizations that have expertise in environmental issues.

Good government involves whichever department is accountable nevertheless reaching out to other departments, and that gets around

one of the long-standing issues that we have identified in a lot of our audits, and that's the whole issue of stovepiping. It doesn't make sense for people to always look inward, even within a department or actually between departments.

The more collaboration that can be done, the better, and that would also extend to the provinces and territories as well. Your point is an important one.

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

We'll conclude with Ms. Gill and Ms. Idlout for two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Go ahead, Mrs. Gill.

**Mrs. Marilène Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In light of your findings and recommendations, I would like to ask you a question about departments.

We know that the work is immense for each of the departments involved in indigenous affairs. In the wake of the tabling of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada in 2015, I would imagine that there are even more demands.

To your knowledge, do those departments have sufficient human, material or financial resources to do their job well? They have been given a mandate, but do they have everything they need?

**Ms. Karen Hogan:** In our audit, we did not look at the resources available to departments to meet the needs of all the programs they must manage and to properly fulfill their mandates. That is beyond the scope of our audit. Ideally, I think that question should be put to the deputy minister of Indigenous Services Canada.

That said, we did find in our audit that there was a lack of financial resources to be able to meet the infrastructure needs. So I would say that there is a lack of resources, but to know the extent of that, you would have to ask the department itself.

**Mrs. Marilène Gill:** My second question was along the same lines, so I will put it to the department.

As you mentioned, the number of emergency situations is bound to increase. The mandates are that much larger and expanding from year to year. Yet, right now, departments are not even able to meet the minimum needs, even if just to identify basic needs.

While we don't have all the data on this, I think the department needs to be strengthened so that it can fulfill its mandate.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mrs. Gill.

To wrap up this round of questions, I give the floor to Ms. Idlout for two and a half minutes.

[*English*]

**Ms. Lori Idlout:** [*Member spoke in Inuktitut as follows:*]



• (1255)

**Mr. Gary Vidal:** All right. Thank you.

My motion is simply in response to today's meeting, that the evidence received by the public accounts committee on "Report 8: Emergency Management in First Nations Communities" of the 2022 reports of the Auditor General of Canada, on Friday Nov 25, 2022, be taken into consideration by the committee in its study of Arctic sovereignty, security and the emergency preparedness of indigenous peoples.

**The Chair:** Fellow members, this would require unanimous consent to adopt. Having heard this motion, does it have unanimous consent?

I see that Mr. Weiler's hand is up.

**Mr. Patrick Weiler:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have concerns about this. We weren't able to actually hear the evidence ourselves and have the opportunity to ask questions of the witnesses. Not having had the ability to do that, I have concerns about that being taken into account as evidence for the report that we are working on in this committee.

**The Chair:** I would have perhaps a couple of extra comments on what you've just said, Mr. Weiler. Do you still hold that position, considering that the actual report is public and that it is a fairly common process to do what Mr. Vidal is suggesting today, to incorporate the record from another committee into this one? Would that—

**Mr. Patrick Weiler:** Those are the concerns I have about it. We're tasked with the issues that we're dealing with on this particular study. I can't speak for what would or would not have been asked at that point.

I'm concerned that they wouldn't have had the expertise that we have on this committee to ask the proper questions to elicit the right evidence that we would want to have incorporated into this study.

**The Chair:** Who was first? It's Mr. Schmale.

**Mr. Jamie Schmale:** Thank you, Chair.

I agree. It is fairly routine, what we're doing here. I don't think it's out of the ordinary. It is a public document. I am very concerned about why the government would not want to include this.

Having said that, if we need to, let's put this to a vote.

**The Chair:** It requires unanimous consent, so we could put it to a vote.

Does anybody else have anything else they want to...?

Go ahead, Mr. Badawey.

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** It's a question for Mr. Vidal, who's putting the motion forward.

Is the intent here to include this information from another committee into our final report?

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Vidal.

**Mr. Gary Vidal:** Yes. The intent was to do two short meetings. There's a whole bunch of evidence, as you heard in my testimony today. I referred to that evidence probably 10 times, saying let's

gather as much info as we can to create as fulsome a report as possible, considering we're having only two meetings on this part of this study.

I think it gives us that much more testimony. It was a very similar conversation at the public accounts committee to what we had today. There was testimony there that wasn't here, and I couldn't ask all the same questions and get all that same stuff on the record here without seemingly wasting time.

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** I agree. We can bring that in as information—

**Mr. Gary Vidal:** That's all it is.

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** —but not as testimony. The reason I say that, and I agree with Mr. Weiler, is that I find it not proper, with the committee not having these folks in front of us to ask them questions, to have that testimony brought into this committee as testimony.

As information, I have no problem with that. We can use that information through the process of providing our drafting instructions to the committee. I have no problem with that.

However, what I have a problem with is that this would be injected as testimony into the committee's process. Therefore, the analysts would use that as part of the testimony we've received, when we, in fact, did not receive it; another committee did.

That's my concern.

