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Graham won't make summit estimate

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Foreign Affairs Minister Bill Graham has rejected the Canadian Alliance's claim that the price tag for this June's Group of Eight summit in Alberta will run as high as $500-million, but he says he won't be able to give a cost estimate until after the meeting.

Federal sources say cabinet has already added up the probable costs and set aside more than $300-million for the 36-hour event in Kananaskis at the end of June.

But Mr. Graham said yesterday the price tag will be in the hands of security authorities.

"It will totally depend on what the risk analyses of the RCMP and the security authorities [are] at the time of the conference. It will go up and down in relation to that. So I think we just have to wait until after it's over and have a look," he told reporters after being questioned by the Canadian Alliance's foreign affairs critic, Stockwell Day.

Mr. Graham suggested that security authorities will have to spend whatever it takes to give world leaders the protection they need.

"The ranges will be more in the minds of the security authorities, as we start looking at exactly what they're going to put in place," he said. "Their responsibilites will be to provide the security for those world leaders. They're not going to come here unless that security is provided."

Federal sources say that months ago cabinet approved almost $120-million to cover the worst-case scenario of holding the summit in Ottawa. But costs have more than doubled since moving it to the resort. A second portion of about $132-million was approved. And then this month, a cabinet committee approved a third installment, bringing the total allotment to slightly more than $300-million.

"We think it's going to approach half a billion," Mr. Day said, adding that the federal government tends to exceed its own estimates.

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