

40th PARLIAMENT, 3rd SESSION

Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

EVIDENCE

Thursday, May 27, 2010

Ms. Sheila Fraser (Auditor General of Canada, Office of the Auditor General of Canada):

Thank you, Mr. Chair, for inviting us to discuss our previous audit work of the Canadian firearms program, notably chapter 10 of our December 2000 report and chapter 4 of our May 2006 status report.

Accompanying me today is Wendy Loschiuk, Assistant Auditor General, responsible for our audits of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

At the outset, I would like to note that we have not conducted detailed audit work on the program since 2006. We therefore are not in a position to discuss events or issues that have arisen since that time. Nor have we audited the effectiveness of the program or the social implications of the firearms policy. We therefore do not have a view on the proposed legislation.

Our 2002 report examined the changing costs and scope of the Canadian Firearms Program, from its creation in 1996. One of our major concerns was the lack of information that was provided to Parliament on the costs of the program and on the escalation of these costs.

At the time of our audit, the Department of Justice Canada estimated that it had spent about \$688 million, and told us that it expected this to reach \$1 billion by the end of the 2004-2005 fiscal year.

However, we found problems with the recording of the costs of the program, in that the full costs were not estimated and reported. In addition, during the preceding years, the Department had changed its costing methodology along with its financial systems and could not provide us with consistent cost information.

In our 2006 audit of the Firearms Program, we examined whether the government had made progress in recording and reporting on the full costs of delivering the Firearms Program since our 2002 audit. We also examined the management of the Canada Firearms Centre.

We found that the government had made satisfactory progress in recording and reporting the full costs of the program. At that time, we noted that the annual expenditures for the centre had decreased from \$117.3 million in the 2002-03 fiscal year to \$71 million in 2004-05. We also noted improvements in the handling of the large volumes of applications, as well as in reporting to Parliament.

In May 2006 the responsibility for the Canadian firearms program was transferred to the RCMP. As I mentioned previously, we have not conducted any detailed work on the firearms program since that time.

Mr. Chair, I thank the committee for their attention. I would be pleased to answer any questions the committee members may have.

Thank you.

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<http://www2.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=4562004&Language=E&Mode=1&Parl=40&Ses=3#Int-3185570>