**Mr. Gary Vidal:** My question to the clerk was simply whether we can have that testimony included, so that when we are doing the drafting instructions on the report, we have that considered as evidence. That way, it can't be excluded just because it wasn't heard at this committee. The advice was that this is a very common practice, and this was how to word it.

All I'm asking for is to consider the evidence—if you like that word better—to ensure that it can be included in our report when we are done drafting the final instructions on it, so we have that much more evidence to consider.

• (1300)

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

If there's no other comment, we're going to put this to a vote. It requires unanimous consent.

**Mr. Michael McLeod:** Chairman, I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Yes, Mr. McLeod.

**Mr. Michael McLeod:** Mr. Chairman, you put the question to the committee, checking to see if there was unanimous consent. Obviously, Patrick has voiced concerns and there will not be unanimous consent, so I'm not sure why we're going to a vote.

**The Chair:** The reason I'm asking for the vote is to find out if there is unanimous consent, because it's not 100% clear to me unless somebody puts their hand up and says, "I do not agree to this," right away.

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** Mr. Chair, this is a point of clarification.

Seeing that this is relevant to what we're studying, it won't need you to ask unanimous consent to pose the question.

**The Chair:** It's a motion.

I would like to.... Yes.

**Mr. Gary Vidal:** From a process perspective, if you are simply going to judge this based on unanimous consent, meaning that one person can derail it or veto it, can I bring it back with 48 hours' notice on Thursday, and we can vote on it then?

**The Chair:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Gary Vidal:** As long as I don't need to withdraw my motion to be able to bring it on Thursday.

**The Chair:** No. I think if you—

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Vanessa Davies):** The motion is still on the floor.

**The Chair:** I mean with the 48 hours' notice, then—

**Mr. Bob Zimmer:** If we adjourn, then it's back on the record at the next meeting.

**Mr. Gary Vidal:** Then I don't need unanimous consent to vote on Thursday if we move to adjourn right now.

**The Chair:** Yes. If it's been with us for 48 hours, my understanding is that we can then vote on it, and it's a majority vote.

**Mr. Gary Vidal:** If I move to adjourn instead of unanimous consent, it's a majority vote on Thursday?

**The Chair:** Yes, but I want to hear Ms. Atwin. She has something as well before we adjourn.

**The Clerk:** We can't have two motions on the floor at the same time.

**The Chair:** Ms. Atwin had her hand up.

I'm not going to adjourn until I hear from her on a different subject.

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Are you taking your hand down, Ms. Atwin?

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin:** No, but as the clerk mentioned, it's a separate motion request.

**The Chair:** Right, but you're not going to adjourn, Mr. Vidal, are you?

**Mr. Gary Vidal:** I'm going to adjourn unless you're going to allow me to make sure this comes to a vote on Thursday.

**The Clerk:** Could I suggest something?

Perhaps Mr. Vidal can withdraw his motion. I have the notice on the motions log. We can return to it on Thursday.

**The Chair:** That would achieve the same thing.

**Mr. Gary Vidal:** I just want the process clear, so we don't end up fighting over it. That's my point.

I will withdraw my motion. We'll consider it on Thursday.

**The Chair:** Very good: It will have had the 48 hours.

We have only one now.

Ms. Atwin, it's your turn.

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

There have been discussions amongst the parties. I am seeking unanimous consent to move another motion, but it's outside of the 48-hour notice period. I will need unanimous consent to move it.

**The Chair:** Very good.

Has it been distributed to members?

**The Clerk:** Yes. It was previously amended. I'm redistributing the amendment.

**The Chair:** Okay.

While it's being distributed, would you care to—in the interest of time—describe it or read it, Ms. Atwin?

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin:** It states:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee of commence a study on Bill S-219, an act respecting a national ribbon skirt day, and that:

a. The study begin on Monday, December 5, 2022;

b. The committee hold a total of one hour of committee meeting to hear testimony from witnesses;

c. Prioritized lists of witnesses be submitted to the clerk by 5:00 p.m., Wednesday, November 30, 2022, and that these lists be distributed to members of the committee as soon as possible;

d. Parties submit amendments to the bill, in both official languages, no later than 5:00 p.m., Friday, December 2, 2022;

e. That the clerk of the committee write immediately to each member who is not a member of a caucus represented on the committee and any independent members to inform them of the study of Bill S-219 by the committee and to invite them to prepare and submit any proposed amendments to Bill S-219 which they would suggest that the committee consider during the clause-by-clause study of the bill; and

f. The committee begin clause-by-clause consideration of the bill in the second hour of the meeting on Monday, December 5, 2022, on the study of the bill.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

The committee has heard the motion. Hopefully, it's been distributed.

Ms. Idlout is okay...? Good.

● (1305)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Gill, is that okay with you? It appears to be.

[*English*]

There seems to be unanimous consent.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** I would ask everybody to be cognizant of the deadlines Ms. Atwin read out to us.

Thank you.

With that, this meeting is adjourned.

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