

Deputy Prime Minister
and Minister of Public Safety
and Emergency Preparedness Canada



Vice-première ministre
et ministre de la Sécurité publique
et de la Protection civile du Canada

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0P8

The Honourable L'honorable
A. Anne McLellan, P.C., M.P. c.p., députée

Commissioner Giuliano Zaccardelli
Royal Canadian Mounted Police
Room G-309
1200 Vanier Parkway
Ottawa, ON K1A 0R2

Dear Commissioner Zaccardelli:

With the summer recess of Parliament, I think it is an important time to take stock of lessons learned over the past year and to plan for the support I will need when the House returns in September.

The Prime Minister has made democratic reform a priority for the Government, and in turn has placed high expectations on Ministers and their senior officials to be responsive to Parliament.

The Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Act confers upon the Minister the responsibility to coordinate the activities of the entities under his or her administration. This fundamental principle of portfolio coordination needs to be at the core of our responsiveness to Parliament, and it is important that the roles of Ministers and officials be clearly delineated.

Parliamentary Committees

Appearances by officials to support the accountability of Ministers are important elements of *responsiveness* to Parliament. However, **Ministers alone are responsible to Parliament, and Ministers alone remain answerable for matters of policy.** Hence, the role of officials in our system --including of Governor-in-Council appointees--is very different from that of Ministers.

In appearing on behalf of their Minister before parliamentary committees, officials are expected to describe the plans, activities and performance of their organizations in areas such as financial management, program and service delivery, and human resources management. Officials are also expected to *explain*

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the implications of policy decisions taken by the government. Officials do not, however, engage in debate as to policy alternatives, propose legislative amendments, or advocate for courses of action that are the domain of Ministers.

Given my accountability to Parliament, and our respective roles, it is important that we continue to work together towards ensuring the highest degree of cooperation between my portfolio and Parliament. At the same time, I would ask you to be mindful of the need to ensure that the cooperation is effectively coordinated across the portfolio so as to provide the most comprehensive answers to my colleagues.

By following some practical principles in interactions with committees, we can ensure that our engagement is productive, coordinated, and responsive to the expectations of Parliament.

- Officials are to be mindful that when dealing with Parliamentary committees they do so on their Minister's behalf, and the proper roles of Ministers and officials must be respected.
- I have asked the Deputy Minister, through the Department, to coordinate the portfolio's interactions with committees on my behalf.
 - Agencies are to inform my Office of all invitations to appear at committees or make submissions to them before accepting them.
 - Submissions, presentations and opening statements are to be provided to my Office sufficiently in advance of appearances to allow for review and revision to ensure a coordinated portfolio perspective.
 - Follow-up letters conveying further information to committees are to be prepared as promptly as possible and provided to my Office for review and approval by my Office before submission to committee.

Further information about responsibility may be found in the Privy Council Office publications *Notes on the Responsibilities of Public Servants in Relation to Parliamentary Committees*, and, *Governing Responsibly, A Guide for Ministers and Ministers of State*.

Question Period and Written Questions

Support for the daily Question Period and Written Questions is equally critical since these are key instruments of a Minister's accountability to Parliament. The Department has processes and deadlines in place to ensure coordinated input across the Portfolio.

- Regarding Question Period, the system in place for Agencies to provide material through the Department works well. However, as you can understand, timeliness in providing the material is critical, especially in the PSEP Portfolio given the volume of daily issues and the number of agencies involved. Accordingly, I am asking you to monitor the timeliness of your Question Period material and to impress upon your senior managers the importance I attach to this material.
- Similarly, I would ask that you monitor the timeliness and completeness of responses for Written Questions. I recognize that many of these questions require laborious research, but since Agency responses must be aggregated into a single response for the portfolio for my signature, the portfolio's timeliness as a whole is dependent on the timeliness of each respective Agency.

In closing, I want to thank you for the support your organization has provided to me in serving Canadians. It has been a busy and challenging year but I believe our collective success in matters of legislation and the Main Estimates demonstrate the benefits of the portfolio coordination.

In planning for the fall, I have asked senior officials in the Department to meet with their counterparts in the Agencies, together with members of my staff, to ensure that arrangements for the entire portfolio are as effective as possible.

In conveying these expectations to your respective officials, I would also ask that you convey to them my thanks for their dedication in serving Canadians well, and their continuing support to me.

Yours sincerely,

A. Anne McLellan